



GLOBAL
YOUNG
REFORMERS
NETWORK
THE LUTHERAN
WORLD FEDERATION

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Message from the Workshop Wittenberg

*"...they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language."
Acts 2:6*

The Global Young Reformers Network of the Lutheran World Federation gathered 140 young delegates in Wittenberg, Germany, from 22 August to 04 September 2015. The participants came from 80 member churches of the LWF and 60 different countries. We have come together as seven regions of LWF churches. We have met to discuss our regional themes and to prepare daily worship. The Workshop consisted of prayer, worship, plenary presentations, panels, workshops and world cafe discussions. Each church presented a poster in the global exhibition and prepared a cultural presentation for the Intercultural night. We have broadcasted our fellowship and work together through various forms of social media and webcast, which we will continue to use beyond this conference. Social media unites us to be present in the world. Participants also spent one weekend with a host parish from the Evangelische Kirche in Mitteldeutschland and one day visiting social and diaconal projects. We want to express our gratitude to the host parishes and all the people we met. The theme for Workshop Wittenberg was "Freed by God's love - to change the world."

The unity of Pentecost serves as an image for Workshop Wittenberg. People gathered from all corners of the world, speaking different languages but were united by the common language of prayer and unity in Christ. We are learning to listen to one another as we celebrate what it means for us to stand together. We are called to work for God's kingdom on earth together, to focus on Christ at the center, to see and to recognize His face in each other and the suffering neighbors near and far. We are liberated to change the world through God's love.

As LWF church members celebrate the diversity in liturgy and traditions, it was important for us to reflect on Lutheran theology, in order to be reminded of the common ground on which to stand. We celebrate the basic foundation of our faith presented in the Sacraments, justification by grace and the theology of the cross. We recognize the call to be reformers and to proclaim the Gospel in our time and context.

As Lutherans preparing to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, it was important for us to address our ecumenical self-understanding. It is our aim to promote understanding and cooperation among churches to find ways to live and walk together as members of the same body of Christ. In addition to ecumenical matters, participants discussed the importance of interfaith dialogue and relationships for the church today.

As Lutherans, we are citizens of the world and the kingdom of God. Those two cannot be separated from one another. Theology of the cross leads us to recognize Christ's presence in world suffering, bringing us to the questions of social justice. Proclaiming the Gospel calls us to face and act in issues such as poverty, human rights, climate and gender justice, among other forms of injustice.

As an ongoing process of being together as a communion of churches, acknowledging the fact that we come from a very diverse context, a "young reformer's space" was provided for young reformers to freely express their questions and views. It was inspiring to see that many of the young reformers could come together at table with different views and openly express themselves. It was an opportunity to understand and respect the diverse opinions and all the views of the young people in our member churches today on the many important issues that were raised. We are a community that values hearing one another in order that we may grow in our understanding of faith and communion.

Some Young Reformers participated in the monthly #fastfortheclimate campaign on 01 September 2015. Through the fast, we are standing in solidarity and prayer with those directly impacted by the climate change; we are engaged in this issue and invite others to join our voice through the monthly campaign.

Some Young Reformers have also participated in the locally organized Peace Pilgrimage prayer walk on 01 September 2015, which remembers the beginning of World War II and visually demonstrates our continued yearning for peace among nations.

Being in Germany, we have been exposed to the refugee crisis facing our world, specifically with Middle Eastern and North African refugees coming to Europe. We learned about the forming of the LWF with the call to respond to the refugee situation in Europe seventy years ago. Our encounters today with local churches and news, has led to conversations and prayers about this global issue. We want to be united with the local parishes and express our solidarity with their efforts concerning this topic. We want to raise our voice and prayers, reminding the world that every human being is created in the image of God. To be created in the image of God means we are compelled to welcome the stranger and treat them as our neighbor.

The Workshop Wittenberg served as a network space to collaborate on Lutheran identity in theological, ecumenical and political dimensions, but also as a Launchpad to commission continued reformation work at home. All Young Reformers were trained in project planning and implementation. Working with regional teams, each member church present has developed a Living Reformation project in order to replicate the on-going Reformation work at home. Each project fits within one of the subthemes for the LWF Twelfth Assembly "Liberated by God's Grace": "Creation - Not for Sale," "Human Beings - Not for Sale," and "Salvation - Not for Sale." Participants have been commissioned to complete their projects within the next 14 months. They are working with global teams for collaboration and support during their projects.

We are young and committed to church; together we are one community ready to change the world.

We are grateful for the space we have been given, the opportunities to share with one another, and we appreciate that the LWF believes in young people. We want to thank those who invested in us and made this experience possible. We want to thank staff, stewards and presenters.

We hope that all young people will join in continued conversations, so that we may grow our in understanding of faith and the world, and proclaim the Gospel in our world. The two weeks spent together gave us new ideas and tools to continue our way as Young Reformers. Many questions were raised from the diversity of our churches and not all of them could be answered,

therefore, we continue our studies and reflections on what it means to journey together as a community of churches.

We invite all Global Young Reformers to join us in actively participating in the ongoing Reformation of our Church.



Drafted and submitted by young reformers from each LWF region

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