



The LWF Communion – With Passion for the Church and for the World

Draft LWF Strategy 2012-17

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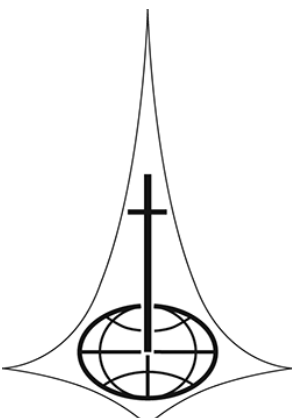


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Introduction

This global strategy of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) lays out a vision and pathway for our common spiritual journey as a communion of Lutheran churches, and for our service to people and the world. It comes at a time of great significance to the communion, as we prepare to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017.

Background and hopes for the strategy

The strategy has been shaped by the LWF Renewal Process, the LWF Eleventh Assembly held in Stuttgart, Germany, in July 2010 and a comprehensive process of consultation and planning involving our member churches, ecumenical partners, church-related organizations, staff around the world, and members of the LWF Council. Each of these important formation processes has involved listening carefully to our member churches in their different contexts, being in dialogue and discussion with our partners and thinking together on the challenges and opportunities that are before us in the contexts of today's world.

Our aspirations for the strategy are that it supports further evolution of LWF as a communion of churches in our life and work together; it provides a focus for mutual accompaniment and inter-church relationships within and across regional boundaries; and, it lets our partners know the directions we want to take and our commitments to them.

The strategy sets out who we are as a communion, our shared vision, purpose and values. To understand better our goals and strategy commitments, we identify the major contextual factors that will further shape who we are and what we do. We state our goals and commitments in three priority focus areas that signal our most important work. We identify the cross cutting policy work and themes that will remain high on our agenda and present in our life and work together. Underpinning all of this, the strategy addresses the question of sustainability and organizational effectiveness.

The strategy will specifically direct the work of the LWF communion office as the global expression of the communion and provide the platform for strategic leadership and accountability by our governing body, the LWF Council. For the communion office the strategy will be implemented through more detailed annual operational plans. The strategy will provide vital guidance for each year's budget and plans, in prioritizing what will be done given that year's human and financial resources.

The strategy tries to balance providing clear direction and encouraging flexibility in how these directions might be taken forward in different regions and contexts. It is hoped that the strategy will also provide inspiration and a framework for planning by regional expressions and member churches.

The next step in an ongoing journey

The LWF was established in 1947 as a *Federation* of Lutheran churches. It was founded because Lutheran churches around the world felt compelled to come together to confess, reflect, and reconcile, and to work together to respond to human suffering in the aftermath of the Second World War. This called for a diaconal response that was coordinated beyond national boundaries. We can see the same pattern if we think today about the communion's life in confession, reflection, celebrating the life of

faith, commending the grace of God to each person and to the world, and responding to major disasters and conflict situations..

Looking back on our history we see the elements present in today's strategy—our life as a journey, how our identity, faith and responses are shaped by multiple contexts, the importance of ongoing theological formation, our interdependence and connectedness and our strong commitment to being ecumenical and being in dialogue with other faiths. As the LWF—now in its seventh decade--has lived and worked together, it has grown closer and has changed in nature. It has both recognized the gift of communion and follows the calling to give expression to this identity in each new day.

The LWF Renewal Process, undertaken between 2007 and 2009, was a moment of conscious self-reflection on identity and practice as a communion of churches. The Renewal Committee report states that *“the need for renewal arises out of developments in a dramatically changed global landscape in which the LWF lives as a communion of churches”*. The committee was entrusted with the task to look beyond the present realities, to help think about the “next step” for the spiritual journey, which is leading the LWF communion of churches again to face new challenges, where no roads and paths are clearly mapped out, and where models adopted by other global Christian communions are not fully transferable to our own journey.

The strategy is simply the next step in the fundamentally dynamic and evolving life of the LWF from convention to federation to communion. It seeks to respond to and further shape the current contextual realities of member churches and the world in which they serve God's mission.

Who we are as a communion

The LWF is a communion of churches, rich in our theological traditions and our commitment to renewal and reformation. Who we are as a communion comes from: our Lutheran identity; the distinctive character of our communion; and our shared vision, purpose and values.

Our Lutheran identity

The LWF is based on the foundational confessions of the Lutheran tradition. LWF member churches confess the Triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship. Lutheran identity is biblically and historically rooted, shaped in an ongoing way by the multiple contexts and relationships in which it is lived and given different expression throughout the world.

To be Lutheran is to be freed by grace to love and serve the neighbor. Our service in the world and our care for creation are integral to our Lutheran identity.

The LWF confesses the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. It is resolved actively to promote and serve Christian unity throughout the world and to further a united witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical. We work for unity among Christians through theological exploration, dialogue and collaborative action (*diapraxis*), as part of the ecumenical movement.

We reach out to, engage and work beside other faith communities to promote understanding and build relationships for a better world. As Lutheran churches we understand that God's mission requires we have a public role in society, relating to others of good will who share our commitments.

Our distinctive character as a communion

As we look ahead to 2017, we want to affirm and further develop what distinguishes us as a global communion of churches. The LWF's progression from "federation" to "communion" has reflected a maturing of relationships within the LWF and a growing commitment and desire for greater connectedness among member churches. Communion is both a gift and a task given to us by God. Through being in communion, member churches share a spiritual journey and live out their commitment to proclaiming and witnessing the gospel for all people. The communion cannot be thought of simply as an organizational form. Rather, it is lived and expressed by member churches in their multiple contexts and in the ways they are in relationship with each other.

The life of the communion is nourished first by worship. Communion is lived out joyfully in common proclamation of the gospel, in prayer and singing, in sharing the sacraments and recognizing ministries.

God's mission is at the core of the communion of Lutheran churches. Being in communion means that member churches support and accompany each other in shared holistic mission, encompassing proclamation, diakonia (service), and advocacy.

The communion is present through the relationships and connectedness among its different expressions. Member churches and their congregations are local expressions of communion. Of

growing importance are the multiple ways in which churches come together through regional expressions and networks and in global networks and forums. In addition, the communion office is an indispensable part of the global expression of the communion.

Communion relationships are interdependent. There are multiple centers of decision-making and action. Being part of the communion helps empower member churches to participate and shape communion life through the networks that connect and bring them together regionally and globally. Their rich cultural diversity is to be celebrated, and it provides opportunities of many kinds for shared encounter, mutual challenge and mutual learning. This "transcontextual" dimension to communion life fosters deeper reflection and spiritual growth at all levels of the communion.

From its history, the LWF has emerged with a distinctive identity in the Christian family. Born in response to the suffering of war, the LWF was living out a commitment to shared diakonia even before it claimed the identity as communion which was commended to it both by its theology and by the demands of social witness. In its two decades as a "communion of churches," the LWF has experienced a strengthening of the bonds of its common life not only in all the dimensions of *diakonia* but also in theological inquiry, in communion-defining ecumenical agreements, and in the bonds of affection. In its future direction the LWF will seek ways to bring these strengths of its common life to bear on the challenges which lie before it, confident in the commitment to life together which has been built over its history.

Our vision

A communion inspired by God's liberating grace, working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world.

Our shared purpose

Together as a communion of churches, the LWF furthers the united witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and strengthens the member churches in carrying out God's holistic mission. Together in communion, member churches are committed to:

- Proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed and promoting Christian unity worldwide;
- Increasing their self understanding as churches and as a communion through cooperative study, reflection, and theological dialogue with others;
- Sharing their gifts, understandings and resources and through this, strengthening individual churches and the communion in faith and action;
- Contributing to dialogue and reconciliation among churches, between different faiths and in societies affected by violence and conflict;
- Responding to and alleviating poverty and human suffering in the world;
- Promoting human rights and social, economic and gender justice;
- Caring for God's creation and living in an environmentally sustainable way.

Our values

Our values derive from our Lutheran identity. They are a deeply rooted response to God's grace as revealed through Jesus Christ. As a communion we are freed by this grace to participate in God's vision and mission for the world.

Dignity and justice

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

Compassion and commitment

Inspired by God's love for humanity, we seek to show care and compassion toward people who are suffering--the poor, the vulnerable and marginalized, and minority populations and faiths who experience discrimination, violence and hardship in different contexts.

Respect for diversity

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

Inclusion and participation

We are committed to being inclusive and enabling full and equitable participation of women, men, youth, and people with disabilities in church life and in society, and in the decision-making processes, activities and programs of the LWF. We understand that power dynamics, cultural norms, access to resources and other factors create barriers to participation and we work to overcome these.

Interdependence and mutual responsibility in relationships

As a communion of churches we are interdependent and mutually responsible to each other. Our commitment to cooperation and collaboration relates to our being communion together and our way of acting and doing together.

Transparency and accountability

We are a responsible steward of the resources and responsibilities which God has entrusted to us. We are committed to transparency in our aims, processes, decisions and use of resources and to being accountable to the people we serve, our member churches, partners and donors.

The context for our strategy

Each of the LWF Assemblies has been a milestone in our communion's journey. Delegates who gathered in 2010 for the eleventh LWF Assembly in Stuttgart reflected together on the state of the church and of the world and how the communion is called to speak out and act in response. From their different contexts they explored the manifestations of complex and challenging issues on people's lives and on creation. The LWF Renewal Process also analyzed the current global realities in seeking to understand the context in which the LWF serves.

These are challenging times for all peoples but particularly people in the world who are poor, marginalized or vulnerable in their daily lives. The context is a challenging one for Christian churches and other religions in the world. The LWF strategy is both a response to the current global realities and a plan for effecting change in those realities. Here we touch briefly on some of the major contextual factors.

Globalization and advances in technology have brought about increased global connectivity and interdependence between people, nations and regions. Some change has been positive. Rapid transfer of knowledge and innovation is possible, even to remote parts of the world. There is increased access to employment opportunities and greater representation through a globalized civil society. However each of these benefits carry inherent risks to communities recently integrated into a complex, inter-connected world: innovation and new knowledge can undermine cultural norms and practices that form the bedrock of stable communities; unregulated labor markets can result in depleted social capital within communities and expose them to exploitative practices; and, ceding to the global consensus can undermine the very strengths that have enabled communities to adapt and survive for so long.

With globalization comes the dominant neo-liberal economic doctrine, built as it is on individualism, private capital and acquisition of wealth. This has led to a widening gap between rich and poor people and rich and poor nations, and these trends are exacerbated by the recent global economic crisis.

Globalization has also contributed to the breakdown of traditional community networks or connectors such as family, religion and ethnic groups, and new forms of poverty and exclusion have emerged, such as access to new technologies.

Environmental degradation and pressure on natural resources remains a pressing concern. Responsible stewardship of natural resources must be a focus for our work together, particularly in those parts of the world that have the least capacity to turn the tide in depletion of their natural resources.

It is now widely accepted that climate change is accelerating and contributing to ever more serious natural catastrophes, rising seas, dramatic storms, droughts and floods. These events come more frequently and contribute to food insecurity, disease, conflicts over scarce land and resources and forced migration of people. Major natural disasters are striking with greater intensity and leaving a devastating legacy for communities, cities and nations. It is often poor and marginalized people, living in densely populated areas with the least resilient livelihoods, who are hit the hardest. The growing

Together making a difference in the world

We will proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are freed by grace to love and serve the neighbor.

We will be peacemakers, building bridges among people, communities, societies, and religions.

We will empower people and communities to achieve their universal rights and an adequate quality of life.

We will address the underlying causes of poverty, conflict and human suffering.

recognition of climate change as a global concern is a positive development, but the pain and suffering being caused by its effects are deep and overwhelming.

The economic and social pressures on people and nations result in ever increasing migration of people, forced and voluntary, and increased conflict within nations due to population growth, disputes over land and other scarce resources and ethnic or inter-religious tensions. These same pressures mean governments of already poor and vulnerable nations are less able to address the needs of their populations.

The LWF Renewal Process also identified significant changes in the ecumenical and Lutheran landscape which help understand the current context for LWF work.

Among Christians, the movement toward overcoming historical divisions has changed the face of Christianity on the globe and, hence, the frameworks for church cooperation on many levels. Local churches have found many different entry points into the ecumenical engagement, including bilateral theological dialogues, participation in ecumenical councils, cooperative church efforts in diakonia and advocacy, or joint church agreements with governments on common concerns.

At the international level also, the LWF has contributed to ecumenical efforts in human rights advocacy and, in ACT Alliance, to coordinated work in relief and development. The LWF has become known for its intense commitment to bilateral theological dialogues. Official actions with the Roman Catholic Church (1999) and the Mennonite World Conference (2010) were communion-defining. At the same time, the LWF has been supportive of the efforts of multi-lateral bodies, notably the World Council of Churches (WCC), to adapt its structures to changing times.

Most important of these changes are the rapid growth of churches in the global South and the growth of Christian movements—now 25 percent of the world's Christians—who do not belong to churches engaged in traditional ecumenism. For many new Christians, existing divisions among Christian bodies make no sense; while in areas with long traditions of historic church membership, the inherited religious identity of many is eroding and does not satisfy their spiritual hunger. Structures and relationships to engage the new diverse Christian bodies are still being developed, and strategies for renewal and even “re-evangelization” in historic churches are discussed.

At the same time, religious pluralism receives increasing attention as a feature of our globalized context – religious diversity that is experienced in more and more communities and neighborhoods as well as at national and international levels. The prevalence of inter-religious encounter requires Christian communities to learn about multiple religious others, to examine their own theological understandings of God's love and grace, to devise more inclusive strategies of cooperation toward common civic goals—and to intensify their roles as bridge builders and peacemakers when difficulties appear.

Our strategic priorities

Three strategic priorities are identified as our most important work under the LWF Strategy 2012-17:

- A communion strengthened in mutual support for holistic mission
- A communion strengthened in diakonia
- A communion strengthened by ongoing theological discernment and by relationships of dialogue and collaboration (diapraxis)

There are three cross-cutting priorities embedded in the goals and commitments, and informing all the work in each strategic priority area:

- Theological reflection and formation
- Advocacy and public witness
- Gender justice

Finally, there are two organizational priorities that have been universally affirmed as important to our journey and work together as a communion

- Effective communication
- Financial sustainability

Below are four strategic aims that provide a structure for our more detailed strategy. Goals and commitments relating to the cross cutting priorities are embedded across all priority focus areas.

Our aims

A communion strengthened in mutual support for holistic mission

Member churches are strengthened in holistic mission and better able to meet the challenges they face in their context through mutual support and learning, giving and receiving their gifts, sharing resources and acting together.

A communion strengthened in diakonia

Diakonia continues to be affirmed as an essential vocation of our communion and, together with the ecumenical family, we work locally and internationally to improve the lives of poor and vulnerable people through high quality service and advocacy.

A communion strengthened by ongoing theological discernment and by relationships of dialogue and collaboration (diapraxis)

Shaped by a rich and diverse theological heritage, the communion responds to contemporary challenges to faith, journeys together spiritually, and explores its identity in multiple relationships, both ecumenical and interfaith.

Sustainability and organizational effectiveness

LWF is a well-governed communion of churches supported by a communion office that is financially sustainable, professional, effective and accountable.

Goals and strategies to achieve our aims



Priority area 1: A communion strengthened in mutual support for holistic mission

Strategic aim

Member churches are strengthened in holistic mission and better able to meet the challenges they face in their context through mutual support and learning, giving and receiving their gifts, sharing resources and acting together.

In the years ahead high importance will be given to supporting member churches in holistic mission and to creating networks for learning and capacity development. We will continue to promote mutual accompaniment as our working model – member churches walking together in solidarity, sharing their gifts and resources, learning from their contextual diversity and being mutually responsible and accountable for their actions.

Goals – what we want to achieve

1. There is more common understanding across the communion of holistic mission as encompassing proclamation, diakonia and advocacy.
2. Member churches affirm that they are supported and confident to proclaim the gospel in their context, serve people and creation through diakonia and advocacy and build relationships ecumenically, with other faiths and with civil society.
3. Member churches and regional expressions embrace leadership cultures and governance practices that are participatory, empowering, transparent and accountable.
4. Women and young people are actively and more equitably engaged in the life and leadership of churches.

Strategy commitments

Develop the role and capacity of regional expressions

Regional expressions will be encouraged and supported to play a stronger role in accompaniment of member churches. This direction requires more focus on developing the capacities of regional expressions to assume new roles and ways of being regional expressions. The communion office will support the development of regional expressions by assisting them to:

- clarify their roles and contributions locally, regionally and globally;
- decide on their priorities and how they can best achieve them;
- accompany and support them to achieve their goals; and
- link them to other regional expressions, resources and knowledge.

The communion office will also accompany regional expressions in mediating and managing church conflict in the regions.

Encourage interchurch relationships and networks

Member churches will be connected virtually and through bilateral and multilateral meetings to discuss concerns or priorities in their contexts. These discussions will be regional and cross regional and have different dimensions:

- theological reflection and understanding
- addressing issues that cause exclusion and poverty in their region (for example conflict, HIV and AIDS or the escalating frequency and impact of natural disasters caused by climate change); and
- strengthening organizational structures and processes (for example leadership development, being minority churches, addressing declining congregations or accessing resources).

Member churches have a strong desire to meet churches from contexts different from their own as they seek new understandings of what it means to be Lutheran churches today. Through the communion office and regional expressions we will encourage and arrange visits between churches for joint mutual support, exchange and learning, providing opportunities especially for struggling and minority churches.

A program of exchange visits focusing on inclusion will support member churches to better understand the blessings and assets that flow from participation of women and young people in church life and leadership.

Support and develop capacity of member churches

Our approach to capacity development starts from an understanding that all member churches have assets and strengths, as well capacities that need further development. Responding to these needs means providing more spaces for regional and global connection of member churches, and:

- identifying the expertise and resources that are available within the communion and how to better facilitate access to this by member churches;
- having a more structured and efficient system for linking churches with training and capacity development opportunities, different scholarships, theological education and learning networks;
- establishing global and regional coordination points for communication and information and bringing issues, knowledge and ideas from member churches into regional and global forums; and
- developing practical guides and training programs that can be efficiently delivered through regions or other networks.

Project funding for member church initiatives will be focused more strategically, in line with priorities in this strategy and needs identified in different regions, and with particular attention to the needs of minority and struggling churches.

We will research and evaluate different models of mutual accompaniment, networking and capacity development in order to share good practice with member churches and ecumenical partners.

Strengthen relationships with mission related organizations

We will clarify roles and develop the processes for collaboration and partnership between the LWF and mission-related organizations. Through global forums and bi-lateral and multilateral collaboration, we will broaden the circle of participation and further understanding of holistic mission in today's world.

Priority area 2: A communion strengthened in diakonia

Strategic aim

Diakonia continues to be affirmed as an essential vocation of our communion and, together with the ecumenical family and interfaith and other partners, we work locally and internationally to improve the lives of poor and vulnerable people through high quality service and advocacy.

Diakonia is central to what it means to be church. Christians are called by God to live out diakonia in their daily lives and in what they do. More organized forms of diakonia are part of communion life - in congregations, through ministries of the church and, on behalf of churches, through programs and responses managed by LWF in collaboration with ecumenical and other partners. LWF is involved in a wide range of diaconal work – local diakonia or social ministry work, pastoral work, international humanitarian and development programs and local, regional and global advocacy.



Goals – what we want to achieve

1. Lutheran churches and their members are better able to respond to human suffering and need at a local, regional and global level and their capacities for diaconal work are supported and developed.
2. Local and global diakonia is developed and practiced with regard to international human rights principles and the codes and standards for quality, accountability and good practice and there is continual improvement in the quality and effectiveness of diaconal work.
3. Disaster preparedness and response has a stronger profile in the diaconal work of member churches and in LWF's country programs.
4. LWF's global humanitarian and development programs give priority to marginalized and vulnerable people whose lives are threatened by conflict, emergencies and natural disasters, with special regard for refugees and internally displaced persons, women and people affected by HIV and AIDs.
5. LWF is a leader within the ACT Alliance and there is strong ecumenical collaboration in diakonia and advocacy, locally and globally.
6. LWF is a reliable and effective voice for justice, peace and human rights and member churches have strong capacities for public witness on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed people.

Strategy commitments

Our approach to diakonia

We will strive for quality and greater consistency of approach in local and global diakonia, including a commitment to a rights-based approach, empowerment, participation, working multilaterally with ecumenical partners and churches engaging with civil society and states.

We will build strong collaboration with church-related organizations involved in humanitarian and development programs and manage these relationships in a spirit of partnership, mutual accountability, shared learning and joint ownership of achievements.

As part of our commitment to ongoing learning, accountability and communicating what we are doing, we will collect and disseminate stories about the impacts of local and global diaconal activities in people's lives and the way diakonia is being practiced locally and globally. The communion office will use these in our communication to promote understanding of LWF and what we do.

Support and develop member churches in local diakonia

The communion office will work with and through member churches and regional expressions in affirming and supporting member churches in their diaconal work. This includes facilitating access to training, resources and capacity development needed by member churches to improve their diaconal practices.

Given the mutual concern about the impacts of climate change and the continuous threat of natural disasters in many parts of the world, we will encourage and support member churches to play an active role in disaster preparedness and encourage their participation in local networks that plan and coordinate disaster response.

In keeping with our mutual accompaniment approach, member churches will be connected with each other and to LWF programs in their countries for purposes of mutual understanding, exchange and learning. We will develop and strengthen a network of diaconal arms of member churches as a vehicle for stronger collaboration and sharing good practice.

Further develop LWF's global humanitarian and development programs

LWF will continue to strengthen management and delivery of its global humanitarian and development programs, ensuring resources are used responsibly, quality is consistently high and programs are directed to the most vulnerable people and areas.

With the increasing frequency and the devastating impact of natural disasters and conflict in the world, LWF will develop stronger capacity for emergency response, in close collaboration with the ACT Alliance.

In planning for new and existing country programs, special attention will be given to the growing vulnerability of people at risk of natural disasters resulting from climate change. All country programs will develop their capacities and have a stronger focus on disaster risk reduction and preparedness.

LWF staff and church leaders will work to enhance cooperation and understanding between country programs and national churches, creating opportunities to clarify roles, do joint planning, share experience and together engage with ACT Alliance forums and other diaconal networks.

Strengthen our advocacy and public witness

Advocacy is part of the church's prophetic witness and, like diakonia, is carried out in all expressions of the communion and through collaboration with ecumenical and other partners. We will strengthen local, national, regional and global advocacy by:

- promoting theological understanding of advocacy as part of Lutheran tradition;
- promoting theological reflection on the LWF's priority themes for global advocacy;
- encouraging and supporting member churches to be advocates in their local contexts both from the pulpit and by working with others to influence change in their societies;
- including advocacy skills and practice as a focus for leadership development; and
- encouraging discussion and self-understanding among member churches on the public role of churches in society and how they will work with other civil society organizations and the state.

Priority themes for global advocacy

- Religious freedom and interfaith relations
- Climate change and environmental protection (escalating impacts for already poor and vulnerable people)
- Gender justice
- Refugees, internally displaced persons and other forced migrants
- Oppressed minority populations and indigenous people.

At an international level the communion office will tap into the grassroots knowledge and experience of member churches and country programs to bring the issues and realities they are dealing with to the global arena.

To ensure best use of the resources and expertise available, we will maintain close collaboration with other global ecumenical partners in advocacy. Joint planning will result in agreements about specialist areas of expertise, lead roles and joint activities.

The communion office will keep abreast of trends relevant to our priority concerns and track what is happening in key United Nations (UN) and international bodies so we know when and how to leverage influence. It will also maintain close relationships and engagement with relevant UN agencies and their forums and processes.



Priority area 3: A communion strengthened by ongoing theological discernment and by relationships of dialogue and collaboration (diapraxis)

Strategic aim

Shaped by a rich and diverse theological heritage, the communion responds to contemporary challenges to faith, journeys together spiritually, and explores its identity in multiple relationships, both ecumenical and interfaith.

As a confessional body and as an ecclesial communion, the LWF is committed to theological reflection as a core activity. Theological work is done at all levels of the communion. It responds to the learning which emerges from engagement with the questions and the sufferings of the world and seeks to offer faithful wisdom which, in turn, helps to shape all aspects of the church activity. The anniversary of the reformation in 2017 provides a powerful focal point for further formation as a communion and reaffirming our ecumenical commitment. Because communion is something that we are constantly growing into and becoming, we not only may talk about our heritage and history, but also we must talk

about what will mark us as a communion in the years ahead. Just as reformation remains a continuing challenge, so also there are no end points to the communion's formation.

Goals – what we want to achieve

The marks of our progress as a communion leading up to 2017:

1. We continue to articulate what it means to be Lutheran today, deepening understanding of the gospel and promoting understanding of the theological basis for our identity and shared mission.
2. The gifts, understandings and contextual knowledges of member churches from all parts of the world are brought into conversation to shape and deepen our theology, spiritual life and work together.
3. As a communion maturing in our connectedness and understanding, we find ways of respectful discussion and discernment on areas of difference, particularly on issues that could threaten our unity.
4. In all our expressions, we remain strongly committed to ecumenical dialogue and relationships and, together with our ecumenical partners, we build bridges and dialogue with other faiths.
5. As a communion we embrace a culture of leadership that is inclusive, transparent and accountable. Women and youth are better represented in decision making and can bring their gifts and perspectives to leadership in all aspects of communion life, work and governance.

Strategy commitments

Broaden and deepen theological reflection

Theological reflection is at the heart of the LWF's being and becoming a communion. The communion office, in collaboration with the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, will continue to offer leadership in theological discernment concerning questions facing the communion today and will develop resources that support member churches, regional expressions, and other networks to engage with these questions.

Increased emphasis will be given to building networks for theological reflection that support dialogue and exchange among theologians from different cultures and regions. Moving beyond sharing the wealth of knowledge and experience shaped by different cultural and historical contexts, new structures will be developed to help unleash the "transcontextual" wisdom that can be developed in these encounters.

Links of communication, consultation, and collaboration among the institutions involved in theological study and education will be made stronger, so that the entire communion can more easily profit from their resources.

Build and nurture self-awareness and unity

The anniversary of the reformation in 2017 becomes the focus for a multi-year global process of reflection, repentance and celebration in all congregations and expressions of the communion. As one part of this emphasis, the LWF Assembly in 2017 will be planned as an occasion for joyful celebration

of the power of the Lutheran witness to the Gospel and at the same time a space for self-critical acknowledgement of failures in faithfulness and of the continuing pain of divisions among Christians.

At all levels, awareness of the gift of communion in the united response to human need and suffering in different parts of the world will be strengthened. Member churches will be encouraged to explore new ways to encounter each other and develop their capacities to discuss the theological, moral and ethical issues confronting them.

As a communion we will find ways better to discuss the issues that potentially divide us—issues such as human sexuality, women’s ordination, and different interpretation of the scriptures—ways that honor both diversity of views and the unity among us. We will first of all rely on the power of eucharistic worship and prayer.

Strengthen ecumenical dialogue and relationships

We will continue to engage strongly with our ecumenical partners in theology, shared mission and joint work in development programs and advocacy at all levels. Ecumenical engagement with other Christian churches and communities is encouraged in local, regional and global expressions of the communion.

The communion office represents the Lutheran family in relation with other international Christian bodies and facilitates international dialogues, while also fostering exchange of information among different levels of dialogue throughout the communion. In addition, the communion office encourages other international Christian bodies in their own evolving identities. Relationships with multiple ecumenical partners are nurtured, as appropriate, in all aspects of the communion’s work. The communion office seeks to deepen relations with long-term partners and to develop new relations, especially with churches who have not been part of the traditional ecumenical movement.

Continue to develop interfaith dialogue and collaboration (diapraxis)

Regional and local expressions will be encouraged and supported in interfaith dialogue and collaboration to build mutual understanding and transformation among faith communities and work together for justice, peace and reconciliation in society. The communion office will locate and bring positive stories of interfaith endeavor to the communion, so experience and learning can be shared and progress celebrated.

Develop our future leaders

Sustainability of the communion requires deliberate cultivation of future leaders. LWF’s policies for representation of women and youth in leadership positions within churches, regional expressions, global forums, the communion office and the LWF Council will be maintained. We will work together to achieve models of leadership that equally value the perspectives and contributions of men and women and of youth and those who are older.

In developing leaders and an inclusive and transparent leadership culture we will:

- facilitate sharing of good practices in leadership development of individuals, member churches and regional expressions;
- develop resources that will guide and support leadership development; and
- establish networks that bring leaders and thinkers together in areas of common interest (for example, theologians, emerging church leaders, youth leaders, women leaders, human rights activists and policy experts).

Improve and streamline processes for communication and information sharing

Regional expressions will become a central hub for information, communication and bringing the grassroots experience and knowledge to the fore in our global processes. Regional expressions will be supported to assume leadership in communication in their regions.

Networks connected to the communion office will be expanded in order to reach, inform and engage more people. Globally, there will be more deliberate creation of networks for information sharing and communication around common interests and shared challenges.



Sustainability and organizational effectiveness

Strategic aim

LWF is a well-governed communion of churches supported by a communion office that is financially sustainable, professional, effective and accountable.

Achievement of our aims must be supported by a clear strategy for strengthening our governance and the communion office. This section covers leadership in governance, financial sustainability, effective communication and developing a responsive, collaborative and effective communion office.

This strategy reflects a shift in how the communion office will be working in the future. As the regional expressions assume a stronger role and member churches become better connected globally and regionally, the communion office's role becomes that of catalyst, convener and facilitator – supporting regional expressions, providing global perspectives, challenging others as part of dialogue and discussion and enabling effective communication and knowledge exchange.

Leadership in governance

Goals – what we want to achieve

1. There is increased efficiency and quality of governance structures and processes and Council members are well equipped and supported for strategic leadership of LWF.
2. Council membership reflects the rich diversity of the communion and the Assembly resolutions for gender balance and youth representation.

Strategy commitments

Continuously improve Council processes and structures

Strengthening governance of the LWF involves review and development of Council's structures and processes with specific attention to:

- clarifying and sharpening the roles and responsibilities of Council and other governing committees, based on a clear delineation between governance and communion office tasks and responsibilities;
- continually improving the systems used by the communion office to support the Council in its role, including information sharing, reporting and advice on decisions; and
- being proactive in recruiting a competent Council with balanced representation (gender, age and geographic) and identifying new ways to include related organizations in governance processes.

We will institute a process for ongoing self-evaluation and review of Council performance and engage the Council in identifying areas of governance practice to be strengthened.

Develop and support Council members

We will provide spaces and opportunities for learning and development of Council members, including initial orientation, understanding their roles and responsibilities and principles for good governance. To widen their understanding of the communion, opportunities will be provided for Council members to familiarize themselves with the communion and its work outside their regions. Specific systems for supporting and mentoring new members and youth representatives appointed to the Council will be developed.

Financial sustainability

Goals – what we want to achieve

1. A growing and more diversified funding base that provides for sustainability of the communion office into the future and enables us to better match resources to priorities.
2. Strong partnership and collaboration with all our funding partners.
3. Excellence in financial management and accountability and ongoing improvement of financial management, systems and controls.
4. A strong culture of stewardship that emphasizes strategic investments, calculated risk-taking, cost consciousness, living within our means, balanced budgets, making best use of the resources entrusted to us, and environmental sustainability.

Strategy commitments

Ensure program relevance, quality and accountability

Achieving a secure and growing income base is dependent on developing and implementing relevant programs and processes that bring added value to partners, participants and beneficiaries. It also requires high standards of quality and accountability in all programs and activities, and being able to better communicate and demonstrate our value, expertise and achievements to funding partners.

Strengthen existing partnerships and funding models

While LWF will explore new models of funding, we remain committed to our existing funding partners and the strong collaborative models of funding and joint work that we have developed. We will invest strongly in these relationships in order to maintain and expand the funding we receive, adapting our models to fit the changing realities of our funding partners and aligning funds available to our goals and priorities. Strong communication, information sharing and knowledge exchange will be key strategies underpinning our partnership approach.

Council members will be engaged and supported to be champions and ambassadors for LWF, raising awareness and promoting its distinctive identity as a communion and its work.

Develop new sources of funding

We know that we cannot rely solely on the models that have worked in the past. LWF will pursue an increasing proportion of its funds directly from government and other back donors, foundations and private sources. We recognize this is easier in the area of humanitarian and development work than for other priority areas of work. We will be creative in looking for new funding sources for activities that have been traditionally difficult to fund.

Strategic use of unrestricted funds

The LWF will engage in a process to clearly define what activities will be funded from membership fees, Endowment Fund contributions, and other unrestricted funds. The aim of this process will be to allocate unrestricted funds in the most strategic way.

Improve resource contributions from members

Membership fees enable the communion to connect and develop and for the communion office to undertake work that is important to member churches and regional expressions. We will work to achieve better recovery of member fees and explore other ways that member churches can contribute to the financial base of the communion's global and regional expressions.

Strengthen our internal capacities and expertise

Responsibilities for fund-raising and resource mobilization will be clearly assigned at the senior management level and within key departments. Fund-raising work will remain closely integrated with our communication and relationship management strategies. As resources grow, we will explore ways to establish a dedicated fund-raising team as a way to boost capacity and expertise within the communion office.

Effective communication

Goals – what we want to achieve

1. There is increased visibility, awareness and understanding of the LWF and its work, within the communion, with our partners and with other institutions we want to influence or engage.
2. Communication is supporting effective fund-raising and relationship management.
3. High quality information is being shared on a regular basis between member churches, across regional expressions and globally. Congregations are more connected with LWF's work and members of Lutheran churches feel more a part of a global communion.

Strategy commitments

Adopt a sharpened and more differentiated communications strategy

Improving our communication requires us to better tailor communication methods, processes and products to the needs of different audiences and to making ideas and information relevant and accessible. We will develop clearer messages that provide for consistency of communication on LWF's identity, direction and priority concerns.

More emphasis will be given to developing messages and communication that can be understood by congregations and by people assisted through our services locally and globally. We will work with local and regional communication networks to provide information to church leaders in ways that equip them to be agents of communication with church members.

We will work with regional expressions to make our information and communication more relevant and accessible to the many different contexts of our member churches, and explore ways that we can provide it in other languages, particularly those spoken in countries or regions where church membership is growing.

We will systematically monitor and improve communication and information sharing processes with key global partners with whom we collaborate, including the WCC, other church communions, the

ACT Alliance, ecumenical partners, related organizations, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other partners.

Improve communication capacity and methods

Priority will be given to developing more contemporary and innovative web-based approaches to communication, including social media, thereby increasing the pace, relevance, quality and reach of information. Staff will be trained and supported in new technologies and approaches to communication. Given the importance of communication for the communion, we will seek additional resources to support the technology and staff development needed.

Facilitate information and knowledge sharing across the communion

We will develop information management and communication systems that support member churches, regional expressions and the communion office share their experience and achievements. As part of this, churches will be able to access resources, stories and examples of good practice from LWF and its main ecumenical partners that help them to grow and meet their challenges. We will help to develop communication and information sharing capacities of member churches, particularly those struggling in this area.

A responsive, collaborative and effective communion office

Goals -what we want to achieve

1. A workforce that is highly competent, culturally diverse and meets the LWF's standard for representation of women in leadership roles.
2. A work culture that is shaped by LWF's values and supports staff participation, innovation and continuous learning and improvement.
3. Staff teams that are highly motivated and result oriented, communicating and collaborating well with each other within and across departments and offices.
4. Systems and processes that are well integrated and that support staff teams to be efficient and effective in their work.

Strategy commitments

Improve decision making and management

In taking forward the LWF Strategy the Cabinet group will further develop its role as a strategic leadership team, with individual and collective responsibilities for operationalizing the strategy. Implementation and further review of the communion office structure will ensure all managers and staff understand their role and the authority and autonomy they have within their areas of responsibility.

Decision-making processes will be continually evaluated to ensure they balance quality and timeliness of decisions with participation and consultation processes.

Undertake more strategic workforce planning

The communion office will develop a more strategic approach to workforce planning aligned to its future needs and the LWF Strategy and operational plans. This will include a more systematic consideration of gender and age profile, regional representation, professional skills, and competencies. Recruitment and selection processes will be focused on the capacity of staff in order to ensure that the right people are appointed based on the skills required for positions, and that decisions are made efficiently.

Develop and support our staff

A staff development plan based on a competency framework will provide opportunities for staff for increased and regular learning, planned in response to their needs and communion office priorities. A more equitable access to staff development and training opportunities will be facilitated and monitored and linked to a revised system of performance review.

Improve communion office systems and processes

Systems and processes will be reviewed and developed to improve their efficiency, modernize and standardize systems across departments where possible and eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy. Priority will be given to the systems that support internal communication, information and knowledge sharing, planning, performance monitoring and evaluation, relationships with partners and connectedness between the communion office and other expressions of the communion.

Photos

Cover page: Sustainability project in Peru. © Matti Siippainen

Page 12: A group of Lutheran communion members in Thailand. © ELCT

Page 15: ACT Alliance intervention, following the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti. © Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance

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