



KANISA LA KIINJILI LA KILUTHERI TANZANIA

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN TANZANIA

Ref No:

P.O. Box 3033 - Arusha Tanzania

From: Office of the Presiding Bishop, ELCT

To: All Church members of ELCT

Date: 03 September 2012

Dear brethren and members of ELCT,

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

This letter is a further clarification from our Church regarding its relationship with churches and other Lutheran institutions in various places around the world. This time we briefly touch on membership of the ELCT in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

Our Church has been a member of LWF since its inception as one **Church** in the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania** (ELCT), in 1963. LWF has been an instrument with huge blessings in the life and work of our Church. As members of LWF, we closely cooperate with sister churches the world over in sharing among us, in a variety of ways, God's gifts as we work together in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ through ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of our fellow human beings. These, sometimes, could not have been done by a single church.

LWF is a very essential tool providing the platform where Lutherans can speak with one voice and be seriously listened to. It is a blessed and essential tool in sustaining unity, identity and our witness as Lutherans on the evangelical and biblical foundation as originally intended by the founders of the LWF, more than sixty years ago. Therefore, as ELCT, we envision a mandatory need and necessity to continue as members of the LWF.

Even if differences and failures would appear among individual LWF members, such would not prompt us to terminate our membership of LWF. If some church in LWF contravenes commonly accepted principles among LWF member churches – such as those related to faith, doctrine, ethics or tradition, ELCT would see this as an opportunity to strengthen its position within the LWF and try to influence a reversal or discourage the resultant discord and dissolve it; rather than ELCT taking a quitting stance. LWF is for all of us, and perhaps, it is more accurate to say that LWF is for them, and it concerns those, that have been and continue to be faithful to their heritage within the LWF; much more than those who negate teachings and long-held traditions in the LWF family.

We therefore maintain that if there is division amongst the LWF membership in terms of basic principles in regard, for instance, to their faith, doctrine, ethics or tradition; and it becomes apparent that some have to go separate ways, ELCT's position would be that those who are the source of these disturbing divisions within the LWF are the ones required to terminate their membership of LWF and not the ones, like the ELCT, who are ready to safeguard our heritage and identity by standing firm in rejecting new and misleading teachings which disturb our unity and identity as Lutherans and a church of God.

I think that it is necessary to elaborate on this subject, as we have done, in order to extricate the questions and doubts of church members regarding our presence as members of LWF. Especially at this time when differences have emerged amongst members of LWF regarding the very serious question of acceptance, or not, of same sex marriage – a subject that ELCT has already declared its position on, through its Statements: Bukoba (2004) and Dodoma (2010).

May the Peace of our Lord be with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex G. Malasusa', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bishop Dr. Alex G. Malasusa – Head, ELCT

cc: Secretary General, ELCT