



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

Global, Ecumenical, Ongoing

The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation



Global, Ecumenical, Ongoing

The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation



2017 - 500 YEARS OF REFORMATION

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LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge addresses the Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

Preface

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 was a came with its own particularities: It was the first centennial anniversary of the Reformation that took place in the time where almost half of Lutherans worldwide live in the Global South. It was also the first centennial anniversary in the era where ecumenical movement is playing an essential role in the lives of churches. What is more, the quincentennial anniversary also took place during the time of fast changes and large mobility that pose ever new questions to the church how it can best continue to proclaiming the liberating message of God's grace and reconciliation revealed in Jesus Christ.

Taking the described context into account, the Lutheran World Federation chose three principles to guide the way how it marked the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The first principle, "the Reformation is a global citizen", highlighted the global dimension of the Lutheran communion. The second principle, "Ecumenical accountability", was meant to ensure that the quincentennial anniversary of the Reformation would be marked with a spirit of ecumenical

openness, making sure that the fruits of ecumenical dialogues would be included in the commemoration. The third principle, "the reformation is ongoing", drew attention to the contribution of young people in the church and sought to connect the message of grace and freedom with current challenges and tendencies affecting people and life on earth.

This booklet offers a glimpse at how the Lutheran World Federation put these principles into practice and filled them with content. It includes several examples of how the principles and inputs offered by the LWF were taken up by member churches. Naturally, this booklet cannot cover the whole range of events and processes that were organized by LWF member churches worldwide. Still as a succinct summary, I hope that it conveys something about the enthusiasm, creativity, joy and hope that went along with this anniversary.

*Rev. Dr Martin Junge
General Secretary of the Lutheran World
Federation*

The Reformation is a global citizen

The Lutheran Reformation, which began in 16th century Germany, has 500 years later become a global citizen with almost half of all Lutherans worldwide living in the Global South. The Lutheran communion has become truly polycentric, which also means that the stories of the various churches rooted in the tradition of the Lutheran Reformation vary a great deal. Therefore, while commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) did not want to merely reflect on its Lutheran theological heritage. It also wanted to pay due attention to how the evangelical insights of the Reformation gradually unfolded in different settings and were embraced in distinct situations and epochs, enriching this movement and turning it into a global communion.

For the LWF, the highlight of commemorating the 500th anniversary was its Twelfth Assembly held in Windhoek, Namibia, 10-16 May 2017. The Assembly brought together representatives from almost all LWF member churches and offered a space for discussions and presentations related to the main theme and the sub-themes of the Assembly.

The following examples offer a glimpse of the various processes and events that were initiated by LWF to highlight the global scope of Lutheranism today.



The Salvadoran cross, made for the Joint Catholic-Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation in October 2016 made the journey to Namibia and was used in Assembly worship services.
Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert





Bishop Ben Chun-wa Chang from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong and Rev. Anne Burghardt, LWF Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, present the Chinese translation of the LWF 2017 booklets at the Asian pre-Assembly in August 2016.
Photo: LWF/A. Danielsson

Thematic brochures

The Special Committee on the 500 Years of Reformation, initiated by the LWF and consisting of representatives from all regions of the global Lutheran communion, identified in 2013 the theme for marking the anniversary: *Liberated by God's Grace*. This theme offered wonderful opportunities to explore the central message of the Reformation as captured in the Doctrine of Justification, and invited the communion to reflect on its consequences. The theme also gave the communion a time to reflect on what the faith liberates us from and what it liberates us to do. True freedom expresses itself in the will to

serve one's neighbor and to be a good steward of God's creation.

The Special Committee also identified the three sub-themes of the main theme, *Salvation – Not for Sale*, *Human Beings – Not for Sale*, *Creation – Not for Sale*. All of them helped to reveal further aspects of the main theme, *Liberated by God's Grace*. The theme *Salvation – Not for Sale* was meant to emphasize that salvation is God's free gift, and to express a clear critique of contemporary practices and concepts that treat salvation as a commodity on the "religious market", e.g., prosperity theology, which stands in clear opposition to Martin Luther's theology of the cross. The sub-theme *Human Beings – Not for Sale* helped to underscore that every individual is a unique person created in God's own image and must therefore be fully respected in her/his dignity and integrity. This sub-theme offered space for discussing relevant social issues, such as human trafficking, and economic policies that create or increase poverty. *Creation – Not for Sale* underlined theologically that nature must be fully respected and protected as God's good creation, entrusted to human care. It offered space to discuss climate justice and how churches could



LWF Assembly

better stand against exploitative human domination that regards natural resources as commodities.

In order to encourage discussions on topics related to LWF's Reformation anniversary themes, LWF published four booklets exploring the Reformation themes in 2015. They included essays by authors from all seven regions of LWF; among them bishops, pastors, youth representatives, and members of different LWF networks. The wide range of authors and topics gave readers a glimpse of the diversity within the communion and of some aspects of LWF's programmatic work. Each booklet also includes an essay from an ecumenical partner. The three questions at the end of each essay seek to encourage further reflection and discussion.

The booklets cover topics such as Luther's search for a gracious God and his understanding of the freedom of a Christian; the church's role in the public space; Lutheran hermeneutics; Reformation and education; implementation of gender justice in the Asian context; prosperity gospel; human trafficking; sustainable leadership; conviviality; climate justice; genetic engineering; land grabbing, and many more.

Marangu celebration 2015

The first major regional gathering marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation took place in Moshi, Tanzania, in May 2015. Under the theme "Marangu to Wittenberg: Being a Reforming Church in a Changing African Context", the churches of the Africa Region came together to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Marangu Conference. That gathering, held in 1955, was the first meeting of Lutheran leaders in Africa, and marked the beginning of the Lutheran communion in Africa. The Marangu celebration in 2015 concentrated on the stewardship of creation as well as faith and public responsibility.

*Liberated by
God's Grace
thematic
booklets*



Rev. Elfriede Katjizumo and Southern African delegates receive the "Marangu Banner", symbolizing the journey to the 2017 Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia.
Photo: LWF/Allison Westerhoff



ity. The meeting was seen by African churches as the regional kick-off for commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

At the Marangu Conference in 1955, only the Malagasy Lutheran Church in Madagascar was a full LWF member church. Other delegates had come from so-called “non-LWF member churches” in Northern Tanganyika, South Africa and Ethiopia, and from mission societies. Today, the Lutheran communion in Africa includes 31 LWF member churches in 23 countries, representing more than 26 million Christians, with several emerging Lutheran bodies across the region.

In his presentation at the May 2015 event, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge quoted the first LWF president from Africa, Bishop Dr Josiah M. Kibira, who served from 1977 to 1984: “There is no church, so big and so rich, that it wouldn’t depend on the gifts of others; there is no church so small and so poor it wouldn’t be able to enrich others”.



*Global
Perspectives on
the Reformation*

Windhoek conference

LWF’s three-years global commemoration of the Reformation was launched by the conference “Global Perspectives on the Reformation. Interactions between Theology, Politics and Economics”, which took place in Windhoek from 28 October to 1 November 2015. The conference offered a forum for global discernment on the impact of the Reformation on church and society, enabling discussions on the interaction between theological thinking, economics and politics in the 21st century.

The conference 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 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 for justice.

Dr Andrew Pierce, Assistant Professor at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College, University of Dublin, Ireland, one of the conference participants, shared his impressions: “Theologians and economists alike venture into inter-



pretations and evaluations of our world, how it works, how it should work, what our agency means, and so forth. Their conversations with one another may not always be easy, but the realities disclosed in presentations here over the past three days make it abundantly obvious that in all our societies theology, politics and economics all influence each other. Any contextual and transformative Christian theology is obliged to take the necessary trouble to understand that influence, and what it might become.”

A number of conference presentations are available in the publication *Global Perspectives on the Reformation. Interactions between Theology, Politics and Eco-*

Interactions on theology, politics and economics at the conference Global Perspectives on the Reformation in Windhoek, Namibia, 28 October – 2 November 2015. Windhoek, Namibia. Photo: LWF/I. Benesch

nomics, edited by Rev. Anne Burghardt, study secretary for ecumenical relations in the Department for Theology and Public Witness, and Rev. Dr Simone Sinn, study secretary for public theology and interreligious relations in the DTPW (LWF Documentation 61/2016).

Global study processes

On the threshold of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, LWF initiated several study processes to discern different aspects of both Lutheran identity and the Reformation legacy.

Lutheran hermeneutics

Luther's rediscovery (along with other reformers) of Holy Scripture served as a catalyst for the Reformation. In his testimony, Luther indicated that it was in his reading of Romans 1:17 that "At last meditating day and night, by the mercy of God, I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that through which the righteous live by a gift of God, namely by faith. Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through the gates that had been flung open".

In preparation for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, LWF embarked on a hermeneutics program to nurture the desire of scholars from different contexts to read sacred texts together. The hermeneutics process that lasted from 2011 to 2016 didn't only involve biblical scholars but also representatives of other theological disciplines from various member churches. Global consultations took place on the hermeneutics of the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Matthew as well as on the Psalms and Pauline letters, followed by publications of selected papers from these consultations. The study document "*In the beginning was the Word*" (*Jn 1:1: The Bible in the Life of the Lutheran Communion*) was presented to LWF's Council in 2016. This study document ends with five recommendations, saying, on behalf of LWF:

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we remember how the risen Christ "opened the Scriptures" and commissioned his followers to proclaim his message 'to all nations' (Lk 24:46-47). We are a global communion in which the Scriptures have a vital place. We: (a) Reaffirm the Lutheran



*"In the Beginning
Was the Word"*

emphasis that the heart of the Bible is its salvific message; (b) Commit ourselves to learning from one another globally about the ways in which the Bible can best be heard in our diverse contexts; (c) Commit ourselves to ongoing dialogue about points of biblical interpretation on which members churches of LWF disagree; (d) Commit ourselves to supporting theological education that prepares pastors, teachers and leaders effectively to interpret Scripture; (e) Commit ourselves to encouraging the Church to recognize the Bible as a resource for social commitment.

The Church in the Public Space

The Reformation was a catalyst for change in both church and society. Luther’s pastoral and diaconal concern for people compelled him to publicly protest, critique and advise them because of what he had recognized as the truth of the gospel. LWF’s 2016 statement and accompanying study, “The Church in the Public Space”, argue that public engagement is a vital element of being Lutheran today. They call on churches to strengthen the public



space so that all people have equal access to common goods and political decision-making processes. Such a place should ensure safety— especially for the vulnerable—and the meaningful participation of all groups in society.

The study document offers guidance to Lutheran churches around their engagement in the public space. By declaring that everyone who comes out of the water of baptism is in direct communion with God, the Lutheran tradition stresses that every baptized person is called and empowered to participate in all aspects of church life (1 Pt 2). The whole church, and every member, participates in the church’s public witness. The gift of Holy Com-

Christiana Figueres, head of the UNFCCC, with the LWF delegation to COP20 in Lima.

Photo: LWF/Sean Hawkey

*The Church
in the Public
Space*





Public engagement is a vital element of being Lutheran today.

Photo: LWF/I. Benesch

munion that sustains and strengthens the community is a constant reminder of the reconciliation that Christ brought to the whole world and calls Christians to be ambassadors of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor 5:20).

Based on Luther's distinction between worldly and spiritual matters, known as "two kingdoms" or "two realms" of God's rule, churches are called to advocate against the politicization of religion and the "religionization" of politics. Churches are also called to safeguard the distinction between state institutions and religion – both regarding their own use of power and the rightful use of power by governing authorities. Affirming public space as shared space where churches live together with people of other faiths and convictions,

and where human rights and respect for human dignity are honored, offers a way for communities to speak a common language.

The document identifies five key commitments for Lutherans: (a) assessing public issues in participatory ways, (b) building relationships of trust, (c) challenging injustice, (d) discovering signs of hope, and (e) empowering people in need. The text underlines LWF's commitment to seeing its member churches become part of networks that build solidarity. The study document offers guiding questions that help pastors and theologians to analyze their local situations.

Meanwhile, the document has been translated into several languages and various regional and national workshops have been organized to study it, e.g., in Asia and the Nordic countries.

Self-Understanding of the Lutheran Communion

Since the Curitiba Assembly in 1990, LWF has been a communion of churches. This means that its member churches are in altar and pulpit fellowship with each other and bring together their spiritual and material resources



The Self-Understanding of the Lutheran Communion

to jointly participate in God's mission in the world. Communion is both a gift and a task, rooted in the Triune God, and calling the member churches to discern and live out communion.

As the Lutheran communion was journeying towards the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, a study process on the self-understanding of the Lutheran communion was initiated by LWF to discern what it means to be an ecclesial communion. The study group presented its report *The Self-Understanding of the Lutheran Communion* in 2015 and it was sent to member churches for further study.

This study document offers a reminder that the basic understanding of the church as communion includes the idea that unity exists with differences. It proposes resources and principles that might orient the communion for the task of discerning how to live together in the midst of diversity: (a) The gospel is the core of our life in communion; the unifying core of Christian faith and of Lutheran confessions is salvation in Jesus Christ by grace through faith, witnessed in Scripture that reveals God's unconditional love for us (Eph 2:8); (b) Word and sacraments are events of communion: according to the

Augsburg Confession, Article VII, it is enough (*satis est*) for the true church and its unity that we preach the gospel and celebrate the sacraments properly; (c) The message of the cross heals our brokenness: in touching the broken we are being transformed as we are given a prophetic vocation, which challenges the wisdom of the world, refusing both conservatisms and liberalisms that ignore the gospel call for solidarity with those who are rejected; (d) The Word of God creates and affirms both unity and diversity. The Word of God, mediated through the Holy Scriptures, is the source of ecclesial communion and the church's life, hope and belief. At the same time, the testimony of the Holy Scriptures is not a monotone but a choir of many different voices. Diversity is thus sanctioned in Scripture (Gal 2:7-10); (e) The gospel entails freedom, respect and bearing with one another: evangelical freedom is a freedom shaped by service, recognizing that humans do not experience absolute freedom. Luther expressed this by juxtaposing the two sentences: "A Christian is lord of all, completely free of everything. A Christian is servant of all, completely attentive to the needs of all" (*The Freedom of a Christian*).

Order of worship
at the global
commemoration





Spontaneous marching in the "Light of God" breaks out at the end of the Global Commemoration of the Reformation worship service.

Photo: LWF/Brenda Platero

Global commemoration of 500 years of Reformation

During LWF's Twelfth Assembly in Windhoek, Lutherans from around the world and ecumenical guests gathered at the Sam Nujoma Stadium for the global commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The stadium is situated in Katutura, a township established in the apartheid era, where black people were forcibly relocated from around Windhoek.

Delegates and participants from the Assembly attended the Reformation commemoration with thousands of Lutherans from Namibia and neighboring countries. The commemoration

started with a festive worship service, which was an expression of the global nature of the Lutheran communion, and included testimonies and hymns from different parts of the world. The sermon was offered by Bishop (Emeritus) Zephania Kameeta of Namibia, who preached a message of hope and liberation, giving substance to the Assembly theme "Liberated by God's Grace". Ecumenical guests participated in the service by reading prayers and the Creed. Holy Communion was received by thousands of worshippers, who lined up at 50 communion stations in the stadium to receive the Eucharist. The worship service was followed by a joint meal at the stadium and a cultural program.

Bishop (Emeritus) Zephania Kameeta in his sermon at the global commemoration of the Reformation: "What we need now is not the justification of the wrongs of the past, but that God in his grace, blot out all our iniquity, and create in our world pure hearts of love, justice and peace".

Reformation Day Live

On Reformation Day, 31 October 2017, LWF invited a global audience to a virtual journey around the communion, offering a live stream of worship services from all seven regions of LWF. The journey began in Denmark and took the audience to Tanzania, Germany, Hungary, Hong Kong, the United States of America (US) and Argentina. Three ecumenical services, including the Joint Commemoration in Lund, Sweden, and the Global Commemoration in Windhoek showed how the 500th anniversary of the Reformation has been commemorated in a spirit of ecumenical accountability. The live stream included information about the regions as well as about the respective member churches, and reached more than 280,000 people. All worship services were celebrated in local languages and the translation of the respective sermons could be downloaded from LWF's website.

Reformation anniversary in different regions

Across the Lutheran communion, many projects and processes were initiated commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. In several parts of Europe, the Lutheran Reformation had spread during Luther's lifetime, thanks, to a large degree, to students, who had studied in Wittenberg with Luther or Melanchthon. The students then brought the message of the Reformation back to their home countries. Therefore, a large majority of European Lutheran churches trace their beginning to the 16th century.

Lutheran churches in European countries that historically held a strong position in society explored the impact the Reformation had in their contexts throughout the centuries. This was particularly the case in Germany and the Nordic countries. Germany, where LWF member churches are part of the Evangelical Church in Germany, celebrated the Luther Decade. This commemoration, which included hundreds of events and projects, focused on the impact of Luther and the Reformation on German culture and society. In the Nordic region, in addition to church

Reformation
Day Live



Global, Ecumenical, Ongoing

activities, several research projects were conducted at universities, exploring the impact of the Reformation on Scandinavian societies where Lutheran churches had for centuries enjoyed (or still enjoy) the status of state churches. This included studies on the impact of Lutheran social and work ethics on the formation of Nordic welfare societies, an aspect that had previously not been sufficiently highlighted.

In Central Eastern Europe, several exhibitions on the history of the Reformation were conducted, often in cooperation with national museums of history, e.g., in Hungary and Estonia. The 500th anniversary helped to recall the impact of the Reformation on the region, for instance in view of developing the vernacular. Several Eastern

European languages received vital impulses from the Reformation. Lutheran Catechisms were often the first written books in these languages, e.g. Lithuanian, Estonian, Slovenian.

Outside Europe, the Lutheran Reformation first spread through migration, as was the case in North and South America, or through missionary activities, which happened in Africa and in Asia, then in the 20th century, in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. Today, in the 21st century, Lutheran churches have become strongly rooted in all these contexts. The fastest growing Lutheran churches are found in Africa and Asia, where marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation also offered a good opportunity to reflect on inculturation of worship forms and the biblical message, making it comprehensive in the local context. Similar initiatives could also be found in Latin America. In Bolivia, for instance, where the vast majority of members of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELB) are indigenous people, a process was carried out which looked into the possibilities of making better use of indigenous musical tradition in the liturgy.

In all regions, seminars and conferences explored the key messages of

A group of people forming the Luther rose. Photo: Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil



the Reformation and Luther's theology. LWF's Reformation anniversary theme and sub-themes as well as the study processes that were initiated by LWF contributed to these discussions and sparked several processes and projects in member churches and beyond. Here are just a few examples of some of these initiatives.

Reformation anniversary theme in the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Inspired by the main theme of LWF's commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, *Liberated by God's Grace*, the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC) chose a passage from the Saint Paul's letter to the Galatians as the overarching theme for such celebrations. "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1) was the motto that guided several activities carried out in over 2016 and 2017. The broader framework included several events. A major conference was held on the impact of the Lutheran Reformation, exploring both its influence on Estonian culture, including the development of the vernacular, world-famous song festivals and the high regard for education.

In addition, the conference looked at how Lutheran churches have related to the idea of civil society and democracy vis-à-vis the doctrine of two kingdoms. The overarching theme also embraced the celebrations of a centennial anniversary of reforming the Lutheran church in Estonia as a free folk church in 1917. Lastly, the EELC Institute of Theology took the initiative in translating the four LWF Reformation booklets into Estonian. This was followed up by courses on contemporary Lutheranism, offered by the institute and that were attended by dozens of students, pastors and other church workers. Prof. Thomas-Andreas Põder who facilitated the courses, appreciated the thematic emphasis on God's grace: "Luther's basic theological understanding that God's grace has been given to us as a free and precious gift, which evokes gratitude and encourages us to live our lives as Christians, not only in private but in the public context, is as helpful today as it was during the times of the Reformation".

Commemorative stamps from Namibia and Papua New Guinea

In several countries, commemorative stamps were released in 2017 to



Stamps commemorating the Reformation Anniversary were created in many countries, including Namibia and Papua New Guinea.



celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. To mark the anniversary and the Twelfth Assembly at Windhoek, NamPost (Namibia Post) issued a single stamp souvenir sheet and a postcard stamp. The design shows the outline of the African continent and of the two African countries where LWF Assemblies have been held – Tanzania in 1977 and

Namibia in 2017. The image also features a Namibian woman balancing on her head a basket filled with *mahangu*, a type of pearl millet grown in northern Namibia. The Twelfth Assembly logo and the theme “*Liberated by God’s Grace*”, are printed on the stamp.

Post PNG (Papua New Guinea) launched its Christmas stamp dedicated to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in October 2017. The commemorative stamp took LWF’s theme, *Liberated by God’s Grace*. The stamp below features, as background, Julius Hübner’s (1806-1882) painting “Luther publishes the 95 theses”.

The Reformation Challenge from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) adopted LWF’s Reformation anniversary themes, which inspired the church to come up with the Reformation Challenge. The synods and congregations of the ELCIC committed themselves to sponsor 500 refugees to Canada, providing 500 scholarships for the schools of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and planting 500,000 trees

in Canada, Ethiopia, Palestine and other countries. By mid-2017, the church had already gone beyond its original refugee commitment; and funds had been raised for more than 200 scholarships. The Reformation Challenge is a wonderful example for how global themes and approaches inspired a member church to come up with a global and outward-looking idea while serving both neighbor and creation.

Reforestation project in Cameroon

Despite efforts to promote sustainable forest management, more than three million hectares of Cameroon's forests have been cleared since 1990, largely due to increasing pressure from commercial and subsistence agriculture, mining, hydropower and infrastructure. The Church of the Lutheran Brethren in Cameroon (EFLC), inspired by the Reformation anniversary sub-theme, "*Creation Not for Sale*", decided to reforest 10 community forest sites in the northern regions of Cameroon. Church members committed themselves to participate in the reforestation under the slogan "one tree per faithful".

ELCIC
Reformation
Challenge





Bishop Dr Munib Younan, President of the Lutheran World Federation; Pope Francis; Rev. Dr Martin Junge, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, at the Joint Catholic-Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation on 31 October 2016. Photo: Church of Sweden

Ecumenically accountable

LWF marked the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in a spirit of ecumenical accountability and sensitivity. As a Lutheran communion, we confess that we are part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. Since its foundation, a strong ecumenical vocation has been one of the hallmarks of LWF. Therefore, there was a strong conviction that, while remembering with gratefulness the theological heritage of the Reformation, the commemoration of the Reformation was not meant to be a celebration of our particularity. LWF aimed to respond to the calling of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, with Christian brothers and sisters from other churches and Christian world communions.

The 500th anniversary of the Reformation also created a wonderful opportunity to make visible the fruits of the ecumenical processes and achievements. It opened possibilities for healing of memories, which would also address the difficult and ambivalent sides of the Reformation, something that would not have been possible with a triumphal approach to the Reformation anniversary.



*From Conflict to
Communion*

From Conflict to Communion and the Joint Commemoration



"Common Prayer"

From Conflict to Communion, a report of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity published in 2013, has become an important milestone for the Lutheran-Roman Catholic international dialogue. This is the first international attempt of Lutherans and Roman Catholics to jointly tell the story of the Reformation. The study commission members said that the words of Pope John XXIII, "The things that unite us are greater than those that divide us", were an encouragement for them while preparing the document. This is echoed

Pope Francis and Archbishop Antje Jackelén (Church of Sweden) offer each other the peace of Christ during the Common Prayer on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation at Lund Cathedral on 31 October 2016. Photo: Mikael Ringlander/Church of Sweden



by the first of five commitments at the end of *From Conflict to Communion*: "Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced".

From Conflict to Communion includes three main messages: joy at the rediscovery of the gospel and at common baptism, repentance for the wrongdoings against each other in the past, and common witness to the world. Inspired by *From Conflict to Communion*, a liturgy for commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation was developed and celebrated for the first time at the Joint Catholic-Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation in Lund Cathedral in Sweden on 31 October 2016. The commemoration was co-hosted by Pope Francis, LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan and General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge. The Joint Statement signed by Pope Francis and LWF President Younan says:

Fifty years of sustained and fruitful ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Lutherans have helped us to overcome many differences, and

have deepened our mutual understanding and trust. At the same time, we have drawn closer to one another through joint service to our neighbours – often in circumstances of suffering and persecution. Through dialogue and shared witness we are no longer strangers. Rather, we have learned that what unites us is greater than what divides us.

The celebration at the Lund Cathedral was followed by a public event in Malmö arena, where the Roman Catholic charity Caritas Internationalis and LWF's Department for World Service (DWS) signed a Declaration of Intent, to strengthen the collaboration of the two organizations and offer a powerful sign of joint witness to the world in serving the poor and the needy.

Reformed, Anglicans join the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

The signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) by LWF and the Roman Catholic Church in Augsburg in 1999 is another milestone in the history of LWF's ecumenical rela-



tions. The Official Common Statement on the JDDJ says that “a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics”. With the JDDJ, Lutherans and Catholics declared that one of the main doctrines that had been regarded as dividing between their churches was not regarded as dividing them any longer. The World Methodist Council had signed the Joint Declaration in 2006.

The Anglican Consultative Council, one of the four instruments of the Anglican Communion, passed a resolution on the Joint Declaration at its 16th gathering in Lusaka in 2016, declaring that it “welcomes and affirms the substance of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine

Representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Lutheran World Federation and World Methodist Council after WCRC signed an association agreement to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

Photo: WCRC / Anna Siggelkow.



A service to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation was held at Westminster Abbey on 31 October 2017. Photo: Andrew Dunsmore/ Westminster Abbey

of Justification (JDDJ)”. During a festive worship service at Westminster Abbey commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, presented Dr Junge and the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), Bishop Dr Brian Farrell, with the respective resolution of the Anglican Consultative Council. Addressing the congregation, Archbishop Welby said, “When the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in 1999, you resolved the underlying theological question of 1517, in a decisive moment for all churches in the search for unity and reconciliation.”

On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) signed an association agreement to the Joint Declaration in Wittenberg, on 5 July 2017 during an ecumenical worship service. During the same service, LWF and WCRC also signed the “Wittenberg Witness”, a statement affirming their common call to continued renewal and cooperation. WCRC General Secretary Chris Ferguson noted in regard to the Wittenberg Witness: “As we say in the Witness itself, as world communions, we commit to explore new forms of life together that will more fully express the communion we already have in Christ. We call on our member churches to find ways to more fully live out these commitments together in their local contexts, making our unity more visible.”

Joint Reflections with Anglicans

The Anglican-Lutheran International Coordinating Committee (ALICC) also took up LWF’s theme for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, *Liberated by God’s Grace*, and its sub-themes *Salva-*

tion – Not for Sale, Human Beings – Not for Sale and Creation – Not for Sale. The committee commissioned 42 Anglicans and Lutherans around the world to write a series of reflections for a six-week period as a way of engaging both global communions in a common marking of the Reformation anniversary.

Out of this, the collection *Liberated by God's Grace: Anglican-Lutheran Reflections* was born. It was published in 2017 and consists of reflections based on biblical texts that relate to the Reformation anniversary themes as well as on accompanying texts from Lutheran or Anglican traditions.

Canon Dr John Gibaut, Director for Unity, Faith and Order of the Anglican Communion Office, writes in his devotion on Deuteronomy 4:35-39:

The biblical journey is our own. To know ourselves as liberated by God's grace is to know ourselves as loved and freed to become who we are, the daughters and sons of God.

Joint Seminar with the Orthodox

In the framework of the 17th plenary meeting of the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint International Theological Commission, a seminar on “Legacy of the Reformation – Lutheran and Orthodox approaches” was held in Helsinki on 13 November 2017. The program included presentations from LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge, on “*Freedom of a Christian: Luther's Legacy for Today*”; from Prof. Dr Kostantinos Delikostantis of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on “The Reformation's notion of Christian Freedom from an Orthodox Perspective”; from Prof. (Emeritus) Eila Helander of the University of Helsinki on “The Impact of the Reformation on Finnish Culture and Society”; as well as from Father Heikki Huttunen, General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, on “Living as an Orthodox in a Predominantly Lutheran Country”.

In his presentation, General Secretary Junge, reflected on the importance of the serving character of Christian freedom, quoting from Luther's “Treatise on a Freedom of a Christian”:

Liberated by
God's Grace:
Anglican-
Lutheran
Reflections





At the Eleventh LWF Assembly Vice-President of the Mennonite World Conference Executive Committee, Janet Plenert, presented outgoing LWF president, Bishop Mark S. Hanson, with a pine foot-washing tub as a sign of commitment to a future “when the distinguishing mark of Lutheran and Anabaptist-Mennonite relationships is boundless love and unfailing service.”
Photo: LWF/Erick Coll



*Healing Memories.
Implications of
the Reconciliation
between
Lutherans and
Mennonites.*

In his “Treatise on a Freedom of a Christian,” in which he makes effective use of his love for dialectics, Luther juxtaposes his two famous sentences: “A Christian is a free lord of all, and subject to none” and “A Christian is the most dutiful servant of all and subject to everyone”. (...) Through God’s liberating grace human beings are made truly free and by being freed from their self-centeredness, the “incurvatus in se ipse”, hence from being turned into themselves, they are free to turn their eyes away from themselves to begin to see Christ and their neighbors in their lives. In other words, freed to

live into the double commandment of love.

Follow-up on Lutheran commitments made at the Stuttgart Assembly

LWF’s Eleventh Assembly at Stuttgart, Germany, in 2010 asked for forgiveness from members of the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition for wrongs going back to the beginnings of the Lutheran movement in the 16th century that led to painful divisions between the two Christian families. The Mennonites accepted this apology and both communities committed themselves to move toward reconciliation. Lutherans committed themselves to interpret the Lutheran Confessions in light of the jointly described history between Lutherans and Anabaptists; to teach the Lutheran Confessions in the light of this reconciliation action; to continue the exploration of unresolved issues between the two traditions, such as understanding of baptism and relations of Christians and of the Church to the state; and to seek ways to continue and deepen mutual relations between LWF and the Mennonite World Conference.

To take up these commitments, LWF created a Task Force on Mennonite Action that published a report, *Bearing Fruit: Implications of the Reconciliation between Lutherans and Anabaptist-Mennonites*, in 2016. The report offers helpful insights into how to read and teach Lutheran Confessions, particularly the difficult passages regarding the Anabaptists, in the light of the Mennonite Action in 2010; it includes a dialogue between a Lutheran and a Mennonite that examines disagreements and divergences regard attitudes to the civil state and the use of lethal force. Finally, it offers several examples of good practices of Lutheran-Mennonite cooperation and reconciliation, from the Mennonite supporting LWF's humanitarian work in its refugee camps, to a bilateral dialogue between Lutherans, Roman Catholics and Mennonites.

On the threshold of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the Mennonite Action and the process that followed were part of the broader movement toward reconciliation and seeking healing for relationships that were wounded centuries ago.

Joint ecumenical events from the regions

Reception of *From Conflict to Communion* and the Common Prayer in member churches

The study document *From Conflict to Communion* has been very well received by LWF member churches and been translated into some 20 languages. It was an important impulse for several ecumenical encounters and conferences, joint study groups and worship services held to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Here are just a few examples from the communion on how these resources were received and implemented locally.

Together on the Way: A study process on From Conflict to Communion in Germany

“2017 gemeinsam unterwegs” (*2017 Together on the Way*) was originally a project of the LWF German National Committee and the Johann-Adam-Möhler Institute for Ecumenism to jointly study the document *From Conflict to Communion*. The project was officially

launched on 23 April 2014 by Bishop Dr Gerhard Feige, chair of the German Bishops' Ecumenical Commission, and Bishop Dr Karl-Heinrich Manzke, commissioner for Catholic affairs at the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD). For several months, it was possible to share impressions and comments regarding *From Conflict to Communion* on a website, which included statements related to Protestant-Lutheran relations from well-known personalities in German society.

Bishop Feige shared his impressions about marking the Reformation anniversary on the website www.2017gemeinsamunterwegs.de:

I honestly admit: I was skeptical about the extent to which the Reformation year 2017 would be truly ecumenical – especially against the background of past Reformation anniversaries with their polemical exchanges. Looking back today on a year full of ecumenical moments, intensive encounters and communal services, I am glad that, as churches in Germany, we have been able to celebrate 2017 together as the Christ Festival. It was an ecumenical kairos and a gift of the Holy Spirit. I am

deeply grateful for that. But many tasks in ecumenism are still ahead of us. I am confident, however, that as friends with the great foundation of trust that has come this year, we should be able to use the momentum of 2017 in our conscious awareness of the fruitful moments and not to let up in our efforts towards full visible unity of the Church.

From Conflict to Communion study guide from the United States of America

In the United States of America, Roman Catholics and Lutherans compiled a study guide on *From Conflict to Communion*. The study guide, published in March 2015, was a joint effort of the representatives of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Diocese of Pittsburgh, the Diocese of Greensburg and The Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh. The introduction to the study guide, states: “The goal of our mutual commemoration must include remembering our history and continuing our movement toward the unity that Christ wills for His followers.” This study guide includes seven sessions rooted in prayer and

silent reflection as well as discussion on the theology of Luther, the JDDJ, the Second Vatican Council, and baptism and unity.

Common Prayer in Amman and Bethlehem

The ELCJHL and the Catholic Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (LPJ) held a joint worship service to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in February 2017. Leaders of both Jerusalem churches, Bishop Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, then president of LWF, and The Most Rev. Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa of the Catholic Latin Patriarchate, co-presided at the service and delivered homilies jointly in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Amman, Jordan. Bishop Younan emphasized that friendships and trust are as relevant for ecumenism as theological dialogue. The liturgy was inspired by the Common Prayer and the document *From Conflict to Communion*: the worship began with prayer and thanksgiving, followed by confession and repentance of wrongdoings against each other, and a commitment to focus on five ecumenical imperatives that can be found in *From*



Conflict to Communion. The Arabic translation of the document was distributed before the worship service.

Common Prayer Service in Strasbourg

During Advent in 2016, a joint Catholic-Lutheran prayer service was celebrated at St. Thomas Lutheran Church in Strasbourg, France. The service was attended by more than 800 people and the order of the service followed the Common Prayer liturgy prepared for the Joint Catholic-Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation in Lund. A highlight of the service was the lighting of five candles, each marking one of

A common prayer service of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and the Latin Catholic Patriarchate of Jerusalem was held on 12 February 2017 at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Amman, Jordan. Photo: Ben Gray/ELCJHL

the ecumenical commitments from the document *From Conflict to Communion*. One commitment was presented by a married couple, Rev. Catherine Keller, a Lutheran pastor, and her husband, Tony Keller, a Roman Catholic.

Among the joint events held by the Lutheran church and the Archdiocese of Strasbourg to mark the Reformation anniversary in October 2017 was a study of the report *From Conflict to Communion* in March 2016. In addition to commemoration events around 31 October 2017, the Catholic cathedral had invited Lutheran pastors of the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine to jointly write a musi-

cal about Luther and perform it in the Catholic cathedral.

Anglican-Lutheran conference on understanding of justification in Hong Kong

In October 2017, an ecumenical conference, “Justification by Grace in East Asia: A Lutheran-Anglican Dialogue on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation”, was organized by the Lutheran Theological Seminary and the Anglican Ming Hua Theological College in Hong Kong. The conference addressed justification by grace in the context of East Asian cultures, which have been shaped for centuries by a Confucian ethical system that emphasizes duty, and a Buddhist morality that focuses on earning merit to achieve salvation. The conference focused on Asian contextual similarities to the religious situation in 16th century Europe; and on the liberating power of the message of justification by grace promoted by the reformers. As the teaching of justification by grace had reached Asia in colonial clothing, it was sometimes experienced as an alien imposition rather than good news. Thus, the conference aimed to explore the meaning

Married couple Rev. Catherine and Dominique Keller – he Catholic and she Lutheran – light a candle marking the fourth ecumenical imperative.
Photo: Diocèse de Strasbourg/Marc Larchet



of the doctrine of justification in the Asian context today. The presenters came from China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Japan, and from both Lutheran and Anglican churches.

Luther Garden in Wittenberg

The saying, “Even if I knew that the world were to collapse tomorrow, I would still plant my apple tree today”, has been ascribed to Luther. With this in mind, German National Committee and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany established the Luther Garden (in German, *Luthergarten*) in Wittenberg on the grounds of the former town fortifications. The project, which started in 2008, aimed to plant 500 trees at different places in the region, offering a concrete sign of the optimism expressed in Luther’s words. In addition to the symbolical number of 500, there is more symbolism to be found in the *Luthergarten*. The garden showcases the number 95, the number of Luther’s theses; seen from above, the Luther garden forms a Luther rose; five linden trees between the petals of the Luther rose, were planted by other churches and Christian communions, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate,



the Anglican Communion, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches now World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the World Methodist Council to underscore the ecumenical involvement. Most LWF member churches as well as several other churches and ecumenical partners have planted a tree in the Luther garden. They were, in turn, invited to plant a “partner tree” back home. This invitation was not only followed-up by LWF member churches, but also by ecumenical partners.

Rev. Prof. Nicholas Tai, Bishop Ben Chang, and Gareth Jones at the opening of the Anglican-Lutheran conference on understanding of justification in Hong Kong.

“Even if I knew that the world were to collapse tomorrow, I would still plant my apple tree today” (ascribed to Martin Luther).

Luther Garden







The Luther Garden seen from above.
Photo: Steffen Mainka, www.fotofliegen.de

95 YOUTH INTERVENTIONS

1) Mutumen Linda, Elcin
delivering youth
message to LWF
12th Assembly

Moti Daba, Ethiopia (ECMY): Omata la, Global Yr
Fabian Trzebiatowski, Germany (ELCIOS): Helping to translate the youth message
4) Eduardo, Brazil + others: showing young reformers project
5) Szilvi, Hungary: encouraging the village group members to encourage youth to participate in church life and leadership in their churches (VOC)

6. Mikka, U.S.A., ELCA - village group 7 (st. 2)
7. Fresenet Zekewas Gichamo - village group 7 (Kumasi)
8. Sen Lager, Netherlands - statement in plenary
9. Joha Obimkhaw - church of ... group 15 (Kumasi)
10. Mami ... ARD SANDANI ...
11. ...

As the Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation is coming to an end, 95 Youth Interventions were delivered by the Youth Pre-Assembly to outgoing LWF president bishop Munib Younan, and LWF general secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



The Reformation is ongoing

One of the important principles which marked LWF's celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation was: "The Reformation is ongoing", which was derived from "*ecclesia semper reformanda est*" or "the church must be always reforming". LWF wanted to affirm that the church must be open to constant renewal, always seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in face of contemporary challenges. This principle has also drawn an attention to the relevance of young people's contribution to the life of the church.

Young Reformers: Freed by God's Love to Change the World

To mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, LWF formed the Global Young Reformers Network (GYRN), a vibrant network of young people from almost all LWF member churches. The network chose its own motto for commemorating the anniversary: "Freed by God's Love to Change the World". This theme was inspired by LWF's main theme for the Reformation anniversary and the 2017 Assembly, and it invited young people to reflect on what their faith has freed them from and freed them to do. Several stories were shared

by young people and many of these witnesses were also published on LWF's website. Darius Lee, a global young reformer from Singapore, commented that his faith had freed him from fear:

In Singapore, children and teenagers are expected to meet high standards. Growing up, I struggled with issues of fear and poor self-worth. Learning that God had a plan for me, even at conception, I knew I had no reason to fear.

Carolina Huth from Argentina wrote about being freed from immovable pews:

As Lutherans, we believe that traditions are not necessary for salvation, they are just sometimes good for order, tranquility, and common practice. But when they do not serve their purpose, when people are uncomfortable, and the church is no longer inviting, when God's message does not reach everyone, then we may need to consider reorganizing the pews...

Intercultural evening at the Workshop Wittenberg in August 2015.
Foto: LWB/Marko Schoeneberg



Many young reformers describe how their faith has freed them to serve others. Monica Villareal from the US, notes:

Though I live in the United States, the streets are not made of gold and I have yet to discover the land of milk and honey. Where I live and serve as a pastor, God is calling us to rise up for justice, restore hope, and re-build community. Significant poverty, unemployment, lack of transportation, vacant homes and violence shape the daily lives of people. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and vision of Isaiah 58:6-12, I am freed by the love of Christ for the purpose of re-building community.

A two-week international workshop hosted by the LWF for young reformers took place from 22 August to 4 September 2015 in Wittenberg. The workshop afforded the young reformers the opportunity to learn about the first Lutheran young reformer, Luther, and his experiences in the 16th century. The program included joint prayers and worship services; the opening worship took place in the Castle Church. Luther is said to have nailed his 95 theses on the door of this very church. During

a guided tour of the city, participants learned about Luther's life and work and got a sense of "where it all started". Discussions were held on what it means to be Lutheran, theological, socially and politically responsible and ecumenical. The program included basic training in project management, and the youth began to develop cross-regional Living Reformation projects, which were inspired by the three "Not for Sale" sub-themes of the Reformation anniversary.

Bishop Ilse Junkermann from the hosting church in central Germany wrote to the young reformers, saying: "You are developing ideas and projects for your Lutheran home churches and keeping in contact with each other through your international network. This way you are helping to shape the future of Lutheran Christianity worldwide and to form a worldwide web for justice, peace and the healing of creation."

Living Reformation projects

Reformation Day, 31 October 2015, marked the start of dozens of initiatives around the globe conceived by members of the GYRN following their international workshop in Wittenberg.



Young reformers in Poland wearing t-shirts with the name of their Living Reformation project, “Who are we? What’s our vocation?” (*Wierzę, Więc Jestem*). Photo: ECACP

Young reformers across the Lutheran communion worked with youth and church leaders in other regions to seek ways to keep the church reforming itself, under the banner “*ecclesia semper reformanda* – a church in an ongoing state of reformation or change”. The projects were inspired by the three sub-themes of the Reformation anniversary: *Salvation – Not for Sale*, *Human Beings – Not for Sale*, *Creation – Not for Sale* and had various foci, from reflecting on the notion of grace to protecting the environment by promoting cycling.

Polish young reformers’ project “Who are we? What’s our vocation?”

Polish youth from the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, who were inspired by the theme *Salvation – Not for Sale*, carried out a project titled “Who are we? What’s our vocation?” (in Polish, *Wierzę, Więc Jestem*), linking up with other young reformers in Colombia, Madagascar and Namibia, whose projects also focused on Lutheran identity. In just two years, the project grew from a diocesan activity to a national youth project. Hundreds of young people volunteered in homes for the elderly, made Christmas presents for orphans and engaged in youth work at local parishes. Initially, the project aimed to involve 80 young people from seven local groups. By the beginning of 2017, 22 groups around Poland, including 400 youth, took part. The widespread participation had an impact on the national youth work of the church. Blue t-shirts with the project’s name became popular with the youth and were in high demand. Arkadiusz Raszka said of his motivation for the project: “Martin Luther was moved by the Word of God. And God inspired him to show people God’s grace and love”.

Living Reformation project in Norway: Empowering youth in the church of Norway

Young reformers from Norway, also inspired by the theme *Salvation – Not for Sale*, conducted a nation-wide conversation on the ongoing reformation of the church and the changing role of its young people, while calling for space for youth to talk about faith, and take on responsibility. The project team worked with 100 volunteers across the country to organize a national Reformation Jubilee and produce a document called *Reformer Today*, which gained national media coverage. In the publication, the youth explored what it means to be Lutheran today in Norway and within a global and pluralistic context. It also examined how to be part of a global Christian family. The publication claims that reformers today live amid the tension of cherishing the roots of the Reformation and working to create something new in the 21st century. *Reformer Today* states: “Luther did not start by asking himself how he could make the trade of indulgences and the worship of saints relevant in a new era. He found the center of the Christian faith and ended up making radical changes that still matter today”.

Zambian young reformers’ project Youth Against Drugs and Alcohol Abuse in Zambia

Inspired by the sub-theme *Human beings – Not for Sale*, Zambian young reformer Kheke Chana from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia (ELCZ) started a Living Reformation project in his home country to halt the use of addictive substances, which is increasing among young people due to high rates of unemployment and poverty. The consequences include becoming infected with HIV and AIDS, and crime and domestic violence. “Youth Against Drugs and Alcohol Abuse in Zambia” targeted young people aged 18-30,

Zambian young reformers’ project Youth Against Drugs and Alcohol Abuse in Zambia. Photo: GYRN





Training young people on social justice to develop local projects. Photo: IECLB

both within and outside the church. By the beginning of 2017, the project had reached 800 people, 90 of whom had recovered from drug and alcohol abuse. Transportation was organized for participants from remote communities to enable their participation. Young reformer Kheke Chana, calling the young members of his church to support this diaconal mission and sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ, said: “This project has changed me personally. It gave me a reason to help youth facing problems with alcohol and drugs. I want to see my generation free its own generation from drug abuse.”

“Youth and Diakonia: Free to Transform the World” – Brazilian Church

In the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB), the largest LWF member church in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Region, a group of young reformers were inspired by the theme *Human Beings – Not for Sale*. They started a project called “Youth and *Diakonia*: Free to Transform the World”, first training more than 50 young people on social justice, then developing local youth projects. In the end, they reached out to almost 1,000 youth across the IECLB, empowering them to carry out diaconal service and protect human rights. A national network was established by Brazilian young reformers, together with different partners active in social justice, to help the young people understand how to apply what they had learned in various contexts across the country. They developed material on the history, concept and implications of *diakonia* and monitored projects using social media.

Geocaching: a youth project from Germany

The youth of the Evangelical Church in Central Germany (EKMD), linked to the GYRN, initiated a world-wide project of planting Luther trees, linked to the theme *Creation – Not for Sale* combined with Geocaching. The planting of trees to honor Luther and the Reformation has a long history in Germany. Oaks, beech and lime trees have been planted to mark previous centennial anniversaries. To get young people engaged in the stories of Luther and the Reformation and its changing face over the past 100 years, the young people developed Luther trees' geocaching – a global treasure hunt for the whole family, linked to planting new Luther trees. The GYRN was crucial to the success of the project, helping organizers reach out to youth and other age groups and to expand the project beyond Germany. Thanks to LWF's network, the geocaching went global.

Cycling for the climate: a youth project of the Protestant Christian Batak Church

Inspired by the theme *Creation – Not for Sale* and the “I fast for the climate” action launched after COP19, young reformer Rev. Daniel Sinaga from the Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP) started a “cycling for the climate” initiative. The project inspired young people, especially seminary students, to become more aware about climate justice and increase the use of bicycles. Working with bicycle clubs, Sinaga organized bike trips around the city to get people thinking about climate

Lena Lothring, a young reformer of the Evangelical Church in Central Germany, leads the workshop on “Geocaching and Luther trees”. Photo: LWF/C. Bader





Rev. Daniel Sinaga from the Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP) started a “cycling for the climate” initiative. Photo: HKBP

change. Daniel Sinaga said of the main event, held near the seminary, which has around 600 students: “Everyone joined the one-day campaign. In the end, there were 5 participants who came with their bikes for our campaign ‘cycling for the climate’.”

Women on the Move: “Herstories”

The first woman to be ordained in a Lutheran church was likely Jantine Auguste Haumersen (1881-1967), who was ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands on 17 November 1929.



Herstories

Today, most LWF member churches ordain women. By 2017, more than 90% of member churches had women in ordained ministry. LWF is also committed to ensuring the participation of women in governing bodies. A 40% quota on women’s participation in governance, approved by the Seventh Assembly in Budapest in 1984, is being respected.

To highlight the valuable leadership and participation women have offered their churches from 1517 to 2017, as well as their participation in the ongoing Reformation, the Women in Church and Society (WICAS) desk introduced “Women on the Move: From Wittenberg to Windhoek on the threshold of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. An important part of the project was called “Herstories”. Women’s networks of LWF were invited to contribute to the collection of stories of women who played important roles during the Reformation or in the years since. The idea was to get to know these “forgotten” women who have been agents for renewal in their communities, and to ask women playing an active role today to give witness of their ministry. Over several years prior to 2017, stories were collected that featured the contribution women had given to their churches or

to the global communion of Lutheran churches.

Susannah B. Telewoda from the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL), who served from 1984-1990 as the first vice-president for Africa, explains in “Herstory” that there is still more work to be done, and she affirms strongly that women can and should be an active part of the church’s work of transforming society: “Often women shy away from what has to be done. Women should try to do whatever they have been asked to do, because there is already a bias to not allow women to be in diverse positions, and [the lack of women in these key roles] would reinforce the stereotype that women cannot fulfill these various tasks”.

pable and qualified people for both the civil and the spiritual realms, we really must spare no effort, time, and expense in teaching and educating our children to serve God and the world.” One could continue: “If we want capable people who want to understand their faith and are capable of theological discernment, we have to teach people to think theologically”. Therefore, as part of commemorating 500 years of Reformation, LWF launched a pilot online course in Lutheran theology. The outline and the content of the course were developed by an international working group of theologians in cooperation with the DTPW. Members of this working group also acted as tutors during the course. The online course covered topics such

“Women on the Move” Wittenberg meeting, 2016. Photo: WICAS

Online course in Lutheran theology

Education has been one of the hallmarks of Lutheran theology since its very beginning. Grounded in a theology of baptism and the priesthood of all believers, Luther taught that education was a key driver of social, ecclesial and political reformation. In his *Large Catechism*, Luther said: “If we want ca-



as Luther's understanding of justification, ecclesiology, creation, faith and good works and transformative reading of the Scriptures. The eight-week pilot course ran from October 2017 to December 2018, with students from all parts of the world, providing a platform for trans-contextual learning. Engaging in theological education as a communion in this way can help us to know who God is for us and why that matters today. That is a theological task that can lead us into the next 500 years of faith in our global Lutheran communion, and this online course demonstrated that LWF can convene and sustain transformative communities of learning. Many participants expressed their appreciation for the course, highlighting how they were challenged to realize how some theological assumptions have influenced their reality. They also became more aware of the contextual relevance of some of the basic notions of Lutheran theology. Debbie Loh, a participant from the Damansara Utama Methodist Church in Kuala Lumpur, described her experience with the online course as follows: "It has been a transformational experience for me, and I have been very fortunate to be acquainted with Lutheran theology, learning from Luther

and Lutheran theologians. In particular, I have personally found the teachings on sin (*incurvatus in se, simul iustus et peccator*) highly impactful, and I have been able to relate to God in a fresh new way. I have also found the teachings on public witness and service to be so crucial as I seek to maneuver my way through Malaysian society, especially with my special interest in activism and civil society".

Living in pluralistic societies 500 years after the Reformation

Five hundred years after the Reformation, many societies have become far more pluralistic than they used to be. There is now a need to strengthen relationships between religious leaders, theologians and youth from faith communities so that we can learn to live together in pluralistic societies and overcome destructive behavior.

As the 500th anniversary of the Reformation approached, LWF's program for public theology and interreligious relations initiated an innovative interreligious pilot project in Indonesia, which was carried out from September



Online course
in Lutheran
theology

2016 to February 2017. The project gave youth in three cities in Indonesia opportunities to experience, and affirm, religious diversity where equal rights were enjoyed by all. Partnering with the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), the INGAGE project trained young Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, agnostics and people holding local religious beliefs, in Medan, Manado and Ambon. One of the goals of the program was to assess the role of social media in interreligious relations and encourage the trainees and their peers to creatively use communication tools to affirm diversity and equality. Eighty-one young people were trained in the three locations, though 400 youth had applied for the training.

The youth discussed the theme “Communicating creatively on faith and equal rights – Interfaith training for a new generation in Indonesia” during the seven-day intensive training. Further exchanges took place over several months. In mixed religious groups, they visited a Buddhist center and a Hindu temple; some spent a few days in a Muslim boarding school; or participated in a religious traditional house of worship or *Parmalin*; and shared communal meals.



Participants received literacy training on human rights and citizen rights around freedom of religion or belief. The pilot project ended with a public event for a wider audience of representatives from religious communities, scholars and government officials. Its design drew upon the combined expertise of LWF as an international faith-based organization with a long-standing track record in advocacy for freedom of religion and belief, and the active civil society engagement of ICRS as an academic interfaith institution. INGAGE was principally funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation NORAD.

Participants in the INGAGE project.
Photo: A. Yaqin

After the pilot phase, the young INGAGE participants continued to meet. In Medan, they set up an interactive evening called “*kopi toleransi*” (in English, “coffee tolerance”), during which they met for coffee and discussion around tolerance among different faith communities in their country of multicultural and multi-religious diversity. In these personal interfaith encounters, the young people came to understand that their faith does not hinder building relations. Rather, faith creates

confidence and openness, fosters relationships, and strengthens common citizenship.

“Often people think that young people have to be ‘guided’ in order to be able to deal with religious diversity. But a much more fruitful approach is a dialogical model, where you create a space for young people to express what is dear to their hearts,” noted Dr Leonard C. Epafra, ICRS Yogyakarta coordinator.

Post-script

The Reformation is continuing, both in the country where it originated and also worldwide. By the end of the commemorative year – if not before – it had become clear that the Reformation was a world citizen. The last decade has shown that commemorating the Reformation means a beginning, not an ending. It has raised issues about many aspects of our faith, its development and our history. And yet many points emerged that are still open and need further discussion. The ecumenical idea has gained a completely new quality. We have covered a lot of ground together and I hope that we can continue on this path – indeed we must.

It has become clear that young people are important for our church and for preserving our faith. But the path of participation is long. The importance of this task was particularly brought out by the LWF Assembly, and it is an issue in many churches. We also recognized that many formats in our churches no longer work well and that we should try

out new options and pursue goals appropriate to our times.

But finally I am grateful:

I am grateful for the worldwide, ecumenical perspective opened up by the commemoration of the Reformation.

I am grateful for the many encounters and conversations during the Reformation anniversary year.

I am grateful for the engagement with the dark sides of the history of our faith.

I am particularly grateful for the many events attended by youth and young adults, at which they have been taken seriously.

And I am grateful that the Reformation commemoration became a Christfest (a festival of Christ), that the Reformation is continuing and that 2017 did not mark a conclusion.

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Workshop Wittenberg. Photo: Johanan Celine P. Valeriano

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