



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION



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**SHARING HOPE**  
**EMPOWERING CHURCHES,**  
**IMPACTING THE WORLD**

LWF Strategy 2025–2031



Sharing Hope	03
Empowering Churches, Impacting the World	04

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## 1. WHO WE ARE 07

A Communion of Churches	07
Vision, Mission, Values	08
The World We Live In	10

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## 2. WHAT WE DO 13

Responsible Theology	14
Thriving Churches	16
Justice and Peace	18
Service and Dignity	20

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## 3. HOW WE WORK 22

Stronger together	24
A sustainable future	27

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### COVER IMAGE

A young woman carries a replica of the Lund Cross in a procession at an ecumenical prayer service in Tarutung, Indonesia.

*Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert*

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### IMAGE RIGHT

Participants at the LWF Thirteenth Assembly join a youth-led climate march through the ICE Krakow Congress Centre.

*Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert*









## SHARING HOPE

In the message from our Thirteenth LWF Assembly in Kraków, Poland, we were reminded that “we are One in the Body of Christ, empowered by the One Spirit and called to proclaim the One Hope of the Risen Christ.” This strategy 2025-2031 builds on that conviction that, as a global communion of churches, we are called to witness to the gospel, bringing credible hope to people in a polarized and deeply divided world.

During the coming years, leading up to and beyond the Fourteenth Assembly, we will continue to work towards our vision, building on the values, mission and priorities outlined in the document you have before you.

In a world where wars and conflicts increase, record numbers of people are fleeing from their homes and the climate emergency reaches ever more alarming levels, we believe we must focus our efforts on empowering people to be signs of hope through words and deeds, bringing peace and healing, working for justice and reconciliation.

The suffering of the earth, our common home, and the rising tide of hate speech, discrimination, exclusion and oppression calls the churches to both urgent practical action and deeper theological reflection, as we seek to show that “another world is possible.”

Since the Kraków Assembly, LWF’s staff have been working together to draw up this strategy, guided by the results of the Assembly and in consultation with representatives of churches, networks and partner organizations in all parts of the globe.

*I am extremely grateful for their work and for the input provided by so many people to broaden the scope, while at the same time sharpening the focus of this strategy which will be implemented by the Communion Office on behalf of our global Lutheran family.*

While thanking all those who have contributed to this document, I commend it to the member churches that make up our communion, as well as all those colleagues and friends who support the work of the LWF in a wide variety of ways. As churches in ongoing Reformation, may we all share hope, as the gift of God’s love.



**Bishop Henrik Stubkjær,  
LWF President**

### IMAGE LEFT

A young man holds a cross during morning prayer.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

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## EMPOWERING CHURCHES, IMPACTING THE WORLD

Our strategy for the coming years is grounded in hope. Not a vague, wishful hope for better times, but a hope that is firmly rooted in faith and clearly visible through our actions.

In this period, we look forward to celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, a major Lutheran confessional writing that unites the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation and is ecumenical in its nature. It continues to remind us of some of the basic principles of how we understand the gospel and live out our faith. Being liberated by God's grace, we are called to protect human dignity and the creation, to create welcoming and inclusive spaces, and to empower churches and communities to provide hope in words and deeds.

As a global communion, we recognize that the contexts in which we carry out this work vary greatly for our member churches. At the same time, we affirm that the foundations upon which this strategy builds are universal, because they are concerned with God-given human dignity and justice.

*In our work, we strive to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serving one another with whatever gift each of us has received (1 Peter 4:10).*

However different our contexts, we know that it is vital for member churches and the Communion Office to seek to understand and respect each other's experiences, which in turn shape our theological perspectives. Our connections must be relational, not transactional, as we seek to "grassroot" the work of the LWF. But by the end of this strategic period, our hope is that the member churches are even more strongly connected to the global communion and feel that they can be proud of its achievements.

This strategy is a tool to achieve that goal. It has been mandated and approved by the Council, which represents all member churches and to which the LWF is accountable. The strategy covers three main areas: who we are (identity, vision, mission, values), what we do (strategic priorities for the next seven years) and how we work (approaches and methods to achieve our mission).

It was developed based on directions given by the Thirteenth Assembly and extensive consultation with stakeholders. It will guide the work of the Communion Office and we hope it will also inspire the member churches as they seek to offer their vibrant witness.



**Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt**  
General Secretary

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### IMAGE RIGHT

A Bible at the 2017 meeting of the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



Grounded in hope,  
the strategy covers  
three main areas:  
who we are, what we  
do, and how we work.

A close-up photograph of a red Bible cover. The words "HOLY BIBLE" are embossed in gold, serif capital letters. The cover has a textured, slightly mottled appearance. The spine of the Bible is visible at the bottom left, also showing the embossed text.

HOLY  
BIBLE

HOLY  
BIBLE



In the spirit of the  
Reformation, our global  
communion is ever reforming.





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## WHO WE ARE

### A Communion of Churches

As members of Lutheran churches, we come together as a communion, living and working together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world.

Our Lutheran confessional heritage teaches that God’s promise, through the Holy Spirit, calls and gathers us into communities around Word and sacrament and in service to all neighbors. Faith active in love has been interwoven into the fabric of the LWF since its founding in 1947. World War II had just ended and countries in Europe were dealing with the fallout of war, antisemitism, warring ideologies, and huge numbers of unemployed, wounded, displaced and dispossessed people. Hope in God’s promise compelled Lutheran churches around the world to come together to confess, reflect and reconcile, and to respond together to human suffering.

In 2024, the LWF has 150 member churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 78 million Christians in 99 countries.

The four foundational pillars of the LWF – joint efforts in theology, common initiatives in mission, working for Christian unity, and rescue for people in need – guided the LWF then and continue to offer guidance today for our joint witness to the gospel and service to the neighbor.

These commitments have brought the LWF member churches closer together. Since its foundation, the LWF has been instrumental in connecting Lutheran churches to one another. The contexts in which our member churches live, and work vary to a great degree:

some churches form the majority faith community, others may be a small minority of the population; some have a long history, others are recently founded; some witness in highly secularized countries, others in highly religious countries where Christians can be a minority. Each of these churches will deal with different issues depending on its context.

*Our global communion brings these different perspectives together, so we can learn from one another.*

At the same time, what unites LWF member churches is far greater than what differentiates them. Faith in Jesus Christ should always be at the center of what we teach about God. When it comes to serving the neighbor and giving credible witness as churches, words and deeds need to go together: we must walk the talk.

Reflection on our roots in the gospel and our role in a changing world supports and informs all aspects of the work undertaken by member churches through the LWF. In the spirit of the Reformation, our global communion is ever reforming and will continue to evolve in response to the contextual challenges through theological reflection, diaconal engagement, mutual learning, joint advocacy, and the leadership of young people and women, while being strongly rooted in worship and prayerful discernment.



**LWF has 150 member churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 78 million Christians in 99 countries.**

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#### IMAGE LEFT

A team-building exercise for men, women, and youth, on the eve of the LWF Thirteenth Assembly.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



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## VISION

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



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## MISSION

To share hope that empowers churches and people to make a positive difference in the world.



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## VALUES

Our values are formed by our faith in Jesus Christ and continue to be shaped by our understanding of the Word of God and our Lutheran confessional heritage.

### Dignity and justice

*"Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."  
(Amos 5:24)*

Every person is created in God's image, is gifted with talents and capacities, and has dignity, irrespective of social status, gender, ethnicity, age, ability, or other differences. Our commitment to human rights and justice means that we work on the underlying causes of poverty and exclusion and for a more equitable distribution of power, resources, and opportunities.

### Compassion and commitment

*"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." (Colossians 3:12)*

Immersed in God's love and compassion, we stand with and care for people who are suffering – those who are poor, vulnerable, and marginalized, those who experience discrimination, violence, and hardship.

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### IMAGE RIGHT

Strings of cloth are woven into a cross to be used at the opening worship service of the LWF Thirteenth Assembly.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



### Respect for diversity

*"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." (1 Corinthians 12:12)*

Differences among us express the richness of God's creation. As a global communion of churches, we seek to understand and embrace our differences in culture, history, and context, and the way in which these have shaped our theological understandings and our perspectives on moral and ethical questions.

### Inclusion and participation

*"Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." (Romans 15:7)*

We are committed to creating spaces and structures which enable the full and equitable participation of women, men, people of all ages and ethnicities, indigenous communities, and people with disabilities, in church life and society and in decision-making processes, activities, and programs of the LWF. We work to overcome power dynamics, cultural norms, unequal access to resources, and other factors that create barriers to participation and decision making.

### Transparency and accountability

*"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received." (1 Peter 4:10)*

We are responsible stewards of the resources and tasks that God has entrusted to us. We are committed to transparency in our aims, processes, decisions, and use of resources, and to being accountable to each other, the people we serve, our member churches, partners, and donors. The gifts we have each received are used for the building up of community, the one body of Christ.

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## THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

We live in a world where nationalism, fundamentalism, xenophobia, extremism, racism, and populism in all regions are on the rise, where fear is exploited to build campaigns and maintain power.



**Human rights defenders persist despite threats and violence, more people are taking action locally and globally to address the climate emergency.**

We witness a surge in misleading theologies that emphasize law, fear, intolerance, and exclusion instead of holding fast to the promise of God's love and grace. Politics that is based on fear and protectionism causes divisions across the world. Conflicts in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America, and the Middle East seem relentless. Funding to assist those who are poor and marginalized is diverted to military spending, and the space for humanitarian assistance and development support continues to shrink.

There are more than 100 million people forcibly displaced, the highest number ever, indigenous minorities are persecuted daily, persecution based on religion is increasing, and femicide is the highest it has been for decades. Our planet is under tremendous stress and climate change has now become a climate emergency. Polar caps are melting, oceans are rising, one unique life form becomes extinct every ten minutes, and millions of people will die because of climate-induced disasters.

Digital technology is changing the way people communicate and relate with each other, how information is shared, how public opinion is shaped, and how organizations function. The rapid rise of artificial intelligence is embraced by some and feared by others.

*Yet there is hope. Churches worldwide are making a difference in their local contexts.*

Their faithful presence, prophetic voice, and diaconal action during crises is needed and desired even more since the COVID-19 pandemic. Faith-based partners are duly recognized by the United Nations as vital both as first responders to crises and in building sustainable societies.

*Collaboration across religions speaks powerfully to peace and reconciliation.*

Human rights defenders persist despite threats and violence, more people are taking action locally and globally to address the climate emergency.

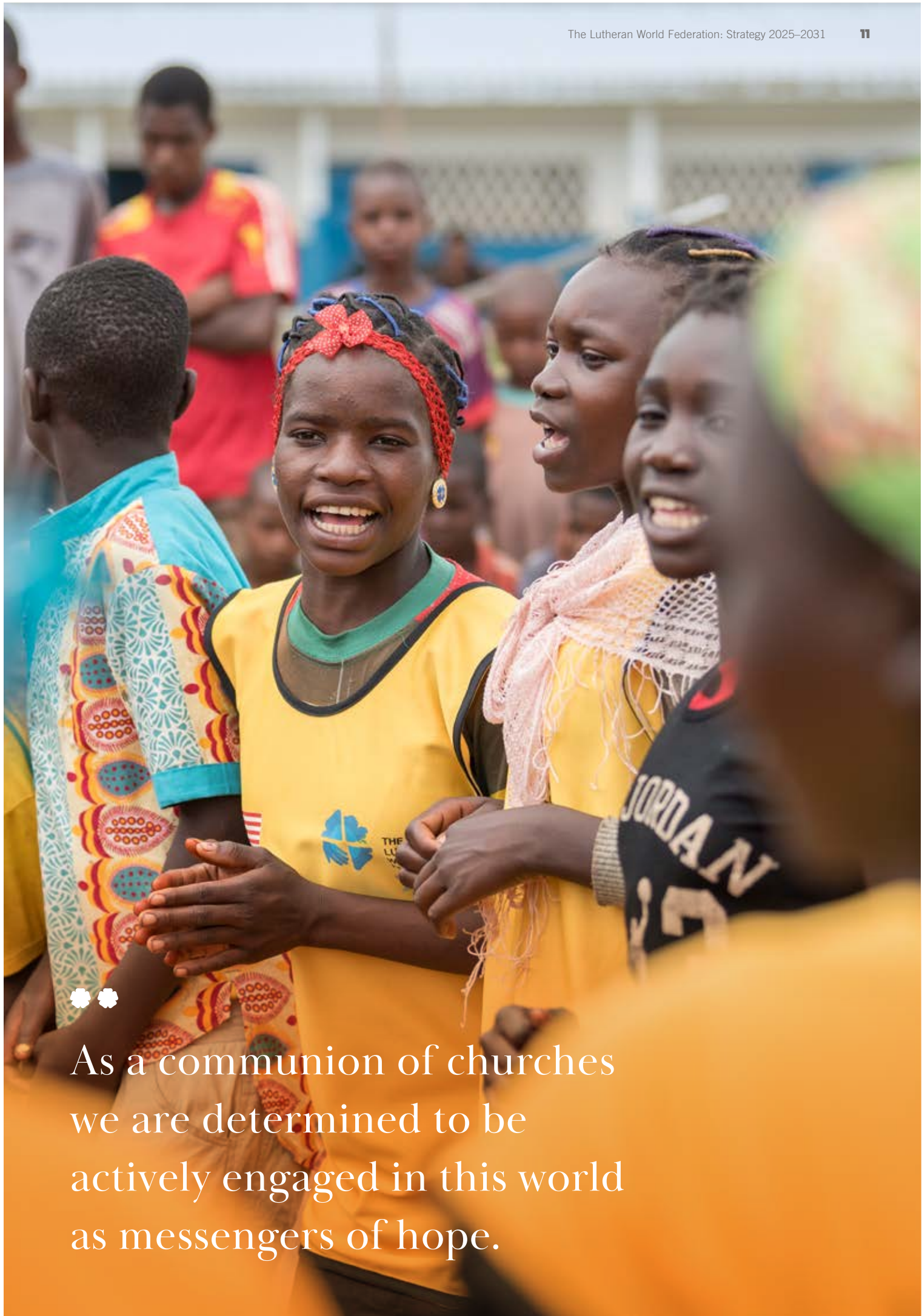
As a communion of churches dedicated to upholding human dignity and protecting the rights of the vulnerable, we are determined to be actively engaged in this world as messengers of hope. We hear and act on Luther's call to practice our baptism daily, that is, seeking to be a communion of thriving, inclusive churches, offering meaningful theological insights, working toward unity with other Christians, striving to reduce human suffering through effective humanitarian work and responding as churches to the needs of others in acts of selfless service. This work is not accomplished alone but in a sustained way in partnership with others.

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### IMAGE RIGHT

Young people dance as part of an intercultural event in Borgop camp in Cameroon which is home to refugees from the Central African Republic.

Photo: LWF/  
Albin Hillert



As a communion of churches  
we are determined to be  
actively engaged in this world  
as messengers of hope.



## SHARING HOPE

Hope is central to this strategy. The "Luther rose" reminds us of our identity as a church uniquely placed to be active in four strategic priorities. In the outer ring, key themes relate to each priority but also to others, reflecting the dynamic and interrelated nature of our work. The form of the circle depicts the world in which we serve and the planet we are to protect. And the cross of Christ as an expression of selfless love and compassion intersects all that we do.



**RESPONSIBLE  
THEOLOGY**

**THRIVING  
CHURCHES**

**JUSTICE  
AND PEACE**

**SERVICE AND  
DIGNITY**

## WHAT WE DO

It is against this backdrop that our strategy is grouped into four strategic priorities that outline the actions we take: responsible theology, thriving churches, justice and peace, and service and dignity.

We are committed to a theology that gives space for hope and for the renewing and ever-reforming power of the Holy Spirit. In response to the changing realities of what it means to be church in diverse contexts across the world, we equip churches to thrive through leadership, good governance, collaboration, and by creating inclusive spaces. In response to human suffering, abuse, and the climate emergency, we advocate for human rights, justice, and peace. In answer to the calls of those who are poor, displaced, and affected by crises, we respond without hesitation to address diaconal, humanitarian and development needs as a global communion through LWF country programs and member churches wherever possible.

These four strategic priorities are interconnected. Nevertheless, they find their separate place in this document to ensure clarity, effective planning, and reporting on the work we do as the LWF.

### IMAGE ABOVE

Participants in a training in community-based psychosocial support in Bytom, Poland. *Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert*



## RESPONSIBLE THEOLOGY

As a communion of churches, we are committed to advance responsible theology, grounded in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, that shows how God heals wounds, creates unity, and strengthens communion.

### STRENGTHENING OUR LUTHERAN IDENTITY

#### HOLISTIC MISSION

### CHURCHES IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

### EDUCATION AND FORMATION

### DEEPENING CHRISTIAN UNITY

#### The context of our work

Justification by grace through faith alone, is one of the basic theological convictions found in Lutheran confessional writings. Today, it is often challenged by misleading theologies that tend, in various ways, to emphasize God’s judgement over God’s grace.

Conspiracy theories and fake news offer easy answers and false foundations, leading to fear and exclusion. Theology based on justification by faith resists all attempts to instrumentalize religion for the sake of political interests and all ideologies that create injustice, question the equality of women and men, and lead to exclusionary or escapist communities.

Education is a key factor in addressing misleading theologies, but in many parts of the world, there is a lack of resources for theological education and formation. Lutheran theological education should provide tools for countering misleading theologies and strengthening gospel-oriented theology that advances holistic mission.

In today’s world, the expectation that Christians speak with one voice continues to be strong. While the ecumenical movement has advanced a lot since its official beginnings in the 20th century, there are forces among Christian churches and communions that question the efforts put into searching for Christian unity.

#### Our vision for change

To respond to the above-mentioned challenges, we need a theology which is ‘responsible’, as affirmed by the Thirteenth Assembly. Responsible theology is rooted in the Gospel, in the Lutheran understanding that Christ is at the center of Scripture, and in the theology of the cross. The cross is a revelation of divine grace and the theology of the cross offers vital insights into the realities of this world. Responsible theology highlights how God heals wounds, creates unity, and strengthens communion through the Holy Spirit. As a result, inclusive communities are built and diverse voices are invited into the conversation. Responsible theology trusts the power of respectful dialogue and follows the principle of unity in reconciled diversity.

As a global communion, the LWF brings together different churches who confess the gospel in various contexts. Through inviting these contextual voices into a global conversation, we understand more deeply what unites us in the Lutheran tradition, despite all the cultural and contextual differences, and how we jointly understand what responsible theology means in today’s world. Here we draw from the rich resources of our confessional tradition that help us to concentrate on what is truly relevant.

Responsible theology critically addresses fundamentalist and exclusionary ideologies and positions through theological reflection, education, and formation. Critical discernment has played an important role in Lutheran theology from the start. Theological education, which offers tools for developing distinctive perspectives and emphasizes the relevance of holistic mission, is crucial for countering polarizing and fragmentizing forces.





Responsible theology provides the framework for churches to raise their voices in the public space and to work toward justice and peace.

For the LWF, as a confessing communion, strongly rooted in the Augsburg Confession and in the Small Catechism, ecumenism is at the heart of our identity. Theology needs to continue to respond in a responsible manner to the challenges of reconciliation within the wider oikoumenē. In this way, we affirm our commitment to seek unity, bearing witness to the Christian calling to be one in the body of Christ, and to the one hope that brings all Christians together in prayer and action. Unity is a gift we receive from God through the Holy Spirit. As we move toward 2030 and the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, we see a strong impetus toward engaging with fellow Christians, strengthening our shared understanding, and witnessing together as a “communion of saints.”

#### IMAGE ABOVE

A conversation of women, youth, and men from different regions of the LWF on the eve of the LWF Thirteenth Assembly in Kraków, Poland.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



#### ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE

*Broaden **theological understanding and engagement with our confessional identity** as we prepare for the 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, emphasizing the core principles of Lutheran theology, based on the liberating power of the gospel.*

*Advance **theological reflection that deepens the understanding of holistic mission** as expressed in proclamation, worship, diakonia, and public witness, strengthening churches as inclusive spaces.*

*Strengthen **churches' theological understanding of and engagement in the public space** to act for justice and peace, build bridges, and resist polarization by promoting mutual respect, understanding, and collective action.*

*Foster initiatives and networks that prioritize **theological education and formation** to advance responsible theology and support mutual and innovative learning across the communion.*

*Deepen **Christian unity** by initiating and participating in global ecumenical dialogues and joint prayer and service with other Christian churches and Christian World Communions. Strengthen the implementation and reception of ecumenical consensus and collaboration on the local level across the communion.*



## THRIVING CHURCHES

As a communion of churches, we want to strengthen churches as inclusive communities of hope where the gospel is shared and lived.

### COMMUNION RELATIONS



### LEADERSHIP FORMATION



### GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE



### INCLUSIVE CHURCHES AND RESPECTFUL DIALOGUE



### YOUTH AND INTERGENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

### The context of our work

LWF member churches are rich in their diversity and differ in size, history, and the cultural contexts in which they serve. As noted above, some enjoy the privileges which come with being large, national churches, while others exist as minority churches. Regardless of size and history, all are undergoing change: those who have historically wielded influence are now seeking to understand their changed role in society, while several younger, emerging churches are experiencing rapid growth and relevance in their communities. In many regions, small churches operate on lean budgets and may suffer persecution under harsh political conditions or in the context of war and conflict.

All churches are faced with the question: what does it mean today to share the gospel with all, in so many complex contexts? Answers must remain true to the calling of the gospel and aware of the needs of the people they serve. In the midst of crises and uncertainty, people look for a church with a clear identity, which is inclusive and welcoming, well led, and bold in its witness to the world. People search for churches where they feel they can belong and where their gifts can be valued, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, ability, or background.

Women and youth continue to be excluded from decision making in some churches, with limited opportunities to influence church policies. This is not only due to a lack of access to participation in decision making, but also to the social and cultural norms of societies.

### Our vision for change

We want to see thriving member churches, that are actively engaged, closely connected, and embracing the gift of communion. This gift is fully experienced when we, as different members of one body, acknowledge each other in our differences, share our gifts with one another, and mutually challenge and console each other. This means to vibrantly share the gospel and witness in a manner that makes a difference in the local contexts of every church, regardless of its size. It also means creating spaces and structures that promote equitable and just relations, meaningful participation, and the full involvement of all ages, members of indigenous communities and different ethnicities, and people with disabilities in our churches. We continue to stand for gender justice and reject discrimination or violence based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, age, disability, or social background.

We envision a communion that recognizes and develops the qualities and potential of lay people as integral members and leaders in our churches. We see laypeople and clergy alike formed into leaders to sustain our churches, equipping them to engage with complex issues without resorting to simplistic answers, a leadership that prioritizes respectful dialogue, continuous learning and growth. We aspire to be a communion where church leaders have access to opportunities to be in conversation with each other, to develop and refine their skills and think critically together about the most significant challenges in the church and the world.



We see leadership built on the priesthood of all believers, a solid understanding of responsible theology, and a practice of transformative leadership that gives space for the renewing and reforming power of the One Spirit.

Together, we affirm and create opportunities to develop the spiritual gifts and professional qualities of youth, bring them into conversations, and involve them in decision-making and leadership. The strengthening of churches should be intergenerational and include the perspectives of all age groups. We affirm our commitment to the full inclusion of women in the ordained ministry. We also encourage and support women to take on leadership positions at all levels, serving with their God-given gifts. We commit to work together to break down barriers that hinder women's leadership, through that witnessing to the gospel in the world.

#### IMAGE ABOVE

A full church during a Sunday service in the Moshi Lutheran Cathedral in Tanzania.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



#### ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE

Strengthen **communion relations** between member churches, increasing collaboration, strengthening churches in mission, resource sharing, support, and mutual responsibility among the churches, regionally and globally.

Support member churches with **leadership formation** for the lay and ordained, women and men, young and old. Listen to the voices of young leaders and emphasize the practice of transformative leadership that empowers churches to respond to the complex issues of our time.

Accompany member churches in strengthening **good governance and organizational culture**, which includes developing their governing structures and practices toward accountable leadership.

Promote **inclusive spaces and structures** in churches to strengthen them as welcoming churches, **enabling respectful dialogue** within and between churches, and the meaningful participation of diverse groups and people.

Strengthen **intergenerational engagement** across the communion, as well as regional and global youth and women networks, providing guidelines and sharing good practices.



## JUSTICE AND PEACE

As a communion of churches, we are called in faith to be messengers of justice, peace, and reconciliation, standing alongside those who are most vulnerable.

### ADVOCATING FOR JUSTICE



### WORKING FOR PEACE



### PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS



### PROMOTING GENDER JUSTICE



### ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

### The context of our work

Currently, there are well over 100 armed conflicts across the globe. Each year, they result in the deaths of almost one quarter of a million people and the displacement of millions more. Wars are fought over land and diminishing resources, and are fueled by greed, corruption, and inequalities in society. Polarization has deepened divides along national, political, religious, and ethnic lines.

More than seven decades since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the world is seeing an unprecedented contempt for and attacks against a range of human rights. International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law remain contested and at best selectively applied in many countries. Blatant violations of human rights persist, following more than a decade of significant and systematic push-back on democracy and the rule of law.

Climate change causes weather extremes, worsens environmental degradation, food insecurity and water scarcity. Unabated greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels and the lack of adaptive capacity and support, particularly for those who are poor, are the main drivers of the global climate emergency. As the planet continues to warm, climate-induced losses and damage will increase and become harder to avoid, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable.

Gender-based violence, discrimination, and inequities persist as women and girls disproportionately bear the brunt of the adverse impacts of war and conflict, as well as climate change.

They are more likely to experience sexual and gender-based violence and lack access to basic services, education, economic resources and opportunities, and essential health services. Women and girls are under-represented in decision making in public life, including in the church. Gender equality and women’s empowerment is integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development.

### Our vision for change

As a communion of churches, the LWF plays a vital role as a messenger of hope and an agent for peace, justice, and human dignity from local to global levels. We are bound by faith to act against injustices and contribute to peaceful initiatives that help to overcome conflict and violence. Across all areas, the LWF contributes to sustainable development as outlined in the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, and we affirm them as a description of what we aspire to do as churches in communion.

Through ecumenical, interfaith and civil society collaboration and dialogue, support for courageous human rights defenders, and the application of legal instruments like International Human Rights and Humanitarian Laws, the LWF makes a valuable contribution toward the common good, peace, climate justice, human rights, and gender justice.

The LWF works for a world where nature is protected and not abused. The LWF strives for a world where the broken condition in which one takes power from the other by degrading their dignity and denying them opportunities is challenged and transformed.



LWF affirms that everything that lives is interconnected. The LWF works for a peaceful world where the fullness of life in God is enjoyed by everybody, and where human beings, their bodies, and their rights, are not for sale, where nature is protected and respected, where creation is not for sale. LWF is committed to taking leadership in protecting our shared home.

Churches can play a significant role in addressing the root causes that divide communities and harm social harmony. Through their long and lasting presence, churches have close connections to communities and governments. Their unique and prophetic voice can speak truth to power in times of injustice, which will require deep courage, especially in oppressive environments.



## ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE

*Strengthen the capacity and awareness of **churches to advocate** for justice locally, nationally, and globally, as an integral part of their holistic mission.*

***Work for peace** by addressing the root causes of crises and through mediation and reconciliation work to strengthen social cohesion among individuals and communities. Foster **interfaith relations**, building bridges between diverse communities to promote understanding, mutual respect, and collective action in society toward common goals.*

*Continue our engagement in the promotion and protection of **human rights**, ensuring that their principles are upheld, and that violations are met with a strong, unified response.*

*Strengthen our commitment to **gender justice**, actively working to eliminate discrimination and violence against women and girls and empowering them to take on leadership roles in church and society.*

*Address the **climate emergency** by advocating for climate justice and policy change and implementing sustainable practices within LWF member churches, country programs, the Communion Office, and communities we work with, while supporting those most affected by the impacts of climate change.*

### IMAGE ABOVE

LWF delegates to COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, gather for a Global March for Climate Justice.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert



## SERVICE AND DIGNITY

As a communion of churches, we are called to serve people in need, enabling them to live in dignity, with hope and a future.

### SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN EMERGENCIES



### IMPLEMENTING PEOPLE-CENTERED PROGRAMS



### CLIMATE RESILIENT LIVELIHOODS



### PROMOTING THE DIGNITY OF ALL PEOPLE



### SUPPORTING PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

### The context of our work

In recent years, the world has reached a new record of over 100 million people forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, and other forms of violence and human rights violations. Human-induced climate change also causes many to flee their homes and further exacerbates the vulnerability of those already marginalized.

New wars continue to emerge over territorial control or the exploitation of resources. Increasingly, we see conflicts being waged online, provoking hatred, intolerance, and xenophobia. In many countries, we also witness a disturbing erosion of human rights and a concerning trend toward impunity for perpetrators of violence and oppression.

The LWF and its member churches have a long history of humanitarian and diaconal engagement, working to address the urgent and longer-term needs of people impacted by forced displacement, poverty, and violence. As politicians and nations close borders and build walls, we hear the biblical imperative to welcome the stranger and support our neighbors in need. In all our humanitarian and development work, we seek to take a rights-based approach, focusing on the empowerment and resilience of individuals, communities, and institutions.

### Our vision for change

We wish to serve people in need and strengthen churches in holistic mission. The dignity of people has its deepest roots in the creation of human beings in the image of God.

*Our faith affirms the dignity of every human being, and this forms the basis of people's universal human rights.*

We share a commitment to the human rights of every individual, regardless of their status; this guides our work, actions, and operations. *Diakonia* is a response to suffering and injustice, the fulfillment of God's commandment to love one another.

Together we will reflect on the theological foundations of *Diakonia* as an integral part of the church's identity.

We envision a communion where member churches, the communion office, and country programs provide locally led, context-specific, and long-term support to the people and communities they serve without discrimination. We work for a world where people feel empowered to engage as dignified citizens, where their capacities are recognized, and their voices are heard.



Together, we work for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world, where people are treated equally, a world where structures are in place to reduce human suffering, where crises are responded to quickly and effectively, and where the strengths of the LWF and its member churches to serve and uphold people's dignity are utilized fully.



## ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE

*Strengthen the capacity of churches to provide holistic, timely and **effective support to people in emergencies and crises** through disaster preparedness and coordination. We will promote collaboration between member churches and LWF's humanitarian and development work, to ensure an integrated and holistic approach.*

***Strengthen support to people on the move** through LWF country programs and member churches. This will include leading and contributing to relevant initiatives and networks, facilitating learning exchanges, and supporting initiatives across departure, transit, and destination countries.*

*Implement **people-centered, community-based and rights-based humanitarian and development programs** that prioritize the needs and rights of the most vulnerable, poor, and marginalized groups. We will also prioritize women, children, indigenous communities, and people with disabilities. These efforts will not only address immediate needs but also focus on recovery, resilience-building, and sustainable approaches to enable long-term change.*

***Promote climate resilient livelihoods**, enhance access to quality services, and foster protection and social cohesion in communities.*

***Advocate for policies and practices to promote the dignity of all people** and protect their rights, linking local churches and communities to global platforms, and strengthening civil society.*

### IMAGE ABOVE

Members of a cooperative in Misugi, Burundi, who have received training in modern agricultural methods and kits for their crops.

Photo: LWF/L. Gillibert

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## HOW WE WORK

The LWF Communion Office seeks to accompany, support and coordinate programs and activities for people across the global communion, always considering the diverse contexts, needs and capacities of member churches. The LWF Assembly, our highest governing body, elects Council members to represent churches in the seven regions. The Council governs between Assemblies, approves the Strategy and gives direction to our work.

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### IMAGE RIGHT

Leadership training workshop in Guaimaca, Honduras, for young returned migrants who are being helped to resettle and reintegrate into the society that they once had left behind.

*Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert*



We support dialogue and engagement with people from other faith communities to overcome divisions and work for the common good.

**Agility and flexibility** are key to our way of working, as was demonstrated by our ability to adapt and respond to the new challenges facing churches during the COVID-19 pandemic. This Strategy is designed to guide our work in the context of today's world, but in the face of rapidly changing and uncertain global circumstances we must continue to adapt and remain relevant to the congregations and people we serve.

**Reaching the grassroots** and working at the local level is critical to guarantee that our activities and resources will benefit individuals and communities.

This means equipping churches to work locally. It includes developing opportunities, trainings, and materials that are easily accessible to lay and ordained women and men, young and old, and supporting initiatives in member churches.





**Working locally and globally** is crucial if we want to ensure that all voices can be heard and all people can be empowered to live safe and fulfilling lives. Providing local actors with access to national and global platforms is a golden thread running throughout our work, from advocacy to ecumenism, from theological research and training to humanitarian and development programs.

**Enabling respectful dialogue** and working for unity among member churches is a vital principle of our work. We embrace the diversity of member churches and seek to promote greater understanding between churches at national and international levels. We recognize that priorities and concerns of churches and communities will vary according to their history, culture, and local political or socioeconomic contexts. We also support dialogue and engagement with people from other faith communities to overcome divisions and work for the common good.

**Connecting and communicating** are central to the success of our work. Over eight decades, the LWF has developed a network of members, friends, and partners, enabling it to serve as a "super connector" between churches and people in different parts of the world. Good communications are essential to build these connections, sharing the story of the LWF and inviting others to join the conversation about being a global communion, working for justice, peace, and reconciliation. As we celebrate the joys and share the struggles of churches and country programs across the globe, we seek to build new bridges and strengthen the vital witness of the global Lutheran community.

## STRONGER TOGETHER

Since its earliest days, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the LWF has understood the value of cooperation and partnerships with other churches and organizations. Decades of partnership and joint action with related agencies have brought us close to one another as we work together with a shared purpose and mission.



**We want to break down barriers, rebuild trust and emphasize our common humanity.**

Ecumenism is one of the four pillars upon which we were established and therefore we continually seek to strengthen dialogue and promote shared action with other churches, Christian World Communions, and ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches, ACT Alliance, and Caritas Internationalis.

At the same time, we see the need to reach out beyond the confines of the Christian world to foster respectful relationships and stronger cooperation with organizations and people of different faith communities. At a time when others seek to exploit religion for personal or political gain, we want to break down barriers, rebuild trust and emphasize our common humanity.

*We know that working together to respond to emergencies or address the root causes of suffering and injustice can be a powerful tool for achieving these goals.*

Therefore, cooperation with interfaith partners and organizations is important for us.

### IMAGE RIGHT

LWF staff and a local refugee leader in Mokolo, Cameroon, discussing the needs of Nigerian refugees who have fled the threat of Boko Haram in North East Nigeria.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

### WE WILL

*Strengthen relations with related organizations, focusing specifically on areas where we can act together, complementing each other to increase the impact of our work.*

*Strengthen ties with other churches and ecumenical bodies by developing initiatives related to shared priorities in this Strategy.*

*Work with partner networks to initiate action on defending human rights, addressing the climate emergency and promoting sustainable development.*

We remain clear and committed to the theological foundations of our work; we also seek to strengthen and develop new partnerships with secular organizations, civil society, governments, and United Nations bodies to increase the impact of our actions.

*Our local to global approach demonstrates the way we can amplify the voices and enhance the advocacy of local communities by connecting them to such national, regional, or global platforms.*



Partnership and joint action with related organizations have brought us close to one another as we work together with a shared purpose and mission.





The work of the LWF must be sustainable, so that we can continue working on our mission of sharing hope to empower churches, communities, and people.

## A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

To achieve the priorities outlined in this document, the work of the LWF – its member churches and Communion Office – must be sustainable, so that we can continue working on our mission of sharing hope to empower churches, communities, and people.

The success of our work depends upon being sustainable, having professional and passionate staff, policies that support accountability and transparency, good relations with partners, good management of finances and resources, effective fundraising, and clear communication. In the current political and economic climate, this is a vital task. Many churches are struggling to make ends meet in the face of declining membership. Some traditionally wealthy churches and related organizations that have historically contributed to the financial sustainability of others within the LWF are looking to a future of reduced finances. Other churches are growing rapidly, and their income is increasing. Contributions from all member churches and related organizations are vital to the LWF's sustainability. Funding from institutional donors such as the United Nations is also shifting, despite the rise of conflict, climate emergency, and human suffering.

Rapid technological developments require both Communion Office staff and member churches to adapt to new ways of working, learning to use new tools and embracing opportunities to become more efficient. In the Communion Office, we have decentralized some of our staff and now manage a workforce located across different continents and time zones. We recognize the need to be more intentional in developing mechanisms to keep staff connected and ensure that their work is valued. To increase our financial sustainability, we will maintain close relationships with our partners, identify new funding opportunities and ensure prudent management of existing resources. We are committed to the values of transparency and accountability, and we strive to maintain the highest professional standards in all aspects of our work.



**We will maintain close relationships with our partners, identify new funding opportunities and ensure prudent management of existing resources.**

### IMAGE LEFT

Cross by the altar of the Resurrection Church of the Christian Lutheran Church in Honduras.

Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

### WE WILL

*Promote effective ways of working that increase efficiency and reduce costs, accommodate needs across the organization, enhance flexibility, and provide more tailored operations.*

*Explore and integrate emerging technologies to streamline our work and strengthen its quality by initiating a global discussion to discover the communion's needs, practices, and vision for digitalization.*

*Create a culture of learning, purpose, belonging, and wellbeing where staff feel valued.*

*Diversify funding sources by online fundraising and by developing communication material that shows impact at a local level.*

*Identify and engage new partners, including philanthropic foundations, corporate sponsors and individual donors to diversify funding sources, and ensure long-term financial sustainability.*

*Maintain a sustainability plan that encompasses funding, digitalization, compliance, communication, learning, quality, well-being, and effectiveness.*

*Develop an internal management tool with milestones based on this strategy, to facilitate progress monitoring and reporting.*



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**IMAGE**

A statue of Martin Luther  
pictured in front of the  
LWF logo.

*Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert*



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

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