

Lutherans from around the world gather in Namibia



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Almost 800 participants, including 324 delegates, are gathering in Windhoek from 10-16 May for the Twelfth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the highest LWF decision-making body that meets every six years. World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit will address the plenary on 12 May.

With the theme “Liberated by God’s Grace” and sub-themes articulating that creation, salvation and human beings are “not for sale”, the assembly is jointly hosted by the three LWF member churches in the country under the umbrella body, the United Church Council – Namibia Evangelical Lutheran Churches (UCC-NELC).

Considered a historic occasion, the LWF Assembly will dedicate privileged space in the program for the commemorations of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. A special event on the 500 years of Reformation will take place on 14 May in the Sam Nujoma Stadium in Windhoek.

Eminent Congolese surgeon Dr Denis Mukwege will deliver the keynote speech on 11 May, focusing on the assembly theme. An active Christian layperson, he has been recognized with several prestigious international awards including the 2008 UN Human Rights Award, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2014, and he has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Toward an ecumenical spring

Reflecting on the assembly's theme "Liberated by God's Grace" at his formal address, LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan encouraged members of the worldwide communion of churches "to capture Luther's drive to reform, rebuild and remake the church in a spirit of repentance and faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ", said Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL).

Turning to the processes of historic reconciliation in which the LWF has been engaged, he said the October 2016 joint Catholic-Lutheran commemoration of the Reformation at Lund and Malmö, Sweden, was profoundly significant for the ecumenical movement, and had charted the way forward from conflict to communion.

He expressed his hope that the sharing of prayer and mission manifested at the event alongside many other movements in the last decades of Lutheran-Catholic dialogue "will lead to further breakthroughs of an ecumenical spring."

Reconciliation and healing of memories

The LWF president also made reference to a recent document by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), in which the Protestant church body confesses to Namibians and to God for unjustifiable German colonial crimes, and asks for forgiveness. He offered LWF's support towards Namibia's reconciliation process with Germany, and emphasized the need to acknowledge and honor memories of past injustices in order for healing to occur.

[Lutheran World Federation Twelfth Assembly](#)

[WCC press release 3 November 2016: "Reformation commemoration 'day of great joy,' says WCC leader"](#)