

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

# Meeting of Council

Wittenberg, Germany

15 - 21 June 2016

## **COUNCIL ACTIONS**



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION



## **REELECTION OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY**

The Council voted to reelect Rev. Dr. Martin Junge for a second seven-year term as General Secretary. The second term begins on 1 November 2017.

This action was pursuant to LWF Bylaw 9.4, which provides that the General Secretary shall be eligible for reelection once, and LWF Bylaw 9.5, which provides that the Meeting of Officers shall determine whether to recommend to the Council that the General Secretary be reelected for a second seven-year term. The Meeting of Officers unanimously recommended to the Council that General Secretary Junge be reelected. In closed session on 16 June, the Council voted by secret ballot to reelect General Secretary Junge.

## **REPORT OF THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

### ***Appointment of Deacon Magnea Sverrisdottir as chairperson of the Committee for Mission and Development***

**It is voted:**

- to appoint Deacon Magnea Sverrisdottir as chairperson of the Committee for Mission and Development.

## **MID-TERM REVIEW OF LWF STRATEGY 2012 - 2018**

**It is voted:**

- to receive the Mid-term Review of the LWF Strategy 2012 – 2018
- to request the General Secretary to follow up on issues arising from the Mid-term Review of the LWF Strategy 2012 -2018.

## **PROJECTING A SUSTAINABLE LWF AND ITS COMMUNION OFFICE**

### ***Progress Report (Exhibit 9.6)***

**It is voted:**

- to receive the Progress Report - Projecting a sustainable LWF and its Communion Office - for information.

***Process Design for Assessment of the location of the Communion Office  
(Exhibit 9.6.1)***

**It is voted:**

- to approve the Process Design for the assessment of the location of the Communion Office;
- to recommend the process design to the new Council to be elected by the Assembly in 2017.
- to take the decision on office relocation at the Council meeting in June 2019 (i.e. one year later than proposed)

***Proposal for a Reorganized LWF Governance to support future sustainability of the LWF and its Communion Office (Exhibit 9.6.2)***

**It is voted:**

- to refer to the Committee for Constitution and Membership to recommend the wording of the proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws which would be required to accomplish the proposed changes.

*(For final actions on proposed amendments to LWF Constitution and Bylaws, please refer to LWF Twelfth Assembly further below on pages 3 + 4.)*

**It is voted:**

- to request the General Secretary to bring a detailed plan for implementing the changes to the November 2016 Meeting of Officers, having taken into account the feedback and directions given by the Council.

## **LWF TWELFTH ASSEMBLY**

***Proposed Rules of Procedures for the Assembly***

*(Proposed by the Standing Committee for Constitution and Membership)*

**It is voted:**

- to approve the Rules of Procedure as presented with these exceptions:
  1. Section 2.1.5: The Committee recommends including Council nominees among the Ex-Officio Participants.
  2. Section 4.1.6.7: The Committee recommends deleting the parenthetical phrase.
- to recommend them to the Assembly for its adoption.

***Proposed composition of the Assembly Committees***

*(Proposed by the Ad-hoc Nominations Committee)*

**It is voted:**

- to authorize the Meeting of Officers at its November meeting to propose the Composition of the Assembly Committees and to recommend them to the Assembly for its adoption.

### ***Proposed Amendments to the LWF Constitution & Bylaws (Exhibits 11.6 and 11.6.1)***

*(Proposed by the Standing Committee for Constitution and Membership)*

#### **It is voted:**

- to approve the LWF Constitution & Bylaws as presented with these exceptions:

#### Constitution

1. Article VIII.1 and VIII.1.a.: The Committee does not recommend changing the size of the Council.
2. Article VIII.5: The Committee recommends retaining the word “shall”.

#### Bylaws

Section 8.2.b: The Committee recommends substituting the words “Provide oversight of” in place of “Monitor”.

In addition, in both documents some typos or inconsistencies in terminology were corrected.

- to recommend them to the Assembly for its adoption.

### ***Guidelines for “Nominations of members of the same family”***

#### **It is voted:**

- to approve that no Assembly delegate shall be the spouse, child, parent, sibling, parent-in-law, or child-in-law of another delegate.

### ***Guidelines on subsidized delegates bringing spouses***

#### **It is voted:**

- to approve that a delegate whose spouse will be attending the Assembly shall not be eligible for an LWF financial subsidy. An exception may be made in case of a delegate with a disability for whom the spouse is the caregiver or for a delegate with a nursing child for whom childcare is needed.

## **COMMITTEE FOR THEOLOGY AND ECUMENICAL RELATIONS**

### ***Report of the Chairperson of the Board of the Lutheran Foundation for Interconfessional Research***

#### **It is voted:**

- receive the Report of the Chairperson of the Board of the Lutheran Foundation for Interconfessional Research with appreciation; and
- to express appreciation for the continued support by the Institute for the bilateral dialogues and for its substantial contributions to these dialogues.

***With reference to Study Document on Lutheran Hermeneutic***

**It is voted:**

- to receive the “In the Beginning was the Word.” The Bible in the Life of the Lutheran Communion—A Study Document on Lutheran Hermeneutics with appreciation, with the following addition and amendment:

Addition to recommendation b (p. 26):

Commit ourselves to learning from one another globally about the ways in which the Bible can best be heard in our diverse contexts. The books of the Bible were written at different times and in different places, and they offer a rich variety of perspectives. As the Bible is read in different contexts throughout the world, it engenders fresh perspectives. We benefit and are constructively challenged by hearing insights that emerge from contexts different from our own. We commit ourselves to creating opportunities for people from our member churches to meet and study the Scriptures, and to share those insights with the wider communion. We therefore also commit ourselves to the ongoing task to translate the Scripture from the original languages to the respective native languages in order to make it accessible to people of our time.

Amendment to recommendation d (p. 27):

We commit ourselves to creating educational opportunities (including the development of a global network of Lutheran theologians) that prepare leaders globally to engage those they serve in the study of Scripture.

And

- to request the Council to commend the document to the member churches for study and action; and
- to encourage the LWF member churches and the Communion Office to draw on the key elements of the document to inform the deliberations around the commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation.

***With reference to LWF Statement “The Church in the Public Space”***

**It is voted:**

- to receive the study document “The Church in the Public Space” with appreciation; and
- to request the Council to commend the document to the member churches for study and action, and

- to request the Communion Office to continue strengthening the member churches' public engagement, where possible, in cooperation with their ecumenical and interfaith partners, and to use the document as a tool to deepen contextual reflection and action.

*(for the LWF Statement “The Church in the Public Space” please refer to Committee for Advocacy and Public Voice on page 15 of this document)*

### ***With reference to Report of the Mennonite Task Force***

**It is voted:**

- to receive the Report of the Lutheran World Federation Task Force to Follow Up the Mennonite Action “Bearing Fruit: Implications of the 2010 Reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites/Anabaptists” with appreciation; and
- to request the Council to commend the report to the member churches for study.

## **COMMITTEE FOR MISSION AND DEVELOPMENT**

### ***Report of the Department for Mission and Development***

**It is voted:**

- to encourage DMD to move forward with plans to explore new opportunities for its work such as addressing the root causes and effects of migration, religion and development discourse, agenda 2030 for sustainable development, enhancing communion building, as well as new models of funding.
- to call upon all member churches to participate in solidarity, to the best of their ability, in developing the financial economy of the LWF as well as bringing up to date their financial obligations such as the membership fees, assembly fees and endowment contributions
- to request the LWF General Secretary to ensure that departments especially DMD and DWS are better aligned and collaborating in order to increase effectiveness of the work thus strengthening the communion.
- to call upon the Communion Office to ensure there is intentional collaboration between the Office of Communication and DMD. Telling the stories and sharing about relationships built are crucial to the life of the communion.

### ***With reference to “Envisioning the gift and task of the communion building in LWF” (Part of Exhibit 9.6)***

**It is voted:**

- to request the General Secretary to include the input and reflections from the committee in further development of the concept of communion building.

- to request the director to steer programs on communion building towards the vision outlined in the concept document.

***With reference to “Proposal for a Reorganized LWF Governance to support future sustainability of the LWF and its Communion Office” (Exhibit 9.6.2)***

**It is voted:**

- to request the General Secretary not to pursue the proposed reduction of the size of the Council and the discontinuation of the Standing Committee for Communication, but to consider other means of improving the efficiency of the Council such as changes in methodology.
- to request the General Secretary to provide further information to the Council for changing the Meeting of Officers back into an Executive Committee in view of the potential impact.

## **COMMITTEE FOR WORLD SERVICE**

No recommendations were proposed.

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

***With reference to the amended Policy on Reserve Funds (Fincom Exhibit 5.3)***

**It is voted:**

- to approve the amended Policy on Reserve Funds.

***LWF Membership Fees 2017-2018***

**It is voted:**

- to approve and adopt the LWF Membership Fees for 2017 - 2018.

***LWF Consolidated Financial Statements at 31 December 2015***

**It is voted:**

- to approve the LWF Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ended December 31, 2015, and
- to approve the Financial Statements of the Department for Theology and Public Witness, Department for Mission and Development, Department for World Service, Department for Planning and Operations and General Secretariat for the year ended December 31, 2015.



### ***Appointment of the LWF Auditor for Year 2016***

**It is voted:**

- to approve the PricewaterhouseCoopers SA as Auditors for the LWF accounts in 2016.

### ***LWF STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS 2017- 2018***

**It is voted:**

- to approve the LWF Strategic Priority Areas 2017 – 2018.
- to add a 5th cross-cutting theme on theological reflection and formation.

### ***LWF BUDGET 2017***

**It is voted:**

- to approve the LWF Budget for 2017 with expenditure of EURO 146,960,000
- to charge any possible deficits against the reserves of the respective departments
- to authorize the LWF Communion Office to fundraise for the LWF Budget as presented in Council Exhibit 12.1
- to authorize the Meeting of Officers to approve adjustments to the budget at its next meeting as necessary.

## **COMMITTEE FOR ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC VOICE**

### ***Resolution on Standing with Refugees***

**It is voted:**

Refugees may lose many things when they flee, but never their human rights. In the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” In our Christian understanding, each refugee or migrant—just like every other human being—is a child of God, created in God’s image, with equal dignity and worth.

In our all-too-violent world, an unprecedented number of people have been forced to flee—some 60 million women, children, and men. 20 million of them are refugees, outside their own country. 40 million of them are internally displaced, refugees within their own countries, unable to return home in safety. The refugee situation attracted dramatic media attention in 2015 when more than a million people fled to Europe. But that meant that there were still 59 million refugees and internally displaced persons outside Europe, most of them in protracted situations. On average, a refugee is now in exile for more than 17 years.

There are some signs of hope. Most of the internally displaced persons in northeastern Nigeria, including those welcomed so generously into the homes of members of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, have been able to return home. In Colombia, where one out of every ten persons has been forced from their homes, an accord is in sight to end the decades-long civil war and allow the internally displaced to return. In Germany, Sweden, Hungary, Canada, and other countries, there have been heart-warming examples of churches and everyday citizens welcoming the refugees and helping them to begin integrating into their new communities. So often, they discover that refugees are not burdens but gifts, soon bringing important contributions to their new societies.

Yet the situation remains dire. The High Commissioner for Refugees warns that the refugee issue has never been as politicized as it is in today's world. In many countries, xenophobia and negative public opinion are rising to alarming levels. Some countries are closing their borders. Too many refugees are living in fear in abysmal conditions. Assistance for refugees is falling far short--halfway through 2016, the UNHCR's budget is only 32% funded. Desperate people continue to risk their lives at sea, with often heart-rending consequences. And to make matters worse, some politicians are even beginning to challenge the Refugee Convention itself, the hard-won global commitment that the victims of persecution and war should be protected.

Meeting again on World Refugee Day, June 20, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation:

- Reaffirms the Lutheran World Federation's profound concern for the refugees and other forced migrants in our world and, in response, our deeply-rooted commitment to live out Jesus' call to "welcome the stranger."
- Gives thanks to God for the Lutheran churches and members, as well as those of other churches and faiths, who are reaching out a loving hand of welcome and help to refugees and migrants in need.
- Gives thanks to God for the staff and supporters of LWF World Service, who make it possible for the LWF today to provide assistance for some 2.3 million refugees and other forcibly displaced persons across the world.
- Urges the nations of the world to use the 19 September 2016 United Nations Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants to reaffirm that refugees are a matter of international concern, to recommit to protecting the rights of all refugees and migrants, to uphold the United Nations Refugee Convention and all instruments of international humanitarian law, and to more generously support the welcome and care for people in need.
- Urges that Lutherans around the world join the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' #WithRefugees Campaign by signing the petition at [www.unhcr.org/refugeeday/petition](http://www.unhcr.org/refugeeday/petition) and calling upon world leaders to show solidarity and find solutions for people displaced by war or persecution.

### ***Public Statement on Women in Ordained Ministry: Our Shared Goal***

**It is voted:**

Called by the liberating grace of God in Christ to speak truth out of love for one another, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), meeting in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany, June 15-21, 2016, is deeply saddened and

concerned by the June 3 decision of the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia (ELCL).

The ELCL, which started women's ordination in 1975, has by constitutional change now restricted the ordained ministry to men and thus has excluded women from full participation in the life of the church. We see this action by the ELCL as a step backward on the common path the LWF has followed for the past 32 years.

Recalling five consecutive LWF Assemblies - from the 7th Assembly in Budapest in 1984 to the 11th Assembly in Stuttgart in 2010 – the communion has urged its member churches to prayerfully discern and affirm women's theological training, their leadership, their ministry, and their full inclusion in the church, both lay and ordained:

“We call on member churches to set appropriate legislation and regulatory policies that enable and ensure women in leadership positions - ordained and lay - and the opportunities to pursue theological education.” (LWF Assembly, Stuttgart, 2010)

While acknowledging that ordination is not a right, but rather a call, we also acknowledge that the restriction and exclusion of women's gifts in and for the church serves to devalue all women and increases their discrimination in both church and society.

While also acknowledging that not all member churches are at the same point on the journey towards women in ordained ministry - that some member churches are still moving toward full inclusion and participation of women - we are convinced that the scriptural witness, in its breadth and scope, honors the equality of all created in God's image and recognizes the gifts of all in the same Spirit to those baptized into the new creation.

Unity in Christ transcends ethnic, social and economic differences: “There is no longer Jew nor Gentile, slave or free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). One crucial aspect of this practical expression of the scriptural witness is the full unity of women and men in Christ. In the church the equality of women and men is expressed and lived out as a sign of God's reign in this world. Therefore, no discrimination of women and men is conceivable in the life of the church. Any kind of discrimination in the way women participate in the ministry of the church (including ordination) harms the fulfilment of the mission of the church in the world, as it is contrary to the nature of God's reign.

We share in the pain and sadness of our sisters and brothers in the ELCL caused by the restriction of ordained ministry to men only. We believe the whole church, and our whole communion, suffers when the gifts of women's ministry are not valued and given full expression.

While we grieve the wound of division within the LWF communion and within the ELCL, we also commit ourselves to accompany our member church through continued bilateral dialogue and relationship, even when it is difficult and disagreement is present. To be in dialogue is a genuine expression of love for one another. We continue to walk in solidarity with our sisters and brothers of the

ELCL, to listen to the voices of the women already ordained in the ELCL, and to the Association of Women Theologians of Latvia.

We recall the resolution at our last Assembly in Stuttgart for our member churches to commit "...to genuine, practical, and effective implementation of LWF policies and decisions regarding the full participation of women in the life of the church – and the LWF communion – as well as in society."

Therefore, we urge the ELCL to reconsider their decision so that, together, we may walk again the path toward our shared goal of women in ordained ministry.

As we move toward our commemorations of 500 years of the church being reformed for the sake of the gospel of Christ, we anticipate and would welcome the on-going commitment and re-affirmation of the LWF's long-standing position on women in ordained ministry at the 12th Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia, 2017.

### ***Resolution on Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)***

**It is voted:**

On September 25, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted 17 "Sustainable Development Goals" (UN Resolution A/RES70/1).



The SDGs are a detailed aspiration of a life where most people in the world will realize a life abundant. We read in Christian Scriptures where God will "wipe every tear from their eyes", where there "will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed" (Revelation 21:4) so "all may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

As a faith-based organization within civil society, the LWF brings added value to the implementation and realization of these goals. For example:

- o As a communion of churches, the LWF works as a connector, bringing local voices to global UN forums in Geneva and New York. For example, churches and country programs in Colombia, Mozambique and Myanmar offered parallel reports to their respective Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanisms.

- o In 2015, the landmark Paris Climate Agreement was reached. Since 2011, the LWF has engaged the Conference of Parties through collaboration with other faith-based groups of goodwill, with youth participation and leadership as a key motivating factor.
- o The LWF values working in inter-faith partnership. In a world where religion is too often seen as a force for division, we see the power of inter-faith work in peace-building and development. In 2014, the LWF and Islamic Relief Worldwide entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on humanitarian and refugee matters and issues of faith and culture related to gender justice. They continue to collaborate on “Welcoming the Stranger” with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The LWF affirms the new participatory process used to develop the SDGs, which included regional meetings and consultations with civil society and governments alike. The LWF also affirms the universal applicability of the SDGs to all member states, not only poor countries.

The LWF Council, meeting 15-21 June 2016 in Wittenberg, Germany, calls on member churches to:

- Commit to awareness raising on the SDGs throughout the member churches and their communities, and
- Encourage and advocate for relevant stakeholders (i.e., nation states and private partners) to mobilize resources toward full funding of the SDGs, and
- Encourage and empower member churches to be practically involved in SDGs implementation strategies and processes in their own countries, and
- Continue active capacity building for participation in the monitoring of the implementation and reporting mechanisms of the SDGs, including Voluntary National Reviews, and
- Encourage the fostering of stakeholder partnerships, especially with UN agencies, governments and civil society, in collaboration and support of the above activities.

### ***Resolution on Supporting Arab Christians in the Middle East***

#### **It is voted:**

The LWF Council supports the on-going efforts by the Fellowship of Middle East Council of Churches (FMECC) to sustain the Christian presence in the Middle East as a witness for the gospel of love and the sake of moderation. Being aware that these churches, including our member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, are witnessing in very difficult circumstances, we pledge our support, financial and otherwise, as they develop an indigenous theology of mission and vision in the Middle East and continue their witness through educational and social programs. We also support them for the role they play in building a modern civil society that respects internationally-recognized human rights, including freedom of religion and freedom of speech, and promotes gender justice.

We support:

- 1) religious speech that respects “the other” and recognizes them as they wish to be understood;

- 2) changes in educational curricula that call on everyone to respect different religious traditions;
- 3) the promotion of an understanding that the Christian presence in the Middle East is integral to those societies and that they are bridge-builders;
- 4) the promotion of an understanding that regional conflicts are at their roots not primarily religious but political, historical and economic, among others.

The LWF Council calls also on the nation states to guarantee equal citizenship -- with equal rights and responsibilities -- grounded in law that respects all ethnicities and religions and embraces diversity. It also reiterates its support for the building of Christian-Muslim-Jewish relations that promote mutual understanding and respect and actively overcome any kind of extremism.

### ***Resolution on Israel-Palestine***

#### **It is voted:**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains, regrettably, one of the world's most intractable political conflicts and the central problem of the Middle East. After nearly 50 years of Israeli occupation of Palestinian land (beyond the 1967 de facto borders), the LWF Council, meeting in Wittenberg, Germany, 15-21 June 2016, continues -- with many people of good will -- to seek out signs of "hope in a hopeless situation".

We commend the recent decision of the European Union to label products from the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories to create awareness that safeguards the commitment to a two-state solution, based on the 1967 borders.

Despite a number of efforts, the well-known core issues that would be part of a final status agreement are still unresolved – borders, security, settlements, movement and access, refugees, mutual recognition and the status of Jerusalem.

The Council calls on our member churches to encourage their governments to commend the recent initiative of the Government of France to hold an international conference by the end of 2016 to discuss a plan, based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 as well as on the Arab Peace Initiative (API). The API commits 57 Islamic and Arab countries to accept normalized diplomatic relations with the State of Israel if it allows for a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders. The Council asks the churches to invest in peace in this and other ways.

The Council calls on the international community, for the sake of the whole world as well as those parties to the conflict, to redouble their efforts to reach a final status solution based on peace with justice.

### ***Open letter - To Member Churches and related partners in Latin America and the Caribbean on Threats to Democracy***

#### **It is voted:**

The LWF Council expresses its deep concern for the difficult situations that some Latin American countries are going through in their democratic processes, particularly in Brazil and Venezuela. This concern has been shared through communications amongst the LWF member churches in the region,

communications that speak of the concern for the uncertainty and vulnerability of the democratic and legal processes of the countries in the region.

We believe that as a communion it is necessary to express our deep concern, not only for Brazil and Venezuela, but also for all the countries that wish to uphold democracy.

- In Brazil, mobilizations and demonstrations have shown disapproval of the current situation, which is for many men and women a coup d'état justified through an investigation for "fiscal responsibility crimes" allegedly carried out by the democratically elected first woman president of Brazil.

- In Venezuela, the situation has become difficult and unbearable due to both internal and external pressures. The lack of food, electricity and medicines affect mainly those most in need. There is uncertainty and lack of trust in the proper application of the constitutional tools that allow the voice of the people to be heard.

Bearing in mind the dramatic situation suffered by Latin American countries in the 1970s and 1980s, during which constitutional laws were violated and coups d'état perpetrated, we call upon you to be attentive (Mark 13:33) and to call upon your governments to ensure respect for democratic processes and the rule of law.

In the name of the communion of the Lutheran World Federation we urge the churches of Latin America and the Caribbean to never stop defending peace and justice, in particular by:

- Continuing to proclaim the love and mercy of God, especially calling for respect among persons who think differently in a context of polarization;
- Inviting the churches of the region to renew their engagement with love, justice and peace, reconciliation and the vision of building a better world; and
- Promoting fundamental respect for human rights in order to foster the democratic process.

You will be in our prayers as you witness for justice, peace and reconciliation. We trust our Lord will give you the strength and hope for a renewed and better future for all.

### ***Pastoral statement concerning the Mass Shooting Incident in Orlando, Florida, USA***

"So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God, he created them." (Genesis 1:27, NRSV).

All too often, in this broken world, we fail to see the image of God in the other. While the LWF Council met in Lutherstadt Wittenberg 15-21 June 2016, we were reminded again of the persistence of sin, in situations named and unnamed, such as the shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, USA.

In the early morning hours of June 12, 2016 a man, later identified as a Muslim American, entered a club known as a place of gathering for the LGBT community in Orlando, killing 49 people and wounding more than 50 others.

So many issues come together in this one horrific incident – hate crime, gun violence, and marginalization of people because of sexual orientation or religious

identification. Sadly, the tragedy is compounded by uncivil discourse that manipulates fear and divides people.

We live in an increasingly divided and polarized world. Too often we separate ourselves into like-minded groups and sort others out. It is a short distance from division to demonization. On June 12th we witnessed the tragic consequences of this rift in the human family.

There is another way. God's deep and gracious love, demonstrated by the death and resurrection of Christ, has reconciled the world to God's self. God invites us into this reconciling work. It is the love that binds us all together. All of humanity is connected by this love. In God's love there is no "other", only children created in the image of God.

As members of the Lutheran World Federation we must examine ourselves, individually and as a communion, to acknowledge the ways we have divided and been divided. We must stand with people who have been "othered". We must speak justice, forgiveness, peace and reconciliation into the cacophony of hatred and division. "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation," (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

We stand against acts of retaliation against the Muslim community now and in days to come. And we must continue to communicate God's love even to those who are compelled by hate and fear.

We continue to pray for the families of the slain and of the shooter, for the wounded, for the LGBT community, and for the Muslim community that faces the threat of retaliation. And we pray that the Prince of Peace will bring us all to the day when we stop the bloodshed.

### ***Public Statement on The Church in the Public Space – A Statement of The Lutheran World Federation***

The Committee recommends that the Council adopt Exhibit 9.3.1 (Revised).

**It is voted:**

#### **1. Lutherans affirm the call to public engagement**

On the occasion of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, the Lutheran communion seeks to claim the church's public engagement as a vital element of what it means to be Lutheran. Public engagement is the church's ongoing response to the freedom that is ours in Christ to love and serve the neighbor. The Reformation clearly expressed that this freedom emerges from the salvation by grace through faith.

At a time in which the role and authority of religion is debated, we articulate why and how as Lutherans we are present and active in the public space. As we look toward the future as a global communion, we respond to the call to a more profound presence in the public space.

Christians are shaped by the gospel message. God's liberating power transforms us to live a life that reflects the good news of Jesus Christ. In Christ God embraces our fragility, suffering and sin and brings human existence into new life (Phil 2). Baptism is the anchor for Christian life and Christian public engagement.



The Bible calls us to be ready to respond to anyone who demands us to account for the hope that is within us; and to do so with gentleness and reverence (1 Pet 3:15f). Baptism implies a vocation to a life in faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13:13), ready to care for the well-being of all.

Christian communities have a public dimension, as they are called by God to be transformative agents in the world (Rom 12:2). Churches and congregations are called to move beyond their institutional comfort zone and prophetically to dwell amidst the cries and hopes that fill their local and global contexts. Thus, when churches isolate themselves from the broader concerns of their societies they betray their calling to be salt and light to the world (Mt 5:13-16).

## **2. Lutherans are committed to strengthening public space as a just place for all**

We envision public space as a just place for all and affirm our commitment actively to contribute to such a space. Three important elements characterize public space as a just place for all: (a) equal access to common goods and political decision-making processes; (b) safety, especially for the vulnerable; and (c) meaningful participation of and interaction among all groups of society.

Social empowerment takes place when groups, traditionally excluded from social, political and economic processes, make their voices heard and have their claims publicly addressed and therefore are able to contribute to the development of public policies and cultural transformation.

## **3. Lutherans affirm the public role and responsibility of religious communities**

Against tendencies to limit religion to the private realm and to withdraw into enclosed communal spaces, we affirm that religious communities have a public role in society. They actively contribute to the common good by sharing their spiritual visions and values, articulating their understanding of a just and peaceful society, advocating against oppressive structures and serving people in need.

Such a public role entails the responsibility to order one's affairs in accountable and transparent ways, both in institutional matters and in matters of theological teaching. Lutherans are acutely aware of human fallibility and sin, also within the church. Because of this the church cannot claim a superior position in the public discourse. The gospel word brings life to the world and the church is an instrument through which the gospel is heard. Therefore, the church is called to engage critically and self-critically in this world.

## **4. Lutherans emphasize the distinction between the worldly and the spiritual realms**

When claiming active presence in the public space, it is helpful to distinguish between the worldly and the spiritual realms. According to Lutheran theology, in the worldly realm, laws are used to order society so that all people may live together in peace. At the heart of the spiritual realm stands the sharing of the good news of God's deep love for this world. Proclaiming God's mercy is an essential mark of our church and one of our contributions to the public space.

Lutherans advocate against the politicization of religion and the instrumentalization of politics by religious actors. Such dynamics distort the meaning and function of both realms, and become destructive for the whole of society. The church's task is not to dominate the public space but, rather, to warn against any worldview or religion, Christian or other, becoming an ideology that

would dominate the public space. Lutherans underline the importance of freedom of religion or belief as a means to protect the spiritual realm in people's lives from undue interference. Lutherans condemn any violence, domestic or public, and any hate speech perpetrated in the name of religion.

#### **5. Lutherans acknowledge the public space as a shared space**

In their societies, Lutherans live together with people of other religious traditions and convictions. Dialogue and cooperation are essential in order to create a participatory public space. As conflict stalks many societies, the church is called to walk the way of peace together with others and to build relationships of trust. The church is called to lead and serve processes of repentance, healing and forgiveness and jointly to walk new ways towards reconciliation. The church is actively involved in shaping a vibrant civil society and being part of networks of solidarity.

#### **6. Lutherans affirm human rights as an important tool to enhance justice and peace**

The Christian witness in the public space is primarily guided by assessing the consequences of political decisions for the most disadvantaged in society. As creatures of God, all human beings are created with equal dignity. Therefore the church is called to reevaluate cultural distinctions between center and margin, between powerful and oppressed, between low and high. In a plural and globalized world, human rights have become an important tool to enhance justice and peace.

#### **7. Lutherans are committed to five key activities in public space:**

- a) Assessing public issues in participatory ways
- b) Building relationships of trust
- c) Challenging injustice
- d) Discovering signs of hope
- e) Empowering people in need.

## **STANDING COMMITTEE FOR CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP**

*The Standing Committee for Constitution and Membership reviewed the Rules of Procedure for the Assembly (Exhibit 11.4) and Possible Amendments to the LWF Constitution and Bylaws (Exhibits 11.6 and 11.6.1). Please refer to LWF Twelfth Assembly on page 3 + 4 of this document.*

## **STANDING COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNICATIONS**

***With reference to "Proposal for a Reorganized LWF Governance to support future sustainability of the LWF and its Communion Office" (Exhibit 9.6.2)***

**It is voted:**

- to request the General Secretary to propose an alternative solution to the one presented in Exhibit 9.6.2 that would safeguard the broader role of

communication as a communion building instrument and a tool for making the LWF visible and vibrant. This would be presented to the Meeting of Officers in November.

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