

# Windhoek Agreement 2019

## Windhuk – Otjomuise – /Ai-//Gams – Windhoek AGREEMENT

### Preamble

In continuity with the prior partnership consultations of partnership groups from the Evangelische Kirche im Rheinland (EKiR), the Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen (EKvW), the Evangelische Kirche von Kurhessen-Waldeck (EKKW) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) in the framework of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) in Gut Holmecke 1985, Swakopmund 1990, Haus Friede 1998, Swakopmund 2006 and Bad Driburg 2013 we, the delegates to the Windhoek 2019 consultation appreciate the work done and commit ourselves to the following renewed agreement:

### 1. Partnership in Solidarity

1.1 When we use the term “partnership”, we want to express the following:

- God has created all of us equal in His great love; therefore partnership is about people;
- through Christ we recognize our guilt and misunderstandings, and Christ helps us to forgive and reconcile;
- the Spirit of God places us anew into the worldwide communion of saints, and sets us free to serve God’s people in our respective societies and nations.

From there we discover each other, and our eyes are opened to others, to the riches of the Church of Christ in the whole world, and to her sufferings and needs.

1.2 The word partnership is not a traditional term in our Christian doctrine and might have arisen from coincidental historical developments and relations, or from certain trends and fashions in discussions on ecumenical and development affairs. Yet, our partnership relations and project work have an outstanding position. They are rooted in a shared history which was fruitful and painful. They cannot be altered at random and cannot be denied or forgotten. Our relationship is a concrete expression of the worldwide sister- and brotherhood in Christ.

It is God who governs history beyond our understanding. God has brought us together in the spirit of committed ecclesiastical communion.

1.3 The word solidarity in our partnership relations means to stand with each other in unity in good and challenging times.

1.4 Partners will have the liberty to raise critical questions where it is due. We are confident that the difficulties and burdens of the partnership can be discussed in a spirit of mutual respect, trust, honesty and transparency and to engage each other in a constructive way.

## 2. Working together

2.1 Within the framework of the existing circuit partnerships, congregations are encouraged to take up partnerships on their own level. Church councils and decision-making bodies on all levels are involved in the process.

2.2 To develop partnership contacts between kindergartens, hostels, schools, institutions, youth groups and choirs of ELCRN and her partners. Congregational councils, circuit councils and the heads of the concerned institutions are involved in the development of partnership relations.

2.3 Circuit program committees in the ELCRN will be working with the heads of institutions, earmarked project administrators and parish councils where no partnership relationships exist. Partnership committees have to report to parish, circuit and church councils on a regular basis. Lay persons are encouraged to lead partnership committees.

2.4 The ELCRN will reorganize the Partnership Office and put in place the Program Management Office and employ staff who will work together with the regional and international UEM partnership and project officers to ensure the facilitation and coordination of the partnerships and projects of the ELCRN. The German partnership groups will continue working together with the responsible person/s in the ecumenical structure of their churches.

2.5 To set up own specific partnership agreements according to the "Partnership Guidelines for the UEM" in order to strengthen the work and communication as a basis for a better partnership and spiritual life. Evaluations of our partnership work will be conducted on a regular basis both in Namibia and Germany.

2.6 To share information about life and work in congregations, institutions and circuits, as well as about burning issues in our societies on a regular basis.

2.7 To put high emphasis on the participation of youth in order to strengthen their ownership in the partnership work.

2.8 To exchange prayer concerns, especially for mission in Namibia and Germany.

2.9 To involve congregations and churches from all parts of the world, who have official relationships with the ELCRN, the EKIR, the EKvW, the EKKW or the UEM.

2.10 To assist jointly in the process of unification of the three Lutheran Churches in Namibia particularly with regard to the revision of existing contracts, and this, considering the continued effort made by Churches towards this goal.

2.11 Official language of communication is English.

### **3. United in God's Mission**

3.1 In our partnership together we proclaim Jesus Christ to be the Lord and Saviour of all people and meet the present-day missionary challenges. In a world torn apart, we commit ourselves to remain members of the one Body of Christ, and therefore

- grow together into a worshipping, learning and serving community;
- share gifts, insights and responsibilities;
- call all people to repentance and new life;
- bear witness to the Kingdom of God in striving for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

We are together in the community of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM), a Communion of Churches on three Continents. We notice the possibilities of this community for our partnership relations (multilateral partnerships, advocacy, exchange programs, financial assistance and much more).

3.2 Our churches are places of trust, refuge and help. As living letters of Christ we raise our prophetic voices in our societies.

We identify ourselves through the prophetic voice in word and deed with the rights of the poor, the oppressed, the refugees and those, whose human rights are violated, and speak out for their rights. We encourage and educate people for self-confidence, awareness-building, self-reliance and self-sustainability.

The churches commit themselves, in particular, to prevent and work against the spread of HIV and Aids and gender-based violence as well as for land reform and poverty reduction, and other social challenges

The churches face the challenges of climate change. We want to share ideas for solutions and encourage each other to change our behavior, to preserve our environment and to work for climate justice.

3.3 We learn to handle the questions arising from the encounter of gospel and cultures with high sensibility and respect. The aim of intercultural learning is to find a deeper understanding and respect of the other one.

3.4 We see sharing of the missionary task as a challenge to the churches involved in partnership. To enable this sharing, burning issues should be identified and exchanged. We share visions and experiences of our mission. Opportunities for all, especially for young people, to take part in mission work of partner churches should be provided.

### **4. Sharing**

Sharing, in all its patterns, is the essence of partnership. What we are, and what we have, does not come from our own strength, but is a gift from God. This results in mutual participation and communication, and sharing is an expression of life in Christ. Such sharing includes the whole person, in whatever situation we find ourselves.

The communion which has been founded by Christ makes us share each other's spiritual life and material possessions and the needs of individuals and of respective churches and societies.

Sharing has its roots in the unity which Christ gave to the Church. Partnership and practical sharing have to start with this clear confession. This results in spiritual fellowship which is not separable from material, administrative, political, financial, personal, personnel, or other aspects.

It is our task and challenge to create awareness towards self-sustainable attitudes and conditions. In order to support this process we must encourage and strengthen each other in empowerment, responsibility and ownership. The partners have to realize their own abundance and needs and have to share these with one another. The partners will give each other a deep inside view of their churches in order to identify their own challenges and the measures how to respond to them and to look for the assistance needed.

#### **4.1 Communication**

Information should be shared by personal encounters, letters, newsletters, minutes, social media or other forms of communication. Websites should be regularly updated.

#### **4.2 Personal Contacts, Visits, Visitations and Delegations**

Personal contacts, visits, visitations and delegations are derived from Jesus, through whom God Himself has visited us. In personal encounters mutual acceptance can be experienced, as Christ has accepted us.

Both pastors and lay co-workers, women, men and youth should be involved in these visits. All parties should receive thorough preparation. A delegation should be composed according to the topic of a visit to ensure sound learning possibilities.

Visitors should see all sides of the life of the church, and should not communicate only with the pastors.

Visits help to get another perspective of one's own situation. Therefore we need time for evaluation and for discussion of common issues. Visits shall be jointly prepared in good time.

Mutual visitations are an expression of mutual assistance in church leadership.

The respective partners should contribute towards costs of visits and visitations according to their abilities.

#### **4.3 Exchange of Personnel**

In the spirit of sharing, we maintain exchange of personnel which is not limited to pastors. For such a program, an agreement on the job description, coverage of the costs for housing, medical care and salaries, is to be worked out. Personnel shall be recruited in mutual consultation, as stipulated in the UEM guidelines. Such programs can be facilitated by the Program Management Office with the help of the UEM.

Our common instrument for short-term exchange for young people is the UEM volunteers program.

We will encourage the exchange of young theologians and students of theology.

#### **4.4 Participation in Spiritual Life**

Mutual participation in spiritual life should be stressed. Common celebration of services and sharing in the sacraments, as well as sharing in hymns, common prayers with lists of intercessions (several times a year, vice versa) can help to express the unity of the church.

Such participation can be experienced in personal encounters, but also through various kinds of media correspondence, reports and newsletters of the partners, and commonly planned worship services.

All partners are encouraged to celebrate common Partnership Sundays.

Joint biblical and theological reflection is essential within the partnerships.

We help each other to bring out our prophetic voice in our different contexts.

### **5. Sharing in Financial Terms**

5.1 We live under unjust economic conditions. The division between rich and poor is a distressing reality between North and South and also visible within our respective societies.

Therefore our financial cooperation is an expression of solidarity.

Out of our confession that we are one in Christ, follows the common participation in material goods and shortcomings.

Needs and possibilities always affect all members of a body equally. Those who have greater financial potential at present do not have a greater right in decision-making or in interference. The act of giving something away is easier than genuine sharing. In this respect we may have to go through some conflicts, but that must not divide us.

5.2 Our financial cooperation is manifested, among others, through project assistance, by the Solidarity Fund (SF) which was established 2013.

The Solidarity Fund is our main tool for financial support of projects in the ELCRN.

This has been confirmed by this consultation after the ASSESSMENT OF THE ELCRN SOLIDARITY FUND has been undertaken. (Namibia, 23-30 September 2018) and the SF PROGRAM MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES – BETTER SERVICES, PEOPLE'S IMPROVED LIVES have been developed. They had been discussed and were adopted by this consultation.

All German partnership groups as well as the German churches, UEM and ELCRN commit themselves to fund this mechanism within their means. Funds shall be channeled via the UEM through the Solidarity Fund account.

Procedures are explained in the “SF PROGRAM MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES”.

5.3 Apart from the Solidarity Fund a bilateral project support for earmarked projects is possible. These funds shall be channeled via the UEM through the Project account of ELCRN.

The circuits and institutions shall acknowledge receipt of the money immediately and report to the partners via the PMO on the use of the funds within 6 months after receipt of the funds. All bodies concerned within ELCRN, German churches and UEM should receive copies of the correspondence.

The delegates of the Bad Driburg consultation envisaged in light of the self-sustainability concept of ELCRN to completely end bilateral fund transfers. Field realities proved to be different so this has not been possible but maybe achieved in the future.

5.4 We also emphasize the idea of working as partners on and in similar projects in Namibia and Germany (Soup kitchens – youth centers ...).

5.5 One of the aims of our partnership support is to help the ELCRN to reach financial self-reliance. The delegates therefore welcome the respective undertakings, which the ELCRN already has done.

5.6 All decisions within the framework of the partner relationship should consider and guarantee the inner structure and unity of the churches concerned.

5.7 Our bilateral partnership shall not affect the contributions of all partners to UEM.

References:

1. SF PROGRAM MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES  
*BETTER SERVICES, PEOPLE'S IMPROVED LIVES*
2. SF STRATEGIC PLAN  
*PAVING THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE*
3. TRANSITION PHASE ACTION PLAN (2020)
4. List of delegates
5. UEM Code of Conduct for Transparency against Corruption
6. UEM Code of Conduct against Sexual Harassment

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Windhoek, Namibia