



Saksbehandler: Sven Oppegaard

Saksdokumenter:

Svarbrev fra Dnk til LVF: "Response to Draft Report from Renewal Committee"

Referanse:

MKR 02/08 (LVF)

MKR/AU 08/08

## Saker fra de økumeniske organisasjonene

### Det lutherske verdensforbund (LVF)

#### Sammendrag

I sitt møte i Betlehem i september 2005 godkjente LVFs råd forslaget fra generalsekretær Ishmael Noko om å nedsette en komité som skulle drøfte LVFs fremtid og legge frem forslag til organisasjonens fornyelse.

Det dokumentet som nå foreligger som "draft", og som ble sendt ut i forbindelse med MKRs februar møte (sak MKR 02/08 – LVF), er medlemskirkene invitert til å kommentere. Fornyelseskomiteen vil på sitt møte 26. april gjennomgå de kommentarene som er kommet inn, og vil da også forberede en rapport til LVFs råds møte i Arusha i juni d.å.

Dokumentet avsluttes med 14 spørsmål som går detaljert gjennom alle de viktige punktene i rapporten. Svaret fra Den norske kirke (sendt til Genève 25. april d.å.) forholder seg til disse spørsmålene. Et første utkast til svar ble diskutert på møtet i MKR/AU 18. april d.å. Kommentarene derfra, og senere innkomne kommentarer fra AUs medlemmer, er innarbeidet i nærværende tekst.

MKR oppfordres til å drøfte forventningene til fornyelsesprosessen i LVF, og ta stilling til hvordan Den norske kirke bør vektlegge og følge opp de anliggender som er reist i vårt svar.

#### Forslag til vedtak

MKR tar prosessen så langt til orientering. Rådet sier seg fornøyd med svaret som ble sendt, og ber om at følgende saker særlig vektlegges under drøftingen av dette temaet på LVFs råds møte i Arusha:





**CHURCH OF NORWAY**  
**National Council, Council on Ecumenical and International  
Relations, Sami Church Council**

General Secretary Dr Ishmael Noko  
The Lutheran World Federation  
P.O.Box 2100 1211 Geneva 2  
SWITZERLAND

Date: 25.04.2008

Our ref: 06/207-29 SOP

Your ref:

**Response to Draft Report from Renewal Committee**

Dear Dr Noko,

Please find attached the response from the Church of Norway to the Draft Report from the Renewal Committee.

We are pleased that this consultative process with the member churches is underway, and will follow it with interest in the time ahead.

Kind regards,

  
Olav Fykse Tveit (Rev. Dr)  
General Secretary

  
Sven Oppegaard (Rev.)  
Deputy General Secretary





**CHURCH OF NORWAY**  
**National Council, Council on Ecumenical and International**  
**Relations, Sami Church Council**

Date: 24.04.2008

Our ref: 06/207-30 SOP

Your ref:

**CONSULTING WITH THE MEMBER CHURCHES AND RELATED CHURCH**  
**ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE LUTHERAN COMMUNION**  
**Questions Raised By The Renewal Committee, January 2008**

**Response from The Church of Norway**

**25 April 2008**

- 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?**

**Response:**

Historically, Christian churches have been a source of unity but also of division within the human family. This fact remains a reality also today. The belief that the church of Jesus Christ serves the unity of the human family is, however, a fundamental aspect of the Lutheran understanding of the mission to which God has called the church, cf. the LWF mission document “Mission in Context. Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment,” (part 2: Theology of Mission). The LWF is well placed to participate in the urgent processing of this matter today, also in the wider perspective of the role of religions in the public sphere, both in Europe and globally. The reconciling work of the Triune God is at the heart of Christian witness and practice, and is strongly lifted up within the ecumenical movement. As a global family of churches, the LWF is one of several paradigms of the church of Jesus Christ, united in the purpose of furthering “worldwide among the member churches diaconic action, alleviation of human need, promotion of peace and human rights, social and economic justice, care for God’s creation and sharing of resources” (Constitution of the LWF, article III: Nature and Functions). The LWF has a proven capacity for this major purpose, and it is significantly enhanced by its development as a communion. It is capable of spiritual bonding across national and ethnic barriers while safeguarding cultural and social identities.

- 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?**

**Response:**

The Lutheran communion is an important expression of the unity of the universal church, being a communion of churches from all continents, united both sacramentally (since the Seventh Assembly 1984) and institutionally, through the LWF. At the same time, the Lutheran communion does not see itself as existing in its own right only, in isolation from other churches and global ecclesial bodies. As a confessional body the LWF is not an “ecumenical organization” in the usual sense. However, precisely on the basis of its confession, the LWF clearly upholds the faith commitment of the Reformers to the renewal and unity of the one universal church, as stated in the Constitution (Article III): “The Lutheran World Federation confesses the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church and is resolved to serve Christian unity throughout the world.” This commitment is essential for understanding the ecumenical nature of the LWF as a communion, being a *confessional*, not a *confessionalistic* ecclesial body. The LWF has for decades proven its engagement in the ecumenical movement by being a pioneering partner in bilateral doctrinal dialogues, by its active relational role among the Christian World Communions generally, by encouraging national and regional ecumenical developments, by its strong support for the work of the World Council of Churches and Faith and Order, and its constitutive role in ACT International. The LWF can advance the ecumenical vision for the unity of the church by continuing this active role among global and regional ecumenical partners. The present consultative process on LWF Renewal should include reflection on different ways in which the LWF may best continue this active ecumenical role strategically, e.g. by giving support to the continued development of regional, sub-regional and national communion agreements (such as Porvoo and CPCE, Called to Common Mission and Formula of Agreement), and to the strengthening of their interrelationship.

- 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?**

**Response:**

The development of the ecclesial profile of the LWF is a natural consequence of the deepened ecumenical self-understanding of the Lutheran churches as united and rooted in the apostolic tradition going back to Christ and the Early Church, with a strong emphasis on the unifying

force of the living gospel itself and the sacraments celebrated in accordance with the gospel in the *congregatio sanctorum* (CA 7). Lutheran teaching focuses strongly on the overall significance of the doctrine of justification (CA 4). This has undoubtedly been a contribution also to the ecumenical movement. But there has, at the same time, been limitations in the ways in which this doctrine has been interpreted and implemented with reference to wider ecclesial and social issues. The Lutheran-Roman Catholic “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” (1999) concentrates primarily on justification in its soteriological meaning. This was the scope under which it was undertaken, and it must be recognized in that perspective. At the same time, this document points explicitly to the need for pursuing the consequences of the agreement reached, in order to clarify further its broader meaning and implications, cf. JDDJ §43. A current challenge for the LWF is to ensure that the doctrine of justification and its ministry (CA 4 and 5), together with a specifically sacramental understanding of the church (CA 7), are maintained as guiding principles for the growth in unity of both the Lutheran Communion and the church universal in the face of current divisive forces in the world. Furthering the goals of the LWF and of the ecumenical movement must be seen as inseparable tasks. A re-focus in LWF work on the spirituality of Christian unity, e.g. through development of theological, liturgical and pedagogical material would, represent a valuable contribution to the common life of the member churches as they pursue their ecumenical and pastoral tasks. Such a focus would also be helpful in order to strengthen the LWF in its complex missionary, diaconal and interfaith efforts.

**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?**

**Response:**

Mutual recognition and exchanges of ministers are an important part of the development of the Lutheran Communion, among the member churches and ecumenically, and the emphasis placed on this matter in the report of the Renewal Committee must be strongly affirmed for the years ahead. It is important to maintain that the ministry of word and sacraments belongs to the whole universal church, not to individual churches or confessions. Rules relative to educational

requirements represent a traditional obstacle for exchangeability of ministers, to be overcome through increased flexibility. Churches should also work with their governments to facilitate work permits in cases where pastors from abroad have a church call for a limited or longer period. As migrant churches, mainly ethnically based in the South, continue to be established in the North, and a shortage of ministers becomes increasingly noticeable e.g. in Europe, the LWF can be a valuable framework within which the churches may process the significant challenges and opportunities related to 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?***

**Response:**

Regional communion relations already have concrete significance for some regions, and represent a potential for other regions, in order for the churches to meet contextual challenges with regard to proclamation, worship and diakonia. Regional relations should be encouraged in the form of ad-hoc processes of consultation and cooperation and should not presuppose or lead into the establishment of institutional LWF structures at regional level. The seven regions that have been established in the LWF have proven to be viable. At the same time it is decisively important for the global communion, which is the LWF, that the interregional work of the Secretariat is given priority in the time to come. It would be advantageous if all seven regions were always represented at staff level in the Secretariat, for the sake of maintaining substantive cooperation and coordination among the regions on programmatic issues.

- 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.***

**Response:**

Churches and related organizations are strengthened in their mission and service today in dissimilar ways. For churches in the South, cooperation is particularly important in the area of diakonia – with LWF through World Service and the Department for Mission and Development. The participation of church-related organizations for mission and diakonia in the network of the LWF represents a vital element the life and operations of the Lutheran Communion, being a faith-based instrumentality of partnership. For the churches in the North the focus is more on



the ecumenical work of the LWF, particularly the progress of the bilateral dialogues and relations, as well as the cooperation with the WCC. What is produced by the Department of Studies is relevant for the churches both in the North and the South, since the topics of study embarked upon, and the methods used, are usually profiled in such a way that they reflect concerns in all regions and their interrelationship. What we see as lacking for the North as well as the South is a more collaborative, interregional focus on issues and challenges in basic church life, preoccupying parishes and ministers in their regular life of worship, teaching and counseling. Still today, the 1969 LWF booklet "Prayer in the Life of the Congregation" is being referred to in our church. In this pastoral area there is a strong potential for developing the life of the communion of churches as a whole. Much can also be gained by further work to clarify the participation of organizations for mission and diakonia in the life of the member churches and the structure of the communion. This issue includes processing of the correlation between bilateral and multilateral forms of service.

- 7. *Affirm* that governance and organizational structures should embody the *character* of communion while also *servicing* 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?**

**Response:**

Facing the interrelated challenges of "servicing" and "embodying the character" of the communion remains a major issue regarding the governance and structure of the LWF in the time ahead. As the question reflects this issue is more than simply a matter of practicality. The Lutheran tradition has, generally speaking, upheld a pragmatic approach, not a theological doctrine, relative to ecclesial structures. Nevertheless, as shown in "the great debate" in the 1970s, initiated by Peter Brunner (cf. the background article by Michael Root in the LWF history book "From Federation to Communion", referred to in footnote 1 in the Report), Lutherans will also recognize that the character of the LWF cannot be considered independently of the fact that it is primarily made up of churches – the nature of which is theological, being constituted by, and called to convey, God's grace by word and sacraments. The structures of ministry belong to this picture. It is appreciated, therefore, that the Renewal Report also focuses on the role of ordained ministers in the central leadership of the LWF. The ministry of episkopé (bishops) naturally comes into the picture also. "The Lund Statement on the Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church" (2006) is already a contribution to the organizational coherence of the communion. A communion of churches, based theologically on fellowship in word and sacraments, must carry distinctive ecclesial marks as an organization.

At the present time, issues of doctrine are for the most part left to the individual member churches, although there is a requirement for membership to adhere to the Lutheran confession. But the LWF has involved itself to some extent with doctrinal matters – apartheid, justification and homosexuality. It has also made a doctrinal statement on the episcopal ministry. The extensive doctrinal work of the LWF in bilateral dialogues and other study processes must also be recognized, even if their outcome is not formally adopted by governing bodies of the LWF. The relevance of theological processes for the understanding of the LWF as a communion still needs to be discussed further. The difficult question of oversight with regard to coherence within the communion must be considered carefully. Although the Lutheran tradition does not adhere to the Roman Catholic view of a magisterium, it cannot reject the importance of churches speaking with one voice with regard to fundamental issues of teaching (cf. the Lutheran sections of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue report on “The Apostolicity of the Church” (2006), part 4). The role and structures of the LWF – serving and embodying the communion – naturally enter into this picture. The LWF has already to a certain extent established itself as an instrument for balancing the need for basic unity with space for legitimate diversity within the communion.

In the scope of “serving” the communion, the related diaconal and missional organizations are obvious components of the LWF structure. It must be clear that these organizations are more than serving instrumentalities. They also participate to a large extent in “embodying the character of” the communion. Upcoming work on the governance and organizational structure of the LWF must give focused attention to this reality.

- 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?**

**Response:**

As implied in the previous question raised by the Renewal Report, the structure of the LWF is not only a matter for the LWF itself, but is also an ecumenical issue. Until now, the CWCs have only to a small extent considered their organizational role in the ecumenical movement, even if several CWCs officially endorse the ecumenical vision of the full visible unity of the church. The LWF should be commended for having seriously taken up the question of the pattern of ecumenical assemblies, as reflected also in the Report and the present question. This is one way (but of course, not the only way) in which some significant aspects of ecumenically-shaped assemblies can begin to be processed. It is regrettable that other CWCs, with the exception of WARC, have so far shown limited interest in this specific matter. This may be due to insufficient processing among them of relevant rationales and options regarding this major issue. It is also regrettable that in this situation the WCC has not succeeded in shaping any comprehensive proposed models – neither by itself, nor in consultation with the CWCs – as follow-up on the bold action by the WCC Ninth Assembly (2006). In the meantime, the LWF should continue to pursue its commitment to the important ecumenical issue of future

assemblies. A special task force could be one way in which to deal in a qualified way with this matter. Already now, for presentation at the 2008 Council, a preliminary, but specific, design of one or two possible models for a broader ecumenical assembly would be of great use for such a vision to have a future. It should be made clear how time might be appropriately divided between the common multilateral (“WCC-type”) work and confessional deliberations and how, at the same time, proper interaction between the confessional and the multilateral processes may be stimulated. It should also be emphasized that the nature and procedures of the confessional work should be defined by the CWCs/confessional families themselves. Finally, it would be useful if the LWF could provide reflection on the character of the new, expanded ecumenical assembly as being more than simply an expansion of the present WCC Assembly.

**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?**

**Response:**

A strengthened role for the regions within the structure and functioning of the LWF Council would follow naturally from a strengthening of regional instruments within the global organization. It would be important, however, to prevent a regionalization of the Council that could be detrimental, rather than beneficial, to its unity and common focus. The Council may be said to have a weakness in that the effects of its actions are to a great extent limited to the LWF itself, and often have little direct impact ecumenically or even within the member churches. Whether this is a question of the Council structure – and if so, in what ways the structure could be improved to better promote the vision of the communion and the ecumenical movement – is difficult to say. It seems likely that strengthening the communion understanding of the LWF generally would lead to an expectation of an increased role of the Council as its governing body. The role of Council members should also be strengthened through such a development. It should be recognized that the present role of the Council members is normally not very strong within their churches. The fact that Council members, as elected volunteers, often have little time to spare from professional and other commitments at home, enters into the picture. Another related issue is that of the relative roles of the Council and the Executive Committee. If the LWF Assembly should become ecumenically more integrated, it might be helpful to transfer some authority from the present Assembly to the future Council, and have a similar transfer from the present Council to the future Executive Committee. The new Council might meet more seldom (e.g. every two years). This would be a saving of personnel and financial resources, and give room for an increased regional emphasis. Electronic forms of communication within the

governing bodies between meetings could be significantly developed in the time to come. This might make it sufficient for the Executive Committee to meet annually.

**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?**

**Response:**

Like the three previous questions, the present question raises both a matter of principle and an important issue of organizational structure. Mutual accountability is fundamental for trust and cooperation. It is basic for the life of the communion already at the present time, and will have increased importance if the LWF is to pursue its communion nature further. Accountability includes readiness for mutual reporting and evaluation referring both to internal and external operations. Procedures for such practices are already present with regard to the organization of the LWF itself, pertaining to the work of World Service and Mission and Development as well as to the Endowment Fund and the operations of the Geneva Secretariat. But procedures for mutual reporting and evaluation are otherwise not comprehensively developed in the LWF among the member churches and related organizations. Since increased mutual accountability in the communion cannot be developed only regionally, the issue includes assessment of the desired level of overall auditing and procedures for comprehensive assessment. Mission and diakonia remain fundamental responsibilities of the churches under all circumstances. Such work cannot, therefore, be delegated away from the churches to “specialized ministries” but must be developed in close cooperation with the church-related organizations carrying specific calling and competence in these areas. It is clearly in the interest of the member churches that operations in mission and diakonia be coordinated to a considerable degree through the LWF, without the operational freedom of the organizations being undermined.

**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.**

**Response:**

Both proposed alternatives have strengths and weaknesses. A problem with the first alternative, which lets the qualification “Lutheran” stay with the churches, is that the LWF includes member

churches that do not normally call themselves Lutheran. Their Lutheranism is to a large extent related to their membership in the LWF. A problem with the second alternative is that it is not self-evident how one should understand specifically the "Lutheran" qualification of a communion of churches, since the ecclesiological issues raised by "the great debate" (cf. our response to question 7) have yet to be fully resolved. A challenge more long-range is the term "Lutheran" itself. How long shall we continue designating a major church tradition and a global communion in this way? Can appropriate alternatives even be proposed and considered? What would be the effects of an even more radical name change? As the LWF continues to probe into these major questions, a change to the second alternative, "The Lutheran Communion of Churches" appears to us still as the most appropriate.

**12. *Welcome* the renaming of the LWF headquarters to be the Communion Office?**

**Response:**

This change would be a good one. It would correspond both to where the LWF finds itself at present and the direction in which it is likely to develop. It could therefore be maintained indefinitely.

**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.**

**Response:**

The issue raised is not only a matter of titles but of how the future leadership of the LWF is to be envisaged. Alternative B ("an ecumenical bishop") could indicate either a) that the LWF has

already achieved an ecclesial self-understanding and global structure of ministry in which an office of bishop would have an institutional basis in the LWF itself, and not only in the church from which the person would come, or b) that for Lutherans the role of bishop is an open one, and can be determined pragmatically. In our view, both of these alternatives would be misleading and would not be in accord with the Lutheran understanding of the episcopal ministry. We can, however, appreciate the value in combining the present roles of General Secretary and President in a new function of LWF President (Alternative C). There could be an advantage – internally in the organization and ecumenically – in moving beyond the polarity in the present leadership structure. It would seem natural that a resident President would carry a ministry of vision, strategy and external relations and would – together with, and in accountability to the governing bodies – carry overall responsibility for the whole of LWF as an ecclesial organization, not only for the Communion Office. The President would need to be ordained. Background as a bishop in his or her church would also be an advantage. Although the President would be resident, he/she would need to travel extensively. A new function as “Secretary General” would naturally be the CAO (or COO) of the Communion Office, as proposed, with clearly and broadly defined responsibilities. This person would not need to be ordained. The President would need to be the responsible moderator of the Council and the Executive Committee. However, the vice-presidents would naturally participate in moderating the meetings.

**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?**

**Response:**

Such a study seems like a reasonable task to undertake. A focus on the alternatives mentioned (Bratislava, Jerusalem and Wittenberg) can lend itself well as a “pilot project” for such a study but other alternatives might also be relevant for consideration. In addition to issues of economy and logistics, strong emphasis should be put on the impact of a new location on how the LWF sees itself and will be seen by others. The future location should not primarily indicate a return to the historical roots of Lutheranism in 16<sup>th</sup> century Germany, but should help to reflect in all ways possible the identity of the Lutheran churches, along with other churches, as rooted in Christ and the apostles, and being committed to the apostolic mission in today’s world. Strengthening the global and ecumenical character of the LWF should provide a basic guiding principle for the discussion of possible relocation, as well as in the preparations for 2017.