



# Hope does not disappoint

Annual Report 2015



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION



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# Hope does not disappoint

“In a world characterized by communication breakdowns, by withdrawal and fragmentation, the prophetic witness of Christian communions – local and global – will be seen in their capability to accept, welcome and embrace the other.”

## Accept one another

We take these words from General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge’s New Years Message 2015, where he quotes and reflects on Romans 15:7 as our starting point, “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

As we do this we can keep in mind this simple but pointed characteristic of Christian communions: How is the reality of meeting the stranger and accepting the other as our sister and brother reflected in the life and work of the LWF? In this report you will find many and diverse examples, which, we hope, will be both inspiring and interesting.

## Four priorities

The Annual Report is organized according to the four priority areas laid out in the LWF Strategy 2012-2017:

1. A communion strengthened in worship and ongoing theological discernment, ecumenical dialogue, and interfaith collaboration.
2. Member churches growing in capacity for holistic mission and deepening relationships with each other.
3. Effective and empowering diakonia addressing human suffering, injustice, and emergencies.
4. Organizational sustainability and effectiveness

In addition, we have included a chapter on the preparations for the 2017 Assembly and the commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation.

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# Harvesting hope, planting hope

As a communion of churches the LWF is called into a ministry of planting, not always knowing what the harvest will be. Our planting is an action that is full of hope, as it is rooted in the faith in the triune God.

The year 2015 has found us in this double role, harvesting from what others have done before and at the same time planting and preparing for what lies ahead.

- The perseverance of ecumenical dialogues, sustained for decades is yielding fruit today for the Reformation anniversary.
- The commitment of church leadership, lay and ordained, men and women, young and old, is fostering relationships among Lutheran churches globally. This is a foundation on which churches jointly engage in holistic mission.

- Building on decades of committed diaconal service on behalf of member churches, the LWF is today a trusted organization that has increased its response as the refugee crisis in the world reached new heights.

In doing this, we plant seeds of hope and love as an expression of our faith. Our decisions and our actions to address climate change are also planting seeds of justice which we hope others after us will harvest and take as inspiration.

It is in this spirit of hope that the LWF dealt with questions around its sustainability in 2015. We are in a privileged position: we continue hearing God's call into communion and we jointly witness in this world. With this call as a gift we look into ways to continue expressing our vision to live and work together for a

“With this call as a gift we look into ways to continue expressing our vision to live and work together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world. It is that vision, resulting from God's call, that we want to continue expressing together.”

just, peaceful and reconciled world. It is that vision, resulting from God's call, that we want to continue expressing together.

We give thanks to God for abundant harvest, building on what others did before us, and for all we could do during this year, thereby offering a witness of faith, love and hope to the world.

Rev. Dr Martin Junge  
LWF General Secretary



LWF General Secretary Rev Dr. Martin Junge at the opening worship of the Global Young Reformers' conference.  
Photo: LWF/Marko Schoeneberg



Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan at the inter-religious dialogue meeting in Kazakhstan .  
Photo: ELCRK

# Ambassadors of reconciliation – agents of hope

Hope does not disappoint. It does not disappoint us or our neighbors.

Our global communion’s commitment to holistic mission and prophetic diakonia means that we seek to see all human communities flourish. Today, we are increasingly confronted with the challenge to promote religious and political moderation. We are called to be ambassadors of reconciliation and agents of hope.

Our hope in the reconciling love of God in Christ Jesus calls us to get our hands dirty in the service of our neighbor. The crucified and risen Christ reminds us to ask questions about the deadly structures of injustice that permeate our world in the hope that we continue to face these challenges together.

As President of The Lutheran World Federation, my visits to member churches have enabled me to see the wonderful ways in which

Lutherans around the world connect with and sustain one another in their joys and difficulties. As a communion of churches, we have found ways to show the love of God, proclaiming our hope to the world. In my travels throughout the world, I see the diverse, contextualized Lutheran theology in practice. I admire our communion more and more.

*“We seek to offer prophetic diakonia that can transform hatred into love, animosity into friendship, violations of human rights into respect for all rights.”*

Our work is an effort to show that we are liberated by grace through faith. We seek to offer prophetic diakonia that can transform hatred into love, animosity into friendship, violations of human rights into re-

spect for all rights, poverty into equal opportunity, and injustice against women into gender justice.

This prophetic witness cannot be realized among Lutherans alone. We must work together with other churches and ecumenical families to realize God’s will of life abundant. Without the communion, we cannot fully express our hope. Thus, the communion is not an end in itself, but is at the same time essential for what God calls us to in this world.

I am grateful to the General Secretary, all LWF departments in the communion office, the Council, and the Meeting of Officers. Only our joint efforts could make our communion a communion of hope.

Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan  
LWF President

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# Highlights of the year

## January

LWF and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity announced that a joint ecumenical commemoration of the reformation would be held in Lund, Sweden, on 31 October 2016. LWF General Secretary Martin Junge welcomed “the opportunity to explore ways to build on the longstanding dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church to begin to plan a joint event in the lead-up to 2017.”

The process of integration between Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and LWF in the Haiti Country Program started.

A major decision by the Swiss National Bank to cap the Swiss franc had serious implications on the LWF budget and called for extensive measures to bridge the gap.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) ex-

pressed appreciation of its partnership with LWF. “You go where others don’t go [...] you are right there with us,” UNHCR Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa George Okoth-Obbo said during a meeting with the Committee for World Service. LWF is the fifth largest implementing partner of the UN refugee agency.

LWF President Munib Younan made his first official visit to the Baltic churches and emphasized that the interdependence of our global communion and the broad web of ecumenical (and even interreligious) relationships we enjoy can be a source of great encouragement and strength.

## February

LWF General Secretary Martin Junge expressed solidarity with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark following the 14 and 15 February attacks in Copenhagen. His mes-

sage, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Women theologians and church leaders from all LWF regions met in Wittenberg, Germany, to develop a work plan for Women on the Move. One of the four thematic approaches was to examine how the LWF Gender Justice Policy could help to empower churches in their respective realities and contexts.

The Lutheran-Mennonite-Catholic dialogue commission met to discuss the topic, Baptism: Communicating Grace and Faith. At their meetings, besides discussing theological papers, commission members studied the Bible together, helping to create an atmosphere of sharing and trust.

## March

A new LWF, UN Children’s Fund and Vodafone Foundation project in the Ajuong Thok Refugee Camp in



South Sudan provided computers and training to 2,000 primary and secondary school students.

Not enough attention is paid to the impact of climate change on human rights. This was the message of LWF and ACT Alliance to the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The International Worship Planning Committee for the LWF Twelfth Assembly met in Geneva and began exploring the ways in which worship and prayer life would be organized at the Assembly.

UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief Prof. Heiner Bielefeldt said LWF humanitarian cooperation with Islamic Relief Worldwide was an example of “meaningful actions that help to enhance open-mindedness and open-heartedness towards freedom of expression and freedom of religion in society.”

Gambella regional authorities in Ethiopia endorsed Jewii as the new camp for urgent development

ahead of the May or June rainy season. The camp, with a capacity of 50,000 people, would accommodate the refugees, mostly women and children, from the flood-affected Leitchuor camp.

Over 300 people including ambassadors, clergy and guests from Lutheran and other churches attended a public symposium on the theme, *Liberated by God’s Grace*, in Windhoek, Namibia. At the symposium Namibian bishop Burgert Brand

said, “grace always needs a context in which it can affect change.”

LWF released the game *Climate Hero* which gives inspirational examples of carbon reduction programs and allows players to create green ideas for reducing emissions in their own countries. LWF Youth desk developed the game as part of the climate justice program.

LWF organized a regional workshop on child protection in Kampala, Uganda.



IELCH Bishop Izani Bruch (left) sharing Holy Communion with Peruvian pastor Rev. Ofelia Dávila during the 2015 LAC Leadership Conference in La Paz, Bolivia. Photo: Eugenio Albrecht



**April** – When the April 25 earthquake hit Nepal affecting 30 percent of the population, the LWF regional emergency hub based in Kathmandu swung into action. The LWF worked relentlessly to support survivors. In addition to supplying 21,000 households with emergency relief and psychosocial support, it joined forces with Islamic Relief Worldwide on shelter and reconstruction work. Photos: LWF/C. Kästner, LWF Nepal

## April

LWF published four new booklets on the 2017 Reformation anniversary theme, *Liberated by God's Grace*, and its three sub-themes on salvation, human beings and creation. They were made available on **2017.lutheranworld.org** a new website for the Reformation anniversary.

In a context marked by increasing exploitation of natural resources, forced migration and human trafficking, leaders of LWF member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean called for stronger advocacy to affirm that salvation, creation and human beings are “not for sale.”

A common challenge for LWF member churches in Asia is to create a church that is holistic and sustainable—preaching the gospel, serving people in need and advocating for justice and peace. This was discussed at the LWF Asia church leadership consultation in Taiwan.

LWF appealed to its member churches in Europe to adopt Europe-wide

life-saving actions to help refugees seeking to cross the Mediterranean Sea to find refuge in Europe.

LWF launched a large-scale emergency response in Nepal to distribute immediate life-saving supplies such as water, food, shelter and medication to those affected by the earthquake on 25 April.

## May

Church leaders from Europe met in Norway and discussed what “liberated by God's grace” means for Lutheran churches and societies in the region. The church leaders called for the creation of “safe passage corridors for refugees especially from countries like Syria and Iraq” and for the development of a system for a more just distribution of refugees within Europe.

More than 200 delegates from LWF member churches in Africa, LWF global leaders and ecumenical guests gathered in Marangu, Tanzania, to reflect on being a reforming church in

a changing African context and what it means to be relevant in the context in which the churches witness.

LWF continued to provide assistance to refugees from Burundi. Emergency teams from LWF and partner Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service worked in the Kasulu and Nyarugusu refugee camps in Tanzania where more than 43,000 Burundian refugees had been relocated following a cholera outbreak in Kagunga refugee camp.

Members of a solidarity group of diaconal actors from LWF member churches in Europe visited the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Ukraine and the Living Hope diaconal organization, both of which had responded to the overwhelming needs of people affected by the war in Ukraine. As many as 300,000 people were at a risk of being displaced in Odessa.

## June

LWF and Islamic Relief Worldwide joined forces to provide shelter for

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12,000 of the most vulnerable and marginalized people in Rasuwa district following the April earthquake in Nepal.

The LWF Council met in Geneva under the theme, Hope does not disappoint. The Council discussed the self-understanding of the Lutheran communion, the 2017 Assembly and Reformation anniversary. Its resolutions included a declaration of LWF policy to not invest in fossil fuels and endorsement of proposals for a process to envision a continued sustainable LWF.

LWF's work in Colombia was held up as an example of how a new humanitarian standard model—The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability—could be applied and used to improve the quality of assistance provided by aid agencies.

LWF Country Program in Djibouti assisted refugees from Yemen. The LWF provided core relief goods to people with specific needs, such as the elderly, chronically ill, unaccompanied minors and separated children.

## July

LWF General Secretary Martin Junge welcomed increased awareness in the UN about the contribution of faith-based organizations to global development at a roundtable discussion on the Sustainable Development Goals, hosted by UN agencies in New York. “There is recognition for the role of faith-based organizations, not only in view of their implementing capacity but also in view of their specific vocation to promote justice, peace and reconciliation,” he noted.

A new publication by LWF member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean showed how the work of churches on HIV and AIDS is a ministry of compassion and commitment to life.

## August

Thousands of refugees who had fled war and persecution arrived in European countries. European member churches were on the streets of European capitals with blankets, food, shelter, clothes and first aid kits to help

their neighbor in need. The LWF called on political leaders to uphold their duty to protect the vulnerable, which European states have committed to as signatories of the Refugee Convention. “The protection of refugees is not only a moral obligation,” LWF General Secretary Rev Dr. Martin Junge reminded member churches. “As signatories of international law, in particular the Refugee Convention, European nations have committed to the duty to protect refugees.” The LWF Department for World Service sent a team to Hungary to support the local member church.

On World Humanitarian Day, General Secretary Martin Junge thanked LWF staff all over the world, “You work and live in difficult places, places where all too often violence, displacement, hunger and lack of basic human rights prevail. [...] I remain deeply concerned for your wellbeing and safety.”

LWF sent a letter of solidarity to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand following the 17 August deadly bombing of a shrine in Bangkok. “We want to assure you that the LWF



**May** – Church leaders from across Africa united in Marangu, Tanzania, to mark 60 years since Lutheran leaders of the continent first gathered as a communion. As well as a time of huge celebration, Marangu presented a chance for African churches to look ahead and seek opportunities for on-going renewal. Photos: LWF/Allison Westerhof, LUCSA, LWF Archives



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**May** – Eighty heads of churches and synods, ecumenical officers, theological educators, and women and youth coordinators from the 40 LWF member churches in Europe met to deepen their understanding of the 2017 Assembly themes, in Trondheim, Norway. Photos: LWF/Ryan Rodrick Beiler



communion, particularly the churches in Asia, is upholding your church and the people of Thailand in our prayers.”

Young representatives from LWF member churches met in Wittenberg, Germany, for the international Global Young Reformers conference. One of the topics discussed was climate justice, and many of the participants went back home with greater awareness and inspiration for advocacy on the subject.

## September

At the interreligious consultation, Religious Life and the Public Space in Asia, theologians and scholars of religious studies explored how religious communities could move beyond passive co-existence towards mutual encounter and understanding through more profound and creative theological engagement.

Biblical scholars from Lutheran and other Christian traditions met in Aarhus, Denmark, for the fourth and final Hermeneutics conference. The series

of meetings have explored how contemporary Lutherans can interpret the Bible together in ways that are faithful to the text itself, relate to the Lutheran tradition and are responsive to different contextual challenges.

LWF welcomed the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a sign that the world community had not abandoned the vision that every individual should live in dignity. LWF General Secretary Martin Junge said, “We look forward to using the SDGs as a compass to help direct our efforts to promote human dignity, to welcome the stranger, and to serve those who are the most vulnerable.”

Newly elected Lutheran church leaders from around the world met in Geneva and Wittenberg to strengthen their vision and practice as transformative leaders, able to offer strong leadership to their churches and in the Lutheran communion.

LWF World Service country programs come together for a global management meeting in Nouakchott, Mauri-

tania. Mauritania is one of the oldest World Service country programs. LWF started serving in the country in 1974. Today’s work focuses on land rights, extractive industries, livelihoods and the management of M’berra camp for refugees from Mali.

## October

Churches must use their global voices and moral authority to challenge systems perpetuating inequality, LWF President Munib Younan, said when he addressed the General Assembly of the Lutheran Church in Korea.

Leading theologians from around the world met in Windhoek, Namibia, for the meeting, Global Perspectives on the Reformation, at which they discussed the ways in which theological questions that triggered the Reformation movement 500 years ago relate to the 21<sup>st</sup> century political and economic realities for both church and society.

Reformation Day, 31 October, marked the launch of a series of Living Reforma-

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tion projects led by young people from around the globe. They hoped these initiatives would transform the lives of people at community level and beyond.

## November

LWF assisted some 400,000 internally displaced people and refugees in and around Dohuk, northern Iraq, with food, non-food items and psychosocial support.

The ordination of four women on 1 November in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh in India marked a historic moment as the first ordained female pastors in the church.

LWF condemned terrorist attacks in Beirut and Paris. In a joint statement LWF President Munib Younan and General Secretary Martin Junge conveyed their condolences “to all people suffering with the loss of the many lives that these attacks have caused.” They affirmed the role of people of faith in such times. “This is a time for churches, synagogues and mosques to pray and

work even harder for peace within and among their communities, and to do this together wherever possible.”

LWF took part in the UN Women’s 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign, which is observed annually throughout the world.

LWF supported the Myanmar Lutheran Church with a three-year grant to train lay leaders on spiritual and practical issues including Bible studies, community building and organic farming.

In its 2015 meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Anglican-Lutheran International Coordinating Committee (ALICC) continued to develop resources through which Lutherans and Anglicans can commemorate together the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation.

## December

LWF was part of ecumenical and interfaith collaboration at the COP 21 climate conference in Paris. Almost 1.8 million signatures for climate jus-

tice inspired tears of joy and dancing in Paris.

Church leaders, theologians, women and youth representatives met in Manila, Philippines, for a LWF consultation on Asian Lutheran identity and self-understanding. “Hospitality will be a fitting metaphor for the identity and mission of Asian Lutheran churches in a religiously pluralistic and postmodern culture because it involves invitation, response and engagement,” Australian theologian Rev. Dr Stephen Haar said.

A record level of contributions to the LWF Endowment Fund moved the fund closer to its target of CHF 20 million. During the year, the fund received more than CHF 670,000, nearing a total of CHF 15 million. Most donations were from small members of the Lutheran communion in the global South, including Costa Rica, Nepal and Nigeria.

In his Christmas message LWF President Munib Younan said, “the message of Christmas was challenge to seek justice and bring hope to the hopeless.”






**November** – The LWF played a prominent role in ecumenical efforts to push for a critical new climate change deal, at UN climate talks, COP21, in Paris. The LWF supported the People's Pilgrimage, Fast for the Climate, and a global petition calling for a new climate agreement that generated 1.8m signatures. Photos: LWF/Ryan Rodrick Beiler (1-3), LWF/S. Gally (4-5).



PRIORITY AREA 1

**A COMMUNION STRENGTHENED IN  
WORSHIP AND ONGOING THEOLOGICAL  
DISCERNMENT, ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE,  
AND INTERFAITH COLLABORATION**

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a bright red robe over a white top with a decorative neckline and a beaded necklace, is reading from an open book. She is looking slightly to her right. To her left, a man in a dark suit and glasses is partially visible. In the background, there is a purple banner with a gold cross and a fish symbol, and a colorful quilted fabric hanging on the right.

“Now the whole  
group of those  
who believed  
were of one heart  
and soul..”

– Acts 4.32

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# Highlights of the year

- LWF member churches and ecumenical partners were increasingly involved in preparations for the Reformation anniversary. Plans to commemorate 2017 with the Anglican, Reformed and Orthodox churches were already advanced.
- The LWF Hermeneutics program held a conference at Aarhus University to reflect on Pauline Hermeneutics. A Philippines-based workshop for Lutheran theologians from the Asian region provided a platform to share hermeneutical outcomes in the Asian context.
- Through the study process on public space, a deepened theological reflection on why and how Lutherans are active in society emerged, including more active engagement in interreligious relations. An interfaith consultation in Hong Kong together with the Tao Fong Shan Christian Center addressed contested issues in relation to the public space in Asia.
- Through the Fast for the Climate Campaign and other ecumenical and interfaith efforts, and its youth delegation at COP21, the LWF helped influence the positive outcome of the UN climate summit in Paris. As part of its climate justice and advocacy, LWF enhanced ecumenical and interfaith cooperation in France and internationally. More than 20 LWF member churches advocated with their governments in advance of the Paris summit.
- The LWF Gender Justice Policy was discussed in local or regional workshops in all seven LWF regions. Specific implementation plans and tools were agreed upon according to each context.
- The policy was in the process of being translated into more than eight languages.
- The LWF continued to reinforce UNHCR's commitment to faith and protection. The LWF strengthened its engagement in UN human rights bodies relating to the rights of women, land rights and other issues impacting the poor and vulnerable.
- The LWF built on its interfaith partnership with Islamic Relief Worldwide, which involved cooperation between World Service and the DTPW international affairs, interfaith, and women's offices.
- The DTPW interreligious program collaborated with the Center for Islamic Theology in Münster, Germany, and with an increasing number of Muslim scholars from different institutions.

# LWF youth influenced COP21

With other faith-based and civil society organizations, the LWF played an important role in the process leading up to the landmark climate agreement in Paris in December 2015. It is hoped the accord—the most significant in history—will unleash worldwide action and investment in low-carbon, resilient and sustainable technology.

The agreement commits countries to keeping the global temperature rise to well below two degrees Centigrade, while making all efforts to keep it to within 1.5 degrees.

The LWF delegation to the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change included young people from several nations who helped raise awareness for climate justice by incorporating perspectives on gender justice, human rights and ecumenical solidarity. The delegation was also instrumental in establishing and coordinating the international Fast for the Climate campaign.



France's special envoy for the protection of the planet Nicolás Hulot (center) poses with LWF delegates during the COP21 climate summit in Paris, France, November 28, 2015. Photo: LWF/Ryan Rodrick Beiler

LWF General Secretary Martin Junge said these approaches help to amplify the fact that Lutheran theological understanding has something critical to offer to the debate on climate change, particularly the idea that “freedom should not be separated from accountability.”

LWF's action around climate change dates to the Sixth LWF As-

sembly at Dar es Salaam in 1977 and has mainly centered on justice, peace and the care of creation. At its June 2015 Council meeting, the LWF endorsed the policy to not invest in fossil fuels and affirmed its commitment to become carbon neutral by 2050.

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# The gospel and Christian identity

In September 2015, a group of 35 biblical scholars from Lutheran and other Christian traditions met in Aarhus, Denmark, for the fourth hermeneutics conference hosted by the LWF and Aarhus University.

The event concluded a series of international hermeneutics (scriptural interpretation) conferences organized by the LWF since 2011. The program aimed to explore how contemporary Lutherans can interpret the Bible together in ways that

are faithful to the text itself, relate to the Lutheran tradition and are responsive to different contextual challenges.

Under the theme, The Power of the Gospel: Developing Pauline Hermeneutics, the gathering brought together leading global scholars from different theological disciplines to read Paul's letters in relationship to Lutheran heritage and explore how these relate to today's political and economic situations.

Bringing voices of theologians from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas to read Paul is significant for Lutherans, as Paul is considered one of the important authorities in Lutheran theology.

As the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation approaches, "it is appropriate that we go back to the scriptures and to Paul to be reminded of the foundations of the faith," said Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, LWF study secretary for Lutheran Theology and Practice, who is responsible for the program.

The conference concluded the LWF hermeneutics process. The learning from this process will be consolidated in the publication of an LWF Hermeneutics Statement in 2017.



Leading global scholars at the fourth conference on Bible interpretation, at Aarhus, Denmark, explored ways of interpreting the Bible. Photo: LWF/I. Benesch

## On the ordained ministry

International dialogue between Lutheran and the Orthodox churches in 2017 will include a celebration to mark 500 years of the Reformation. Members of the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission made this decision at the 16<sup>th</sup> Plenary session, held 28 April-5 May, in Rhodes, Greece.

“It is an important ecumenical signal that the Lutherans and Orthodox will be celebrating the Reformation together,” said Rev. Dr Kaisamari Hintikka, LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, who serves as commission co-secretary.

The commission said its 17<sup>th</sup> Plenary session in 2017 will also publish the final statement on ordained ministry and priesthood, which both dialogue partners have been discussing since 2012 under a wider study, *The Mystery of the Church*.

Hintikka noted that the commission meetings have over the years become an important place to share and reflect together “as members of the one body of Jesus Christ, in spite



Preparatory meeting for the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission. London, Great Britain 5-10 May 2012. Photo: The Ecumenical Patriarchate

of our diversity” in theological and historical perspectives.

At the plenary, commission members discussed three Lutheran and Orthodox presentations, responding to draft statements of the 2012-2014 preparatory meetings.

The international bilateral dialogue between the LWF and Eastern Orthodox churches began in 1981,

and several reports have been produced from its commission meetings.

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# Strengthened ecumenical partnerships

*Bishop Ernst Gamxamub, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), says the 500<sup>th</sup> Reformation anniversary celebrations in Windhoek in 2017 will not only mark a significant moment in Lutheran history but also strengthen relationships between Lutherans and Catholics and other ecumenical partners.*

“It will be a moment of celebrating history, a moment of gratitude and of linking our hands together toward the future,” he says.

The three Lutheran churches in Namibia will host the Twelfth Assembly, the Lutheran World Federation’s highest decision-making body, from 10–16 May 2017 under the theme, Liberated by God’s Grace, together with a day of worship and commemoration for the global Reformation anniversary.

“It is a real joy for Namibian Lutherans to be hosting the Assembly and to have the chance to be united

in the body of the LWF, which took us on the pilgrimage of advocacy during the struggle for independence, not just locally but for people in exile,” Gamxamub says. “This is not merely a meeting but also an opportunity for us to express our gratitude to the LWF for accompanying us through the highs and lows.”

“This is not merely a meeting but also an opportunity for us to express our gratitude to the LWF for accompanying us through the highs and lows.”

The president of the ELCRN, who was elected in August 2013, was in Geneva recently for an induction for new Lutheran leaders. He studied at the United Lutheran Theological Seminary – Paulinum, when it was based in Otjimbingwe, Namibia. Gamxamub recalls feeling “very humbled” on hearing the news of his selection because

he considered himself an “outsider” candidate.

Speaking of his aspirations for the future of the ELCRN, he says, “I would love to see church members taking ownership and responsibility because we are still glued to the old partnerships of the missionaries and mission work, which provide all the needs of the church.”

“But since Namibia is independent, we should also be independent and take charge of our future both spiritually and financially, and foster communion with our partners,” he adds. “We should be on an equal level with our partners.”

The three Lutheran churches in Namibia are of differing sizes. ELCRN has around 420,000 members, the German-speaking ELCIN-GELC comprises about 5,000, and ELCIN, with its roots in Finnish mission, has over 700,000. Members of all three churches already worship together at a congregation in Windhoek



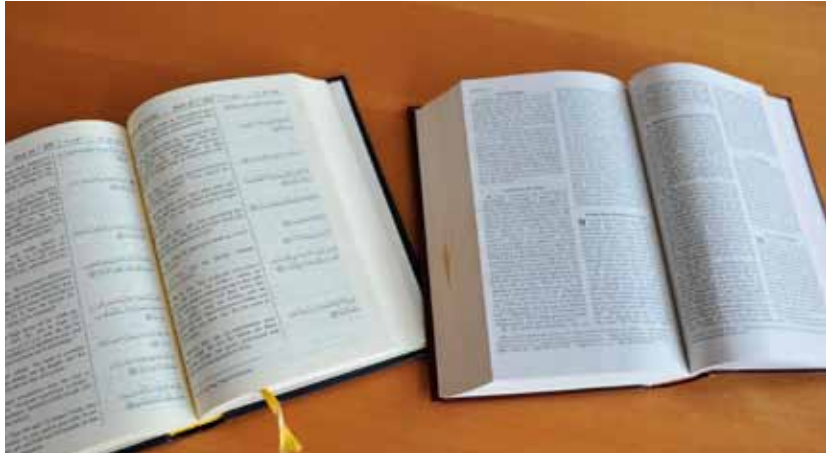
# Faith in the public sphere

*Religious Plurality and the Public Space* is the title of a new publication jointly produced by the LWF and the Center for Islamic Theology (ZIT).

The compilation of theological reflections from Christian and Muslim scholars examines the role of faith in the public sphere. Theologians and social scientists discuss distinctions and relations between religious communities and the state, and analyze anthropological and theological perceptions that influence the understanding of public space.

“In plural societies, the notion of public space is key when negotiating questions pertaining to justice and peace,” LWF’s Rev. Dr Simone Sinn and ZIT theologians Dr Dina El Omari and Prof. Mouhanad Khorchide note in the book’s introduction.

However, fundamentalist perspectives and religious interpretations threaten the plurality of religious commitment and constructive engagement today, as well as politics that embody nationalistic and ethnic identity.



The Bible and the Qur’an. A new publication jointly produced by the LWF and the Center for Islamic Theology examines the role of faith in the public space. Photo: LWF/S. Gallay

In the publication, Christian and Muslim scholars from 12 different countries across the globe examine how religious communities understand and interpret plurality and how they relate with other communities and stakeholders. The authors provide in-depth rationale for why and how Islam and Christianity can contribute to building a shared public space.

They discuss how the interpretation of the Bible and Qur’an strongly influence the way in which com-

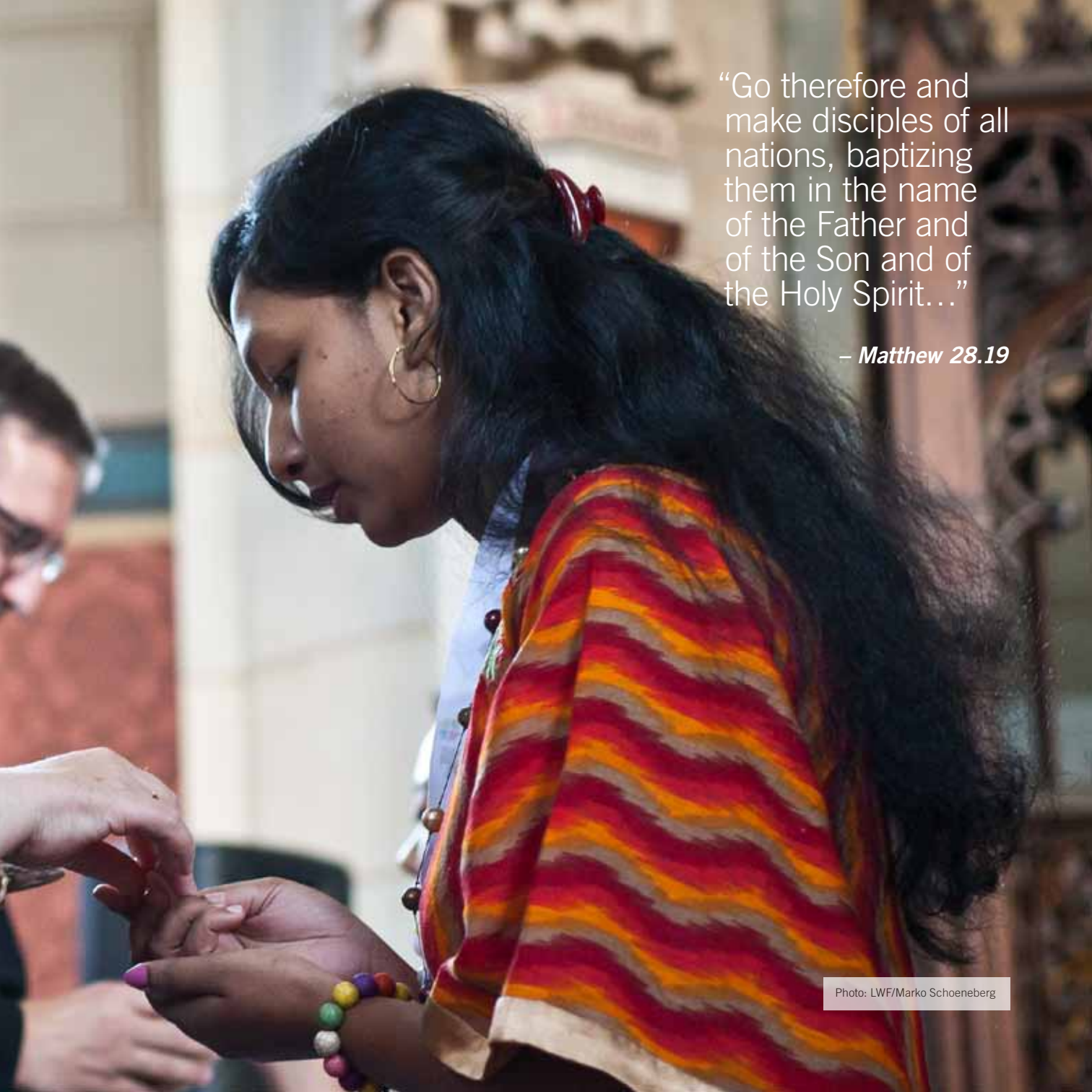
munities engage in public space and how they deal with politics and power. Reflections on contemporary realities in Brazil, Nigeria and Palestine address issues of domination and the complex relationship between religion and politics, and highlight the crucial role played by minority groups in plural societies.

A woman with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a black robe, is shown in profile, holding a golden chalice. She is looking down at the chalice. In the background, another person in a black robe is partially visible, looking down. The setting appears to be a church interior with wooden paneling and a window in the background.

**PRIORITY AREA 2**

**MEMBER CHURCHES GROWING IN CAPACITY  
FOR HOLISTIC MISSION AND DEEPENING  
RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER**

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A woman with long dark hair, wearing a vibrant shawl with horizontal stripes in shades of red, orange, and yellow, is being baptized. She is looking down with a serene expression. A man's hands are visible, holding her hands and pouring water over her head. The background is softly blurred, showing an indoor setting with wooden carvings.

“Go therefore and  
make disciples of all  
nations, baptizing  
them in the name  
of the Father and  
of the Son and of  
the Holy Spirit...”

– *Matthew 28.19*

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# Highlights of the year

- Through the 2014 review process, the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) focused its work on three programmatic areas: Communion Building, Church Growth and Sustainability, and Capacity for Diakonia. DMD's project work was revised, introducing fresh approaches for selection criteria and approval of member church projects.
- The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the first gathering of African Lutherans in Marangu, Tanzania, were an expression of LWF global solidarity. Over 200 delegates reflected on the contribution of African Lutherans to the Lutheran communion and the future of the African Lutheran church.
- A gathering of 140 young people from more than 80 LWF member churches in 60 countries for the Global Young Reformers' Network (GYRN) in Wittenberg provided an opportunity to build community, inspire young Lutherans on their journey of faith and to equip them to continue contributing to the ongoing reformation.
- The church leadership in Europe meeting in Trondheim, Norway, issued a statement affirming the work with migrants as emanating naturally from the understanding of Lutheran theology and encouraged churches to embrace migrants and refugees as "our sisters and brothers." Member churches in European cities also responded through donations of relief goods, food and cash.
- DMD successfully piloted an induction program for newly elected leaders from LWF member churches in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).
- The LAC sustainability process accompanied member churches in Peru, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Argentina, Brazil and Honduras in developing their organizational and management policies.
- Six member church projects (Kenya, Zimbabwe, India, Bangladesh, Bolivia and Estonia) had women and youth as project coordinators, and promoted empowerment of women and youth participation.
- LWF member churches in Asia concluded their bi-annual meeting with a call for church leaders to nurture sustainable churches that promote justice and peace in communities throughout the region.
- Workshops for deepening the theological understanding of diakonia and enhancing human resource management skills were held in Africa, Asia and LAC.

# Being in communion together

Ongoing renewal of the church must be a priority for African Lutheran church witness, in a context in which progress and abundance exist with struggles for justice, peace, reconciliation and a dignified life.

These were the key messages from speakers at the LWF Africa regional consultation and 60th anniversary celebrations, in May, in Moshi, Tanzania.

Over 200 delegates including heads of churches from the 31 LWF member churches, representatives from sister churches around the world, and global LWF leaders reflected on the vision of the first gathering of African Lutherans in Marangu, Tanzania, in 1955. They also analyzed their contribution to the Lutheran communion and the future of the African Lutheran church with a view to the 500<sup>th</sup> Reformation anniversary in 2017 and beyond.

A presentation by Bishop Dr Musa Filibus of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria summarized the



Bishops from across Africa came together to celebrate 60 years since the first gathering of African Lutherans.  
Photo: LUCSA

critical issues for the renewal of the African Lutheran church in today's context. These include theological education, church sustainability, good governance, ecumenism and interfaith relations.

Filibus noted that despite democratic changes and economic progress since the 1960s, there is growing impoverishment of huge sections of Africa's population, high unemployment

rates especially among the youth, poor social infrastructure and basic services, and extremist-related violence.

The African member churches stressed the need to actively engage in mission and diaconal activities. They also pledged to work for service-orientated leadership that is accountable and transparent, with active gender and intergenerational participation.

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# Strengthening relations

In a context marked by increasing exploitation of natural resources, forced migration and human trafficking, Lutheran churches in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have called for stronger advocacy to affirm that salvation, creation and human beings “are not for sale.”

Meeting in Bolivia’s western city of La Paz in April, leaders of the LWF member churches in LAC reflected on the LWF Twelfth Assembly theme, Liberated by God’s Grace. Lutheran

diakonia in LAC focuses on ongoing training, making the churches’ diaconal work visible, and working in networks to sustain learning and sharing of experiences. It integrates inclusion, climate justice, human dignity and creation, all of which are linked with gender justice and youth participation.

The participants, who included representatives of LWF churches in North America, said the main challenges to survival in both regions include labor and sexual exploitation,

disappearance of young people, sex tourism and the sale of children. Trafficking in body organs, violence against women, forced migration and deportation were also mentioned as activities that increasingly threaten life and human dignity.

The work of churches on HIV and AIDS can also offer space for transformation, according to a new publication by churches in the region, *HIV: Espacio para Cambiar*, or HIV: Space for Change. Based on a methodology known as see-reflect-act, the handbook offers theological and diaconal practices that the churches in the region can use in their HIV ministry.

“This book contains the actions of our churches as they accompany people affected by HIV. This is our experience of walking with the excluded,” noted Bishop Dr Victoria Cortez Rodriguez of the Nicaragua Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope.



Young members of the Conference of Leaders in La Paz, Bolivia, called for stronger advocacy to counter social issues in the region. Photo: Adriana Castañeda

# Induction of newly elected leaders

A group of newly elected leaders from 14 LWF member churches in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) formed a peer support network to mutually accompany each other and minister to one another in times of need.

This was one of the outcomes of the Induction of Newly Elected Leaders pilot project aimed at helping first-time heads of churches deepen their understanding and practice as transformative leaders, able to offer strong leadership to their churches and the Lutheran communion.

The program, which took place in Geneva and Wittenberg, provided leaders with the opportunity to improve their knowledge of the operational work of the LWF Communion Office and its strategic alliances with other church organizations and with the United Nations.

“Venezuela is a very small church in terms of human resources. We are very grateful to the communion for the opportunity to work and share



New church leaders described the LWF induction program as a source of encouragement.  
Photo: LWF/S. Gally

together, and the knowledge that we are not alone,” Rev. Gerardo Hands, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela, said.

Participants observed that formation as a pastor, while extensive, does not specifically equip one for the suddenly new role of “shepherding” the entire church. A crisis, for example, requires not only immediate but skilled approaches, which the new program offers.

For Rev. Dr Samuel Ndanga-Toué, President of the Evangelical Lutheran

Church of the Central African Republic, the program was “a source of encouragement,” especially in a context of ongoing civil conflict in the CAR.

The new leaders also reflected on issues related to Lutheran identity, holistic mission, accountability, and ecumenical commitment and witness.

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# Reunification in a divided church

*When 54-year-old Rev. Antonio Reyes was elected president of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines, he knew one of biggest challenges he faced would be reunifying a church divided for more than 20 years. In 2012, the 18,000-member LCP held a reunification conference aimed at ending the divisive crisis.*

“Right now we are still in the process of encouraging congregations and some pastors to be truthful to the reconciliation process and being a unified church,” Reyes says.

“There are some pastors who were at the reconciliation convention and they supported it. But when we get down to the congregational level, there are some who don’t want to accept those who were separated and want to come back and use church property for worship services, even if it is a separate worship service,” he adds.

The president of the LCP took part in an induction for newly elected

Lutheran leaders in Geneva, which he described as being a great source of encouragement to him.

“I can see that whether you are a big church or a small church in terms of numbers or financial status, it doesn’t matter. We can stand together as one,” he says. “On my part, I told them that even though we are a small church, the willingness to help not only other member churches but the LWF as a whole is there.”

“Even though we are a small church, the willingness to help not only other member churches but the LWF as a whole is there.”

That solidarity within the Lutheran World Federation is illustrated by the assistance the LWF has given member churches in the Philippines in order to help local communities become better equipped to handle natural disasters such as typhoons Haiyan and Hagupit. In October

2014, the LWF Department for Mission and Development ran a disaster preparedness workshop.

Another challenge the LCP faces is how to become more self-sufficient. “We are financially hard up and we have properties that need to be developed in order that we can support our own ministry, our church workers and some people in the church, and not be 100 percent dependent on outside churches,” Reyes explains. “There are special projects that need help from the outside but most of the programs that we have in the church must be supported by us.”

One practical solution, he says, is to develop church properties so that they can be used to generate revenue for pastoral salaries, support and training.

“Right now we have an old, big church building in Manila that is not being used. I want to renovate it so that we can hold our own seminars there instead of renting other venues.”



# Engaging neighbors and communities

LWF member churches in Asia concluded their bi-annual meeting in 2015 under the theme of Holistic Sustainability: Towards A Sustainable LWF Asia Region with a call for church leaders to nurture sustainable churches that promote justice and peace in communities throughout the region.

The LWF Asia communion is a diverse communion—culturally, ethnically, politically, economically and socially—facing its own challenges and creating its own opportunities, participants observed. The churches in the respective sub-regions experience different situations that demand varying responses.

However, one common key challenge is the need to create a church that is holistic—preaching the gospel, serving people in need and advocating for justice and peace—and sustainable.

LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan reminded and encouraged the church leaders that their



Karen Hsu, Steven Ju, Bishop Ray Chen and Rev. Selma welcoming members of LUCAS 2015 at China Lutheran Seminary, Hsinchu, Taiwan. Photo: LWF/S. Lawrence

role is about strengthening the vision of a sustainable church with the ability to “engage neighbors and communities not within our walls.”

At a LWF consultation on Asian Lutheran identity and self-understanding hosted by the Lutheran Church in the Philippines, Australian theologian Rev. Dr Stephen Haar, invited Lutheran churches in Asia to reflect on their response to “other-

ness”—other people, cultures, faiths, religions, and worldviews—in order to discover their identities and the nature of their mission.

Young Lutherans in Asia established the regional Asia Lutheran Youth Network. They see it as critical for sharing and learning, nurturing young leaders and contributing to global LWF initiatives.



PRIORITY AREA 3

**EFFECTIVE AND EMPOWERING DIAKONIA  
ADDRESSING HUMAN SUFFERING,  
INJUSTICE, AND EMERGENCIES**

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“Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

– Luke 10:36-37

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# Highlights of the year

- Increased the size and scope of LWF World Service Country Programs, particularly due to a growth in emergency response operations and rights-based projects.
- Served more than 260,000 people affected by the conflict in South Sudan within the country and in the neighboring countries of Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. LWF World Service provided water and sanitation, education, protection and psychosocial support in Kakuma (Kenya), Adjumani (Uganda), Gambella (Ethiopia), some of the largest refugee settlements in the world.
- Joined forces with Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) to provide shelter and relief good for 150,000 people in Nepal following the earthquakes in April and May. Just over 21,000 households received emergency relief goods and psychosocial support.
- Assisted 200,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan, which became the temporary home of 1.3 million refugees from Syria, as well as refugees from other countries and previous conflicts. In the Za'atari refugee camp, LWF World Service offered peace-building and psychosocial support in the LWF Peace Oasis.
- Provided vocational training for young people in Chad, Uganda, Mauritania, Jordan, Laos, Myanmar, Central America, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and in Beit Hanina and Ramallah in the Palestinian territories.
- Facilitated youth projects to empower young people in the countries of Central America, and advocated for and supported the peace process in Colombia.
- Used the Universal Periodic Review mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council as part of a global initiative to successfully submit parallel reports on the situations in Mozambique, Nepal and Myanmar.
- Maintained three emergency hubs in Kathmandu (Nepal), Nairobi (Kenya) and San Salvador (El Salvador), whose members can be deployed within 48 hours to acute emergencies.
- During 2015, hundreds of thousands of people uprooted by conflicts in Syria and Iraq fled to Europe. Assessed the situation of refugees in Hungary and Serbia uprooted by conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of people had fled to Europe. Supported the refugee work of the local LWF member church (ELCH).

# Joining hands in Nepal

The LWF and Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) joined forces in 2015 to provide shelter for 12,000 households in the Rasuwa district following the earthquakes in Nepal in April and May.

After a joint assessment, the project targeted those most in need, including people with disabilities, the elderly, women, children, nursing mothers, and people from marginalized communities such as Dalits, religious minorities and indigenous nationalities.

The LWF and IRW have separately provided assistance to more than 110,000 Nepalese people, and said they were confident that with this new initiative, additional numbers of marginalized people affected by the quake would get relief and early-recovery support in an economic, efficient, transparent and accountable manner.

In August 2014, IRW and LWF World Service signed a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate on humanitarian work, marking the first official cooperation between a global



Nepal earthquake survivor Santoshi Suwal with emergency relief supplied by the LWF and other ACT Alliance members. Photo: Dhivesh Shreshta

Christian communion and a worldwide Islamic non-governmental organization.

The joint Nepal earthquake emergency response was their third cooperative project. The two organizations had been working together with Syrian refugees and host communities in Al Mafrq in Jordan, and in the Kenyan refugee camp Dadaab. The earthquake response brought together many partners, including faith-based organizations in the ACT Nepal Forum, such as the China-based Amity Foundation.

LWF World Service has been operating in Nepal since 1984 on disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness and response, sustainable livelihoods, and community-led actions for governance and justice.

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck the country on 25 April and a heavy aftershock one month later resulted in 9,000 deaths and the destruction of 700,000 buildings.

# Providing relief and support

As the war in Syria entered its fifth year in 2015 and the Islamic State (IS) militia continued its advance into Syria and Iraq, the Middle East remained one of the most volatile regions in the world. More than half a million people were displaced, in addition to those who have already fled their countries.

Between May and October of 2015, hundreds of thousands of people uprooted by these conflicts attempted the perilous journey via North Africa and across the Mediterranean to reach

Europe. LWF assessed the situation in Hungary and Serbia and is supporting the refugee work of the local LWF member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary.

LWF World Service continued to work in Jordan, which became the temporary home of 700,000 refugees from Syria, as well as refugees from other countries and previous conflicts.

In the Za'atari refugee camp, the peace building work in the LWF Peace Oasis continued to be an im-

portant part of helping young people in particular cope with ongoing insecurity, conflict, frustration and anxiety, and to prepare them for a future free of violence.

The LWF also intervenes in host communities, where a majority of the refugees are settled, including through cash-based initiatives, school and shelter rehabilitation and life-skills training.

LWF World Service was present in Northern Iraq (Kurdistan) since the beginning of 2015, where it supports Yazidis, Christians, Muslims and Turkmen who have become refugees in their own country. LWF provided food, installed water and sanitation systems in refugee camps and offered psychosocial support to people who had witnessed or experienced violence.

At its 2015 meeting, the LWF Council adopted a resolution on the Middle East. It urged the international community to “resolve the region’s conflicts through negotiation rather than further violence.”



The Zaini family and their neighbours, displaced by conflict in the Middle East, bring home relief food provided by the LWF. Photo: LWF/Seivan Salim

# Serving those affected by conflict

Fighting between government troops and rebel factions in South Sudan erupted into a conflict in December 2013 that had killed thousands and prompted more than 2.2 million people to flee their homes by the time a tentative internationally-mediated peace agreement was signed in August 2015.

Despite the accord, the conflict in the world's youngest state is still ongoing. In addition to causing displacement within the country, it severely affects neighboring states such as Uganda, Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia which are hosting more than half a million South Sudanese refugees.

In 2015, LWF World Service served more than 260,000 people affected by the conflict within the country and in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. LWF provided water and sanitation, education, protection and psychosocial support in Kakuma (Kenya), Adjumani (Uganda), Gambella (Ethiopia), among the largest refugee settlements in the world.

South Sudan itself is hosting refugees from Sudan, who fled the



Students in class at Napata Primary School, Ajuong Thok refugee camp, South Sudan, where the LWF provides essential services to camp residents. Photo: LWF/ C. Kästner

fighting in South Kordofan and the Nuba mountains to Unity State in South Sudan and from the Blue Nile region to Upper Nile State of South Sudan. As Unity and Upper Nile states are contested territory between the South Sudanese conflict parties, working there makes it one of the most challenging humanitarian contexts for LWF staff.

LWF World Service supports displaced households and vulnerable local communities in the South Sudanese state of Jonglei. They receive relief goods, water and sanitation, mosquito nets and cash grants to help them recover faster from the effects of conflict and displacement.

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# Life in solidarity

*Yuri Guzman, an environmental engineer working in a water, sanitation and social accompaniment project in Choco, Colombia, talks about what humanitarian work means to her.*

“Being an aid worker in Colombia has made me think about my life and compare it to other people, to learn from them and to understand them. It has also made me understand better the need for the presence of humanitarian workers in complex contexts such as the Colombian Pacific, where I am.”

*What is the context in which you work?*

My commitment allows me to meet families, communities and organizations with different experiences. All of them survive in an environment of armed conflict in which there is also a high risk of natural disasters. Humanitarian work allows me to help these people, to assist them, and to contribute ideas, tools and solutions to their problems.

An important part of my work is to make sure that the human rights of these vulnerable people are respected. I want to make them visible and help them out of the stigmatization and marginalization in which they live.

Recurrent humanitarian crises, the absence of the state, the lack of adequate and structural needs of the population and their constant vulnerability are some of the most important challenges that humanitarian workers face every day in Colombia.

From my point of view, humanitarian work means providing new perspectives of life in solidarity. It means respecting diversity and defending human rights.

*What encourages you in your work?*

What encourages us are the tangible results when the projects we develop in a community are consistent with the cultural context and

respond to the needs of the people – when individual and community capacities are strengthened and we see social change come about in the families.

It’s important for me to understand communities. I want them to participate in decision-making processes and initiatives that affect them. This has increased the acceptance of our work because we facilitate their empowerment and help them take charge of their own destiny.

For me, living with Afro-descendant and indigenous communities, eating their food, living in the same conditions in which they live and being a direct and experiential witness of its location has been quite an experience personally and professionally. From my point of view, humanitarian work means providing new perspectives of life in solidarity. It means respecting diversity and defending human rights.



## Local voices on the global stage

The LWF raises awareness and advocates for people's rights at all levels through a rights-based approach. In 2015, LWF used the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council as part of a global initiative to submit parallel reports on the situations in Mozambique, Nepal and Myanmar.

The governments of Myanmar and Nepal accepted recommendations of the LWF at their UPR, which took place at the beginning of November. LWF submitted a parallel report on the human rights situation in both countries, which was taken up by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), several UN member states, and consequently, the two countries themselves.

“The Myanmar and Nepal governments accepted most of these recommendations, including the recommendation on a land registration system, protection from all forms of violence against women, and effective



Consultations with the community in Mozambique formed the basis of a LWF report for the United Nations Human Rights Council. Land rights, women's rights, the right to justice and the rights of minorities were raised.

Photo: LWF/ S.Oftadeh

registration of all children in the country for Myanmar,” LWF Advocacy Officer Dr Ojot Miru Ojulu said. “For Nepal they accepted our recommendation on effective implementation of the caste-based Discrimination and Untouchability Act of 2011, access to education for children with disabilities, and effective implementation of the People's Housing Program,” among others.

The government of Mozambique also accepted most of the hu-

man rights issues addressed in its UPR. The UPR process is a unique mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council aimed at improving the human rights situation on the ground of each of the 193 UN member states. The mechanism is used to review the human rights situation of all UN member states every four-and-a-half years.



“For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

– 1 Cor 3.9

PRIORITY AREA 4

# ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS



Photo: LWF/Helen Putsman

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# Highlights of the year

- LWF Communications provided consistent and full news flow throughout the year. It covered all major events, including the Marangu anniversary, COP21, Global Young Reformers Conference, Global Theological Conference on the Reformation in Windhoek.
- Social media showed significant improvement in terms of coverage and reach. The LWF Facebook page grew organically, by nearly 20% each month. Average posts received 12 percent engagement which indicates that those who like LWF are active in sharing and distributing material.
- LWF Archives published 50 stories on the women who have made the LWF Communion.
- In January 2015, the Swiss National Bank decided to cap the Swiss franc. This impacted the budget of LWF in Geneva. Proactive measures from LWF leadership and staff, with support from churches and related organizations, resulted in a positive impact on the Geneva budget at the end of the year.
- The LWF Council approved the Fundraising Strategy in June. The document maps out the direction of future fundraising in terms of new methodologies and potential new sources of income.
- Finance introduced an improved financial accounting system. Staff became more confident in the use of Sage financial software system. We are in a better position to produce useful, informative and timely financial reports.
- The process of producing the membership request letters was smooth and has become part of the organizational “routine” of business as usual. Membership income is up by EUR 100,000 compared to the previous year.
- Contributions to the Endowment Fund from member churches in 2015 totalled CHF 680,500, up from CHF 204,855 in 2014.
- A new Code of Conduct for LWF staff was approved at the 2015 Council meeting. The complaints mechanism and investigation guidelines were put in place in June. Staff were trained on them.

# Sustainability

In 2015 the LWF Council engaged in a discussion on the sustainability of the LWF and its Communion Office. This was a step on the way to moving from a reactive mode imposed by unexpected external circumstances to proactively addressing the task of sustaining LWF's mission in future.

LWF General Secretary Martin Junge said it was the duty of the Communion Office and Council to tackle these challenges and overcome them. “We have a shared responsibility to take the thriving and vibrant LWF of today as a point of departure, and help make it stronger and more relevant in the years to come.”

He said inspiration in this work came partly from LWF youth who have raised issues of inter-generational justice, such as climate change and proposed “that efforts around sustainability were framed as a measure of justice toward the youth in our member churches, to young reformers, to the LWF youth,



LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge urges the LWF to remain sustainable, during a finance discussion at the 2015 LWF Council meeting. Photo: LWF/Helen Putsman

who will carry on with the LWF in the coming decades.”

The document “Towards a sustainable projection of the LWF and its Communion Office” laid the groundwork for LWF management, staff and governance to understand and agree upon the approach, theological basis, mindset, focus and direction for this process. It is a basis for a shared understanding of the approach and intended outcome of this work which

is to strengthen the LWF's journey and witness in this world.

What needs to be sustained is LWF's ongoing participation in God's mission of transformation and healing in this world. Or, in the language of the LWF strategy: to continue being “a communion in Christ, living and working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world.”

W. A. Visser 't Hooft Hall





Photo: LWF/S. Gallay

# Staff

72

Geneva Staff

66

International Staff

2,684

National staff

5,433

Refugee Staff  
and volunteers

# Finances

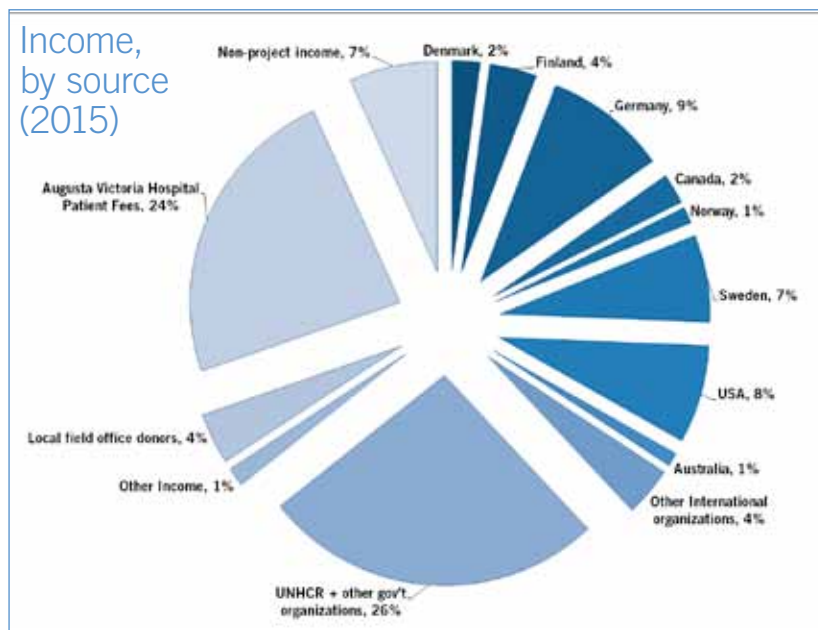
The summary of income and expenditure provides the consolidated financial highlights for the year ended 31 December 2015. “Coordination (Geneva)” refers to the Geneva Communion Office activities, including governance, planning, coordination, program implementation, monitoring, evaluation and capacity building.

The total Geneva coordination expenditures are in Swiss francs

## Consolidated Results in 2015

Amounts in EUR	Geneva Coordination	Program & Projects	AVH Jerusalem	Total
<b>Income</b>	10,713,579	99,842,702	34,007,815	144,564,096
<b>Expenditure</b>	10,837,807	98,836,332	27,574,017	137,248,156
<b>Operating Results</b>	-124,228	-680,404	6,433,798	5,629,166
<b>Other Financial Charges</b>	-21,841	963,613	0	941,772
<b>Net Result</b>	<b>-146,069</b>	<b>283,209</b>	<b>6,433,798</b>	<b>6,570,938</b>
<b>Reserves 31.12.2014 (After Restatement of IAS 19 Revised)</b>	913,280	5,188,361	17,555,679	23,657,320
<b>Reserves 31.12.2015 (After Restatement of IAS 19 Revised)</b>	662,212	5,576,575	23,989,474	30,228,261

### Income, by source (2015)



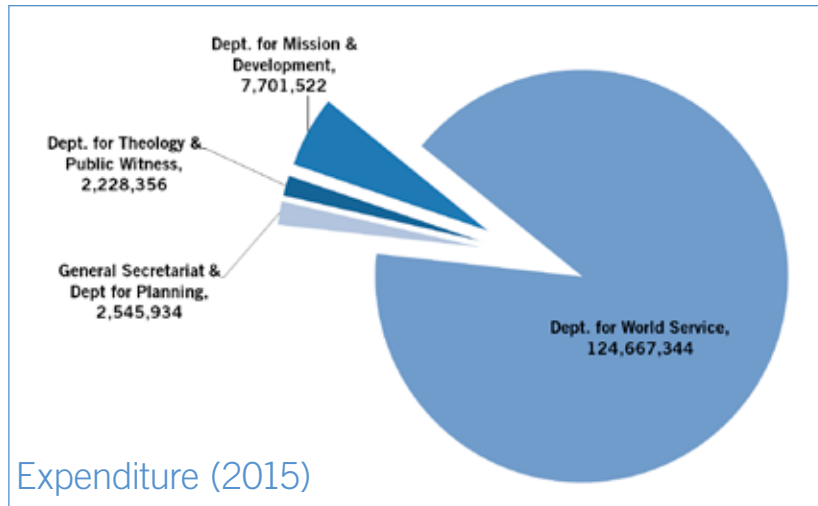
and based on the council approved budgets.

PricewaterhouseCoopers SA audited the 2015 consolidated financial statements in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and Swiss Code of Obligations without any qualifications.

## Income and expenditure

In 2015, LWF total income increased to EUR 145 million, 24% or EUR 28 million over the previous year income of EUR 116 million.





This is mainly due to the increased work of the LWF’s global humanitarian and development programs.

The 2015 total expenditure was EUR 137 million compared with EUR 112 million in 2014. This is an

increase of EUR 25 million or 22% in program expenditures.

## Management and Control

LWF operates in many difficult countries and is exposed to various financial risks that could adversely affect our financial results and performance. The risks are managed through an effective Internal Control System as per the Swiss regulations and evaluated by Pricewaterhouse-Coopers SA.

## The LWF Endowment Fund

The LWF Endowment Fund was established in 1999 to help secure a financially sustainable future for the organization. Yields from the fund secure the continuity of the work of the LWF.

A CHF 20 million target is set for 2017. By the end of 2015, the value of the Fund was CHF 14.91 million. During the year, contributions

to the endowment fund were CHF 680,500 from 21 member churches. In 2015 the fund distributed CHF 345,716 for the LWF programs.

An independent Board of Trustees manages the Endowment Fund.

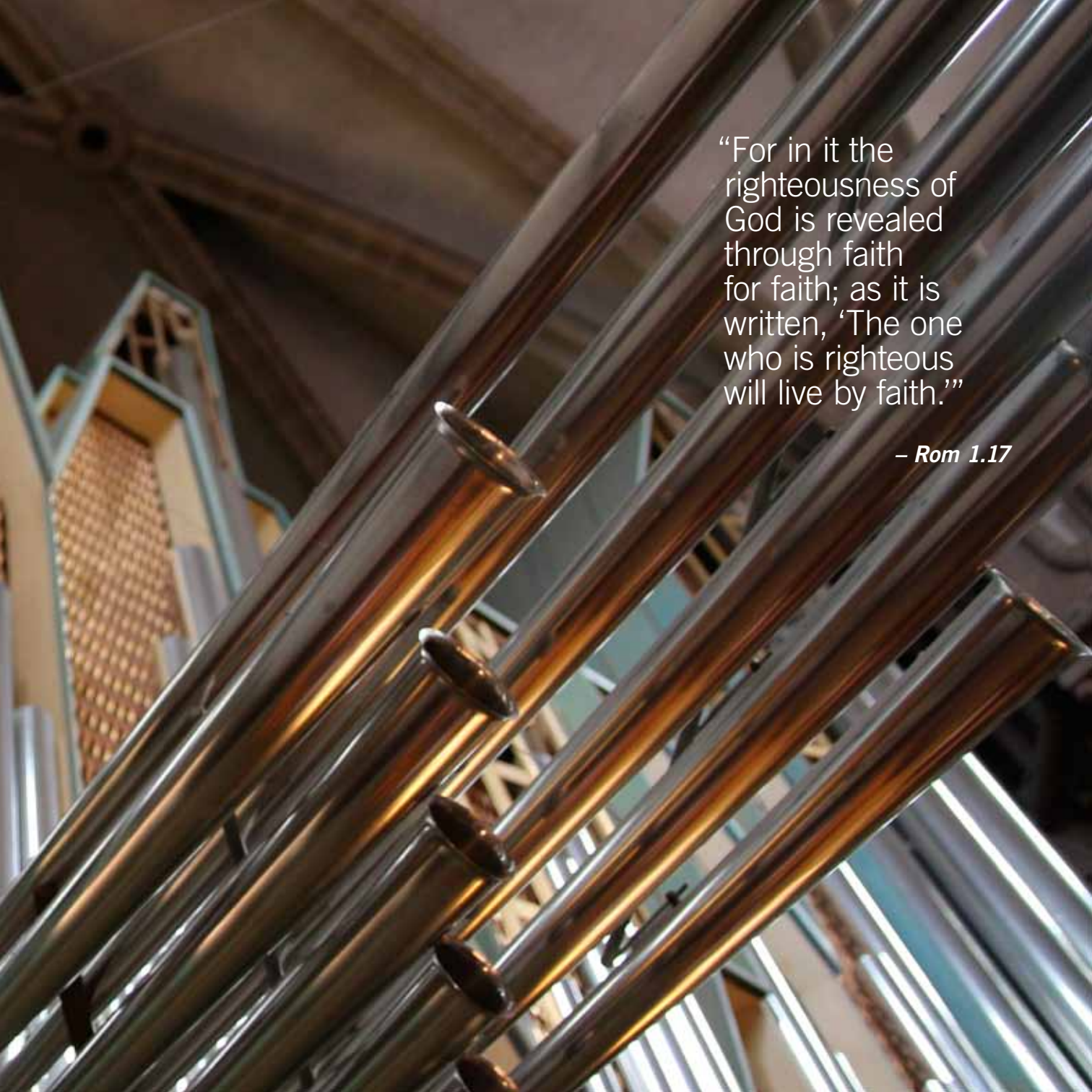
Gifts and legacies from individual, churches and organizations are welcomed with gratitude.

LWF Endowment Fund  
 Department for Planning and Operations  
 P.O. Box 2100  
 CH-1211 Geneva 2  
 Switzerland  
 Email: [info@lutheranworld.org](mailto:info@lutheranworld.org)  
 Telephone: +41-22 7916455



Photo: LWF/S. Cox

## **REFORMATION ANNIVERSARY AND ASSEMBLY**



“For in it the  
righteousness of  
God is revealed  
through faith  
for faith; as it is  
written, ‘The one  
who is righteous  
will live by faith.’”

– *Rom 1.17*

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# Highlights of the year

- In 2015, LWF entered into the three-year period marking the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. During this three-year period, major events and processes relating to the anniversary have and will be taking place throughout the communion.
- In June 2015, four booklets were published on the LWF themes for Reformation 500: the main theme, *Liberated by God's Grace* and the three sub-themes, *Salvation – Not for Sale*, *Human Beings – Not for Sale*, *Creation – Not for Sale*.
- A conference, Global Perspectives on the Reformation, took place in Windhoek, Namibia, around Reformation Day 2015. Leading theologians from around the world participated.
- More than 200 delegates from LWF member churches in Africa, LWF global leaders and ecumenical guests gathered in Marangu, Tanzania, to reflect on being a reforming church in a changing African context and what it means to be relevant in the context in which the churches witness.
- Young representatives from LWF member churches met in Wittenberg, Germany, for the international Global Young Reformers' conference.
- 2015 was a time for planting, harvesting and concretizing ideas and insights about the Assembly, what it means in and of itself, and as part of other processes taking place at national, regional and global levels.
- The Assembly is a journey that we undertake as a global communion. It starts as soon as the previous Assembly ends and ends when the next one begins. The Assembly is therefore the time to gather the fruits from this journey and to put them together to construct a narrative that tells our story at this juncture in our history.
- The Assembly is a time for celebration and discernment and for growing in faith and love as a spiritual community as we prepare to take up the challenge of becoming better sowers of God's love in a world in dire need. Here are some of the major insights learned and achievements realized in the course of 2015.

Read more at  
[2017.lutheranworld.org](http://2017.lutheranworld.org) &  
[lwfassembly.org](http://lwfassembly.org)

## 2017 Reformation booklets

*In June 2015, four booklets were published on the LWF themes for Reformation 500: the main theme, Liberated by God's grace and the three sub-themes, Salvation – Not for Sale, Human Beings – Not for Sale, Creation – Not for Sale.*

The booklets, edited by the Department for Theology and Public Witness, include essays from all regions of the LWF, each essay ending with three questions for reflection. Each booklet concludes with a Bible study based on the theme.

The booklets are intended to trigger discussion in different settings. They provide a ready-made resource for a variety of study groups. They could be used as the basis for clergy study conferences, provide content for presentations at church conventions, be used for dialogue with ecumenical partners, be the basis for a course at a school or seminary, provide theme and content for a youth gathering or retreat, or be used at regional or sub-regional gatherings.



A series of booklets published by the LWF critically examines the theme and sub-theme of the Reformation anniversary.  
Photo: LWF/S. Galloway

The booklets have also been commended as preparatory material for the LWF Twelfth Assembly in 2017.

Under the main theme, a subject closely linked to the doctrine of justification by faith, relevant questions that triggered the 16<sup>th</sup> century movement to reform the church are explored. Insights on new challenges

over the course of time are also discussed.

Read the booklets at  
[2017.lutheranworld.org/resources](http://2017.lutheranworld.org/resources)

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# Global Perspectives on the Reformation

*One of the major events organized by the Department for Theology and Public Witness in preparation of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation was the conference on Global Perspectives on the Reformation that took place in Windhoek, Namibia, around Reformation Day 2015.*

A characteristic of Lutheran theology is that it introduces distinctions that dismantle traditional

hegemonic power structures: the differentiation between the spiritual and the worldly realms liberates each of these realms from the domination of the other and clearly shows each realm's distinct contribution. The conference explored the question of how these Lutheran perspectives help us to analyze the current situation of church and society. The conference brought together around

70 theologians and scholars from 33 countries. It provided a fruitful and dynamic space to discuss contemporary interactions between theology, economics and politics, and an inspiring platform to further develop the LWF's understanding of its public witness. A broad variety of inputs, reflections and insights helped to collect and share the fruits of LWF recent theological study processes.

Daily Bible studies invited participants to take a closer look at a specific biblical text and to draw new insights from it. Moderated group conversations proved to be an important space in which theological concerns could be articulated in a participatory way. Six workshops deepened issues of basic concern to the Lutheran communion: gender justice, theological education, communion and mutual accountability, religion and development, climate justice, interreligious relations and public space.



Lutheran theology dismantles traditional power structures, participants at the conference on Global Perspectives on the Reformation heard. Photo: LWF/I. Benesch



World view: delegates at Global Perspectives on the Reformation discuss the political landscape and look at its effect on member churches and communities.

Photos: LWF/I. Benesch

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# Preparing for the Twelfth Assembly

*The Assembly is a journey that we undertake as a global communion. It starts as soon as the previous Assembly ends and ends when the next one begins.*

Preparations for the LWF Twelfth Assembly are well underway. The concept note which was prepared sets the tone for the Assembly: “The program and methodology of the Twelfth Assembly will be elaborated with the aim of making the Assembly a joyful, transformative, forward-looking and outward-looking.”

The year 2015 was a time for planting, harvesting and concretizing ideas and insights concerning the Assembly and what it means in and of itself and as part of other processes taking place at national, regional and global levels.

It was a time to clarify what hosting an Assembly means. The Assembly is grounded in a particular context

with its distinct history, culture and spirituality. Grounding an Assembly to a place is what gives it its personality, charm and identity. The extent to which the Twelfth Assembly will be referred to as the Namibia Assembly will show the extent to which the Namibian spirit was able to entrench itself in the life of that Assembly.”

[The program and methodology of the Twelfth Assembly will be elaborated with the aim of making the Assembly a joyful, transformative, forward-looking and outward-looking.](#)

It was a time to articulate the hopes of the hosting churches for the Assembly. At a planning meeting in February, Bishop emeritus Zephania Kameeta, said, “I see us all as pieces of clay molded in a pot of one vision for the Assembly, and God is the

potter. My hope is that while we are meeting here, we will hear the music of the Assembly in 2017. I do not mean only the music as such, but the worship services, the celebration, the speeches, the Bible studies – that we will hear all this now and today. We will be therefore excited and inspired by this extraordinary experience and will jump and dance to the tune of the music of the Assembly.”

The year 2015 was a time to define the relationship of the Assembly to the commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. The concept note reminds us that “the LWF wants to emphasize that the Reformation anniversary is not just an event but a process that starts in 2015 and involves programs and activities at all levels, from local, national and regional to global.

The Twelfth Assembly, therefore, is very much a culmination of this process and a converging point for all





The planning committee, drawn from members of the communion across the globe, is entrusted with making the Assembly a success. Photo: LWF/H. Martinussen

major undertakings that have implications in the life, thinking and work of the global communion.”

The year 2015 was a time to weave the fabric of the Assembly’s spiritual life. The International Worship Planning Committee summarized this in a narrative: “The tree is a place of vision. From the perspective of the tree, we see Jesus, we hear Jesus, we encounter Jesus. And from the tree we are called into communion with Jesus. Jesus

shares a meal with us. In Holy Communion, we are called to ‘bear’ one another, to carry one another, to carry each other’s burden, to be community. We share the necklaces among us, using them to form a communal bond as we pray. On the evening with the different stations, we entrust our concerns to God and to one another. Peoples close to the earth (First Nations, Masai, Namibian Creation Story) remind us that ‘community’ includes creation. [...] We entrust all people and

creation to God in the evening with our candles in the red sands of Namibia.”

Various actors are involved in the Assembly preparations, including the LWF Council, Assembly Planning Committee, International Worship Planning Committee, United Church Council-Namibia Evangelical Lutheran Churches, Local Assembly Planning Committee, Assembly Office in Geneva and Windhoek and Communion Office staff.



The future is bright: young reformers from around the world showed off their talents and talked of their expectations for the future at the Global Young Reformers' Network in Wittenberg, Germany. Photos: LWF/Johan C. Valeriano (1-2), LWF/Marko Schoeneberg (3-6)

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Cover photo: Rice provided by LWF is distributed to members of a village hit by monsoon storms in Rakhine state, Myanmar, in August. Photo: John Martin R. Celiz.

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Liberated by God's grace,  
a communion in Christ living  
and working together for a just,  
peaceful, and reconciled world.



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