



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

FOR A JUST AND PEACEFUL WORLD

Annual Report 2023



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Cover photo: Celly Manirakoze of the Evangelical Lutheran Church In Canada distributes holy communion at the closing worship of the LWF Thirteenth Assembly. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



For a just and peaceful world

In 2023, the member churches of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) gathered for the Thirteenth Assembly in Kraków, Poland. For one week, the city of Kraków, became the heart of global Lutheranism. United under the theme 'One Body, One Spirit, One Hope', we strengthened our bonds through prayer, worship, reflection and witness. The Assembly set a direction for the coming years, articulating our shared aspirations.

While the Assembly was a highlight of the year, the continued work of the global communion of churches remained steadfast. We served people in need, brought churches together to learn from each other, engaged in theological reflection, advocated for justice, and worked for Christian unity. Through all of this we came closer to realizing our shared vision of a just, peaceful, and reconciled world.

This Annual Reports provides an overview of the LWF's work during this memorable year. It is divided into two parts: the first offering a month-by-month summary of highlights of that work; the second offering more details about key thematic areas in which we are engaged.

We want to express our thanks to the LWF member churches, our staff, partners, and donors, for their strong commitment to our shared work and values. Together, we go further and achieve more.

Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt

LWF General Secretary

Bishop Henrik Stubkjær

LWF President

Year in brief



22 January: Hundreds of people gather at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in the Old City of Jerusalem, as Sally Azar – an LWF Council member – becomes the first woman ordained for service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

28 February: LWF marks one year of war in Ukraine and expresses gratitude for strong solidarity of LWF member churches and partners. Work begins in the frontline city of Kharkiv.



21-24 March: Representatives of member churches across Europe gather at Mansfield College in the English city of Oxford, for the European Pre-Assembly, hosted by the Lutheran Church in Great Britain.

15 April: LWF responds to the refugee crisis following an outbreak of violence in Sudan. Country programs in Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan receive up to 2,000 refugees in a day.

25 January: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. LWF participates in prayer service with Pope Francis, meets with dialogue partners, and presents Lutheran perspectives at an international symposium in Rome, Italy.

7 February: LWF calls for donations following devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. LWF works with local partner Caritas Syria and other Christian partners through ACT Alliance.



6-17 March: At the UN Commission on the Status of Women, a 32-member LWF delegation brings grassroots perspectives on work for gender justice and women's empowerment.

20-24 March: The LWF World Service Regional Management Team Meeting in Nepal focuses on building resilience.

17-21 April: Representatives of member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America gather in Bogotá for the Pre-Assembly of the Americas, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia.

2 May: LWF related agencies meet in the Communion Office for strategic discussions.

9-14 May: Representatives of member churches in Africa gather in Nairobi, Kenya, for the Africa Pre-Assembly, hosted by the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya.

8-14 July: LWF advocates for an end to gender-based violence and the prevention of human rights violations against migrants and refugees at the 53rd session of the UN Human Rights Council.

19 August: LWF highlights the work of field staff on World Humanitarian Day.

6-10 September: Representatives of LWF's 26 humanitarian country programs meet in Prague, Czech Republic, for the Global Leadership Team Meeting, focusing on the new World Service Strategy.



20 October: The LWF Central America program celebrates 40 years of service to people in need.

23 November: LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt visits the 14 Lutheran churches in Indonesia and meets with church leaders in Tarutung, Sumatra.

20 November: Retreat of Newly Elected Church Leaders in the Communion Office in Geneva, and in Wittenberg, Germany.



15 May: The LWF country program in Myanmar responds after category 5 cyclone Mocha makes landfall in the coastal areas of Myanmar.

14-18 June: Representatives from across Asia gather for their regional Pre-Assembly in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, hosted by the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia.

20 June: On World Refugee Day, LWF issues a global call for solidarity with displaced people.



11-13 September: Women's, Men's and Youth Pre-Assemblies take place in Poland.

13-19 September: Over 1,300 participants including 327 member church delegates meet in Kraków, Poland, for the Thirteenth LWF Assembly, under the Theme "One Body, One Spirit, One Hope."

7 October: Following a terror attack by Hamas, Israel starts bombing the Gaza strip. LWF advocates for a humanitarian ceasefire and the release of Israeli hostages. Around 100 patients and people accompanying them from Gaza are accommodated at the LWF Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem.



30 November-12 December: An LWF delegation of over 60 young people participates in COP 28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Attending in-person and online, they call on world leaders to accelerate action toward climate justice for all.

16 December: LWF, Islamic Relief Worldwide and Jewish aid organization HIAS bring faith perspectives to refugee protection at the Global Refugee Forum.

Year in photos

The Lutheran World Federation had an eventful year in 2023, with the Thirteenth Assembly as a major highlight, as the global communion of churches came together to worship, reflect and set direction for the years ahead. The following pages give insights into the diverse work and witness of the LWF and its member churches throughout the year from January to December.

January—April



January: A historic event at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem, as Rev. Sally Azar – an LWF Council member – becomes the first ordained woman in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert



February: As a 7.8-magnitude earthquake causes massive destruction in the border area between Turkey and Syria in early February, the LWF works with local partner CARITAS Syria to support people in need. Photo: ACT/ FCA



January: LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations Prof. Dr Dirk Lange with Kurt Cardinal Koch, Prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Photo: Vatican Media



February: Students from Ethiopia, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe are the first graduates of a program on theology, gender justice and leadership education, established in honor of Malagasy theologian H el ene Ralivao. Photo: Makumira University



March: During the Regional Management Team Meeting in Nepal, participants visit a community-owned cooperative in Jhapa district. Photo: LWF/ Y. Gautam



March: Hosted by the Lutheran Church in Great Britain, representatives of member churches in Europe gather at Mansfield College in Oxford for the first LWF regional Pre-Assembly. PHoto: LWF/ Albin Hillert

“The church is called into God’s mission of sharing the good news of hope amid suffering.”

Good Friday message by
Rev. Dr Yonas Yigezu Dibisa



April: In an Easter message on the theme of “Upending the status quo”, Rev. Dr Robin Steinke, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, reflects on the “earth shaking news” of Easter. Photo: Ramon Perucho/ Pexels



March: Church of Sweden Archbishop em. Dr. Antje Jackelén speaks at an LWF event on harnessing technology to end gender-based violence during the 67th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Photo: Roy Anthony Morrison



April: Representatives of member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America gather in Bogotá for the regional Pre-Assembly hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia. Photo: LWF/ Eugenio Albrecht



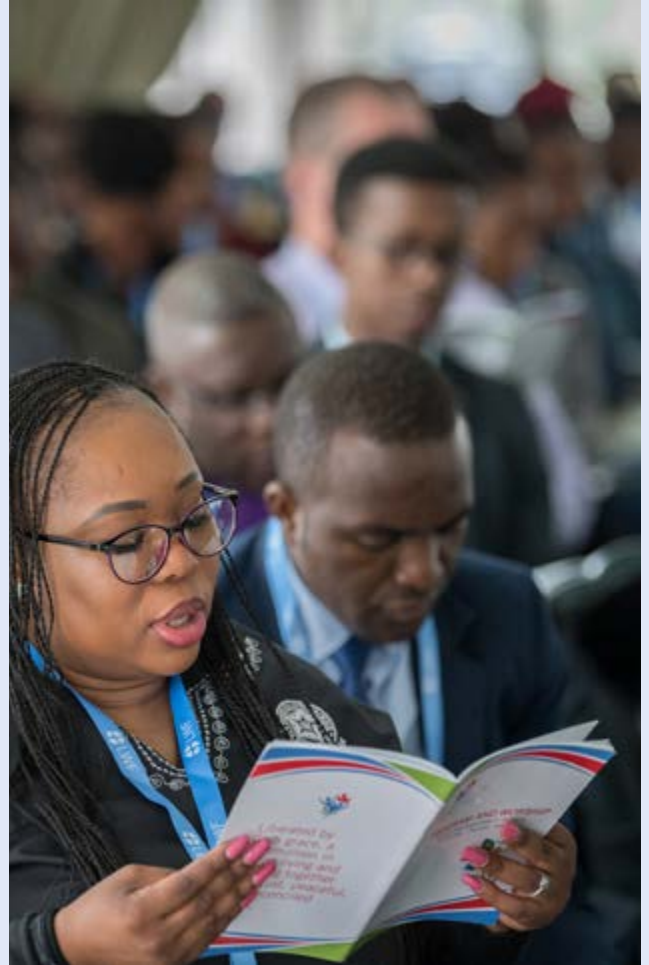
May: Pastors, staff and volunteers from Central Eastern Europe LWF member churches that support refugees, meet for a consultation on pastoral care and psychosocial first aid. Photo: ECCB

“We acknowledge the rich diversity within the communion. For us unity does not mean uniformity.”

Message of the Europe Pre-Assembly
in Oxford, United Kingdom



May: “Jesus commanded the women to speak.” The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark marks the 75th anniversary of women’s ordination, recalling the day in 1948 when the first three female pastors were ordained. Photo: Marlene Laursen



May: Representatives of LWF’s member churches in Africa gather in Nairobi, Kenya, for the regional Pre-Assembly hosted by the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. Photo LWF/ Albin Hillert



May: As Cyclone ‘Mocha’ causes flooding and devastation around the coastal areas of Myanmar in mid-May, the LWF country program responds in collaboration with other organizations. Photo: LWF Myanmar



May: LWF joins an interagency call to international governments to fully fund the emergency response in the Horn of Africa. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert

“We call upon the LWF Assembly and member churches to accompany the Asian region in prioritizing dialogue and cooperation between different communities.”

Message of the Asia Pre-Assembly
in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

May–June



June: Representatives of member churches across Asia gather at the Luther Center in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for the regional Pre-Assembly. Photo: LWF/ Jotham Lee



June: “Part of a bigger family.” Delegates from a range of Lutheran churches in Europe attend the Conference of European Churches General Assembly in Tallinn, Estonia. Photo: CEC/ Albin Hillert



June: Participants in a week-long seminar organized by the LWF in Geneva and Wittenberg, bringing together 17 lay leaders from different member churches around the globe. Photo: LWF/ S. Gallay

“We commit to continue striving to be a communion that goes out and acts on the margins of society, offering a radical welcome to all, as Jesus taught us.”

Message from the Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America Pre-Assembly in Bogotá, Colombia



July: More than 1,200 Brazilian and international youth gather for the national synod meeting of youth in the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB). Photo: LWF Youth



July: The overcrowded Kumer refugee camp near the Ethiopia-Sudan border at Metema faces acute shortages of essential services, as Ethiopia receives people fleeing from the conflict in Sudan. Photo: LWF/S. Gebreyes



July: The Nepal Evangelical Lutheran Church has a lot to celebrate on 18 July. The church’s 80th anniversary coincides with the installation of Rev. Joseph Soren as the church’s first bishop. Photo: ELC Nepal



August: On World Humanitarian Day 2023, LWF joins aid organizations worldwide in highlighting the commitment of its nearly 7,000 field staff working in crisis regions across the world, including Chad, in this photo. Photo: LWF/ M. Renaux



August: Weeks away from the LWF Thirteenth Assembly, the Kraków congregation of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland opens its doors to the international team preparing the 13 to 19 September gathering. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert



The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) held its Thirteenth Assembly from 13 to 19 September 2023 under the theme “One Body, One Spirit, One Hope.” The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland hosted the highest decision-making body of the global Lutheran communion in the city of Kraków and its ICE Congress Center.



More than 1,300 people from all over the world attended the Assembly, including 327 delegates from LWF member churches. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert



People arrive at the registration desk of the Thirteenth Assembly venue. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert



Assembly worship hall in the ICE Congress Center in Kraków, Poland. Photo: LWF/ M. Renaux



Rev. Danielle Dokman, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname preaches at the opening worship of the LWF Thirteenth Assembly. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert



Communications staff evaluate pictures at the Thirteenth Assembly in Kraków, Poland. Photo: LWF/Johan Celine Valeriano

“Hope empowers us to speak out in the public space for justice and human rights.”

Assembly Message



Participants mark a white cloth with the words “How long oh Lord?” during the visit to the Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, which was part of the Assembly program. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert



Assembly participants pray before the election of the next LWF president. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert



LWF President (2017-2023) Archbishop Dr Pantil Filibus Musa delivers his address to the Thirteenth LWF Assembly. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert



Presiding Bishop Jerzy Samiec of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland speaks during an opening worship service celebrated in the Lutheran Parish of the Divine Providence of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, as women from around the globe gather in Wroclaw for a women's pre-assembly to the Thirteenth LWF Assembly. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert.



LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt delivers her report at the LWF Thirteenth Assembly. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

“Together we affirm that we are One in the Body of Christ, empowered by the One Spirit and called to proclaim the One Hope of the Risen Christ.”

Assembly Message



LWF President-elect, Bishop Henrik Stubkjær, speaks with media at the Assembly. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



Youth lead a climate march through Thirteenth Assembly venue. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert.



LWF Council members pictured at their first meeting following the Thirteenth Assembly. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert.



Lutherans from around the globe join local congregants for Sunday worship at the Lutheran church in Bystrice (Czech Republic) as part of their participation in the Thirteenth Assembly. Photo: LWF/Marie Renaux



Local Polish choir sings during the opening worship of the LWF Thirteenth Assembly. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



Representatives of the LWF and Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland carry a wreath – with a ribbon on one side reading 'The Lutheran World Federation' and on the other 'We will not forget' – to the Death Wall at the Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau, as they visit as part of the Assembly program. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert.

“Hope is the lens through which we look at the world, as followers of Christ, journeying together into the future”.

Assembly Message



October 2023: LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt leads a delegation of young Lutherans to Rome for an ecumenical prayer vigil organized by the Taizé community. Photo: Catholic Press Photo/ Alessia Guiliani for LWF



October 2023: On the 40th anniversary of the LWF Central America program, General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt LWF speaks to a group of returned migrants during a visit to a community center in El Guante, Honduras. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert



October 2023: Following an escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine, the LWF unequivocally condemns attacks by all parties targeting civilians. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert

“LWF stands with all affected by this violence, with those who grieve, and those who live in fear and without hope for the future.

LWF Statement on Israel-Palestine,
11 October 2023



October 2023: A mental health therapy session is underway in Adjumani refugee settlement in northern Uganda, where LWF provides support to host communities and refugees. Photo: LWF Uganda



November 2023: As part of the annual campaign of 16 Days of Activism to end gender-based violence, LWF Burundi facilitates a three-day gender justice workshop for women leaders. Photo: LWF/ L. Gillibert

“Preventing sexual and gender-based violence means challenging the gender norms and beliefs that make it socially acceptable for people to carry out these harmful practices.”

LWF Gender Justice Toolbox



November 2023: Through its Nepal country program, LWF responds to a 6.4-magnitude earthquake in the western district of Karnali, which destroyed or damaged over 15,000 houses leaving many people without food, winter clothing and shelter. Photo: LWF/ Y. Gautam



November 2023: Heads of churches meet in Geneva and Wittenberg at the annual LWF Retreat for Newly Elected Leaders or RoNEL. Photo: LWF



November 2023: Celebrating God’s grace in West Africa. LWF member churches in Cameroon and the Central African Republic celebrate 100 years of witnessing to the gospel, contributing to development and serving people in need. EEL-RCA



November 2023: LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt visits member churches in Indonesia, learning about the life and ministry of 14 Lutheran churches in a predominantly Muslim context. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert

“A faith-based approach emphasizes the need for compassion for all living beings and the moral imperative to care for the earth.”

LWF Engagement at COP 28



December 2023: On the eve of the Global Refugee Forum, the LWF, Islamic Relief Worldwide and Jewish aid organization HIAS pledge to develop tools for more faith-sensitivity in refugee protection. Photo: LWF/ C. Kästner-Meyer

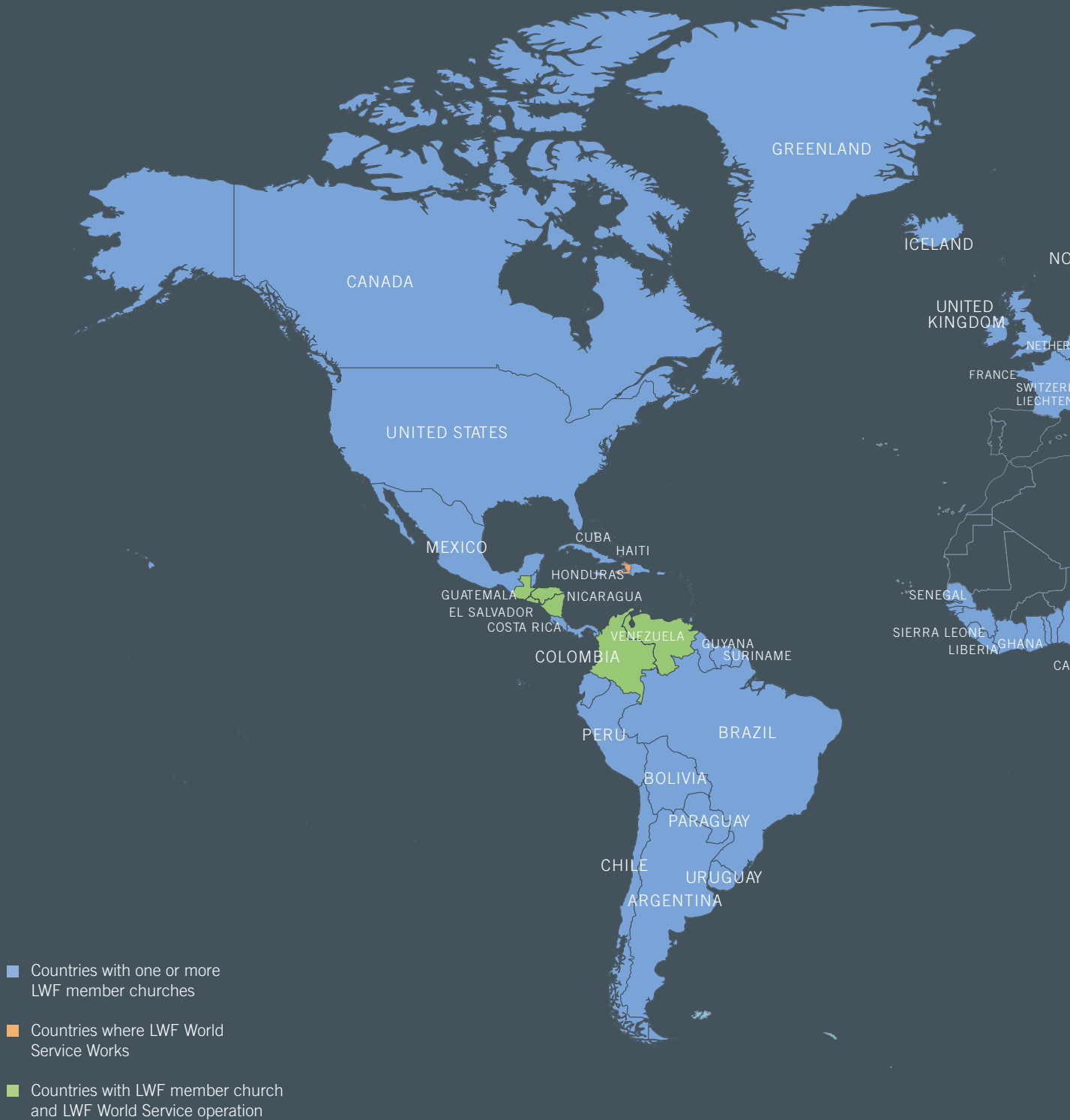


December 2023: Together for faith in action at the UN climate conference. Young LWF delegates from all regions of the global communion participate in COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert



December 2023: The LWF and UNHCR rebuild homes in Ukraine, handing over the last of 525 renovated apartments to families in Kharkiv, just as Christmas approaches. Photo: LWF/ Anatolyi Nazarenko

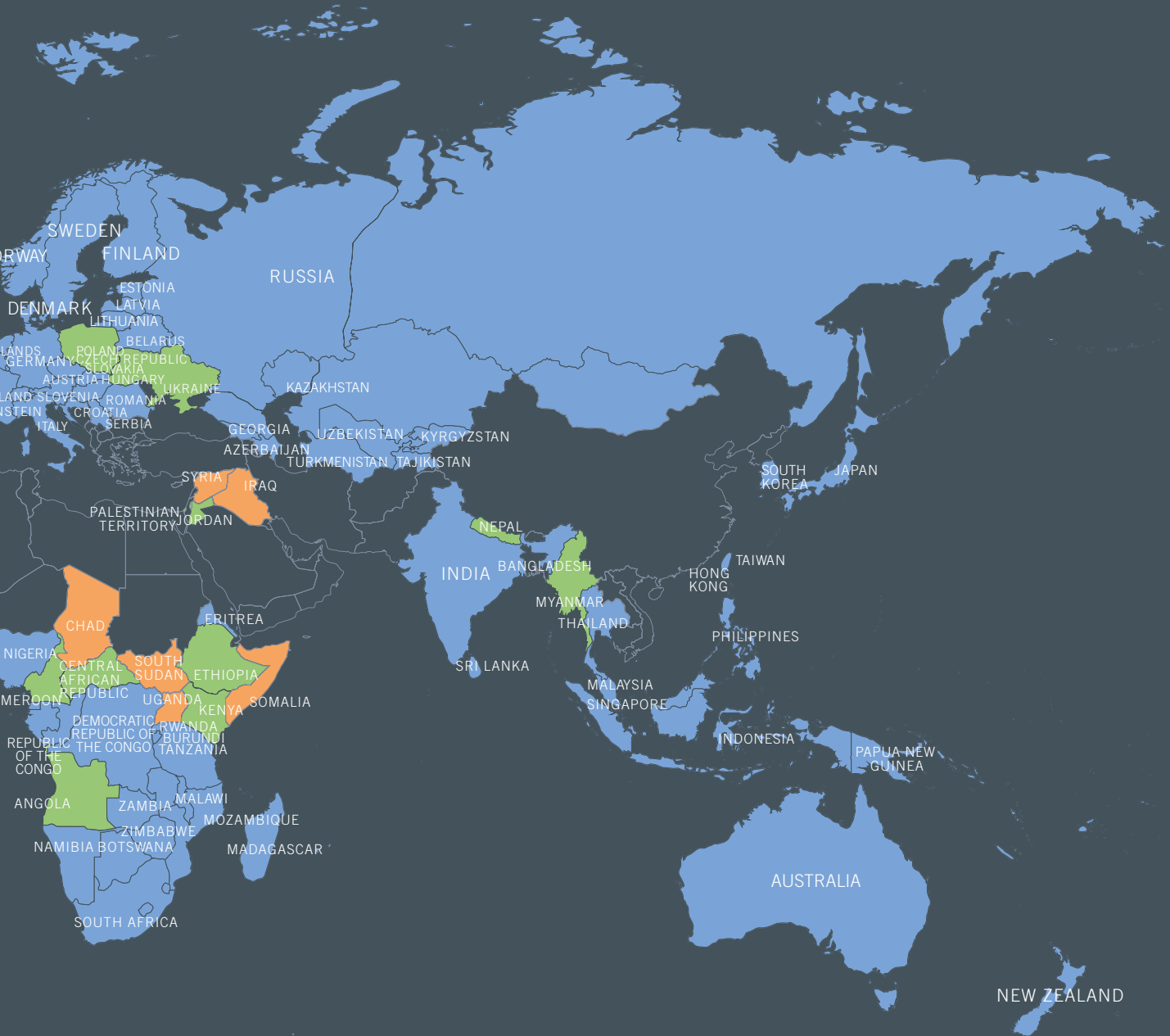
The Lutheran World



7 regions

150 member churches
(as of 2024)

26 countries where LWF World Service is working
(25 as of 2024)



A group of young people are taking a selfie outdoors. In the foreground, a person's hand holds a smartphone high, capturing the group. The group consists of several young women and one man, all smiling and looking towards the camera. They are standing on a paved path that runs alongside a grassy area with many trees. In the background, other people can be seen walking along the path, and a blue sky with light clouds is visible. The overall atmosphere is bright and cheerful.

Program activities



Lutheran World Federation general secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt poses for a photo with a group of female students after giving a public lecture on the topic "One Body, One Spirit, One Hope" at the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP) in Siantar. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

Communion relations

Communion relations in 2023 focused on the Thirteenth Assembly and delegates' preparations. Four regional Pre-Assemblies were held to prepare for that significant event in Kraków, Poland. Meeting in their regional contexts, participants at each Pre-Assembly formulated their main concerns and priorities. These informed the Assembly message and helped to set priorities for LWF's work over the coming years.

Delegates to all four Pre-Assemblies stressed the need for theological training and formation of women, men, and youth. They called for continued efforts regarding the strengthening of gender justice and youth leadership in the churches. Other cross-cutting issues included responding to the climate crisis, advocating for peace and reconciliation, and standing up against fundamentalism in various forms.

The three European regions (Central Eastern Europe, Central Western Europe, and Nordic Countries) met in Oxford, United Kingdom, from

21 to 24 March with the Lutheran Church in Great Britain hosting the gathering.

The European churches identified searching for "credible and transformative hope" amid the war against Ukraine as a critical topic. In the context of declining church membership across the region, the delegates acknowledged their enormous challenges in remaining relevant, hopeful and responsive to people's spiritual needs.

The Pre-Assembly of the Americas took place in Bogotá, Colombia, from 17 to 21 April. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO)

Participants of the partnership conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony during a church service. The conference had the theme "... to give you a future and a hope" (Jer 29:11). Photo: EVLKS



hosted delegates from LWF member churches in the Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America regions.

They highlighted how churches in the two regions are called to respond holistically to a variety of contextual challenges, including polarization, governmental corruption, false information in media and on social networks, and “the structural discrimination suffered by vulnerable groups, which we refer to as the cries of a people crying out for justice.”

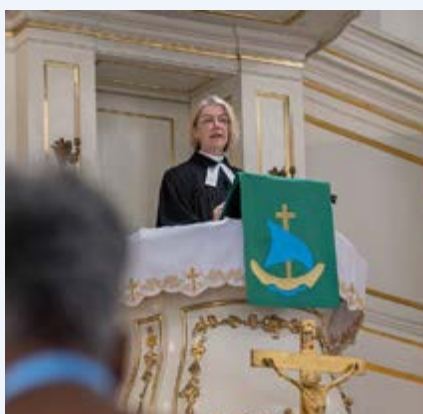
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya and the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church hosted the Africa Pre-Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, from 8 to 12 May.

The African member churches called on each other to “focus on what unites us, not what divides us.” They committed to cooperating with governments, ecumenical partners, civil society organizations and the global Lutheran communion to promote peace and reconciliation. They also urged the member churches to “work together

for conflict resolution, peace, and reconciliation, to stand with churches exposed to violence and terrorism or internal challenges, always addressing the root causes of conflict and violence.”

Finally, the Asia Pre-Assembly took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 14 to 18 June. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia (ELCM) and the Lutheran Church in Malaysia (LCM) hosted the event.

Delegates highlighted the church’s role in the public space and freedom of religion in multi-ethnic and multi-religious contexts. With a “strong spirit of fellowship, commitment to diakonia and peace,” they said, “our hearts come together for the future of our local and global communion.” The Asian church leaders expressed grave concern at the “different degrees of oppression” faced by many churches in the Asia region, including policies that “prevent us from living our faith freely and violate human rights.”



Rev. Halina Radacz, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, talks about her journey to become a pastor, her Lutheran identity in Polish society, and her church’s long process to ordain women. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert



Rev. Joseph Ngoé, President, Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Central African Republic, highlights the church’s responsibility in building trust in the community, providing health care and education. Photo: LWF/S. Gallyay

Read more about the great diversity of Lutherans around the world in these interviews, highlighting the understanding of being Lutheran in different contexts.



Poland: Serving God and the church without limitations



Central African Republic: A beacon of light toward stability and peace



LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt joined Pope Francis, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, alongside a host of other Christian leaders and young people for a prayer vigil on 30 September in St Peter's Square in Rome.

The event, organized by the Taizé community, together with the Vatican and a committee of ecumenical youth leaders, was held ahead of a Synod of Roman Catholic bishops from around the globe, who met from 4 to 29 October to discuss reforming the Church.

Photos: Catholic Press Photo/Alessia Giuliani for LWF

Ecumenical Relations

It was a busy year for ecumenical dialogue in 2023, as the LWF and its partners pushed full steam ahead with in-person encounters that had been delayed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lutheran and Orthodox theologians met three times in Turkey, Germany and Estonia to work together on a joint statement looking ahead to the landmark 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea in 2025, an important milestone for all Christian churches. The International Joint Commission on Theological Dialogue between the LWF and the Orthodox Church is currently exploring the role of the Holy Spirit in the churches and within wider society. LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Prof. Dr Dirk Lange welcomed “this new impetus and energy among members of the Commission [which] demonstrates our commitment to the exploration of critical questions of faith and the search for a common language to express these insights.”

Anglicans and Lutherans held a meeting of their International Commission on Unity and Mission in Costa Rica – the first time the group had gathered in person since the group was established

in 2018. Their goal is to find ways of cooperating more closely and put into practice the theological agreements that have been reached between the two communions. Pairs of bishops from different parts of the world will be tasked with working together on this vital reception process, translating the many consensus documents into practical actions.

Catholic-Lutheran relations came under the spotlight several times during the year, particularly during the presentation of their Common Word at the Kraków, Assembly (see below) and shortly afterwards in the Vatican, as General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt joined Pope Francis and a host of other Christian leaders for a prayer vigil organised by the Taizé Community. Behind the scenes, meanwhile, theologians continued with their preparatory group meetings for the launch of a Sixth Phase of the International Lutheran-Catholic Joint Commission on Unity.

The year marked the publication of an important report on the first ever international dialogue between LWF member churches and representatives of the Pentecostal World Fellowship. The report, titled [The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me](#), was the fruit of five in-person meetings that took place between 2016 and 2022, preceded by preparatory talks facilitated by the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France. During their encounters, delegates grew to understand and appreciate each other's theological and spiritual traditions, finding ways of working together in common witness to the world.



Read the Report
'The Spirit of the
Lord is Upon Me'



Common Word

Ecumenical relations were high on the agenda at the Kraków Assembly as leaders of seven Christian world communions – Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Orthodox, Pentecostal and Reformed – met together for a discussion on the future of their journey towards full, visible unity. The unprecedented event took place on the closing day of the Assembly, which was focused on the theme “One Body, One Spirit, One Hope.”

Ahead of the discussion, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt and the Prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, Kurt Cardinal Koch, presented a Common Word document to the Assembly, stating that dialogue

between Lutherans and Catholics in preparation for the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg confession in 2030 “could lead to another ‘milestone’ on the way from conflict to communion, comparable to the 1999 landmark Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ).”

Citing that declaration, Burghardt noted that “the doctrine of justification is [the] touchstone for the Christian faith,” and the ecumenical task is “to translate that message for our time,” in a world challenged by those “proclaiming misleading theologies.” The language of “justified by God through faith alone” is a message of reconciliation that “must come alive for people today,” she said.

Theology for transformation

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) holds the conviction that for theology to be truly transformative, it should not be done for theology’s sake, but rather aim at effecting change in the church and in society.

In this Assembly year, various publications documented the results of study processes involving participants from all LWF regions on Lutheran identities, Christian-Jewish dialogue, women in the ordained ministry, theological education and youth leadership.

The results of a four-year study process on what it means to be Lutheran were published. [Now there are varieties - A study document on Lutheran identity in the global Lutheran communion](#) documents responses from more than 2,800 people—lay and ordained leaders, theologians and practitioners—from LWF member churches across the world. It highlights the importance of LWF’s strong witness against a global push toward economic and political uniformity and ethno-nationalist populist movements that threaten to erode human rights and liberty around the world.

Being Lutheran “does not prescribe one identity,” the document affirms, but rather it describes “a faithful way of being in the world that points to Christ as the revelation of God’s love, while embracing the creative tensions of ecumenical consensus, interfaith dialogue and interdisciplinary dialectic.”

In [Hope for the Future](#), a team of Lutheran theologians presented various perspectives on the development of Jewish-Christian relations. The aim, as stated in the study document, is to stimulate further reflection among LWF member churches and beyond on relations between the two faith communities, and “to work toward respectful coexistence, mutual understanding and effective solidarity with our Jewish neighbors.”

LWF’s theological education processes were documented in [For building up the body of Christ](#). The resource includes a compilation of



Tenth anniversary of Gender Justice Policy

In 2023, to mark 10 years since the adoption of its Gender Justice Policy, LWF launched a new Gender Justice Toolbox. This resource aims to support member churches and country programs to implement the policy through gender transformative programming and institutional practice.



Download the Gender Justice Policy in 15 languages.



The LWF learning platform offers a variety of training materials and resources in theology, diakonia, and leadership, with more thematic areas to be added. Photo: LWF/A. Danielsson

statements, messages, reports and resolutions from 1950 to 2020 on the Lutheran communion's commitment to theological education, and contributions from members of the Theological Education and Formation (TEF) network that accompanies different processes. The LWF also supported specific initiatives by theological institutions in India, Tanzania, and in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

The interim report on [Experiences of Women in the Ordained Ministry](#) marked the completion of the first phase of a study process aimed at removing barriers for the full and meaningful participation of women in the ordained ministry.


At regional level, the tenth anniversary of the LWF Gender Justice Policy included discussions at an event organized by the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA). Accompaniment of member churches on theology and gender justice was highlighted in various ways such as the 40th anniversary of women's ordination in the

Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil. In March, 27 participants from 23 member churches met in Bangkok, Thailand, for the Asia Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment Network, and elected new coordinators for the regional network.

A new LWF [Learning Platform](#) was set up during the year and launched in early 2024. It offers a variety of training materials and resources on theology, diakonia, and leadership, with more themes to be added gradually.

The regular accompaniment of scholarship holders in theological studies and diakonia related fields continued, with 60 new theological scholarships being activated in 2023, plus the quarterly online encounters of theology scholars. A group of current LWF scholarship holders shared their honest and authentic narratives on how studying theology has transformed their thoughts, lives and faith in the publication [Journeys from the Crossroads](#).

Equal opportunities in leadership



The LWF Leadership program invites women, men and youth in positions of church leadership to explore the meaning of their respective responsibilities and strengthen their identity as leaders in the Lutheran communion.

Key topics for 14 Bishops and Presidents of LWF member churches, who gathered at the annual Retreat of Newly Elected Leaders (RoNEL) in November, were signs of hope among churches, challenges and opportunities faced, and how those in leadership deal with such concerns. Participants met at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute and the LWF Communion Office in Geneva, and the LWF Center in Wittenberg,

Germany. “I came to realize that in our different contexts . . . churches that are very different in the number of members, size, and also the way they are organized, we often have had the same difficulties, the same problems and that we can share together and this sharing with one another is truly a great richness and very fascinating,” noted Pastor President Emmanuelle Seyboldt of the United Protestant Church of France.



The first cohort of graduates from the Tumaini University Makumira program on theology, gender justice and leadership education, together with LWF program executives Rev. Dr Chad Rimmer and Rev. Katarina Kiilunen. Photo: Makumira University

In June, the 6th International Seminar for Lay Leaders gathered 17 participants from different member churches around the globe in Geneva and in Wittenberg to focus on theological and biblical values of church leadership, learn about LWF's work, and share about the different contexts in which they work. "As a minority in my country, I frequently feel alone and there are not so many people who share my faith. But now I have met friends who believe the same as me and it is so comforting to know that," said Mirza Munoz Orea from the Mexican Lutheran Church.

Strengthening women's and youth leadership was among priorities highlighted at meetings for women and youth in conjunction with the regional Pre-Assemblies. In Poland, empowering both groups for leadership, promoting gender and intergenerational justice, were among key topics at the Women's and Youth Pre-Assemblies in Poland, and in the decisions of the Assembly itself.

Youth stewards who had been trained under the LWF Youth program for various leadership and administration skills at the Assembly and its related meetings were part of the 101 participants at the Youth Pre-Assembly in Wisła Malinka, Poland.

In May, the LWF accompanied a leadership capacity training for 70 synod presidents and other key leaders of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Addis Ababa, under the theme "Leadership during times of crisis."

As part of the H el ene Ralivao Fund, the Theology, Gender Justice and Leadership Education program, in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, graduated its first cohort of students in February 2023. The same month, the second cohort of 24 participants from 11 LWF member churches in Africa began their two-week residential training at the Tumaini Makumira University, and proceeded to the second part of individual research around gender equality in their home churches. Rev. Gwakisa Mwaipopo from Tanzania said he was happy to hear that their research papers would serve as a resource for churches and institutions in Africa and beyond. "Our research findings were not designed for our supervisors to give us grades, but their purpose was for us to learn and to bring about positive changes in our own contexts," he said.



Read more about
LWF's leadership
program

Supporting the diaconal engagement of churches

The LWF Communion Office encourages member churches to implement their own local diaconal initiatives through project support and global initiatives focusing on different themes.

As part of the “One LWF” response to people affected by the war in Ukraine, there was continued support for churches in their work with refugees in neighboring countries, as well as the Czech Republic. The “Bread for Life” project of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ukraine facilitated the distribution of vouchers to vulnerable persons enabling them to purchase items for their daily needs. A particular highlight was a training held in Prague, Czech Republic, on pastoral care and psychosocial support, bringing together 25 participants from LWF member churches in Central Eastern Europe to focus on supporting those working with refugees.

Participants of the Central Eastern Europe LWF consultation on pastoral care and psychosocial first aid in the context of refugee assistance. Photo: LWF



From left to right in white chef jackets: Nothando Nkala, Zingaphi Nomatiti and Olga Mamogobo, the three women who trained in bakery and catering through the LWF-supported Outreach Foundation in South Africa. They are now responsible for corporate events under the guidance of the South African Chefs Association. Photo: Outreach Foundation



In 2023, there were 23 new or ongoing long-term member church projects supported by the LWF. They included the Outreach Foundation in South Africa, which empowers community members with livelihood skills. Three women, who completed catering and bakery courses, now take part in food exhibitions organized by the Restaurant Association of South Africa. They continue to earn income through such events, while gaining more experience in the industry.

Support to the member churches' work on irregular migration and addressing human trafficking continued under the Symbols of Hope



(SoH) program with LWF's member churches in Ethiopia, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe program showcased its work when it hosted, for the first time, the exchange visit of coordinators of SoH country programs in September.

Initiatives to confront poverty and economic injustice in Africa were supported in the form of six youth-led leadership and livelihood projects in Ghana, Liberia, Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania and Zambia.

LWF's accompaniment to churches' work in diakonia involves both longer-term training and education, and capacity building workshops. In 2023, the LWF activated 71 new scholarships for studies in various fields relating to diakonia. In October, the diaconal workshop in Indonesia under the theme "Transforming Hearts, Inspiring Change: One Body, One Spirit, One Hope," brought together 120 participants representing 21 member churches and five diaconal institutions in Asia. "Building Righteous Communities" was the theme of the November workshop held in São Leopoldo, Brazil, with 34 participants from 11 churches and four diaconal organizations in the Latin America and Caribbean region. In Europe, diaconal practitioners from LWF's member churches in the region came together in January at a workshop in Tallinn, Estonia, under the theme "Conviviality: Diaconal Life in Diversity." They developed a framework for a new learning program, introducing more open approaches to diakonia in societies that are increasingly diverse.

In December, the Communion Solidarity Fund, a new tool for churches to support each other by providing rapid short-term response during unforeseen events, distributed its first grants to member churches.



Learn more
about our
diaconal work

Action for Justice

In response to an increasingly volatile world in 2023, marked by heightened crises alongside an escalating climate emergency and setbacks in gender equality and human rights, the LWF boldly championed justice through its Action for Justice advocacy hub.

LWF celebrates 75 years of human rights advocacy

The year 2023 marked the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - the principal document that enshrines the rights and freedoms of all human beings.

Together with the World Council of Churches and ACT Alliance, the LWF held a side event at the Human Rights Council and organised an online forum on LWF's human rights work over the last seven decades, featuring Rev. Dr Frederick Nolde, a Lutheran theologian who was one of the authors of the declaration and a pioneer of the Christian human rights movement.



Dr. O. Frederick Nolde, consultant to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, prepares papers for a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, December 23, 1947. Photo: ELCA Archives.

32

representatives from member churches in UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

73

advocates empowered in Climate Justice & Faith Certificate program

An advocacy delegation, coordinated with the Lutheran Office for World Community in New York, engaged key UN and government leaders in New York and Washington DC. Their mission: to press for decisive action addressing humanitarian crises spawned by conflicts in Ukraine, Ethiopia, and the Middle East.

The LWF advocacy work continued to target decision and policy making processes. It honed in on decision-making arenas within the UN, with the Lutheran Office for World Community leveraging its UN headquarters representation to champion crucial issues. From the roles of faith actors to tax justice, migrant and refugee rights, and more, the LWF amplified its voice across platforms like the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly.

At the forefront of the work for gender justice, LWF's Action for Justice participated in the 67th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), with 32 delegates from member churches, LWF country programs and partners.

Concurrently, targeted engagements with the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) underscored the commitment to women's rights, supported by initiatives like the Women Human Rights Advocacy Training.

In the face of escalating climate crises, the LWF stood firm for climate justice at COP 28. Youth delegates from member churches worldwide voiced calls to action and messages of hope. Furthermore, LWF's collaboration with scientific communities, exemplified by a dialogue with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), reinforced the imperative for urgent action. Moreover, the Climate Justice & Faith Certificate program empowered 73 advocates to continue driving change.

LWF's dedication to refugee rights remained unwavering. Advocacy efforts toward the Global Refugee Forum, bolstered by interfaith partnerships, cemented commitments to faith-sensitive refugee protection approaches.

Throughout 2023, the LWF maintained a steadfast focus on human rights, presenting cases from member churches and country programs across the globe in forums like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the UN Human Rights Council. Meanwhile the human rights work towards the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, which began in 2022, increased significantly in 2023, with the participation of 36 representatives from member churches and country programs from eight African countries.

No-one is safe until everyone is safe

In 2023 LWF published a report focusing on the advocacy and policy engagement of the LWF and its partners during the COVID-19 pandemic. It shows the solidarity of faith-based actors in addressing the pandemic's impact and offers recommendations that include a call on faith actors to engage in advocacy not only from a global perspective but also at the local and regional levels. Read the publication "No one is safe until everyone is safe"

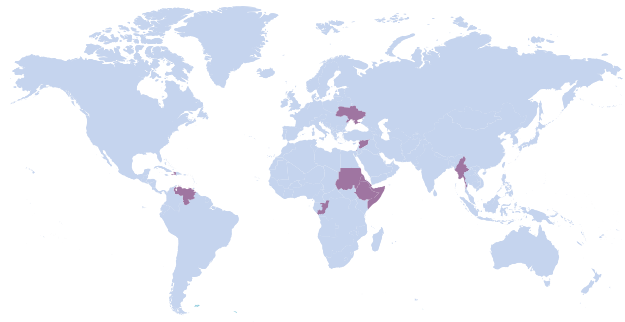


Read the publication
"No one is safe until
everyone is safe"



Maro Micah Maua of the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church pictured in the Faith Pavilion of the United Nations climate summit COP28. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

LWF's response in humanitarian emergencies



The year 2023 was marked by significant challenges, starting with a massive earthquake in Syria and Turkey, and ending with the conflict in Gaza which, by the end of the year, had already killed more than 20,000 people. The war in Ukraine went into its second year. Almost unnoticed by the world, the conflicts in Sudan and Ethiopia claimed thousands of lives.

6,964

staff and volunteers have supported people in need in some of the most difficult humanitarian contexts



Syria

A series of massive earthquakes shook Syria and Turkey in February 2023. The LWF responded through local partners in the ACT Alliance, providing water and sanitation, shelter, health services and psychosocial support.

Ukraine

As the war in Ukraine went into its second year, the LWF started responding in the frontline city of Kharkiv, with shelter rehabilitation, food and relief goods. LWF Poland focused on integration, psychosocial support, and socio-economic inclusion of refugees.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

In March, heavy violence in Eastern DRC erupted, causing tens of thousands to flee to Uganda. The LWF Uganda country program provided water and sanitation, shelter, relief goods and protection services.

Ethiopia

LWF Ethiopia launched various projects in Tigray and the Amhara Region. These initiatives aim to assist people affected by the Tigray and Amhara violence, and host communities, supporting them during this challenging time.

Sudan crisis

The outbreak of violence in Sudan in April 2023 caused a refugee crisis in the region. LWF country programs in Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan provided water and sanitation, shelter, food, health care and protection services

LWF World Service was founded to respond to these kinds of disasters. In many of these emergencies, LWF partners and donors enabled a rapid response. Their support and efforts to fundraise in their context, have enabled the work we present here.

A total of 6,964 staff, including many local employees and volunteers, have supported people in need in some of the most difficult humanitarian contexts.

However, conflicts and disasters that continue to make headlines tend to eclipse violence and natural disasters in places away from the public eye, leading to a severe underfunding

of much needed humanitarian aid, especially in Central and East Africa. It is the strength of LWF World Service that we work in many of these underreported emergency settings, serving people in need to the best of our ability. Much of this work is done on the frontlines, by local and incentive staff who continue to serve because it is their community that is affected.



Video: LWF work in Kharkiv, Ukraine



Myanmar

Cyclone Mocha made landfall on the coast of Rakhine state in May, destroying homes, roads and water and sanitation systems. The LWF distributed food and repaired damaged homes and community infrastructure through cash for work.

Horn of Africa

In 2023, the Horn of Africa grappled with extreme climatic events, causing drought and intense flooding. The LWF in Ethiopia and Kenya-Somalia provided water, food, relief goods, shelter and emergency cash.

Haiti

The situation in Haiti remains dire as armed gangs continue to terrorize communities, making Haiti one of the most dangerous environments worldwide. The LWF continues to support people in the most vulnerable communities.

Venezuela

Venezuela is the origin of a large refugee movement caused by the breakdown of law and order in the country. The LWF supports vulnerable communities in Venezuela, and provides protection and other services to migrants on the route through Colombia.

Gaza

Following the Hamas attack and the bombing of the Gaza strip, the Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem provided accommodation and support to cancer patients from Gaza, and repeatedly tried to send medication into the Gaza strip.

Quality Services

Public and community services such as education, water and healthcare are usually the responsibility of governments. In emergency settings, or in contexts of political and economic instability however, local structures might be unable to provide this kind of service, making humanitarian interventions necessary.

Ukraine: Rebuilding homes

In 2023, the LWF World Service program in Ukraine started working in the frontline city of Kharkiv, which is frequently attacked by drones and missiles. Together with two local organizations and the local administration, staff identified people and families whose apartments had been damaged, and started rehabilitating people's homes, providing new windows, doors, electricity, plumbing and cosmetic repairs.

By the end of the year, 525 apartments had been renovated. For the families, returning to their apartment was a moment of celebration. Mykola Tisheninov, a local resident said: "For us it is not just a home, it is a place of inspiration, a place where our family stories were born and a place of our strength."

525

apartments renovated



In the places where LWF country programs work, there is often either a lack of capacity or inadequacy in the quality of services offered or available to refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees and disadvantaged communities. In such situations, LWF World Service temporarily supports and complements national structures, planning to eventually hand them back over.

In 2023, the LWF through LWF World Service supported individuals and communities to access safe drinking water; sanitation and hygiene, food, shelter, education, energy and essential household items.



Destroyed apartment in Kharkiv, Ukraine.
Photo: LWF/ Anatoly Nazarenko

Cameroon: Water and Sanitation

The Far North province of Cameroon is the most populous and poorest part of the country. In rural areas, 85 % of the people live in extreme poverty.

Lack of clean water and food insecurity are among the biggest problems. People travel long distances to collect water from open wells and rivers, and have no sanitation system. The lack of water in the Minawao refugee camp for Nigerian refugees makes it impossible for people to wash and clean regularly, exposing them to water-borne diseases.

LWF World Service has been working in the region for years, focusing on improving the water supply, hygiene and sanitation promotion. In 2023, we supported the construction of two new boreholes, trained water point management committees, constructed latrines and raised awareness on safe drinking water and good hygiene practices. The LWF is gradually transforming hand-pump boreholes into a mini drinking water supply system with tower and solar systems to reach more people. 34,317 individuals now have better access to safe drinking water.

34,317

individuals with better access to safe drinking water



A woman pumps water at one of the boreholes in Minawao refugee camp, North Cameroon.
Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

Protection and social cohesion

We envision a world where everyone lives a safe, dignified, and empowered life. The emergency settings where LWF World Service works pose heightened risk to vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, women and people living with disabilities. We work with communities and faith leaders to protect children and vulnerable adults, preventing and responding to gender-based violence and in fostering peaceful co-existence. We also prioritise mental health and psychosocial support. When working with displaced people, we integrate the local host community in our activities, creating space for peaceful interaction and addressing tensions over local resources.

2023 highlights and achievements

Every LWF country program applies protection and social cohesion components in its project work. The LWF trains teachers and runs child rights clubs in places where we manage schools. We work with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict areas and we especially include people with disabilities. On the migration routes in Colombia and Central America, we provide information about safe support systems.

In the large refugee settlements in Central Africa, we have initiated peace committees between refugees and local communities. In Nepal and in Ukraine, we advocate for the rights and protection of people with disabilities.

LWF World Service in 2023 developed a Safeguarding Policy and revised its complaints response mechanism and investigation guidelines. One of the main focuses was to better integrate child-friendly reporting mechanisms in

Child protection

Children are among the most vulnerable victims of war and conflict. Child refugees, during their formative years, experience trauma, loss of family, insecurity, lack of education and basic necessities. Conflict and displacement often leave parents unable to adequately protect the children in their care. Refugee camps and settlements expose children to heightened risk of exploitation and abuse.

The LWF approaches child protection from a holistic perspective. By collaborating with community leaders, camp administrators, and others, the LWF ensures children can go to school, receive food, and live in a safe environment. In cases of neglect and abuse, the LWF helps place children in foster homes, before making their families and homes safe for them again.



A young girl in fourth grade pictured at Peace Primary School during class. Photo: LWF/ Albin Hillert

the policy and procedures. LWF World Service also internally reviewed its Protection and Social Cohesion guidance note, revising the current document to include peace building in the future. In 2023 we also focused on training our staff in the country programs in gender responsive programming.

Together with our partners in humanitarian work, we also raised awareness about human rights violations on the global level. The LWF advocated for the protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian law in Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Israel-Palestine, Ukraine, Poland, Venezuela and Haiti.

Disability inclusion

Mr Deepak Gautam from Surkhet, Nepal, a young activist with visual disability, presents about the organization of people with disabilities that he leads. Photo: LWF/ Asha Chaudhary

LWF's commitment to disability inclusion in Nepal is grounded in a rights-based approach, challenging systemic discrimination toward people with disabilities. In many LWF country programs, the protection needs of people with disabilities is a priority concern. They are identified as the most vulnerable, and programming ensures that their needs are met and they are included to the best of their abilities.

The LWF Nepal country program has been championing the integration of people with disabilities for many years. Where they were often marginalized, the LWF has raised awareness, trained teachers and local community leaders, and made sure their needs and vulnerabilities are included in local emergency response plans. This is especially necessary as many regions in Nepal are prone to natural disasters.



Collaboration with national organisations and local governments facilitated the creation of disability profiles and help desks. Thanks to this work, more than 800 people in Nepal received special identity cards, which entitle them to additional insurance and support.

Individuals referred to and receiving protection assistance	44,181 male	49,917 female	94,098 total
Children using LWF child-friendly spaces	50,516	54,768	105,284
Individuals accessing LWF psycho-social support services	55,243	106,644	161,887
Total outreach of protection and social cohesion work in LWF World Service country programs	164,917	263,458	429,571

Mr. Deepak Gautam, a young activist with a visual disability, from Surkhet is presenting about the organization of people with disabilities that he is leading. Photo: LWF/ Asha Chaudhary

Livelihoods

Livelihoods means all relevant activities which help the people we serve secure, like food, clean water, shelter, and clothing. The LWF responds in many contexts where people have lost access to livelihoods – be it because of natural disaster or displacement. Restoring their ability to provide for themselves, by providing knowledge, assets, or access to land, allows them to live with dignity.

In particular, the many long-term conflicts in the world have made visible how important it is for displaced people to cultivate their resilience and self-sufficiency.

At the LWF, our efforts to support livelihoods take shape through vocational training, skill-building initiatives, often paired with humanitarian aid and grants to kickstart small businesses. LWF vocational training centers in the Palestinian Territories are a way to combat unemployment, especially among young people in the West

Bank. In many refugee contexts, we provide similar skill training to young people. In Poland, we offer language courses, which enable refugees to find more qualified work in line with their previous professions.

In agricultural contexts, we combine modern farming techniques and climate change adaptation skills. We also provide tools and improved seeds that yield a higher harvest in droughts. Our work is adapted to the specific region and local environment, building on the knowledge that



2,768

hectares of arable land secured in Chad

Danamadja village, near Goré, Chad. In this village, the LWF supports 15 gardeners, who each received money to buy adequate equipment. Nodjingoto Josephine is one of them. Photo: LWF/ Marie Renaux



Students learn welding in a metal workshop at the LWF Vocational Training Center in Beit Hanina, Palestinian Territories. Photo: LWF/ Cornelia Kästner-Meyer

people already have, and helping them adapt to changing circumstances.

Furthermore, the LWF actively advocates for refugees and vulnerable communities to have access to land and other resources necessary for sustainable livelihoods. We weave advocacy for land rights into our rights-based approach, empowering communities and individuals to obtain land titles and to unite against land-grabbing.

Land for refugees

Chad is currently hosting more than 1 million refugees, many from the Central African Republic (CAR) and Sudan. With conflicts raging in their homelands, the displacement of these people has become a prolonged ordeal. To aid their integration, promote self-sufficiency, and alleviate pressure on host communities, it is crucial that they have access to land for farming.

The LWF team has been actively engaging with local landowners and host communities, so that land can be allocated temporarily to refugee households. Communities that are generous with their arable land in turn reap the benefits of communal projects. Furthermore, the LWF acts as a mediator in resolving conflicts and obstacles in the land allocation process, like cultural barriers that can hinder giving land to refugees.

Thanks to LWF's efforts, 2,768 hectares of arable land have been secured in Chad for Central African and Sudanese refugees, greatly enhancing their food security.

Kickstarting a business

In Iraq, the LWF works in Dohuk and Ninewa regions, where many people started new lives following the Islamic State insurgency ten years ago. Unemployment is high, especially among young people. The LWF joined the PROSPECTS initiative, which brings together the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, UN institutions, and smaller NGOs. The program aims to provide employment through business and finance training.

Three years after starting the project, the first businesses have established themselves. Among them, the barber shops of Nijyar Yacou. He had earned a reputation for exceptional haircuts already in 2014 in his hometown of Mosul, but lost his business after being displaced.

In addition to his skills as a barber, Mr Yacoub received financial training. He successfully applied for a loan and opened his second barber shop. Today these shops have evolved into vibrant community hubs, providing employment and serving as an inspiration to others.

A strategic and sustainable organization



LWF Communion Office staff share visuals developed during a brainstorming session for a new LWF strategy, as they gather at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva for the annual Days of Meeting, to review and strategize for the work ahead. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



Uniting passion and purpose

Agnès Page Livron has been leading the LWF’s human resource work for several years. Before joining the LWF, she worked for the International Committee of the Red Cross. In this interview, she shares insights on how the LWF cultivates a mission-driven and dynamic workforce.

Who are the people working for the LWF?

The LWF has a diverse workforce. At our headquarters, the Communion Office, we have just over 100 employees, with two-thirds based in Geneva. In our country programs, we have nearly 7,000 staff, including international and national staff, incentive workers, and volunteers. Altogether, the expertise of our workforce ranges from theology to capacity building, project management, advocacy, and humanitarian and development work.

All are united by a commitment to LWF’s values and mission. Our staff find meaning in working for a faith-based organization, connecting work and values, irrespective of their own religion or beliefs.

What would you say makes the LWF an attractive workplace?

The LWF attracts individuals passionate about promoting human dignity, justice, and peace, and supporting the member churches. The local and global impact of our work on issues



like justice and human rights is deeply fulfilling. We are a supportive community that values teamwork and job satisfaction, promoting a healthy work-life balance. Our staff find purpose in making a significant difference in the lives of others.

What has changed in the working environment in recent years?

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the Communion Office adopted remote and hybrid work models, which have remained in place. We introduced online collaboration tools and flexible policies to meet diverse needs, focusing on empowering staff. Platforms like Teams and Zoom are used for real-time communication and regular online meetings. We also maintain an annual week of in-person gatherings to strengthen our sense of community. These changes influenced the design of our new Communion Office in Geneva. At the heart of all this is a strong commitment to collaboration and communication.

What do you look for when you recruit?

We seek individuals aligned with the LWF's mission and values, interested in working for a multilingual and multicultural organization, locally rooted and where cultural sensitivity is crucial. We value technical skills, adaptability, communication, teamwork, and strong interpersonal skills for effective collaboration.

How do you see the future of staffing?

Remote and hybrid work will continue, with a focus on skills over traditional roles. Diversity and inclusion will grow in importance. In rapidly changing environments, continuous learning will be vital. We will maintain a focus on staff well-being and foster a collaborative culture, ensuring all staff understand how their contributions make a difference for churches and communities.



Agnès Page Livron speaks as Lutheran World Federation staff gather at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva for the annual Days of Meeting, to review and strategize for the work ahead. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

Leadership team

The Communion Office Leadership Team supports the General Secretary in leading and managing the Communion Office.



Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt
General Secretary



Mr Szabolcs Lőrincz
Director, Department for Planning
and Coordination



Rev. Dr Sivin Kit
Director, Department for
Theology Mission and Justice



Rev. Arni Svanur Danielsson
Head of Communication



Dr Maria Immonen
Director, Department for
World Service

Photos: LWF/M. Renaux
and LWF/S. Gallay

Finances

Consolidated income for the year was EUR 170 million. This was a decrease of 6% from the previous year.

The main sources of unrestricted income were membership fees from the LWF member churches, distribution from the LWF Endowment Fund; main sources of program funds were church related organizations, the United Nations agencies (in particular, UNHCR), European Union governments, the United States of America government, ecumenical partners, as well as individual donors.

Expenditure for the year was EUR 177 million, which is the same as was spent in 2022. This expenditure was mainly for implementing the programmatic work of the LWF as well as for infrastructure costs.

The total income for the year was EUR 7M lower than the total expenditure. This primarily stems from operations at the Augusta Victoria Hospital which were significantly impacted by the war in Gaza, leading to increased costs and a decrease in revenue. The shortfall in income was covered by the restricted reserves of the AVH.

The 2023 consolidated financial reports were audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers SA from Geneva, Switzerland. The accounts were issued on 29 May 2024.

LWF's consolidated financial reports are prepared in compliance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), International Accounting Standards (IAS) and the Swiss regulatory standards.

The LWF Endowment Fund

Established in 1999, the LWF Endowment Fund (LWB Stiftung) provides financial stability for

LWF's work. On 31 December 2023 total assets of the fund amounted to CHF 14.5 million. Part of its investment income is allocated annually to the program and project activities. The Endowment Fund board approved a distribution of CHF 91,332 to LWF's budget for 2024.



Executive Committee

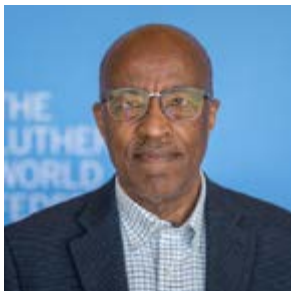
The Executive Committee conducts LWF affairs between Council meetings. It convenes twice a year. Elected at the 2023 Assembly in Kraków, Poland, members of the committee serve a seven-year term. The Executive Committee is made up of the LWF President, seven Vice-Presidents, chairpersons of the Finance Committee, the Committee for World Service and the other specified committees respectively.



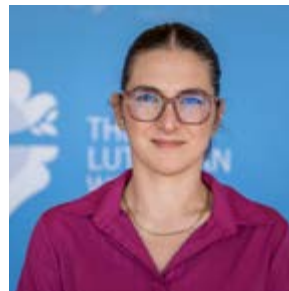
President
Bishop Henrik Stubkjær,
The Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Denmark.



Vice-President for
Central Western Europe
**Bishop Kristina Kühnbaum-
Schmidt**, Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Northern Germany



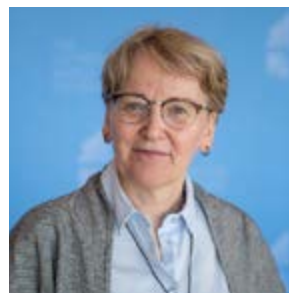
Vice-President
for Africa
President Dr Yonas Yigezu Dibisa,
The Ethiopian Evangelical
Church Mekane Yesus



Vice-President for
Latin America and the Caribbean
Ms Isabella Reimann Gnas,
Evangelical Church of the
Lutheran Confession in Brazil



Vice-President for Asia
Bishop Chun Wa Chang,
The Evangelical Lutheran
Church of Hong Kong



Vice-President for
Nordic Countries
**Prof. Dr Arnfríður
Guðmundsdóttir**, The Evangelical
Lutheran Church of Iceland



Vice-President for
Central Eastern Europe
Bishop Dr. Tamás Fabiny,
The Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Hungary



Vice-President for
North America
Rev. Katherine Maria Gohm,
Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Canada



Chairperson of the Finance Committee
Mr Michael Ram, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana



Chairperson of the Committee for Theology, Mission and Justice
Rev. Dr Deonal Sinaga, Protestant Christian Batak Church, Indonesia



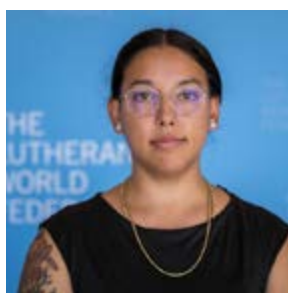
Chairperson of the Committee for Advocacy and Public Voice
Rev. Jussi Luoma, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland



Chairperson of the Committee for World Service
Rev. Barbara Lund, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Chairperson of the Committee for Communications
Dr Anna Hildegard Krauss, The Lutheran Church in Great Britain



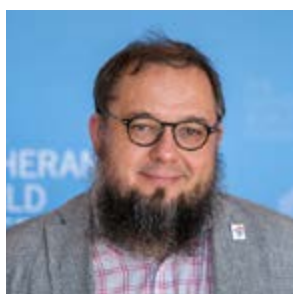
Chairperson of the Standing Committee for Constitution and Membership
Ms Khadijah Islam, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Chairperson of the Committee for Communion Relations:
Rev. Dr Jeanette Ada Epse Maina, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon



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Photos: LWF / Albin Hillert

Five favorite Bible verses

Bishop Henrik Stubkjær was elected President of the LWF at the Thirteenth Assembly in Kraków. He serves as bishop of the Viborg Diocese in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark. From 2017-2023 he was a member of the LWF Council and Chairperson of the Committee for World Service. He shared five favorite Bible verses with us.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” [Mark 10, 45](#)

This was my confirmation verse. The pastor chose it for me. Later I realized that this is exactly the point of the Gospel: That God is the one who serves us and serves through us. This is stated even more clearly in [1. John 4](#):

Love is not that we have loved God, but that he loves through us.

Love is only understandable in relations. When we hear that God loves us, it immediately builds a relationship. Relations between Him and us, and between us and our neighbor. We have to share God’s love with one another, because love will live when you share it.



Bishop Henrik Stubkjær pictured at the podium during a greeting given after his election as the new LWF President. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

“I will put my law in their minds and write it in their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. [Jeremiah 31, 31-34](#)

This text is about the relationship between the Old and the New Testament, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. For me, it’s the connection of God the Creator in the Old Testament, and Jesus Christ, who built a new covenant built on God’s Grace. Jesus takes it up when he installed the Eucharist, saying “This is the new covenant in my blood and my body”.

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?** (...) [Romans 8, 31-39](#)

This is very hopeful, very powerful, and it shows the love of God to all human beings. If God is with us, who can be against us, and no-one can remove the love of God from us.

And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^{[a] 40} All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” [Matthew 22, 39-40](#)

For me, to be a Christian is to be diaconal. I cannot separate one from the other. The love of God should be visible in our deeds. As Luther said: A faith without fruit is a dead faith. For Luther, it was obvious that these two things are connected, and for me that is really the point of the Bible.

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