

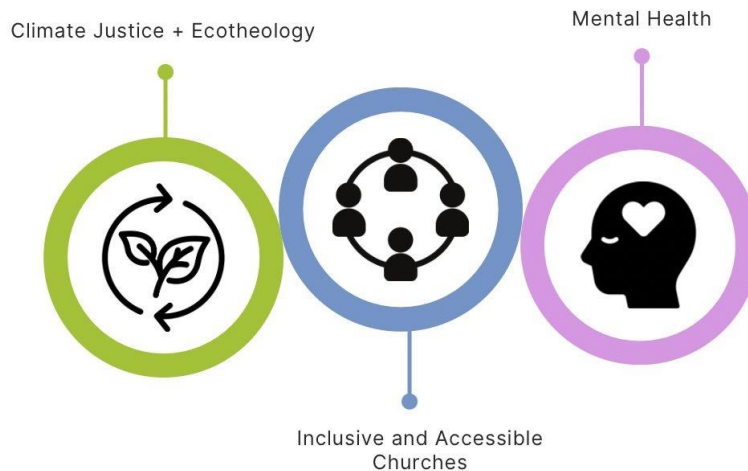
# European Youth Message

We gathered this week in Oxford from our many churches in different parts of Europe, bringing with us many questions and many hopes: hopes to listen and learn, to find a clear vision for our communion, and to deepen our faith in God.

During our meeting, the Lutheran youth in Europe identified many challenges in our churches which are also reflected within our broader societies. Challenges like the ongoing climate crisis, gender-based violence, a lack of equity in leadership, secularization and the decline in church membership, as well as political instability and polarization. We meet with the backdrop of ongoing war in our region, which has greatly impacted our discussions and our discernment,

As youth leaders, we are eager to play an active role in tackling these persistent challenges. We dream of a communion where young people of all races, genders and backgrounds are equitably present in decision-making, a communion that hears the call for justice echoing from its faith identity, a liberated, inclusive communion, living into its diversity and accessible to all. Below are three priorities that we believe will help us to realize this dream:

## LWF EUROPE YOUTH Assembly Priorities



### 1. Inclusive and Accessible Churches

In increasingly secularized contexts, we young European leaders are thankful for the gifts of our Lutheran theology, liturgy and communion. We call on LWF Member Churches to grow in inclusivity and access: access to power, access to theology, and access to community. Making our churches more accessible will allow us to grow in our witness and ministry and will allow us to reflect the rich diversity of God's creation more fully.

We, with our churches, seek to act in these areas:

- make theology and liturgy more accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds, both the translation of clerical terms into contemporary language and clearer communication using new mediums
- create space for youth to practice theology in ways that resonate with them and for these perspectives to shape theological teaching and worship
- realize full intergenerational collaboration in decision making processes, especially through quota adherence. It has been 39 years since the assembly in Budapest introduced the youth quota, yet many of our churches have failed to live up to this. We plead with other leaders to take full responsibility for the inclusion of youth in all levels of church leadership and life.
- equitably include women and lay people in leadership as specified in the LWF quotas
- reflect with us on power dynamics in our local settings, identifying the structures of exclusion and engaging in dialogue to enable us to build a more inclusive church together

## 2. Recommitment to Climate Justice

We identify climate justice as one of the most urgent priorities on our way as global communion. Climate change is already destroying the livelihoods of millions of people and threatens to annihilate creation in its entirety. Beyond a political issue, we see this as a central theological issue for the people of God going into the future.

We see the efforts that have already been made and highly appreciate them but feel, that not enough has been done. Therefore, we strongly call on our churches to act further on following areas:

- Deepen our conversations about eco-theology and include this more fully into our theological education
- Advance as well our conversations on eco-Diakonia on a global scale and rethink our priorities in this way
- Repent for the injustice caused by our contributions to climate change and respond by taking equitable responsibility as churches in the Global North
- Reflect on the true needs of our churches, reconsider our churches consumption and spending, and ultimately redistribute our church resources
- Integrate climate considerations in all major decisions of our churches

As we are want to strengthen the unity of our communion we should not hesitate anymore on this issue and let our body be hurt. In the end Climate justice is the essential link to global peacebuilding.

## 3. Focus on Mental Health

As fellow members of Christ's one body, we know when one member suffers, all suffer together. The destruction and injustices caused by climate change, exclusion of women and youth from leadership, relational strain during and after the pandemic, and the landscape of war in our region are causes for psychological stress and mental illness throughout the whole of society, especially among young people.

As faith leaders, we believe it is essential for the church to:

- facilitate honest dialogue about these challenges

- develop resources to directly address growing eco-anxiety and depression in order to re-ignite shared hope in our churches and in society
- train more pastors in spiritual care for mental health crises

Siblings in Christ, we know that young people are not a separate part of the church, but we are the church. Together with other generations, we seek to find a way to live the Lutheran understanding of the priesthood of all believers. We offer these priorities, not only for our work with other youth in Europe, but as essential priorities for the communion and for leaders of every generation.

As young faith leaders, we see ourselves as co-creators of a necessary transformation process in our churches and in the world. In one body and one spirit, with one hope, we celebrate this call to ministry and invite you to join us in acting on these priorities which are deeply rooted in our shared understanding of Lutheran faith and witness in the world.