
Part 1: The Tenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation



A. The Theme: “For the Healing of the World”

Why does the Lutheran communion of churches gather in Assembly?

Why should we gather from around the world to meet together in an Assembly? There are reasons prescribed in the LWF Constitution, such as electing officers and members of the Council and acting on reports. The business we will be about at the Assembly will be important for determining the future leadership and direction of our work as the LWF. But beyond these required constitutional matters are some deeply theological reasons for why we assemble together.

The church (*ecclesia*)—as the people of God, the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit—is by nature an “assembly.” The Assembly of the LWF enables churches to worship, witness, confer and speak together on matters common to the whole church, and to express their unity as part of the one, universal, new community in Christ.

The LWF understands itself today as being more than a loosely affiliated federation of churches: we are a *communion* of Lutheran churches united through Word and sacrament. This holds us together in a more profound way than any constitutional requirements. Whenever and wherever we gather in local congregations to hear the Word and celebrate the sacraments, we are reminded that we do so as part of the worldwide communion of saints. The Word and sacraments bear witness to the triune God’s self-communication to us, creating communion with God and with one another.¹

This wider communion must become for us more than an abstract, faceless re-

ality. We must be able to touch, hear, taste and experience this reality first hand. In self-giving love, God became incarnate in a human being. Similarly, the communion we share with one another must become incarnate in very human, face-to-face kinds of communication and interaction that enrich, test and deepen what it truly means to be a communion.

Although there are many ways in which we can communicate today, they all fall short of the importance of gathering with one another, at the same time, in the same place, as flesh and blood creatures. As we are present with one another, we realize who our sisters and brothers in Christ actually are, and our generalizations are challenged. In living and working with one another over several days, we realize our significantly different situations and perceptions, as well as what we have in common. Through God’s grace, we begin to share our pains and joys, our burdens and gifts, and in that process, to gain a deeper sense of what occurs through the Holy Communion:

...through the interchange of Christ’s blessings and our misfortunes, we become one loaf, one bread, one body, one drink, and have all things in common... In this way we are changed into one another and are made into a community of love.²

Here we receive the promise, a foretaste of God’s communion with the whole of creation in the coming reign of God. This coming together in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, has important, ongoing consequences for our life together as churches throughout the world.

God's self-giving which constitutes communion with God in faith, seeks expression in forms of mutual sharing in both its spiritual and material aspects.³

This triune God also sends us out for the sake of God's mission in the world. Attending to what that mission means "for the healing of the world" is a central reason why member churches of the LWF will be assembling at Winnipeg. Held together by the power of God's Spirit, we are able to speak honestly about the challenges we face, and to discern, debate and decide how these will be addressed through our ongoing work as a communion.

How will we bear faithful witness in word and deed "for the healing of the world"? How will we address the tensions and problems we face within our churches and societies? How can this Lutheran communion of churches, as part of the wider church, further God's all-encompassing mission in and for the sake of the world?

The LWF Council has specified these purposes specific to the Tenth Assembly:

- Explore ways to be God's instruments for healing, justice and reconciliation in the midst of brokenness in church and society.
- Deepen the understanding and experience of the Lutheran communion by addressing differences and disparities among us and by sharing our gifts.
- Commit to closer and deeper cooperation within the ecumenical movement and to life in communion as given in Christ.
- Discern the challenges posed to Lutheran churches in today's multicultural and multi-faith contexts.

- Address spiritual, social and environmental challenges provoked especially by economic globalization.

A theme in continuity with previous assemblies

Although "healing" may not appear in the themes of other assemblies, the need for healing was implicit in many of them.⁴ At the First Assembly in 1947, meeting in Lund, Sweden under the theme, "**The Lutheran Church in the World Today**," member churches were determined to forgive and move beyond their images of those who had been enemies. They committed themselves to live and work together as a federation for healing in the world, especially on behalf of those who cried out, "we are bleeding." In the face of competing loyalties, the LWF sought to develop and maintain a clear confessional integrity and to translate this into meeting the post-World War II needs, especially in Europe.

The Second Assembly met in 1952 in Hanover, Germany, a city ravaged by war and overshadowed by the East/West split. Meeting under the theme, "**The Living Word in a Responsible Church**," a responsible engagement with society was emphasized in order to rectify previous Lutheran quietism on political questions. A department of theology was established, along with departments focused on world service and on mission, underlining the importance of common work in these areas. Although still mostly European and North American, other parts of the world began to be represented in their own right, along with the first laity to serve on the Executive Committee.

The only previous Assembly to meet in North America was the Third Assembly (1957) in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Churches gathered under the theme,

“Christ Frees and Unites,” at a time when many Lutheran churches were experiencing repression under Communism and, especially in Africa, were struggling to overcome colonialism. In the United States, churches were growing, and the civil rights movement was beginning. Implicit in these contextual realities was the need for healing of the past. Confessional theological work was given significant attention, along with the public witness of Lutheran churches in the world. Various theses were adopted and passed on to member churches.

More church representatives from countries of the South were present when the Fourth Assembly met in 1963 in Helsinki, Finland, under the theme **“Christ Today.”** In view of the new dawning of ecumenism with Vatican II, an LWF Foundation for Interconfessional Research was established. The major focus at this Assembly was the doctrine of justification, but agreement on its contemporary meaning could not be reached.

Faced with controversy over the decision not to go to Brazil in 1970 because of the political situation there, the Fifth Assembly met instead in Evian, France, under the theme, **“Sent into the World.”** Once again, “the world” figured prominently in this theme, along with the conviction that the church cannot remain separate from a world of conflictual politics. Although some concern was expressed that in addressing socio-ethical issues the theological accent might become obscured, strong stances were taken on human rights and other social issues for the sake of the healing of the world into which the church is sent. New commitments were made to include more fully churches of the South as well as women and youth in decision making.

In 1977 the Sixth Assembly met for the first time in the South, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, under the theme, **“In Christ—A New Community.”** By now, 40 percent of the delegates were from churches of the



South, and 25 percent were women. The bold, historic decision was made to declare that a *status confessionis* situation existed when, under the South African apartheid system, a church excluded from membership on the basis of race. Root causes of injustice were given attention, in quest of healing in society and “reconciled diversity,” for the sake of healing divisions in the church.

Meeting for the first time in a Communist-ruled country, in Budapest, Hungary under the theme, **“In Christ—Hope for the World,”** the Seventh Assembly in 1984 took the subsequent solemn action of suspending from the LWF two white South African churches. It also sought to heal the painful legacy of the relationship between Lutheran churches and the Jewish people, the legacy of excluding women from being full partners in the church, and continued the concern for healing divisions in the church through ecumenical pursuits.

The 1990 Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil, shifted to a theme that resembles the 2003 theme. Under the Exodus-based theme, **“I Have Heard the Cry of My People,”** the Assembly focused on situations of political and economic oppression around the world, and called for ac-

tion in solidarity with people and the rest of creation in their suffering. Considerable attention was also given to the emerging *communio* nature of the LWF, and to the extensive re-structuring intended to express that more clearly.

Finally, meeting for the first time in Asia, the 1997 Ninth Assembly returned to another christological theme, “**In Christ—Called to Witness.**” Meeting in Hong Kong immediately after its return to the jurisdiction of China, as well as meeting in a context where Christians, much less Lutherans, are in a distinct minority, was noteworthy.

It is apparent that the theme of the Tenth Assembly in Winnipeg is in continuity with and builds upon the themes of previous assemblies:

- Attention to the world, whether explicit or implicit, has been there from the beginning. The world’s problems, divisions and tensions have deeply affected what it means for the church to gather in assembly at a given time and place. Although the church’s agenda must never be reduced to the world’s agenda, it cannot ignore the challenges to faith and discipleship emerging from the world. The faith we confess is more than private; it has public implications for the sake of the world.

How might this theme catch the attention of people living in a skeptical, pluralistic world? When Lutherans from throughout the world assemble in Winnipeg, what will be the public witness they will bring to Canada?

- The idea of “healing” has been implicit in many of the emphases and actions of previous assemblies. Healing is central to the calling of the church: proclaiming the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ; bridging social, political

and economic differences; understanding the significance of justification in the lives of believers in the world; working for justice, human rights, peace and reconciliation; rectifying policies of exclusion; working to heal divisions in the church and with people of other faiths. In countless ways member churches are quietly bringing healing in communities throughout the world.

- In many previous Assembly themes, Christ was clearly proclaimed as the one who brings about what the world seeks. The 2003 Assembly theme causes those who hear it to pause and to ask, Who or what is “for the healing of the world”? Rather than immediately responding with “Christ” as the answer, we are invited to reflect more deeply on how God, who creates, redeems and sustains us and all of creation, is indeed “for the healing of the world.” In addition to the central role of Christ, what are the important but often overlooked roles of the Creator and the Spirit?

A theme consistent with what Lutheran churches have been about

Healing is an emphasis that has shaped the LWF. International diaconal work, especially reaching out to refugees from World War II, was key in its founding. Although initially focused on serving the needs of Lutherans, “healing” in its broad sense was at stake: providing emergency assistance; helping displaced people to find and settle into homes in new lands; healing physical and emotional wounds of war; and seeking recon-

ciliation with those living behind the Iron Curtain. Over the years, this work began to shift, especially to areas such as the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Institutions have been established to provide vitally needed health services and education. This international diaconal work, as it occurs today through the Department for World Service, has long been at the heart of the recognized identity of the LWF, especially in places where Lutherans are otherwise scarce. This work continues to be pivotal in the LWF today, making it distinctive as an international church organization.

Over the years, there has been increasing awareness that in addition to providing these services, the root causes of poverty, violence and other injustices need to be examined and addressed, not only by large international organizations, but also by the churches themselves. Diaconia needs to be understood and practiced in relation to wider systemic factors. Prior to the Assembly a global LWF consultation is being held in South Africa under the theme, “Prophetic Diaconia: For the Healing of the World,” with poverty, HIV/AIDS and violence being the examples that challenge and expand what diaconia needs to be about in our day. Results from that consultation are expected to feed into the Assembly.

From 1997-2000, the LWF was engaged in an empirical theological study of how Lutheran churches understand and live out what it means to be a communion in society. One of the observations coming out of that study is how central diaconal work (or “social ministry”) has become in the recognized profile of member churches.⁵ In fact, we might ask whether this, along with the Word and sacraments, is actually becoming for Lutherans one of the marks of the church (*notae ecclesiae*).

Word and sacraments are, of course, the way in which the Lutheran Confessions have long identified what is essen-

tial to the church. The healing power of the proclaimed Word, especially in terms of law and gospel, certainly has been a hallmark of Lutheranism. Just as crucial, but perhaps under-emphasized in many Lutheran churches, has been the healing power of the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, along with corporate prayer and the confession and forgiveness of sin. Pastoral care has been and continues to be a strong emphasis in most Lutheran churches. In these and other ways, healing is what churches have long been about: receiving into communion, consoling, guiding, rebuking, announcing and embodying God’s forgiveness.

The Assembly theme embraces these recognizable dimensions of the church, which will be emphasized especially in the worship life of the Assembly. The theme is grounded in these understandings of healing, while moving us outward, to the healing of the world.

A world desperately in need of healing

As the theme draws our attention to the world, we are reminded that:

- The world as God’s creation is bestowed by God with being and worth. God became incarnate in this world. It is not dualistically separated from a spiritual realm of life, but is where we see and participate in the drama of God’s activity throughout the whole inhabited earth (*oikos*).
- The world is also a fallen world, where sin and brokenness are all too evident in human distortions and betrayals of what God has given and intends, in injustices that deny the dignity of all, and in

violence that destroys life itself. A world permeated by sin and brokenness is desperately in need of healing.

- As people of faith we ourselves are in need of healing. We are also called to participate in the healing or transformation of the world, through small acts of service—faith active in love—as well as wider practices to change policies and practices that wound and harm what God has created and sustains. We are among God's healing, diaconal agents.

As Lutherans prepare to gather in 2003 in Winnipeg, what specific prayers, words and actions will we bring for this wounded, frightening world in which we live?

- We participate in this healing with the awareness that ultimately it is not our efforts that heal the world, but that God promises a new creation, salvation of the whole earth and cosmos. The fulfillment of this hope is in God's hands and time, not in ours, yet it is this eschatological hope that inspires and sustains our efforts.

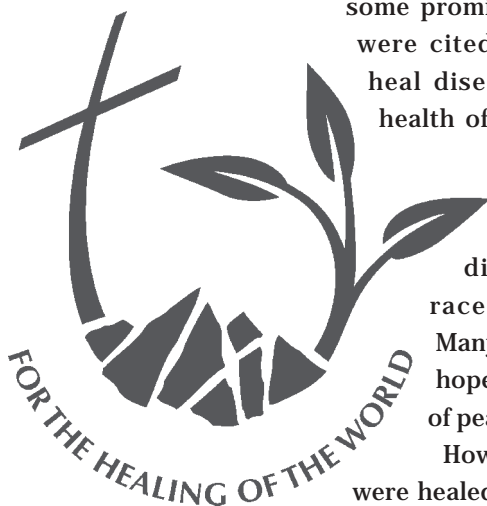
As the past millennium came to an end, some promising signs of healing were cited, such as efforts to heal disease, to improve the health of communities, to liberate those who have been oppressed, to reconcile those of different ideologies, races and nationalities. Many looked forward with hope to a new millennium of peace.

However, as old divisions were healed, new ones arose. Sin

and its effects continued to be manifest in familiar as well as in alarmingly new ways. Old and new rivalries broke open, confounding the illusion that old wounds had actually been healed. Those left ever further behind by the forces of globalization became more ravaged, wounded and devastated, while others reached dizzying heights of affluence. The former sometimes sought refuge in expressions of fundamentalism, while the latter celebrated what now is possible through global flows of postmodern culture, technology and capital. Some feared a violent "clash of civilizations." The ecumenical spirit of openness to others has given way to sharp new forms of religious balkanization in many places throughout the world.

The hope for global human progress toward healing, justice and peace continues to be severely tested. The earth itself ruptures through quakes or other natural catastrophes, and thousands of already impoverished people suddenly find themselves without homes. For the sake of economic or political gain, desperate rulers exercise despotic power over their citizens, whose lives become expendable. Under the policies of the international financial institutions, a country's economy can plunge into chaos, shattering the livelihood and future of its people. In flashes of unimaginable destruction, human power and possibilities can suddenly be thrown into a state of crisis. Peace and relative well-being can disappear in a massive cloud of human debris. Such vulnerability and devastation have been recurring throughout much of the world.

In North America, well-known symbols of human know-how, achievement and strength were pierced and destroyed by speeding airplanes that suddenly became weapons of mass destruction, as they crashed into fortresses of human might and security. This became a potent mixture of technological triumph, financial strength, military might,



resentment, anger, hatred, mourning and fear. The vertical and horizontal dimensions of this fiery inferno were filled with human beings from around the world, and rendered through a child's drawing into a burning cross.

From the perspective of the cross

At the beginning of the third millennium, the Assembly logo of the cross bending toward the broken earth is a dramatic reminder of the potential of the Christian faith to speak to these critical times in which we live and to bring healing (the leaves).

In encountering personal trauma or global crises, we become more aware of the human capacity for evil, as well as of our capacity to do good by serving the neighbor, reaching out with compassionate mercy and justice across human divides. Human beings are both destroyers and healers. Luther reminds us that Christians are simultaneously saint and sinner (*simul iustus et peccator*). According to St. Paul, there are no hard and fast distinctions between those who are good and those who are evil; “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

The cross shatters the illusion that dominating power is what matters—that human beings can save, secure, or make life invulnerable, in other words, that human beings have divine power. Seeking to become like God is itself the essence of sin. Human attempts to root out all evil, to establish total security, to hunt down and conquer the enemy in any clear-cut or final way are continually confounded. Such attempts are especially troubling when religion is misused as a tool to mobilize forces of resistance and violence for the sake of what is seen as “God’s will.”

Seeking divine legitimization of human power must be challenged. In most



societies, such human power has been held by and associated with men more than women. When God then is portrayed and addressed in exclusively male terms, this tends to provide divine legitimization for patriarchal patterns of power in society. A theology of the cross suggests much different understandings and dynamics of power, and concepts of God who is beyond gender. We are challenged to live this out more consistently in our ecclesial language and practices.

How have people in your church viewed events of massive destruction? What have you said, or wanted to say, to those directly affected, especially to others in the communion?



A theology of the cross is a decisive counter to the seductive appeal of a theology of glory. As Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall has repeatedly pointed out, such a theological emphasis is especially needed in contexts such as North America, where the Assembly will meet:

For us as a people, expectancy is synonymous with progress, expansion, development, production, growth, bigness, victory, the breaking of barriers, the pushing back of frontiers, the refusal to admit limits, the sense of power and success. We have even banished death ... and the religion of Jesus helped us do it.⁶

The Assembly will meet in a country that lies in the shadow of the most powerful country in the world today. This “empire” pervasively affects, for good and ill, the rest of the globe. A theology of the cross brings critical perspectives to this kind of reality, by focusing our attention instead on the lowliness and suffering that is the plight of so much of the rest of the world, including there where many LWF member churches minister.

Luther reminded us that tendencies toward theological triumphalism are re-

flected in preferring glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, good to evil.⁷ As human beings, we often seek to justify ourselves through our actions, rather than relying on God’s grace as we know it through Jesus Christ. To begin with the indicative—with how *God* justifies, liberates, reconciles, heals—provides a much different basis for human action. We act in light of what God has done and promises to bring to fulfillment, rather than seeking recognition for what our efforts will bring about, as if *we* will heal the world.

We may yearn for definitive solutions to sin and evil, but we are left with partial glimpses of what God promises. Yet, we trust in those promises. Out of these depths, the human cries out for help to the God who cannot be seen. We may begin to glimpse some signs of healing, but often in ways we do not expect or cannot verify according to human criteria. A theology of the cross reminds us that God’s healing power is active in human history, not through the kind of triumphal might that many associate with “God,” but through weakness, vulnerability and suffering. God’s power is made known through the cross. Living from that

power, the church is called to be with those who are being stripped of life by sickness, disease and conflict, to be with those who are poor, marginalized and violated, to identify with the shamed and outcast, and to live among those who are fearful and terrorized.

Those of us for whom vulnerability and desperation are ongoing rather than new realities can testify to how such a suffering, compassionate God does indeed bring healing, new life and liberating hope. In the depths of human pathos, we experience God's abiding commitment to the world—God with us—giving us the courage to enter the darkness, with all the wounds, scars and diseases in need of healing. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we do so in communion with one another, and in the confident hope that God's promises will be fulfilled.

This is what it means to be the church. And yet, churches are too often caught up in fear, suspicion of "the other," and "business as usual." Too often churches are captive to the protection of economic, political, or social privilege. Unless churches themselves are "converted" from such predominant tendencies, they cannot presume to be "for the healing of the world." Through the transformative power of the cross, the church's eyes are opened to the painful realities in the world that it has previously overlooked, its ears begin to hear the cries rising from the suffering earth, and its heart is moved to act compassionately with others.

What needs to be healed?

The theme immediately reminds us of particular persons who are in need of healing—we ourselves, and those close to us—especially those who are regularly named in intercessory prayers of

the church. This has been the focus of much of the church's healing ministry.

Health and health care are major concerns throughout the world, especially in those places where there is an alarming lack of accessible, affordable health care—including in affluent countries such as the United States. Historically the church has taken the initiative to provide such care there where it is most needed. Increasingly pivotal is its advocacy role for the sake of health care for all.

Justification is the basis from which we approach other needs for healing. People's deepest spiritual needs for healing have been addressed through the good news of God's gracious, justifying activity in Jesus Christ:

Justification is the forgiveness of sins (*cf.* Rom 3:23–25; Acts 13:39; Lk 18:14), liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (Rom 5:12–21) and from the curse of the law (Gal 3:10–14). It is acceptance into communion with God—already now, but then fully in God's coming kingdom (Rom 5:1f). It unites with Christ and with his death and resurrection (Rom 6:5).⁸

What afflicts us includes diseases acquired that are primarily physical, as well as those that are more mental or spiritual. Jesus was clear that disease or illness is not the result of a sin that has been committed (Lk 13:1–5; Jn 9:2–3). What is reflective of sin are the ways those who are diseased, are separated, or alienated from the community (as lepers were in Jesus' day). Some diseases result in deep scars and disabilities that last a lifetime, and may never be cured.

Some "diseases" deeply afflict how we think, see, or act, such as when eco-

What in the world is in need of healing? What are the specific cries, pains, laments, memories? What are the diseases, illnesses and wounds from which the world and the church suffer?

conomic measures become all that matter. Entrenched poverty continues to haunt billions. Parts of the world suffer from excessive individualism and consumerism. We and the rest of creation become “polluted” and thus ill, because of the very air we breathe, both literally and figuratively. All these and more of the world’s diseases need to be raised up as a collective lament to God.

Healing is also needed because of the walls that are erected between people due to their ethnicity, race, caste, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental condition. These barriers lead to further injustices. Out of our sickness (or sin), we erect walls that exclude or discriminate against others. Many of these have deep cultural bases, which is why they can be so difficult to talk about or to address, such as those related to ethnicity, caste, gender and sexuality. Many of the “walls” between churches are related to the huge economic disparities in the world, which in turn are reflected in the affluence of some member churches in stark contrast to the dire poverty of others. We need to reflect on how Christ breaks down the most entrenched walls or taboos, transforming our assumptions and ways of relating to one another.

Furthermore, others inflict wounds on us—various forms of violence and injustice, whether covert or overt, interpersonal or institutional. We are sinned against, and we sin against others. The scars and memories fester, and can lead to resentment if not violence. Some wounds are inflicted by those as close at hand as family members, as occurs in domestic violence, others by our governments or by more distant political and economic powers, especially under the reign of economic globalization. The seemingly intrac-

table conflicts raging in the world today, and the deep scars they inflict on all of creation, cry out for reconciliation that does far more than gloss over differences.

Churches have sometimes been among those who have legitimated or inflicted the wounds, and perpetuated illnesses in persons and societies. For example, people are blamed for their impoverished or diseased condition. Theology is used to endorse rather than critique the worst features of affluence. Bible passages are used to justify keeping women and others in their places. Christian theology is used to denounce other faiths. Churches aligned with certain ethnic groups or nations have inflicted massive suffering on others, especially on those who are different from themselves. The divisions within and among churches and the walls of animosity with those of other faiths must be addressed. Silence in the face of oppression and exploitation of people and lands, such as the indigenous peoples and land of North America, has resulted in untold deaths and devastation.

Might there be honest naming, confessing and critiquing of how we as churches have been complicit in what needs to be brought to light and healed? This is likely to occur through many aspects of the Assembly and the interaction that will occur there, especially in the work of the Village Groups. Here the different healing challenges in our world and churches will be addressed from the perspective of the Christian faith. From this work will emerge commitments and directions for future priorities and work of the Lutheran communion.

Theological perspectives on “healing”

The grounding for the Assembly theme goes back to the Hebrew Scriptures. In

From the perspective of your church, what kinds of healing are especially needed?

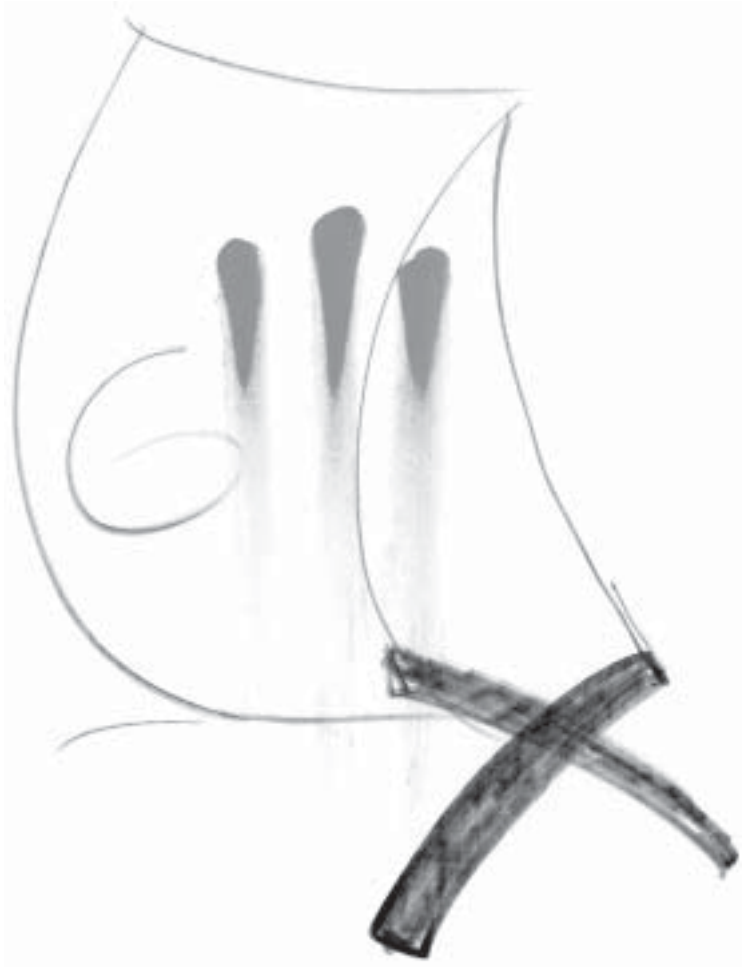
the presence of the righteous and compassionate Yahweh,

Israel experienced the forgiveness of sin and the healing that freed it for commitment to the order of life intended by God for all.⁹

Thus, the people of ancient Israel, and Jews since then have understood their calling to mend, heal and transform the world in light of God's creative and redemptive purposes in human history. Jesus and the Early Church were anchored in this understanding:

With Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Jesus looked to the day when God would break the bonds of sin that enslaved humans, freeing them to be God's people. According to Jesus, that day was to be a day of healing not only for humans, but for all creation. ... Jesus anticipated God's drawing near to restore a broken and fallen creation, and God drawing those who were faithful to God's plan of healing and justice into participation in the Kingdom.¹⁰

Christians today believe that healing comes through faith in the God we know in Jesus Christ, whose Spirit heals us and all of creation. Healing is made possible by the power of God's Spirit, as an expression of God's love and grace. The Spirit is the power of God through which people are continually being rescued, healed and saved. Healing restores the right relationship with God, with other persons, peoples, communities and with the rest of creation. It has dimensions that are spiritual, physical, psychological and social, and in these ways, is "salvific."



Healing can be a way of understanding what forgiveness and reconciliation are about. Forgiveness points toward the healing of pain, liberation from oppression, rectifying injustices and mending of broken relationships, beginning with our relationship with God. Forgiveness is a process that includes both the perpetrator and the offended. Jesus not only forgave, but he identified with the victims, healing and freeing them, so

Rita lost her brother in the attack on the World Trade Center, because he chose to help others less able than himself to escape. In her grief over his death, she went to Afghanistan to get to know those who have experienced far greater loss due to the US bombing. They became closer to her than her own family. Now she has returned to the US to tell *their* story of loss. "What they have endured through 23 years of war," she remarks, "the last part of which was carried out in the name of my brother!"

that their dignity was restored. Genuine reconciliation is a mutual process; both are changed in the encounter. It cannot occur unless the injustices in the relationship are addressed. Reconciliation in turn paves the way for new relationships, for new ways of being together, for a new future that is not tied to the pains of the past. In political as well as personal life, forgiveness has to do with how we manage our relationships with the past without letting them manage us.

Healing can be a long and difficult process. It is not synonymous with curing; the wound or condition can persist. Disabling conditions may persist, but what can be transformed is how people are received as whole persons in community. Restoration to live faithfully in community is what healing seeks. Just as forgiveness does not necessarily mean forgetting, healing does not mean the disappearance of all signs of a disease or wound. Memories often cannot be healed, especially when they are deeply painful. The source of the pain or wound needs to be re-visited before healing can occur.

Healing points to all the ways through which people are liberated and reconciled in the world, and how the world itself is being healed or saved. While we affirm the signs of healing in our day, we “wait with eager longing” (Rom 8:19ff.) for God’s promised healing or redemption of all creation in the age to come. As one Asian Lutheran theologian has put it,

For Luther, the Spirit of justification is the Spirit of creation, and the Spirit of resurrection and a final transformation of all things, a new heaven and earth.¹¹

Jesus, heal us!

Healing is a pervasive theme in the ministry of Jesus. In approaching this theme, some Western understandings of healing and health care may need to be tempo-

rarily suspended in order to appreciate the much different cultural assumptions operating in the New Testament stories of Jesus and healing. In this sense, this theme provides rich opportunities for cross-cultural considerations that privilege other healing perspectives, which continue to be present in many parts of the Lutheran communion today, but are often overlooked or viewed with skepticism.

As a condition of well-being, health is understood according to what is valued within a given cultural system. It involves more than bodily or physical health. Illness is experienced through aspects of a culture such as honor and shame and the misfortune brought by spirits. Healing focuses not on disease or curing, but on the personal and social meaning of the sickness.¹² In healing, the meaning of such experiences is transformed.

This is apparent in the worldview of Luke’s Gospel, which was strongly influenced by spirits and demons. Here Jesus is portrayed as conceived, baptized and sent forth in ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit. In that sense, he is a Spirit-filled prophet who healed people of illnesses associated with unclean spirits. His focus was not on the causes or diagnoses of sickness, but on restoring persons to wholeness or integrity. “The miracles were nothing less than the mending of the created order.”¹³

To be healed was more than a private experience; it involved the wider social, economic and political orders of relationships. Social power was re-ordered through healing, which was why this was seen as threatening to the established order. Jesus reached out to touch others, or was touched himself, across taboo boundaries of impurity. He drove out demons whose possession made persons powerless to act. Although Jesus did not have significant social power or status, he is depicted as a folk healer, one who took people’s needs for healing at face value. He entered individual stories and

experiences of suffering, bringing concrete experiences of liberation.

The body matters

The theme evokes the bodily as well as spiritual dimensions of life. It compels us to re-examine how we view and relate to our bodies, the bodies of those different from us, and the whole body of creation — as God’s good creation. God creates us as embodied flesh and blood beings; our bodies truly do matter in God’s scheme of things. Bodies are very central in Jesus’ healing ministry, and in the Christian hope, “the resurrection of the body.” Furthermore, the church has often been referred to as a body: “now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor 12:27).

I believe that God has created me, together with all creatures. (Martin Luther)

Martin Luther viewed all of creation as the abode of God’s indwelling, and refused to sever the spiritual from the material. Thus,

we are to rejoice in our bodiliness as the very place the utterly incarnate God is with us, not sever our souls from the biophysical in an attempt to leave earth behind and incant our way to supposedly “higher” places.¹⁴

The problem is that some aspects of the Christian tradition, including some New Testament passages, reflect the influence of Greek dualistic thought, in which the physical body was seen as separate from and inferior to the spirit or soul. This was epitomized in the heresy of Gnosticism. These influences resulted in a devaluing of bodies. Further devalued were those whose bodies are different from the norm, such as women or people with deformities or disabilities, whose inferiority has been justified on the basis of their bodies. Despite the Christian doctrines of

Are there negative messages regarding the body that have you received through the church? How, if at all, has your culture or family communicated a different message?

creation, incarnation and resurrection of the body, this devaluation of the body has adversely affected how we view bodies, sexuality, disabilities, illness, the rest of creation and the overall theme of “healing.” Even though the church was referred to as the body of Christ, this tended to be spiritualized.

We do not **have** bodies, as if they were inferior servants who work for us, but instead we **are** bodies, made up of the same stuff as other life forms on our planet.¹⁵ The body is how each one of us can be recognized, responded to, touched, cared for, loved, as well as oppressed, beaten, starved and killed. We experience the greatest pleasure and the most intense pain in our bodies, which knit us together in networks of shared suffering and joy with all of creation. Through bodies—in all their diversity—we are connected with one another, with the rest of creation and with God. Disdain and fear of bodies begins to be overcome. We become one body with the rest of creation. Taking the needs of the body seriously points toward a new inclusive sense of justice for all of creation.

Healing through the sacraments

We must never regard the sacrament as a harmful thing from which we should flee, but as a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine that aids you and gives life in both soul and body. For where the soul is healed, the body is helped as well.¹⁶

The sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion are means of grace, expres-

sions of the saving and healing presence of God in the church. They are healing events through which God restores human beings. The Church Fathers called the Eucharist a medicine of immortality; it provides us not only with a remedy on earth but also with eternal life. Luther viewed the Eucharist as daily food and sustenance; it is given to us so that our faith may be refreshed and strengthened, so that we will not succumb in the struggle with sin, but grow stronger. Other rites of healing are, in a sense, extensions of the Eucharist.

How can the sacraments help us to understand the nature of healing as God's gift? To be realistic, patient and not to make empty promises to those in need of healing?

The sacraments are gifts of God. God bestows them freely. They cannot be manipulated to cure illnesses. Thus, they help us to challenge healing practices based on superstitions. Dualisms that separate body or matter from spirit or soul are challenged by sacramental approaches to healing and wholeness, which consider a human being as a unity of body, mind and spirit.

Holy Communion is the source of and creative force behind what it means for us to be a communion. It expresses both the particularity and catholicity of the church. We meet the resurrected Christ in the breaking of bread (Lk 24:13–35), and are formed into a meal-sharing community. By receiving communion we take Christ into our bodies, in a way that transforms us personally and collectively. The people gather, the Word of God is proclaimed, the people intercede for the needs of the church and the world, the eucharistic meal is shared, and the people are sent out into the world with a mission.

How can the unity of sacramental celebration and daily life be strengthened?

As God in Christ has entered into the human situation, so there is an intrinsic connection between the sacraments and daily life. The sacraments express the corporeality and materiality of the faith. Through them, God's grace becomes visible, edible, drinkable and audible. The sacraments are celebrated in the midst of the suffering world that yearns for healing. It is significant that the Lutheran communion, meeting under the theme, "for the healing of the world," will celebrate Holy Communion each day.

The spirit of the triune God

The doctrine of the Trinity is a way of talking about the mystery of God who saves and heals through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ The point of this doctrine is to express that God goes forth into the world as breath. That breath communicates and gives life to the Word. The Word calls forth a living faith, as well as disclosing the purposes of God everywhere in the world.¹⁸ The Trinity is a way of speaking of God that expresses God's profound involvement in, with and for the world.¹⁹ God communicates to the world a plentitude of overflowing love, grace and mercy.

Much of the renewed attention to trinitarian theology in our day has underlined the relational, dialogical nature of God, in ways that draw upon and yet go beyond some Eastern (Orthodox) understandings. Rather than as an autonomous patriarch, God is essentially relational, as are we and the whole universe. Different notions of divine power become evident, as relational, *communio*-creating power. Everything comes from and returns to God, through Christ and in the Spirit. Christ is the communion of the divine and human, and the Holy Spirit unites all persons in communion with God and one another.

The truth about God and ourselves is that we were meant to live as persons in community, living from God, for and with others. From an African perspective, we **are** in relation to others.

Entering into the life of God means entering in the deepest way possible ... into the life of Jesus Christ, the life of the Spirit, the life of others. ... into a life of love and communion with others.²⁰

Saving and healing love is at the heart of this reign of God. God in Christ inaugurates this by forgiving sin, casting out demons and healing. God's reign or communion is the shared rule of equal persons in communion, not domination of some over others.

A triune understanding of God becomes the basis for mutuality among persons, different groups of people and among churches from different parts of the world. Rather than some being viewed as normative and set over others, a communion grounded in the triune God is characterized by equality, mutuality and reciprocity in the midst of our very real differences.

Within such a triune understanding of who God is and how God relates to the world, the role of the Spirit acquires new significance. In the New Testament healing stories, especially in Luke and Acts, the power of the Holy Spirit is repeatedly emphasized. Throughout church history, there has been a close association between the Holy Spirit and healing.

The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common true faith.²¹

Through the Spirit, we participate in the divine pathos, present in human history and throughout creation. We enter into communion with the crucified and risen Christ, in whom God's Spirit has

What are the implications of trinitarian theology for how we relate to each other within this communion? For how we relate to those of other faiths?

been made visible and tangible. In other words, the Holy Spirit is the presence and reality of God's creating, saving, preserving work in ways that can be sensed and experienced. Luther's conviction was that the presence of the indwelling Christ through the Holy Spirit is the source of wisdom and power. To "receive the Holy Spirit" is to see what God is doing in and through the brokenness of our lives and world to bring healing, and to enliven people toward each other and the rest of creation.²²

The Holy Spirit affects how we experience God and participate in and with one another. We are set in a web of new relationships with one another, in ways that cut across and transform old boundaries. God's Spirit empowers us to act differently in relation to one another. Polarities and hostilities that can contribute to violence are overcome in favor of a community of solidarity, responsibility and love. Love reaches out and draws others in, creating diverse webs of relatedness.

The spirit of the modern world, with its emphasis on human power and know-how, is relativized by the power of God's Spirit. Finitude and vulnerability are accepted rather than something we seek to overcome. Instead of self-preservation, we are liberated from the need to assert ourselves at the expense of others. We are freed from the presumption that the world can be healed by principles of conquest that actually divide and destroy human community. People are freed in relationship to themselves and the ruling powers. This can be threatening to the powers that reign in our world today. It can become a powerful witness, as the Holy Spirit opens us up to the world.

How have you experienced this boundary-crossing love?

Deliberating, discerning and deciding together

Through the power of the Spirit we are able to assemble together. Furthermore, we are able to communicate and hear in ways we would not be able to on our own. The Holy Spirit precedes and underlies communication with one another. Rather than our differences hindering communion with one another, in our diversity we together become the body of Christ, bearers of and witnesses to God's presence in the world.

At Pentecost (Acts 2), with the outpouring of the Spirit, members of the Early Church were able to understand each other in unexpected ways. Similarly, we may not be able to understand one another's language or culture, but together we acquire a new comprehension of what it means to be a communion in the world. In this communion we may speak different languages and have different identities, yet we still have something in common. Amid what seem to be impossible hurdles to mutual understanding, amid all the foreignness, the

How might this Assembly be like a Pentecost experience for those who gather?

Spirit imparts a sense of connection and familiarity. People with different gifts and abilities can attest to the reality of a relational God who creates, delivers and gives life to us and the whole world. God's presence is experienced in concretely diverse ways, arising out of different cultural situations that are mutually challenging and enriching testimonies to what God is about.

Through the power of the Spirit we are able to communicate across our many differences, to deliberate what is at stake in light of Scripture and our faith convictions, and to discern what we as a communion will do. The Spirit restores solidarity and the ability to act, to resist in the face of despair, to move beyond feelings of insecurity, fear and paralysis. Dominant values and systems cannot limit the action of the Spirit, who rules through what seems like powerlessness. We "blaspheme against the Holy Spirit" when we disregard how God's Spirit is delivering us out of conditions from which there seems no human escape.²³ Forgiveness of sin raises up those who are crushed. We experience a new beginning in which relationships are restored. Solidarity implies accountability to one another. We become more vulnerable, capable of being changed by the suffering, open to critique and to change reality. As we become open with and for each other, we are changed for others so as to work for that which is good for the neighbor...and for the healing of the world.

B. The Canadian Context

Where We Meet

The Tenth Assembly will gather in the city of Winnipeg, a city of 635,000 people in the center of the world's second largest country in geographical terms. Canada has been blessed with abundant natural resources, strong traditions of Aboriginal, French and English peoples, and a rich diversity of immigrants who continue to weave the fabric of Canadian society. The *1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* observes that

Canada is a test case for a great notion—the notion that dissimilar peoples can share lands, resources, power and dreams while respecting and sustaining their differences. The story of Canada is the story of many such peoples, trying and failing and trying again, to live together in peace and harmony.

Canadian society and government

In a country of two confederating cultures in 1867, successive waves of immigrants (primarily from all parts of Europe and more recently from Asia) have produced a multicultural population. With Francophones comprising 25 percent of the population, aspirations within the province of Québec to be *maîtres chez nous* have grown to include significant desires for sovereignty from



“the rest of Canada.” While French culture contributes significantly to Canadian culture and identity, growing multicultural diversity seems to be eroding sensitivities to these aspirations.

At the same time, Canada's history of federalism and its vast geography have shaped a society embodying a strong cooperative social consciousness that has stood against crude individualistic and unfettered capitalist approaches. This has created a sense of “responsibility for the whole,” and the development of a highly valued “social safety net.” This now is under threat as Canada is increasingly shaped by globalizing forces and its powerful southern neighbor. The Canadian churches have been reminded that they cannot have an effective private mo-

Canada's name derives from the Huron-Iroquois word for “village” or “settlement,” referring in 1535 to the early settlement of Quebec City. Winnipeg's name means “muddy waters” in the Cree language, describing its location and the effects where the waters of the Red River and the Assiniboine River come together. Where the rivers meet in downtown Winnipeg, “The Forks” marks what has been an important meeting place for more than 6,000 years. Thus, meeting in Village Groups and gathering at The Forks will take on special meaning at the Assembly.

Assimilation policies have done great damage, leaving a legacy of brokenness affecting Aboriginal individuals, families and communities. The damage has been equally serious for the spirit of Canada – the spirit of generosity and mutual accommodation in which Canadians take pride. Aboriginal reality in Canada has become a vicious circle of cause and effect. If that vicious circle is to become a healing circle, the roots of injustice must be addressed. Breaking free of the pain, anger and resentment that are the legacy of the colonial past means allowing Aboriginal people and communities to initiate their healing strategies – initiatives that draw on traditional practices and an understanding of peoples needs. (*The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*)

ality without a lively social ethic and vision for the whole, which they must imaginatively preserve and enhance.²⁴

Canada is a parliamentary democracy and a respected nation with moderate influence on the world stage. This includes membership in the G8, the Commonwealth and the Francophonie; longstanding support of United Nations peacekeeping; and, a willingness sometimes to distinguish itself sharply from US policies (e.g., Vietnam, Cuba and missile defense). More recently, Canada and its churches have been strong advocates for debt relief for poorer nations and for the abolition of landmines.

Yet, there are great tensions in Canadian society which are in urgent need of healing. These concern French-English relations, regional differences and rivalries, relations with Aboriginal peoples, and debates about social policy and “public versus private” responsibilities (for example, health care, education and income security).

Relations with Aboriginal peoples

Canadian life includes a troubled history of relations between Canada’s Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, beginning with colonial traders and settlers who either befriended or betrayed the resident Aboriginal peoples as they chose. Health care, education, employment and social services are critical issues for Ab-

original people, along with issues of land claims and self-government. The establishment in 1999 of the new Territory of Nunavut (meaning “our land”) provided the first embodiment of Aboriginal self-government on the national scene.

Although Canada is among the top countries in which to live (according to the annual UN Human Development Index), the well-being of many of Canada’s Aboriginal communities has been below that of many developing nations. Aboriginal people face a life expectancy six years shorter than the Canadian average. Aboriginal youth suicide rates are five to eight times greater than the national average. The Aboriginal infant mortality rate is almost double the Canadian average, and 40 percent of Aboriginal people live at or below the poverty line.²⁵

Since 1975, a coalition of Canadian churches has been working in partnership with Aboriginal people and community organizations in the *Aboriginal Rights Coalition*. With a focus on public education and action programs, this coalition seeks to build alliances and solidarity in the struggle for Aboriginal justice in Canada, and seeks reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples, the Christian community and Canadian society.

Immigration

Most of Canada’s population of 31 million people (in 2001) live within a 300 km west-

to-east band stretching for a distance comparable to that of England to the Persian Gulf. Immigration to present-day Canada began in the sixteenth century with explorers, fur traders and settlers from France and Great Britain. The American Revolution in the late eighteenth century drove many “empire loyalists” north into Canada. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, great waves of immigrants came from Europe in search of land for farming and freedom for religious and social expression. Canada’s vast expanses attracted many to move north. German immigrants settled mainly in southern Ontario with smaller numbers in the west. Swedes, Danes, Norwegians, Finns and Icelanders settled in great numbers in northern Ontario and the western provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Where they settled, they also established churches.

Immigration patterns have changed dramatically in the last 50 years, decreasing from more than 90 percent European before 1961 to about 19 percent since 1991, and from only 3 percent Asian before 1961 to 57 percent since 1991. Canada continues to emphasize its multicultural character as a mosaic rather than a melting pot. Some critics say this detracts from a sense of social cohesion.

Theologian Douglas John Hall reframes this issue in terms of “hospitality.”

Hospitality is an important biblical concept which means more than inclusivity because it takes seriously the “otherness” of the others; it lets them be who they are. Canada’s historic potentiality for accepting and being hospitable towards difference is gravely under threat today—threatened by those who emphasize the particularity and specialness of one group, thus jeopardizing the whole, and by forces of globalization which destroy real distinctiveness ... As Christians in Canada today, we have an ethical mandate

to fashion and inculcate a vision for our country that honors and fosters both unity and difference.²⁶

How do you experience “otherness” or “specialness” in your setting? How has your church understood and practiced “hospitality” toward others? What kind of hospitality could bring healing to troubled communities?

Religion

Census figures for 1996 report that main-line denominations (Roman Catholic, Anglican, United Church, Lutheran and Presbyterian) comprise 85 percent of the Christian community and so-called conservative Protestants (Mennonite, Pentecostal, Missionary Alliance, Salvation Army, Baptist, etc.) are about 8 percent of the Canadian church scene. Lutherans represent 2.4 percent of the population and Anglicans 8.1 percent. The number of people who claim no religious affiliation has almost doubled from 1981 to 1991, increasing to 12.5 percent of the total population.

The leading researcher on religion in Canada reports that religion no longer occupies center stage in Canadian society. It has ceased to be life-informing for the average Canadians, who have moved from religious “commitment” to religious “consumption.”²⁷ Religious participation in Canada is down sharply from the 60 percent of members who attended church weekly in 1945 to 23 percent in 1995. Few people, however, are actively leaving the church. They still identify with religion but want to access it *à la carte*—not participating in church life regularly but seeking it out for baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals. Religious memory is everywhere and there is an extensive receptivity to spirituality.

How does this compare to the religious participation in your country?



Lutherans in Canada

The first service of Lutheran worship in North America took place in 1619 near Churchill, on Hudson Bay in northern Manitoba. It was led by the Danish Pastor, Rasmus Jensen, who accompanied an ill-fated expedition seeking a northwest passage to Asia. Early German Lutheran settlement in Nova Scotia began over 250 years ago, and several congregations in those early years became Anglican. To find pastors to serve communities of German-speaking and Nordic immigrants, relationships developed among various Lutheran synods and councils on a North American basis. Thus by the mid-1960s, most of the Lutheran congregations in Canada were members of the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS).

In 1967 and 1968, the congregations of the Canada District of the ALC became autonomous to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada (ELCC). In 1986, the Canada Section of the LCA joined with the ELCC to become the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) with 652 congregations and 210,000 members (declining to 627 congregations and about 189,000 members in 2001). The church has five synods, two seminaries (Saskatoon and Waterloo), and two colleges and two high schools in western Canada. New ethnic ministries consist of 10 Chinese congregations and one mission, totaling about 1,200 members; two Aboriginal missions; one Vietnamese mission; and one Spanish mission. Several congregations continue with services in German, Finnish, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian.

Canada is also home to congregations of the Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian diaspora churches; the church offices of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad are in Toronto. Canadian congregations of the LC-MS formed the

A significant expression of Canada's cooperative movements has been the leadership of the churches with their strong history of ecumenical initiative and cooperation in addressing issues of justice and peace. Moving beyond mere cooperation, the churches have established several independent ecumenical organizations in areas of research, policy development, advocacy, education and grass-roots mobilization. In 2001, these separate organizations came together in *KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives*, to focus the work of churches and religious organizations on promoting international human rights, global economic justice, environmental and ecological justice, Canadian social development and advocacy for Aboriginal peoples.

We commit ourselves as church through prayer, study and conversation, to discern what it is for us to live faithfully under the cross in this time and place, seeing the world through the event of the cross. We will enter into the lives of people in our local, national and global communities. We commit ourselves as church to communicate clearly with one another and with society. We commit ourselves to openness and trust. We will listen to the voices of our church and society and respond to their needs.

(1997 Evangelical Declaration of the ELCIC)

autonomous Lutheran Church–Canada (LC-C) in 1988 with about 80,000 members, and church offices in Winnipeg. The ELCIC and LC-C participate jointly in Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR).

In 1995, the ELCIC convention took bold action to eliminate the structure of divisions and offices (modeled on much larger churches in the USA) and to replace it with a more flexible organization of staff and working groups involving synodical representation. The 1997 convention embraced an *Evangelical Declaration* “as our church’s vision for life and mission for the next decade (1997–2007).” This Declaration begins,

God calls us, through Word and Sacrament, to be disciples and to make disciples. Our discipleship is defined by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Our mission is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people in Canada and around the world through the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the Sacraments, and through service in Christ’s name.

In 2001 the ELCIC observed the 25th anniversary of ordaining women with celebrations and an intensive study of

women’s experiences in ministry. More than 140 women have served as ordained pastors of the ELCIC.

Regional expression of communion

In order to deepen the regional expression of communion, an LWF regional office for North America was established in

How does communion break through the barriers between people and communities? How have language or hopes of communion become realities in your region?

1998 as a cooperative effort of the LWF and the region’s member churches. In 2000 the first LWF consultation of North American churches was held to strengthen relationships, reflect on mission in North America to explore what communion might involve beyond occasional cooperation. The consultation questioned what it is about boundaries (of nation, race, gender, age, status, denomination, etc.) that keeps us apart and defines communities and people as “dif-

The North American farm crisis highlights how relationships that support economic globalization make it nearly impossible for “winners” and “losers” to communicate. In difficult times, farmers across the 49th parallel (between the US and Canada) become adversaries because they operate within separate national economic systems. The church and its expression of communion can create the space where stories are shared, where systems are held accountable, and where alternative relationships are inspired. Taking the experiences and life-situations of others seriously will transform us—even, and perhaps especially, in the church.

(2000 LWF North America Consultation)

ferent.” For example, the young adults emphasized that youth feel isolated even within the church, and that their gifts are consistently not appreciated. Participants noted that, most of the time, churches and leaders become preoccupied with maintaining ministries and responding to crises that relate to our separate “territories” of mission. They realized they need “someone from outside” to ask and invite them into a larger and richer context and community, which is what the communion provides.

Full communion with the Anglican Church of Canada

In July 2001, the Waterloo Declaration joined the ELCIC and the Anglican Church of Canada in a relationship of full communion—affirming what was already the practical reality in many communities. This Declaration involves

transferability of members; mutual recognition and interchangeability of ministries; freedom to use each other’s liturgies; freedom to participate in each other’s ordinations and installations of clergy, including bishops; and structures for consultation to express, strengthen and enable our common life, witness and service, to the glory of God and the salvation of the world.²⁸

Alongside this process of bilateral dialogue with the ELCIC, the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) has been facing the consequences of its ministries in Aboriginal residential schools which are now acknowledged to have abused significant numbers of Aboriginal children. The ELCIC experience of walking together with the ACC—along the road of guilt, repentance and seeking to make amends with Aboriginal people and communities, many of whom are members and leaders within the same church—has drawn the two churches even closer together. Where the ELCIC has had limited experience in ministry among Aboriginal peoples, the experience of the ACC opens up opportunities to learn and grow together—as churches and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people—in serving God’s mission in the world and in Canada.

Hosting the Tenth Assembly

In planning to host the Tenth Assembly, the ELCIC has chosen to emphasize the vision of hospitality. Any sense of barriers or separation into camps of “hosts” and “visitors” is removed when hospitality is combined with the Assembly theme. As we plan to gather, we trust that it is God who will host us in Winnipeg and daily throughout the world in our own national, local and community contexts.

After almost three days of weeping and unburdening their pain and trauma concerning residential schools, the community gathered for a healing service. Moments before the service began, Archbishop Michael Peers, Primate of the ACC, asked permission to speak: “...Together here with you, I have listened as you have told your stories.... I accept and I confess, before God and you, our failures in the residential schools. We failed you.... On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, I present our apology....” A profound silence filled the room as people tried to understand what this action meant. Then there was the sound of weeping around the room as the impact of the apology began to sink in. The healing could begin now.

(Report from the 2nd Anglican National Native Convocation, 1993)

C. Preparing for the Assembly

It is expected that the healing theme will be reflected in the overall process of what is experienced and not just talked about at the Assembly. Given the holistic nature of what healing entails, it is important that this become more than just an Assembly of many words. The healing of memories, relationships and persons often occurs through the sharing of stories, songs and symbolic rituals, as well as through conversations with one another. In addition to our minds, our bodies and emotions need to be engaged.

Participants will be bringing many different concerns for healing, and many examples of how healing is occurring in their contexts. We need to be able to hear and learn from one another, across the boundaries that usually separate us and our particular concerns. In these ways, what it means for the LWF to be a communion can mature and be deepened.

As we share with one another, our differences are likely to become apparent. How can we listen and talk about these differences, and the different pieties and moral positions we have as churches in our diverse cultural settings? How might healing be embodied in how we “do business” with one another? How can we move beyond what can be caricatures of churches in “the North” or “the South” to more authentic relationships of sharing and receiving, of critiquing and being vulnerable? Might there be some public symbolic acts of reconciliation that go be-

yond the convention hall? How can this Assembly inspire and empower member churches and local congregations to become healing communities, equipped for an array of healing ministries in the world?

Living out the theme during the days of the Assembly

After the opening day of the Assembly, a continuous series of prayer petitions will weave throughout the rest of the days. One petition of a prayer will become the overall emphasis for each day. Worship will frame and permeate each day, from the morning Eucharist to the noon day prayers to the evening prayers and occasional services of healing. By beginning each day with worship, our grounding, identity and source of all healing is made clear. We begin with praise for God’s gifts which we receive through bread and wine, earthly elements that put us in touch with ourselves and the world, and empower us to face together the painful realities in need of healing.

When participants gather in the plenary hall, voices from different parts of the world will “cry out” some of the needs for healing in their context, followed by the plenary presentation of the Bible study by one of the regions. One or both of the printed Bible studies (see

Each member church is encouraged to identify stories or examples of the kinds of healing that are especially needed in their context. Many of these will be briefly shared during a number of the plenary sessions at the Assembly. On one of the evenings, participants are invited to share resources, approaches and practices related to healing in different contexts. On Sunday, as part of an outdoor celebration, each region is invited to reflect on and bring to the Assembly symbols expressing what “healing the land” means for them.

part II of this book) will provide a basis for this. Afterwards, small group Bible studies will continue in the Village Group settings.

The Village Groups will serve several important purposes at the Assembly. They are the place where:

- Small group Bible study discussions take place.
- Closer interpersonal relationships are developed, experiences shared, and hopefully some healing experienced.
- Challenges of intercultural communication are faced and dealt with.
- The theological substance of what we are about as a communion “for the healing of the world” is explored and deepened.
- The healing challenges in the church and the world are probed and analyzed.
- Designated aspects of the work of the LWF are considered, in order to propose directions and new commitments for the future work of the LWF.

Because this is where much that is central to the purpose of the Assembly will occur, five sessions will be spent in Village Groups. Out of this work will come the substance for the Assembly Message and recommendations for future LWF work, which will later be considered in plenary.

Most days will also involve a considerable amount of time spent in plenary business sessions. There will be a special public outdoor celebration on Sunday, and lots of time for informal interaction with participants from around the world, as together we experience what it means to be transformed into a communion.

The Writing Team for the Bible studies and Village Group chapters

In November 2001, a twelve-person Writing Team for the Assembly Study Book was gathered from member churches around the world. Together with a number of LWF staff, they probed more deeply into the theme, planned what should be covered and how, and prepared to write the Bible studies and the initial drafts to support and focus the work that is expected to occur in the Village Groups. Members of the team included:

Manas Buthelezi (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa), former bishop of the Central Diocese

Christoffer H. Grundmann (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover—Germany), professor of religion and the healing arts, Valparaiso University (USA)

Norman Habel (Lutheran Church of Australia), Adelaide College of Divinity, Flinders University of South Australia

Guillermo Hansen (United Evangelical Lutheran Church—Argentina), professor of theology, ISEDET, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Paul Isaak (Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia), professor and head of religion and theology, University of Namibia

Anastasia Malle (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania), United Bible Societies, Kenya

Monica J. Melanchthon (Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church), professor of Old Testament and women's studies, Gurukul Lutheran College, Chennai, India

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), adjunct professor of Christian ethics at Seattle University and Fuller Theological Seminary

Iara Müller (Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil), pastor currently studying in the USA

Tiit Pädam (Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church), rector of the Theological Institute

Barbara Rossing (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), associate professor of New Testament, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Turid Karlsen Seim (Church of Norway), professor of theology (New Testament) University of Oslo

Authors of the Bible studies are listed at the end of their respective pieces. The Village Group chapters (see part III) have been written in a more collaborative process so that the final version generally reflects the work of more than one author, and has undergone various revisions by the editor, as well as by others. Special thanks go to those who did the initial writing for these chapters:

- A. "Gods healing gift of justification" – Guillermo Hansen
- B. "Gods healing gift of communion" – Manas Buthelezi
- C. "Healing divisions within the one Church" – Guillermo Hansen
- D. "The mission of the Church in multi-faith contexts" – Ingo Wulfhorst (staff)
- E. "Removing barriers that exclude" – Iara Müller
- F. "The Church's ministry of healing" – Christoffer H. Grundmann
- G. "Justice and healing in families" – Paul Isaak
- H. "Overcoming violence" – Monica J. Melanchthon
- I. "Transforming economic globalization" – Cynthia Moe-Lobeda
- J. "Healing creation" – Norman Habel and Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

This book would not have been possible without the assistance of a number of LWF staff persons.



Notes

¹ Christoph Schwöbel, “The Quest for Communion: Reasons, Reflections and Recommendations,” in Heinrich Holze (ed.), *The Church as Communion, LWF Documentation 42* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1997), p. 277.

² “The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ,” in E. Theodore Bachmann (ed.), *Luther’s Works*, vol. 35 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 58.

³ Schwöbel, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 279.

⁴ The following section draws on Jens Holger Schjorring, Prasanna Kumari, Norman A. Hjelm (eds.), *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), pp. 353–419.

⁵ Wolfgang Greive (ed.), *Between Vision and Reality: Lutheran Churches in Transition, LWF Documentation 47* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2001).

⁶ Douglas John Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness. Toward an Indigenous Theology of the Cross* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 198.

⁷ “Heidelberg Disputation,” in Harold J. Grimm (ed.), *Luther’s Works*, vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 53.

⁸ *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), p.15.

⁹ Paul D. Hanson, *A People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), p. 77.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 397; p. 417.

¹¹ Paul Chung, “An Ecumenical Legacy of Martin Luther and Asian Theology” (unpublished manuscript), p. 6.

¹² John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 25.

¹³ Hanson, *op. cit.* (note 9), p. 398.

¹⁴ Larry Rasmussen and Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, “The Reform Dynamic,” in Karen L. Bloomquist and John R. Stumme (eds.), *The Promise of Lutheran Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), p. 137.

¹⁵ Sallie McFague, *The Body of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 16.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, “The Large Catechism,” in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (eds.), *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 474.

¹⁷ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991), p. 210. Much of what follows is based on her historical interpretation and re-conception of the doctrine of the Trinity.

¹⁸ Lee E. Snook, *What in the World is God Doing? Re-imagining Spirit and Power* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 29.

¹⁹ Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), p. 143.

²⁰ LaCugna, *op. cit.* (note 17), p. 382.

²¹ Third Article of the Creed in the Small Catechism, in Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (eds.), *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 355.

²² Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, transl. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), p. 155.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

²⁴ Douglas John Hall, *Canada Could Have a Future (and the Churches Could Help!): An Exercise in Contextual Theology*, lecture in the series, "Keeping the Spirit Alive," St. Stephen's College, Edmonton and Calgary, 1998.

²⁵ Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, official Web site, April 2002.

²⁶ Hall, *op. cit.* (note 24).

²⁷ Reginald W. Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: the Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1988); *There's Got to be More: Connecting Churches and Canadians* (Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books, 1995); *Mosaic Madness* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1990).

²⁸ "Called to Full Communion," adopted by the National Convention of the ELCIC and the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, 2001.