



Saksdokumenter:

Being and Living as a Communion: Taking the Next Steps to Strengthen Ecclesial Identity. Implications and Proposals for LWF Renewal. DRAFT (*vedlagt*)

Saker fra de økumeniske organisasjonene

Det lutherske verdensforbund (LVF)

Sammendrag

Første fremlegg fra fornyelseskomiteen i LVF

I tråd med forslag fra LVFs generalsekretær til rådsmøtet i 2005 ble det nedsatt en komité med det formål å drøfte utviklingslinjer for LVF som organisasjon og som fellesskap av kirker, med henblikk på å komme frem til et forslag til vedtak på generalforsamlingen i 2010.

Som et første skritt i fornyelseskomiteens kommunikasjon med LVFs medlemskirker og samarbeidende organisasjoner legger komiteen frem nærværende dokument med anmodning om respons før 3. april 2008.

Fra norsk side er generalsekretær Atle Sommerfeldt medlem i komiteen. Han vil presentere dokumentet på MKRs møte.

Forslag til vedtak

Saken tas til orientering.

*Being and Living as a Communion:
Taking the Next Steps to Strengthen Ecclesial Identity*

Implications and Proposals for LWF Renewal

DRAFT

As part of its work, the LWF Renewal Committee presents these reflections for response and consultation with member churches and related organizations for mission and diakonia within the Lutheran communion.

They are requested to study this draft, and to provide their responses by April 3rd, 2008.

BACKGROUND: “From Federation to Communion”

The understanding of the ecclesial nature of the Lutheran World Federation as a global organization has developed significantly since its start in 1947 as “a free association of churches.”¹ The delegates of the member churches at the 7th Assembly in Budapest in 1984 adopted the language of “pulpit and altar fellowship” to describe relations among the churches and the standard for LWF membership. This expression was clearly theological and ecclesial, and reflected the particular way that Lutherans have spoken about communion. While this affirmation of confessional communion challenged the member churches to become connected in new ways, giving up a stand-alone consciousness, the language of “free association” was retained.

The 8th Assembly in Curitiba in 1990 took a major step to resolve this inconsistency by stating in the constitution that the Lutheran World Federation is “a communion of churches” that are “united in pulpit and altar fellowship.” This reaffirmed that confessional communion has implications for ecclesial communion, and deepened the challenge for common life and mission among the member churches and also ecumenically.

By the time of the LWF 11th Assembly in 2010, twenty years will have passed since the LWF affirmed this self-understanding as “a communion of churches,” and established the current structures for governance and administration. These structures have served the member churches and the ecumenical movement well, as the LWF has matured in its understanding and experience of being a communion of churches. We have also experienced, however, the ways in which our current systems are stretched by our strengthening relationships and are sometimes limited in their ability to empower and facilitate further development. Thus, it is timely and even urgent to focus again on LWF renewal in order to be responsive to the changed, and changing, context for service together in God’s mission.

¹ The historical background on ecclesiological reflection in the LWF is provided by Michael Root, “Affirming the Communion,” in *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation*, ed. Norman A. Hjelm, Prasanna Kumari, Jens Holger Schjørring (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), pp. 216-245.

At its meeting in September 2005, the Council welcomed the proposal from the General Secretary to consider a process for putting in place a new LWF by the year 2010. Following the Council's request, the Executive Committee appointed a Renewal Committee, comprising a chairperson and ten members representing the seven regions, including Council members and representatives from member churches, national committees, theological institutions, and related organizations for mission and diakonia. During 2007, the committee met in January, reported to the Council in March, and met again in August.

The next step is to invite participation and responses from member churches and from our related organizations for mission and diakonia. To stimulate this discussion, this document provides a summary of information and reflections on how the LWF has developed as a communion of churches since 1990. It identifies some key implications and presents proposals for *being and living as a communion* in the future, with questions for reflection and response

The Renewal Committee will meet to consider the responses, and will report and consult with the Council when it meets in June 2008. Then a second draft of the document will be sent to the member churches. The Renewal Committee will incorporate responses to the second draft and report to the Council when it meets in October 2009. The Council will make final recommendations on LWF renewal and send them to the member churches in preparation for the 11th Assembly, which will meet in Stuttgart, Germany, in July 2010. The Assembly will make the final decisions on the recommendations for LWF renewal.

CONTEXT

When we are considering LWF renewal, it is important to examine the context in which the LWF serves. The changes for renewal that were adopted in 1990 were developed in the context of the years leading up to the Assembly that year. The forces of change unleashed by the end of apartheid, the fall of communism and the creation of the World Wide Web were only imagined when the 1990 renewal proposals were adopted. Much has changed in the world context and the ecumenical context since then. Moreover, important new possibilities within the life the LWF were opened up in 1990, and these also invite us to respond with further changes.

The LWF mission document, *Mission in Context* (which was adopted in 2004, and is itself a response to the changing context for mission) advises that understanding the context for mission is an interactive process that involves both naming and discovering contexts and situations. "In analyzing its context, the church may ask, among other things, questions relating to situations requiring transformation and/or healing, situations of conflict and reconciliation, and situations of control of power – its abuse, misuse, or lack of it."²

This renewal document reflects on the current context, and developments that have taken place since 1990 for the LWF as a communion of churches, using three perspectives: the Human Landscape, the Ecumenical Landscape and the Lutheran Landscape. This document cannot consider all perspectives, nor can it include extensive analysis or the full diversity of

² *Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment – An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission.* (Geneva, Switzerland: The Lutheran World Federation, 2004), p. 11.

experiences. It aims to highlight for the LWF some examples of what has been experienced in the deepening of relationships and in joint action, and what limitations have been encountered.

THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE

In the human landscape, the list of concerns and challenges facing the world's people is endless: growing poverty alongside increasing wealth; racism, exclusion and marginalization; sexual abuse and exploitation; illiteracy, unemployment and hunger; powerlessness and the abuse of power; war and conflict; insecurity, despair and apathy; and so much more.

In the period since 1990, the dominant paradigm for understanding and describing the world's human landscape has been *globalization*, which involves the experience, processes and impact of increasing global connectivity, integration and interdependence. Globalization has had significant impacts, both positive and negative, on social and economic systems, and it presents both opportunities and threats for human community and sustainable life on earth. *Mission in Context* provided this overview of the impacts of globalization:

Different parts of the world have become increasingly interlinked as a result of improved means of transportation and communication technologies. In general, globalization has had a considerable impact on all aspects of societal life: economy, politics, culture, communication, and the individual's sense of value and morality. On the one hand, globalization has brought a number of benefits in different aspects of life. Improved transportation allows people to travel widely with greater flexibility and efficiency and to meet people of different cultures in their own contexts. Communication technology such as the Internet has fostered the democratization of information, which can no longer be controlled or manipulated as easily by the state. Scientific and technical knowledge, best practices in different fields of human endeavor, and expectations and opportunities are shared across regional and national frontiers.... On the other hand, with its promotion of individualism at the expense of community, globalization has widened the gap between people, nations, and the wealthy and the impoverished.³

The economic effects of globalization have not been all positive for the life of this earth and its people. There is increased environmental degradation and climate change, which have both immediate and long-term impacts. It is abundantly evident that decisions and actions in one part of the world's ecosystem can have dramatic impact on life elsewhere on the planet.

Despite technological progress, the world struggles with critical health issues, and illnesses are often hidden, denied or ignored. The HIV and AIDS pandemic continues to spread and raises many social, cultural and gender justice issues. Religious communities can be part of the problem, or can be agents for inclusion, care and advocacy for those affected by disease.

An increasing global movement of refugees and people seeking a new life in other parts of the world intensifies immigration debates in many places, often driven by fears of being swamped by newcomers, and giving rise to opposition based on fear and dislike of "foreigners." Religious communities often find themselves called upon to provide immediate

³*Mission in Context*, pp. 12-13.

hospitality and also to participate in creative ways to re-imagine membership in local communities.

The overarching concern for state security in the face of terrorism feeds a sense of insecurity in daily life, and responses can threaten social cohesion and human rights. Religious belief and history are often invoked to justify terrorism or responses to it, and religious leaders struggle against forces of radical fundamentalism and the fear of those who are “different from us.” The role of religion in conflict, peace and reconciliation is challenging religious communities to strengthen efforts for inter-religious dialogue and common action for the good of society.

It is evident that no country is immune from the ripple effect of these forces and challenges. Globally, there is increased awareness and concern for human interrelatedness, justice and common action. People are looking for new forms of community that take seriously the threats to life and the environment. Meanwhile, globalization’s push for connectivity leaves many unconnected, thus increasing social fragmentation and limiting economic opportunity.

The processes of globalization have also intensified inter-religious dynamics, locally and globally, and have promoted the development of many coalitions and movements in civil society. The church is not the only voice for spirituality, compassion and justice. In political terms, in many places the church stands at the margins, and its credibility is being questioned by various elements both within and outside the church.

At the same time, the church is increasingly recognized as an agent for transformation and reconciliation in the human landscape, because of its potential to bridge global and local relationships with extensive connections to grassroots communities. This has the double effect of raising expectations and calling for accountability.

THE ECUMENICAL LANDSCAPE

The ecumenical landscape has also changed dramatically since 1990. The harvesting of the fruits of decades of ecumenical engagement has accelerated, so that the current configuration of ecumenical relationships seems inadequate for the challenges and opportunities that are arising. At the same time, rapidly growing new communities, which are changing the face of Christianity around the globe, have sometimes stood apart from ecumenical structures and activity. Reconfiguration for the 21st century has been accepted as an urgent task for the ecumenical movement and for all efforts to address destructive Christian divisions.

The LWF and the member churches recognize that the global reality of the Lutheran communion does not isolate the Lutheran confessional family from other Christians. By declaring that the LWF is a communion of churches, the Assembly in Curitiba in 1990 affirmed that the Lutheran communion is itself a partial expression of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, and that the LWF “is resolved to serve Christian unity throughout the world.” This means that the Lutheran communion does not exist for its own sake, but participates and makes significant contributions within the ecumenical movement.

In recognition of this, the LWF has worked with distinctive intensity in the area of international ecumenical bilateral dialogues with Anglican, Orthodox, Reformed and Roman Catholic dialogue partners. With the 1990 affirmation of the LWF as a communion of

churches, the strength of the LWF as an accountable global instrument of Lutheran churches made it possible to reach a global ecumenical agreement with the Roman Catholic Church in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ) in 1999. The World Methodist Council signed the JDDJ in 2005, and an international biblical study on justification is being formed with Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Reformed participation.

The 1990 decisions made it clear that international and regional dialogues cannot be pursued in isolation. Confessional communion demands consultation and mutual accountability, and credible ecumenical dialogue demands consistent standards and approaches. Accordingly, the results of international ecumenical dialogues are sent to the member churches for study and response, in a form of consultation that both contributes to the international dialogues and stimulates and strengthens regional dialogues. Recognizing that national and regional ecumenical relations have implications for the entire Communion, the Council in 1993 decided that member churches should inform other member churches, through the LWF, about their processes and intentions to enter into fellowship with other churches.

With the success of international and regional dialogues, some member churches have established agreements with churches of other confessional families. These agreements are significant, and have contributed to strengthening Lutheran communion and ecumenical relationships, because each agreement – in its own way for its own context and moment in time – breaks through barriers of church separation, builds bridges of reconciliation and cooperation, and witnesses to the earnest desire for visible Christian unity.

Since 1990, regional ecumenical agreements involving member churches have included the *Porvoo Common Statement* (1992) and the *Reuilly Common Statement* (1997) in Europe; and the *Formula of Agreement* (1997), *Following Our Shepherd to Full Communion* (1999), *Called to Common Mission* (1999/2000), and the *Waterloo Declaration* (2001) in North America. Reflecting the significance of these regional agreements for the Lutheran communion and the ecumenical movement, LWF participation in signing ceremonies for some agreements highlighted implications of these agreements for the Lutheran communion.

The forces of ecumenical change that were energized by the 1990 affirmation of communion were not a break from what came before. Rather, the choice of language joined a familiar ecumenical expression (“communion”) with a familiar Lutheran expression (“pulpit and altar fellowship”), thus reflecting processes and understandings that were already emerging in the ecumenical landscape. Earlier ecumenical agreements involving LWF member churches (the *Leuenberg Agreement* in 1973 and the *Meissen Common Statement* in 1988) were early reflections of these processes, and were ecumenical signs of hope for overcoming separation and isolation.

There have also been signs of intensifying relationship among churches in other settings: for example, the agreements on baptism between the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Bolivia, and between the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches and the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic; various Anglican-Lutheran initiatives for dialogue in Africa; and the increased participation of member churches in regional ecumenical councils.

In addition to formal dialogues and agreements, increased high-level collaboration within the ecumenical movement has been seen in coordinated and joint efforts for diakonia and advocacy. These efforts have focused attention and resources on such critical issues as the HIV and AIDS pandemic and responding to humanitarian emergencies. This shift from “do we cooperate?” to “how do we cooperate?” gained momentum from ecumenical theological achievements, and continues to expand through Action by Churches Together (ACT) International and the establishment of ACT Development. In Latin America, churches have worked ecumenically to address illegitimate debt, with concrete positive results.

It is evident that the ecumenical landscape is changing with the continuing harvest of the fruits of ecumenical dialogues and agreements, and increased efforts for closer ecumenical collaboration in diakonia and advocacy. The lifting of mutual condemnations between churches, and the establishment of full communion agreements, have raised awareness of the role and significance of Christian World Communions (CWCs). These Christian families have emerged as valuable complements to other agents seeking Christian unity. Among them, Lutherans have provided a significant and suggestive example in their efforts to seek the implications of being and living as a communion.

Another expression of the LWF’s commitment to the ecumenical movement has been its continued support for the World Council of Churches (WCC) as a uniquely privileged ecumenical instrument. The LWF has encouraged the WCC in its recognition that it cannot stay the same. The WCC articulated its ecumenical vision with the major policy statement, *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC*, in the 1990s, and released a study paper, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, in 2005. The WCC has initiated a process on *Ecumenism in the 21st Century*, with attention to ecumenical reconfiguration and the vision to include churches and families of churches that presently are not members of ecumenical organizations.

With a commitment to the ecumenical movement and proactive involvement in ecumenical reconfiguration processes, the LWF has been working toward the goal of a broad ecumenical assembly where the CWCs can have more visible space. A joint meeting of LWF and World Alliance of Reformed Churches governing bodies in 2006 strongly supported this ecumenical initiative. The LWF is also seeking to strengthen ecumenical partnership and cooperation within the framework of ACT International and ACT Development, seeking space where churches, CWCs and church organizations for diakonia can advance a common agenda.

In the ecumenical landscape, we can affirm that the LWF renewal in 1990 succeeded in significant ways by enabling the LWF, as a communion of churches, to become a stronger and highly credible participant and leader within the ecumenical movement. We have also recognized that churches find different entry points in the ecumenical landscape in the search for the visible unity of the church. In different settings, the entry point can be bilateral theological dialogues, participation in ecumenical councils, cooperative church efforts in diakonia and advocacy, or joint church agreements with governments on common concerns.

Since 1990, it is evident that the ecumenical landscape has become energized with many forms of ecumenical engagement. A new climate prevails in global ecumenical relations. An outstanding example of these new initiatives, and one whose lasting significance is yet to emerge, is the Global Christian Forum, for which the LWF has been a significant and reliable

supporter. This group seeks to bring together churches long committed to ecumenism with the burgeoning communities somewhat inadequately called “Pentecostal” or “Evangelical”—groups which have sometimes been suspicious even of the word “ecumenical.” The success of the first meeting of the GCF in Kenya in November 2007 underlines the timeliness of new efforts to develop understanding and relationships with the new bodies which are changing the face of Christianity in the settings in which many of our members live. Churches of the LWF have much to learn from the energy and contagious faith of these new Christians, and we also have insights and commitments to offer in the discussion—notably a sense of the role of Church in Christian discipleship. From these encounters, it will become apparent how current configurations and systems must change in order to facilitate and empower further developments among the full range of Christian communities.

THE LUTHERAN LANDSCAPE

The Assembly in Curitiba in 1990 was a significant landmark in the global Lutheran landscape. The amendment of the LWF constitution in Curitiba formalized a significant shift from the understanding that the LWF is “an expression of the communion” to the understanding that the LWF is “a communion of churches.” (Article III) This decision clearly affirmed the growing ecclesial profile of the LWF.

The decision process itself reflected the dynamics of the Lutheran landscape. It was based on extensive consultation and deliberation among the member churches, and reflected a consensus that was clearly emerging. It was a theological and ecclesial process that sought consistency between theology and practice, and took seriously the particular dynamics of the context in which the LWF was serving at the time.

As a consequence of this decision, and based on this new understanding, the LWF governance and administrative structures were shaped with the aim of better integrating legislative and administrative procedures, and providing flexibility. Six legislative bodies were reduced to two (the Assembly and the Council). As an example of flexibility, structures for regional expression of communion were encouraged to develop in each region according to the needs and timeline deemed appropriate to the region.

These systems responded to the prevailing context in which the 1990 decisions were made, and have functioned very well to support the mission and work of the LWF and the member churches. At the same time, the following examples and reflections indicate the limitations and new needs that have emerged in the changing Lutheran landscape.

Lutheran joint action and mutual accountability

The practical implications of the vision for communion - turning from a “stand-alone consciousness” to a “consciousness of solidarity and mutuality” - included intentional efforts for joint action and mutual accountability, and recognition of the ability to act on behalf of one another, even as the member churches remain autonomous.

Furthermore, this understanding recognized that the aims of the LWF are carried out both by the member churches and by the common life of the member churches in the Lutheran communion. Therefore, to facilitate and support the achievement of its aims, the Constitution

provided that the LWF “shall exercise its functions through the Assembly, the Council, the Secretariat and appropriate instrumentalities of the member churches” (Article VI).

The Assembly includes representatives of all the member churches and is the principal authority of the LWF. Although the 1990 changes did not affect the Assembly structurally, assemblies began making *commitments* as the primary expression of future directions, reflecting a tone of mutual accountability as a communion of churches. In actual experience, the reception of these commitments by the member churches, and follow up action, has been difficult to support with current governance and administrative systems that still officially relate to member churches on an individual basis.

The name chosen for the highest ecclesial governing body between assemblies was the *Council*, expressing the growing ecclesial consciousness within the LWF. The Council has responsibility to act on behalf of the churches, including decisions about membership and relations between the member churches. Equal representation of churches from North and South has brought the increasing consciousness of solidarity and mutual accountability into the arena of governance and decision-making on behalf of the Communion. Several examples will serve to reflect the growing practice of joint decisions on behalf of one another, and the increasing sense of mutual accountability.

In 1991, the Council acted to restore to LWF membership two churches from southern Africa whose membership had been suspended by the Assembly in Budapest in 1984, over the issue of apartheid. The Council has also adopted guidelines for conflict resolution, as an instrument to address conflict within and between churches. Recognizing that churches cannot make final decisions alone – on issues that affect our common life and while other churches continue to struggle with the questions – the Council in 2007 approved “Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue on Marriage, Family and Sexuality.”

On behalf of the Lutheran communion and the member churches, the Council adopts official LWF statements that reflect common concerns and positions of the member churches, and that call for action. Issues addressed include human rights, the plight of refugees and excluded communities, issues of war and seeking peace, and environmental protection.

The Council also acts on behalf of the member churches in adopting action plans for implementing LWF commitments. In 1992, the Council adopted *A Clear Plan of Action* for the equal participation of women and men in the LWF and in the member churches. In 2001, the Council adopted the document, “Churches say ‘NO’ to Violence Against Women,” including an action plan for member churches to respond. In 2002, the Council adopted an LWF HIV and AIDS Action Plan, addressing theological and ecclesiological challenges, and calling on member churches to break the silence and become agents of care and compassion.

Through the Council, participants for international ecumenical dialogues are appointed from the member churches. Results are shared with the member churches for study and response, and joint decisions are made for agreements, reception and follow up. In 1998 and 1999, the Council followed up action by the 1997 9th Assembly in Hong Kong, by deciding formally to adopt the JDDJ with the Roman Catholic Church. In 2007, the Council adopted an LWF statement on oversight (Episcopal ministry) which both recognized the variety of practices in

our member churches and yet also agreed on statements on this aspect of ecclesial life—a degree of common expression which would have been impossible twenty years before.

Among the Christian World Communions, the LWF is distinctive in having many mechanisms by which authorized entities regularly make decisions on behalf of the Communion which relate to our common life. These mechanisms are exercised by the Council, or committees responsible to the Council. For example: the LWF has an international personnel committee that functions through the Council and Executive Committee; the sharing of needs and resources within the Communion is exercised through a common forum, the LWF Project Committee; and the Standing Committee for World Service makes decisions on behalf of the Communion for country programs and strategies and for starting new programs.

The 1990 decision on communion upheld an approach to common life among the churches which expressed a commitment to shared ecclesial life rather than an expectation of comprehensive theological agreement. This recognized that Lutheran communion exists on the basis of a common confession, and embraces all those churches that accept the Lutheran confessions. The fact that there are Lutheran churches that do not acknowledge pulpit and altar fellowship with all other Lutheran Churches, and that are not members of the LWF, is a reminder that full communion among all Lutheran churches remains before us as an ecclesiological task.

Thus, we recognize in the 1990 decision on communion the affirmation of a basis for inter-Lutheran initiatives. Accordingly, the Council in 2002 called for regular discussions between the LWF and the International Lutheran Council, which includes most Lutheran churches that do not belong to the LWF, including the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. Annual meetings have the aim of increasing mutual understanding and considering issues of tension that may arise. Inter-Lutheran cooperation exists in some areas, for example, in joint agencies for international humanitarian response, and refugee and social services in North America.

Regarding overall Lutheran joint action since 1990, the effective ways in which the member churches have worked together has been unprecedented. The limitation in joint efforts has been experienced in the persistent difficulty, with only the means provided by current governance and administrative systems, in following up on agreed commitments and action plans.

The role of regional expressions of communion

In 1990, it was anticipated that the communion of churches in the regions would be expressed through intensified use of existing structures and programs in the LWF and among the member churches. The regions were encouraged to develop at their own pace, with a minimal emphasis on anything structural. From the following examples, it is evident that practical forms of communion have developed significantly and in a variety of ways in the different regions. It is also evident that further development is limited by the absence of formal recognition and supporting infrastructure.

On the positive side, the aims of communication and interpretation, as well developing channels for advice and consultation, have been achieved in the regional expressions to a

very high degree since 1990. For example, regional communication networks have emerged to enhance the identity, visibility and sustainability of communion in the regions, and to encourage mutual support in mission and diakonia. Especially for small churches and minority churches, these networks prevent the feeling of isolation in an environment of large or majority churches and other faith communities.

Regional conferences of bishops/presidents and other church leadership (including women, youth and laity) have strengthened forms of fellowship and communication, as well as trust and understanding. They have also strengthened bonds of unity in common purpose and action, for example, in peace building, advocacy, and combating HIV and AIDS. A sense of unity is evident among the churches when they intimately share spiritual and ecclesial journeys despite diversities of culture, language and social contexts.

Council members from the regions regularly participate in LWF consultations, studies and regional gatherings. This has provided a strong link of communication and mutual learning between church representatives on the Council and church participants from the regions. However, the lack of a formal role for Council members within their regions limits their ability to facilitate formal channels of consultation, and also limits their accountability.

The participation of women and youth has been strengthened through regional relationships. The network of WICAS regional coordinators works jointly to further the Communion's gender work with a regional sensitivity. Youth from the regions have participated in regional workshops and developed a global youth vision for the LWF, highlighting both the shortcomings and the potential for the LWF as it seeks to become "a communicating communion."

With the minimal use of structures – as was encouraged in the 1990 renewal – the regions have each developed forms of regional expression of communion that suit their settings.

- In Africa, three sub-regional expressions of communion are cooperating and collaborating more closely on matters of common concern. The *Lutheran Council in Africa* was established to strengthen communion, joint decisions and mutual accountability. There is also consideration of a doctrinal commission to advise on doctrinal issues and differences.
- In Asia, a regional office has existed since 2000. The *Lutheran Council in Asia* was established in 2007, with aims to strengthen communion formation and to coordinate regional efforts in holistic mission, diakonia and education. It will also focus on research in ecumenical theology and inter-faith relations for the Asian context.
- In Europe, church leadership conferences engage European and global church issues with increased mutual understanding and common concern. Partnership is based on equality and spiritual communion, and nurtures solidarity among larger churches and smaller minority churches. A regional office (2003-2006) helped regionalize international issues.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, the annual church leadership meetings express and celebrate communion in practical terms. Mutual knowledge and trust have grown significantly, strengthening efforts for pastoral accompaniment, conflict mediation, advocacy, church-to-church cooperation and sharing, and joint decision making.

- In North America, a regional expression office has existed since 1998. It serves to enhance Lutheran communion and visible solidarity in the region, and to facilitate participation and cooperation with the LWF Secretariat in Geneva. Regional consultations have addressed how local, regional and global issues intersect within the Communion.

The weak side of these developments is seen in the lack of a constitutional definition for regional expressions to mandate their decisions and formal participation within the Communion. This makes their role tenuous and limits their further development. Although recommendations and concerns that emerge from regional gatherings sometimes find their way to decision making bodies, there is no assurance that this will happen, and there are no clear mechanisms for follow up and accountability. Also, the desire and readiness of some regions for joint action is sometimes curtailed when other LWF entities have formal mandates in those areas.

The role of organizations for mission and diakonia in the Lutheran communion

While the 1990 renewal did not specifically address the role of organizations for mission and diakonia in the Lutheran communion, the history of the LWF clearly indicates that these organizations have relationships, by mutual choice, with the LWF and with individual member churches. For many years, these organizations have taken the initiative and shown leadership for effective mission and diakonia on behalf of the churches, including when the churches themselves have been unable to take such action. They are acknowledged as effective instruments of the member churches and of the Lutheran communion.

There is much diversity in these relationships, ranging from weak to strong, with varying degrees of autonomy and integration. Among organizations for diakonia, some exist as entities entirely within member churches; some serve on behalf of Lutheran churches only; and some serve ecumenically on behalf of many churches, while having strong or primary links with LWF member churches. Among mission organizations, some exist fully within churches; some are separate stand-alone entities; and some are semi-integrated units.

In the period since 1990, representatives of these organizations have participated actively in LWF processes for governance, consultation and joint action. They serve as advisers and consultants to the Council, and are regularly included in LWF consultations, for example, the 1998 Global Consultation on Mission and the 2002 Global Consultation on Prophetic Diakonia. Mission organizations joined with member churches in an extensive consultation process that resulted in the new LWF mission document, *Mission in Context*, which seeks to deepen the common understanding and practices of holistic mission. Organizations for diakonia participated in shaping the Global Strategic Plan 2007-2012 for World Service.

These examples of consultation, joint action and mutual commitment demonstrate that these organizations are deeply rooted in the life of the member churches and the Lutheran communion, and also in the life of ecumenical partners. However, the infrastructure of relationships has not kept pace or developed in response to the changing needs in the inter-related human, ecumenical and Lutheran landscapes.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR “BEING AND LIVING AS A COMMUNION”?

This reflection on the growing ecclesial profile of the LWF and the maturing experience of “being and living as a communion” since 1990 has revealed significant positive developments that have taken place since the 1990 renewal. It has also identified ways in which further developments are limited, due in some cases to inconsistency between theology and practice and in other cases to lack of formal recognition and infrastructure.

These limitations, together with the increasing challenges presented by the interacting human, ecumenical and Lutheran landscapes, lead us to consider renewal of the LWF, including its governing and administrative structures. The possible implications are far-reaching. Some key examples will suffice to indicate the need for, and the potential of, LWF renewal.

TAKING THE NEXT STEPS TO STRENGTHEN ECCLESIAL IDENTITY

A. *Mutual recognition and exchangeability of ordained ministers*

The affirmation of confessional communion and ecclesial communion has implications for ministry and the service of ordained ministers among the member churches of the Lutheran communion. The *one ministry* that exists within the universal church recognizes the validity of ministries within the churches. This should be manifestly evident within the Lutheran communion – with policies, procedures and practices for the recognition of ministries and the exchange of ordained ministers – but this is not yet the case.

Therefore, principles are needed within the Communion for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers between churches, to provide for various possibilities of service. Experience of some of our member churches can help us imagine what is possible.⁴

B. *Strengthened regional expressions of communion*

Regional expressions of communion have developed in the each region at their own pace, in various forms, and in response to the needs and opportunities recognized by the churches in each situation. Regional offices already function in Africa, Asia and North America, and a regional office functioned for three years in Europe during a time of particular need. Regional gatherings already serve as important occasions for deliberation on issues facing churches in the regions and within the entire Communion.

However, the regional expressions function by common consent, without constitutional status to ensure their existence and to support their effective functioning and maturing.

⁴ The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, for example, distinguishes among these categories:

Occasional service: preaching or administering the sacraments on a one-time or occasional basis, with procedures for authorization by the host church.

Extended service: serving as a minister of Word and Sacrament in another church for an extended period while remaining an ordained minister of the sending church, with procedures for authorization by the receiving church. The receiving church’s expectations for serving and living as an ordained minister should be clearly stated and agreed.

Transfer of status as an ordained minister: serving indefinitely within the ordained ministry of the receiving church. Standards and procedures for acceptance of ordained ministers for service should recognize the minister’s ordained status in the sending church while reflecting standards for service in the receiving church.

Therefore, to address this shortcoming, the following are specific measures that aim to strengthen and support regional expressions of communion and their further development.

1. Recognize the expressions of communion in the regions with constitutional changes, and provide mechanisms for functional support.
2. Establish the Council on the basis of the regions, taking into account new regional roles, for example, receiving reports from the regions.
3. Make constitutional provisions to strengthen the role of Council members from the regions in regional meetings and consultations.
4. Provide means for issues from the regions to help shape the agenda of the Council, thus strengthening the connections between the work of the Council and the life of the Communion in the regions.
5. Shape the programmatic units in the Communion office on the basis of the regions – as one consideration among others – with the unit heads representing the regions. The staffing structures on the international level, and Cabinet membership, would therefore reflect strengthened leadership functions based on regional expressions of communion.

C. *The Assembly and the Council as organs of the Lutheran communion*

Like a living body, the Lutheran communion has *essential organs* and *connective tissues* or *ligaments* to make the life of the Communion possible and meaningful. These organs and ligaments are more than instrumentalities because the Communion cannot function without them. The LWF Assembly and the Council are two related yet distinct organs of the Lutheran communion.

1. *The Assembly*

As a result of the success of ecumenical dialogues, and the development of the Lutheran communion as an effective ecumenical instrument, LWF assemblies cannot work in isolation. Hence, there are compelling reasons for the LWF to use space that would become available for CWCs in association with WCC assemblies.

In this situation, it will be necessary to define the role of LWF assemblies within the space available in association with WCC assemblies.

A preparatory process is needed for Assembly delegates from the member churches, in advance of assemblies, in order to prepare them for discussion and for acting on behalf of their churches and regions, with consideration for the entire Communion.

Pre-assembly processes are needed to enable consultation and preparation on matters of common concern that will be coming to the Assembly for action.

It is necessary to clarify the quality of Assembly decisions and commitments, for example, to clarify expectations for accountability by distinguishing between advisory and binding resolutions.

2. *The Council*

The regions currently nominate persons for election to the Council, based on a formula for inclusive representation. Member church delegates at an Assembly, representing the regions, are responsible for the election of the Council. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure a role for the regions in the common life that is shared between the Assembly and the Council.

There is need to define a formal role for Council members within their regions, to mandate them to facilitate formal channels of communication between the Council and their region, and to facilitate the process of reception of Assembly and Council decisions (that is, interpretation and follow up action).

To improve the quality of Council deliberations, support mechanisms are needed to ensure that Council members are knowledgeable about their region's churches and concerns. Means are also needed for Council members to participate in regional gatherings for purposes of consultation, information sharing and accountability.

D. *Organizations for mission and diakonia*

Recognizing that mission and diakonia are core functions of the church, and cannot be undertaken in a way that is strictly autonomous from it, there is need to discuss and clarify the relationships between the Lutheran communion and related organizations for mission and diakonia. This discussion is not about control, but about ensuring that the role of these organizations within the Lutheran communion would never be in doubt. It recognizes that the infrastructure of relationships has not kept pace or developed in response to the changing needs in the inter-related human, ecumenical and Lutheran landscapes.

Discussion and agreement is needed regarding responsible ways for pulling together God-given resources, to enable effective responses to many challenges while avoiding duplication.

Discussion is also needed to develop means of mutual accountability among the churches and the organizations for mission and diakonia within the Communion, with a clear understanding and acceptance of what this entails. In areas of common concern and service, the churches and organizations should be able to represent each other well.

E. *Strengthen the identity of the Lutheran communion*

The name of the ecclesial entity that has developed continuously since its founding as the Lutheran World Federation in 1947 should accurately reflect our self-understanding and experience as a communion of churches. Retaining the name of *Federation* thus presents an element of inconsistency with our identity. While the identity as "communion"

overcomes the sense that diversity divides or means isolating autonomy, the concept of "federation" puts limits on the vision of a communion of churches.

Having recognized this inconsistency, the logical response would be to rename the fellowship of churches that constitutes the LWF, in order to strengthen the identity of the Lutheran communion by a clear profiling of who we are.

Two options for renaming the LWF are presented for consideration.

- A. The Communion of Lutheran Churches
- B. The Lutheran Communion of Churches

In considering these two options, the strength of the ecumenical witness that is given by each option should be carefully assessed.

F. *The Lutheran communion as an ecumenical instrument*

As a confessional communion that is an integral part of the ecumenical movement, the LWF is committed to work with the WCC and other CWCs toward the goal of broad ecumenically-shaped assemblies where the CWCs would meet in the expanded space provided by the WCC. For this reason, discussion about future assemblies of Christian world organizations is important in the context of LWF renewal. This discussion must consider theological and ecumenical implications, and not only structural ones.

In one dimension, it will be necessary to define the broad role of assemblies of CWCs within the space available in relation to WCC assemblies.

In another dimension, it will be necessary to define the more specific role and functions of the LWF Assembly that will take place in this configuration, especially with regard to matters that concern the Lutheran communion more specifically.

G. *The Communion Office*

The LWF Constitution provides for the election of a President by the Assembly, and the election of a General Secretary by the Council, and the Bylaws specify that the legal headquarters (or Secretariat) of the LWF are located in Geneva, Switzerland.

"The President shall be the chief official representative and spokesperson of the Federation. He/she shall be the presiding officer of the Assembly, the Council and the Executive Committee. The President shall oversee the life and work of the Federation, in consultation with the Treasurer and General Secretary." (Article X.1)

"The Federation shall have a Secretariat adequate to carry out its tasks. The Council shall authorize the structure and the Terms of Reference of the Secretariat." (Article XI) Article VIII.3 states that the Council shall elect the General Secretary.

The name, *Communion Office*, is more consistent with the nature and functions of the headquarters of the Lutheran communion, and with proposed renewal of the governance structure. It would clearly define the expected role of serving the Communion.

The renamed Communion Office would need to be reshaped to reflect strengthened leadership functions that are based on the regional expressions of communion.

LWF-related institutions need to be drawn into the picture of the Communion Office. The ecumenical work of the LWF includes focuses in Geneva for theology and ecumenical relations, and a research focus in the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France. Reconsideration is needed for synchronization of the Institute's mandate with the Geneva-based focuses, and for how its governing board relates to the Council.

There is also need to rethink the title and role of the person heading the LWF, and how this person relates to the Communion Office. The following three alternatives are presented for consideration.

Alternative A: A *president* who is non-resident.

This is the current leadership structure. A *president* is head of the LWF and serves as chairperson of the Council and Executive Committee. The president is non-resident (that is, not located at the Communion Office) and can be an ordained or lay person. The president may or may not be serving in a leading position in his or her church, and the president continues in office as head of the LWF even if he or she retires or no longer serves in an active leadership position in his or her church.

The *general secretary* is an ordained or lay person who serves as chief executive officer and head of the Communion Office.

Alternative B: An *ecumenical bishop* who is non-resident.

An *ecumenical bishop* would serve as head of the LWF. The ecumenical bishop is a person serving as a minister of oversight (for example: a bishop, archbishop, president or ephorus serving a synod, diocese or national church) who would continue serving in that position, and therefore would not be located at the Communion Office. (The title of "ecumenical bishop" does not exist in the Lutheran tradition; however, it is a term that is friendly to shifts and developments in the Lutheran communion, and it recognizes the ecumenical implications of the chosen title.) The ecumenical bishop would exercise pastoral oversight for the spiritual life of the Communion, and would not have authority for installing other bishops.

The Council would elect from its membership a lay person to serve as its *moderator*, who would chair the Council and Executive Committee.

A *general secretary* would serve as chief executive officer and head of the Communion Office, with pastoral duties, and would thus be ordained.

Alternative C: A *president* who serves full time in office.

A *president*, serving full time, would head the Communion Office as chief ecumenical officer, and would carry executive responsibilities. The president would exercise pastoral oversight for the spiritual life of the Communion, and would thus be ordained.

The Council would elect from its membership a lay person to serve as its *moderator*, who would chair the Council and the Executive Committee.

The president would be assisted by a *general secretary* who would serve as the chief administrative officer, and would be an ordained or lay person.

H. *Relocation of the LWF headquarters / Communion Office*

The question of relocating the headquarters of the LWF has been raised several times through the years, with the main motivation being the very high cost of living in Geneva. The Council discussed the question in March 2007, and referred it to the Renewal Committee for consideration. The Renewal Committee discussed the matter when it met in August 2007, and considered three possible sites for relocation: Bratislava (Slovak Republic); Jerusalem; and Wittenberg (Germany). The Renewal Committee will undertake a feasibility study, and will report to the Council in June 2008.

CONSULTING WITH THE MEMBER CHURCHES AND RELATED CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE LUTHERAN COMMUNION

As we approach the LWF 11th Assembly in 2010, the member churches and related organizations for mission and diakonia are encouraged to reflect on the understanding and experience of “being and living as a communion of churches” since 1990, and to consider proposals for renewal of the LWF.

The following questions, which relate to the overall context in which LWF renewal is being considered, are addressed to the member churches and related church organizations within the Lutheran communion. They are invited to provide their responses and comments for each question, from the perspective of their church or organization, and region.

1. With regard to the “human landscape,” do you affirm that the one church of Jesus Christ – the worldwide *communio* – serves as a catalyst and instrument for the unity of the human family? How might the LWF contribute to building the unity of the human family?
2. With regard to the “ecumenical landscape,” do you affirm the ecumenical vision for the unity of the church, and affirm that the Lutheran communion is an essential expression of that unity, which earnestly seeks greater unity within the *oikumene*? How might the LWF advance the ecumenical vision for the unity of the church?
3. With regard to the “Lutheran landscape,” do you affirm the growing ecclesial profile of the LWF? What limitations have you observed and what challenges do you foresee for the LWF to increase its effectiveness in furthering the goals of Lutheran communion and the ecumenical movement?

The following questions refer more specifically to the *Proposals for LWF Renewal*.

Does your church or organization:

4. *Affirm* – within the Lutheran communion, and on the basis of communion – the recognition of ordained ministers and acceptance of the exchangeability of ordained ministers, while exercising local standards for serving in particular contexts? What obstacles (e.g. theological, ecclesial or structural) do you see in regard to implementing exchangeability?
5. *Affirm* the increasing significance of regional expressions of communion, and affirm efforts to strengthen the deliberative and consultative role of regional expressions within the Communion? What is your experience with regional communion? What additional steps are needed to strengthen regional and global interrelationships of communion?
6. *Affirm* that being part of the Lutheran communion strengthens churches and related organizations in their mission and service in today's changing contexts? Please comment with examples.
7. *Affirm* that governance and organizational structures should embody the *character* of communion while also *serving* the Communion? What qualities should characterize the governance relationships and organizational structure of the Lutheran communion as it relates to other churches and ecumenical bodies, and as it serves member churches and organizations within the Communion?
8. *Affirm* the goal of broad ecumenically-shaped assemblies – inspired also by the first meeting of the Global Christian Forum – where the LWF and other Christian World Communions would meet in expanded space provided by the WCC?
9. *Affirm* the goal of a strengthened role for regions within the structure and functioning of the LWF Council, and strengthened roles for Council members in relations between the Council and their respective regions? With respect to promoting the vision of the Lutheran communion and the ecumenical movement, what weaknesses do you see with the current structure?
10. *Affirm* the call for discussions and efforts to develop means of mutual accountability among the churches and organizations for mission and diakonia, within the Communion, with a clear understanding of what this entails? In your view, what are the weaknesses and challenges with the current structure and relationships?
11. *Welcome* the renaming of the LWF to more clearly express the identity of the LWF as a communion of churches, and to avoid limitations associated with the name of *Federation*?

From the two options presented, do you prefer the name “The Communion of Lutheran Churches” or “The Lutheran Communion of Churches” or do you prefer another option? Please provide comments on your choice, and your assessment of the ecumenical witness provided by that choice.

12. *Welcome* the renaming of the LWF headquarters to be the Communion Office?
13. *Welcome* a change in the title of the person heading the Communion Office? Which alternative, among the three presented, do you prefer? Please comment on the advantages and disadvantages you considered in making your choice.

Alternative A: (This is the current leadership structure). A *president* who is non-resident. An ordained or lay person as *general secretary* who serves as chief executive officer and head of the Communion Office.

Alternative B: An *ecumenical bishop* who is non-resident. A lay *moderator* who chairs the Council and Executive Committee. An ordained *general secretary* who serves as chief executive officer and head of the Communion Office.

Alternative C: An ordained *president* who serves full time in office as head of the Communion Office. A lay *moderator* who chairs the Council and Executive Committee. An ordained or lay *general secretary* who serves as chief administrative officer.

14. *Welcome* the feasibility study of possible relocation of the LWF headquarters/Communion Office to a city other than Geneva? What factors should be addressed in this study?

