Die Präses
der Landessynode
Evangelisch-Lutherische
Kirche in Norddeutschland

Welcome Address by the President of the Regional Synod of the Lutheran Church in Northern Germany

Mittwoch, 11. November 2026, Hamburg

Distinguished bishops and church leaders,
Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

It is a great pleasure and honour to welcome you here in Hamburg today, as President of the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany. Article 77 of our Church Constitution states that our Church is governed by three bodies: the Synod, the Church Council and the Bishops.

Bishop Jeremias has already welcomed you on behalf of the episcopal office. On Friday evening, you will have the opportunity to meet the members of the Church Council. And now, I have the pleasure of welcoming you as the representative of the Synod.

In a sense, we have brought the whole Northern Church together for you – and we are very happy to do so!

In preparation for this occasion, I was asked to bring along an object that, for me, symbolises the Northern Church.

Now, one might expect the President of a Synod to choose something particularly liturgical: a cross, a chalice or perhaps another object from the life of the Church.

But I decided to take a different approach.

I have brought an umbrella. This one here.

There is a simple reason for this: the outline of the Northern Church is printed on it. But the umbrella is also a meaningful symbol of our Church for several other reasons.

An umbrella has an impressive span. Its strength comes from the way its individual ribs are held together by a single piece of fabric. Together, they form something that offers protection and brings people together beneath it.

And that is precisely what I recognise in our Northern Church.

It is a large umbrella under which very different people and ways of life come together.

It connects East and West, from the Polish border all the way to the island of Sylt. It connects town and countryside. It brings together different generations, life experiences and church traditions.

The Northern Church brings people together who might otherwise never have met.

And that is one of its great strengths: we do not all have to be the same in order to belong together. We do not have to erase our differences to live in community. There is room for all of us under one common roof.

And there is a second reason why I chose an umbrella.

We are in the north of Germany, and the weather here, as you may know, is not always on our side. We are familiar with all kinds of rain: rain falling straight down, rain blowing directly in our faces, drizzle and heavy downpours. Sometimes it feels as though the rain is coming at us from every possible direction.

And anyone who has ever stood under an umbrella with several other people knows: you have to move closer together.

You cannot simply insist on keeping your usual personal space. You have to show consideration, make room for one another and sometimes even suck in your stomach a little to accommodate someone else!

And this is precisely where I see the connection with our gathering today.
We all come from different countries, churches and traditions. And we are living in times when the winds are growing stronger and the rain sometimes comes at us from every direction.

The Church is about coming closer together. About making room for one another, even when things get a little crowded. And about discovering that many storms are easier to weather together.

With that in mind: a very warm welcome to the Northern Church! We are delighted to have you here.

Just as we gather beneath one common umbrella, so too do we place ourselves under God's love and blessing.

Thank you very much!