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(Towards A Sustainable Asia Region)
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The Asia Church Leadership Consultation (ACLC) is a biennial regional platform for head of churches and leaders of networks to share, discuss and identify agenda for the way forward.

In 2015, the consultation was held at China Lutheran Seminary, Hsinchu, Taipei, Taiwan, from 12-15 April. The theme was, "Toward the Sustainability of the LWF Asia Region: Holistic Sustainability". Asia member churches have come of age and coupled with the ongoing impact of globalization which has brought about constant changes in local contexts, it's time we worked towards sustainability. For only a sustainable church can meet the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities of its changing context to fulfil its mission.

The consultation prepared its leaders, including those from the WICAS and youth networks, to articulate its agenda at the coming Pre-Assembly and Assembly.

Bishop Mounib Younan, President of LWF, delivered the keynote message, aptly addressing "Sustainable Leadership". Four other messages helped unpack the theme and group discussions were convened to receive feedback from the diverse contexts. The theme and sub-themes of the LWF Assembly was also given the same treatment.
This publication contains the outcome of the discussions and resolutions of the consultation to be shared with the LWF communion.

A communion in Christ,

Revd Dr William Chang
Area Secretary for Asia
Department for Mission and Development
Lutheran World Federation
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keynote Address</td>
<td>The Sustainability of the Asia Region – Holistic Sustainability  Bishop Mounib Younan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Address</td>
<td>Ms Kwon LWF</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Paper 1</td>
<td>Mission &amp; Church Growth As Marks of the Church’s Sustainability  Dr Kenneth Mtata</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Paper 2</td>
<td>Theological Formation and Reflection – The Church’s Ecclesiology, Self-Understanding and Role in Society  Dr Wilfred J Samuel</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Paper 3</td>
<td>Church Sustainability &amp; Discipleship  Bishop Terry Kee</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Paper 4</td>
<td>The Church’s Sustainability &amp; Ecumenical &amp; Interfaith Relations  Bishop Suneel Bhanu</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Report 1</td>
<td>Women on the Move – A Project Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Drafting Committee Report</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolutions</td>
<td>Conference Resolutions and Recommendations</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Bishop Mounib Younan (President)
LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

The Sustainability of the Asia Region – Holistic Sustainability

I greet you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

It is a great pleasure to be with you here. As President of our Global Communion, I am privileged to travel to every region of the globe. It is always wonderful, however, to return to my home in Asia. I deeply appreciate your hospitality and the joy we share together in expressing our passion for the church and for the world.

I am also pleased to be discussing this important theme: “Holistic Leadership for Sustainability.” This theme is a pressing concern for every church in our communion. No church is exempt from concerns about the health of its institutional expression; every church works to ensure that its emerging generation of leaders is equipped to face the challenges of the present and the future.

Sustainability is a key theme for us as we tend to our own concerns, but also for how we engage neighbors and communities not within our walls. If we seek sustainability only
to preserve our institutional expressions, we are missing the mark. Instead, we seek sustainability that serves the mission given to us by God, to go out into the world proclaiming “good news to the poor ... release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4.18). As we discuss sustainability, we should always seek to lead lives worthy of the calling to which we have been called (Eph 4.1), a calling centered on love and concern for our neighbors rather than ourselves alone.

Today, I will discuss several different forms of sustainability, including doctrinal sustainability, spiritual sustainability, sustainability in society, sustainability in interreligious and ecumenical engagement, sustainability for mission, and sustainability within our communion. First, however, we must discuss what we mean by the concept of sustainability. Our conversation will not be fruitful if we cannot agree on our basic terms.

The Spanish language provides an important resource for reflecting on sustainability. Those of you who speak Spanish will be familiar with the distinctions between Sostenibilidad o sustentabilidad.¹ I am not claiming to be an expert on the Spanish language! But I do appreciate the subtle distinction between these two words. Sustentabilidad can be used to indicate that sustainability is the preservation of a static reality, intended to keep things in their present state. Sostenibilidad, on the other hand, indicates something changing and developing at a steady rate, moving forward.
Understanding ourselves as “ecclesia semper reformanda,” we can fully embrace sustainability as *sostentibilidad*, always moving forward. We are not called merely to preserve ourselves, or live in imaginations of the past, or create static impressions of society. We are instead sent out to seek justice and establish peace to promote the flourishing of all human communities. This vital work—grounded in God’s passion for the church and for the world—is why we have been called together as a global communion.

**The Root and Foundation of Lutheran Sustainability**

Our Global Communion’s approach to sustainability must necessarily begin with our roots. Before we effectively serve our neighbors, we need to be strongly grounded in our own calling, as distinct churches and as a communion. To again recall the two different approaches to sustainability, we must ask ourselves what is it we seek to preserve and carry forward. What do we need to minimize or change so we can better respond to God’s call? What is it that we offer to the world?

Lutheran churches in Asia and throughout our communion are often faced with the question of Lutheran identity. The LWF is currently developing a resource on Lutheran self understanding. It is important for us to articulate the things that bind us together, those things that are distinctively Lutheran, the things that bind us in unity with churches not in our tradition, and those things which bind us in love and care to all our neighbors.

Our Lutheran identities have been formed doctrinally, historically, and contextually. As evangelical Christians in the
Lutheran tradition, we agree with Martin Luther that the doctrine of justification by grace through faith apart from works of the law is the article on which the church stands or falls. From our confessional foundation, our churches have taken many forms and flavors in different periods and in different places. Because of the Reformers’ insistence that the “one holy, Christian church ... is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the sacraments are administered according to the gospel,” what is known as “Lutheran” has taken on a vast variety of expressions.

So while our identity is formed doctrinally and historically, it is also formed contextually. Some of the churches in our global communion emerged in the contexts where the Reformation was birthed. But even those churches—in Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, for instance—contain wonderful diversities of structure and expression. Many other churches are the result of missionary service and outreach from these European and North American sisters and brothers. This is the case with my church in Jordan and the Holy Land as it is for many of your own. Our various struggles, challenges, and cultures have each come together to form a beautiful tapestry of what is now our global communion.

In Asia, there are 53 Lutheran churches, including the ELCJHL. Each of our churches was established by missions from other parts of the world. When these missions came to Asia, they brought their own theologies, sometimes importing their own theological disagreements into our context. As a result, many Asian contexts have multiple Lutheran churches, one identifying as more conservative and the other more progressive. In some
places, there are multiple LWF churches, each from its distinctive mission heritage.

I ask you today: is this sustainable? Is it necessary and sustainable to maintain multiple LWF member churches in the same geographic context? Theologically speaking, the challenge before each of us is to develop our own theological identity and understanding of our church’s mission. Now that we are independent of our founders’ vision, we are able to produce our own theologies. In my context as well, the challenge is to produce a contextually meaningful theological vision for the mission and purpose of my church. The sustainability of our churches depends on each church engaging in intense theological reflection that is contextual and at the same time rooted in Lutheran theology. All of this will deeply enrich our communion, showing how God is at work in every corner of the globe.

In this diversity, we have a strong unity. Above all, our unity is based on the work of God in Christ Jesus, who has given us the gift of justification by grace through faith. Because of this free gift, we are bound together also in service to our neighbors. Gospel of liberation and restoration drives us into the world, to bind up the brokenhearted, heal the sick, and confront injustice.

We do not simply sit and enjoy the gift of our salvation. In his 1520 treatise, “Freedom of a Christian,” Luther says “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” As Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, who serves at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, reminds us, “Salvation is never a solitary thing for Luther. It is us wrapped up in God’s life, and for that
reason wrapped up in each other’s lives, too. It is total freedom; at the same time it is total service. It is always trading places, one joyful exchange after another.”\textsuperscript{3} From this center of freedom and duty, we are sent out into the world. The clarity of this mission and calling strengthens our capacity for sustainability in all its forms. Confident in this shared foundation, we trust that the Holy Spirit leads us, comforts us, guides us, nourishes us, and continues to deepen our \textit{koinonia} through our altar and pulpit fellowship. Thus, we are sent to the world freshly commissioned for holistic mission, including prophetic diakonia.

**Toward Spiritual Sustainability**

The confidence we have in Christ gives us the courage to go out into the world. In this way, the gift of justification leads not to complacency and laziness, but to prophetic \textit{diakonia} for the sake of the world. It is the foundation of our work toward evangelization, interfaith engagement, ecumenism, along with the development of civil society and political engagement. By reflecting on these non negotiable aspects of our faith, we can foster the spiritual sustainability necessary to continue participating in God’s work of redeeming the world.

In his Theses for the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther reflected on what he called a “theology of the cross.”\textsuperscript{4} Rejecting theological approaches which seek “the ‘invisible’ things of God as though they were clearly ‘perceptible in those things which have already happened,’” Luther favors theologians who comprehend “the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.” Praising the Law but seeking to keep it in its place, Luther says that “without the theology of the
cross man misuses the best in the worst manner.” All of this leads to his central point in Thesis 21: “A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.”

This call for clear headed analysis, truth telling and rejecting the quest for glory can help us today in our quest for spiritual sustainability. Embracing the suffering of the cross means that we can focus on mission through accompaniment rather than focusing on our supposed success, measured in how many people convert to Lutheran faith or attend services in our churches.

All of this takes us far away from the so called “Prosperity Gospel,” which is nothing less than a Gospel destroying Theology of Glory seeking to shop indulgences in the here and now. Throughout the world, including here in Asia, we are confronted with the false Gospel of prosperity. Again and again, I hear people claim that if you have a car and wear a nice tie, then God has blessed you with this and that. The other side of this equation, of course, is that if you are facing challenges, if your child falls ill, or if your best milking goat dies, God is somehow withdrawing blessing from you because of something you have done or failed to do. The false gospel of prosperity contains no love, no grace, no faith. It proposes nothing more than a mere financial transaction between God and human beings like a modern day quick fix indulgence for the here and now. Already, we see that such teachings often connect with narrow apocalyptic understandings of God’s will for the world. If we do not confront this nihilistic false gospel with the wisdom and clarity of Lutheran doctrine and biblical interpretation, we will face grave problems in the future.
Embracing the cross means embracing our full equality throughout Asia and throughout our global communion, no matter our size, our bank accounts, or our relative position in society. For instance, we evangelicals in the Arab world are very few. We are less than one million in an ocean of other churches and other religions. But we have brought ecumenism, education, health care, civil society, and nationalism into the Arab world. Mission does not mean that we are there to impose the Bible on all spheres of life. It means that we are being creative with the Word of God, always ready to bring the freshness of the Gospel into our contexts.

Through embracing both our doctrinal foundations and our fresh contextuality, we show ourselves to be a communion that is always reforming itself and always preparing to be reformed by God’s response to the world. This dynamic reality means our communion is always one focused on God’s call. Even if in some countries we are small in number and in some places we are under pressure, our presence makes a fundamental contribution to individual and society wellbeing. Our presence, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is itself a witness to the world.

**Sustainability in Society**

The church’s quest for effective proclamation of the Gospel and prophetic diakonia to serve all of God’s people is opposed by human sinfulness. In our world today, this sinfulness is expressed in many systems and structures that stand against God’s will. Rather than promoting human flourishing, these systems and structures promote economic exploitation and environmental degradation, and interreligious conflict. In Asia and around the
world, the churches must stand against these powers and principalities if we are to have a sustainable witness for a sustainable world.

For this reason, we must not focus alone on theological renewal and sustainability. Human beings today are not seeking abstract religion. Our people—over 72 million Lutherans around the world—are looking for tangible, concrete faith. In our interconnected world, the church must return to its concrete call to work for justice. This quest for justice must not be in the realm of ideas alone, but in real justice that promotes human flourishing and life abundant. As the Amman Call of the World Council of Churches in 2007 said when it invited Christians worldwide to engage Israel and Palestine, “No more words without deeds. It is time for action.”

This tangible faith is found first and foremost in the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. These are the sites where God has chosen to enter in to the most basic elements of our world, sanctifying our existence. But this tangible faith is also found in the concrete work of churches responding around the world to the concrete needs of persons who are poor and vulnerable.

The challenges of the world are intimidating. But in the sacraments we are given strength and confidence. We are even given, as Isaiah 2 says, “the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” The sacraments bring us coram deo—before God, before the cross of Christ—where every human being is profoundly and utterly equal. As Paul wrote in his letter to the
Romans, “all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written: ‘There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God’” (Rom. 3.9–11). When we consider human relations from a Christian theological perspective, no person is more deserving of benefits—tangible or spiritual—than any other. Because Christ has died once for all, the same Baptism is offered to all, as is the same sacrament of Holy Communion.

This fundamental awareness of human equality is challenged each and every moment by the profound inequalities that mark our fallen world. Injustice is increased when those inequalities are either ignored or exploited, often by those who already possess greater resources.

As we approach the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we have chosen to focus on our Lutheran proclamation that we are liberated by God’s grace. This freedom we have in Christ Jesus binds us to our neighbors through service. This theological lens, we are called—individually and collectively—to recognize and work against threats to justice, including systemic inequalities. Equality alone does not guarantee justice, but justice cannot be achieved without greater equality.

Here in Asia, one can find rich and affluent countries immediately next to countries that cannot adequately address the needs of their own people. We see, for instance, the inequality between Japan and India. One finds many countries exploited by multinational and transnational corporations. You find countries with nuclear power and nuclear weapons but not
enough food to feed their people. Disparities between countries are matched by growing inequality within them. In China especially, the wealth gap is growing more profound. One of the central reasons for these inequalities is the radical disparity between urban households and those in agricultural contexts. In 2007, the *Economist* magazine observed that “income inequality in emerging Asia is heading towards Latin American levels.”

More recently, the *Wall Street Journal* echoed the International Monetary Fund’s observation that “inequality hurts growth in a number of ways. It reduces the education levels of poorer citizens, and saps their health, reducing the potential productivity of a workforce. It also can cause political instability due to anger over income disparities, which leads to a falloff in investment.”

The churches are called to rise to this challenge. We must ask hard questions as we seek to call things what they are. Are these inequalities—both between countries and within countries—the result of wrong-headed policies or are we facing the more troubling possibility that there is no will to make necessary changes? The churches, as global voices, can use moral authority to challenge the systems and structures perpetuating inequality and human misery. Some of you may find that your own churches own lack of material resources distracts you from looking at other spheres of concern. One opportunity we have within our global communion is learning from one another’s successes and mistakes. I am very impressed with how the relatively small church in South Korea is utilizing its land holdings to build commercial properties that help fund their ministries. This creativity helps us all.
The rapid economic growth of Asia is also being marked by environmental degradation. One of our Reformation themes as we prepare for 2017 is “Creation: Not for Sale.” As the LWF Council has said, nature has to be fully respected and protected as God’s good creation, entrusted to human care. Therefore it cannot be subject to exploitative domination by humans nor can their resources be concentrated and exploited as commodities. Policies must aim at sustainable development.7

Economic inequalities harm the ability of countries, communities, and individuals to respond to the crisis of climate change. For this reason, our work toward economic justice cannot be separated from the call to work toward environmental justice. This is a Lutheran call.

Care for creation is a fundamental commitment growing out of the first article of the Nicene and Apostolic creeds. This is God’s creation and human beings are to care for it; we are to tend to God’s beautiful garden. There are times, however, when we can distract ourselves with theological language; it is time that the church speaks plainly about the looming crisis of climate change. Our communion is enriched by the witness of Lutheran churches in Asia regarding the need for effective global responses to climate change. I call on you to help lead and guide our communion’s response to this unfolding crisis.

The Lutheran doctrinal emphasis on equality has important implications for gender justice, a topic of great importance throughout Asia. I am proud that the LWF Council unanimously adopted our communion’s gender justice policy during its 2013 meeting. I encourage each of your churches to be in direct
contact with Rev. Dr. Elaine Neuenfeldt, the LWF Secretary for Women in Church and Society, to ensure that you are effectively contextualizing the gender justice policy. Without being contextualized in Palestine, India, Indonesia, and throughout our communion, the Gender Policy could simply be a document on a shelf. Gender justice is too important to let that happen.

My friends, our world is dying for fresh streams of water that will transform inequality to equality, injustice to justice, egocentric economies to economies of equal opportunity. The church will be prophetic only when it is the voice of the poor, the ones suffering injustice, the occupied, oppressed, persecuted, and displaced.

In order to bring about such change, we will need to engage the political sphere. For too long, we have labored under the false conception that religion and politics cannot mix, that the church cannot speak directly or critically to the state. My position is that the basic sustainability of the church is found in its vocation to be the voice for the voiceless as it advocates for human rights, gender justice, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of conviction. The churches cannot be silent. This is not politics, but the calling of the church. In an Asian context, no church can be sustainable if the church is not prophetic.

From a Lutheran perspective, it is not our goal to “Christianize” politics. In other words, we do not seek to “Christianize” either the region or work for the benefits of Christians alone. In the Lutheran tradition, we acknowledge that government does not have to be explicitly Christian in order to
fulfill God’s purposes. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a young German pastor who led resistance efforts in Germany during the Third Reich, suggested that the church acts as the conscience of the state since “the church is what leads government to an understanding of itself.” In delineating the political responsibility of the church, Bonhoeffer calls the church “to make government aware of its failures and mistakes that necessarily threaten its governmental office.” As to what political arrangement is best, Bonhoeffer says that, theologically speaking, “the question concerning the form of the state is always secondary.” The importance of government is in its practical functioning, not in its form: “As long as the government fulfills its task, the form under which it does so is not essential, at least for the church.” We are left to consider “the relatively best form of the state” rather than any political pronouncement in absolute terms.8 One is to judge a particular governmental form or practice not by static principles but by its promotion of the wellbeing of the people and, in specifically Christian theological terms, its relative service to God’s purposes. The benefit we seek is the benefit for all.

The spiritual sustainability we find in the Theology of the Cross does not determine our political positions. It does, however, shape the way we engage in civil society and the political discourses of our various local and regional contexts. Our commitment to radical equality before God strengthens our commitment to the wellbeing and flourishing of our communities as a whole.

Unlike some who seek to know the secrets of God’s will by theologically excusing or explaining the realities of poverty, malnutrition, and disease, we have the courage, through the
Theology of the Cross, to call things what they are. The particular way of reading the Bible and Christian faith binds us together in communion precisely because it reminds us of God’s love for the entire world.

**Sustainability in Interreligious and Ecumenical Engagement**

Beyond the interrelated challenges of economic inequality, climate change, and food security, the Asian context is dealing with a third crisis: interreligious tension and extremism. As you know, much of the world’s attention has returned to the Middle East with the rise of the so-called Islamic State, or Da’esh. I am keenly aware, however, that many of you are dealing with Muslim Christian and other interreligious tensions in your own diverse contexts. In March of this year, we saw deadly bombings against churches in Pakistan; a mob of Christians then killed a man they suspected of being a Taliban informant. Similar violence has taken place in many other parts of Asia. In other contexts, such as Malaysia, Christians are targeted with specific government policies that limit their freedom of worship and expression. The processes of elevating Hindu and Buddhist community interests above others are continuing in many areas as well, with the result that Christians are being pushed further from the center of society. While not covered in media as widely as spectacular acts of violence, these efforts are no less concerning for us and must be confronted.

Where governments are tolerating or promoting policies of faith-based structures of privilege and power, our global communion has a stake in the matter. In all contexts, we insist on the full implementation of human rights and civil rights, including
freedom of religion and freedom of expression, along with gender justice, for the building up of civil society. All forms of persecution and pressure must be identified and confronted. Too many governments are interested in stoking the fires of religiously sanctioned extremism to achieve some form of short term gain. The consequences for such actions can be enormously destructive, especially in this time of rapid global change. In such a climate, the churches have an opportunity to be witnesses of moderation and concern for all communities, not just our own.

Although many of our present challenges are with forms of Islamic expression, we must be conscious that no religion has a monopoly on extremism. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, and of course Christians produce various forms of politicized faith and extremist religion. The challenge for us, as moderates, is to put forth a strong case for moderation and coexistence rather than fall prey to the temptations of engaging in our own responses of anger. We must remind our people that while extremist religion can appear to give meaning, it is actually a way of draining all meaning from both faith and public life. The extremist is one who has given up on making a positive change in the world and is only seeking to act through coercion and force. Our vision refuses to allow us to follow or live in fear of that path.

These interreligious challenges remind us of the importance of ecumenical relations. Lutherans have never existed apart from an ecumenical environment, in relation to other Christians. In our increasingly interrelated world, we must not imagine that we need to face any challenge alone. In these times when the church may be heading into a new period of persecution, we need to lean on one another and our ecumenical partners.
As I said in my Easter message from Jerusalem, our sustainability is to stay in our country no matter what pressures are placed on us. In Jerusalem, “we cling to the news of the resurrection as our hope, our strength, and our courage to face the challenges and obstacles in the Middle East today. This is the only thing that has kept us in this Holy Land.”

Further, in my sermon preached on Easter morning in Jerusalem, I said to my community that “Marytria is a challenging call, and a difficult path, but God has given us today the hope and strength to follow as the women did, all the way to the tomb. By the power of the resurrection, we do not allow extremism to frustrate us or oblige us to leave. We do not fear any stone which attempts to stand in the way of our future in this place. We will stay in the land of the resurrection by the power of the resurrection.” I pray that those of you who need it will take comfort in these words.

Ecumenical engagement gives us the opportunity to foster strong local and regional relationships. As we work to develop contextual understandings of our callings as churches in Asia, we should not neglect the resources Christian sisters and brothers can offer. All of this will strengthen the ecumenical efforts of our communion as we prepare for 2017 and beyond.

**Sustainability in Calling and Mission**

Lutheran churches in Asia, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, are the result of mission outreach. Because we are the result of mission outreach, most of us have not developed our own capacities so that we can be fully self-sustaining. In the present global economic climate, we are finding that fewer and fewer resources - both personnel and funding - come from the churches that founded us. They are
facing their own limits. Since churches around the world are already dealing with various forms of financial crisis, these changes create complications.

As I have discussed already, we must nevertheless have confidence in our mission. Diminishing financial support from the Global North is evidence neither of those churches’ lack of interest in our work nor in the importance of what we have been called to do in our contexts. Money is not the proof of mission! In this time of change, I commend to you the LWF resource, “Mission in Context.” Read it again in the near future. Find there the comforting strength validating the good work your church is doing for the sake of the Gospel.

Within the field of mission, the question of relating to Muslims has special importance for our region. The question we must ask, I think, is how we can be a living witness vis-à-vis the Muslim world?

The question of witness is quite different from the challenge of proselytizing. Indeed, we are called to living witness, not to create battlefields of religion. Our witness as a communion in the Muslim world is not an evangelism campaign. At the same time, if anybody wants to hear the message of the Gospel, they should not be denied; we stand ready to respond with specific Good News of the Cross. Instead, we are known as a communion working in many Muslim countries, seeking dignity and sustainable development for all. We are known as a communion of churches that respects the faiths of others. We promote the freedom of religion, commitments to interfaith engagement and dialogue. Specifically, we promote efforts that strengthen
comprehension of Islam and relations with Muslims. Our witness, faithful to Christ, is one of hospitality and openness, not exclusion and controversy. Our presence in itself is a witness to the Gospel of Christ’s love.

From this foundation, we can faithfully and effectively engage in difficult conversations with Muslim neighbors. In Malaysia, for instance, where political and judicial leaders have sought to ban Christian use of the word “Allah” for God, Lutheran leaders have engaged critically but respectfully. From my perspective in the Arab world, I know that Christians used this word 600 years before the religion of Islam itself. We confidently use the word Allah to name our Triune God.

We respect freedom of religion when we do not deny others the ability to worship, sanctify their holy places, and name God in the way they want. From Indonesia, and in support of the Malay churches’ basic human right to worship and name God as they desire, I call on all governing bodies within Malaysia, including the Parliament, to reaffirm the commitments of religious freedom. I call on each governing body to allow for the unimpeded distribution and use of Bibles where Allah is used in the local language.

By considering these important questions, we accompany one another in providing sustainability in mission. We Asian churches must accompany one another as well as other churches in providing sustainability in mission.
Sustainability within Communion

It is good that we can gather here in a spirit of accompaniment and mutual support. As President of our global communion, I am able to see the wonderful ways Lutherans around the world connect with and sustain one another in their difficult work. And as President, I am aware of the many disagreements that we have within our diverse global body. Just as with the first Christian communities, we are not all of one mind on a host of issues. Part of my role as President of this diverse communion is to help ensure unity while not seeking uniformity.

Since we believe, as I mentioned earlier, that the “one holy, Christian church ... is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the sacraments are administered according to the gospel,” our communion is bound together by pulpit and altar fellowship. We are not separated by secondary questions, including disagreements about social/ethical issues or the style of mission engagement. What binds us together is far greater than what would threaten to separate us from one another.

What binds us together is the blood of Christ, which has set us free. This is our theology of justification by faith. For us to have sustainable unity among Lutheran churches, however, we must ensure that we are speaking in terms we can recognize with one another. We have many seminaries throughout Asia. But what is the common line from which we are teaching our emerging leaders? How can we be sustainable if we are producing generations of leaders who do not comprehend one another theologically? The unity and sustainability of our
churches will be strengthened with some form of theological coordination.

In conclusion, my sisters and brothers, I remind you again that the passion of God and of our global communion is for the church and for the world. When we consider the topic of sustainability, I believe as well that sustainability for the church is sustainability for the world. In our engagement with theology, spirituality, society, and relationships, we are called to seek sustainability not for ourselves alone, but for the sake of the One who has sent us and for the sake of those who need our prophetic diakonia. I am proud to be a fellow laborer with you in this vineyard and look forward to seeing what more God will do in our midst in order that we will always work together for sustainability.

May God bless you.
Bishop Mounib Younan (President)
Endnotes

1 I draw my discussion of Spanish subtleties from this concise article: Carlos Miguel Barber Kuri, “Sostenibilidad o sustentabilidad?” Cable News Network (May 22, 2009), available online at http://www.cnnexpansion.com/actualidad/2009/05/22/sostenibilidadocsustentabilidad.


5 “For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more,” The Economist (August 9, 2007).


7 Report from the LWF Special Committee “Luther 2017: 500 years of Reformation,” presented to the Meeting of the LWF Council (12–18 June 2013, Geneva).


9 Farhan Bokhari, “Deadly attack on Pakistan Christians ignites murderous mob,” CBS News (March 15, 2015), online at

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I welcome you all to the Asia Church Leadership Conference in Taiwan.

The Asia Church Leadership Conference provides a space and opportunity for church leadership in our region – youth leaders, women leaders, Bishops, regional coordinators, LWF council members, theologians and mission partners who will share information, exchange knowledge and collaborate through joint activities as part of regional expression. We are looking forward to having productive and good discussions.

It is a great privilege to meet here in Taipei, Taiwan. We are very grateful for the invitation by the Lutheran Church of Taiwan to come and see, to closely listen and to engage in discussion. Thank you for inviting us to your home: to the place where your heart is. We are eager to know and hear about the wonderful stories of God’s abundant love and missions here in Taiwan. We are looking forward to being with your churches to know what is to be witnessing in your context. In doing so, we hope to better understand your people and your church and also to experience the joy of fellowship together.
It is through these profound actions of visitation and hospitality, of expressed mutual concern, opportunities and encouragement that the notion of being a communion of churches connects to tangible and lively expressions rooted in the life of our member churches.

Especially, we would also like to thank the China Lutheran Seminary for offering your seminary as a wonderful venue for our ACLC meeting which makes our gathering more meaningful. During our meeting in this Seminary, we hope we can learn more about your work and mission.

Sisters and brothers, as a communion of churches in Asia, we are journeying toward the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017. In 1517 October 31st, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. It was the new beginning for an entire generation for men and women. It was the reformation which continues to touch people even today.

When most of us are focusing to the very day of the Reformation, we also need to bear in our mind “what at all happens on the 32nd of October? In other words, “How do we live as a Christian after the 31st October, the Reformation?” This question is leading us to our theme in this ACLC, Challenging us to question and reflection on the sustainability in our churches: “As a church, as a communion in Christ liberated by God’s grace, how can we live and work for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world, now and in the future?
The Reformation changed people in the midst of their lives, has lead people from the fear to the freedom that Christians enjoy and to new beginnings as we go out into the world. This gospel of Jesus Christ should be celebrated and communicated to the people of our time so that the world may believe that God gives Himself to human beings and calls us into communion with Himself and His church.

Historically the concept of sustainability emerged from economic and referred to investments made in the production area and recovery of them done through profit from sale of products. And since the eighties of last century it is observed an adaptation of the concept of sustainability to the complexity in the world and society increased especially by environmental and ecological issues.

And here comes an important question for our meeting. “What does it mean for us as a church to be sustainable?”

In biblical terms, sustainability in every sense depends on the relationship with the Creator. Being sustainable as a church, means that it provides the space in which restoration and reconciliation conquered by Christ is experienced and lived. The call to return to the creator: this is the Gospel that creates the Church and gives back hope to the world. So being sustainable in holistic term is not only reflecting on the growth in the number of churches but really affirming on the firm continuity of the church witnessing the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

The last thing I would like to share is that, when we speak about sustainability, it is an issue of intergenerational
solidarity. This task is one that we can only achieve when youth and adults work together to continue the witnessing of the Gospel. It is impossible to deal with this issue by excluding any generation. We need each other. The work towards a sustainable church requests a shared accountability, valued contribution from different generations. From our children in the Sunday school to the elders in the ministry, we need to value their gifts, their resources and find new models and creative ways to utilize the resources for a sustainable communion.

On that note, I hope that during our discussion we will be able to touch these fundamental questions and be able to fully reflect on what it means for us as a church to be sustainable.

May the Holy Spirit be poured out upon this Conference in blessed fullness, and enable us to discern His plans for us with clearness, and work them out with consecrated wills and intellects endued with power from our Lord.

Thank you.
RESOURCE PAPER 1

Mission & Church Growth As Marks of the Church’s Sustainability
Dr Kenneth Mtata – LWF

Mission and Sustainability as Marks of the church
BY: DR KENNETH MTATA

Understanding church
- Normative character—Bible and tradition
- Descriptive character—Lived experience

Normative character
- ONE
- HOLY
- CATHOLIC
- APOSTOLIC

ONENESS
- Rooted in the *koinonia* of the triune God (John 17:11)
- Manifest in worship (Matt. 18:20)
- Communion of the living (eclesia militans) and the dead (eclesia triumphant) (Heb. 12:1)

ONENESS
- Oneness not compromised by differences of, for example,
  (a) Individuality (1 Cor. 12:12)
  (b) Ethnicity (Rom. 10:12)
  (c) Gender and social status (Gal. 3:28)

Normative character: LUTHERAN
- WORD
- SACRAMENTS
HOLINESS
To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are made holy in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours (1 Co 1:2).
(a) Belonging to God
(b) Made holy in Christ
(c) Called to be holy
(d) Together with all others

HOLINESS
But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Pe 2:9)
(a) Called and chosen out of darkness
(b) Elevated into a status of priesthood
(c) Set apart into a people
(d) Given a responsibility to proclaim

CATHOLICITY
(a) The whole message, world, creation (Mark 16:15)
(b) Foretaste of the eschatological realization of God’s rule (Col. 1:16-20)
(c) Ignatius of Antioch (AD 110): ‘kat’ holos’—according to the whole
(d) From 2nd century AD: distinguishing mark of true from false church

APOSTOLICITY
(a) Sent Moses, Prophets, John the Baptist, His Son (Gal 4:4), the Spirit
(b) Called, Conformed, Commissioned
(c) Vocation is response to the Sending—One (missio, Apostolos)
(d) Proclamation in apostolic tradition is ministry (diakonia) is in the Spirit of
  i. Truth (John 14:17; 8:32)
  ii. Love
  iii. Hope/consolation (Eberhard-Jengeb)

Six core-competencies for sustainable church
1. Responding to God in worship (dakologa/leitourgia);
2. Nurturing fellowship of God, human beings and creation (diakonia);
3. Serving the hurting and strive for justice in the world (diakonia);
4. Proclaiming the whole message of Jesus Christ to all (kerygma);
5. Witnessing to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ (martys);
6. Teaching the full gospel, the whole counsel and wisdom (elleuchte).

Conclusions and Implications for Asia
• Ensure ongoing critical reflection on the unchanging Word in ever-changing context (theological task)
• Seek critical engagement with other Christians, other faiths, business, state, civil society for the common good (public task)
RESOURCE PAPER 2

THEOLOGICAL FORMATION AND REFLECTION

The Church’s Ecclesiology, Self-understanding and Role in Society
(A Reflection Paper)

“Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice – alive, holy, and pleasing to God – which is your reasonable service. 2 Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God – what is good and well-pleasing and perfect.”

Romans 12:1-2

INTRODUCTION

Theological education in Asia has its focus on theological formation, which incorporates spiritual and character formation, and impartation of vital ministerial skills for rites and social entrepreneurship. Essentially, therefore, theological training is not about passing on knowledge about God alone; rather, it is about people, their relationship with God and their service to community. The primary purpose of studying God’s Word is to encounter God in our lives, and allowing the Word of God shapes us, so that we can engage with the community in loving service and play a transformative role. Therefore, the Church needs to have a clear picture of what is the content of its belief system and how its religious practices are ordered by this belief system in developing a self understanding, which in turn provides the motivation for engagement with the society. Hence, a seminary
is a place to prepare students for ministry and assisting churches to accomplish her call and mission, and should rightly take the question of ecclesiology seriously.

IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH

This quest for a relevant ecclesiology through right theological formation begins with understanding of what the Church is. The Scriptures provide various imageries, which carries within them certain socio-religious implications. For example:

- **She** is corporately referred to as the body of Christ 1 Corinthians 12:12-27
- She is also referred to as God’s family; we are all sons and daughters of the Lord 2 Cor 6:18.
- her intimate and dependent relationship to her Lord is likened to a vine and its branches (John 15:1-11)
- In her relationship to the world she is referred to as the pillar of the truth (1 Tim 3:15)
- She is corporately referred to as a building (1 Cor 3:9)
- A living temple (Eph 2:20-21)
- Her service before God and in her relationship she is referred to as a “holy nation,” a “royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9)
- She is referred to by the Lord as the salt and light of the world (Matt 5:13-15; Acts 13:47; Col 4:5-6).

The purpose of the Church is to carry on the work of Christ in proclaiming the gospel and being a light to the world (John 14:13-14; Acts 1:8; Acts 13:47). Therefore, the Church’s ecclesiology is the way the church understands its call, authority, relationship with the community, in brief, its purpose of
existence, nature of practice and model of governance. Here the Lutheran Christian expressions cannot be just modular or theoretical but must relate to faith, life and work issues in a manner that would make Christianity significant and relevant within its diverse settings. The praxis element of faith expression should be accorded equal significance so as to steer clear of tendencies that would otherwise inhibit relevance in the teaching of theology and living out theology. This nexus is important in avoiding our approach from becoming static and non relevant. Further, as we reflect on theological formation, the perceptive balance between teaching of theology and practice of theology as well as the nexus between the Great Commission and Great Commandment ought to be sacredly guarded and constantly reemphasized. Thus making the Lutheran Church become visible through local expressions and in which Lutheran members commit themselves to services; to God and humanity. Here, too, the question and importance of Lutheran identity needs some mentioning.

DENOMINATIONAL IDENTITY – CONFESSIONAL OR BRANDING

Denominational identity is based on a uniquely arranged set of beliefs (confessions), polity (style of Church administration) and worship (performing faith duties), which the particular Church community accepts as relevant and true for itself. As it has been over and again mentioned, that in Asia the Lutheran Church in general, view LUTHERAN as a brand name and with lesser understanding of the doctrinal and confessional composition of Lutheran beliefs or history. While this is true, a second issue tied with identity is the context of Christian minority, where the need for ecumenical partnership and
acceptance of other denominations as equally true and relevant, is vital for survival. In addition most of the theological seminaries where Lutheran pastors are trained usually assume an ecumenical identity. On the one hand we need to set a higher benchmark for enhancing Lutheran identity in Asia and on the other hand, our understanding of “Justification by Faith Alone and Grace Alone’ should help us to strengthen our ecumenical outlook. The brand identity need not interfere with the ‘unity in diversity’ principle. This can be a happy marriage. The following are some situation where there develops instances of loss of identity.

a. Where lay leaders and Pastors object to the Church’s policies and programs which are geared to enhancing Lutheran knowledge and identity.
b. When Lutheran congregations decide not to use Lutheran resources.
c. Unresolved and substantial theological differences held by their membership.
d. Where people do not understand that theological unity is part of the brand identity.
e. When external forms and expressions become more important than doctrine.

Given those realities, young people today, too, do not quite subscribe to denominational loyalty. They look for a certain type of church that would give them what they like and the kind of spirituality that they appreciate. They get married in the Lutheran Church but worship at the Charismatic Church.
SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIVE INTERVENTION: UNDERSTANDING SERVANTHOOD

Yet another crucial question is the Church’s role in the society. This hinges on the question of relevance and performance of the faith community. Here theological education plays a vital role. Theological education becomes relevant as theologians engage spiritually and biblically with each other, with the communion of saints and with the world, and in the process assess the ongoing ministry, church witness, structures, systems and operational modes, policies to ascertain needs, relevance and congruence.

Reaching out and transforming society requires proper theological undergirding, acquiring vital skills and clarity of purpose. The seminaries sometimes call this practical theology; becoming not only hearers of the Word but also doers. In other words it is about how we understand our vocation as towards service to God and to the kingdom of God in the most appropriate and effective manner in enhancing witness and societal transformation. The Cross presupposes the fact that the peace received by the world from Christ cannot be enjoyed if people are not healed:
- From lack of holistic spirituality and narrow understanding of religion.
- From ignorance concerning misguided spirituality based on individualism.
- From the love of amassing wealth, power and egocentrism.
- From marginalization based on caste and ethnic identity.
- From love for violence and the commissioning of it.
- From negative religious fundamentalism.
- From male and female gender biasness.
- From lack of ecological care.

Here negative religious fundamentalism may pose a danger. But we affirm, that, the answer for negative religious fundamentalism is not countering it with more secularism, but asserting religious values such as compassion, social justice, peacemaking, unity in diversity and sacrifice; similar to the ‘way’ of the Cross of the Servant - King.

TOWARDS AN INCARNATIONAL SPIRITUALITY

In theological training it is therefore important to educate students not only in the key area of knowledge transfer, but also the praxis. Here we need to underline the related connectedness between, information, function and relation (knowledge, purpose and practice). The shared or acquired information, in order to be translated into a practical model, will so require more than just the ownership of knowledge itself, but also the capacity to apply it appropriately. Appropriate application will systematize the process in order to achieve the purpose of acquired information or knowledge, which would lead to formation and transformation through innovation. Thus it will create a harmonious relation between Christ-people and God’s-people, especially in the area of ministering to people with needs through welfare services, humanitarian support and development as a Christian response to redemptive social action. It would bring Christian community into a theological conversation through living out love practically.
Hence, it calls for a prayerful discernment and holistic approach in addressing contextual needs. The assessment process must be one that takes into consideration all areas of life’s activities. Pain and suffering should connect Christ-People with God’s-People in a manner that Christian care and Christian charity would be able to go hand in hand. Where does this begin? It starts with developing a respect for human dignity. The respect is not based on some philosophical tenets, but recognized something inherent in creation. It begins when Christ-People, as they read the Scriptures, attentively listen to the cries and struggles of those around them – God’s-People. Connecting the reading with the community struggles is vital to the relevance of the gospel of Christ and the missional mandate.

We therefore need to assert that the fruits of faith are clearly reflected in the actions of grace practiced within the community guided by the koinonia and diakonia principles. The Church’s life is among people who need to be served – the poor and marginalized, the oppressed and abused (Matt 26:10-11). Hence, there is always room for opportunity and service for those who want to follow the Jesus’ model.

THE NEED FOR REVISITING

This is where we need to revisit the nexus between transformative theological education and living out faith with the community. The revisiting is particularly necessary, because both the context within the Church and the external society continues to reflect trends that are subjected to constant change. The new ideological changes, within and without, must clearly be understood and undergirded with Scriptural interpretations that
are practical and relevant in promoting Christian involvement. So the book of James notes, “What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself (James 2: 14-17).

Wilfred J Samuel

SABAH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
(12-15 April 2015 - Asia Church Leadership Consultation Towards A Sustainable Asia Region, Taiwan-LWF)
By the grace of God I had the privilege to serve God as a pastor, a missionary (Church Planting) and now a bishop. Through the years of my ministry, I had often struggled with the issue of “making disciples” within the Lutheran Tradition.

Year after year we are challenged by Jesus’ words talking about “disciple” and “discipleship” in the Gospels. Some examples are “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34); or “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthews 28:19)

It puzzled me as to why although Martin Luther himself used the words for “disciple” and “discipleship” in his translation of the Scripture, it did not become a part of Lutheran Theological vocabulary until much later. It is believed that Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s “Nachfolge” may be one of the first, if not the first of the major works promoting the concept in our tradition.

One of the reason is the perception that it make a “believer” less than a “disciple” because Luther, Melanchthon and their students believed that when one trusted in the Lord
above all that He has made, he or she would do what the logic of faith makes inevitable: they who have been buried with Christ in His baptism would raise with Him to walk in His footstep.

Another reason is that the demands of discipleship, sounds more of Law than Gospel. With the emphasis on the Gospel, we hesitate to preach the demands of discipleship as taught by Jesus.

**How then shall we in the Lutheran tradition approach this subject of Discipleship?**

Brian Brock in his book, “Singing the Ethos of God” wrote “Luther’s emphasis is on transformation into the form of Christ, understood in terms of Nachfolge, is the following of ... a God who is leading in time ... a dialogical ethic of hearing and speaking with God”1, It is the relationship between loving God and trusting child of God and hearer of his Word that determines all of life. That Luther seldom used the word discipleship should not distract us from the fact that he was very concerned about Nachfolge, as the sense and shape of the life of faith.

It may be helpful for us to note that Luther’s understanding of Christian life involves the daily turning away from false gods to Jesus Christ. In other words, “the whole life of the Christian is a life of repentance,”2 of daily dying through the surrender of sinfulness to the buried Christ and the daily resurrection to a new life by trusting in the one in whose footsteps we follow.

According to Luther, this following in Christ’s footstep is possible only in and through faith and faith comes through the
hearing of the Word of God. He emphasized that everything done in faith is God pleasing (Rom. 14:23). Luther concluded his Small Catechism with instructions for daily meditation on God’s Word and prayer and a table of succinct pointers on how to live within the structure of God’s ordained situations according to his callings and commands.

Luther stated this very clearly in his 1519 commentary of Galatians:

This faith, I say, was promised in the blessing. Here again, therefore, he (Paul) touches briefly on the fact that the Gentiles will be children of Abraham, not because they will imitate him but because they have received the promise; and that they will imitate him because they will be his children as result of God’s promise and fulfillment, not as a result of the deeds and the imitating of the Gentiles. It is not the imitation that makes sons; it is sonship that makes imitators.”3

For Luther, following the example of Christ does not make us to be Christian because it is God’s favour alone that does that. However, it is God’s external Word that renews the inner person and this is not distinguished by its ability to empower us to do good works but rather it grants freedom to do them.

My Personal Journey

After much personal struggle, I concluded that while we can disagree with how discipleship is understood and done by some para-church organization and churches, we cannot escape from the fact that Jesus called us to “make disciples”. It is
important that we go back to the Scriptures and ask ourselves, “What does Jesus meant by “disciples” or “make disciples”.

(We cannot make disciples as Jesus desired if we do not know what He meant.)

A simple definition of disciple and discipleship is: “A disciple is a learner and discipleship is the process of learning.” It is an ongoing process of learning to follow Jesus. It is learning about the God who so loved us as well as what He has done for us, in us and through us. To put it simply, it is learning to connect our faith with our daily life. Another way to put it is learning to live in the grace of God daily.

In Matthew 28 where Jesus charged His disciple to make disciples, He said “baptizing them in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

In other words, making disciples involves the bringing people into a faith relationship with God through baptism and teaching them that they may live and grow in that relationship with God, with one another and with their neighbours. It is the following and learning from Jesus that we become like Christ.

Twice in the Bible God the Father spoke from heaven of Jesus, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well please, listen to Him” (once at his baptism and another on the Mount of Transfiguration).
All humankind is created of God and is loved by God, “for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believed in Him shall not perish (John 3:16) but not all humankinds are his children. All baptized are children of God through adoption by the grace of God but not all children are well pleased of God as Jesus was.

My question and challenge to my people and to you is: Are you His beloved child in whom He is well pleased. Are we growing in our understanding and love of Him who gave Himself to us in love? Are we growing in our love for one another in the family of God as well as our neighbours who do not yet know nor believed in Christ. Are we equipping and empowering our people to be light and salt in the world?

I am not proposing new methods nor am I introducing new programs. I am challenging all of us to take a good hard look at our own church in our own context. How can we as a Church, intentionally and conscientiously provide an environment for conducive growth; where the gospel is faithfully preached and members strengthened to be who and what God desires them to be. When I was in Wittenberg, I was fascinated with the altarpiece of Cranach. It portrayed the following scenes:
(1) Undergirding the whole altarpiece we have Martin Luther pointing towards the crucified Jesus. It is a powerful reminder that the role of the preacher is to draw the people’s attention to the crucified Christ. It is important that our people understand who is God is and what He has done for us. If our preaching does not help our people to know and appreciate God more than, we have short-changed them. Are we preaching the Word of God or are we preaching Christian ethics?

(2) The painting on the left depicts the Sacrament of Baptism with Philip Melanchthon baptizing. It calls our attention to the baptismal grace through which we receive our sonship and office as priest (priesthood of all believers) as illustrated with Philip Melanchthon baptizing as a layperson. How are we helping our people understand and grow in their Christian vocation as sons and daughters of God and as priests of God.

(3) The painting in the center depicts the Sacrament of Holy Communion depicting Christ with his original disciples as well as disciples of the day that includes Martin Luther. Besides reminding us of the daily grace of God for us through the Body and Blood of Christ, it also reminds us of our communion with saints past and present. How are we reinforcing this glorious grace to our people that they, overwhelmed by the love and grace of God respond in love for God and neighbours and translate that love into active expression in worship and service of God and in outreach to and service of their community.

(4) On the right panel of the altarpiece is a depiction of the office of the keys where forgiveness is extended to the repentant and withheld from the unrepentant. How do we help our people to
recognize their need of grace daily and invites them to receive that grace through daily repentance.

As Lutherans, we all are familiar with Luther’s small Catechism. It is important for us to remember that Luther wrote it as a tool for fathers to teach their children about God, God’s Law and Gospel that they may be nurtured in the faith. Have we train and equip the parents in our midst that they can model and mentor their children in the faith. How can the church creatively reinforce that with their confirmation programs? How can we provide the catechumen a safe environment where they can ask questions and be guided in their understanding of God, a place where they are guided in their reading of the Scriptures, share their insights and pray for one and another.

Many churches in Asia have small group ministries: Cell groups, Bible Study groups, Care groups and others. How can we explore turning these groups into safe places where one can share the concerns of their lives, share lessons learnt from the reading of the Scriptures and to pray for one and another.

Lastly, are our churches trying to do too much at the expense of our core purposes? What I meant is that in the trying to be all things to all people do we become too busy to nurture or be nurtured.

Conclusion

It has been my observation that churches which conscientiously provide an environment for conducive lifelong learning and growing in the grace and the knowledge of God do well in retaining their members. Those who truly believe that
God is real and is really good will worship faithfully and serve passionately. Those who grasped the extent of God’s love and grace will respond with gratitude and will have little problem telling others about it or giving sacrificially in response to needs or as an expression of the love and gratitude. These churches will not only be “sustainable” but will be vibrant and growing in maturity, ministry and mission.

The Lutheran Church in Singapore is a small Church of only about 3,000 members and by the grace of God we are not only self-reliant financially, we are also sending and supporting missionaries in the mission field. We are engaged in God’s Mission in Cambodia, China, Mongolia and Thailand. We have missionary teams visiting and supporting the ministry in the above countries annually.

It is my prayer that over and above all the good things we are doing, that we do not neglect the discipling of our people young and old, that the whole Church is engaged in the bringing of the whole gospel to the whole world.

**Endnotes**

2 Small Catechism, Table of Christian Callings, BC 365-367
3 “Lectures on Galatians” (1519) in LW 27:263
A. Introduction – the Contextual Realities

There were several attacks on Christians, a few churches in the national capital New Delhi were vandalized and many more incidents of such kind occurred in other parts of India in the very first quarter of 2015. Heinous among all these was the rape of a 70 year old Roman Catholic nun in Ranaghat in Nadia district of West Bengal which occurred last month. In January, this year, in Tamadue, the central region of Sulawesi, Indonesia, five Christians were murdered in two separate attacks by Muslim fanatics; March has seen the death of 17 Christians with more than 70 injured in the Taliban suicide attack on two churches near Lahore in Pakistan. Since 2010, over the dispute of the use of the term, Allah; the conflict between the minority Christians and the majority Muslims is widening in Malaysia with the latest attack on the Church of Assumption in Lebuh Farquhar in Penang, Malaysia. And the most heart-bleeding piece of news is the beheading of twenty one Coptic Christians in Libya by forces sympathetic to the Islamic State. Are these some isolated cases of religious fundamentalism and intolerance or a well-organized and concerted effort of genocide that is
systematically being carried out against Christians in Asia and the Middle East. My sincere attempt this morning is to re-imagine the image of the Church as we think of her sustainability.

B. The Image of or the Definition of the Church

In the context of growing opposition to the Church in India, and concerted effort by the religious majority, and the deathly silence of the present Government, the Church in India need to indulge in a self-understanding and self-critique of her vision and mission. For all of us, there is absolutely no hesitation in considering the Church as the communion of believers. When we talk of the Church and her image what rings out in our minds and memories are the words of Martin Luther, he said, *Thank God, a child of seven years old knows what the Church is, namely the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd.* (*The Smalcald Articles*, III.12) That is to say, if we define the Church from Luther’s vantage point, the Church is a community of people who abide in Christ by faith and in whom the Holy Spirit is at work making them holy.

Here we come to the crucial issue of how to express and articulate through our word and deed our faith in Jesus Christ or God and how the holiness of God empowers us to present the Church's work and witness as acceptable to all in our neighborhood? In other words, *in our own diverse contexts, what could be the life-giving image of the Church?* This in fact raises the question about the sustainability of the Church.
C. The Church’s Sustainability

In spite of growing opposition and accelerating violence of intimidation by right-wing religious groups like the Sangh Parivar, and the insensitive and discriminative attitude of the successive Governments, the Church in India is not disintegrating but rather sustaining herself and steadily growing from strength to strength. We feel saddened whenever we hear about the growing realities of empty pews and diminishing membership of the Church in other parts of the world. However, the Asian pictures in general and India in particular, it is the reverse. Both *religiosity and spirituality* are becoming visible and vibrant. For me these are the two resources that are available locally for the sustainability of the Church. In other words, two characteristics of the Church, faith and holiness are very much alive.

1. The Local Resources for Sustainability

Religiosity and spirituality as resources for the sustainability of the work and witness of the Church are integral part of Asian theistic heritage. When talking about religiosity one necessarily recognizes its two dimensions – experiential and ritualistic. In the experiential dimension, the encounter of a person with the divine/transcendent power transforms him/her as spiritual. In spirituality one experiences the connectedness to the divine, to the self, to the nature and tries to be in harmony with everyone. In the process of living in harmony with the other, one needs to struggle with several options or choose different possibilities.
2. Enriching Extrinsic Religiosity

First, Christians as called out people of God and sanctified by the Holy Spirit are in fact, recognized by their religiosity through witnessing acts and practices of public praise and thanksgiving to God and through their prayers for self-edification and for the welfare of others. In this public demonstration of religiosity Martin Luther advocates the congregation’s worship wherein every Christian joins in the worship of God, and learns to meditate on the life-giving Word in order to find out Gods will for the well-being of the individual and for the community that does not exclude others. This extrinsic religiosity in fact, enriches one’s understanding of the other, realizing the needs of the other, and expressing concern for the other. This in fact, helps one to wean away from mutual distrust to openness to appreciate one another. For this we need prophetic intrinsic spirituality.

3. Prophetic Intrinsic Spirituality

Second, for its sustainability the Church needs to develop a prophetic spirituality. Last week, on April 5 2015, the government of India has convened the conclave of the Chief Justices and Chief Ministers of the 30 States and 7 Union Territories and the day of the Convention happened to be Easter Sunday. Justice Joseph Kurian had objected to the government’s deliberate attempt of jeopardizing the secular nature of the country, saying that it is his fundamental right to attend a worship service to celebrate Easter in his parish Church along with his family rather than attending to official business. In a majority world of religiosity, here is a
Christian who is courageous enough to reflect and articulate his prophetic intrinsic spirituality by defying the powers and principalities. If only one individual believer can raise his voice against injustice and apathy, if only the Church which is a movement of the collective of intrinsic spirituality of many believers can become prophetic for the well-being and harmonious co-existence of all, irrespective of caste, creed, color and gender. In other words, the inward work of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit needs to become outward prophetic outbursts in the face of injustice and discrimination and in the fight against life-negating forces. This in fact invites the Church for ecumenical diakonia and to strengthen interfaith relations

4. Ecumenical Diakonia and Inter-Faith Relations

Third, for a long time, the Church felt that anything other than Christianity is the work of the devil. The very concept of ecumenism is complex and confusing for many because it embraces the whole ‘inhabited earth’. For many, true ecumenism is a state of the mind and spirit that recognizes the unity in diversity, and for others it may be a confessional openness to ecumenical participation. The Church is the sign and sacrament of God’s loving and liberating presence in our very own contexts. That is to say that the Church needs to become sensitive to the fact of the life-affirming grace of God and the empowering embrace of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians of other confessional backgrounds as well as peoples of other living faiths, especially the concern for the last and the least – moving from sarvodaya (welfare of all) to antyodaya (well-being of the last and the least).
The indwelling image of God constrains the Church to seek for ecumenical *diakonia* and to develop and strengthen Inter-faith relations. The scandal of divisions within the Church of God, wherein one is shocked and saddened to see the viciousness with which one Christian denomination attempts to humiliate and annihilate the credibility of the work and witness of other confessional group forgetting the Gospel truth that Christians are reconciled to God and to one another through the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let us realize that being ecumenical means, our very being coming together seeking out the will of God, and what the Holy Spirit is inspiring us to do through sharing our resources with one another for the well-being of the last and the least – the ecumenical diakonia.

The mission of God in ecumenical *diakonia* compels the Church to reach out to other and to cherish unity in diversity as a gift of God and to find out ways and means to give visible expressions to that unity in diversity. Ecumenical diakonia is nothing but a prophetic intrinsic spirituality. The Church’s unique role in this endeavor is her openness and willingness to make an effort to uncover and unshackle every idea, concept and prejudice that prevent her from existing as the channel of God’s grace and to live out her vision and mission, and her work and witness.

D. A Word of Hope

Whatever the context may be, and however negligible the numerical strength of the Church may be, the Church is a
powerful movement that proclaims and shares the love of God to those who still live in darkness without hope for tomorrow. Extrinsic religiosity, prophetic intrinsic spirituality and ecumenical diakonia and interfaith relations are the local resources that are to be tapped by the Church in order to fight against injustice and inequality and move forward from strength to strength, to foster dignity of life, justice, peace and harmony among all and from sarvodaya to anthyodaya. This potential vibrancy of the Church often times makes others suspicious of the Church and its well-intended work and witness. Under such unreasonable swaying influence, one becomes an adversary to the Church invoking and advocating the need cultural ‘nationalism’ such as and necessity to safeguard and protect the parochial Hindu, Christian, Islam nationalism, etc. In other words, there is a danger of nationalism in its narrow sense, robbing the vibrancy of intra-faith and inter-faith relations and conversations. The only way forward is to develop an anthro-centered nationalism.
PROJECT REPORT 1

Women on the Move – A Project Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation

Goals

- To make women visible in the life of the church and society.
- To strengthen the women’s network.
- To explore the main theme of the Assembly, “Liberated by God’s grace” from the women’s perspective.

Timeline

- Regional herstory committees are formed with the regional WICAS coordinator and one other member, i.e. NEALUC, SEALUC, WESALUC.
- Regionally we are selecting 1 or 2 stories from each church, but each church can collect as many stories as they want.
- Regional publication online of those stories that are not selected.
- The global collection is released before the LWF Assembly in May 2017.

Who should be invited to tell the stories?

- Grassroots lay women
- Theologians
- Ordained women
Formal and informal educators

What kind of stories should be collected?

- Stories of women´s experiences of empowerment and women making prophetic changes.
- Stories of discrimination and injustice towards women.
- Stories of women´s barriers to self-realization and education.
- Stories of women who have served as role models and agents of encouragement in church and society.

How should those stories be used?

- Theology through these stories - doing theology from daily life experiences.
- For discussions about women´s role in the church and society, as a tool for workshops, Bible studies etc.
- As preparatory material for Assemblies/pre-Assemblies.
- Include photos of authors/described persons in their natural environment.

Proposal

- That the ACLC recommends that member churches in the Asia Communion engage in the Her-stories project, as part of the “Women on the Move – From Wittenberg to Windhoek” and support the process of collecting stories, which will be developed by a regional committee lead, by the WICAS regional coordinators.

(R espectfully submitted by WICAS Asia Regional Coordinators: Ranjitha Borgoary and Nora Samosir)
THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE REPORT

1. **Drafting Committee Members:** Bishop Suneel Bhanu, Ms Hannah Renuka, Rev Steven Lawrence, Dr Wilfred J Samuel, Ms. Heidi Smith (apology).

2. **Dates of the Conference:** 12-15 April 2015

3. **Venue:** China Lutheran Seminary

4. **Theme:** Asia Church Leaders Consultation: Towards a Sustainable LWF Asia Region - Holistic Sustainability

5. **Word of Appreciation:** The Consultation members would like to thank the Lutheran Churches in Taiwan and the China Lutheran Seminary for assisting in hosting the Consultation.

6. **Objectives of the Consultation:**
   
a. To create a platform for key leadership of churches to identify and continue to deepen the conversation on holistic sustainability and identifying their contextual areas of focus.

b. To enhance commitment to being companion churches for mutual accompanying (strong churches and struggling churches in a relationship of mutual accompaniment).

c. To help Heads of churches to understand the purpose of the pre-assemblies and assemblies and be able to respond to the agenda meaningfully, particularly for the coming Pre-Assembly and Assembly in 2016 and 2017 respectively.
d. To provide the space to discuss and develop the theme and sub-themes of the Assembly in 2017 contextually

e. To understand the purpose, process and plan of the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

7. **Number of Participants**: 75 persons

8. **Keynote Address: The Sustainability of the Asia Region – Holistic Sustainability** – Bishop Mounib Younan (President LWF)

   Bishop Younan pointed out that there are different aspects of sustainability. This include: doctrinal sustainability, spiritual sustainability, sustainability in society, sustainability in inter-religious and ecumenical engagement, sustainability in mission, and sustainability within our community. He added that we are not called merely to preserve ourselves, or live in imaginations of the past, or create static impressions of society; but are instead sent out to seek justice and establish peace to promote the flourishing of all human communities.

9. **Resource Papers – Discussion and Reflections**

   a. **Mission & Church Growth As Marks of the Church’s Sustainability** - Revd Dr Kenneth Mtata

   Revd Dr. Mtata observed that there are two ways we can understand the character of the Church; normative or descriptive. Normative character is reflected when the Church is based upon Bible and tradition, while the
descriptive character may be defined by the lived experiences of the Church. Further, the Normative character carries in it four basic elements; namely, oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. Within this there are six core areas of competencies, which include, responding to God in worship (doxology/leitourgia), nurturing fellowship of God, human beings and creation (koinonia), serving the suffering and strive for justice in the world (diakonia), proclaiming the whole message of Jesus Christ to all (kerygma), witnessing to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ (martyria) and teaching the full gospel, the whole counsel and wisdom (didache).

b. Theological Formation and Reflection – The Church’s Ecclesiology, Self-Understanding and Role in Society – Revd Dr Wilfred J Samuel

According to Revd Dr. Wilfred John, the theological education in Asia has its focus on theological formation, which incorporates spiritual and character formation, and impartation of vital ministerial skills for Christian ministry in the church and social entrepreneurship. Therefore, theological training is not just about imparting knowledge about God alone; but also people, their relationship to God and their service to community. Therefore, the Church needs to have a clear picture of what is the content of their belief system and how their religious practices are ordered by this belief system in developing a self-understanding, which in turn provides the motivation for engagement with the society. Hence, theological education in the seminary, a place which prepares
students for Church ministry, should rightly take the question of ecclesiology and communion seriously.

c. **Church Sustainability & Discipleship** - Bishop Terry Kee

Although Luther seldom use the word “disciple” or “discipleship” in his writings, for him, the following in Christ’s footstep is possible only in and through faith and faith comes through the hearing of the Word of God. A simple definition of disciple and discipleship is: “A disciple is a learner and discipleship is the process of learning.” It is an ongoing process of learning to follow Jesus. It is important to make the home and church a conducive place for the learning and growing of every member of the church. We have to ensure the learning space of the church is not squeezed out by too many activities.

Those who truly believe that God is real and is really good will worship faithfully and serve passionately. Those who grasped the extend of God’s love and grace will respond with gratitude and will have little problem telling others about it or giving sacrificially in response to needs or as an expression of the love and gratitude. Thus the church will not only be “sustainable” but will be vibrant and growing in maturity, ministry and mission.

d. **The Church’s Sustainability & Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations** – Bishop Suneel Bhanu

According to Bishop Suneel Bhanu, in a pluralistic context of religions and cultures, the local resources available for the holistic sustainability of the Church are the extrinsic
religiosity and intrinsic spirituality of members of the Church wherein the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ accompanied by prophetic diakonia and advocacy-action becomes not only the missio dei, but channel for the Church's sustainability.

9. SUMMARY OF THE 8 GROUP REPORTS

a. PAPER: Mission & Church Growth as Marks of the Church’s Sustainability – Dr Kenneth Mtata

- Growing pressure from repressive government policies restricting Christian witness and freedom.
- Muslim majority countries facing continued pressure through government sponsored Islamization activities.
- Continued and unhealthy dependence on foreign financial aid.
- Lesser young people in the Church. Need to decrease gap between young and old through intergenerational partnership, networking and dialogue.
- Continued challenge for Lutheran identity in the midst of growing Charismatic influences and prosperity theology.
- Need for closer networking among Asian Lutheran Churches and a wider community is necessary.
- Migration is becoming a growing phenomenon. New support systems and networking is made necessary to minister to the membership abroad.
b. PAPER: Assembly Main and Sub Themes – Dr Nicholas Tai

The discussion was based on the Assembly theme *Liberated by God's Grace* and the sub themes, *salvation not for sale, human beings not for sale creation not for sale*. The findings include:

- Similar to the reformation era in the 16th century (the selling of indulgence) the concept of justification by good works is in most religions.
- Secularism (wealth) and animism (spiritism and fear) continue to have a negative impact in understanding salvation as a free gift of God.
- Liberated by God's Grace: Because of what Jesus had done for us, we are freed from the values set by the society, we are empowered to courageously pursue the calling and the values from God. It also means that we no longer do what we desire, we are required to fulfill the responsibilities God has entrusted to us as well as to respect the dignity and freedom of others.
- We should have ongoing reformation, in our churches so that they would not become exclusive but inclusive and the gospel (kergma) is reclaimed whenever it is overshadowed by our social or humanitarian works.
- Poverty, greed and exploitation are causes leading to human trafficking, selling girls for prostitution and indentured labour.
• Diaconal work in terms of education and vocational training should be strengthened to fight poverty.

• Government needs to be pressured and challenged to fight corruption and other illegal practices that go unchecked.

• Social class inequalities and unjust systems must be corrected through advocacy.

• The Church needs to be humble before God and admit that our possessions come from God, hence we need to use it to be a blessing for others. We need to promote an alternative theology to counter success theology. Money alone is not the key to success.

• The churches should stand against human trafficking and alongside victims of such evil practices.

• Practice fair-trade policies and buy only products produced through non-corrupt means.

• Encourage the practice of reducing, recycling, re-using. Preach on environmental abuses in services and include such topics in Bible study sessions.

• The Church has a role to play in educating people and create a renewed understanding of creation and responsibility to care for God’s good gifts.

• Promote advocacy within the Church concerning the rape of the environment.

c. PAPER: Theological Formation and Reflection – The Church’s Ecclesiology, Self-Understanding and Role in Society – Revd Dr Wilfred J Samuel
• Lutheran church in Asia should continue to support regional and wider Lutheran communion through smart partnership and fellowships.

• Lutheran churches in Asia should endeavor to use worship services to emphasize and enhance Lutheran identity.

• Churches should improve their understanding of Lutheran doctrines and what is holistic mission. Hence, Lutheran confirmation classes and Sunday school in the churches play a very important role in the education process.

• The church should find other creative ways to teach and improve our own Lutheran identity and communion.

• Seminaries should play a bigger role in creating better awareness of confessional identity and there must be an ongoing pastoral training to equip pastors with Lutheran teachings.

• While increasing and improving Lutheran identity and communion, it is also important for Lutheran churches to consider participating in local ecumenical organizations and be inclusive in the common witness.

• Encourage the publication of easily readable tracts on Lutheran doctrines and teachings.

• Gender issues and generational issues continue to remain as social issues in the Lutheran churches and require ongoing reformation.
• There is a need to review and revitalize our liturgical worship, by changing forms but retaining Lutheran theological emphases.

d. PAPER: **Church Sustainability & Discipleship** - Bishop Terry Kee

• Following Jesus would include following his words and His deeds. Hence, this should be reflected in continuous proclamation of the word and rendering diaconal services like Jesus.

• This would also include developing a strong sense of commitment, maintenance of the teacher–student and master-servant relationship, a total surrender to Christ, attitude of servanthood and sacrifice, and nurturing a harmonious relationship with God, Christ-People and God’s-People.

• We recognize that discipleship is not just the work of human beings, but the work of Holy Spirit in the life of the believers through the Church.

• We agree the use of the Small Catechism in an appropriate manner would aid in discipleship process.

• Use of contextualized teaching material and music would also be necessary for proper training of disciples.
e. PAPER: **The Church’s Sustainability & Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations** – Bishop Suneel Bhanu

- In the life offering image of the church, gospel proclamation and diakonia are very much visible, whereas advocacy is missing.

- The three elements of diakonia are Diakonia of Truth - no deception in society/all forms of life. Raise the question of justice? Liberating truth? Offering a ministry to the people and the government. Diakonia of Love/Care — for those who needs help. Diakonia of Hope and reconciliation. Those who are dying, church couldn’t help, but the presence is very important despite giving some form of helps.

- The resources that are available for the sustainability of the church – they are members of the church, especially the children and young people, for the church's sustainability is not possible without the full inclusion of its children and young people; the children and youth are of ‘tomorrow’ and hence need to be involved in decision making of today. Other resources are the contextual theologies of the Word of God.

- Ecumenism should start from our churches before moving to the communities. There should also be unity in our churches. Churches can’t grow without unity. By witnessing the unity within the church, society will see Christ too.

- The unique Lutheran identity is based on the awareness that we are both leaders and servants, obedience to Word and Sacrament, and realization of the importance of dialogical and contextual liturgy.
10. Project Reports Presented

a. **Women on the Move – A Project Commemorating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation**- Revd Dr Elaine Neufeld.

Asia WICAS Priorities – building leadership qualities through capacity training program, women theologians' network, collecting her-stories as a process of women on the move from Wittenberg to Windhoek, Implementation of Gender Justice Policy by translating the document into local languages.

b. **The Young Reformers - Youth Work in the Asia Region.**

In view of the ACLC 2013 youth report, the youth of Asia Region welcome the efforts and commitments to include them as leaders into life of the Asian Lutheran communion and in decision-making.

Accordingly it is encouraging that during the ACLC 2015 there were eleven young leaders participating which represents 15% of the total participants. The aspiration is to achieve the full youth quota of 20%. The eleven youth delegates being part of the ACLC and the church leadership would like to recommend the following resolutions on youth participation:

That LUCAS ensures the youth quota of 20% in the Asia Pre-Assembly of 2016.
To request the LWF Asia Secretary and the Youth Secretary to ensure the full participation of youth in planning the agenda, budget and implementation.

That LUCAS advises the church leaders to embrace and support the “Asia Lutheran Youth Network”, founded on April 19, 2015, as part of the regional expression in Asia.

That LUCAS ensures that bi-annual youth leadership meetings are convened at the regional level to empower the “Asia Lutheran Youth Network” and to sustain the Asia region.
CONSULTATION RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ACLC 1/2015

a. Resolved to thank Bishop Munib Younan, President of LWF for his gracious presence in this Consultation and for delivering the keynote address on “Holistic Leadership for Sustainability”

b. Resolved to thank Ms. Kwon Eun-hae, Vice President, Asia Region – LWF for her refreshing presence and accompaniment.

c. It is further resolved to record appreciation and thanks to Rev. Dr. William Chang, Area Secretary for Asia and Rev. Steven Lawrence, Regional Expression Officer for their dedication to the development of Asia region.

d. It is also resolved to thank Revd Dr. Kenneth Mtata, Revd Dr. Elaine Neuenfeld, Ms. Simangaliso Hove and Ms. Caroline Ritcher for their constant support through their kind presence.

ACLC 2/2015

a. Resolved to thank the leaders and members of the Taiwan Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church R.O.C, The Lutheran Church in Taiwan, R.O.C, especially Rev. Patrick Kao and Rev. Selma Chen and the staff and students of China Lutheran Seminary including Rev. Dr. Samuel Liu,
Ms. Karen Hsu for hosting the Consultation and the warm reception of the participants.

ACLC 3/2015

a. Resolved to thank all the resource persons whose presentations had enriched the Consultation.

ACLC 4/2015

a. The consultation participants have unanimously resolved to fully support WICAS’s program of ‘HERSTORIES’ publication project.

b. Further the participants resolved to appeal to all the Bishops and Presidents of the NeaLUC, WesaLUC AND SeaLUC regions to assist in identifying and motivating suitable and competent women to articulate their life stories from their respective sub-regions, as well as to assist in collecting and submitting such stories to the editors of HER STORIES by July 31, 2015.

ACLC 5/2015

a. Resolved to affirm that the purpose of the Church is to carry on the work of Christ in proclaiming the gospel and be the salt and light to the world (John 14:13-14; Acts 1:8; Acts 13:47). That is to say that the Lutheran Christian expressions cannot be just modular or theoretical but must relate to faith, life and work issues that would make the Lutheran Church in Asia significant and relevant within her diverse settings.
ACLC 6/2015

a. It is resolved to agree that the Lutheran churches in Asia should continue to be intentional in cooperating and networking in order to enhance Lutheran identity among the members, as well as maintaining qualitative communion with each other.
b. It is further resolved to recognise and affirm that in the context of wider communion and ecumenical partnership to accept the other denominations as equal and vital.

ACLC 7/2015

a. It is resolved to agree that the Lutheran Churches in Asia should set a higher benchmark in enhancing Lutheran understanding and identity in the region.

ACLC 8/2015

a. It is resolved to agree that the Cross of Jesus Christ presupposes the fact that peace received by the world from Christ cannot be enjoyed if people are not healed:
   • From the lack of holistic spirituality and narrow understanding of religion.
   • From misguided individualistic spirituality.
   • From the love of amassing wealth, power and egocentrism.
   • From marginalization based on caste and ethnic identity.
• From love and promotion of violence.
• From negative religious fundamentalism.
• From male and female gender biases.
• From lack of ecological sensitivity and care.

b. Further, it is resolved to affirm the marks of our Lutheran identity and symbol of our communion and to commit to this ministry of proclaiming peace and healing, in word and services to humanity.

**ACLC 9/2015**

a. It is resolved to encourage the member churches in Asia to be more active in engaging through the social media. The ACLC promotes the use of the already existing LWF Asia Desk Facebook page, LWF Asia-Pacific Facebook page, the LWF Asia Website and collaborate with the Asia Communications Network.

b. The generation of young people is today’s most frequent users of Social Media. The ACLC encourages members of the Asian Lutheran Youth Network to help build such capacity for church leaders in Asia. The ACLC calls for adequate support from churches and the Asia regional office.

c. It is recommended to present some results on the effective use of social media in church ministry at the Asia Pre-assembly 2016, to be prepared by the Asia Global Young Reformers.