

Lutheran World Information

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The three Lutheran bishops presented the LWF with a Namibian flag, symbolizing the invitation to host the 2017 Assembly in Windhoek. © LWF/Maximilian Haas

Namibian Churches to Host LWF Assembly in 2017

“Invited by Africa”

GENEVA (LWI) – The Twelfth Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) will be held in 2017 in Windhoek, Namibia.

The LWF Council gratefully accepted an invitation from the three LWF member churches in Namibia during its 13-18 June meeting at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, Switzerland. “The Lutheran World Federation is happy to come to Namibia to celebrate Namibia’s independence and to boost the mission of your churches!” announced LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, expressing his satisfaction with the decision.

Prior to the vote on the Assembly venue, three bishops from the three

churches gave a presentation of Namibia and the LWF member churches.

Presiding Bishop Dr Shekutaamba V. V. Nambala of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN), recalled the multi-faceted history of mission in that country, which led to the emergence of the three Lutheran churches.

Missionaries who came to Namibia, including from Britain, Finland and Germany, contributed to the fact that today about 90 percent of Namibians are Christians. More than half the population belongs to the three Lutheran churches.

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Intergenerational Dialogue at Council Meeting: Envisioning a Sustainable LWF

The 2013 meeting of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Council in Geneva, Switzerland, met under the theme “Called to Be Disciples in Today’s World.”

In one of the Council sessions led by youth members of the governing body, representatives from the LWF member churches engaged in a special intergenerational dialogue aimed at benefiting from the rich experience that individuals bring to the table.

Meeting in groups representing three social genera-



(Left) Mr Warime Gutu (Papua New Guinea) and Ms Mikka McCracken (United States) shared their insights on the many learning opportunities provided through LWF meetings such as the Council. © LWF/Maximilian Haas

tions—1945 to 1963; 1964 to 1981 and 1982 to 1995—Council members had a dialogue on how working together across the generations is valuable in shaping the future of the LWF communion.

In one plenary dialogue followed by group sessions, they reflected on their initial picture and vision of the LWF; actual commitment to the LWF, regarding role and age; perspectives for the future; and LWF’s sustainability.

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LWF COUNCIL 2013 – CALLED TO BE DISCIPLES IN TODAY'S WORLD

13-18 June, Geneva, Switzerland

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“We are therefore inviting you to a Lutheran country,” said LWF Council member Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN).

Experiencing Peace and Freedom in Namibia

The churches explained their special motivation in extending the invitation. “The LWF supported Namibia immensely in our struggle for liberation, not only at home,” declared Nambala.

Offering theologians training overseas was another example of its assistance, along with support for people who had had to flee Namibia.

Nambala recalled that the LWF had given humanitarian and spiritual aid in the refugee camps. “The LWF managed to find ways and passages for our church leaders to visit and assist our refugees in the camps,” he told the Council.

In the 21st century, now that Namibia is independent and apartheid is over, the Namibian churches have issued this invitation as a way of thanking the LWF. “Come and see what it means to be in communion and independent,” Nambala urged Council members.

Towards a United Lutheran Church

Bishop Erich Hertel from the German-speaking Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN-GELC) also pointed



Left to right: Namibia's Lutheran Bishops Erich Hertel (ELCIN-GELC); Dr Shekutaamba V. V. Nambala (ELCIN); and Dr Zephania Kameeta (ELCRN) applaud the Council's decision to hold the Twelfth LWF Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia. © LWF/Maximilian Haas

out that hosting the LWF Assembly could have a positive impact on the three churches, helping them to grow closer together.

After the first unsuccessful attempts to merge the churches in times of racial segregation and apartheid, the churches had made further moves to unite in the 1990s.

A United Church Council was founded in 2007. “However, this should by no means be the end of the road but it should be a milestone on our way to further unity,” underlined the bishop of ELCIN-GELC. In his opinion, holding the Assembly in Namibia would certainly advance this process.

The three Lutheran churches in Namibia are of differing sizes. The German-speaking ELCIN-GELC comprises about 5,000 members, ELCRN has around 420,000 and ELCIN, with

its roots in Finnish mission, has over 700,000. There is already a congregation in Windhoek where members of all three churches worship together.

Invited by the Whole of Africa

Finally, Bishop Kameeta reported on support for the invitation from the African Lutheran Church Leadership Conference. “So the invitation to you does not just come from Namibia, you are invited by Africa!”

After the Council decision the three bishops presented the LWF President with a Namibian flag as a symbolic gift accompanying the invitation.

In conclusion, Hertel could not resist sharing a Namibian proverb with the Council members: “You can leave Namibia but it will never leave you.”

Emphasis on Church Diaconal Ministries at Council Worship Service

Hungarian Bishop Fabiny Calls for Sincerity and Honesty

Hungarian Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny appealed to member churches of The

Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to persevere in their diaconal ministries,

and to be sincere and honest in interacting with one another.

Preaching at the opening eucharistic service of the LWF Council meeting at the Ecumenical Center chapel in Geneva, Fabiny said those who wander in their own deserts today “and who cannot find ‘an inhabited town’ include the millions of refugees, who, hungry and thirsty, leave their homes and, if they are lucky, can settle in refugee camps.” Along with the Roma, homeless people and women and children who are seeking refuge, they must be accompanied today by the diaconal ministries of the churches, added the LWF Vice-President for Central Eastern Europe.

Fabiny who is bishop of the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, based his sermon on the first nine verses of Psalm 107. Rev. Marcia Blasi from the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil officiated at the opening service.

Spiritual Needs

The LWF vice-president also pointed to the situation in secularized societies today, saying there are many people who do not experience physical hunger but they have spiritual needs, and the churches should ask themselves whether they have done enough. “Especially to us as Lutherans, the church of the Word of God, this responsibility is no less than to testify to the Word of

God among them, and to testify to the life-creating, new life-creating power of it.” The churches, he added, should proclaim the Word of God “with power and authenticity.”

Reflecting on verse 7 of Psalm 107, an account about God leading the wanderers to an “inhabited town,” the Hungarian bishop said the inhabited town could be a metaphor of the *oikoumene*—the whole inhabited world. He expressed his “hope that although we have arrived via different ways from our own desert wastes, we can still meet each other in this oikoumene, in the inhabited town,” where all can find a home as “citizens of the same city, with the same rights.”

Referring to Martin Luther’s *Invocavit* sermons, Fabiny said that at a critical period of great argument, Luther called for patience and support among the sisters and brothers. In this way, as Luther said, we can “travel heavenward” not alone, but with those with whom we disagree. Fabiny reminded the LWF governing body: “Along with Luther we cannot say less than we have to go to heaven together! There can be, and of course, there must be debates between us, but we have to go to heaven together!”

The remaining verses of Psalm 107 were the subject of daily meditation and Bible study during the Council meeting.



Hungarian Bishop Dr. Tamás Fabiny, LWF Vice-President for Central Eastern Europe, delivers the sermon at the Council opening worship service. © LWF/Maximilian Haas

Called to a Discipleship of Equals for Mission in a Fragmented World

LWF President Younan’s Opening Address to 2013 Council Meeting

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) President Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan reminded member churches of the global Lutheran communion that God calls them into a discipleship of equals as they accompany one another in their respective contexts and serve the world.

In his opening address to the 2013 meeting of the LWF Council, Younan

told representatives of LWF member churches, “I am convinced that discipleship is a concept that we need to reclaim as we seek to accompany one another as we participate in God’s redeeming and reconciling mission.”

There were 167 participants in this year’s meeting, including Council members, advisers and invited guests, and LWF staff.

In his presentation, the LWF president reflected on the biblical and Lutheran understanding on discipleship and how the call to follow Christ (Matthew 28:19) is lived out today amidst contexts of economic inequalities, different interpretations of Scripture and witnessing as churches in situations where religious freedom is oppressed.



LWF President Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan, presenting his address to the LWF Council.
© LWF/Maximilian Haas

On who can be a disciple, Younan, who is bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) emphasized that faithfulness is not determined by individual actions or decisions, but by belonging to the community of believers. He challenged churches in the Lutheran communion to “reject any attempt to claim that one person or group is a better follower of Jesus than another. [...] We are in mission and diakonia together.” The Lutheran understanding of *simul iustus et peccator* (justified and sinner at the same time) emphasizes each in equal measure before God, he stressed.

The depth of discipleship cannot be measured only in terms of the ability to respond materially to people’s needs around the globe, Younan argued. As churches accompany one another, they must ensure that the resources within the Lutheran communion are used to effectively promote the flourishing of human communities. Wealth, he added, must never be sanctified as a sign of discipleship.

Younan said preparations to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, presented an opportunity to revisit Lutherans’ foundational commitments—to be in the spirit of the reformation as disciples, including the ecumenical commitment

to all Christian families. “The Lutheran recognition that we are *ecclesia semper reformanda*, a church to be always reformed, is a sign of our humility calling us to discipleship,” he noted.

Religious Freedom, Extremism and Persecution

Regarding discipleship and religious freedom, the ELCJHL bishop noted that the question of relationships between religious and civil authority are existential for many LWF member churches, whether living in societies of Christian numerical majorities or minorities. Christian discipleship is a

public act and churches are called to contribute to society and to be recognized as citizens with equal rights and equal responsibilities, he said.

Still, the commitment to discipleship calls the Lutheran communion to reflect on its response to religious freedom, the realities of persecution, the question of mission, and engaging the world’s governments, Younan noted.

Reflecting on the situation of Christian minorities in the Arab and Muslim world, the Palestinian bishop noted that the question of protected autonomous minorities is not only restricted to Christians but also to Muslims living in Europe and other parts of the world. Lutherans’ commitment to support not only the freedom of worship but also the freedom of conviction includes working against extreme secularism alongside religious extremism. “We must explore what it means to have freedom of religion for ourselves and for others,” he added.

Younan urged LWF’s commitment and solidarity towards churches that are suffering as a result of new movements within Muslim communities in countries such as Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria and Pakistan. He underlined the Middle East as one region where Christianity is under existential threat, especially in Syria, and called for LWF’s accompaniment to churches in that region.



Latvian Archbishop Janis Vanags (middle), comments on the president’s address.
© LWF/Maximilian Haas

The question of discipleship is connected directly with the nature of mission, the LWF president said. Contextual discipleship calls churches back to contextual mission as they respond to the evangelical call to transform “our world from extremism to moderation.”

Strengthening Protection

Referring to LWF’s cooperation with civil government to protect and uphold the rights of the needy, Younan commended to the Council the document

“Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders,” which was adopted on 12 June by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and faith-based non-governmental organizations including the LWF. A first in global humanitarian response work, the declaration sets out principles to guide faith leaders in strengthening protection for the more than 40 million refugees, internally displaced, and stateless people across the globe.

Concluding his address, Younan reminded the global communion of

Lutheran churches that the call to follow Jesus Christ is not an easy path, but one that intimately leads to the cross. “Disciples of Christ do not make their own separate club, but are sent into the world by the one who chose to come into the world,” he added.

The full text of Bishop Younan’s address is available on the LWF Web site at www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/Council%202013%20Address%20of%20the%20President_0.pdf

Promoting Neighborly Relations in Multireligious Societies

General Secretary’s Report to Council Invites Discussion on a Sustainable LWF

The General Secretary’s report to the 2013 Council meeting of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) offered reflections on his visits to LWF member churches, interactions with ecumenical partners, an update of the work carried out by the respective departments in the LWF Communion Office, and future perspectives for the life and work of the LWF.

Referring to his visit to Tanzania, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge noted that there are churches living in contexts that undermine peaceful neighborhood relations between religious communities. Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and buildings had become direct targets of violent riots, for which the root cause is “abject poverty and absence of relevant and viable perspectives, particularly for young people. It is the alienation generated by this situation, together with targeted instrumentalization, which ends up undermining healthy and peaceful neighborhood relationships between (religious) communities.”

In Asia, Junge noted, the vitality of churches’ engagement in mission is evident, but the issue of co-existence with other religions is also a concern.



LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge reports to the 2013 Council meeting in Geneva.
© LWF/Maximilian Haas

His report stated that tensions and conflicts that are often perceived and communicated as religious are related to issues that are normally far more complex. The LWF governing body was invited to deeper discussions on religious freedom during its meeting.

The general secretary’s visits to churches and interactions with LWF’s bilateral dialogue partners are “a reflection of both the strong ecumenical vocation of the LWF, and the vitality of its engagements at various levels,” his report stated. At the church leader-

ship meeting in Africa, the changing religious landscape was discussed. Referring to the planned bilateral dialogue with the Pentecostals, Junge underlined that it was important “to include the perspective of reception during the inception of ecumenical dialogues and a deliberate attempt to secure strong links between the local and global dimensions.”

But there are also encouraging stories about churches’ involvement in bridge building even amidst tensions, as well as the Department for World

Service work in upholding the rights and dignity of refugees and internally displaced people regardless of their faith. The interreligious cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection, is also a positive development for the religious landscape.

The report stated gratitude to the communion's member churches for support and commitment to LWF's work with an estimated 1.5 million refugees and displaced persons across the world.

If Youth Do Not Have a Future nor Does Our Common Household

On the global youth unemployment crisis—with over 75 million youth worldwide looking for work—the general secretary's report underlined the member churches' role in addressing this dangerous development, stating, "If youth do not have a future, our common household doesn't have one either."

The general secretary's report also highlighted the growing gap of resources, capacities and relationships among churches, which results in the weakening of "capacity and ability to offer holistic ministry in their respective societies," with several churches



LWF Council member Bishop Dr Antje Jackelén (Sweden), commenting on the general secretary's report.
© LWF/Maximilian Haas

becoming increasingly isolated from both accompaniment and support.

This Council meeting was significant for the Communion Office as it anticipated decision on the LWF Gender Justice Policy. "We begin to look ahead already and discern ways in which this policy will come into life in the LWF, thus transforming relationships between genders with a view on justice," Junge's report noted.

The report also stated the need to begin envisioning today a sustainable LWF beyond the 2017 Reformation anniversary. "How will such a sustainable LWF look like for those after us who will celebrate the 500 years of the Augsburg Confession in the year 2030?"

Other issues that the general secretary cited for further deliberation by the Council included how the pedagogy of the communion can mutually support churches as they journey together; developing methodologies to promote wider participation in LWF's programs and processes; the role and functions of regional expressions of communion; developing future generations of leadership in the churches; and perspectives and strategies for financial sustainability.

Read the general secretary's report at:
www.lutheranworld.org

LWF Financial Results Positive for 2012

Work Must Be Sustained Amid Rising Costs, Says Finance Committee Chairperson Jackson-Skelton

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) governing body was told that financial results for 2012 were positive, with income exceeding expenses mainly due to increased World Service operations. Pension provisions had been reduced and operating reserves increased.

"Staff and management should be commended for their careful monitoring of budgeted expenses and good

budget planning—resulting in positive net results," Finance Committee Chairperson Ms Christina Jackson-Skelton said in her report to the Council meeting in Geneva.

"Going forward, it will be important for the Council and LWF management to consider ways to sustain growth or grow the work in the midst of rising costs. Additions to the Endowment

Fund and increasing membership contributions and other unrestricted revenue sources are two important considerations," she added.

The representatives of LWF member churches heard that receipts for 2012 totaled EUR 100.8 million. This compared with EUR 85 million the previous year, a gain of EUR 15.8 million or 18.6 percent, mainly attributed to



Finance Committee Chairperson Ms Christina Jackson-Skelton reports to the LWF Council.
© LWF/Maximilian Haas

World Service being able to undertake more emergency operations.

In 2012 LWF's reserves increased from EUR 19 million to EUR 21.7 million.

The net income from LWF's operations in 2012 was nearly EUR 2.7 million, with the Geneva Coordination showing a positive income of EUR 137,000 while work coordinated in the Department for World Service (DWS) field operations reported an income of EUR 2.5 million, mainly due to an operating surplus at the Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem.

Jackson-Skelton, who serves as Executive Director at the Mission Advancement unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America said that membership fee contributions, which "provide stability for critical work other than programs and projects," remained stable at EUR 2.4 million.

However, she added that the undesignated contributions by LWF member churches lag behind fair membership targets. "Growth in this area would help provide support for areas that have been identified as high priority in the strategic

planning process, such as theological and ecumenical work," she noted.

LWF's total expenditures in 2012 totaled EUR 97.8 million, compared with EUR 85 million in 2011, an increase of EUR 12.8 million or 15 percent. DWS accounted for EUR 85.7 million or 87.6 percent, the Department for Mission and Development, EUR 8.5 million or 8.7 percent, the Department for Theology and Public Witness, EUR 1.3 million or 1.4 percent, while the General Secretariat expenditures amounted to EUR 2.3 million, 2.3 percent.

The finance committee chairperson reported that the merger of the LWF Pension Fund with the Switzerland-based Abendrot Foundation was completed.

Contributions to the LWF Endowment Fund in 2012 were CHF 134,000, which was lower than anticipated for the fund, which was established in 1999. However, Jackson-Skelton added that the investment performance of the portfolio was "extremely positive" with a net return of CHF 951,410.

[Read the report of the Finance Committee Chairperson at www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/Council%202013-Report%20of%20Chairperson%20for%20Finance%20Committee_0.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/Council%202013-Report%20of%20Chairperson%20for%20Finance%20Committee_0.pdf)

Claiming the Gift of Communion in a Fragmented World

Message Received with Consensus

On 13 June, the LWF Council met in a special session during its annual meeting in Geneva to discuss the document "Claiming the Gift of Communion in a Fragmented World." The document offered reflections on the communion implications of the recent rupture of relations among three LWF member churches.

The Council offered a joint message from their discussion in which they expressed an ongoing commitment to being a communion of

churches into which the 143 member churches of the LWF have been called by God's grace.

The LWF Council asked the General Secretary to continue providing for close contact with the three churches, as well as offering space and processes for further conversation between them.

The governing body also asked the general secretary to engage LWF member churches in further theological reflections on how they express

and deal with differences resulting from their respected autonomous decisions, while at the same time upholding their commitment to live and work together as a communion of churches.

"The LWF has shown that it is a communion that is alive, that is vibrant, that is mature and that is able to deal with issues of great complexity," commented General Secretary Martin Junge. "In the communion we feel the pain of the rupture in relations but the Council message

gives us hope that we are able to heal and confirms that together we will continue being a communion that is witnessing for a just, peaceful and reconciled world.”

The Council recommended the document “Claiming the Gift of Communion in a Fragmented World” to all LWF member churches for study.

[The Message of the Council and the document “Claiming the Gift of Communion in a Fragmented World” are available for download on www.lutheranworld.org/content/council-2013.](http://www.lutheranworld.org/content/council-2013)

“Liberated by God’s Grace”

LWF Presents Plans and Theme for the Reformation Anniversary

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) wishes to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 as a global communion. “There are already many activities in the member churches. The LWF’s role is to support them and offer a global perspective,” underlined Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann, during this year’s LWF Council meeting.

Altmann was speaking as chairperson of the LWF Special Committee on “Luther 2017 – 500 Years of the Reformation,” and presenting the committee’s report to the LWF Council on 14 June. The report proposes values and principles for the LWF’s activities to mark the Reformation anniversary, and also includes practical details of processes that are already underway. The Council expressed its unanimous approval of the report. Accordingly, the LWF will mainly concentrate its activities on the three years from 2015 to 2017. Focal points will be the Council meeting in 2016 in Wittenberg, the Assembly in 2017, and Reformation Day in 2017.

Global, Ecumenical and in Ongoing Reformation

The report recommended three areas of content to the Council. Activities will be guided by the principles “Reformation as a global citizen”, “Ecumenical accountability,” and “Churches of Reformation are churches in ongoing reformation.”

“Ecumenical relations are an integral component of our Lutheran identity. Not something added on,” Altmann said in his presentation. He saw 2017 as a good time to harvest the fruits and successes of the ecumenical



Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann (Brazil) presents the report of the Special Committee on “Luther 2017 – 500 Years of the Reformation.” © LWF/Maximilian Haas

process. For example, the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity would celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2017 as well.

An important question for Altmann was how the anniversary can be important for young people. The LWF Communion Office is already working on a Global Young Reformers Network as a practical LWF project. The idea is that young people from LWF member churches use global connectivity to focus worldwide on the Reformation heritage and Lutheran identity, at the same time becoming young reformers in their churches.

“Liberated by God’s Grace” as the Theme

Along with the report, the Council approved the theme “Liberated by God’s Grace,” which will overarch all LWF activities around the Reformation anniversary. “The theme,” Altmann noted,

“offers various possibilities of reflection on such questions as, liberated by God’s grace – from what? For what?” It would enable further exploration of the Lutheran understanding of the doctrine of justification or Luther’s concept of the “freedom of the Christian.” “Liberated by God’s Grace” will also be theme of the LWF Assembly in 2017.

Altmann explained that the theme had been divided into three more tangible sub-themes:

“Salvation – not for sale” highlights the fact that salvation is God’s free gift and cannot be bought. There is a clear critique of practices that treat salvation as a commodity on the “religious market.”

“Human beings – not for sale” underscores that every individual is a unique person created in God’s own image and his/her dignity and integrity must therefore be fully respected. Social and economic practices that violate this dignity can receive due attention here.

“Creation – not for sale” highlights that creation has only been entrusted to human beings. The sub-theme calls for a non-exploitative, sustainable approach to creation and opposes commodifying resources such as water.

Reformation Anniversary as Communion

In his presentation, Altmann underlined again the communion concept of the LWF: “May all member churches

understand the processes and plans for the anniversary as part of their common path as a worldwide communion.” The member churches should thus mutually inform one another of their ideas and initiatives. They should also play an active part in LWF programs: “LWF’s task is global expression.”

“Unity in diversity” could find special expression on Reformation Day 2017, which most churches celebrate on 31 October. The Special Committee

suggested holding services of worship worldwide with an LWF liturgy. True to LWF’s self-understanding, the liturgy should contain elements of catholicity and contextuality—elements that are both universal and contextualized.

Networking Role of the LWF

On the basis of the report, the Communion Office in Geneva will continue with more detailed planning for the whole LWF communion. In doing so, it will foster exchange and coordination among member churches, such as a worldwide network of persons in the member churches with responsibility for the Reformation anniversary.

On the presentation’s conclusion, LWF President Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan thanked the members and the chairperson of the Special Committee for their hard work and great commitment.

The full text of the report of the Special Committee is available at: www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/Council%202013-Report%20Special%20Committee%20500%20Years%20Reformation.pdf



LWF Council member Bishop Geza Erniša contributes to discussion on the Luther 2017 committee report. © LWF/Maximilian Haas

Joint Lutheran-Catholic Publication on Reformation Launched

Cardinal Koch: Keynote Address to LWF Council

Presenting the keynote address to the Council of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) on 17 June, Kurt Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), reflected on the joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic publication, “From Conflict to Communion,” which was launched during the meeting of the LWF governing body.

Koch expressed his strong hope that the document will be mutually received by Lutherans and Catholics at global and local levels.

From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Com-

moration in 2017, has been published by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity in the context of the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and the 50th anniversary of dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics in 2017. It builds on important ecumenical milestones especially the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ).

In his address to the LWF governing body, the PCPCU president reflected on the opportunities that a common Lutheran-Catholic commemoration of the 500th anniversary would offer; the

need to listen to one another about the meaning of the commemoration for both sides; rediscovering what Lutherans and Catholics have in common by having the courage to address the conflicts in the Reformation history; and the significance of the current document for the further dialogue process.

Koch said that the decision by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity to follow up their dialogue process on the topic of baptism under the working title ‘Baptism and Growing in Communion,’ was much to be welcomed, as it represents a further



PCPCU President Kurt Cardinal Koch delivers his keynote address on "From Conflict to Communion."
© LWF/S. Gally

important step on the path of deepening understanding between Lutherans and Catholics. He also proposed that this would open a possibility for the preparation of a future joint declaration on church, Eucharist and ministry.

"The true success of the Reformation can only be achieved through the overcoming of our inherited divisions in a renewed Church consisting of all Christians, and that consequently our ecumenical efforts aimed at recovering unity are actually a completion of the work of the Reformation itself," Koch said.

Questions about Eucharistic Hospitality

Responding to Cardinal Koch's address, LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan noted that local relationships with Catholics take different shapes in the respective regions and the LWF member churches. "It is my sense that this document can be an important tool in improving relationships and, more importantly, common witness, in all contexts."

In a plenary discussion following the presentation of "Conflict to Communion" LWF Council members welcomed the publishing of the publication at the global dialogue level, but also expressed hope for its practical reception and relevance at the grassroots.

Bishop em. Ambrose Moyo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, said one of the questions often asked since the signing of the JDDJ and other joint publications in the dialogue process, was when Lutheran and Catholics would come to a point where they can share the Eucharist. He expressed optimism that the common commemoration in 2017 would offer such encouragement.

Understanding about Church

Presiding Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien, Church of Norway, spoke of the ecumenical milestones in the bilateral dialogue including the JDDJ and the current publication, and noted that the processes describe the concept of the Eucharist. However, she noted, "It seems the hindrance in the time to come is going to be about the church and structure."

Bishop Dr Frank O. July, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg (Germany) commented on the critical questions between Lutherans and Catholics about the authority of Luther's confessional writings and the authority of the church.

Responding to the remarks, Koch said the reception of the results of ecumenical dialogue processes need to be both local and global. "Both levels should be aware of the progress on each side," he emphasized.

On the remaining questions in the search for Christian unity, the PCPCU president said he agreed "that the goal of ecumenical efforts has to be the



Bishop em. Eero Huovinen (Finland), co-chairperson of the Lutheran - Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, refers to "From Conflict to Communion" at a joint LWF-PCPCU press conference during the Council meeting.
© LWF/S. Gally

common supper, but it would be difficult for this document to be the step to it.” His advice to both Lutherans and Catholics was to be realistic about the expectations from each other. “We, for example, cannot impose papacy on you; and I can expect from you not to push us to eucharistic hospitality and church community as these are constitutive questions for the theological basis of our faith.”

Bishop em. Eero Huovinen (Finland), who serves as co-chair of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, urged that both Lutherans and Catholics concentrate on how much they have in common in the theological issues that were central to both Martin Luther and the Catholic faith.

He called for patience and impatience, adding, “None of us can alone decide how to build unity. We have

other sisters and brothers on the same road. We need profound and sound theological work.”

The LWF Council received the publication “From Conflict to Communion” in a Council action.

[Download the keynote address, responses, and the publication “From Conflict to Communion” on \[www.lutheranworld.org/content/council-2013\]\(http://www.lutheranworld.org/content/council-2013\)](#)

Becoming Better Disciples Together

LWF Ecumenical Partners Invite Continuing Collaboration

Ecumenical guests invited continuing dialogue and collaboration as they brought greetings to the 2013 Council meeting of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Geneva, Switzerland.

In his greeting, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), noted that the theme of the upcoming WCC’s 10th Assembly in Busan, Republic of Korea, “God of life, lead us to justice and peace,” echoes the LWF Council theme.

Both topics emphasize the need for prayer and transformative spirituality, he said. “We are called to be together in the world for justice and peace,” Tveit added. The WCC general secretary said that LWF’s preparations for commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 offer hope and vision for Christian traditions to share the gospel together.

Rev. Dr Guy Liagre, general secretary of the Conference of European Churches, expressed hope that the Reformation anniversary would offer Christian traditions in Europe opportunity to develop a common vision of their calling as God’s people.

“We can be confident that the future is in God’s hands,” Liagre said. “Let us have the courage to put into those hands our best thinking, our most vital energies and our most joyful praying. There is a need for strengthening the ecumenical Christian voice in this continent.”



WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit greets participants in the LWF Council meeting.
© LWF/Maximilian Haas

Rev. Dr Larry Miller, secretary of the Global Christian Forum (GCF), praised the LWF for playing “an indispensable role in activating and shaping” the forum.

“The LWF’s seeking forgiveness from and reconciliation with Mennonites has become an exemplary story for forum participants—and example to follow in many ecclesial relationships around the world, both between and within confessions,” Miller said, referring to the reconciliation action at the July 2010 LWF Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany.

Many Challenges as Disciples

Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed

Churches (WCRC), said that the LWF Council theme was appropriate for the times.

“In a world in which there is so much pain, conflict, injustice and violence, our call to be disciples has many challenges,” Nyomi added.

He paid tribute to the LWF for participating with the WCRC, WCC and the Council for World Mission (CWM) in a process seeking a new economic and financial architecture to foster life in fullness for all. “This quest is also close to the heart of the LWF.”

Making reference to the report, “From Conflict to Communion,” which was launched during the Council meeting, Monsignor Dr Matthias Türk, representing the Vatican’s Pontifical



Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan brings greetings from the Anglican Communion.
© LWF/Maximilian Haas

Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), emphasized how important it was for Catholics and Lutherans to be able for the first time to jointly tell the Reformation history.

Türk said the consensus document showed that by putting Jesus Christ at the center, Lutherans and Catholics can commemorate together the 500th Reformation anniversary in 2017. “The goal is to put Christ at the center, to bear witness to him with resolve in the world today. By doing this, we would have fulfilled our duty as His disciples,” he added.

Sacrament of Baptism

Rev. Dr Charles Evanson from the International Lutheran Council (ILC) reminded the LWF governing body that the Sacrament of Baptism was the basis for church unity, adding that more attention should be given to this principle.

“There has not been sufficient theological reflection about the significance of our baptismal ties when and where theological differences arise. It would seem to me that we should address this question together,” Evanson said in the greetings presented on behalf of ILC chairperson, Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt.

He noted that the common commemoration of the Reformation in 2017

would offer opportunity to “rediscover basic insights of Lutheran theology and to build on them possible common steps of the LWF and the ILC.”

Called to Greater Communion

Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, director for unity, faith and order for the Anglican Communion, said Lutherans and Anglicans were being called out of their isolation and self-service to greater communion with one another.

“We are always, in this world, living in conflict between the values of our societies and the values of the realm

of God—and it is in this crucible of conflict that we are given grace to grow in the knowledge and love of God and discern how we can be better disciples together,” Barnett-Cowan said.

While both traditions face challenges on how to interpret and live out the gospel, they need to listen for “the still small voice of God’s calm” while continuing to engage with one another, as well as with those holding different views.

“Anglicans are looking forward to walking with you toward the remembrance of 1517, a date significant for all the churches of Christ, particularly in reminding us of the constant need for renewal, and of the need for reconciliation when our zeal for the gospel may take us too far from one another,” she added.

Dr Jean-Daniel Plüss, representing Pentecostal churches, offered encouragement to the LWF in its Christian discipleship and ecumenical engagement, particularly as it relates to those with whom it disagrees.

“Let us make it a common prayer, that indeed we all move beyond the communion of like-mindedness, because we are partakers of God’s grace and we want to take the call to discipleship seriously,” Plüss concluded.



Some of the LWF staff attending the June 2013 Council meeting.
© LWF/S. Gallay

LWF Adopts Gender Justice Policy

A Call to Promote Dignity and Justice for all Human Beings

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has adopted a wide-ranging policy on gender justice that urges inclusive and sustainable communities, churches and programs throughout the global communion of churches.

for bringing about transformation and ensuring the dignity of all.

Gender justice is expressed through equality and balanced power relations between women and men as well as through the elimination of institutional,

men by implementing contextualized measures that promote justice and dignity," the document states.

The gender justice policy notes that the participation of women in the ordained ministry is a vital step towards building an inclusive communion, but also urges the full participation of women and men in decision-making bodies. The documents notes that by the end of 2012, nearly 82 percent of LWF members churches were ordaining women, while 18 percent were yet to ordain women.

"The church has not fully addressed the ways in which gender systems and relationships generate privilege for some and oppression and pain for others and thus affect our shared life in church and society," the document emphasizes.

The policy is set in the context of LWF's diaconal service to the world, which affirms the equality of all human beings, including the promotion and inclusion of women's leadership and participation.

"The experience of the diaconal approach to upholding the rights of the poor and oppressed provides the practical basis for the conceptual understanding of justice at all levels and in all relations, specifically in gender relations," the LWF Gender Justice Policy states.

Biblical Interpretations

The policy calls for a closer look at the interpretation of some biblical passages which appear to endorse gender inequality.

"The issue of gender justice has theological foundations in the biblical testimony and Christian tradition. While this theological and biblical tradition can be interpreted as affirming the cooperation between men and women



Rev. Dr. Kaisamari Hintikka (left), director of the LWF Department for Theology and Public Witness, with Slovak Bishop Dr. Miloš Klátik, who presented the Gender Justice Policy document. © LWF/Maximilian Haas

The LWF Council endorsed the LWF Gender Justice Policy, 18 June.

The development of the document included years of study and consultation across the communion.

Receiving recommendations presented by the Committee for Theology and Ecumenical Relations, the Council recommended the implementation of the policy through the LWF regional expressions and member churches, with the expectation that the methodology would be adapted to local contexts. The General Secretary was requested to report on the policy's implementation in the communion.

The theological approach proposed in this policy relies on justice as a fundamental concept that is embedded in the biblical and Lutheran theological notion of being justified by grace through faith. The document underscores justice as a prophetic announcement and the basis

cultural and interpersonal systems of privilege and oppression that sustain discrimination, the policy document notes.

The newly adopted policy calls for the promotion of gender justice as a theological foundation to proclaim dignity and justice for all human beings; and support towards women as a key strategy in ending the unequal distribution of wealth and the prevention of gender-based violence.

"The communion is called to live and work in Christ to address injustices and oppression and to create transformed realities, communities of good life with gender just relations that nurture and lead to the flourishing of all human beings," the policy states.

"The LWF Gender Justice Policy is to serve as an instrument for the communion and its member churches, congregations, groups and organizations to achieve equality between women and

in various aspects of leadership in the world, this conclusion is generally not fully lived out in the context of family, church and public space.

“Women tend to be overburdened with domestic responsibility, excluded from leadership in ministry and not encouraged to take leadership in the public arena,” the policy says.

“Dialogue that engages in and leads to reflection on gender issues and promotes change leading to gender justice practices challenging patriarchal and non-inclusive values in the churches and societies should be encouraged.”

Leadership and Decision Making

The policy underlines that it is vital for women and men to have equal opportunities to fully participate in the leadership and decision making in church and society. “In its values and practices, the church can and must set an example, thereby showing its actions are coherent with its prophetic preaching.”

The LWF policy was developed on the basis of numerous LWF Assembly decisions over many years, which have endorsed the gifts of women in

leadership while promoting inclusivity in structures and governance.

“Embracing the full participation and equitable representation of women and men in leadership is a sign of the continuous reformation and transformation of the church.”

The policy calls for an end to silence concerning gender-based violence. “Gender-based oppression and violence, no matter how normative, traditional, or widely accepted they are in various contexts, are crimes and sinful; gender-based oppression and violence stand in contradiction to the gospel.”

LWF Council Statement on Religious Freedom

Religious Intolerance Has Been a Source of Untold Violence

At its 2013 meeting, the Council of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) called upon its member churches and the ecumenical community to strengthen their commitment to freedom of religion and belief.

In a public statement, the Council noted that in many countries of the world the freedom of people to practice their religion freely was being curtailed or denied. Religious intolerance has been a source of untold violence and immeasurable human suffering up to this very day, the LWF governing body stated.

Approving the statement presented by the Committee for Advocacy and Public Voice, the Council called upon LWF member churches and the ecumenical community “to redouble their efforts and to cooperate widely in promoting and defending religious freedom in their own societies and internationally, including the freedom of public and private worship in the form and language of their choice.”

The LWF and its member churches were urged to intercede with both state and religious authorities for the defense “of individuals or groups whose rightful religious freedoms are being curtailed or denied, including the right to change religions and the right to wear or display religious symbols.”



LWF Council member Ms Jenette Alisha Purba from Indonesia (middle) contributes to the plenary discussion on religious freedom. © LWF/S. Gally

Worrying Situation in Many Countries

The public statement emphasized the devastating effects of limitations on religious freedom and religious intolerance. In recent times violent riots against churches in Indonesia, Tanzania and Nigeria have been observed, affecting also LWF member churches. During its sessions, the Council heard reports from Council members from those churches about the situation in their own countries. In other countries, laws have been passed in order to settle scores with religious minorities.

A Long Tradition of Engagement

The statement that was unanimously adopted by the Council outlined for the first time in a comprehensive way all the diverse position statements of the LWF concerning freedom of religion and belief.

The statement highlighted the fundamental engagement of the LWF with the right to religious freedom since its founding. Even before the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the LWF at its first Assembly in 1947 in Lund advocated

that refugees and minorities should be allowed to practice their religion in their own mother tongue and according to the practices of their own Confession. The Lutheran pastor Frederik Nolde was credited as being the main drafter of Article 18 of the human rights declaration, in which religious freedom is laid down.

Alongside the call to the churches, the Council also affirmed LWF's coop-

eration and support for the United Nations mechanisms to protect and extend religious freedom. It underscored the important role of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

The statement reiterated the need to campaign for religious freedom in cooperation with others across religious boundaries. The LWF governing body called upon all Lutherans and

other people of faith around the world to pray for all those who suffer due to the lack of freedom of religion or belief.

The Public Statement on Freedom of Religion or Belief: www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/Council2013-Statement_Freedom_Religion_Belief.pdf

Seeking Peace in Central America

LWF Council Calls for Action to End Violence and Impunity in the Region

Expressing its "deep concern" regarding the continuing violence and violation of human rights in Central America, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has urged concrete action to help bring calm to the region.

In a public statement adopted by the Council, the LWF reiterated that Guatemala and Honduras were experiencing a high level of social insecurity, with Honduras suffering the highest homicide rate in the world and Guatemala ranked in the top 10.

The LWF governing body reiterated its 2011 appeal to the United Nations for the establishment of an Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Honduras to complement the office in Guatemala: It urged that both offices redouble their efforts to overcome the impunity allowed those who commit murder and attack human rights activists.

The statement presented by the Committee for Advocacy and Public Voice noted that the crimes in both countries are mainly associated with gangs and organized crime, but they affect the whole population, especially the poor and weak.

"We believe it is urgent to seek peace, and that it is our duty as churches to be supportive of the peace initiatives that are being attempted in response to the cries of the people of Guatemala and Honduras. They ask for our prayers and expressions of love," the Council said.

The Geneva Council meeting also offered thanks for the peace processes that have been initiated in both Honduras and El Salvador between criminal gangs and government authorities, with the critical involvement of churches and other civil society players.

"We call upon the international community to redouble efforts in support of these processes, with an aim to consolidate a lasting peace for the benefit of all citizens," the Council said.

The LWF governing body welcomed the upcoming visit to Central America of the LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, with the hope that it would help make governments in the region aware of the Lutheran communion's concern about human rights

violations and the need for immediate action to end the violence.

The Council offered the prayers and solidarity of the Lutheran communion with the churches and people of Central America, saying: "May they be encouraged in their continuing struggle for peace and for the defense of the human rights of the weak and the most vulnerable in society."

The full text of the Public Statement on Central America: www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/Council2013-Statement_Central_America.pdf



Bishop Melvin Jiménez (Costa Rica) speaks during discussions on the public statement on Central America. © LWF/S. Gallay

Resolutions of the 2013 LWF Council Meeting

Stronger Engagement Urged for Peace and Justice

In addition to public statements and other actions taken at its 2013 meeting, the Council of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) adopted resolutions for LWF's advocacy on the humanitarian impact of the conflict in Syria; Christian witness in the Middle East; gender justice; climate change; youth unemployment and the global financial crisis.

disaster that has touched the lives of all Syrians," the Council noted at its meeting.

The LWF governing body urged the international community to support internally displaced persons and refugees who have been forced to flee the Syrian conflict, and renewed support for those pursuing dialogue.

Christians in an existential crisis, with some Christian communities not knowing if they will be able to remain in the geographic areas their people have inhabited since the beginning of Christianity.

The Council affirmed its support for "those Christians in the region who want to remain in their countries with their people" and encouraged "our Christian sisters and brothers as they work for peace based on justice in their respective countries." It expressed gratitude for the Lutheran ministry and work being carried out through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and the LWF, adding that "these help support the continuity of Christians in the Middle East, both in holistic mission and in diakonia."



Council members vote on committee reports. © LWF/S. Gallay

Syria

The Council appealed for an end to the violence and human rights violations in Syria, urging all parties to protect the people and refrain from supplying combatants with weapons.

LWF member church representatives from around the world called on the Syrian government and opposition forces to allow immediate international humanitarian access to those in need in the wake of the ongoing violence.

The LWF governing body noted that an estimated 93,000 people had died in the fighting in the past two years, including more than 1,300 children under the age of 10. In addition more than 1.5 million refugees have fled the country and 4.5 million people have been displaced internally.

"The tragedy of this violence is matched only by the humanitarian

"As a global communion of churches, we grieve that religion is being used as a weapon to perpetuate the conflict in Syria. We reject violence being perpetrated in the name of God," the Council said.

Noting its special concern for Christians in Syria, the LWF also paid tribute to their desire to live in peace with their neighbors of other faiths and cultures, and cautioned: "The rich religious and ethnic tapestry that has characterized Syria for centuries is at risk of fraying beyond repair."

Middle East

The Council affirmed LWF's long-standing commitment for the recognition of Christians throughout the Middle East as integral to the region. The LWF governing body noted that current developments in the region place Arab and Middle East

Gender Justice

The Council reiterated LWF's long-standing commitment to gender justice (*See related story on Gender Justice Policy*). It encouraged the LWF Communion Office to develop a proactive process to encourage member churches and partner agencies to get involved in the 58th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The meeting in March 2014 will focus on the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.

Youth Unemployment

Council members called for greater awareness on youth unemployment and for public and private sectors players as well as unions to work together to increase job opportunities for young people.

The LWF Council urged countries to promote economic policies and fiscal incentives to combat youth unemployment, saying it could not remain silent in the face of over 70 million youth without gainful employment worldwide.

Council member Ms Danielle Catherine Leker, a social worker from the Netherlands explained the increasing difficulty for young people to secure employment, despite having educational qualifications. If they are employed, most of the time they are hired on short-term contracts, she added. “Sometimes it seems pretty hopeless. It is a big question for my friends and me: are we ever going to find a steady job?” she asked.

Mr A. Elijah Zina, also a social worker, from Liberia, said that most youth in his country are not employed, or lacked secure jobs. He challenged churches in the Lutheran communion to take the lead in advocating for youth employment. The issue of unemployment should not be taken for granted. It is very serious,” he added.

Global Financial Crisis

The Council also commended the São Paulo statement on “International Transformation for the Economy of Life,” which was adopted in 2012 at a meeting held on economic, social and ecological justice involving the LWF, World Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Council for World Mission.

It recommended the statement to the member churches for study and advocacy, and encouraged the Communion Office to continue engaging in the follow-up processes.”

Other Council resolutions on recommendations from the Committee for Theology and Public Voice included



LWF Council member Ms Danielle Catherine Leker, talks about youth unemployment in the Netherlands. © LWF/S. Gallay

endorsement of the “Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders,” and a call on LWF member churches to share the document with other churches and interfaith bodies in their respective countries. The faith affirmations were publicly released on 12 June in Geneva at a UN High Commissioner for Refugees consultation with non-governmental organizations. The main speakers included LWF President Bishop Dr Munib Younan.

Climate Change

A resolution on climate change affirmed the recommendations of the LWF delegation to the December 2012 UN Climate Conference in Doha, and called on the LWF and its member churches to continue engaging in UN processes related to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the

Conference on Sustainable Development, “particularly through ecumenical, interfaith and youth networks.”

The Lutheran communion was also tasked with developing a holistic climate change strategy that addresses advocacy, carbon emissions, training and awareness raising, and humanitarian assistance. Further engagement was encouraged with civil society in lobbying governments for increased action on mitigation and adaptation.

Emphasis was placed on exploring the issue of climate change through theological reflection in Lutheran, ecumenical and interfaith frameworks. The Council urged commitment to becoming carbon-neutral at the communion, national, congregational and individual level, and that churches and the LWF address the negative impacts of social inequality and unsustainable consumerism.

2017 Assembly Planning Committee Named

Compilation of Additional Council Actions

Following the decision of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Council to hold the Twelfth LWF Assembly in 2017 in Windhoek, Namibia, the governing body appointed an eight-person Assembly Planning Committee (APC) to guide preparations for the next

meeting of LWF’s highest decision-making body.

The Council accepted an invitation to host the assembly from the bishops of the three LWF member churches in Namibia—Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN), Evangeli-

cal Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) and the German-speaking Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN-GELC).

The APC comprises representatives from each of the seven LWF regions, and ensures generational and gender balanc-

es. In addition, it has two consultants to support the assembly planning process.

Africa is represented by two members; ELCRN Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta and youth Council member Ms Mami Brunah Aro Sandaniaina from the Malagasy Lutheran Church in Madagascar. Other committee members include Bishop Dr Nicolas Tai, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (Asia); Rev. Dr Gloria Rojas Vargas, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (Latin America and the Caribbean); youth Council member Ms Mikka McCracken, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (North America); Rev. Agnes Pángyánszky, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary (Central Eastern Europe); Rev. Dr Kjell Nordstokke, Church of Norway (Nordic Countries); and Superintendent Oliver Dantine, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria (Central Western Europe).

The two consultants, Rev. Dr Chandran Paul Martin, Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (India) and Rev. Klaus Rieth, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg (Germany), served as coordinators of the 2010 LWF Eleventh Assembly for the Communion Office and host church respectively.

Nordstokke, a former director of the LWF Department for Mission and Development, will serve as chairperson of the 2017 APC.

142 LWF Member Churches

Approving recommendations presented by the Standing Committee for Constitution and Membership, the Council noted with joy the merger of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad into the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, and affirmed the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church as a founding member of the LWF. The Council also welcomed the United Protestant Church of France into LWF membership, following the merger of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of France with the Reformed Church of France.

With these changes, the LWF now has 142 member churches.

Commitment to Ecumenical Dialogues

From recommendations by the Committee for Theology and Ecumenical Relations, the Council received the report of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, “From Conflict to Communion,” with appreciation and thanked the commission for its work. The Council noted the committee’s emphasis on the need to translate the document into local languages; develop accompanying popular study materials to facilitate its accessibility to grassroots communities; and wide dissemination to theological faculties and institutions.

The Council received the report of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, and expressed its appreciation for the Institute’s continued support and substantial contributions towards the bilateral dialogues, and its assistance to the LWF Office for Ecumenical Relations.

The Council reaffirmed LWF’s strong commitment to the ecumenical research work to which the Institute is devoted.

World Service

Receiving the report of the Committee for World Service, the Council heard that more than 1 million people in

Angola and Namibia are currently affected by the most severe drought in three decades, and are lacking access to sufficient food and water.

The Council urged the LWF member churches to support with prayers and financial resources a joint drought response action planned by the LWF churches in Namibia and World Service as well as the ACT Forum and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Angola.

Emphasizing the need to take action, the committee informed the Council that “this very serious situation” was overshadowed by larger crises globally, and risked not receiving “the necessary attention and support.”

Communications

The Council received the report of the Standing Committee for Communication, outlining major achievements made over the past year in developing an LWF communication strategy; a visual identity including the launch of the new LWF Web site at the Council meeting; and better communication cooperation across the Communion Office.

The committee informed the Council that the program plans for communication in 2014 will prioritize the building of regional communication networks in the LWF communion.



Ms Anna-Maria Klassen (Germany), chairperson of the Standing Committee for Communication, contributes to a plenary discussion on the Council resolutions. © LWF/S. Gally



A symbolic exchange of gifts and prayers during the Council's closing devotion.
© LWF/S. Gally

Mission and Development

In its report to the Council, the Committee for Mission and Development noted the changing dynamics in funding relationships between member churches, agencies and the LWF, including the increasing tendency by some partners to support member churches bilaterally. The need was expressed to take up discussion on how resources are shared within the LWF communion. The Council endorsed the proposal that the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) takes initiative to research and analyze these trends within the communion with the view that this could result in the discovery of new models for relationships and collaboration between partners and DMD, especially for project funding.

The Council also received with appreciation the report of the impact assessment of the LWF HIV and AIDS Campaign, and requested the Communion

Office through the General Secretary to review the recommendations in the document and develop concrete action plans on how the work is continued. The LWF governing body asked member churches to consider the recommended future directions in their HIV and AIDS ministries. DMD focuses on strengthening the capacities of member churches to better address issues of HIV and AIDS especially through mainstreaming.

The Council received the proposed “Theological Framework for Capacity Development”—a document aimed at providing a basis for joint learning to enhance churches’ capacities to respond to contextual needs. It asked the Communion Office to use this framework as a basis for its work on capacity development with member churches.

Based on the report of the Special Committee for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, the Council endorsed an animation film on Luther

developed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary as a project of the whole communion. The governing body affirmed that the film be used in Lutheran churches worldwide, and encouraged all member churches to contribute to its production and use.

Finances

Receiving the report of the Finance Committee, the Council approved the LWF Budget for 2014 with a total expenditure of EUR 87,676,868, and authorized the Communion Office to raise the funds. A surplus of EUR 10,202 and a cost-of-living adjustment of 0.5 percent in the salaries of the Geneva and field staff was also approved. The Council authorized the Meeting of Officers to approve adjustments to this budget at its next meeting.

The Council received the reports of the LWF Communion Office Operational Plan 2012, the Endowment Fund, as well as the auditors’ consolidated financial statements for 2012, and appointed PricewaterhouseCoopers as LWF auditors.

In its report to the Council, the Finance Committee expressed concern regarding declining income for some LWF departments and the budget challenge that this creates.

2014 Council Meeting

Responding to an invitation by the LWF National Committee in Indonesia, the Council endorsed that its next meeting will be held in Medan, Indonesia, from 12 to 17 June 2014.



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