



## Twelfth Assembly Process and Methodology

10 to 16 May 2017  
Windhoek, Namibia

### Introduction

The concept underlying the Twelfth Assembly program reveals the complexity of the Assembly process and the many objectives which it is supposed to accomplish. The varying expectations and experiences that delegates with their different cultural backgrounds bring along (polity, piety, pressing agendas, hermeneutical and theological approaches, memories and life experiences) add to this complexity.

The strategic decision to connect the themes of the reformation anniversary (with its programs and processes) with the Twelfth Assembly has the potential to offer to the whole Assembly a strong structure both in content and methodology. Concretely, the communion wide processes of engagement with the reformation anniversary, with its local and regional conversations, have the strong potential to become the process to prepare the Assembly itself. The Assembly then is the space where the larger conversation of the global communion of churches on the reformation anniversary themes would take place. Indeed, a global conversation, polycentric and trans-contextual, that will discern the gifts and the call resulting from Lutheran theological tradition and from being a communion of churches that is called to bring witness of the Good News of Jesus Christ, and therefore “to live and work together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world” (LWF vision statement).

The key concept informing the methodology of the Twelfth Assembly is the notion that the Assembly is not a stand-alone event, but that it constitutes a culminating point of a thorough process of preparation and the starting point for the ongoing journey after the Assembly.

The present document is structured along three main chapters:

- ***Journeying towards the Assembly.*** In this chapter, the preparatory and methodological processes for member churches and delegates are outlined and elaborated.
- ***The Twelfth Assembly of the LWF.*** In this chapter, the actual implementation of the Assembly is explained. Program structure and elements, spaces and methodology are also included in this chapter.
- ***Journeying on from the Twelfth Assembly.*** Ways to ensure that the wealth of the life and outcomes of the Assembly flow into further processes of the LWF's post-Assembly journey and witness are presented in this chapter.

### Journeying towards the Assembly – content preparation and methodology

The content preparation for the Twelfth Assembly is intrinsically linked to the Reformation anniversary programs and processes at local, regional and global levels. Many of these programs are actually designed in such a way that they will offer the results, insights and fruits from these programs to the Twelfth Assembly (examples: women on the move, self-understanding of the communion, biblical hermeneutics, Global Young Reformers Network). Needless to say, these programs will also come to the Assembly in a coherent and cohesive way. It would be impossible for the Assembly to receive reports and outcomes from all of them. In order to achieve this cohesion and coherence, the preparations linked to three specific resources and processes need to be aligned. These are:

## **Preparatory materials and processes**

### ***Booklets on the Reformation anniversary's theme and subthemes***

These booklets, now available in the four official languages of the LWF, offer short texts from authors representing the diversity of the LWF communion. Each booklet also includes an ecumenical contribution. The booklets in English were made available in 2015 and were sent to the LWF member churches with the request to:

- Set up internal, local reflection processes, safeguarding the ecumenical dimension
- Consider setting up study processes with their bilateral, international communion relationships
- Bring their reflections and insights to the regional Pre-Assemblies

Thus, the booklets, designed as a discussion starter and a basis for the themes and subthemes of the reformation anniversary, constitute the main preparatory material for the LWF Twelfth Assembly. As such, they provide the basis for local, regional and global articulation of the theological substance, for the discernment of opportunities and challenges for mission, and the dialectics of both the gift and the call to participate in God's mission. The booklets will be the basis, on which the LWF member churches and the LWF communion will reflect on the concept of ongoing reformation and how the gift of justification by faith alone leads to the imperative to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in today's world.

### ***The regional Pre-Assemblies***

The regional Pre-Assemblies are the space to collect, develop and shape contextual reflection on the Assembly themes. Regional Pre-Assemblies will be invited to reflect on the Assembly themes based on their contexts and experiences and to document these reflections, which will feature in the Assembly process. Written in the form of a regional contribution and based on a common framework provided to the Pre-Assemblies, the regional inputs will be synthesized into one document and appended to the Assembly Study Book together with the individual regional contributions.

Pre-Assemblies are in addition a special moment to prepare delegates for the Assembly, its processes and methodologies. In addition, information about Namibia and the hosting churches will be offered during the Pre-Assemblies.

### ***Women and Youth Pre-Assemblies***

These two Pre-Assemblies will have their own processes (Women on the move; Global Young Reformers Network) and develop their specific input for the Assembly process. The question of safeguarding coherence between these specific contributions, and the contributions resulting from the regional Pre-Assemblies would result from the participation of the same youth and women participants in the regional Pre-Assemblies.

## **The Twelfth Assembly of the LWF**

### ***The Namibian and African contexts***

The LWF Assembly, while a gathering of the global communion, will meet in a specific context, hosted by churches with their specific histories, in a country with its own history, among people with their own memories, challenges, joys and hopes. The program design of the Assembly will safeguard this dialectic between the global and the local. During the Assembly, specific moments to present the local context will be offered. At the same time, an introduction to Namibia and its member churches is already envisaged in the regional pre-Assemblies. This would allow for an early start in the preparations so that deeper and more meaningful exchanges between Assembly participants and those representing the local context in Namibia could take place during the Assembly. Needless to say, it will also be important to affirm the fact that the Namibian churches and their own context is situated within their own larger context, in particular, that of the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) and the Africa region in general.

Related to the Assembly, but not part of the formal structure or process of the Assembly will be the pre Assembly visits. These visits will give delegates the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the country and its people and of the witness of the church in the past and present.

***The flow and internal coherence of the Assembly: Liberating grace - the gift we receive and the call we share***

The way in which the Assembly program itself is designed will have significant impact on how Assembly delegates understand the process in which they participate, how they can contribute to the Assembly and play the role they are expected to fulfill. A recognizable framework and a clear logic underlying the Assembly program will be key for the accomplishment of the tasks of the Twelfth Assembly.

The thematic approach as outlined in the concept note for the Twelfth Assembly makes reference to the dialectics between liberating grace both as the gift we receive and as the call we share. The LWF strategy applies this dialectic to the very self-understanding of the LWF as a communion when it states (with slightly differing terminology) that “Communion is a gift before it is a task”.

The way the program of the Twelfth Assembly will be structured will reflect this dialectic. This will be done both in a “horizontal” and in a “vertical” dimension, and hence as a dynamic informing the overall program of the Assembly – the meeting days representing the horizontal dimension and the daily program representing the vertical dimension. Both the horizontal and the vertical dimensions will enforce each other, helping the Assembly to arrive at the adoption of a final message that will reflect the two poles of the dialectics of gift and call. Thus, the Assembly message will celebrate God’s abundant grace, and articulate the commitments into which God’s liberating power leads LWF member churches and the communion as a whole.

Throughout the Assembly, the LWF’s commitment to youth and women’s participation will be safeguarded and intentionally promoted, in line with the policies set by previous LWF Assemblies.

***The thematic flow and structure of the Assembly program***

The overall thematic structure of the Assembly is designed as follows:

Wednesday, 10 May:	Liberated by God’s Grace
Thursday, 11 May:	Liberating grace: The Gift we Receive
Friday, 12 May:	Salvation – Not for Sale
Saturday, 13 May:	Human beings – Not for Sale
Sunday, 14 May:	Journeying as communion: The Global Reformation Anniversary
Monday, 15 May:	Creation – Not for Sale
Tuesday, 16 May:	Liberating grace: The Call we Share

***The Assembly space and program elements***

In order for the Assembly to be able to:

- Engage in spiritual life
- Thoroughly engage with the theme and subthemes of the Assembly
- Harvest the gifts of being hosted in Namibia as well as commemorate 500 years of Reformation
- Take governance decisions and elect the next President and Council,
- Envision the journey ahead for the LWF communion of churches,

the program will consist of different spaces and program elements each with their own methodology. These elements will work together towards a joyful, transformative and outward-looking Assembly and at the same time ensure that the Assembly is able to fulfill its function as a governance body.

The various spaces and program elements will be designed accordingly:

Space		Program element
<b>Plenary</b>	A space where all participants gather	All participants gather for:  Governance sessions Gathering the gifts of pre-assemblies Worship Keynote and thematic plenary sessions Namibia and Africa night and Reformation Anniversary
<b>Small Groups</b>	A space where participants cluster around particular themes for further reflection.  Smaller groups offer the possibility of deeper reflection, sharing and dialogue.	Participants gather in smaller groups for:  Village groups  Midday prayer  Workshops and storytelling at the Omatala
<b>Affinity Groups</b>	A space where participants cluster around areas of interest to inspire and offer personal or regional input for the greater communion.	Participants gather in affinity groups for:  Omatala  Regional meetings

### **Components of the Assembly program**

With a few exceptions (to cater for the opening of the Assembly and the global Reformation Anniversary) each Assembly day will have a recurring daily flow which consists of the following elements:

<b>Before God</b>	Morning Worship and Bible Study
<b>Discernment</b>	Thematic plenary on main theme and sub-themes
<b>Deliberation and Mutual learning</b>	Village groups for thematic reflections Omatala
<b>Commitment</b>	Plenary discussions and governance decisions
<b>Before God</b>	Evening prayer and Eucharist

### **Worship, Eucharist and Reading the Bible together**

Worship, Eucharist and the joint reading of the Bible will play a central role in the life of the Assembly. Each day starts *before God* - afterwards participants face each other and the world. Each day also ends *before God*, coming back to the place of worship for prayer and Eucharist.

A special place for morning Worship and evening prayer, a tent, is going to be constructed at the conference grounds. The designation of a specific place for worship ensures that Assembly participants come ready for prayer. However, the movement from the worship tent to the plenary hall in a procession will be an integral part of the liturgy. The procession will mark the transition from prayer to the reading of the Word and then back to prayer in the plenary hall which will conclude the morning worship. In the planning being undertaken by the

International Worship Planning Committee, special care and attention is being given to link worship to Bible study, e.g. in the choice of the Biblical texts and for both to connect to the theme of the day.

### **Thematic Plenary Sessions**

Thematic plenary sessions constitute one of two components comprising the thematic flow of the Assembly program; the other is Village Groups which will have its own section. The keynote address on the central Assembly theme will set the tone for the whole Assembly and will be delivered by someone from outside the Lutheran communion. Three thematic plenary sessions, each dealing with a sub-theme, will provide for deepening understanding of issues linked to the themes. By exploring the questions raised in the Study Book, the sessions will connect theological insights and contextual realities as they speak to the global Assembly. They will also provide a basis for the ensuing work of the Village Groups. The presentations on the themes, including the Keynote address, will include time for responses and testimonials.

### **Village Groups**

Each thematic plenary session, including the main keynote address, will be followed by Village Groups. Discussions in the Village Groups will:

- Give the opportunity to enable a meaningful and trans-contextual engagement with the Assembly themes
- Provide space for mutual exchange and learning, and
- Generate input for the Assembly Message.

Village Groups will have 90 minutes for discussion and dialogue. In order to facilitate this, moderators will be selected from among the Assembly participants before the Assembly. Their task will be to ensure an inclusive and participatory process as the Village Groups tackle the following questions:

- a. What captured your attention in previous sessions (name some key words/issues)?
- b. Into what kind of witness are these issues calling us today as a global communion of churches?
- c. What would we want to convey to our constituencies back home in view of what was discussed today?

Each Village Group will have a reporter who takes notes and delivers the main messages to the Editorial Committee. Some of the Village Group reporters will be members of the Editorial Committee so that further processing of the inputs received from the Village Groups could be done. The Editorial Committee, being an Assembly committee, will be responsible for reporting in plenary the outcome of its work and will present for adoption the Assembly Message.

Other important feed-back and questions from the Village Groups and plenary will be posted in the Omatala so that participants can reflect further and harvest the fruits of the discussions to take home.

### **Omatala – the market place**

The goals and purposes of the Omatala are:

- Provide the space for encounter, dialogue and learning
- Facilitate the sharing of good practices and knowledge through workshops, theme-based exhibitions and advocacy activities
- Enable the sharing of stories from across the world
- Provide the space for artistic and creative expression of ideas and feelings

The Omatala is a key component of the Assembly and will play a unique role in enabling the Assembly to be transformative, joyful, forward-looking and outward-looking. It will be both a structured as well as a fluid space in that some activities will have a fixed time-slot while others will be unstructured in nature. Activities in both these categories will be found in the program of the Omatala. The Omatala and activities organized in this framework represent an opportunity for mutual learning, transformation and inspiration.

### **Harvesting the Fruits from Youth and Women Pre-Assemblies**

While regional perspectives (incorporating already the perspectives of women and youth) will be included in the Assembly Study Book, the Assembly will have the opportunity to specifically acknowledge the special contribution of women and youth. A session in the Assembly program is set aside for this purpose. This session on harvesting the fruits from the Youth and Women's pre-Assemblies will be done on the first day of the Assembly to ensure that their contributions can be meaningfully taken up in the Assembly process.

### **President's Address**

The President addresses the Assembly on the first day and his address will be based on the theme of the Assembly. Together with offering biblical-theological foundations to the Assembly's theme, he will also reflect on major moments and insights resulting from his service as President of the LWF.

### **General Secretary's Report**

The General Secretary will present his report taking as a basis and reference point the LWF Strategy "With passion for the church and for the world". He will reflect on the main landmarks of the communion's journey during the years 2010 – 2017 and offer vision and perspectives for the journey ahead.

### **Election of Council Members and President**

The LWF Communion Office will produce a small publication which will include the names, photos and short bios for each nominated Council member and President.

The candidates for LWF President will be given the opportunity to briefly address the Assembly.

### **Assembly Committees**

Assembly committees and their interim reports are crucial for the development of the Assembly process, particularly in view of the governance role of the Assembly. The following committees will be constituted during the Assembly:

- Business Committee
- Policy and Reference Committee
- Editorial Committee
- Credentials and Elections Committee
- Minutes Committee
- Nominations Committee

The Terms of Reference for these Assembly committees will be adopted by the LWF Council at its session in 2016. The composition of the Committees will be acted upon by the Assembly, following a slate proposed by the LWF Council, which meets the day before the opening of the Assembly..

### **Regional Meetings**

Space will be offered for the different regions to come together and to discuss, plan and strategize how they can effectively contribute to the Assembly process. These regional meetings are important moments to secure the ground for decisions, particularly those related to governance decisions.

It is also a space for sharing output from smaller groups that will be taken back to the region.

Two program slots are set aside for regional meetings.

### **Global Reformation Anniversary**

The International Worship Planning Committee also has the mandate of preparing the liturgy for the commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. The Assembly, being the global venue for the

commemoration, will be live streamed to enable those who could not be physically present in Namibia to be part of this special event. The venue of the commemoration will be the Sam Nujoma Stadium which is located at the heart of the sprawling community of Katutura, once a black township established under apartheid and is still home to the majority of the black and marginalized people living in Windhoek. The commemoration of the Reformation will, therefore, see the participation of thousands of members of local Lutheran congregations in Katutura, elsewhere in Windhoek and across Namibia. Their presence will be a gift to the Assembly.

The whole event is being planned jointly by the IWPC, the United Church Council of the Namibian Evangelical Lutheran Churches, the Local Assembly Planning Committee and the Communion Office.

### **Welcome Reception**

The President of the Republic of Namibia will host a Reception for all Assembly participants on 10 May 2017.

### **Celebrating African and Namibian Cultures**

The Assembly is invited to Namibia, which has a distinct history with the LWF. Assembly participants will have the opportunity to share in this history and get to know more about the culture and context in which Lutheran churches in Namibia are serving. This evening will also include a variety of cultural performances from Namibia and elsewhere in Africa as well as choirs from local congregations in Windhoek.

### **Journeying on from the Twelfth Assembly**

The principle that the Assembly is not a stand-alone event needs to be reflected in the ways it impacts and empowers the LWF communion and its member churches for their ongoing journey and mission of “living and working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world” (Vision statement, LWF strategy).

Three dimensions will be of critical importance in this regard:

#### **Individual experiences, learning and insights**

Critical for the multiplication of the outcomes of the Assembly is the way its delegates and other Assembly participants will communicate their own personal learning, their insights and their own transformation in view of the unique opportunity that a global Assembly represents. Methodologies and elements supporting this role include a post-Assembly letter from the General Secretary addressed to church leaders and Assembly participants outlining the ways in which the outcomes of the Assembly may be shared and continue to grow. An important aspect is that of ownership and contextualization of these outcomes so that the post-Assembly process will take root in the work and ministry of member churches.

#### **Assembly Message, Statements and Resolutions**

Connected to this, but not uniquely related to the multiplier role of Assembly participants, is the way in which the Assembly manages to speak intelligibly and forcefully, and to do so in ways that its voice speaks in a relevant way to local, regional and global realities. A separate communication process after the Assembly will be set up in order to bring the Assembly’s voice to the churches and regions. The process will be launched through a Pastoral letter issued by the incoming LWF President and the General Secretary. Post-Assembly Regional meetings and processes will also have a key role in taking this voice of the Assembly back to their specific contexts.

#### **Guiding the development of the LWF 2019 Strategy and beyond**

The Assembly as the space that brings together the biggest representation of the LWF across the world is a unique and valuable space for identifying lessons and generating powerful insights for the work ahead. In this regard, the outcomes of the Assembly will constitute an important element for further work to be developed in order to propose a revised LWF Strategy to the Council in 2018.