



# THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES – EINE KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT – UNA COMUNIÓN DE IGLESIAS – UNE COMMUNION D'ÉGLISES  
LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

*Department for Mission and Development – Asia Desk*

## **The Lutheran World Federation Asia Pre-Assembly Consultation and Asia Church Leadership Conference 6-9 December 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand**

### **Message from the Asia Pre-Assembly to the Lutheran Communion**

We are the 96 participants—including delegates, mission partners and LWF staff from 15 countries representing The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches—who are attending the Asia Pre-Assembly Consultation and Asia Church Leadership Conference, 6-9 December 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand, organized by the Asia desk of the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) and hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand. As the first in the series of LWF regional pre-assemblies, we take seriously our responsibility to communicate to sisters and brothers in our communion our determination and desire to commit ourselves to God's work in the world. Among the many challenges humanity faces today, the ones placed before us at this pre-assembly are these: human trafficking, climate change, diakonia and diapraxis.

We affirm the work of: the LWF Department for Mission and Development – Asia desk, the Lutheran Council in Asia (LUCAS), the field offices of the LWF Department for World Service in Asia and the Mekong Mission Forum, which carry out this work through holistic mission and diakonia programs.

Coming from the Asian context, with its rich plurality of cultures, religious traditions and spiritualities, as well as obvious poverty and hunger, we take refuge in the living word of God as relevant to all of life's joys and sorrows. As representatives of the Lutheran communion in this part of the world, we endeavor to realize, comprehend and internalize the urgency, the necessity and the challenges of what it means when we pray the prayer that our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray: "Give us today our daily bread."

### **"Give us today our daily bread" from an Asian perspective**

Among all the implications of the phrase, "Give us today our daily bread," the most obvious is that of food security. We recognize that food sustains our physical bodies even as it nurtures our spirits. We in Asia see food as sacred, a gift from God, which is a necessity for life as well as for human dignity and self-respect. At the same time, we recognize food also serves as a symbol and a tool of power and control.



The word “us” in the theme reflects an assumption that food is to be shared—not only with humanity but with all of God’s creation. The biblical story of the loaves and fishes affirms this vision, upholding the gifts of sharing and organizing as necessary for the just distribution of God’s resources.

### **What are the challenges to “daily bread” that we face in Asia?**

The theme challenges us to consider the status of “daily bread” in Asia. We acknowledge and experience the painful fact that many in Asia do not have adequate food, as reflected in malnutrition rates among children and women that number in the millions, and thousands of hunger-related deaths throughout Asia on a daily basis.

This sad fact is compounded by the reality that hunger in Asia is not the result of insufficient food production in the region but rather man-made crises such as corruption, unjust distribution, militarization, colonialism, overwhelming national debt, climate change and occupation. Furthermore, the Asia region is deeply impacted by natural disasters, accounting for some 89 percent of all people affected by disasters worldwide.

Fuelled by the worldwide economic crisis, which has had a devastating impact on many lives and countries in Asia, the disparity between the rich and the poor continues to grow. It is ironic that, while countless women and children starve, food consumption and wastage is on the rise.

While we in the global South often blame the North for the current environmental devastation, we recognize that we fail to take responsibility for sustainable use of our own God-given resources.

### **Affirming our divine call to prophetic diakonia**

Although we Lutherans are a minority in Asia, we are encouraged by the biblical prophetic tradition of those who, although in the minority, spoke out for God’s justice no matter what the cost. Taking our cue from these courageous people of God, we join together our voices to speak for justice for all who hunger in body and spirit:

- Once again we call on our governments to work for disarmament in the Asia region, in order that the huge amounts of money that are currently used for “national security” can be utilized for food security for all.
- We call on our member churches to ally with all people of good will, including ecumenical, interfaith, governmental, non-governmental and ideological groups, in order to speak more loudly in favor of justice for people who are in need; such as indigenous people, Adivasis, Dalits and people in occupied lands.
- As the assembly theme emphasizes community, we call upon member churches to adopt a mindset of interdependence, in place of dependence or independence; and to work toward greater reconciliation among churches and communities.

- Recognizing a call for us to evaluate our own consumption patterns, we call on the Stuttgart assembly planners to minimize costs by emphasizing simple food and life-style. We ask that participants be encouraged to give up a meal to support a hunger-related initiative of the member churches. This is a tangible way in which we can stand in solidarity with those who are hungry.
- We call upon churches to listen to, respect and trust their young people and invite young people's participation in all aspects of church life and society.
- We call upon churches to support the initiatives of Asian women by setting up justice and gender equality mechanisms that build up and promote a culture of equality.
- We call upon churches as well as individual members to use fair trade products and raise awareness of fair trade and labor practices.
- Because of our religious and cultural diversity, we in Asia have had the opportunity to bring to the Lutheran communion our experiences of dialogue and diapraxis. We now call upon our sisters and brothers in other regions to join us in a deepening commitment to these ongoing conversations and actions with people of other faiths. At the same time, we affirm that this does not detract from our primary call to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments.
- As residents of a region already adversely affected by global climate change, we are keenly aware that world leaders are gathering in Copenhagen for the United Nations Climate Change Conference at the same time we meet to shape our Asian Christian response to the crisis. We therefore call on member churches to appeal to their government leaders to seek a fair, equitable, legally-binding agreement to succeed the Kyoto Protocol, to pressure polluters in our region to take responsibility for their emissions; to encourage the development of alternative energy sources that do not further burden people who are poor; and to use Asian ingenuity to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of people who are already affected by global climate change.
- In light of the paradoxical realities of economic growth and deepening poverty in our region, we call on Asian churches to act for more equitable distribution of "daily bread" in all its forms.
- We call upon all churches to advocate for and appeal to national leaders to adopt and enforce the Palermo Protocol, which criminalizes human trafficking, in hopes of preventing more people from being lured into virtual slavery for want of daily bread.

We have the obligation to engage in prophetic diakonia—that is, service to the world that confronts injustice. At the same time, we have the privilege of envisioning a better world and joining with God for its realization. May God, who graciously provides for all our needs, give us the strength and the courage to speak these words for the sake of the world: "Give us today our daily bread."

*The delegates and participants of the LWF Pre-Assembly Consultation/Asia Church Leadership Conference, Bangkok, Thailand, 9 December 2009*