

**Liberated by God's Grace – Are we fully liberated when our sisters (and brothers) are not? Our liberation is bound up together and is a gift of God.**

“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

I. We celebrate that through our baptism, we *are* liberated by God's grace.

As women, we do not always experience this liberating grace due to our experiences of violence and from limited participation in church and society. Our experience of being liberated by God's grace is hampered. We call for freedom from violence and for the full participation of women in church and society.

We celebrate the Lutheran theological tradition and the women and men who have participated in that tradition over 500 years. We celebrate the fact that women theologize, formally and non-formally, and that the church is enriched with our perspectives through preaching, publishing, teaching, organizing, and dialogue. What we all need is gender justice, and it is rooted in adequate biblical interpretation and true preaching of the Gospel. The truth of the Gospel revealed through a Lutheran hermeneutic speaks against gender injustice. “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10b)

We call for the member churches and for the communion to give a clear focus to holistic mission, which includes preaching the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to all humanity and seeking justice and dignity for all *because salvation is not for sale*.

We therefore call for the member churches and for the communion to confront critical issues, no matter how controversial, including gender sensitive readings of Scripture and the use of biblical hermeneutics tied to power. We call for feminist Lutheran hermeneutics.

II. We celebrate that the Lutheran movement has been engaged in society over 500 years.

We call on the assembly to acknowledge that we all live in patriarchal societies. We call on women and men to recognize the need for new gender roles and masculinities, recognizing that patriarchy and gender issues affect us all.

The church should advocate for human rights for all. In every context, there are practices and laws that harm women and girls. These include, for example, inheritance laws, early marriage, female genital mutilation, gender-based homicide, rape, and dowry practices. In addition, refugees in many countries are particularly vulnerable to violence and discrimination. The church should address these injustices with particular attention to the ways in which race and ethnicity and class exacerbate injustices *because human beings are not for sale*.

We call upon the member churches and the communion to strengthen ecumenical and inter-religious relations to seek Christian unity and to build bridges in our deeply divided world.

III. We celebrate that we have a Gender Justice Policy and that it is now available in 22 languages! We commend the many churches which are already inspired and implementing the principles, methods, and practices outlined in it.

We call on the LWF Council to amend the LWF Constitution to hold a commitment to gender justice and specifically to the Gender Justice Policy. We call on everyone in the Assembly, the Council, and the member churches' leadership to study and apply the Gender Justice Policy for contextual implementation in all member churches. Communion leaders need to have a plan of implementation. This includes having it translated into at least one local language in every member church and to call for women and men across the Communion to study the Gender Justice Policy together.

We call on the General Secretary to continue to follow up on the implementation of the Gender Justice Policy, which includes a review of Communion progress thus far and allocation of staff and finances to support opportunities and resources for more workshops and trainings to engage the Gender Justice Policy. We recommend a gender audit at the LWF Communion office.

IV. We recognize and celebrate the leadership of women in the church.

We recognize that we are not yet meeting the full capacity of women's leadership within the church. We want to see leadership in the communion reflect women as well as men. We call for women to have the freedom to study, act, and lead and for structural changes to create space for women's leadership. We call for full participation of women in decision-making bodies and for the LWF to review the structures and processes that impede women in leadership, including the opportunities to serve as the general secretary and the president. We encourage women to seek leadership positions.

We call on member churches to implement intentional initiatives to avoid tokenism and empower women's voices and full participation in leadership and decision-making. We call for all structures in the Communion and member churches to address church structures that create the best practices to elect the most qualified leaders. Member churches should adopt the LWF 40/40/20 quota system for synods, church council, etc.

We need ongoing theological education as ordained and lay leaders.

The reporting from women and youth pre-assemblies needs to have separate and privileged time in the Assembly agenda.

We call for a communion-wide conversation on leadership and power. For example, we experience a misuse of power based on gender when in LWF meetings and assemblies some men choose not to participate when women preside or preach.

We call for re-commitments to overcoming poverty and economic injustice through women's empowerment.

Women's networks should be strengthened.

V. We remember Martin Luther's liberating understanding of ministry as service: "We are all priests, as many of us as are Christians. But the priests, as we call them, are ministers chosen from among us. All that they do is done in our name."<sup>1</sup> We celebrate that 82 percent of LWF member churches ordain women. We celebrate and applaud the women and men who continue to work towards the full presence of women in the ordained ministry.

Through baptism, we women are fully part of the church. We are liberated by God's grace and, as such, we should respond to God's grace in all spheres of God's ministry. We claim what is already ours—God's call to us.

We call for member churches that are not yet ordaining women to be in partnership and dialogue with member churches that have recently decided to ordain women. We call for the LWF Communion Office to provide a platform. We call for the ongoing commitment and reaffirmation at this 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the shared path of women in ordained ministry. We urge member churches which have ceased to ordain women to develop a process and timeline to reconsider this decision.

VI. We celebrate women in theological education and theology with a gender lens. We call for opportunities in theological education for women to teach and to lead. We call for courses on gender justice to be included in theological curriculum and for further development of gender just and intersectional theology.

We call for equal access for women and men to theological education and equal access to opportunities to serve thereafter. We call for a commitment not to use women as tokens in theological education, or as a means for fundraising, but with appreciation for the gifts they bring to the churches. Scholarships should be given on merits, not on the approval of bishops. Women at times need flexible timing to attend seminary, and women whose theological education is not equitable to men's need further education. Many women in theological education suffer from ideological isolation because the structures are dominated by men; thus, there is a need for structures of support for women in theological education. We recommend WICAS to strengthen the effort on this.

VII. We recognize that many member churches speak out against violence. However, there are serious problems not only in our social contexts, but within our own churches. We know of and experience widespread abuse within the church. Male clergy abuse female clergy, men in congregation abuse women and girls in the church, and sometimes church leaders refuse to address the problems. Domestic violence must end. We also call for an end to sexual harassment and sexual violence in all church structures, by which women are coerced to engage in sex for church leadership roles. We call for all leaders within member churches to stop this form of human trafficking of female church leaders *because human beings are not for sale*. We call on member churches to address all forms of human trafficking in their communities. Culture, tradition, and theology are used to stop women from speaking up, being heard, and holding perpetrators accountable. We condemn all misuse of power because the church should be a safe space. Each church should develop and use a code of conduct. Once

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<sup>1</sup> "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" (1520). WA 6, 564:12 (LW 36:113).

a year church leaders should attend a code of conduct seminar led by professionals in the field to learn how to respond to and prevent gender-based violence. As a sign of solidarity, member churches are encouraged to participate in Thursdays in Black Campaign towards a world without violence.

We celebrate women around the world who are on the move, from Wittenberg to Windhoek and beyond. We are thankful for the hard work and the inspiring challenges that the LWF WICAS desk has taken on, especially in the construction of the Gender Justice Policy and following up on its implementation. We thank God for wisdom, courage and strength along the way. We are women liberated by God's grace. We are women on the move, and we are many!