

**Report to the LWF Council  
International Worship Planning Committee (IWPC) + Wittenberg + June 2016**

**Worship at the Twelfth Assembly**

In liturgy and song the Twelfth Assembly will look back to remember the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation and look ahead to anticipate young reformers keeping alive the need to ever reform the church. Prayers will remember with thanksgiving the extraordinary work of the LWF in recent years, intercede for those awaiting God's liberating grace and articulate hopes for the future. Throughout the Assembly, daily worship will accompany the LWF with prayer. At the closing worship, the "under age 33", young reformer pastor selected from the preaching competition will preach. The newly elected Council will be installed and young reformers from each region will be sent forth into their future mission and ministry.

At the Sunday Reformation Commemoration, we will gather in Sam Nujoma Stadium in Katutura with thousands of local congregation members. Together we will hear a young reformer from the 1970s who now is an elder statesman. Bishop emeritus Zephania Kameeta, who lived the Assembly theme, "Liberated by God's Grace" with the people of Namibia, will preach. A mass choir from Windhoek congregations accompanied by a brass band will join the Assembly's song.

**The International Worship Planning Committee: From Medan to Wittenberg**

Over several months, the IWPC was appointed to plan and prepare the Assembly worship. Six members were appointed by the LWF Council in June 2014, at the Medan, Indonesia meeting:

- Rev. Dr Stephen M Larson – from USA and Canada (chair)
- Rev. Sonia Skupch – from Argentina
- Rev. Seth Mesiaki Ole Sululu – from Tanzania
- Ms Lilla Molnár – from Hungary – Youth (ordained in Hungary shortly after the Council meeting in June 2014)
- Prof. Dr Jochen Arnold – from Germany
- Ms Karin Runow – from Sweden

Rev. Terry MacArthur, a Methodist pastor from the USA and former worship and music staff person at the World Council of Churches, has been the music director at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva's - English-speaking Congregation since 1988. He was brought in as a consultant to the committee in the summer of 2014.

On a trip to Windhoek, Assembly Coordinator, Ms Clarissa Balan, met Dr Sakari Löytty, a Namibian born Finnish musician who did his doctoral studies on Namibian Lutheran church worship and music. He too was brought into the IWPC as a consultant.

Then two more members were appointed by the Meeting of Officers in November 2014, at the Ljubljana, Slovenia meeting:

- Ms Michelle Mu le Wong – from Malaysia – Youth
- Rev. Dr Martin Nelumbu – from Namibia

Early in 2015, Prof. Dr Dirk Lange, joined the committee. He is from Canada and a former brother in

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the Taizé Community. He presently teaches worship and theology at Luther Seminary in the USA. He was appointed North American Lutheran representative on the Joint Commission Lutheran-Catholic dialogue and hired as a co-opted staff to work with LWF-DTPW preparations for the 2017 Reformation Commemorations and serve as worship coordinator for the Assembly.

That was the make-up of the IWPC when we held our first meeting in Geneva in March 2015.

Shortly after that meeting, Rev. Dr Nelumbu was hired as the Local Assembly Coordinator. He was replaced on the IWPC by Pastor Dr Rudolf Schmid, from Windhoek, Namibia.

**IWPC Meetings: Geneva, Atlanta, Windhoek and Hildesheim**

We held one preliminary meeting by Skype in October 2014 before the IWPC was fully appointed to start getting acquainted over distance and articulate hopes and expectations for Assembly worship in Namibia in 2017.

At our first meeting in Geneva in March 2015, we took time to get acquainted as a full committee and received an overview of the LWF history, mission and ministries from Communion Office staff. We learned about the history of Namibia and its churches. We shared ideas and visions about the worship life of the Assembly and sang together many songs and liturgical pieces. We worshipped together each day.

It was Rev. Dr Martin Nelumbu and Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, LWF-DTPW staff, who impressed us with stories of the importance of trees in the African context. Beneath trees people find shade from the heat and warm protection in the night, markets and meetings take place, worship and teaching occur, newlywed couples are blessed in the shelter of trees. We connected those stories to trees in Scripture – from the tree of life in the garden of Eden to the tree of life in Revelation's new Jerusalem, but most especially to the tree of the cross. From those stories, a theme emerged of "The global church gathered beneath a tree" (with that particular "tree" in the theme especially meaning "the cross") which has continued to shape our thinking and planning for Assembly worship space, liturgies and texts.

After that Geneva meeting, I traveled to Windhoek to report on our meeting to the International Assembly Planning Committee and LAPC members. I was invited to preach at Emmanuel Lutheran Church and share in worship. We toured Sam Nujoma Stadium in Katutura as a potential site of the Sunday Reformation Commemoration as well as the Safari Hotel Convention Centre locations for the Assembly.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America provided us with an unexpected meeting opportunity when they invited the IWPC to be their guests at their Worship Jubilee in Atlanta in July 2015. They generously provided us with transportation, housing, registration and meals. Rev. Lilla Molnár, Rev. Seth Sululu and Ms Karin Runow led workshops on experiential "station worship", Tanzanian music and Swedish song amidst Advent darkness. We were able to experience a variety of well-crafted, large group liturgies which used a broad selection of music styles. We had opportunities to meet as a committee and drew in world-class resource people for consultation and conversations. We identified most of the Bible texts to connect with the overall theme and sub-themes for Assembly worship. Unfortunately, not all of the IWPC members and consultants were able to attend this meeting.

At our October 2015 meeting in Windhoek, all the IWPC members and consultants were together for the first time. We all attended worship at Windhoek area congregations. We were able to meet with

many members of the LAPC and get a sense of the Assembly facilities and where the worship tent would be located in proximity to the Assembly hall. We visited Independence Stadium and the Parliament Gardens as possible sites for the Sunday Reformation Commemoration. We met with Bishop Kisting and talked with him about the theme song he was invited to compose for the Assembly. We met with representatives of the National Art Gallery. Before concluding, we assigned small groups to work on individual liturgies during the months until our next meeting.

Unfortunately, the plan to work by email was not as productive as hoped. Nor did that email plan work as well as hoped after our final meeting.

In February, Dr Sakari Löytty and Prof Dr Dirk Lange met in Järvenpää, Finland to clarify the liturgical arc of the daily worship and prepared a proposal for the IWPC to review in Hildesheim. They also discussed possible song selections for the liturgies.

In March 2016, the IWPC met in Hildesheim, Germany for our final meeting. We worshiped each day and sang music being considered for the Assembly. We reviewed the liturgies that had been developed and worked on others that were not as well developed, or had not even been sent. On one morning, we worshiped using a draft liturgy, then together critiqued it. We discussed the environment, space and decoration for the worship tent and considered possibilities for the Sunday Reformation Commemoration in a vast stadium. Following that meeting, Prof. Dr Dirk Lange, Rev. Terry MacArthur and I traveled to Geneva together to meet with Communion Office staff to discuss logistics around Assembly Bible studies, preparation of worship materials and other aspects of Assembly worship.

As Hildesheim was the last full meeting for the IWPC before Namibia, and as it was difficult to accomplish this work via email, it was decided that the work should be completed by a smaller group consisting of Prof. Dr Dirk Lange, Ms Karin Runow, Rev. Terry MacArthur and me. Prof. Dr Dirk Lange, Ms Karin Runow and Rev. Terry MacArthur met in Geneva April 30, to fine-tune the worship services and prepare for their publication. It is expected that Ms Clarissa Balan, Pastor Dr Rudolf Schmid and Dr Sakari Löytty will meet with LAPC members, the Assembly mass choir and local musicians in Windhoek in late May to explore music and other aspects of Assembly worship. In mid-June, Ms Karin Runow and Dr Sakari Löytty will meet in Helsinki to continue work on music.

Throughout our meetings we have sought to work in close communication and cooperation with Ms Clarissa Balan, Assembly Coordinator, the Communion Office and the International and Local Assembly Planning Committees.

### **To Hold the Assembly in Prayer**

As in previous LWF Assemblies, daily worship will be a key component, with Bible studies woven into the structure of Morning Prayer. The Assembly theme and sub-themes will focus each day's worship. From beginning to end, the Assembly will be held in prayer.

A worship tent will be set up in the parking lot adjacent to the Assembly plenary hall. There will be a few live trees within the tent and other visual and symbolic representations of trees amidst the decoration. All but two days will begin and end in the worship tent:

- **Morning Prayer** will begin in the worship tent and then proceed, with song, into the Assembly hall for the Bible study (because of its simultaneous translation capacity) and completion of Morning Prayer. Scripture read in this worship will be the focus of the Bible study that follows.

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- **Midday Prayer** will take place either in plenary or smaller working groups. The day's theme, Psalm, study and deliberations will come to expression in this prayer.
- **Evening Prayer** will begin in the plenary hall, process to the worship tent with song and conclude there. Local choirs will be invited to participate in these liturgies. A final benediction, only then and there will close the Assembly's day held in prayer.
- The **Sunday Reformation Commemoration** with Eucharist will take place at Sam Nujoma Stadium in Katutura where local congregations will be invited to join the worship. Several thousand are expected to attend.

Each day of the Assembly worship will focus on the overall theme or sub-themes. Scripture readings will dialogue with the day's theme while Galatians 5:1 (For freedom Christ has set us free....) will weave through the readings as a central motif. Trees and nuts from the Makalani palm tree will find symbolic expression. Eucharist will be celebrated every other day. Here is a summary of the daily worship, themes and texts:

Wednesday May 10	<i>Liberated by God's Grace</i> Opening Worship with Eucharist (Isaiah 61:1-4; Psalm 1:1-6; Mark 4:30-32) Midday Prayer in plenary (Psalm 1) No Evening Prayer this day
Thursday May 11	<i>Liberating Grace</i> Morning Prayer with Bible study (Psalm 3; Galatians 3:10-14; John 3:14-17) Midday Prayer in plenary (Psalm 3) Evening Prayer (Exodus 3)
Friday May 12	<i>Salvation: Not for Sale</i> Morning Prayer with Bible study (Psalm 130; Ephesians 2:4-10; Luke 19:1-10) Midday Prayer in Village Groups (Psalm 130) Evening Prayer with Eucharist (Luke 19:9-10)
Saturday May 13	<i>Human Beings: Not for Sale</i> Morning Prayer with Bible study (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 139; Acts 16:16-34) Midday Prayer in Village Groups (Psalm 139) Evening Prayer with station worship inspired by Thomas Mass (Mark 10:13-16) A "Night of Choirs" choral music will follow dinner
Sunday May 14	<i>500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation</i> Commemoration with Eucharist (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:10-12; Romans 1:16-17; John 8:31-36) No Evening Prayer this day

Monday May 15 *Creation: Not for Sale*

Morning Prayer with Bible study (Isaiah 55:1-3; Romans 8:18-27; Song of the three children from the Apocrypha)  
 Midday Prayer in Village Groups  
 Evening Prayer (Song of the three children; Isaiah 55:1-3)

Tuesday May 16

*Liberating Grace*

Morning Prayer with Bible study (Psalm 46; Revelation 22:1-5)  
 Midday Prayer in plenary (Psalm 46)  
 Closing Worship with Eucharist and installation of new leadership (Jeremiah 29:10-12; Psalm 46; Galatians 5:1, 22-26; John 15:1-11)

Worship leadership will require many people:

- Presiding ministers and preachers will be determined in consultation with the Communion Office.
- A large, mass Assembly choir is already taking shape in Namibia and will sing at the Sunday Reformation Commemoration. A brass band is also preparing for that event.
- A small core choir will be recruited to assist, rehearse daily and lead the Assembly's song in worship.
- Local, congregational choirs will be invited to sing at some of the Evening Prayer services as well as at the Saturday evening "Night of Choirs".
- Readers and assisting ministers will be recruited from among Assembly participants.
- The IWPC will be involved in daily worship in varieties of ways.

Liturgical texts for Assembly worship are drawn from Scripture, ancient texts, Reformation-era texts as well as contemporary and newly crafted litanies and prayers.

Liturgical music, hymns and songs are chosen from several centuries of the Church's song with broad regional representation, especially Africa. Instrumental accompaniment will include piano, guitar, brass band, saxophone, drums, mbira and other Namibian instruments. Some of the music will be brand new compositions from IWPC members and Namibian composers.

Among the challenges we anticipate will be carving out rehearsal time for worship leaders and musicians within the Assembly's tight daily schedule. This will particularly be a challenge for the Sunday Reformation Commemoration given the distance to Sam Nujoma Stadium from the Assembly site. We hold to the hope that "...with God all things are possible." We are still exploring ideas for large, visual, yet simple symbolic actions at the stadium worship, if, as expected, that event will be televised.

### **The Road Ahead**

We are in consultation with the LWF Communications Office in Geneva to develop a time line for the preparation and publication of orders of worship. We anticipate following the model from Stuttgart of having individual liturgies prepared for each worship in four languages with a companion volume of multi-lingual hymns, songs and liturgical pieces. In the next few months we shall arrange copyright authorizations and graphic designs for the publications. We are not yet clear if some of these worship resources will be electronically available for use in Windhoek.

For the Sunday Reformation Commemoration, we anticipate the preparation of a commemorative, souvenir worship booklet with images of Namibian art work and Reformation-era woodcuts or paintings. For Assembly participants this would be printed in the four LWF languages. For the larger crowd of local congregation members this would be printed in English, the official language of Namibia.

Our March 2016, Hildesheim meeting was the last full IWPC gathering until we arrive in Windhoek in May 2017. We expect to work in close consultation and cooperation with the Communion Office and LAPC in smaller, sub-committee dimensions during the coming year with Prof. Dr Dirk Lange, as Assembly Worship Coordinator, taking the lead as we transition toward Windhoek.

On behalf of the IWPC,

Rev Dr Stephen M Larson  
IWPC Chair