

## Synod 2017 Women in Church and Society (WICAS)

Women in Church and Society involves women who have studied Theology but are not ordained, female theologians, women who are holding senior positions in their Churches, work, women holding senior positions in Government and in Society or heading their own businesses and youth.

Our main objectives are to construct a network of Lutheran women theologians within the regional context of Africa residing under the jurisdiction of the Lutheran Council in Africa (LUCA). Our main methodological journey in discussing gender will be the Gender Justice Policy as a tool, striving to create a gender just environment on our journey toward reformation 2017.

The LWF WICAS, in collaboration with the WICAS Sub-Regional coordination and a special working group of Women Theologians would spearhead the process.

The working group members are as follows:

**LUCSA**—Mrs Colleen Cunningham from the Moravian Church in Cape Town, Rev Lilana Kasper from ELCSA in Johannesburg, Rev. Dr Magdalena Ya-Shalongo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN), Principal of Engela Parish Institute (EPI).

**LUCCWA** - Rev Jeanette Ada Maina (WICAS LUCCWA regional coordinator) Rev Lydia Weagba, Ms Naomi Wilson Ford (Liberia)

These areas of work, for which WICAS has committed its full potential, can be summarized as follows:

1.1. The *Women on the Move* process, which comprises the following dimensions:

- Empowerment of women in leadership and decision-making
- Implementation and contextualization process of the Gender Justice Policy
- Women doing theology
- Her-stories – telling women stories and experiences in the on-going Reformation

1.2. *Advocacy for women's human rights* protection and promotion strengthening regional networks

### **Strategic Priority Areas towards Reformation 2017**

#### **Tool: LWF Gender Justice Policy [for implementation]**

1. Leadership
2. Reformation
3. Advocacy
4. Theology

#### **Priority Areas**

1. Women in Theology, implementation of the Gender Justice Policy
2. Women's Ordination and women in the Ordained Ministry
3. Leadership and Decision Making
  - Actively reflecting on Women's participation in Policy development and implementation
  - Implementation of Policies, capacity building, Finance, Leadership and Administration management
  - Governance
4. Mentorship and Induction programmes to be initiated.

#### Crosscutting Issues:

1. Poverty Alleviation
2. Cultural, Political and Social Practices
3. Women's empowerment
4. Engaging Men

#### Thematic Issues:

1. Women's Health and Wellness – HIV and AIDS, Age and Ageing, etc.
2. Cultural Practices, e.g.: FGM, Early Marriage, etc.
3. A successful pre-Assembly will lead the communion to an increased visibility of women's contributions to the Reformation journey and to an acknowledgement of women's gift and commitment to the church life, but at the same time, will raise interest to question the missing implementation of policies and other remaining barriers in the achievement of gender justice at different levels. The women delegates, together with a steering group of the Women on the Move process will be main agents/participants in the women's pre assembly meeting.
4. Women from the network and women delegates have actively participated in the LWF Assembly
5. The women on the move process have built significant contributions in the agenda and the decisions of the Assembly
6. The women delegates have been active in speaking and formulating resolutions and message at the Assembly
7. The women's network has harvested content and methodology to re-design and re-focus its agenda beyond the Assembly
8. The communion office develops greater capacity to plan and monitor the implementation of the Gender Justice Policy as a cross-cutting responsibility.
9. The regional networks have started an assessment that is moving its coordination towards a model that fully involves the women theologians' network inputs in the planning and implementation of activities.



The LWF Africa Pre-Assembly was held in South Africa at the Premier Hotel from 5-11 February 2017. The Africa Women Pre-Assembly took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Women in Church and Society participated and worked on the message that was going to be presented at the LWF 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly that took place in Windhoek Namibia. The Pre-Assembly was attended by about 50 women from the Africa region. This was in preparation for the women Pre-Assembly in Namibia that was held from 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

Women Pre-Assembly 4<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

The women Pre-Assembly was officially opened by the LWF General Secretary and the 3 bishops from ELCIN, ELCINGELC and ELCRN

This was a time of Bible studies to understand the theme of the LWF 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly and Reformation; what it meant then and what it means now. It was also a time to discuss challenges that are faced by women in church and society and also women ordination. It was an event on songs and prayers.

In preparation for the LWF 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly WICAS had to prepare stories to be shared with the Assembly delegates -“Her Stories”. The women were asked to tell stories of the women in their Church, Society. The following were guidelines:

Name of the women or group of women.

Date/s of birth/s.

Place, Church/Congregation, City, Country.

Major events that took place.

Contributions.

Two important highlights.

Contribution in Church or Congregation.

What the woman/women did to bring Reformation in the Church Congregation or Society.

During the LWF Africa Pre-Assembly the WICAS prepared the message to be presented at the LWF 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Namibia.

These stories were told the delegates who the attended the LWF Assembly in the Omatala tent.



*“Welwitschia” The women space in the Omatala.*

The women had space in the Omatala tent called the “Welwitschia” named after the indigenous Namibian plant. This space was visited by delegates daily either to listen to Her Stories, drink coffee that was prepared in the women space by women from Ethiopia, buy things that were made by women from all over the world ranging from clerical shirts, dresses, necklaces and scarves.

There was also a table in the women space called the Katharina talks. Information was shared about other women during the Katharina and Martin Luther era.



## **WOMEN’S MESSAGE**

We noted that women’s ordination continues to be a challenge. While acknowledging that a lot of progress has been made, yet the journey continues. As a gift for the church we also noted that in many places, they are ordained but not really allowed to exercise their pastoral ministries in the parishes.



We therefore,

- Urge churches to continue ordaining women and support them to carry out their ministerial services.
- Advise churches to seriously support theological education for women.
- Encourage churches to promote Gender Justice in Church and Society and the inclusion of women in leadership.

The women message was delivered to the LWF General Secretary Rev Martin Junge and all the women participants all had the handmade windmills when they were handing the message to the General Secretary.

The youth also prepared their message.

#### **YOUTH MESSAGE**

We were challenged by the message of the youth who pleaded that the social evils they are struggling with should not only be left to the governments and secular organizations. We received with appreciation the report of LWF Africa Youth delegation to UN Conference of Parties on Climate Change and commend the LWF in supporting these initiatives.

We therefore,

- Call upon churches to step up action in addressing the social vices affecting the youth such as teenage pregnancy, alcohol, drug abuse, forced marriages, school drop outs, and poverty.
- Strongly advise churches to create space including intergenerational dialogue to engage and accompany the youth in dealing with these issues.
- Urge churches to develop mechanisms for strengthening youth leadership development and participation in the church.
- Remind African governments their obligation of ensuring the implementation of policies that create conducive environment for job creation, employment and entrepreneurship.
- Advise member churches to encourage and support initiatives aimed at building the capacity and participation of youth in addressing the challenge of climate change.

