



THE
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WORLD
FEDERATION

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We are in the midst of commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation!

A letter to the LWF member churches

The Lutheran World Federation has selected the period from 2015 through 2017 to focus on the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, and there is already much to announce this year. We are in the midst of the Reformation anniversary celebrations!

By way of reminder: All of our events and processes are carried out in accordance with the three basic principles being followed during the LWF's anniversary celebrations. As we mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we wish to emphasize the *polycentric character* of the Reformation and the various contextual realities that gave rise to the Reformation movement. We also wish to pay close attention and find out which topics are able to move the people and societies of today, as part of an *ongoing Reformation*; and we will seek to celebrate the Reformation anniversary in a spirit of *ecumenical openness*, and deliberately take into account the results of ecumenical dialogue in the process of preparing the anniversary events.

A number of exceptional events of importance have already taken place within this context. Please allow me to mention a few of them in brief:

- “From Marangu to Wittenberg”: In May 2015, 200 delegates from African LWF member churches celebrated the 60th anniversary of the historical conference held in Marangu, northern Tanzania in 1955. Leading representatives of Africa's Lutheran churches met back then for the first time, an occasion that continues to be viewed as the birth of the spirit of unity among African Lutheran churches. Participants in this year's conference, titled “Marangu to Wittenberg: Being a Reforming Church in a Changing African Context”, raised awareness on the historical event and reflected on their unity and the African contribution to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.
- International conference of Young Reformers: From 22 August through 4 September, 140 “young reformers” from around the globe convened for a workshop in Wittenberg. Young people from the world over met in the historical Reformation center, representing a strong symbol of the impact that the Reformation continues to have on our world today. The theme of the workshop was “Freed by God's love to change the world”. It featured a program that

provided an opportunity to exchange ideas and to come together to learn about and discuss topics, including Lutheran identity, discipleship, youth participation, climate justice, the future sustainability of the churches, and mission renewal. The thoughts and ideas collected in Wittenberg will continue to leave their mark on the long road to the Reformation anniversary through the development of “Living Reformation” projects along the way.

- Publication of topical booklets on the occasion of the Reformation anniversary: Four booklets have been published that I would especially like to recommend to you. The booklets focus on the main theme and sub-themes connected with the Reformation anniversary (*Liberated by God's Grace* with the sub-themes *Salvation – Not for Sale*, *Human Beings – Not for Sale*, and *Creation – Not For Sale*), and provide an opportunity to grapple with the central concerns of the Reformation in a framework relevant to our own times. The booklets, which appeared in June (<https://2017.lutheranworld.org/resources>), will be made available early next year in the LWF's official languages. Several translations into other languages are already on their way as well. The articles, written by authors from all parts of the global church communion, take on topics such as migration, climate change, land grabbing, prosperity gospel, and issues involving sustainable forms of human coexistence. The booklets are also to serve as preparatory materials for the 2017 LWF Assembly. I would again like to invite the LWF member churches to make use of the booklets as impetus for discussion, and would be particularly happy if the booklets were to be used in a dialogue among bilateral international partners. Could you imagine your church using them in that way?
- Women on the Move – From Wittenberg to Windhoek: An international LWF working group launched a process in February to focus on the underlying contributions of women to church and society. At their first meeting, women theologians and church leaders from all seven regions of the LWF worked on a framework for this process to unfold. An important part of this involves the compilation of the stories of women who, through their activities, have left a lasting mark on their particular churches.

And exceptional events and projects are still to come:

- Global theological conference: Around Reformation Day 2015, 80 participants will come together from around the world to reflect on the interplay between theology, politics, and the economy. The conference will take into account the effects of the 16th-century Reformation, which also had a fundamental influence on people's lives during its era. The main presentations will be recorded and provided on the LWF Reformation website so that anyone interested can follow the discussions as well. (<https://2017.lutheranworld.org/>).
- Project fund for the Reformation anniversary: The LWF has set up a special fund to support member churches in the implementation of small projects with a thematic connection to the Reformation anniversary. Please pay attention to the correspondence you receive from the Communion Office, which will provide further details on this important measure of support.

- The 2017 LWF Assembly: As you could read in various letters to the member churches, preparations are in full swing for the Assembly, which promises to be a joyous, transformational, and forward-looking event. The perspective is deliberately meant to be externally focused in order to be able to capture the significance of the Reformation message for today's world. The Reformation Sunday will be one particular highlight, with representatives of the 145 member churches coming together in a worship service to mark the Reformation anniversary.

As the representatives of our member churches, we encourage you to get involved! Come together with other churches and partners in thinking about what it means to be liberated by God's grace, and to join one another in following the call of Jesus Christ in establishing signs of his service and his love in the world. Take part in the variety of networks and get involved in projects at the local, regional, and global levels. Allow us to come together to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in a joyous spirit and in a spirit that encourages us to move forward so that the radiant force of the anniversary may continue to shine on, well beyond 2017.

LWF General Secretary
Rev. Dr Martin Junge

Geneva
14 October 2015