

SYNOD 2017: Global Young Reformers Report

In 2014, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Youth desk started a program where they united 284 young leaders from 142 member churches who were agents of reformation. This program is known as the Global Young Reformers network. The Global Young Reformers Network was in preparation for the 500th anniversary of the start of the Lutheran Reformation. The goal of this network was to empower young people to engage in all aspects of the church and communion life. The aim was to show the meaning of *'ecclesia semper reformanda- a church in ongoing reformation!'*

I joined the Global Young Reformers Network representing ELCSA (N-T) at 17 years old and since then have been highly active within the network connecting with other Young Reformers around the world exchanging ideas and advocating issues that us as youth, more important as individuals and citizens of this world were passionate about.

Mine has been to ensure that the ELCSA (N-T) Youth are well represented, that the ELCSA (N-T) Youth are present in high level conversations and have an input, that ELCSA (N-T) Youth are connected and united, finally mine has been to motivate youth to challenge the status quo and voice out their opinions and/or frustrations without fear, respectfully so and taken seriously as the next person.

Timeline of my participation in the LWF as a Global Young Reformer

My first experience representing the ELCSA (N-T) Youth was at the 60th Anniversary of Marangu and the LWF Africa Leadership Consultation in 2015 in Tanzania. This Consultation hosted various African Lutheran Church leaders from all corners of Africa at the highest peak in Africa. The 14 Youth delegates met to discuss ways in which to reform African Churches which would be included into the message from the conference. We discussed issues we, as youth, faced that thwarted reformation in our church and attempted to find solutions for them. We established that empowering and educating the youth

(capacity building) was one way to sustain the church and allow the youth to meaningfully contribute to the sustainability of the church, moreover, take ownership of the church. We recognised



that the mission work needed to be renewed; we need to be aware of our Lutheran Identity in order to spread the word of the true Lutheran Identity.

My colleague, Mpho Hlongwa, and I (both being Global Young Reformers of ELCSA (N-T)) were then tasked to initiate a reformation project. Given that South Africa has the good climate to farm and many youth members within ELCSA (N-T) have not been exposed to the world of farming and how as an African it is the most useful life skill one could possess, we decided to start a Garden Project that the youth from different congregations could work on and use the produce to start a food drive. What seemed like a simple, perfect project became very complicated which led to the project now being stagnant. But this will soon be remedied and the Garden Project will be the success we need it to be.

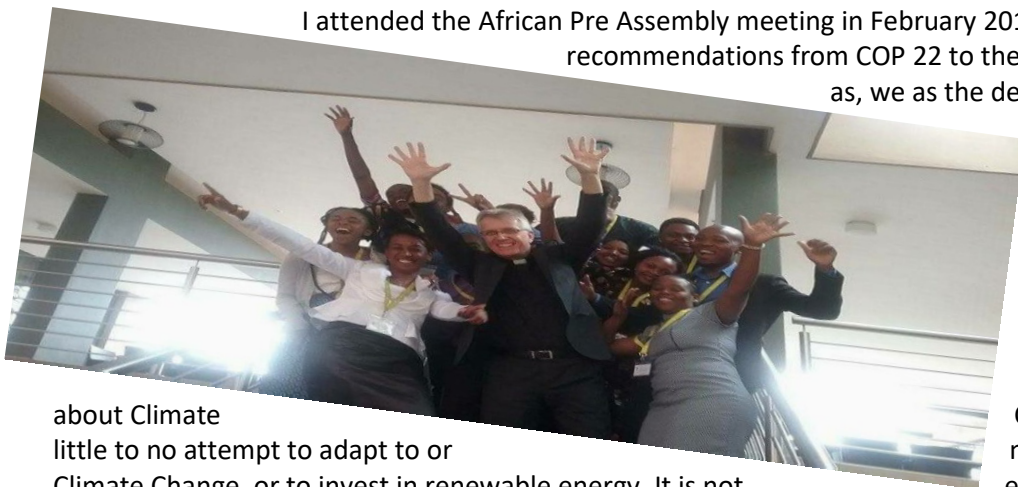


The LWF Youth desk then hosted the Wittenberg Workshop in Geneva where 140 Young Reformers, theology students, LWF Council members and ecumenical youth from all walks of the world congregated where the attendees could share and learn, work on themes like Lutheran Identity, Discipleship, Youth Participation, Climate Justice, Sustainability of the churches, renewal of the mission and develop together local 'living reformation projects' in the LWF Member Churches. Unfortunately I was unable to attend the conference.

I was then awarded the opportunity to attend the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 22nd Congress of the Parties in Marrakech in 2016 representing not only the youth of ELCSA (N-T), but all the member churches of the LWF. Climate Change has always been an area within the LWF where the youth were leading. The 7 of us LWF delegates (All African at the 'African COP') worked tirelessly for the 2 week duration of the COP Conference to ensure that as representatives of Civil Society, negotiators and leaders in the COP Conference always kept the people in their minds when they made decisions. We performed stunts, hosted workshops, marched and attended meetings to ensure that in any space we were visible and we positively contributed to dialogues. At the end of COP we produced recommendations to the LWF and the LWF member churches.



I attended the African Pre Assembly meeting in February 2017 to present the recommendations from COP 22 to the African Church leaders as, we as the delegation of COP 22, felt



as though many African Countries are vulnerable to the effects of Climate Change, however, no efforts are made to create awareness within the churches. Climate Change, there has been mitigate the effects of easy but it definitely

about Climate little to no attempt to adapt to or Climate Change, or to invest in renewable energy. It is not doable. I was present to create awareness about Climate Change and attempt to make the Church leaders see the links between Climate Change and the issues we face in society. I hope we were successful in this regard.

Post the African Pre Assembly was the COP Training which I was unable to attend. It was decided at the COP Training that we initiate Climate Projects or alter the projects to include Climate Change. At COP 22 I met a Palestinian Scientist who taught me how to farm in a manner which does not use too much water and can potentially call back the rain if the plant trees. It really is interesting. I, then, decided to convert the garden project to a climate change garden project because climate change also affects agriculture. This project is yet to begin. I plan on going this differently; with all relevant parties equally involved in order to make a success of this project.

My work as a Global Young Reformer of ELCSA (N-T) is not over yet. I believe there is so much work I still need to do and so much advice I have received from people I have interacted with to act on. One thing about Youth work is that you cannot do it alone so more communiqué will be sent to get more participation from the youth from different congregations and more opinions.

There is a lot more yet to be done.

Yours in Christ

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