



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

# CONSTITUTION OF THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

*(as adopted by the LWF Eighth Assembly, Curitiba, Brazil, 1990, including amendments adopted by the LWF Ninth Assembly, Hong Kong, China 1997 by the LWF Eleventh Assembly, Stuttgart, Germany, 2010, by the LWF Twelfth Assembly, Windhoek, Namibia, 2017 and by the LWF Thirteenth Assembly, Kraków, Poland 2023)*

## I. NAME

The name of the body organized under this Constitution shall be The Lutheran World Federation.

## II. DOCTRINAL BASIS

The Lutheran World Federation confesses the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only source and norm of its doctrine, life and service. It sees in the three Ecumenical Creeds and in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, especially in the unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism of Martin Luther, a pure exposition of the Word of God.

## III. NATURE AND FUNCTIONS

1. The Lutheran World Federation is a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship.
2. The Lutheran World Federation confesses the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church and is resolved to serve Christian unity throughout the world.
3. The Lutheran World Federation:
  - a. furthers the united witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and strengthens the member churches in carrying out the missionary command and in their efforts towards Christian unity worldwide;
  - b. furthers worldwide among the member churches diaconic action, alleviation of human need, promotion of peace and human rights, the practice of just relationships with no one being discriminated against because of race, ethnicity, or gender; social and economic justice, care for God's creation and sharing of resources;
  - c. furthers through cooperative study the self-understanding and the communion of member churches and helps them to act jointly in common tasks.

## IV. SCOPE OF AUTHORITY

As instrument of its autonomous member churches the Lutheran World Federation may take action in matters committed to it by the member churches. It may act on behalf of one or more churches in such specific tasks as they commit to it. It may request individual member churches to assume tasks on behalf of the entire Communion.

## V. MEMBERSHIP AND OTHER FORMS OF AFFILIATION

### 1. Member Churches

- a. The Lutheran World Federation consists of churches which accept the doctrinal basis set forth in Article II of this Constitution.
- b. Each church which applies for membership in the Federation shall declare its acceptance of this Constitution.
- c. Reception into membership shall be decided by the Federation in the Assembly, or in the interim, by the Council.
- d. Membership in the Federation may be terminated by withdrawal. Upon recommendation of the Council, the Assembly may suspend or terminate the membership by a two-thirds vote of the delegates.
- e. Procedures relating to membership shall be governed by the Bylaws.

### 2. Recognized Churches, Councils and Congregations

- a. The Lutheran World Federation may recognize as eligible to participate in the work of the Federation non-member churches, councils or congregations which accept the doctrinal basis set forth in Article II of this Constitution.
- b. The granting, conditions and continuation of such recognition shall be governed by the Bylaws.

## VI. ORGANIZATION

The Lutheran World Federation shall exercise its functions through the Assembly, the Council, the secretariat and appropriate instrumentalities of the member churches. In all these functions of the Federation, ordained and lay persons, men, women and youth shall be eligible to participate.

## VII. ASSEMBLY

1. The Assembly shall consist of representatives of the member churches of the Federation. As the principal authority of the Lutheran World Federation, the Assembly shall:
  - a. be responsible for the Constitution;
  - b. give general direction to the work of the Federation;
  - c. elect the President and the members of the Council;
  - d. act on the reports of the President, the General Secretary and the Chairperson of the Finance Committee.
2. The Assembly shall normally be held every six years with the time, place and program to be determined by the Council.

Extraordinary Assemblies may be called by the Council and shall be called at the request of one-fifth of the member churches.

3. The number of representatives to the Assembly and their distribution among the member churches shall be determined by the Council.

Each member church shall have the right to have at least one representative in the Assembly.

Due regard shall be given to the numerical size of member churches and their distributions by regions and countries.

4. The Council may invite representatives of the Lutheran congregations in union church bodies or of Lutheran associations and organizations to the Assembly in a consultative capacity if these are not represented by member churches.

The number of these representatives shall be determined by the Council.

## VIII. COUNCIL

1. The Assembly shall elect 48 members of the Council taking into consideration the nominations by the regions.

- a. The Council shall consist of these 48 members, the President, and the Chairpersons of the Finance Committee and of the Committee for World Service if they are elected from outside the Council.
- b. Election procedure shall be governed in the Bylaws. A due representation of ordained and lay persons, women, men and youth shall be observed.
- c. The term of office of the Council shall end at the close of the next ordinary Assembly.
- d. Members of the Council shall be eligible for one re-election.
- e. If a member of the Council can no longer be present for his/her term of office, the Council shall elect, in consultation with the member churches of the member's region, a replacement for the remaining term of service.

2. The Council is the principal authority of the LWF during the period between Assemblies.

- a. The Council has the responsibility to ensure that LWF is satisfactorily organized and run according to its defined purpose and in accordance with resolutions made by the Assembly.
- b. The Council shall decide on the budget of the LWF and safeguard the proper control and management of the LWF's assets.
- c. The Council shall receive the audited annual financial statements of the LWF and approve them.
- d. The Council may, when necessary, authorize the Executive Committee to approve the audited annual financial statements.
- e. The Council shall define the strategy of the LWF according to decisions and actions made by the Assembly.

3. The Council shall elect the Vice-Presidents from among its members taking into consideration the regions. A due representation of women and men shall be observed. The Vice Presidents, ordained or lay leaders in their own churches,

represent the LWF in the region to which their churches belong. The President does not represent a particular region.

4. The Executive Committee shall be composed of the following persons: The President, the Vice-Presidents, the Chairpersons of the Finance Committee and of the Committee for World Service, and the chairpersons of Committees as defined in the bylaws. In addition the Council may elect up to two members for the purpose of ensuring gender balance and generational participation.
  - a. The Executive Committee shall serve as the LWF Board of Trustees and as the Personnel Committee.
  - b. The role and function of the Executive Committee shall be described in the appropriate Terms of Reference.
5. The Council shall elect for its term of office up to 21 advisers with voting rights in the committees to provide professional competence and expertise to the Council.
6. The Council may appoint committees or ad hoc sub-committees as required and appoint their chairpersons.
7. The term of office of Council members or of persons elected by the Council may be terminated before expiration by a two-thirds vote of the members of the Council.
8. The Council shall be responsible for approval of governance documents such as Bylaws, Terms of Reference, rules of procedure and other policy enactments.

## IX. REGIONAL EXPRESSIONS

The member churches in the regions may constitute regional meetings for consultative purposes. Such meetings may propose items for Council agendas.

The regional meetings shall report to the Council through their Vice Presidents.

## X. NATIONAL COMMITTEES

The member churches in each country may constitute a National Committee to coordinate the relationships to the Federation. The right of direct communication between the member churches and the LWF shall be retained. Each National Committee shall present to the Council an annual report on its activities.

## XI. PRESIDENT

1. The election of the President by the Assembly shall be by a majority of the votes cast in a secret ballot.
2. He/she shall be a member of the Council.
3. The President shall assume office immediately after the close of the Assembly at which the election was held. He/she shall hold office until the close of the following ordinary Assembly and shall not be eligible for a second term.
4. The President shall be the chief official representative and spokesperson of the Federation. He/she shall be the presiding officer of the Assembly, the Council and the Executive Committee.
5. The President shall oversee the life and work of the Federation, in consultation with the General Secretary.

6. Upon the death or permanent incapacity of the President, the Council shall elect a President within three months. The Executive Committee shall elect from among themselves an Acting President until a new President is elected.

## **XII. CHAIRPERSONS OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE AND OF THE COMMITTEE FOR WORLD SERVICE**

1. The Chairpersons of the Finance Committee and of the Committee for World Service shall be elected by the Council at its constituting meeting and shall hold office until the close of the following ordinary Assembly.
2. These Chairpersons may be elected from among the Council members or from outside.

## **XIII. COMMUNION OFFICE**

1. The Federation shall have a Communion Office adequate to carry out its tasks.
2. The Council shall authorize the structure and the Terms of Reference of the Communion Office.

## **XIV. GENERAL SECRETARY**

1. The Council shall elect the General Secretary.
2. The General Secretary shall be the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and, together with the President, a public representative and chief spokesperson for the LWF. The General Secretary shall report to the Assembly and the Council on activities of the Communion Office.
3. The office and function of the General Secretary shall be described in the Terms of Reference.

## **XV. FINANCES**

1. The Council shall authorize the budget for transmission to the member churches, National Committees and other agencies, commending it for support through designated and undesignated contributions.
2. The Council shall allocate membership fees to be paid by member churches. The member churches shall receive an annual financial report.

## **XVI. AMENDMENTS AND BYLAWS**

### **1. Amendments**

- a. Amendments to this Constitution may be made by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast at any ordinary Assembly, provided notice of intention to amend shall have been submitted through the General Secretary to the member churches, three months before the Assembly.
- b. Amendments shall become effective one year after their adoption by the Assembly unless objection has been filed with the Council by at least one-third of the member churches.

## 2. Bylaws

- a. The Council shall adopt Bylaws to this Constitution. Such Bylaws adopted or amended by the Council shall become effective one year after their adoption unless objection has been filed with the Council by at least one-third of the member churches.
- b. The Assembly may adopt, amend or rescind Bylaws by a majority of the votes cast. Such decisions shall become effective after one year unless objection has been filed with the Council by at least one-third of the member churches.