

**Agreement  
between  
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (ELCB) and  
The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea (ELC-PNG)**

*“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body” (1 Cor 12:13);  
“Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it” (1Cor 12: 27)*

**1. From the beginnings to the present**

We do deeply acknowledge with humbleness and gratefulness, that the gospel of Jesus Christ entered the shores of New Guinea many decades ago. We thank God for sending the missionaries from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria who brought the Gospel and ultimately the commencement of the Christian church in Papua New Guinea. The commitment in witness, education and services to become tools for change in God’s name which began in 1886 continues to the present. Reconciliation by faith, transformation by love, empowerment by hope has shaped emerging new communities which we continue to embrace. Since then we share a unique history in mission, experiences of church life and endeavours to serve God’s people. With the Agreement we want to manifest, that our common past also holds us together and will continue to lead us into the future as Lutheran Churches.

**2. In Reference to the Policy Guidelines for Inter church Relations**

This agreement acknowledges the existing guidelines for international relations of the ELC-PNG and the Statement of International Relations (“Außenbeziehungen”) of the ELCB. They do offer opportunities for both partners to participate together in the mission of God and to strengthen their relationship as churches. Together we seek our partnership as a challenge and an opportunity to define our relations and to practice communion under His calling. We can see each other, irrespective of ethnicity, traditions, cultures, structures and practices, as brothers and sisters in and through Christ. Therefore, every care must be taken throughout the years to maintain and enhance positive dialogue and interaction. We hope, that this agreement will assist all concerned to deepen our faith, strengthen our learning, sharing and working relationships, to be guided to contribute to aims as set out here.

*Overall Goal:*

*The understanding of partnership between ELC-PNG and ELCB is to share the Gospel of Christ, to mutually strengthen the spiritual life and Christian faith in our congregations and institutions and to share in services to God’s people.*

**3. Basis of our Partnership**

- ELC-PNG and ELCB do acknowledge and reaffirm our partnership on the basis of the word of God as our guide for our relationship with our overseas partners. *“Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head. Under his control, all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided, so when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love.”* (Eph. 4:15, 16)

- We recognize ourselves as churches which exist as communities diverse in cultures and customs, based on our Lutheran heritage and faith to walk together as living communities of congregations, circuits, districts and churches within the universal church bound by God’s love, peace and justice. We do discern constituent elements of our mission, shaped by the Gospel as partners in the one

faith in the triune God.

- This relationship is embedded in our respective committees and institutions under each church; it is a manifestation and acknowledgment of the multilateral relationships we share. The spiritual dimension was and continues to be a prime basis and focus in sharing in God's mission as a living communion across borders.

- Vivid relationships between congregations, districts and institutions developed and grew over the years, being the backbone of a reliable, tangible and sustainable companionship based on our Lutheran confessions and faith. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of PNG and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, through Centre Mission EineWelt, the Centre for Partnership, Development and Mission, do pursue in their common calling to witness Jesus Christ and serve God's people. Therefore we affirm afresh, to commit ourselves to actively foster relations between us. Both churches will continue to share spiritual and material resources entrusted to us. Both want to continue to be mindful and faithful with and to each other in mutual learning and cooperation.

- We reaffirm that our partner relationship is centered in Christ and that we do recognize each other as people of God, equipped with varying gifts necessary to share in the life, service, work and mission of the church.

#### **4. Understanding of our partnership**

The understanding of our partnership implies,

- That by grace God has called us into a living, sharing and caring community of believers

- That by the same Spirit of God, we are joined together through our faith

- That we accept and understand each other's diverse differences and live and act in love and truth and strive to preserve unity

- That mutual trust, transparency, accountability, sensitivity, responsibility, willingness to understand, sharing of resources as well as unconditional acceptance of each other may strengthen our partnership

- That we assist and strengthen each other's faith as co-workers and partners in the mission of the Lord

- That in our commitment of sharing and sojourning together we do discern and acknowledge basics of essential insights as manifest in the "conciliar process": Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, which we want to acknowledge and which we do strive for.

#### **5. Objectives**

Objectives of our partnership are:

- To encourage, strengthen and help each other to grow in faith, love and hope

- To participate together in assisting each other to be God's church in ELC-PNG and ELCB

- To promote and proclaim the Gospel of Christ through words and deeds;

- To foster equal participation of men and women (gender) and decision-making in partnership programs

- To respect and accept one another without making any distinction on the basis of our cultural, traditional or material possessions – to promote unity in diversity by working together as one people of God

- To participate together in the life, work and the mission of church

- To share information, experiences and ideas as well as our cultural and other traditional heritages

- To strengthen each other through the exchange of visits, communication, prayers and other forms of assistance, activities and programs.

## **6. Mission in Context**

This cooperation is embedded in the Lutheran Communion and based on an understanding of mission as explained in the LWF document from 2004: "Mission in Context: Transformation - Reconciliation – Empowerment." In accordance with this document our cooperation does comprise and enhance the following areas and issues before us and between us:

### **6.1. Transformation**

#### **- To foster partnership relations between parishes, districts and institutions**

The living expression of our churches is principally visible in the activities of the congregation. Our partnership is rooted there, in order to achieve a better understanding of each other and to eliminate prejudices in our churches.

#### **- To exchange ecumenical experts and strengthen our relation**

One of the guiding principles of our communion is the biblical text of the journey to Emmaus (Lk. 24). In obedience to the Lord we travel together in order to be more visible as salt of the earth and light of the world. In this journey we see the exchange of personnel as an opportunity to transform ourselves and the world. Since we need to be transformed ourselves and to contribute to the transformation of the world we exchange personnel sharing their lives and professional skills. We will enhance our tools for recruitment, preparation and reintegration of ecumenical staff. This exchange of personnel between the two churches will, at all times, be implemented in a spirit of mutual consent, being mindful of each other's concerns and with conditions acceptable for the personnel involved.

#### **- To continue with mutual visits on all levels – for study, exposure, awareness, sharing**

One essential instrument for transformation is an ongoing process of mutual visits in order to know each other better, to manifest interest and learning and to strengthen mutual trust, to discern capacity resources. This will enable us to encourage each other, discern needs how to address difficulties in our churches and freely talk to each other even about difficult issues for which easy, clear or immediate answers may not be available from both or either side.

### **6.2. Reconciliation**

#### **- To mutually cooperate and assist in core programs**

Through our multilateral Partnership Forum some areas have been defined as core programs. They shall be given special attention.

In the area of *Mission and Evangelisation* we want to contribute to the reconciliation of the world with God by carrying the good news of salvation to people who have not been reached or need special attention in their struggles to define Christianity between cultural and biblical traditions. At the same time we want to strengthen our parishes in their spiritual journey as the core of our being as a church;

In the light of the *revival of traditional beliefs* of all sorts, esp. the resurgence of life threatening mindsets, actions and its negative impact on church life and civil society alike;

*Women's Work, youth work and work with children* addresses the visible injustice related to gender by enhancing equal chances of participation as well as creating just and humane environments for children. We see the need to enhance equal chances for women and men. Also when visiting each other we will care for gender balance regarding invitations for seminars and programs as well as composition of visiting groups;

Through *social, educational and medical work and programmes* the good news of salvation finds vital expressions. We cherish a long lasting involvement of institutions in our churches to those

mandates. At the same time we express the need to further strengthen those relations in order to address increasing social injustice and dangers for the future of our globalized world;

This globalized world contributes to an unequal distribution of chances and resources. With some groups in our societies being marginalized and/or being deprived of their basic human rights we affirm that *Advocacy and Human Rights* issues gain more and more importance. We want to be the voice of the voiceless and advocating the rights of those being deprived of their human rights is indispensable in our partnership;

We will cooperate in strengthening a *dialogue between people of different faiths*, in order to advocate peaceful co-existence between them.

**- To enhance transparency and accountability**

Matters of transparency and accountability have been a priority area for years. We recommit ourselves to further strengthen transparency and accountability, especially in financial matters and also to be obliged to a Code of Conduct, including to actively step up fighting corruption in society at large.

**6.3. Empowerment**

**- To cooperate in training and capacity building**

We are aware that chances for and possibilities of education are very different in our countries.

Consequently we will also in future cooperate in order to make scholarships and educational programs available which will meet the various needs of our countries.

The existing volunteer program will be enhanced by enabling young people from Papua New Guinea to come and serve for one year in Bavaria.

**- To share resources in proclaiming the gospel**

We acknowledge the fact, that members and staff of our churches while doing their assigned work can profit from each other's capacities and spiritual gifts. While providing the material support, we will also develop tools needed to put this into reality. Short term programs such as "changing of perspectives – expanding horizons", guest lecturer program, women south-north program, and a joint course of preacher's seminary will be the platforms of this approach.

**- To discern programmes and projects to be supported and realised of mutual interest**

**- To strengthen and support theological training institutions and other church run institutions in ELC-PNG in terms of human and material resources.**

**- To strengthen the cooperation between theological training institutions regionally, in Melanesia, Pacific and South East Asia.**

We acknowledge the importance of theological education and discussion among theological institutions of our churches. This is an important tool for enrichment. We will make sure, that good quality theological training will be strengthened as a priority area of education.

**- To plan and participate in seminars and events as possible in each church and within other partner settings given**

Being part of the Lutheran Communion we will enhance our understanding of and participation in God's Mission and our role in the "public square". To achieve this goal we will invite each other to seminars, exposure, consultations, where possible with other international and regional partners of other international Lutheran Churches, actually defined as Lutheran Overseas Partner Churches (LOPC). While both of our churches are in close contact, we acknowledge the fact, that God has

given us sisters and brothers of other churches to work with in God's Mission.

### **7. Ecumenical responsibility**

As members of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches, ELC-PNG and ELCB do cooperate in these bodies and inform them about this Agreement. Likewise do both of us entertain specific relations in the region with the Pacific Conference of Churches, the Papua New Guinea Council of Churches and the Melanesian Institute.

Further, ELCB being a member of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD), ELCB will inform these bodies about the Agreement and about important issues evolving from this partnership.

Likewise, as member of the actual LOPC we will inform other churches which we stand in partnership with about this agreement.

The churches involved will review this Agreement as need arises and will adjust the cooperation accordingly including new perspectives and priorities whenever necessary.

Amberg,

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Bishop

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Dr. Annekathrin Preidel  
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