



Message from the Lutheran World Federation International Conference

“Global Perspectives on the Reformation. Interactions between Theology, Politics and Economics”

28 October—1 November 2015

Windhoek, Namibia

At this conference we have been looking at the relationship between theology, politics and economics. This message reflects common themes that emerged in our conversations. One key idea is that all three—theology, politics and economics—have potential for social transformation toward a world of abundant life for all (Jn 10:10).

We have grappled with what ought be the relationship between these three. We agreed that in Lutheran traditions, all three are intended to serve God’s purposes. In fact, for Luther the economy and the body politic were theological issues. Human fallibility makes our efforts toward social transformation always less than perfect.

We identified four core features of transformative theology that inform and are informed by political and economic realities:

- **Contextual:**
 - Different ways of hearing God’s Word
 - Different ways of relating to God’s presence
 - Different ways of reflecting on and addressing diverse needs around the globe
 - Different ways of engaging with other faith traditions.

- **Critical:**
 - Questioning certainties—through thought, word and action
 - Challenging centers of power, structures of injustice and dynamics that close down public space or exclude people from having a voice in it—through thought, word and action
 - Acknowledging one's own limits, biases and self-interests—through thought, word and action.
- **Creative**
 - Courage to think things anew
 - Enhanced understanding of God and God's will
 - On-going dynamic development of liturgical resources and biblical hermeneutics
 - Practical solutions and alternative approaches
 - Capacity-building for bringing theology, politics and economics together for the sake of social transformation.
- **Concrete**
 - Speaking out and acting against injustice such as economic, gender and climate injustice.
 - Reforming structures, policies and practices.
 - Providing support, investing in education and engaging leadership.
 - Shifting curricula in theological education so that pastors and laity are equipped to engage from a faith perspective in the political and economic realms on behalf of justice.

Together these four features of theology enable theology to contribute to social transformation. Sensitivity to context reveals the need for critical reflection on one's own universalizing assumptions and on the context. Critical reflection discloses that some dynamics of power and privilege need to be overthrown, which invites creativity which in turn generates concrete actions.

Transformative theology requires and enables looking with new eyes, truth-telling about the realities that we face. Seeing with new eyes is made possible by the communion and the differences within it; deep and trusting relationships within the communion enable us to see reality through others' eyes. We are therefore profoundly grateful for the differences among us. This is precisely how a communion works and what communion is.

These reflections suggest tasks for the on-going journey of Reformation.

- 1) The LWF (communion office and member churches) will build capacity of its members for bringing politics, economics, and theology together in service of social transformation according to God's vision of abundant life for all.
- 2) The LWF will build the communion such that member churches may share with each other how they understand and practice the public role of theology, and will provide ongoing guidance in the practice of public theology.