

(Provisional Translation)

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For the Healing of the World

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1. Eli, Eli lema sabachthani (Mt 27:46) – the cry of the wounds of the world

- (1) We see the wounds of the children injured in the wars on our planet.
We see the hurt of the hungry people suffering injustice.
We see the wounding of women who are victims of rape.
We see the wounds of the homeless people living in the streets.
We see the hurt of lonely individuals who long to be loved in a loving environment.
We see the wounds of tormented creation, longing for redemption.
We hear the cry of Jesus: Eli, Eli lema sabachthani? (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?)
- (2) Our world has wounds and cries out. Even God is vulnerable and cries. God has exposed the divine self to wounds.

2. O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord! (Jer 22:29) – seeing contexts

- (3) In the ecumenical movement I have learned that our context has an influence on our theology. I live in the middle of Europe and come from the country of the Reformation. A lovely country, a fascinating continent full of culture and history. Above all I love the different scenery – France with its beautiful beaches, Ireland with its rough sea, Poland with its wide fields, Hungary with its splendid horses, my regional church with its north German expanses. We see and feel the parts of Europe growing together. For years there have been no more border checks when I go to the Netherlands or Italy. And the roads are all open even to eastern Germany – a country where, in my youth, everything was defined by the Berlin Wall. Within Europe we can hardly imagine what wars are like nowadays. That is why we are so shocked by what happened in Yugoslavia and is happening in Northern Ireland. Even Germany, that has so often inflicted war and suffering on the world, seems to be finally tired of war – as shown by the mass protests against the Iraq war. However, the experts say, it is above all the economic relations that will link the countries in Europe, and prevent the outbreak of wars. The people in our part of Europe have enough to eat, there are schools for our children, medical care for those who fall ill. A happy continent, a lucky country. Yes, that is true.

- (4) But it is also not true. There are many happy people in my country, many who work for justice and peace, but also many who are internally burnt out. Luther's question: "Wie bekomme ich einen gnädigen Gott?" (How can I get a gracious God?) is one that very few people still understand. For the successful, life often consists of trying to get as much as possible out of it: you have to keep up with your car, your house and your money. Be at the right parties! And if you are a woman you have to be slim and look good. Many feel they have to have botox poison injected under their wrinkles, pad their bosom with silicon, and have surplus fat suctioned out – they are afraid of getting old. And if you are a man and do not earn enough, are unemployed, ill or disabled, you stand by the wayside and just watch the world go by. What is the meaning of life? – that is a question rarely asked. But the advertising budget of German industry is around six billion euros. And it does not suggest "I think, therefore I am" (Descartes), but "I consume, therefore I am". As one ad says, "We believe in safe cars".
- (5) And woe betide anyone who does not live within the walls of this continent. We have been getting news of refugee-laden boats sinking in the Mediterranean – right in front of the islands on which many of us spend our holidays. Cars are discovered in which the people smuggled in from Afghanistan or Iraq have suffocated. And more money is earned with trafficking in women than with the arms trade. Every year whole gangs force up to 500 000 young girls, mainly from eastern Europe, into prostitution in western Europe.
- (6) Many in our part of the world ask: "Who needs God?" People want to be free of all rules and duties. The birthrate is falling in Germany - it is around 1.4 children per woman. Children are considered a liability – they could make you poor. Consequently our society is becoming ever older. While at the beginning of the 20th century the life expectation was 46, today half our society is over 40. The divorce rate is high. Commitment is not a high value in a society attaching so much importance to mobility and individuality. However, things get difficult when the great questions about meaning burst out – where do I come from, where am I going? 11,156 people took their own lives last year. That was more than died in traffic accidents. Statistically speaking, one person takes their own life in my lovely country every 47 minutes.
- (7) And our Lutheran Church in this context? We proclaim Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on the cross and rose from the dead. We baptize children, and marry couples; we console the bereaved and bury their loved ones. In the midst of a performance-driven society we tell the message of justification by faith alone, the understanding of human beings as *simul iustus et peccator*. Our diaconal services care for the ill, the elderly and the disabled. In the last few years a large-scale hospice movement has arisen, seeking to help people to die in dignity. There is a lot of good work going on, many new projects being launched, and our church does find a hearing in society.
- (8) I know that there are many prejudices about the German churches, which are said to have "empty pews!" But that is too sweeping. In the rural areas of my regional church sometimes over 90% of the population belong to our Lutheran Church and as Christians leave their mark on the places where they live. To others, however, the church seems

boring with its old stories of the Good Samaritan and about Jesus and Moses. They leave the church, leave the community, and that hurts. It also has material consequences. So it is getting harder to fill pastorates, to pay salaries, keep up the buildings – particularly in eastern Germany where the decades of what was called "really existing socialism" dechristianized whole districts. But we are striving with courage and commitment to make the church credible at the beginning of the 21st century, in its witness and service and preaching. In these times of change Martin Luther can give us fresh heart: "For after all, we are not the ones who can preserve the church," he said, "nor were our [forebears] able to do so. Nor will our successors have this power. No, it was, is, and will be he who says, 'I am with you always, to the close of the age.'"¹

- (9) Happy Germany – poor Germany, happy Europe – poor Europe. What does healing mean in this context? My concern is to take a close look, to see people with the eyes of God, to look at them with their weaknesses and strengths and to recognize the image of God in each and every one. So many long for a fulfilled life and seem to miss out on it in all their busy-ness. So many long for meaning and remain alone. Health is certainly important, but the main thing is healing the soul, making relationships whole – for example, social relationships, the relationships between old and young, strangers and local residents, rich and poor in our country and in the whole world. It is all about learning, or regaining, social skills. Our educational system must focus again on communication skills, which some have lost – despite the most modern internet access. And, it must be said – for many people in the eastern part of Germany there is still the need to heal the breaches of trust from the past that were disclosed by the "Stasi" files, the State Security records of the German Democratic Republic.
- (10) Let us remember – even if Europe possesses great wealth there is still much that is broken and in need of healing. There is a yearning for salvation. As Christians we can pass on God's words of healing in this context. We can look at the world as it is and need not close our eyes to it or run away from reality.
- (11) ⇒ Anyone who wants to heal must first look at their own context, and learn to see the world with eyes wide-open, with the eyes of God's love.

3. By his wounds we are healed (Is 53:5) – God's wounding

- (12) Whoever wants to speak of healing must first look at the wounds – any good doctor does that. There are small cuts: the tangible snub because I don't look like other people. The sharp word that is so wounding and that I simply can't get out of my head. My trust that was so bitterly abused. Then there are the horrific injuries inflicted in Germany too. A young man who ran amok in a school last year and shot 16 people. Two men who throttled an eleven-year-old boy and raped his nine-year-old sister several times before murdering her. A student who killed an 11-year-old boy out of greed. A car accident in which five young people lost their lives. And there are the immense wounds of our

¹ Martin Luther, *Against the Antinomians*, 1539, in: F. Sherman (ed.), *Luther's Works Vol. 47*, Fortress Press Philadelphia, 1971, p. 118

world: the wars in which people are torn apart by bombs. The refugees driven hither and thither by marauding gangs. The debt crisis that gives so many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America no chance to develop. The child soldiers that are brutally forced to take up arms. The hunger to which thousands fall victim every day. The injustice that deprives so many of their opportunities in life.

- (13) Wounds of humanity, yes, and also wounds of God. Cries that echo throughout the world. Also the cry for God: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? This cry heard till today: Where were you, God? The complaint: How can God let that happen? What does healing, or becoming whole, mean in such cases? Can such wounds ever be healed?
- (14) First of all, such injuries probably call for silence. The horror that seizes us when we look at the victims in our world cannot easily be expressed in words. Such words must sound banal. Such silence, this lament, such cries, these hours between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, they have their own right. Silence and lament, the Saturday between crucifixion and resurrection...
- (15) It is important to me to understand: God himself, God herself is wounded by the destruction that people cause, by what we do to one another. In the Book of Job we find the limits of an explanatory pattern according to which suffering is punishment. Job, the righteous man, has to suffer. And Job's traditional answers are inadequate, in view of the fact that Job has not sinned and therefore cannot explain his bad luck. Job tries to understand the mind of God, even if this contradicts all previous attempts at interpretation. God's reply to Job is to point to the creative power without actually explaining the suffering. The message to Job is that suffering too is part of faith in God.
- (16) In the Book of Jonah there is a clear turning away from the doctrine of retribution (the "*Tun-Ergehen* connection"). Nineveh is not destroyed as it would have deserved, in view of its wickedness. Rather Nineveh receives an opportunity to repent through the appearance of Jonah. God's wrath is overcome by the city's repentance (*niham*). God does not punish but shows mercy and kindness. God is shown to be not rigid and unchanging: there is a history of relationship between God and humankind, whom God turns to ever anew and does not let go. It reveals God's mercy and patience. The motif of punishment recedes into the background in the overall witness of the Hebrew scriptures.
- (17) The witness of the New Testament clearly rejects an interpretation of suffering and evil as punishment (e.g. Lk 13:1-5). In Jesus Christ God is revealed once and for all as a loving God, who opens the way to community among people while renouncing human power and force. That is always hard to understand. What a provocation: God, who comes into the world as a child. God, who dies a tortured death on the cross! Shouldn't God be a strong, all-conquering hero? Or someone who stands above it all? Can we believe in a powerless God – or isn't that really a joke?
- (18) The story of Jesus Christ challenges us to link the omnipotence and the powerlessness of God in our minds. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes: "God allows himself to be edged out of

the world and on to the cross. God is weak and powerless in the world, and that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can be with us and help us."² And the resurrection says: God seeks to overcome the suffering in this world with the power of love alone. Love is vulnerable but is also stronger than death! It is from this promise of God's new world that we live. In this God we trust, made manifest in this way; we believe and trust in him with all our wounds and hurts. That was proclaimed by Jesus Christ; that is why he lived, died and rose again. We hold to this God, our savior. Luther always spoke of God's being hidden, in order to express this experience of God's becoming a stranger and yet to witness to the faith that all things are in God's hand. Indeed, Luther warned against wanting to explore and interpret the "*deus absconditus*" and thereby wanting to take control of God.

- (19) It therefore remains a matter of reflection and wrestling with the issue of God's almighty power and of the admission of suffering. No, we have no better answers than generations before us. I am concerned that we should not try to find exact or logical answers, but have the courage to trust in God in the knowledge that God wants life, not death. It is about the trust in Jesus testified to by Luke: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46). After crying out that he had been abandoned by God, Jesus found his way back to trusting in God. No, there is no fast track. It is the way of the Cross and death. Jesus apparently goes wounded into God's kingdom. He does not show Thomas an immaculate body, and it is by his wounds that the disciples recognize that he has risen. That is the point with us too. Even when our wounds, our injuries, the fractures in our lives heal they remain part of our history. They can close up, but not be eradicated from our memory. There is no life without breaks, or without scars.
- (20) The disciples regain their trust in God when Jesus breaks through the closed doors. This trust is enabled by God's spirit, which he promises them, which we can sense when we open up. In this trust wounds can heal, even if scars remain. In this trust we go our way undeterred as a community of hope that believes that the love of God is stronger than hatred, violence, horror and death.
- (21) Let us remember: as Christians we have the courage to look at the wounds and can keep God's powerlessness and all-powerfulness in mind at the same time. Indeed, we have to put up with the brokenness of life and accept the experience of the Cross as part of our lives.
- (22) ⇒ Anyone seeking to heal can trust that God will attend to those who suffer.

4. Honor physicians for their services (Sir 38:1) – holistic medicine

- (23) Years ago I held the hand of a dying man and heard him say, in great distress, "Is that all life was? I actually never thought about it. It all went so quickly!" Yes, the words of the psalm, "So teach us to count our days so that we may gain a wise heart." (Ps 90:12) contains a profound truth. Only if we recognize the finitude of life will we understand life

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, letter of 16.7.44, Fontana books, 122.

- as a gift, and see and perceive it as limited time, for which we will be accountable to God one day.
- (24) In the western world there are two extremes: first, the total belief in medicine, overestimating medicine as a science as though it knows no frontiers or does not accept the power of death. And then there is the total fixation on the so-called alternatives: aren't Chinese medicine and homeopathy worth more, both scientific in their own way although often regarded skeptically by conventional medicine in our countries? And what is the situation with spiritual forces, esoteric rites and the cult of well-being? The first version understands the body like a machine: if anything is broken it has to be mended. The second version thinks that all scientific knowledge is unhelpful and is sometimes subject to suggestion.
- (25) Let me say right away that we Christians should not despise medicine. Luther saw it both as a science and as a gift of God.³ He also esteemed doctors as "experience teaches that we cannot do without them."⁴ We have to admit the same thing ourselves today. We can be grateful to have been vaccinated against measles and finally making this vaccination available to people in all countries is a most urgent matter. In Africa 500 000 children still die of measles every year (mostly due to under-nourishment).
- (26) Or take the SARS virus, that also threatened the holding of our Assembly - it has been contained by medical skill. Nowadays many people in the rich industrialized nations survive cancer thanks to medical progress. Even the HIV infection is no longer a death sentence if the right medicines are administered. The problem is more that this medication is so expensive that people in South Africa or Kenya cannot afford it. There are two classes when it comes to medical care, that is true. Yet let us not disparage medical knowledge and its potential!
- (27) Progress in medicine has, however, led to a growing feeling that health is controllable and that it must be possible to cure every ill. Often human beings no longer understand themselves as made in the image of God but want to create humans in their own image: disabled children – are they necessary? That can be recognized during pregnancy and then the woman can have an abortion. Or what about preimplantation diagnostics? Trying to clone people is a modern form of temptation. Christians can only say: hands off! Health and healing can become an ideology when it seems that we can make the body perfect. The fact that healing is not just a technical process but that the soul also has to be healed is something that is often underestimated.
- (28) As Christians we must not despise the psyche either, the inner life, the interplay of body and soul.⁵ Luther also knew that it was important whether a sick person liked and trusted

³³ Martin Luther, Die Tischreden, in: LTD, ed. K. Aland, vol. 9, 282.

⁴ Martin Luther, Der Christ in der Welt, LTD ed. Kurt Aland, vol. 7, 257.

⁵ Walter Hollenweger's thinking on this and the following was extremely helpful, e.g. Das Kirchenjahr inszenieren, Stuttgart 2002, 219ff.

their doctor and often referred to that in his *Table Talk*.⁶ No, we cannot explain everything. Yes, faith, prayer, trust in God can have an influence on disease, and can heal. Yet medicine is not to be despised. I can only agree with Wilfried Härle "that the workings of the Holy Spirit not only determine the spirit or soul of a person but also their body, and that these workings can have a healing character is something that is gradually becoming clear again to our age (albeit despite resistance) - an insight that was long mocked, ignored or disregarded."⁷

- (29) We should come back to understanding the mission of healing as part of the great commission and not as a diaconal activity, or act of charity, that is considered of secondary importance. "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons" (Mt 10:8) – that is part of the call to mission! The churches have a therapeutic ministry, there are healing charisms among us. And pastoral care – that means precisely taking care of the soul, that is wounded in so many cases, and healing spiritual suffering. Keeping both in mind, medicine and the charism of healing, that is an important task for our Lutheran Church. God's healing power can be manifestly experienced. So we should not disparage people with special gifts, such as those we in East Frisia call "bone-breakers" or the "bone-setters" in Africa. Couldn't we indeed contribute to bringing together conventional medicine and traditional healers for dialogue, as is already happening in Ghana, Peru and Switzerland?⁸
- (30) I am aware that many churches are asking how they should handle healing, for example in charismatic movements. It is important to develop criteria for this and to derive them from Jesus himself. When Jesus healed he did two things: he spoke and he touched, God's word became audible and tangible. When Jesus healed he looked at the faith, the trust in God. When Jesus healed his healing became a sign of the coming of the kingdom of God (Mt 12:28; Jn 2:11). When Christians heal in Jesus' name, God's spirit is at work. Yes, we may indeed take on board charismatic elements. But healing in the spirit of Jesus is not a matter of performing miracles for show, as these criteria indicate. Healing in Jesus' name does not focus attention on the healer but on God's loving care for the whole person. Health is not a proof of God's presence and is misused when a person thinks they can feature as particularly gifted. Healing in God's name has nothing to do with glorifying oneself. Healing is about trust in God and faith. Being healed, or being healthy, is not the same as having a strong faith. We can show our trust in God by learning to live with an illness. That is a gift of God, a grace. By trusting in God we can understand death as part of the way to God, not the end but a way-station.
- (31) And we have criteria to discern: was that God at work or was it forces with other intentions? Is God involved or the self-aggrandizement of a person? Is the intention to build up the community, the *οικοδομη*? Is it a matter of humility or of raising oneself up? The critical question must be: Who is ever perfectly whole? We live in the age between paradise and the perfection of the kingdom of God. *Theologia crucis* has its place here.

⁶ Martin Luther, *Die Tischreden*, op. cit., 282ff.

⁷ Wilfried Härle, *Dogmatik*, Berlin 2000 (2), 370.

⁸ Hollenweger, op. cit., 225.

Our life is always injured, we are not perfect, we cannot blow our own trumpets without being dishonest. The brokenness of life must be accepted. That is not easy; that is not conceivable without the cross, without this divine foolishness (1 Cor 1:18).

- (32) A doctor who only sees his own skill, the art of application, has a restricted horizon. A healer who sings her own praises is not humble. Yes, scientific knowledge is a gift of God, but it is subject to the criterion of what will build people up. At the same time, "denying a reality that we cannot explain is unscientific. There are things that we do not (yet) understand."⁹ That is now being reflected on even in the field of reproductive medicine.¹⁰ So let us open ourselves up to the workings of God's spirit. But let us judge clearly whether what happens "promotes Christ" (Luther: "Christum treibet") or whether someone wants to glorify themselves. Is it a *theologia gloriae*, seeking to show how powerful *our* God is, who is thus used to show how good *we* are? Or do we struggle for healing as a way of following Christ?
- (33) Let us remember: healing is a holistic process in which we should despise neither the achievements of medicine, nor the soul, nor the gift of God's spirit. Perhaps the churches can help people to see the different charisms as not being in competition but complementary, and able to learn from one other.
- (34) ⇒ Anyone wanting to heal must be open for body and soul, for old and new insights, for differing experiences of God and for a holistic approach.

5. They met to share the common life (Acts 2:42) - *communio sanctorum*

- (35) The theme of our Assembly is "*For the Healing of the World*". Have we anything to offer? Does our faith or our theology contribute anything that the world itself cannot produce?
- (36) Life in community is part of our faith. Since Jesus wandered through Palestine with the first disciples, and shared bread and wine, community has been part of the definition of discipleship. The Book of Acts paints a special picture of it - a kind of glossy snapshot, like when we look a photo in our album and say: "Those were the days!" But we don't look like the picture now. And yet community, sharing, supporting one another remains the sign and symbol of the church.
- (37) We are all of us called by God and baptism is a symbol of that: I have called you by your name (Is 43:1). Luther made that very clear to us: You stand before God (*coram deo*), freedom and responsibility belong together. And at the same time we are a community and every church in its own place is a province of world Christendom (Ernst Lange). We are a learning community with all our different contexts. We in the industrialized countries are learning, for example, what indigenous peoples have to say about the land

⁹ Hollenweger, op.cit, 222.

¹⁰ See Kwang Y Cha, Does Prayer influence the Success of *in Vitro* Fertilization-Embryo Transfer, JRM, Vol. 46, No. 9/ September 2001, 781ff.

as belonging to God, that cannot be sold, and about the Creation, that is a gift. We listen and we learn. That is the great opportunity of our community – being open for new perspectives on things.

- (38) I think that precisely Holy Communion shows our specific contribution to the healing of the world. When we share bread and wine with one another, then all squabbling, all argument, all burdens and all hierarchy recede into the background – because we experience anew that we belong together. The many are one Body, as Paul said. *Communio sanctorum* – Community of the saints. No one is against their neighbor. We all hear these words often enough. And often enough we do not live up to them. Because we are human, far from being as generous as we would like to be, often bearing grudges, envious and skeptical – confession and penance are continually necessary so that we can come to the Lord's Table openly and freely.
- (39) We are called to one table. But warned against coming while unworthy. This idea of being "unworthy" has caused many to be afraid of guilt. "Showing a lack of solidarity" would be a better translation of *anaxios*. After all, it is supposed to be a common meal. That is what Paul reprimands them for in Corinth – the fact that everyone just eats their own food and there is no growth in community. It is supposed to be a common feast, which can include laughter and tears, gaiety, festiveness, spirituality with the heart and the senses – that is something we Lutherans often lack! We come together, the poor and the rich, those from the highways and byways, the estranged, the disappointed, the lovers, the sick, those from the North and those from the South. – a healing community around the whole globe and through the ages.
- (40) The Lord's Supper involves a human and social challenge.
- (41) We share bread and wine. And are thereby in community with those who celebrate Holy Communion at all times and in all places. We enter into the history of all those who have met in remembrance of him for over 2000 years. Remembering is part of the Lord's Supper. And we know we are in fellowship with all those who are sharing bread and wine at many places. In the slums of Rio de Janeiro. In refugee camps in Palestine. In the bombed-out buildings of Grosny. In the suburbs of Washington. Sisters and brothers – the Lord's Supper recalls that we belong together across borders as the people of God.
- (42) The Lord's Supper is a reminder to seek peace and justice.
- (43) We hope for a future in which all sit together at the Lord's Table. It remains a thorn in the flesh, a stumbling block, that we cannot celebrate the Eucharist together. Even if we Protestants in Germany grant all others who have been baptized eucharistic hospitality on the basis of the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973, that cannot allow us just to sit back. It is certainly not a question of denying our own profile. Nevertheless, despite recognizing all denominational differences we confess each Sunday in the Apostle's Creed that we believe in *one* church. We read in John's gospel of how Jesus prayed that his own should all be one. Healing divisions in the church must be a burning issue for us! The Ecumenical Kirchentag held in Berlin in May, and attended by over 200 000 people, was

a lively sign of that. That which is growing together cannot be held up by encyclicals! Yes, the church must also cope with its own wounds if it is to take up the wounds of the world.

- (44) The Lord's Supper is a challenge to ecumenical commitment.
- (45) We share bread and wine, the fruits of the earth. We are often estranged from the source – farming has become an industry at many places. A bishop from the Pacific once said at an ecumenical conference, "Jesus saw grain and grapes around him so he talked about them at the last supper. Our staple food is coconut – why shouldn't we use that in Holy Communion?" ... you can well imagine the heated discussion sparked off by that suggestion! But it really is about staple food. All our senses are in play, not just our heads. Taste. See. Perceive. Give us today our daily bread – the real bread, that the rich on this planet often hardly appreciate. Bread, for which millions still hunger every day. Bread that tastes good, no genetically modified industrial product! Baked bread. Bread from the earth. The earth that belongs to God. From the soil that is to be protected for those who will follow us.
- (46) The Lord's Supper challenges us to till the earth and keep it for coming generations.
- (47) *Communio sanctorum* – sharing in what is holy. We say: the Body of Christ, given for us. The Blood of Christ, shed for us. Christ really present here and now. An impenetrable mystery! Jesus' death – a sacrifice of atonement? Christ's body, given for you, Christ's blood, shed for you – some find that off-putting. Died for us – did God want this sacrifice. Or did Jesus give himself for his own? For love?
- (48) The Lord's Supper remains a theological challenge.
- (49) That is how it should be: no misery, no crying. No child that dies an early death. People building houses in which they live, harvesting fruit to eat. Communion with one another and communion with God. In hope we come together "until he comes". A hope that breaks through and transcends our age and world. We will share bread and wine in remembrance of him until he comes.
- (50) The Lord's Supper has an eschatological dimension.
- (51) Let us remember: altar fellowship is healing fellowship, is a visible sign of healing, is God's invitation to the healing of the world.
- (52) If our church wants to contribute to the healing of the world it can offer the sacrament of communion as the central event between God and humankind, and between us as persons.

6. It is the spirit that gives life (Jn 6:63) – an alternative society

- (53) The World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, psychological and social well-being. Hence it is not just a matter of the absence of illness, but also of social conditions. Where God's spirit is at work we will be moved to do our part in such comprehensive healing.
- (54) In January 2003 the Third World Social Forum met in Porto Alegre. The Lutheran Church in Brazil played an active part in it. Isn't that the place for our Lutheran church as a whole? With those who gather to shape globalization from below. A globalization whose goal is not profit for a few but social justice for all? Couldn't the LWF speak and act for us all at world level? After all, as Lutheran churches we are both "local actors" and "global players" at the same time. In my country there is anxiety about the goals named by the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 that involve changing consumption and production patterns. But couldn't a positive attitude take the place of fear? Couldn't a sustainable lifestyle be an opportunity, a benefit of a quite different kind? Couldn't there be open borders not just for goods but for people too?
- (55) As Lutheran Christians, as families with a common confession in a globalized world, we come together from many small places, from North and South and East and West, in order to see and to hear. We look at one another as sisters and brothers. We do not hear banalities but share the experience of people on the ground; we hear true stories. Truth – a rare commodity today! In the people of God there is true communication, however, that is not distorted by the pictures drawn by the media. We encounter one another person to person, across all borders of nation and race and gender. We are the people of God from all peoples – that remains the biblical vision. That is why we can give hope for the world in our discipleship. We hope for a new heaven and a new earth - we have a hope beyond this world. From this eschatological hope we will struggle to trace the contours of an alternative society in the here and now, a society that does not follow the law of the strongest, of power and assertiveness, but practices solidarity, loves justice, makes peace, and safeguards creation. In this society, a *different* society –
- (56) We will heal memories. Germans and Poles, Hutu and Tutsi, Protestants and Catholics, Jews and Christians, the battle of Kosovo (1389, when the Serbs were defeated by the Turks), crusades, colonialism, the burning of witches – memories that are not healed will destroy us. Yet it must never be a matter of explaining away injustice suffered. Reconciliation is only possible if the victims are heard and the perpetrators confess their guilt. Anything else would be cheap reconciliation that cannot lead to healing.
- (57) We will leave behind the ideology of weapons and allow peace to grow without violence. We do not believe in empires and superpowers but in the power of the meek and the perseverance of the peaceable.
- (58) Justice and peace will kiss, there will be a jubilee year that sees debts as guilt and frees people and nations from bondage; there will certainly be disagreement about the right

way to take (arbitration or compensation?), and questions (debt cancellation or reparation?) but people will sit down and try to map out a common future together, in a spirit of solidarity.

- (59) Those with HIV/AIDS will not be stigmatized and discriminated against, but help will be possible in the community, e.g. through access to anti-retroviral medication for all. Here our churches will stand with others to lower the rate of infection through education, including about the use of condoms. Here people will receive information to protect them from infection and those already infected will receive information about treatment and support, so that they do not need to abandon themselves.
- (60) Refugees will find a home, for example those who are torn between Bhutan and Nepal. There a whole generation has grown up in camps. How are they to find a home? That is not a matter for others. They are the refugees that God places in our way, as happened to the Samaritan.
- (61) Conduct a dialogue of the religions, so that religion can finally become a factor in defusing conflicts and can no longer be misused to fan the flames of political conflicts.
- (62) Coming generations, children and young people, will learn hope; they will learn to understand the earth as God's Creation - the living space for them to till and keep.
- (63) Let us remember: healing also means acting as stewards in this wounded world, leaving traces of the kingdom of God, in which one day all tears will be wiped away and death will be no more. What is not salutary or healthy for our world is a globalization of goods and corporations and markets that shows no respect for differing cultures. It is through a globalization of the message of God's love, a globalization of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that salvation will come.
- (64) If Christians want to contribute to the healing of the world we will have to take energetic action in the affairs of the world, imbued with the hope that we can all live together in justice and peace.

7. Rejoice in hope (Rom 12:12) – Final litany

- (65) Perhaps the language of theology in our time should really be poetry, since in the Bible, too, the language of hope is poetic.
- (66) We will keep alive the hope for a transformed world – Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth (Mt 5:5).
- (67) We will not tire of loving the Holy Land, of praying for peace between Muslims, Christians and Jews, Israelis and Palestinians – for it is the land flowing with milk and honey for those who live there (Ex 3:8).

- (68) We will not give up hoping for a truly human community – I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your old men shall dream dreams (Joel 2:28).
- (69) We will make hope visible and tangible – As a mother comforts her child so I will comfort you (Is 66:13).
- (70) We will courageously take the path of discipleship – For he will command his angels to guard you in all your ways (Psalm 91:11).
- (71) We will keep alive the hope for a world that can overcome violence – Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God (Mt 5:9).
- (72) We will speak of hope for healing – The Lord lifts up the downtrodden (Psalm 147:6).
- (73) Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev 22:20)