

Report of the German National Committee for the LWF Council Meeting in 2014

1. General remarks

Farewell to Inken Wöhlbrand: after over 11 years of service to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) and the German National Committee (GNC/LWF) OKR Inken Wöhlbrand will return to her regional church in the late summer of 2014. She has been mainly active in the areas of mission and development and especially on behalf of the GNC/LWF's Program Committee (formerly: Hauptausschuss). In the last few years she has been Co-Chair of COCOP, the Coordination Committee for cooperation with partners of the ELCJHL. Inken Wöhlbrand has also brought great expertise and enthusiasm to the work in the field of LUCSA and PROCMURA. VELKD and the GNC/LWF are very grateful to Inken Wöhlbrand for her years of service, and for her very competent, collegiate and friendly approach.

Inken Wöhlbrand's successor will be Rev. Dr. Christine Keim from Stuttgart, who comes from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg. She will start work in September 2014.

2. Review of activities over the past year

Director of studies at the LWF Center: Since 1 January 2014 Rev. Joachim Zirkler has been director of studies at the LWF Center in Wittenberg. Besides maintaining the tradition of theological seminars, he is responsible for developing new forms of continuing education for different interest groups in the member churches of the LWF. The GNC/LWF expresses its appreciation to Rev. Edwin Dedekind and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Natal-Transvaal), in which Zirkler was able to spend several months studying and working in preparation for his new appointment in Wittenberg. Zirkler enjoyed another opportunity of in-service training at an international ecumenical Summer Seminar of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg. Through seconding Zirkler for this ministry and covering his salary-related costs, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony has demonstrated its strong commitment to the LWF Center in Wittenberg.

Preparation for the Reformation anniversary year: On the basis of the forward planning undertaken by the LWF Council in 2013, the GNC/LWF and its Program Committee decided to support the LWF with projects connected with the Reformation anniversary, both in terms of financial and staff resources. For example, it contributed to funding the Global Young Reformers Network and the Luther film produced by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hungary. Special financial assistance was also projected for the 2017 Assembly in Namibia.

Luther Garden: The trees being planted in Wittenberg with corresponding trees all over the globe are creating an interactive monument to international church fellowship. This will flourish up until the anniversary of the Reformation and far beyond that occasion. Churches from about 75 countries are already represented in the Luther Garden. The number of corresponding trees is also steadily increasing. On 28 March 2014 the corresponding tree of the Anglican Communion was planted in the garden of Lambeth Palace. In Wittenberg the final artistic design of the central Luther Rose is on the drawing board. This phase is scheduled for completion by the opening of the LWF Council meeting in Lutherstadt Wittenberg in June 2016.

Some members of the LWF are not yet represented in the Luther Garden. They are invited to make contact with the LWF Center in Wittenberg in order to obtain a place in the central layout of the Luther Garden. This should happen before the end of this year. Although

financial participation is requested, questions of finance should definitely not prevent a church from taking part.

3. Future plans, programs and priorities

Interactive internet project: The dialogue document “From Conflict to Communion” is the first ecumenical description of the Reformation event and its consequences. In order to engage with this document, the GNC/LWF and the Johann-Adam-Möhler Institute, together with the Commissioner for Catholic affairs of the VELKD and the Chair of the Ecumenism Committee of the German Bishops’ Conference, have launched an interactive internet project. Everyone is welcome to read and comment on the dialogue document at www.2017gemeinsam.de. In addition, prominent persons from society at large, business and political circles, and the church are being asked to take a position on central issues in the document, in the form of a “question of the week”. The GNC/LWF sees this project as a contribution to the national reception of the document, as was proposed by the LWF and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) in their joint letter of 18 March 2014. The results of the project are to be presented to the LWF and the PCPCU.

Logo and visual identity of the GNC/LWF: After the introduction of the new logo for the LWF the Communion Office designed a sub-brand for GNC/LWF. The new GNC/LWF logo is in “dignity purple”, a shade taken from the LWF’s secondary color range. This color guarantees that the GNC/LWF logo can also be used with the other LWF colors; it can equally be combined with the purple used by the VELKD. By analogy with the previous practice of the GNC/LWF, the text line “Lutherischer Weltbund” (Lutheran World Federation) is given precedence and “Deutsches Nationalkomitee” (German National Committee) is placed below it, even though our official name continues to be the German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation. Reversing the order in the logo especially emphasizes that we belong to the LWF. The new logo is being introduced gradually.

4. An important issue for the Council

Financial situation of the Augusta Victoria Hospital: The GNC/LWF values the important professional and life-saving work of the Augusta Victoria Hospital for Palestinian children, women and men. The GNC/LWF is aware that the hospital is a cornerstone of the Palestinian health system and an important institution in Palestine’s social infrastructure. This role of the hospital must be maintained and, if possible, strengthened. At the same time, the GNC/LWF notes with concern that the hospital’s financial situation is precarious. This concern is all the more justified as the LWF is the direct funding body and, with its total assets, provides security for the hospital. The GNC/LWF is particularly anxious to prevent any threat to the LWF’s activity in order of the legal status of the Augusta Victoria Hospital.

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Norbert Denecke

GNC/LWF Executive Secretary