

LWF STRATEGY 2012–2017

**THE LWF COMMUNION – WITH PASSION
FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR THE WORLD**

A COMMUNION OF 145 MEMBER CHURCHES

representing over 70 million Christians in:

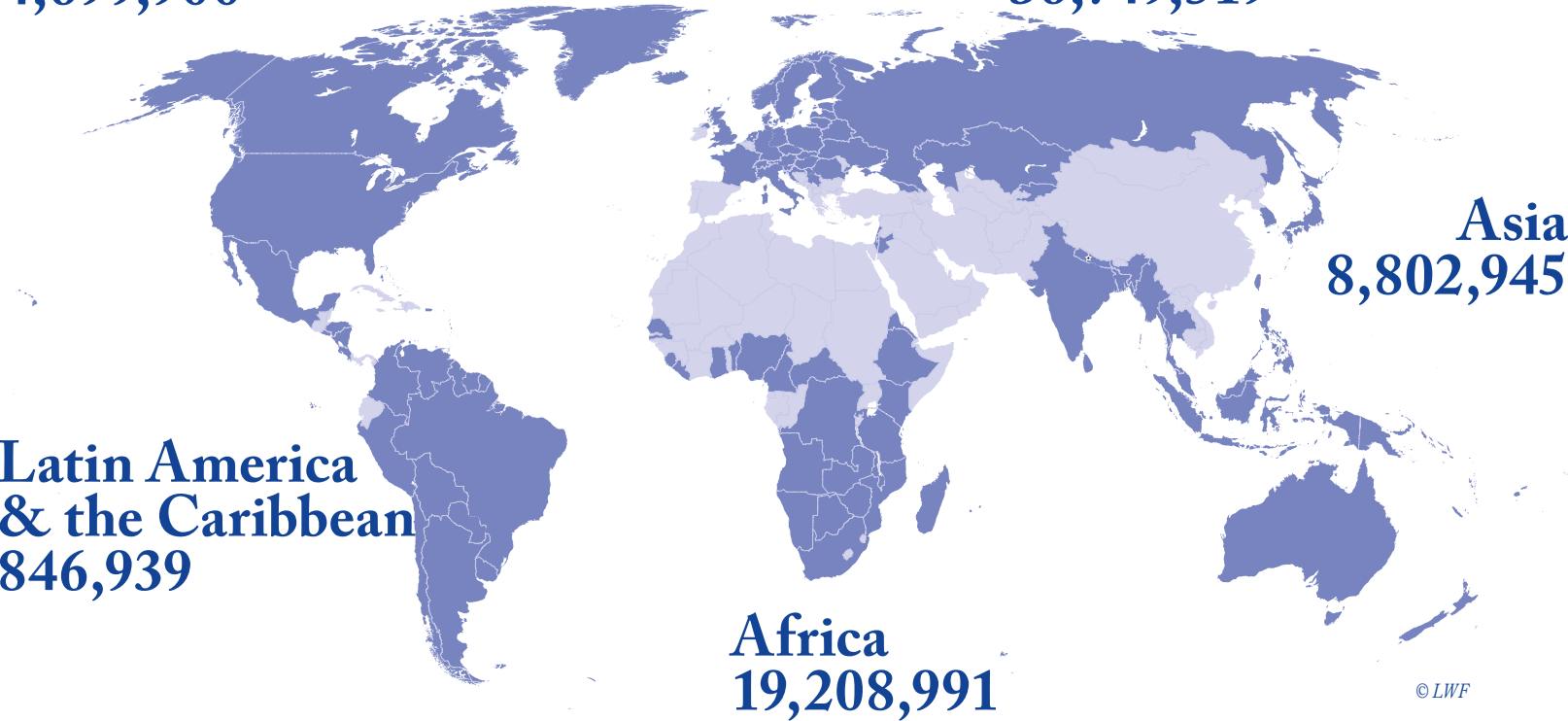
North America
4,699,900

Europe
36,749,519

Asia
8,802,945

**Latin America
& the Caribbean**
846,939

Africa
19,208,991



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(updated 14 February 2011)

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LWF Strategy 2012-2017

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FOREWORD

In this Strategic Plan we set forth our common journey as a Communion of Churches through 2017. The approval of this Plan was the most important decision taken by the 2011 meeting of the LWF Council. All subsequent decisions of the LWF in the next years will be rooted in this plan.

The process of developing this Plan has been a broadly participatory one. All of our member churches and our related specialized organizations were invited to comment and contribute during the course of its development. The present Plan also puts into practice proposals made by the Renewal Committee (2007-2009) and recommended by the previous Council (2010).

We are a communion of churches committed to the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ to all nations, devoted to mutual accompaniment in mission, to common theological work, to relationships with other churches (*ecumenism*) and to dialogue and cooperation with representatives of other faiths (*diapaxis*). Out of the abundant and gracious love of God for us and for all creation, we are called to be engaged in *diakonia*

through the love of neighbor. Jesus' Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) inspires a biblical paradigm for our work and calls us to reach out to and accompany our neighbor on the qualification of rights, and not by any other human or spiritual qualification.

God's Word and God's Spirit guide us in the living out of our mission, and our Strategic Plan is formed in and reflects our faith in the Triune God. This Strategic Plan calls us to be prophetic in addressing the contemporary issues of our age and will strengthen us in our common efforts for healing, bridge building and justice in a world increasingly torn by conflicts and aggression.

It is my hope, as we embark upon the implementation of the Strategic Plan that the many cultures and backgrounds of our 145 member churches may help to strengthen both our conversation and our witness as a Lutheran Communion in the world.

Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan
LWF President



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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.

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.

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 which called for a diaconal response beyond national boundaries.

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. Increasingly, we see the importance of the decision to claim the gift of our identity as a communion of churches, with the greater dimensions of ecclesial character and mutual accountability that this identity recognizes. Now, in its seventh decade, the LWF looks to the future with confident faith, seeking to discern the ways which lie ahead.

The strategy builds on the work of the LWF Renewal Process undertaken between 2007 and 2009. This was a moment of conscious self-reflection on identity and practice as a communion of churches. The report of the Renewal Committee 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 and to think about the "next step" for the communion's spiritual journey. This journey involves new challenges for which paths are not clearly mapped out, and where models adopted by other global Christian communions are not fully transferable.

The strategy will guide the LWF to 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and so invites the communion to move toward that year in ways which express the principle of *semper reformanda*: The need for reforming and renewal is never exhausted, as God calls the church to respond afresh to the gift of new life by sharing in God's own mission for the world.

OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

Part A of the strategy sets out who we are as a communion, our shared vision, purpose and values and the relationships that are of great importance in the years ahead. (Unless otherwise noted, in this document the pronoun "we" refers to the LWF communion.) It is hoped that this part of the strategy speaks to the communion as a whole and helps our shared understanding of being in communion together.

Part B presents the strategic directions for the period 2012–2017. This section describes the context for the strategy, the priorities for the LWF communion office and strategic aims, goals and commitments for taking the priorities forward. The strategy tries to balance providing clear directions and encouraging flexibility in how these directions might be taken forward in different regions and contexts.

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 the LWF council. The strategic directions will provide vital guidance for the communion office's annual operational plan and budget.

More broadly, it is hoped that the strategy support the further evolution of the LWF as a communion of churches in our life and work together; that it inspire and provide a focus for mutual accompaniment and interchurch relationships within and across regional boundaries; and that it let our partners know the directions we want to take and our commitments to them.



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PART A:

WHO WE ARE AS A COMMUNION

The LWF is a global communion of churches in the Lutheran tradition. In 2011, when the strategy was developed, there were 145 member churches in seventy-nine countries all over the world representing over 70 million Christians. As a communion of churches, rich in theological traditions and a commitment to renewal and reformation, who we are is shaped by our Lutheran identity, how we understand communion, our shared vision, purpose and values and our relationships.

OUR LUTHERAN IDENTITY

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. LWF member churches “confess the Triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship.”¹

To be Lutheran is to be evangelical. We proclaim the “good news” of Christ’s life, his death on the cross, and his resurrection. Together we witness that, despite our sins, we are accepted unconditionally: forgiven, saved and justified by God’s grace for Christ’s sake through faith alone.

To be Lutheran is to be sacramental. We live our life together in the communion of the Church, as we center our worship of the Triune God in the proclamation of the Word of God, both law and gospel, and in the sacraments.

To be Lutheran is to be diaconal, as we are freed by Christ in faith to love and serve the neighbor. Our service in the world and our care for creation are integral to our Lutheran identity.

¹ Constitution of The Lutheran World Federation III

To be Lutheran is to be confessional. The LWF confesses the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as “the only source and norm of its doctrine, life and service,” and sees in the Ecumenical Creeds and in the Lutheran Confessions “a pure exposition of the Word of God.”²

To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical. The LWF “confesses the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church” and is resolved to serve and actively promote Christian unity throughout the world and to further united witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.³ We work for unity among Christians through theological education and exploration, dialogue and collaborative action, as our participation in 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 that we have a public role in society, relating to others of good will who share our commitments.

The Lutheran tradition is invited by its own best insights to be dynamic, self-critical, and open to the future. Its theological outlook is marked by recognition of dialectic tensions, which resist resolution because they illuminate different facets of life with God and in God’s world. While the central convictions of the Lutheran tradition are not uniquely ours, its distinctive patterns and emphases shape the way in which we respond to the challenges and questions of our time.

In this strategy, this means

- In the presence of all forms of human suffering, we confess God’s initiating and justifying grace, which liberates us for the needs of others.

² Constitution II

³ Constitution III

- In the face of the earth’s growing vulnerability, we honor its glorious diversity, in which the Creator is praised, and emphasize the earthiness of the incarnation.
- In the presence of worldly success defined by earth-damaging acquisition, we follow the way of Christ’s cross, which calls us to a costly discipleship.
- In the face of human structures of competition and exclusion, we affirm that Christians are a priestly people, receivers of mercy who proclaim God’s works (1 Pt 2:9–10), among whom the vocations of all should be honored and the service of each equally welcomed.
- While acknowledging the churches’ faults and weaknesses, we confess that these communities are parts of Christ’s body, where Christ has promised his gifts and the Holy Spirit is present.
- In our cooperation with civil society and search for interreligious understanding and common work, we move forward with confidence that God is active in the world as well as in the Church.

OUR DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER AS A COMMUNION

As we look ahead to 2017, we want to affirm and further develop that which distinguishes us as a global communion of churches. The LWF’s progression from “federation” to “communion” reflects a maturing of relationships within the LWF and a growing commitment and desire for greater connectedness among member churches. Communion is a gift

Our vision

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

before it is a task. In hearing the gospel of God's grace, in receiving baptism and daily living out our baptismal identity, and in joining together in Holy Communion, we are drawn into communion with God and with one another. The life of the communion is nourished first by worship. Communion is lived out joyfully in the common proclamation of the gospel, in prayer and singing, and in sharing the sacraments and recognizing ministries.

► *For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith" (Rom 1:16-17)*

Through being in communion, member churches share a spiritual journey. God's Spirit enables us to listen to one another; to share our joys and sufferings; to grow in practices of mutual care, admonition, forgiveness and reconciliation; and to deepen our understanding of the need for one another as members of the one Body of Christ. Thus, 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 in which they are in ecclesial relationship with each other.

God's mission is at the core of the communion of Lutheran churches. In Christ and especially in

his cross we see the shape of that mission: God is present at the margins of human society, enters into the depths of human suffering and injustice, and embraces those whom human arrangements would exclude.

The communion is present through the relationships and connectedness among churches and among local congregations. 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.

► *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:28)*

OUR SHARED PURPOSE

Together as a communion of churches, the LWF is called to further the united witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to strengthen 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
- Strengthening self understanding and faith in action through the sharing of gifts and resources, cooperative study, reflection, and theological dialogue
- Contributing to dialogue and reconciliation among churches, between different faiths and in societies affected by violence and conflict
- Promoting human rights, peace, and reconciliation, and alleviating human suffering and addressing the root causes of social, economic, and gender injustice
- Caring for God's creation and living in an environmentally sustainable way.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOLISTIC MISSION

► *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42).*

In this strategy, mission is taken to mean participation in God's mission and holistic mission as encom-

passing proclamation and service (diakonia) and advocacy. The understanding of holistic mission has been developed through theological reflection, dialogue, and practice from 1977 until today with LWF assemblies progressively affirming deeper understandings. (See *Mission in Context—Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment*, LWF, 2004)

Mission as proclamation is each Christian telling and interpreting the Good News of God's love in their context as a way to discover God's saving action and meaningful presence in the world. Member churches understand that being evangelical is to proclaim and share the Gospel.

Mission as service highlights the diaconal dimension of a faith active in love, working for the empowerment and liberation of people who are marginalized and in need. Mission as advocacy for justice denotes the church's action in the public arena affirming the dignity of human life and promoting justice in the economic, social, and ecological spheres. Advocacy for justice, besides diakonia, must also belong to preaching and teaching—as seen in Jesus' message and ministry.

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

- *But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Am 5:24).*

Each and 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

- *But a Samaritan while traveling came near him, and when he saw him, he was moved with pity (Lk 10:33).*

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

- *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 (1Cor 12:12).*

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 in which these have shaped our theological understandings, our perspectives on moral and ethical questions, and our practice of ministry, mission, and service.

Inclusion and participation

- *“Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet” (Mat 22:9).*

We are committed to being inclusive and enabling the full and equitable participation of women, men, people of all ages and people with disabilities in church life and society, and in 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.

Transparency and accountability

- *“...truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Mat 25:40)*

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.

COMMUNION RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Relationships are defining of who we are in our life and work as a communion of churches. These relationships take many forms and serve different purposes within the communion and beyond. They involve coming together to share faith and faith expressions, to exchange knowledge and share

resources, to collaborate and take action and, in some cases, jointly to plan and implement programs. The relationships that are of fundamental importance to LWF in the years ahead are described briefly below.

Relationships within the communion—member churches and related organizations

As members of the LWF, churches forming the communion have a formal relationship as set out in the constitution. The council and communion office act on behalf of the member churches, accompanying them in their contexts and coordinating and implementing joint actions or programs.

Member churches have embraced mutual accompaniment as the model for communion relationships: walking together in God's mission in solidarity, interdependence and mutual responsibility. The biblical roots of accompaniment are found in the story of the encounter between Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

In mutual accompaniment, member churches depend on the gifts they give one another: the Gospel message; resources, experience and mutual support; advice and admonition to deepen and expand self-understanding. Receiving is as important as giving and openness and appreciation for different perspectives and experiences is essential. Accompaniment is a way of living in communion and being in relationship for holistic mission. Accompaniment describes the way in which God walks with member churches and with all people. This reflects how we approach relationships with other Christian communities, ecumenical partners, and communities in their contexts.

The LWF has long-established relationships with agencies of its member churches involved in mission, service and development and with some development agencies connected to other denomina-

tions. These are referred to as “related organizations.” Related organizations contribute to governance and policy through strategic advice, reflection, and joint action on the challenges facing the communion, churches and the world. Many are long-standing and committed partners of the LWF in the funding and implementation of programs. In the spirit of accompaniment, there is mutual sharing of knowledge, experience, and resources. Related organizations are of vital importance in the communion and to the LWF strategy.

Ecumenical relationships and partnerships

Given the LWF's tradition of ecumenical engagements and our commitment to an ecumenical celebration of 2017, relations with other Christian bodies will have major strategic importance. As a world communion, the LWF is a consistent partner and supporter of the distinctive and complementary role of the World Council of Churches, to which many of our member churches also belong. We will continue our commitments to long-term partners in the search for Christian unity and to our emerging relationships with other Christian families to build mutual understanding and growth in communion.

The LWF works with ecumenical partners in mission and diaconal activities. The LWF is a founding member of the ACT Alliance and an implementing partner with ACT and its members in emergency and humanitarian response and development work. Advocacy work is also undertaken in close collaboration with other ecumenical partners such as the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.

Member churches are also engaged in relationship and dialogue with other Christian communities, regionally and locally, and carry out their mission with ecumenical partners and networks.

Relationships with other faiths, civil society, and state actors

This strategy affirms the importance of ongoing relationships and dialogue with other faiths, with civil society and state actors and United Nations agencies. These relationships have great importance for member churches and the communion office in our efforts toward peace, reconciliation, sustainable livelihoods, and justice.

Guiding principles

Our relationships will be conducted in line with our values, our commitment to mutual accompaniment, and the following partnership principles.

- Clarity about the purpose of relationships and roles and responsibilities of partners
- Respect for the autonomy of partners and their separate accountabilities
- Making best use of the capacities, knowledge, and contributions of each partner
- Mutual responsibility and accountability in the relationships and for outcomes
- Transparency in decision making and openness in communication.



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Referendum 7 de octubre
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Por una Costa Rica solidaria y justa

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vivir el evangelio es luchar por la justicia

VOTAMOS al TLC ¡SÍ!
JOSUE 1:9

PART B: STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

THE CONTEXT

Each of the LWF assemblies has been a milestone in our communion's journey. Delegates who gathered in 2010 for the LWF's Eleventh Assembly at Stuttgart reflected together on the state of the church and the world and on 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 in people's lives and on creation. Guided by the theme, "Give us today our daily bread," the Assembly Message affirmed, "Knowing that in the act of sharing both givers and receivers can be deeply transformed, we commit ourselves to foster the awareness of receiving and the blessing of giving." The LWF Renewal Process also analyzed the current global realities in seeking to understand the context in which the LWF serves. Here we can touch only briefly on some of the major contextual factors this strategy is responding to.

Increased global connectivity

Globalization and advances in technology have brought about increased global connectivity and interdependence between people, nations, and regions. All nations have been affected and challenged by the resulting changes. Some change has

been positive. Rapid communication and transfer of knowledge and innovation are possible, even to remote parts of the world. In many places, this has increased access to employment opportunities, opened up freedom of expression, and increased space for civil society engagement. Innovation and new knowledge can bring about opportunities and positive transformation for communities long oppressed within their own society. Yet it can also undermine community and deplete social capital when nations cede to global consensus or adopt dominant norms from outside their context. Access to new technologies and information is uneven within nations and across regions, creating new forms of exclusion and disadvantage in today's world.

Widening gaps between the rich and the poor

Because globalization is built on neo-liberal doctrines of individualism, idolatry of markets, and acquisition of wealth, it has led to a growing divide between rich and poor people. This gap has been exacerbated by the global recession and poor economic management in many nations. Poverty and other forms of injustice impact unevenly on men, women, and children in many societies. This is one factor giving rise to the need for strategies that promote gender justice.

Forced and voluntary migration

Our world continues to be one in which millions of people are forced to leave their homes. The causes are many. Among them are: warfare and violence; political, ethnic or religious persecution; poverty and lack of economic opportunity; social pressures; natural disasters; and climate change. Many others migrate voluntarily, seeking opportunities or to reunite with loved ones. More people now live in cities than in rural areas. Oppressive, corrupt, or bad government is increasingly associated with violence, poverty, human suffering, and forced migration.

Climate change

Climate change, one of the biggest challenges for all humanity, is contributing to ever more serious natural catastrophes, rising sea levels, dramatic storms, droughts, and floods. These events occur more frequently and contribute to food insecurity, disease, conflicts over scarce land and resources, and the 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 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.

Environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources remain a pressing concern globally, but especially in those parts of the world that have the least capacity to turn the tide and achieve sustainable lives through new or alternative practices.

HIV and AIDS and other global health epidemics

HIV and AIDS continues to affect millions of people around the world. Its impacts are felt by men, women and children, families, communities and nations. For the countries and regions most affected, HIV and AIDS has a drastic effect on economic and social development, politics, health and well-being and culture. Advances in treatment and public health policies have improved the situation in some parts of the world. Elsewhere, stigma, discrimination and inadequate health responses mean the disease continues to spread. Churches can play a vital role in raising awareness, advocating for better care and treatment and in tending to the spiritual and psychological well being of people living with HIV and AIDS and those affected by it.

Other global health concerns are equally challenging for the millions affected, and those who

care for them, families and communities, including malaria, tuberculosis, water borne diseases and mental illness.

Changes in the religious and ecumenical landscapes

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 interreligious 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.

Among Christians, the movement toward overcoming historical divisions has changed the face of Christianity on the globe and, hence, the frameworks for church cooperation at many levels. Local churches have found many different entry points into 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, 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 multilateral bodies, notably the World Council of Churches (WCC), to adapt its structures to changing times.

The changes that are arguably of greatest significance to the LWF are the rapid growth of churches in the global South and the growth of Christian movements—now twenty-five 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. Lutheran churches in the global North increasingly struggle with declining church participation and other aspects of secularization. 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 being discussed.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In its global expression, there are **THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES** for the LWF for the period 2012–2017 which define the most important areas of work of the communion office, including its country programs.

- A communion strengthened in worship and ongoing **theological** discernment, ecumenical dialogue, and interfaith collaboration
- Member churches growing in capacity for holistic mission and deepening relationships with each other
- Effective and empowering **diakonia** addressing human suffering, injustice, and emergencies.

FOUR CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES are identified as foundational work or important elements of our strategy across the goals and commitments relating to the strategic priorities above.

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

Finally, there are **TWO ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES** that are highly important within a broader commitment to building organizational sustainability and effectiveness

- Effective communication
- Financial sustainability

Strategies to improve communication are critical to achieving our aims and essential for communion relationships. While being only one aspect of organizational sustainability, financial sustainability requires a specific and concerted focus.

The strategic aims, goals, and strategy commitments are organized in four focus areas. The first three align with our strategic priorities. The fourth deals with organizational sustainability and effectiveness, with a primary focus on the communion office.



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AIMS, GOALS, AND STRATEGY COMMITMENTS

PRIORITY AREA 1:

A communion strengthened in worship and ongoing theological discernment, ecumenical dialogue, and interfaith collaboration

Strategic aim

Shaped by a rich and diverse theological heritage, the communion responds to contemporary challenges to faith, journeys together spiritually, and

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 our understanding of the gospel and promoting our understanding of the theological basis for our identity and shared mission.
2. The understandings and contextual insights and “knowledges” of the member churches from all parts of the world are welcomed as gifts and 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 in 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.

explores its identity in multiple relationships, both ecumenical and interfaith.

As a confessional body and 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 emerging from engagement with the questions and the sufferings of the world and seeks to offer faithful wisdom which, in turn, helps shape all aspects of the church’s activity. The anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 provides a powerful focal point for further formation as a communion and the reaffirmation of our ecumenical commitment. Because communion is something that we are constantly growing into and becoming, we will not only talk about our heritage and history, but must also 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.

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 and others, will continue to offer leadership in theological discernment concerning questions facing the communion today and 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 lay and ordained theologians, both women and men 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. Young theologians are supported to connect in order to contribute and broaden their understanding beyond their context.

Links of communication, consultation, and collaboration among the institutions involved in theological study and education will be strengthened, 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 multiyear 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 the joyful celebration of the power of the Lutheran witness to the gospel and at the same time a space for the self-critical acknowledgement of failures in faithfulness and of the continuing pain of division among Christians. Ecumenical partners will be involved both in planning and observing the anniversary.

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 and different interpretation of the Scriptures—in ways that honor both diversity of views on important issues and the more fundamental basis of 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 churches and communities is encouraged in local, regional, and global expressions of the communion.

The communion office represents the Lutheran family in relationships with other international Christian bodies and facilitates international dialogues, while fostering the 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 expressions and individual member churches 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.

The communion office will carry out its interfaith work together with other ecumenical bodies. It will locate and bring positive stories of interfaith endeavor to the communion, so that experience and learning can be shared and progress celebrated. It will also seek to explore and communicate distinctive Lutheran perspectives on and contributions to interfaith understanding, with a focus on diapraxis.

PRIORITY AREA 2:

Member churches growing in capacity for holistic mission

and deepening relationships with each other

► *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Lk 4:18-19).*

Goals—what we want to achieve

1. There is increased common understanding across the communion of holistic mission as encompassing proclamation, diakonia, and advocacy
2. Member churches are confident to proclaim the gospel in their context, serve people and creation, and to 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 are actively and equitably engaged in the life and leadership of member churches and the communion and their unique gifts are valued.
5. Young people have a place and a voice in all aspects of church and communion life, including decision making and leadership.

Strategic aim

Member churches are strengthened in holistic mission and better able to meet the challenges they face in their context individually and together.

Mutual accompaniment will continue to be 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. Significant importance will be given to the accompaniment and capacity development of member churches, interchurch relationships and networks, supporting regional expressions, and developing future leaders.

Strategy commitments

Support and develop capacity of the member churches

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

- Identifying the expertise and resources available within the communion and facilitating better access to these
- A more structured and efficient system for linking churches with training and capacity development opportunities, different scholarships, theological education, and learning networks
- Linking new ordained and lay leaders to training and opportunities for reflection on Lutheran identity
- Improving communication and the flow of information and bringing issues, knowledge, and ideas from member churches into regional, sub-regional and global forums
- Developing practical guides and training programs that can be efficiently delivered through regional or other networks.

We will evaluate and gather information on positive experiences with networking and capacity development in order to promote and share good practices.

Project funding for member church initiatives and capacity development will be focused more strategically in line with the priorities set out in this strategy, the needs identified in the different regions,

and with particular attention to the needs of minority and struggling churches.

Encourage interchurch relationships and networks

Member churches will have opportunities to come together through bilateral and multilateral meetings, and virtually via the internet. Regional and cross-regional relationships and networks will be encouraged focusing on, for example:

- Theological reflection and understanding
- Addressing issues that cause exclusion and poverty in their region (for example conflict, HIV and AIDS, patriarchy, sexism and ensuing gender-based violence, or the escalating frequency and impact of natural disasters caused by climate change)
- Sharing good practices in youth participation
- Discussing contextual and organizational challenges as Lutheran churches.

Member churches benefit greatly from meeting churches from contexts different from their own when seeking new understandings of what it means to be Lutheran churches today. We will encourage and arrange visits between churches for mutual support, exchange, and learning and provide opportunities especially for struggling and minority churches.

Encourage the formation of youth networks locally, regionally and globally

Member churches will be encouraged to establish youth networks and support participation of youth in regional and global networks and forums.

Youth networks contribute to the life and work of the communion in numerous ways: as a source of advice and ideas, as a mechanism for inclusion and participation in decision making and as a resource in helping churches become more relevant to the next generation. Youth networks can be a powerful voice for change on issues such as climate change and poverty. The communion office will support the development of youth networks directly and indirectly, through on-line consultation and campaigns, information sharing and resource development.

Develop and support future leaders

The communion's sustainability requires the deliberate cultivation of future leaders. The LWF's policies pertaining to the representation of women and youth in leadership positions within churches, regional expressions, global forums, the communion office, and the LWF council will be maintained. At the same time, we will encourage and support new leaders to emerge and promote good practices in leadership, including the capacity to listen to different perspectives of women and men, and young and older people. Leadership will be cultivated and developed through:

- Sharing good practices in leadership development (for developing capacities of leaders and achieving equity in representation of men, women and youth)
- Developing and distributing resources
- Establishing 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).

Further develop relationships with and among related organizations

We will improve processes of communication, information sharing, and collaboration between the LWF and church-related organizations in mission. We will support the emergence and development of new agencies or units in areas where these are currently weak and promote links between such agencies within and across regions. The communion office will invite participation of member churches from the global South in roundtables and other forums that bring related organizations in mission together for mutual learning and sharing of experiences, thus achieving a more balanced North-South engagement and trans-contextual exchange.

Further clarify the role and support development of regional expressions

Member churches come together as regional expressions. More space will be given to clarifying their roles in ways that are relevant to different regions and contexts. The communion office will support this by keeping member churches informed about what is happening in different regions and assisting them to fulfill their roles and priorities.

PRIORITY AREA 3:

Effective and empowering diakonia addressing human suffering, injustice, and emergencies

Strategic aim

Diakonia continues to be affirmed as an essential calling of our communion and, together with ecumenical, interfaith, and other partners, we empower and

Goals—what we want to achieve

1. Lutheran churches and their members are better able to respond to human suffering and need and their capacities for diaconal work are supported and developed
2. The 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
3. The LWF's global humanitarian and development programs give priority to marginalized and vulnerable poor people whose lives are threatened by conflict, emergencies, and natural disasters, with special regard for refugees and internally displaced persons, people affected by HIV and AIDS and the different needs and capacities of men, women and children.
4. The LWF is a strong and active member in the ACT Alliance and there is effective ecumenical collaboration in diakonia and advocacy, both locally and globally
5. Disaster preparedness and response have a stronger profile in the diaconal work of member churches and in the LWF's country programs.

accompany people and communities in overcoming injustice, exclusion, and the impacts of conflicts and natural disasters.

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 the ministries of the church and, on behalf of churches, through programs and responses managed by the LWF in collaboration with ecumenical and other partners. The LWF is involved in a wide range of diaconal work: local diakonia or social ministry work; pastoral work; international humanitarian and development programs; local, regional, and global advocacy. Central elements of our approach to diakonia are the rights-based approach, a commitment to empowering people and communities, a focus on gender justice, and accountability to the communities we assist.

Strategy commitments

Support and recognize the contribution of 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 the training, resources, and capacity development needed by member churches.

Given the escalating impact 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 to engage with local networks that plan and coordinate disaster response.

In keeping with our mutual accompaniment approach, member churches will be connected with one another and to LWF programs in their countries to build 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 particularly in those regions and sub-regions without existing networks.

Further develop the LWF's global humanitarian and development programs

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

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

In planning for new and existing country programs, special attention will be given to the grow-

ing 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.

The LWF will continue to cooperate with United Nations agencies as well as with other civil society organizations in its humanitarian and development work.

Maintain and further develop our partnerships with related organizations

We will continue to build strong bi- and multi-lateral collaboration with the LWF's related organizations involved in humanitarian and development programs and manage these relationships in a spirit of partnership, mutual accountability, and joint ownership of achievements. We will encourage the involvement of new or emerging diaconal agencies and networks, particularly in the global South.

We will provide structured opportunities for long-standing and new related organizations to come together to exchange experiences, discuss common concerns, and provide strategic advice for decision making.

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 the 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
- Encouraging discussion among and the self-understanding of member churches regarding the public role of churches in society and the ways in which they will work with other civil society organizations and the state.

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 the best use of the resources and expertise available, we will collaborate closely with other global ecumenical partners in advocacy such as the World Council of Churches, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, ACT Alliance and YWCA. Joint planning will result in agreements about 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 the United Nations (UN) and key international bodies so that we can leverage influence. It will also maintain close relationships and

Priority themes for global advocacy

In keeping with the LWF's overall commitment to human rights and human dignity, the LWF's advocacy will focus on:

- **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 peoples, e.g. Dalits and Roma**
- **Economic justice**
- **HIV and AIDS**

engagement with relevant UN agencies and their forums and processes.

Improve communication about the impact of diaconal work

As part of our commitment to ongoing learning and accountability, the communion office will collect and disseminate stories about the impact of local and global diaconal activities on people's lives and the way diakonia, including advocacy, is being practiced. The communion office will use these in its communication to promote understanding of, and support for, the LWF and what it does.



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ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Strategic aim

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

Achieving our aims must be supported by a clear strategy for organizational sustainability and effec-

tiveness. Sustainability relies on many aspects of organizational life and design. The most important are clarity of mission and direction, human and financial resources, strong leadership, clarity and agility in communication, knowledge management, partnerships with others and well-functioning systems for planning and evaluation. Another aspect of sustainability is the communion office's commitment to environmental sustainability and being a responsible steward of the earth's resources.

This section covers directions for leadership in governance, financial sustainability, effective communication, and developing a responsive, collaborative, and effective communion office. The LWF strategy will be supported by an operational plan and it is here that more detailed decisions will be made about annual operations and the use of resources. Balancing intentions with resources and institutional capacity will be key to being effective in a given year and to the LWF's ongoing sustainability.

Goals—leadership in governance

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

and ordained) and new processes for the inclusion of related organizations in governance processes.

A process for the ongoing self-evaluation and review of the Council performance will be developed allowing Council members to identify areas of governance practice to be strengthened.

Strategy commitments

Continuously improve Council processes and structures

Strengthening the governance of the LWF involves reviewing and developing the Council's structures and processes, paying specific attention to:

- Clarifying and sharpening the roles and responsibilities of the Council and other governing committees

Reaffirming clear boundaries between governance functions 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
- Having a competent Council with balanced representation (gender, age, geographical, and lay

Develop and support Council members

Processes for the induction and development of Council members will be strengthened, including initial orientation, understanding governance roles and responsibilities and principles for good governance. 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.

Goals—effective communication

1. There is increased visibility 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 communion relationships and fund raising
3. Communication from the communion office is rapid and agile and uses new technologies and media effectively
4. Member churches have timely access to relevant, high quality information and their members, in turn, feel more connected with the LWF's work.

Strategy commitments

Adopt a sharpened and more differentiated communications strategy

Improving communication requires that methods, processes, and products are better tailored to the needs of different audiences and making ideas and information relevant and accessible. Clear messages will be agreed on for consistency of communication on the LWF's identity, direction, and priority concerns.

More emphasis will be given to developing messages and communication that can be understood by congregations and people assisted through our services locally and globally. Local and regional communication networks will be used to channel information to church leaders in forms that equip

them to be agents of communication with church members.

The communion office will work with member churches to make information and communication more relevant and accessible to their many contexts, and explore ways to provide information in other languages, particularly those spoken in countries or regions where church membership is growing. One aspect of this will be how new media can be used more effectively to reach and engage young people.

The communion office will systematically monitor and improve communication and information sharing processes with key global partners, 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. More effective use of media—church and secular—will also be a priority in order to achieve broader reach and influence.

Given the importance of communication for the communion, the communion office will seek additional resources to support the technology and staff development needed. Staff will be trained and supported in new technologies and approaches to communication.

Facilitate the sharing of information and knowledge across the communion

The communion office will develop information management and communication systems that support member churches to share their experience and achievements and to learn about achievements at a global level. As part of this, churches will be able to access resources, stories, and examples of good practice from the LWF and its main ecumenical partners relevant to their context, goals, and challenges. It will also help to develop communication and information sharing capacities of member churches, particularly those struggling in this area.



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Goals—financial sustainability

1. The LWF achieves a growing and diversified funding base that provides for sustainability of the communion office into the future.
2. A strong culture of stewardship is developed 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.
3. Strong partnership and collaboration is maintained with all our funding partners.
4. The communion office and country programs demonstrate excellence in financial management and accountability.

Strategy commitments

Ensure program relevance, quality and accountability

Achieving a secure and growing income base depends 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 better to communicate and demonstrate the LWF's value, expertise, and achievements to funding partners.

Strengthen existing partnerships and funding models

While the 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 have been developed. We will

invest strongly in these relationships in order to maintain and expand funding received, adapting our models to fit the changing realities of our funding partners and aligning funds available to our goals and priorities.

Council members will be engaged and supported to be champions for and ambassadors of the 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. The LWF will seek 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 in other priority areas of work. We will be creative in looking for new funding sources for activities that have traditionally been difficult to fund.

Strategic use of unrestricted funds

The LWF will engage in a process clearly to 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 a better recovery of member fees and to 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 fundraising 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.

Goals—a responsive, collaborative, and sustainable communion office

1. The communion office achieves and retains a workforce that is highly competent, culturally diverse, and meets the LWF’s standard for representation of women in leadership roles.
2. Staff teams are highly motivated, result oriented and communicate and collaborate well with each other within and across departments and offices.
3. Staff contribute to and enjoy a work culture that supports staff participation, innovation, and continuous learning and improvement.
4. Operational systems and processes are well integrated and support staff to be efficient, effective, and accountable 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’s 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 strategic workforce planning

The communion office will develop a strategic approach to workforce planning aligned to its future needs and the LWF’s 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, systems across departments will be modernized and standardized where possible and unnecessary bureaucracy eliminated. 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.

The communion office will also develop and implement an ecological audit for its Geneva and country program offices and establish plans for moving toward climate neutrality.

A COMMUNION IN ONGOING REFORMATION

As the Lutheran communion of churches looks ahead to 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the Council of the LWF is committed to leading the communion in realizing the vision, goals and commitments articulated in this strategy. As Lutherans freed by grace to love and serve the neighbor, the communion lives out God's mission to make a difference in the world.

- We will proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- We will extend invitations to Christian fellowship and to baptism.

- 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, exclusion, injustice and conflict.

As the communion continues on its journey to re-forming toward a radically inclusive, diverse and reconciled community we ask God to help and guide us.

— *LWF Council, June 2011*

