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### **Youth Message**

**Lutheran World Federation Youth Pre-Assembly:  
Freed By God's Grace to Change the World  
3–9 May 2017, Ondangwa and Windhoek, Namibia**

- 1) Before you is the 2017 Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Youth Pre-Assembly Message.
- 2) In the days of the 3 to the 9 May, 120 Lutheran youth from 61 LWF member churches gathered together in Ondangwa and Windhoek, Namibia to participate in the Youth Pre-Assembly and discuss our current context and envision our future under the theme "Freed By God's Grace to Change the World."
- 3) Through respectful discussion of diverse opinions and common experiences, we tackled challenges we face and addressed how we want to be active participants in finding solutions. Together, we shared in our joys and learned more about our distinct and collective Lutheran identity. We commemorate the 500 years since Martin Luther's reformation and see our communion as one that is ever reforming.
- 4) As young Lutherans in a changing communion and world, we know our obligation to take steps towards a thriving future. This future should be open, honoring of cultural context, ever changing and cognizant of the impact of globalization and cultural exchange. We know that things we might take for granted now might not be taken for granted in the future. As we look forward to the Twelfth LWF Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia, we are Liberated by God's Grace and are called to embrace our neighbor as Christ embraces us.
- 5) We affirm the current efforts for climate justice through activities, such as #fastfortheclimate and the work done toward increased youth participation within the communion. These initiatives will continue as cross-cutting themes.

Moving forward, we have named three key priorities to shape the next phase of LWF Youth work: the revival of churches, equity, and education.

#### **Revival of churches**

- 6) To be a thriving church, we must have an active and strong membership in both church and society. We are grounded in the Gospel, centered in worship, gathered at the table, and sent to serve in mission. We must be bold, flexible and proud of our Lutheran identity in the face of ever-present change. We are not limited by the divisions of our past and affirm the LWF statement, "The Church in the Public Space."<sup>1</sup> Staying rooted in the Gospel, we must honor our diversity and contextualize worship throughout the communion while improving our work to spread the Gospel and being a welcoming communion. Lutheran youth play a significant role with the revival of churches and share this responsibility with the whole church. Intergenerational dialogue and leadership are essential to this task.
- 7) We celebrate the diaconal work of our communion and recognize the opportunity for increased communication. This visibility raising is key to show the world that being a Lutheran is much more than attending worship and providing services. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, we are freed to serve our neighbors.

#### **Equity**

- 8) To achieve justice, we must first strive for equity. Equity is fairness; ensuring that all people have the same access to opportunities while taking into consideration barriers that some might face. We firmly believe equity is for every human, based upon the underlying foundation of human dignity (*imago dei*). The full

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<sup>1</sup> LWF: *The Church in the Public Space – A Statement of The Lutheran World Federation*, LWF Council Meeting in Wittenberg, Exhibit 9.3.1, June 2016

equity of people requires bringing the concerns of all communities, especially those historically marginalized, to the center. Respectful use and responsible sharing of land is also required to attain equity of creation. As youth, we know there is strength in the diversity of communities around the world.

- 9) In the pursuit of equity for all, we look specially to address gender justice within all communities. The role of women and men must be reexamined and engaged through ongoing dialogue to redefine these roles in our contexts. In order for equity to be attained, transformation must take place at the community, church, and structural level. We affirm the gender justice work of the LWF including the “LWF Gender Justice Policy” and propose continued attention on the grassroots level.<sup>2</sup> We know the presence of sin continues to separate us from one another, and we long for the reconciling power of Christ to unite, heal, and empower us in this task.

### **Education**

- 10) Education is key in addressing a variety of challenges facing our communion such as poverty and hunger, climate change, conflict, and lack of empowerment. Education serves as the foundation for all of our communities and communion. Recognizing the human dignity of each person, quality education must be accessible and free. We advocate for education for all with full participation at all levels: lower, higher and vocational education. Proper and pedagogical education can transform our societies.
- 11) We do not only advocate for basic education but also for proper theological education, exchange programs, and dialogue opportunities between Lutheran churches and interfaith communities are part of the transformation. Following in the footsteps of Martin Luther, Lutherans have promoted education for 500 years and must take responsibility to continue this legacy.

### **Closing – a call to action**

- 12) The world today is ever and fast changing, and we, the Lutheran youth, members of a global and varied community, take our responsibility. Our three key commitments to reviving churches, striving for equity, and education are our call to action for all. We are happy and proud to share, participate in this ongoing reformation and strive to carry this commitment - into the next 500 years.

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<sup>2</sup> The Lutheran World Federation: *Gender Justice Policy*, 2013.