



# 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 – Europe Desk*

## **Message of the European Pre-Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation Bratislava, 12-17 March 2010**

We, delegates from European Lutheran Churches, gathered at the European Pre-Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Bratislava from March 13-17, 2010, have discussed the theme of 'Give us today our daily bread' from our Europe-wide perspective.

### **Sharing**

Our identity as Lutherans gives us confidence to go to new places where we do not feel comfortable, to get to know new people from whom we feel different and share the gifts of God including the gospel. In the ongoing economic crises, we need to make uncomfortable but prophetic decisions for and with those who are in weak, defenseless, marginalized or hated positions. The common understanding of what it means to be rich as implying material wealth, must be challenged by the experience of becoming spiritually rich by sharing. We recognize that as European Christians we have failed in many ways, including a wasteful use of resources and tolerating a spirit of greed and carelessness. We repent of our role in the breakdown of relationships between Creator and creation, Savior and saved, Sustainer and sustained.

We praise God for the wonderful gift of food, a source of joy and life. Although this is a gift freely given to all, it is constantly an object of political and economic interests. Due to unjust systems and structures we see that people suffer from lack of access to sufficiently nutritious food. The need for food justice demands action in Europe in the areas of politics, economics and ecology.

As members of a Federation born out of diaconal action, we reconfirm the diaconal dimension of our communion of Lutheran Churches. In the current world situation climate change, migration, poverty and financial crisis are sharpening the need for domestic and international diakonia. Furthermore, our context demands from the church a strengthened identity as a community where sharing is a fundamental value. Advocacy for those who do not have a voice, for example refugees and asylum seekers, is also an important feature of our mission in this world.

### **Human Dignity**

As a church we believe that all men and women are created in the image of God in body, mind and soul. The loss of human dignity involved in human trafficking, gender injustice and forced migration damages the integrity of body and soul. The task of the church is to uphold human dignity and assist people in retaining their personal integrity.

Human beings – men, women and children- are profoundly affected by the tragic business of human trafficking. For many of us in Europe, this seems like an invisible problem. In our ignorance and naivety we do not see the fact that people are being trafficked across borders in Europe on a daily basis.

This cross-border challenge needs cross-border cooperation, between the worldwide church communions, NGOs and governments to act at a political level.

Therefore we request LWF to engage in a process involving theologians, pastors, service providers, those who have been trafficked and those who have been involved in trafficking, sharing experiences to develop strategies in order to work towards the restoration of human dignity.

### **Gender Justice**

By the on-going renewal of practice in gender justice in lay and ordained ministries and leadership the church could contribute to society for the healing of gender inequalities in our world. As we approach the 2010 Assembly, we regret the fact that there are still member churches that do not ordain women, and hinder women from leadership in decision-making bodies in the church. Prayerfully we encourage and continue our solidarity with women who long to live out their God-given vocation, and encourage them not to give up their struggle to serve the church on all levels in an expression of gender justice. We uphold in prayer the partnership between men and women in the LWF and we pray that all their talents would be used in the service of the Gospel.

We ask the LWF community to evaluate the impact the 20-year old quota system in its member churches. We also firmly ask to LWF to respect gender balance in all its governing bodies.

### **Environment**

In God's infinite grace God gave us his good Creation, of which we are part, and entrusted us with good stewardship.

Therefore we call upon our Lutheran brothers and sisters to model a sustainable lifestyle. As Europeans we should be aware that we find happiness and peace in God, and not in endless material growth. We suggest that the stance of receiving Creation with thanks, and environmental awareness, should be emphasized at all different levels of education.

We call upon individuals and churches to act through their examples to encourage society toward institutional change and political advocacy. We call upon our federation and churches to consider these following concrete actions:

- Consistent ethical investment policy and practice
- purchasing policy that is responsible ecologically and socially
- CO<sub>2</sub> neutral event management
- ecologically sound mobility concepts
- Sustainable administration and use of buildings and estates

### **Church Unity**

Faced with many new challenges and threats the church must come together in unified witness. In the face of a secular and pluralistic context it is necessary to find practical ways, theological discourse and ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue to enable us as Christians to live together with people of all faiths.

A unified Lutheran World Federation must allow different opinions and ideas, respecting the different heritage, cultures and societies our member churches represent. Differences can also be understood as richness, bringing diversity in unity.

We believe in one Church. We have a common faith in Jesus Christ which empowers us to trust in God's healing power, extended to us in grace through faith. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray that God's Kingdom will come, and His will be done.

*God, our Creator and Protector, you illumine the world and breathe life into us. You heal the world with your outstretched arms. You rescue creation and inspire your church. We thank you for your gifts and remember your promises in our thoughts and actions, in our communities and our churches. Amen.*