

Report
of the
Commission on Theology
and
Church Relations



Preliminary Report
Regarding the
Lutheran World Federation

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PRELIMINARY REPORT

REGARDING THE

LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

The Synod in 1965 (Res. 3-14) and again in 1967 (Res. 3-18) directed the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to conduct a "thorough and critical exploration of future relations with the Lutheran World Federation." The Synod also directed that "this exploration . . . be made together with the Lutheran World Federation secretariat," and that "the entire issue of future relations with the Lutheran World Federation be made the subject of intensive conversation with our sister churches."

The commission has undertaken the implementation of these directives in several ways. Through the courteous cooperation of the LWF secretariat several meetings have been held in which members of the commission were able to discuss relevant questions with official representatives of the federation. Dr. Ivar Asheim, director of the LWF Department of Theology, met with representatives of our commission in February 1967. The federation's general secretary, Dr. André Appel, was in St. Louis twice for the same purpose, once alone in June 1966, and again in November 1967 together with Dr. Fredrik Schiotz, the president of the LWF. In preparation for this latter meeting the commission had supplied Doctors Schiotz and Appel with a number of specific questions, which served as a basis for a full day's discussion.

In addition to these contacts the executive secretary of the CTCR was invited to attend the regular meeting of the LWF's Commission on Theology in St. Peter, Minn., in June 1967. In July 1968 he visited the Geneva headquarters of the federation to gain particular information directly from staff persons of various LWF departments and offices. Doctors Bouman, Fuerbringer, and Nickel represented the CTCR and President Harms at the conference of heads of churches and representatives of theological commissions of our sister churches in Europe that was held in Frankfurt, Germany, in June 1966, to discuss the doctrine of the church, including the question of the nature of the LWF. Again this past summer Doctors Franzmann and Gaertner of the CTCR attended the Cambridge Conference of the International Lutheran Theological Conference (composed of the LCMS and sister churches), at which the question of the implications of LWF membership was once more the major item on the agenda.

In light of what has been learned through these various avenues of inquiry and consultation as well as by careful study of the LWF constitution, the commission respectfully submits the following findings.

Findings

1. The LWF is in fact what its constitution declares it to be, namely, "a free association" of Lutheran churches.

This means that —

- a member church does not forfeit its autonomy in regard to decision or action.
- the federation cannot legislate for the churches.
- the federation does not exercise any churchly function on its own authority.
- membership in the federation does not establish altar and pulpit fellowship with other member churches.

2. The doctrinal basis of the LWF sets forth the proper and sufficient norms for its identity as an association of Lutheran churches, namely, the Holy Scriptures as the only and infallible norm of church doctrine and practice, and the three Ecumenical Creeds, together with the Confessions of the Lutheran church, as a pure exposition of the Word of God.

This means that —

- eligibility for membership is restricted to such churches as declare with their application for membership their acceptance of this doctrinal basis.
- if a member church were to change its confessional basis, its membership would be terminated; for example, a union consummated between a Lutheran and a Reformed church would automatically exclude the resultant church body from membership.

3. The LWF is neither a church nor a superchurch, but as a free association of Lutheran churches is designed to serve as their agent or instrument in such matters as they assign to it.

This means that —

- the initiative for any activities of the federation in support of churchly functions must come from the churches themselves.
- churchworkers whom the federation might supply for service to a particular church remain responsible in that capacity either to their own church or to the church that has requested their service.
- the role of the federation in regard to churchly functions is properly understood in terms of liaison, encouragement, and assistance where these services are needed or requested to help the churches perform their own proper tasks and fulfill their own responsibilities.
- although the LWF is not itself a church, it does have an "ecclesial" character to the extent that it helps the churches do their own churchly tasks; in this sense it is analogous to our own LCUSA.

4. The LWF is not a substitute for world Lutheran fellowship; on the contrary, it recognizes that to the

Constitution of the Lutheran World Federation *

I. Name

The name and title of the body organized under this Constitution shall be The Lutheran World Federation.

II. Doctrinal Basis

The Lutheran World Federation acknowledges the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only source and the infallible norm of all church doctrine and practice, and sees in the three Ecumenical Creeds and in the Confessions of The Lutheran Church, especially in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's *Small Catechism*, a pure exposition of the Word of God.

III. Nature, Functions and Scope

1. Nature

The Lutheran World Federation shall be a free association of Lutheran Churches. It shall act as their agent in such matters as they assign to it. It shall not exercise churchly functions on its own authority, nor shall it have power to legislate for the Churches belonging to it or to limit the autonomy of any Member Church.

2. Functions

In accord with the preceding paragraphs, The Lutheran World Federation shall:

- (a) Further a united witness before the world to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the power of God for salvation.
- (b) Cultivate unity of faith and confession among the Lutheran Churches of the world.
- (c) Develop fellowship and cooperation in study among Lutherans.
- (d) Foster Lutheran interest in, concern for, and participation in ecumenical movements.
- (e) Support Lutheran Churches and groups as they endeavor to meet the spiritual needs of other Lutherans and to extend the Gospel.
- (f) Provide a channel for Lutheran Churches and groups to help meet physical needs.

3. Scope of Authority

In accordance with its nature, function and structure, The Lutheran World Federation may take action on behalf of one or more Member Churches in such matters as they may commit to it.

IV. Membership

The Lutheran World Federation consists of Churches which accept the doctrinal basis set forth in Article II of this Constitution. Each Church which applies for membership in the Federation shall declare its acceptance of this Constitution. Its reception into membership shall be decided by The Lutheran World Federation in Assembly, or in the interim, if not more than one-third

* Italics indicate words, phrases, and sentences which were added as amendments to the former constitution at the 1963 Assembly in Helsinki.

of the Member Churches raise an objection within one year, by the Executive Committee.

Membership in the Federation may be terminated by vote of the Assembly or by withdrawal.

V. Organization

The Lutheran World Federation shall exercise its functions through the following: 1) The Assembly; 2) The Executive Committee; 3) National Committees; 4) Commissions. In all the functions of the Federation, both clerical and lay persons shall be eligible to participate.

VI. The Assembly

1. An Assembly of the Federation shall normally be held every six years at the call of the President. The time and place and program of each Assembly shall be determined by the Executive Committee. Special Meetings of the Assembly may be called by the Executive Committee.
2. The Assembly shall consist of chosen representatives of the Member Churches of the Federation. The number of the representatives shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

The allocation of the representatives in the Assembly shall be made to the Member Churches by the Executive Committee with the advice of the National Committees, and due regard shall be given to such factors as numerical size of churches, geographical distribution by continents and countries, adequate representation of the Younger Churches and the Minority Churches, and the right of each completely independent Member Church to have at least one representative in the Assembly. Suggestions for readjustments in the allocation of representatives in the Assembly may be made to the Executive Committee by Member Churches or groups of Member Churches, national or regional, and these readjustments shall become effective if approved by the Executive Committee and by the Member Churches concerned.

The representatives in the Assembly shall be chosen by the Member Churches themselves.

Whenever Lutheran congregations in union church bodies combine to ask for representation in the Assembly, the Executive Committee may invite them to send representatives to the Assembly in a consultative capacity. Lutheran associations and organizations designated by the Executive Committee may be invited to send representatives to the Assembly in a consultative capacity in such numbers as the Executive Committee may determine.

3. The Assembly shall be the principal authority in the Federation. It shall elect the President of the Federation and the other members of the Executive Committee, shall receive reports from National Committees, shall appoint Commissions, and shall determine the fundamental lines of the Federation's work.

VII. Officers

The President of the Federation shall be chosen by ballot of the Assembly and a majority of the votes cast shall be necessary for an election. He shall assume office immediately after the close of the Assembly which has elected him and before the organization of the new Executive Committee. He shall be the chief official representative of the Federation. He shall hold office until the close of the following Assembly, and he shall be ineligible to succeed himself. Other officers of the Federation shall be chosen by the Executive Committee.

VIII. Executive Committee

1. Each Assembly shall elect nineteen persons who with the President shall constitute the Executive Committee of the Federation. At least four members of the Executive Committee shall be lay persons. Membership in the Executive Committee shall be allocated with due regard to such factors as numerical size of churches, geographical distribution by continents and countries, and adequate representation of the Younger Churches and the Minority Churches. In the choice of members from the Younger Churches and the Minority Churches, an effort shall be made to effect changes at each Assembly in order to make possible a rotation among all of them.
2. The Executive Committee shall meet at least once annually. It shall choose from its own membership three Vice-Presidents as officers of the Federation. It shall also elect a Treasurer of the Federation. The duties of these officers shall be those usually assigned to those offices.
3. The Executive Committee shall conduct the business of The Lutheran World Federation in the interim between Assemblies, shall supervise the appointment of National Committees and receive annual reports from them, shall elect a *General Secretary* and assign him his duties, shall make a full annual report (including complete financial statements) to all Member Churches, shall appoint all Committees and Commissions not otherwise provided for, and shall represent the Federation in all external relations.
4. Vacancies in the Executive Committee ad interim shall be filled by that Committee.
5. *Normally, chairmen of Commissions shall attend the regular meetings of the Executive Committee as consultants.*

IX. General Secretary

Immediately following the close of each Assembly the Executive Committee shall elect a *General Secretary* who shall devote his full time to this office and who shall serve until the close of the next Assembly. The *General Secretary* shall be responsible to the Executive Committee for his work. It shall be his duty to carry out the decisions of the Assembly and of the Executive Committee under the general supervision of the President. He shall report through the Executive Committee to the Assembly of the Federation.

X. National Committees

The Member Churches in each country shall select a group of persons who, together with the member or members of the Executive Committee in that country, shall constitute a National Committee for The Lutheran World Federation. Each National Committee shall be asked to present to the Executive Committee an annual statement concerning the interests of the Lutheran World Federation in its country.

XI. Commissions

Commissions shall be established under the authority of the Federation and shall be appointed either by the Assembly or by the Executive Committee. It shall be the purpose of these Commissions to discharge designated functions of the Federation. They shall report annually to the Executive Committee, which shall exercise general supervision over them.

XII. Finance

The Executive Committee shall prepare annually a detailed budget for the Federation, designate the allocation of funds to particular needs, and assign to each National Committee its responsibility for specific portions of the budget. The Treasurer shall be authorized to establish depositories in various countries.

XIII. Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution may be made by a two-thirds vote of those present at any regularly called Assembly, provided notice of intention to amend shall have been given the preceding day. Amendments so made shall become effective one year after their adoption by the Assembly unless objection has been filed with the Executive Committee by Churches embracing in aggregate one-third of the constituency of the Federation.