

STATEMENT

Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution of “Anabaptists”

When Lutherans today realize the history of Lutheran - Anabaptist relationships in the sixteenth century and beyond as it is presented in the report of the Lutheran - Mennonite International Study Commission, they are filled with a deep sense of regret and pain over the persecution of Anabaptists by Lutheran authorities and especially over the fact that Lutheran reformers theologically supported this persecution. Thus, The Lutheran World Federation, A Communion of Churches wishes to express publicly its deep regret and sorrow.

Trusting in God who in Jesus Christ was reconciling the world to himself, we ask for forgiveness - from God and from our Mennonite sisters and brothers - for the harm that our forbears in the sixteenth century committed to Anabaptists, for forgetting or ignoring this persecution in the intervening centuries, and for all inappropriate, misleading and hurtful portraits of Anabaptists and Mennonites made by Lutheran authors, in both popular and scholarly forms, to the present day.

We pray that God may grant to our communities a healing of our memories and reconciliation.

We commit ourselves:

to interpret the Lutheran Confessions in light of the jointly described history between Lutherans and Anabaptists;

to take care that this action of the LWF will bear fruit in the teaching of the Lutheran Confessions in the seminaries and other educational activities of our member churches;

to continue the exploration of unresolved issues between our two traditions, in particular baptism and relations of Christians and of the Church to the state, in an atmosphere of mutual openness and the willingness to learn from each other;

to affirm the present consensus, gained by the experience of our churches over the centuries, in repudiating the use of the state's power either to exclude or enforce particular religious beliefs; and to work towards upholding and maintaining freedom of religion and conscience in political orders and societies, and

to urge our international bodies, member churches, and in particular our congregations, to seek ways to continue and deepen relations with the Mennonite World Conference and with local Mennonite communities through common prayer and Bible study, shared humanitarian engagement, and common work for peace.

Recommended by the LWF Council, October 2009, for approval by the LWF Eleventh Assembly, July 2010.