



Intergenerational Sharing in the LWF Communion



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

Toolkit

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“35 years may be regarded as the time span of one generation.

The change from one generation to the next is no sudden overnight change.

Children, youth, adults and older people can and indeed should stick together in the life of the LWF so that the generations may continue in dialog with each other, speaking, reflecting and deciding together. What a wonderful thing it is when the elderly can show understanding for the younger generation because they are able to see themselves as the young people they once were, under the justifying judgement of God. But equally wonderful it is when the younger generation, instead of despising the experience of its predecessors, is able to consider it calmly and steadily and make it part of its own reflections.

When this happens, it is possible for us to seek together the ways to the future.”

Prof. Dr. Vilmos Vajta, 1983

“We appreciate very much the intergenerational approach by the LWF. The intergenerational sharing has been eye-opening for us and I would like to use this model in my church context.”

(LWF Council Member, 2013)

“There is so much wisdom and knowledge in the LWF that is not written down, but has to be passed on from generation to generation.”

(LWF Council Member, 2013)

Foreword

In 2013, another 30 years after the speech by Prof. Dr. Vatja he gave for the 35th anniversary of LWF, we hear LWF Council members speaking about an intergenerational LWF.

This toolkit presents ideas for an Intergenerational Sharing as a resource and methodology for ongoing processes of sustainability and as inspiration for other committees

and churches of the Lutheran Communion of Churches.

It explains one of many intergenerational approaches, the approach that we have chosen in the LWF Communion Office.

We hope it encourages many of the LWF member churches to be intergenerational in their church leadership and church life.





Introduction: An intergenerational LWF

What is a generation? And why should we be, act and share inter-generationally?

In the Bible we find many passages about generations. The word „generation“ hits 195 times!

Although the word „intergenerational“ might be new for some, the concept of bringing different generations together and passing on experiences, wisdom and heritage „from generation to generation“ is known to every Bible reader²

In the Psalms we read about the passing on of experiences of faith:

Ps 145:4 One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

But we are also reminded of the shortness of life and the limited impact one generation can have:

Ec 1:4 A generation goes, and a generation

comes, but the earth remains forever.

The LWF communion is a bit like a big family—it gathers different generations. We define those generations by birth date. And we find out: We are multi-generational.

Being in such a multi-generational communion means to share one place with members of very different

- key experiences that built their faith and identity
- environmental and societal situations that shaped their character and
- stations in their life, that make them see a life span from a certain perspective.

The generations are linked closely through the worshipping, working and reflecting together. They build up relationships within the community.

Yet, the communication among those generations is sometimes challenged or not felt equal.

In facilitating an intergenerational sharing the focus is put on strengthening the competences of all generations to closely listening, open sharing and mutual trust.

Thus, the LWF Communion started its first intentional intergenerational sharing in its governance:

“The LWF Council, as it is representing the communion of churches in on-going reformation, creates a space of intergenerational listening, sharing and learning between the three different LWF Generations. It triggers the dialogue on sustainability and future of the LWF.”

Setting an example: The intergenerational sharing at the LWF Council

LWF Council members “envisioned a sustainable LWF” as they engaged in the first Intergenerational Session of the LWF Council meeting in Geneva, June 2013.

The methodology of ‘intergenerational sharing’, initiated by the LWF Youth Secretary, Ms Caroline Richter, provided a structure for the sharing between generations.

This report presents the results and ideas of the Intergenerational Session as a resource for on-going processes of sustainability and as inspiration for other committees and churches of the Lutheran Communion of Churches.

The Planning Process

The Intergenerational Session of the LWF Council was convened around the following objective and outcomes. It is key to agree together what those should be, to be sure of its success.

a) Objective:

The LWF Council, as it is representing the communion of churches in on-going reformation, creates a space of intergenerational listening, sharing and learning between the three different LWF Generations. It triggers the dialogue on sustainability and future of the LWF.

and

b) Expected outcomes:

- The methodology of an intergenerational sharing has strengthened the open, resource orientated and constructive dialogue within the LWF Council.
- The three presented LWF generations have clearly witnessed their diverse and rich resources as a communion.

- A meaningful passing on of knowledge between the three generations has taken place.
- The results and ideas of the sharing are a resource for the on-going processes on sustainability and future of the LWF.
- The good experience of the intergenerational sharing inspires other committees and churches.

The Methodology

Preparation

a) Different Generations in the LWF

The three LWF generations were defined by birth date. The first generation is representative of those born between 1945- 1963; the second and third respectively represent those born between 1964-1981 and 1982-1993 (*see table*).

b) Intergenerational Preparation Team and Facilitators

In keeping with LWF's commitment to principles of participation, inclusiveness, fair and equal participation of youth, women and men at all levels of decision making, council members were invited to already take part in preparing for the 'Intergenerational Session', and to become facilitators of working groups.

c) Tasks of the Facilitators

The seven facilitators prepared, chaired and evaluated the intergen-

erational sharing together with the Communion Office.

The facilitators agreed to the following responsibilities:

- to be interviewed and to interview each other on one prepared question in the plenary
- to facilitate and moderate the 7 working groups
- to present the outcomes to the plenary

During the 'Intergenerational Session' the facilitators would interview each other on prepared questions:

- What did you hope for when you entered the "LWF world" first?
- What would you like to pass on as "your very LWF experience"?
- What do you absolutely want to keep as a LWF core value or resource?
- What are you most afraid of?
- What needs to be (re-)invented?
- How do you see the LWF in the year 2030?

They then chaired the seven working groups, making sure that the rules of equal speaking time and generational balance were followed.

During the second session the facilitators presented the ideas of their group to the plenary.

d) Role of the observers

In addition to the seven facilitators, seven observers (LWF Staff) were responsible for observing and documenting content and intergenerational interactions of working group discussions.

Observers were not to interact or intervene in the discussions, but to listen and observe attentively. Notes on observation and content of the intergenerational interactions were shared with the facilitators and COLT for evaluation and follow-up.

THE FIVE LIVING GENERATIONS					
Living Generation	Civic	Mediating	Boomer	Diversity	Millennial
Name	G.I. generation	Silent generation	Idealist generation	Generation X	New Civic generation, Generation Y
Years Born	1901-1931	1932-1944	1945-1963	1964-1981	1982-2003
Traits	Sacrificial Religious Contributors	Compromise Serve others Family focus	Spiritual Perfection Self-interest	Sceptical Self-blaming Frustrated	Educated Want safety Service
Characteristics	-Excellent team players -Community-minded -Strongly interested in personal morality -Strong sense of personal civic duty	-Loyalty to the corporation and lifelong jobs -Women stayed home -Strong sense of trans-generational common values and near-absolute truths -Disciplined, self-sacrificing, & cautious	-Individualist -Working men and women -Optimistic, driven, team-oriented Envision technology and innovation	-Entrepreneurial -Very individualistic -Commit to self rather than an organization -Desire a chance to learn, explore and make a contribution - "Want to save the neighbourhood, not the world"	-Respect authority - Feel enormous academic pressure -Prefer to work in teams -First digital generation, prefer digital literacy and make use of digital encounter -With unlimited access to information sometimes assertive with strong views -Want fast and immediate processing ("Generation now")
Possible features of LWF Generation	Founders, strong commitment to the initial idea of the Federation	mediating role, strong sense of trans-generational common values	Hold on to ideals, optimistic and inspirational	Individual ideas and innovation	Share enthusiasm, but also worry for the future, Identify with LWF's virtual connectedness
Representation in the LWF Council 2010-2017	0 %	0%	54 % – 20/37 ¹ Bishops and Presidents, mostly ordained, church leaders, few female	18 % – 7/37 Mostly female , treasurer and humanitarian professions	27 % – 10/37 Young Council members, lay or ordained, many students, male and female
Relates Best To	Millennial	All	None	None	Civics and Boomers
Conflicts most with	Boomers	None	Civics and Diversity	Boomers	Diversity



Tips for a successful intergenerational dialogue

Use symbols

Those images of a growing tree visualized in a respectful and gender neutral way different ages. It served also as an ice-breaker to easily get into a conversation about different aspects of age.

Questions to the participants:

- Explain the beauty of each of these trees?
- What is the specific feature of each tree?
- When looking at another generation: What could one of the trees could be jealous or sad about?
- How do they best protect each other in a moment of crisis?

Make sure the characteristics of an intergenerational sharing are communicated before hand

The sharing should be

- question- and process-oriented
- resource-oriented
- giving equal speaking time to the three generations
- attentively listening
- non-confrontational
- respecting each other's opinion and ideas
- participative
- open-minded and thinking out of the box
- interactive and inclusive

Focus on listening and sharing

- Step 1: each generation is encouraged to share its points of view after each question
- Step 2: everyone is mirroring the contribution of the other generation
- Step 3: an observer notes the conversation in each group
- Step 4: each participants notes at the end "one thought of another generation that should be heard by everyone"
- Step 4: These reflections are shared in the plenary

Implementation

Council members committed to be in one working group, which they chose to join before the session. Attention was given to intergenerational balance within the working groups, all 3 generations needed to be represented in each group.

Firstly, an introduction was made by generation (starting with the youngest).

Then participants would discuss their working question, also following the principle to let each generation speak one by one.

All participants were then asked to reflect on one important thought of a participant from another generation. This mirroring exercise and attentive listening created a spirit of mutual understanding and empathies.

Later on, the intergenerational facilitators gave a brief resume of their working group, highlighting the positive exchange between the generations, but also the specific issues, that were raised in this small group and which would otherwise not be heard at Council.

The Session closed with a prayer for the generations and the intergenerational respect and learning in the LWF communion, by LWF president Bishop Munib Younan.

First Session (90 minutes)

1. Introduction of rationale and working methodology

2. Short interviews of the three LWF generations

In a short panel representatives from all three generations were interviewed (see above)

3. Intergenerational working groups on 7 specific questions

The following questions invited answers from the 7 working groups:

- **Harvesting from our journey as a communion** – What are we

learning from the experiences of being with the LWF?

- **Being in transformation** – What needs to be addressed now for the sake of a sustainable LWF?
- **Shaping the future** – Who will we be and what will we do in the year 2030?
- **Living Lutheranism** – What does being and living as a Lutheran personally mean to me today?
- **Being relevant** – What is relevant and unique about being a LWF Council member for me in my home context?
- **Being in communication** – How do we communicate with each other and back to our churches?
- **Being gifted with resources** – What are the treasures of our communion and how can we



foster them to make the LWF sustainable?

Second Session (40 minutes)

The discussions of the working groups were summarized in the plenary

- Each participant presented the summary of their notes
- The summary of discussions of each group were presented to the plenary by the group facilitator

Intergenerational Prayer

The session was concluded with an intergenerational prayer.

Outcomes

The following summarized outcomes of the Intergenerational Sharing Session were presented by the facilitators in the second session. All participants were asked to note down

one important thought of another generation in their group.

Those are the original notes by the participants.



Group 1: Harvesting from our journey as a communion


What are we learning from the experiences of being with the LWF?

- The LWF is a living body
- The LWF is about relationship
- The LWF is communion with each other
- To be Lutheran is to share and to care for our neighbor- this is diakonia
- The LWF was present for me when I was imprisoned in Apartheid in South Africa and LWF has been part of our liberation
- The ecumenical and global understanding of Christianity should be emphasized for confirmation training
- Confirmation class should teach about the LWF
- Being with the LWF is:
 - being responsive to human suffering
 - being resilient
 - having unity and respect in our diversity
 - connectedness
- being a family
- having compassion for our suffering neighbour



Group 2: Being in transformation

What needs to be addressed now for the sake of a sustainable LWF?

- The first generation built the communion, the young generation has to pursue this wonderful work for a sustainable LWF
 - Our congregations must become sustainable in order for member churches to become sustainable
 - To do this, the gospel must be contextual and families and households need to be reached more effectively
 - To see a sustainable LWF, member churches need to abide with the Word of God as taught in the scriptures – strengthen spiritual life of families and help them own the ministry of their churches and the global communion
 - Equipping youth with necessary skills in the church
 - teaching them values of Lutheranism and how to be self-sustainable
- 
- Encouraging them to participate in Leadership conferences in church, giving them space to air their views
 - We need to address the issue of stewardship and good governance along with the leadership styles and conflicts in the churches to create a sustainable LWF
 - Focus on the youth in the church
 - Financial sustainability investments
 - Christian values in Christian homes
 - Leadership styles that carries church members along

Group 3: Shaping the future

Who will we be and what will we do in the year 2030?

- Be an Inclusive communion
- Be important with relevant communication
- Have awareness and an action plan regarding climate change
- Be important with roots and also new interpretations
- Being a family of churches that have a process of trans-contextual learning

- What do we give to people so that they can still be positive agents of life and faith when the environment and social-political situation gets even more and more devastated?
- What if we don't manage to make a decisive difference...?
- There are two main concerns for the third generation:

- How can we contribute to this world, for example on climate change.
- How can the church learn to meet the needs and to “learn the language” of those parts of society that do not see the need for personal belief
- Challenge of proclamation of the Gospel in a meaningful way to those who don't have any church relation
- Finding new ways of communicating the Gospels message among us and among the secular societies
- We should find ways how to proclaim the Gospel News to our respective contexts in a relevant way
- We should use the new means of communication for mutual support and exchange of knowledge experience ideas: a bank, a forum of ideas...



Group 4: Living Lutheranism

What does being and living as a Lutheran personally mean to me today?

- From silence to the courage of sharing
- to be Lutheran means to challenge authorities
- Always thank God for the gift of salvation and grace and share this message
- Speaking to my fellow young people with the plain truth of the Gospel

- Mobilising and participating in the movement
- Being Lutheran is to be a voice in our society
- Give thanks for the gift of grace and to share this gift with others
- To proclaim the Gospel is to speak about the life and death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ
- The devil exists
- Being Lutheran helps us take up our responsibilities of faith in

life, called to proclaim the gift of salvation to others

- The Gospel makes us move, semper reformanda
- Being Lutheran is to be:
 - ecumenical
 - in movement
 - in thought
 - reading the Bible
 - proclaiming, giving thanks, sharing the gift of God
 - challenge authorities
 - proclaiming the death and resurrection of Christ
 - a distinctive confession, clear, sober and with a sermon tradition
 - the gift of salvation: to proclaim, testify and share the Gospel.
 - being in movement, being in change,
 - being young but deep rooted
 - because of the centrality and the plain gospel in Lutheranism



Group 5: Being relevant

What is relevant and unique about being a LWF Council member for me in my home context?

- We have to know that in many churches youth and women (and lay) do not have enough representation in their own church. The LWF is the only communion I know which gives importance to young people. I really appreciate it. It is recommended that the communion helps the local churches to understand the importance of the participation of young people
- There is need of support for those Council members, mostly young ones, who are not part of the leadership of their church and therefore have no or almost no chance to bring into their church the problems and richness of being part of the LWF communion and the LWF Council
- The youth delegates have to be more much supported with



- regards to the churches that sent them
- It is important to integrate the Council members into the communication process of their respective churches
- The sharing of experiences:
 - How can we develop structures to support one another?
- The importance of relation between the delegate and the church leadership
- It is important to respect the opinions from all generations and to create the space where we can share our experiences

Group 6: Being in communication

How do we communicate with each other and back to our churches?

- We should be respectful to teach others regardless of your age
- I am the third generation, I have faith in you, the second generation, for the future. I hope in you, the first generation, for your knowledge you passed on to me
- The first generation is the church leaders with most historical knowledge and wisdom. The second generation is the smallest group, but has so much richness. They are stable and committed to a cause. The third generation is resourceful and full of energy
- There is a good balance between experience, routine and creativity
- The 1st generation gives experience, routine and wisdom that we must use and cherish
- Youth needs to be empowered, but they empower the other generations even more – they supply



the communion with a surplus of empowerment

- We need some more of you, second generation, since you are only 17% of us
- The youth is already well represented and well received, in terms of ideas and different

opinion about many topics they have had in their meetings

Group 7: Being gifted with resources

What are the treasures of our communion and how can we foster them to make the LWF sustainable?

- Diverse backgrounds and knowledge resources
- International nature of the communion
- Being idealistic and confident of the future
- I have many dreams and would like to pursue them, I therefore want to utilize and tap also from the older generations
- Our treasures are the physical, the face to face meetings, being in relationship
- Not to take things for granted
- Host the moments of being together



Epilogue

How do you feel reading this variety of the statements by the three LWF generations in leadership? Does it surprise you? Can you guess which generation said what? Would you like to add something? Do you feel inspired to try this methodology with your own team or leadership group?

Please feel free to use, sharpen and modify this methodology to your own context.

Develop questions that you want to solve with your community or your team. Agree on the objective of the sharing. Choose an intergenerational preparation group and start the adventure...

We are curious to hear many more examples and results from Intergenerational Sharing in the LWF communion life!

In Christ

Caroline Richter
LWF Youth Secretary

Carlos Bock
DMD Director



“An intergenerational approach to the LWF into the future is necessary because each generation brings a life perspective that often compliments – (if allowed).

The inquisitive questioning of the Generation X encourages continued growth, while the dreams of the Millenials and the life knowledge of the Boomers spur it along.

The boomers realize the international world, while the Xers see the falling of regimes and colonial reign, and the Millenials see a globalizing diverse world.

The boomers know of a church rich with its heritage, strengthened by the struggles of participation and direct service of the Xers that can help the Millenial generational connect in a relevant way with their peers.

This was an encouraging experience and we hope it continues.“

Mikka Mc Crakken, ELCA, LWF Council Member



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