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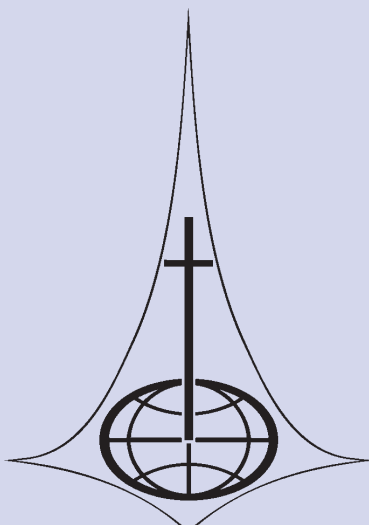
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How Can the Church Be Renewed Amidst Growing Secularization?



Left to right: Lutheran Bishops Caroline Krook (Sweden); Wilma Kucharek (USA) and Ms Aleksandra Blachut-Kowalczyk (Poland) at the LWF consultation for women bishops and presidents. © LWF/B. Schneider

The growing secularization in central and western Europe, as well as in the Nordic countries affects the churches tremendously. Less and less people see themselves as believers or attend church services. What needs to be done against this development and how can the Church be renewed? These were two of the main questions that Lutheran women bishops and presidents dealt with at a recent consultation organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) desk for Women in Church and Society (WICAS).

Stockholm Bishop Caroline Krook spoke of the need to link church renewal with “burning issues” in Sweden, while Hamburg Bishop Maria Jepsen, North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church, described the current situation in Germany. *(See page 9)*

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The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Convenor of Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, urged the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, to take steps to extend even further the debt relief program for poor countries announced in June.

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Lutheran churches in Central America warn that a free trade agreement with the United States of America poses a threat to the region’s most disenfranchised people, and are calling for broader consultation before any such deal goes into effect.

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Indonesian Bishop Bonar Matondang Dies

Bishop Bonar Matondang, head of the Christian Protestant Angkola Church (GKPA) in Indonesia's North Sumatra province died in a road accident on July 10. According to information received from Rev. Josep P. Matondang, head of the GKPA pastors' community, Matondang died when the car in which he and four pastors and two staff members of the church were traveling rolled into a valley. They were returning home from celebrations marking the inaugura-

tion of a congregation building. Three pastors suffered serious injuries and were hospitalized.

Meanwhile, Rev. Sabam P. Marpaung has taken up the position of GKPA bishop, the church announced in a statement on July 26. The GKPA, with over 27,900 members is one of the 12 Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Indonesia. It joined the LWF in 1977.

(136 words) (Asia Lutheran News)

New President for India's Largest Lutheran Church

The largest Lutheran church in India, the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC), has a new president, **Rev. Dr V. E. Christopher**. He succeeds Rev. Victor Moses.

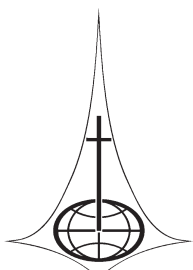
During a visit to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) an AELC delegation led by Christopher and other newly elected office bearers, held discussions with the UELCI Executive Secretary Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, and explored possibilities of partnership and cooperation for their respective programs.

Christopher expressed the AELC's vision to strengthen its evangelistic endeavor and deepen the roots of Christian education in a religiously and culturally pluralistic context. Martin urged the 150-year-old church to develop its untapped resources and capacity in order to strengthen its work and witness.

The UELCI brings together 11 Lutheran churches in India including the AELC. The AELC has 800,000 members, and joined the Lutheran World Federation in 1947.

(149 words) (Asia Lutheran News)

To receive news from the Lutheran World Federation by e-mail, please contact: info@lutheranworld.org



Congolese Church General Secretary Provisionally Released from Police Custody

LWF Sends Pastoral Delegation

GENEVA, 30 June 2005 (LWI) – Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), learned with relief of the provisional release from police custody of Ngoy Mwanana Lusanga, general secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo (ELCC).

Noko said he welcomed the release and appreciated that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Minister of Justice, Honorius Kisimba Ngoy, had considered an LWF appeal to release Lusanga. The LWF immediately sent a pastoral delegation representing the global constituency of the LWF communion to meet with the Congolese justice minister and other state authorities, Noko told *Lutheran World Information* (LWI).

In a 27 June 2005 letter to the Congolese Minister of Justice, Noko had expressed his “grave concern” over Lusanga’s arrest: “I believe that M. Lusanga was arrested on your orders, but the charges against him are far from clear. I do not believe that M. Lusanga is a threat to the State, to the church, or to any individual,” he wrote.

The LWF general secretary expressed his concern about the developments, noting that there was, at the least, a grave lack of transparency about the reasons for M. Lusanga’s arrest and imprisonment, and a strong implication that he had been arbitrarily detained. “In short, there appear to have been a series of serious infringements of M. Lusanga’s human rights, of which you are the chief legal guardian in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” he wrote.

Detained over ELCC’s Protest Letters on Bishop’s Election

Lusanga, arrested on the afternoon of June 20, immediately after a Ministry of Justice hearing, was imprisoned the next day at Kasapa Prison in Lubumbashi. The reason for the detention, given by the Ministry of Justice, was that the ELCC had tarnished the minister’s public reputation through a number of protest letters written by the church to the DRC government, about the way in which a conflict between them was being handled by the Ministry of Justice. Having signed all the letters in his capacity as ELCC



ELCC General Secretary, Mr Ngoy Mwanana Lusanga. © Reinhard Hansen

General Secretary, Lusanga had come into view.

On June 25, Lusanga was transferred to the Lubumbashi University Hospital under police escort for health reasons. According to the ELCC, he was provisionally released from detention June 29, and police surveillance was lifted. The 68-year-old Lusanga stayed in hospital because of his state of health. To date, the ELCC has not provided information as to the specific conditions of his provisional release from prison.

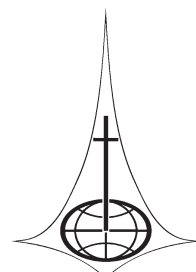
The background to the conflict is the election of Bishop Daniel Kabamba Mukala wa Kasonku on 16 February 2003 as the ELCC bishop and legal representative. As required by law, the Congolese Ministry of Justice was notified of the decisions and results voted by the synod. By decree of March 20, the ministry endorsed the synod decisions. The decree was promulgated in April 2003 in the government’s “Journal Officiel.” But on 29 September 2003, the newly elected Minister of Justice, Honorius Kisimba Ngoy, rescinded the decision, and declared the election of the bishop and legal representative of the ELCC invalid.

LWF Supports DRC’s Search for Sustainable Peace

In his letter to the Ministry of Justice, Noko stressed that “the tragic conflicts which have afflicted the DRC have ensured a considerable amount of international goodwill for your country’s struggle to rebuild.” The LWF, he added, had undertaken extensive humanitarian activities in the eastern part of the country and had gathered an international inter-faith constituency in support of the search for a just and sustainable peace in the DRC as a whole.

“A situation such as that described above undermines the government’s efforts to gather international support, it puts the country’s reputation at stake. The welfare of M. Lusanga touches all members of the LWF family around the world. However, I do not wish to be responsible for any loss of goodwill towards the DRC,” Noko wrote.

The ELCC has been a member church of the LWF since 1986, and has some 136,000 members. (670 words)



Lutherans Celebrate 475th Anniversary of the Augsburg Confession

LWF General Secretary Noko Urges Facing Up to Ecumenical Challenges

AUGSBURG, Germany/GENEVA, 30 June 2005 (LWI) – The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, has urged facing up to the ecumenical challenges consequential to Christians' shared common faith. "Through faith we are the undisputed recipients of God's promise to Abraham," he said in his sermon during celebrations marking the 475th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession (*Confessio Augustana*) June 26, in the Evangelical Lutheran Holy Cross Church in Augsburg, Germany.

Joint Declaration Is a Gift From God

"God's promise to Abraham is the promise to the world," Noko said. "The nations of the world are the addressees of Divine Love. We stand justified before God like our parent Abraham, not because we deserve it. Not because of ethnic ancestry but only on the basis of faith that trusts in the Triune God," he continued in his interpretation of Romans 4:13–17. Consequently, he stressed, "We are challenged to find ways of living a shared faith and life in the proclamation of the gospel and worship life that is expressed in the common celebration of the Lord's table."

In 1999, after countless wars, tensions, and 470 years of separation of the two faiths, Lutherans and Roman Catholics together confessed in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) "that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ." This joint confession can only be best described as a gift from God, Noko stated. "May the gracious God of Abraham give us courage and faith to be a Church for others for the healing of the world."

Noko said it was a "joy and honor" for him to be in the historic city of Augsburg on the occasion of the anniversary celebration of the *Confessio Augustana*, which had been "officially and publicly read before the dignitaries and leading theological minds of the Church and before the representatives of the Holy Roman Empire and regional and municipal authorities in the year 1530." He said that one could sense or imagine the level of anxiety that must have accompanied the participants. The Emperor Charles V, wanting to keep the empire united, Noko said, had taken charge of the deliberations. Theologians on both sides of the argument had sought to overcome the pending rift within the church.

The city of Augsburg was remembered not only in connection with that event, but also for numerous other historic events, Noko said, such as the peace of Augsburg in 1555 and the ecumenical event of 31 October 1999, when the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church signed the JDDJ. "The action of confirming the Joint Declaration has put in place an ecumenical bridge enabling God's people to walk with confidence toward new ecumenical possibilities," he noted.

The LWF general secretary stated that the signing of the JDDJ had confirmed agreement between Lutherans and Roman Catholics with respect to a central issue, "that Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church have listened together to the gospel proclaimed in the Holy Scripture." Listening



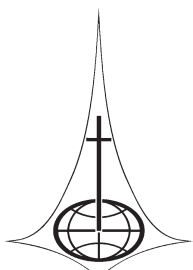
31 October 1999 Joint Declaration signing in Augsburg, Germany: LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko reads out the JDDJ's Official Common Statement in St Anna's Church. © LWF/K. Wieckhorst

together had led to a shared understanding of justification, he said.

Events Included Festive Worship and Symposium

A small church convention to celebrate the 475th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession took place at the Annahof, in Augsburg, 25–26 June. Approximately 100 guests from eight central and east European countries participated in the events. The spiritual highlight was a festive worship service on Sunday June 26. The modern-day significance of the Augsburg Confession for Christianity as a whole was discussed at a June 24 symposium.

The Augsburg Confession, written primarily by Philipp Melancthon, was unveiled at the Reichstag



in Augsburg on 25 June 1530, and presented to the Emperor in Latin and German. The *Confessio Augustana* contains 28 articles and is divided into two parts. The first 21 sections relate to fundamental issues of faith according to Protestant understanding. The last seven articles address abuses within the church in need of remedy. The Reformers originally attempted to use the articles of the Augsburg Confession to recover commonalities with the Roman Catholic Church. Only in the last articles did the authors see true dif-

ferences with respect to the Roman Catholic Church, and therefore they hoped to find an understanding. Thereafter, the Augsburg Confession became the central document for the faith of the churches of the Reformation in the Lutheran tradition.

(752 words)

The complete text of the sermon by LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko is available on the LWF Web site at: www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/475_Years_AC_Sermon-Noko.pdf

North Elbian Lutheran Church Invites Partner Churches to Discuss Structural Reform

People No Longer Dare to Talk about their Faith and Pray

BREKLUM, Germany/GENEVA, 6 July 2005 (LWI) – The North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church has included its international partner churches in its planned structural reform for the first time. Thirty delegates from the partner churches were invited to Breklum for a joint consultation.

They comprised bishops and pastors from the Lutheran churches in Brazil, India, Kenya, Lithuania, Latvia, Papua New Guinea, the Russian Federation, and Tanzania. The church invited them to give their views on financial cutbacks, and make recommendations.

Bishop Dr Wesley Kigasung from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea said they were amazed at the beautiful churches and variety of church life in North Elbia, but surprised that people no longer dared to talk about their faith and pray.

It looks as though the church is seeking to solve its “faith problem” through administrative measures, and that structures are important but not the actual goal of the church, Bishop Dr Israel-Peter Mwakyolile from Tanzania said. North Elbia needed spiritual renewal, not just structural reform, he said.

The guests spent one week in Hamburg, Germany, and in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein, visiting congregations and church institutions. They later met at the Christian Jensen College in Breklum to compare notes. Forty representatives from the church, the synod, church government, church institutions and districts, and congregations, were also present.

Synod Deputy President Cynthia Lies pointed out that in a critical time of change the consultation had shown [the church] what God’s “one” church in the world really meant: that we mutually helped each other as equal partners to find God’s truth and vision for the church.

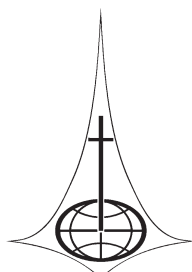


Participants in the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church consultation included the church’s international partners. © NMZ/Doreen Gliemann

At a reception hosted by the North Elbian church ending the consultation, the church’s bishops thanked their partners for the friendly cooperation and confidence they had brought with them. Bishop Dr Hans Christian Knuth, chairperson of the North Elbian church administration expressed gratitude for the way in which the partners’ perceptions had reflected back onto the church, which was keen to try them out in practice.

An Expression of Ecumenical Spirit

The visiting partners praised the invitation to the consultation as an expression of “ecumenical spirit” on the part of North Elbia. In listening to our advice, that of a partner church, the North Elbian church revealed itself to be a reliable partner, Brazilian pastor Carlos Hoch noted. He said the partners were privileged to have been able to look behind the scenes. The church had shown its vulnerability and opened its doors wide, for the first time during their over 100 years of



shared history, marking the beginning of a church partnership on an equal footing, he said.

The greatest challenge for the church, according to the partners, was that of accommodating the increasing longing of people for faith and pastoral care. The openness of the North Elbian church was a great treasure; that is what mattered in the long run, summarized Santa Cilevica, spokesperson for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia.

The results of the consultation were sent to the North Elbian congregations and church organizations as an open letter. One suggestion from the partners was a campaign for "spiritual literacy," which would assist people to pray, read the Bible, praise God, heal, meditate and discover tranquillity.

Greatest Financial Crisis in Church's History

The North Elbian church is currently confronted with the greatest financial crisis in its history. Since 1992 its budget

has fallen by 30 percent, from EUR 380 million to EUR 270 million for 2005. To economize, the North Elbian church has initiated a comprehensive structural reform.

According to a synod decision, in future there will be 12 church districts only, instead of the current 27. Consideration is also being given to reducing the number of bishops' jurisdictions from three to one. Economy measures include the merging of church institutions and congregations as well as the elimination of some pastoral and staff positions. In a new development, churches in Hamburg have been officially put out of use. Even the renowned Protestant Academy recently had to close for financial reasons. (692 words)

(Reported by Doreen Gliemann, public relations office of the North Elbian Center for World Mission and Church World Service - NMZ, and Rev. Michael Stahl, public relations office of the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church.)

The open letter to the North Elbian congregations and church institutions can be found at: www.nmz-mission.de.

LWF Calls Member Churches to Provide Long-Term Assistance in South East Asia

"Communion Tsunami Fund" Established

GENEVA, 6 August 2005 (LWI) – The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, has appealed to LWF member churches to enter into a long-term engagement for the rebuilding of infrastructure in the tsunami-affected areas of South East Asia.

In a letter to the LWF member churches, Noko expresses gratitude toward churches and church-related organizations for their swift action by providing assistance in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. These countries were hardest hit by the violent tidal waves that broke out 26 December 2004, following an undersea earthquake that affected several other countries off the Indian Ocean. Millions in South East Asia were displaced and rendered homeless, while destruction of property and livelihoods was extensive.

The impact particularly on Nias Island in Indonesia, calls for a long-term rehabilitation process, according to the LWF general secretary. "A major effort will be required on the part of the LWF constituency to provide funds for the reconstruction of destroyed churches and other buildings," he writes to the churches. More than 1,300 churches were affected, 50 percent of which are completely damaged, not to

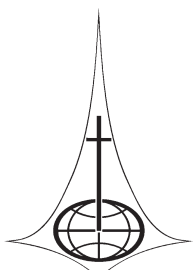


Indonesia, Nias Island: In Sirombu district, community members participate in the construction of the Vabaliwa congregation church, Nias Protestant Christian Church. © Petteri Kokkonen, ACT International/FinnChurchAid

mention other facilities. It is estimated that over USD 1 million will be needed to rebuild the infrastructure.

Diaconal Fund for Reconstruction of Church Buildings, Schools

In order to facilitate this long-term rehabilitation, the LWF Project Committee supported the establishment of a "Communion Tsunami Fund," which will be coordinated





Displaced by the tsunami in Sri Lanka, a small boy at a camp in Kalladi, south of Trincomalee.
© Petteri Kokkonen, ACT International/FinnChurchAid

by the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) in cooperation with the Department for World Service (DWS). The diaconal focus of the fund is response to human suffering, especially in cases where needs cannot be catered through the regular assistance mechanisms.

Money from this fund will go to churches in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, and will mainly be used to reconstruct church buildings, schools and houses. Additional areas of focus include women's counseling, leadership training and children's scholarships. A pastoral support team comprising members from neighboring countries and churches, for example Malaysia, will visit the Indonesian churches and accompany their reconstruction process. A consultation on inter-faith relations in the affected region is planned as a long-term accompaniment program. DWS has seconded a person from Australia to facilitate the member churches' response through the Action by Churches Together (ACT) International mechanism, and in the process contribute to building the member churches' capacity as well.

Empowering Communities to Change the Social Dynamics

Neville Pradhan, DWS Program Officer for Emergencies, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons explains the impact of the tsunami disaster on the population in South East Asia: "Such a catastrophe

affects mainly the poor and marginalized as they survive on the edges of society. It is as if they are knocked down into a ditch. We don't only want to pick them up and put them back on the edge, but to work together with them to reduce their vulnerability to such disasters in the future."

The rehabilitation assistance by the LWF, churches and related agencies goes beyond restoring the livelihood of communities and churches: "We work to empower and change the social dynamics in our operational areas, which we recognize is a difficult task," says Pradhan. He cited some of the fisherfolk communities in India as a good example—unlike before the tsunami disaster, they now own their fishing boats and can keep the profits earned. By working together they also recognize their own strengths. A majority of those

assisted are members of communities that belong to the lower strata of Indian society.

The DMD and DWS partners include the Wuppertal (Germany)-based United Evangelical Mission and Indonesian churches on Nias Island namely: the Protestant Christian Church (BNKP), Christian Com-



In southeast India, representatives of ACT member, Churches Auxiliary for Social Action distribute school materials to school-age children.
© Peter Høvring, DanChurchAid/ACT International

munion of Indonesia Church in Nias (Gereja AMIN) and the Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP) Diakonia Department. For relief assistance, the LWF will work through ACT and its local implementing partners. (650 words)

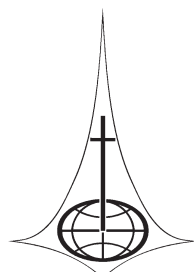
(By Julia Heyde, youth intern, LWF Office for Communication Services.)

Rev. Kimio Takano Heads Japan's Church

At its Triennial General Convention in May this year, the Japan Lutheran Church (JLC) elected **Rev. Kimio Takano** as its president. Takano had served two previous terms, from 1996 to 2002. Takano, 63, succeeds Rev. Yoshiaki Kashiki

who held the office of president from 2002 to 2005. The JLC with over 2,800 members, is an associate member church of the Lutheran World Federation since 1999.

(71 words) (Asia Lutheran News)



South African Bishop Says Development Aid Should Focus on Partnership for Justice

DMD Project Committee Discusses Sustainability of the Church in Mission

MONTREUX, Switzerland/GENEVA, 30 June 2005 (LWI) – South African Lutheran Bishop Ngandaneni Phaswana has challenged churches in the North “to enable us to talk freely about organizing people and money.”

Referring to development aid and its disbursement, Phaswana, head of the Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA), pointed out that the needs of donors and recipients are often perceived differently. Donor assessment’s often focus on needs that are totally different from those identified by churches and communities in the South, he told participants at this year’s meeting of the Project Committee of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Mission and Development (DMD) in Montreux, Switzerland.

“How do we [then] move away from a donor-recipient mentality toward communion or partnership for justice?” asked Phaswana, who is also ELCSA General Secretary. He stressed the mission of the church as one of walking the same path, sharing and strengthening each other.

During the four-day meeting, mid-May, projects in the areas of proclamation, service and advocacy were evaluated and approved. A day’s seminar was devoted to discussing sustainability of the church and its mission.

Ultimate Goal Is People

In his keynote speech at the meeting, Rev. Dr Rafael Malpica-Padilla, Director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s (ELCA) Department for Global Mission, emphasized: “The challenge for us in the Lutheran community is to develop a spirituality of giftedness that enables us to transcend the limitations of economic theory, which abstracts itself from the social or communal character of human existence.” He support this argument theologically by pointing to the diverse gifts with which God has endowed people, saying these were a sign of God’s free grace in the world. “This notion of giftedness runs contrary to the prevailing mentality of the privatization of resources,” he said.

Malpica-Padilla underscored that the ELCA was not allowing financial issues to dominate the process of creating a sustainable development policy. “Our discussion is guided by what is ultimately the goal of this process—people—and in this particular case, people in need.”

Tapio Leskinen, director for fundraising and communication for the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM), also emphasized that “human presence and sharing life with the Southern partners has been a corrective for our lifestyles in the North.” He pointed out that the FELM, which was founded in 1859, had sent more than 5,000 missionaries abroad. At the end of 2004, a total of 230 missionaries were working in 22 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

Progress Reports Important also for Global Awareness and Advocacy

Leskinen said it was important for Southern partners to report on their situation regularly and over the long-term, as this information was crucial not only for the planning process and project evaluation but also for the development of global awareness, advocacy and fundraising. “Sustainability of the partner and of the partnership, not only of an individual project, is the goal,” he added.

DMD endeavors to encourage, support and work with the 138 LWF member churches alongside related agencies and other organizations as they strive to create, develop and maintain ministries faithful to the fundamental task of the church, namely, participation in God’s mission to all creation.

DMD’s project work provides an opportunity to fulfill the holistic and participatory mission of the church, encompassing pastoral and missionary activities as well as communication and development projects. At the meeting in Montreux, the Project Committee approved projects for the years 2006 to 2008 in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Latin America/Caribbean region estimated to cost some USD 10.7 million. (612 words)

(A contribution by Barbara Schneider, youth trainee, LWF Office for Communication Services.)

Former LWF Council Member Rev. Ipendra Borgoyary Dies

Rev. Ipendra Borgoyary from the Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church (NELC) in India died on 11 May 2005.

According to information received from the church, Borgoyary died after suffering a massive stroke. He was a member of the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), 1997–2003, on the Program Committee for World Service.

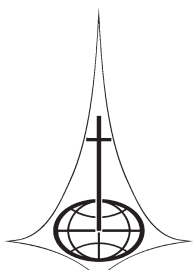
At the time of his death, he was director of the church’s Shalom Communication Ministry.

Borgoyary is survived by his wife Sujata and two children.

(85 words) (Asia Lutheran News)



Rev. Ipendra Borgoyary.
© LWF/D. Zimmernann



LWF WOMEN BISHOPS AND PRESIDENTS' CONSULTATION, JUNE 16-19, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Understanding Role of Ordained and Lay People Crucial for the Church

GENEVA, 30 June 2005 (LWI) – The role of lay leaders versus that of ordained ministers was a key discussion topic in an international gathering of women bishops from among the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches.

In his presentation titled “The Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church,” Dr Theodor Dieter, director of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, said the struggle to discern the appropriate extent of lay leadership involvement was rooted in the struggle to define a pastor’s role.

“We have lost the understanding of the task of the pastor,” he told the conference participants who comprised ordained and lay church leaders. This task, according to Dieter, was to preach the gospel. The question of lay leadership involvement arises when the pastor does not fulfill this mission.

“My hope is that we would not discourage the participation of lay people,” he said, “but that we would strengthen the understanding of the role of the ordained.”

The discussion also included the worldwide development of women in lay and ordained leadership roles. An analysis by the LWF desk for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) indicates that although some LWF member churches were still not ordaining women, overall, the number of Lutheran women pastors had significantly increased.

In the Netherlands for example, women comprise more than 50 percent of the Lutheran pastors, according to Rev. Ilona Fritz,

[Lutheran] Synod President, Protestant Church in the Netherlands.



Ms Angelene Swart, President of the Moravian Church in South Africa.
© LWF/B. Schneider

Ms Angelene Swart, President of the Moravian Church in South Africa, pointed out that women from the South and those from the North had mutually helped each other in developing leadership roles. This cycle of aid, as she described it, began when Northern women encouraged Southern women to seek leadership positions.

“Women in our place looked at women from the North and admired them,” Swart went on. By expressing this admiration, Southern women empowered Northern women, thus helping them develop their leadership roles, she explained.

“We in the South helped you to get where you are, perhaps not consciously,” she said. “You have also learned. You have also grown. You have also become more sensitive. You have also known what to say and what not to say,” she added.

The Lutheran women leaders affirmed the need for further mutual exchange and support in order to uplift female church leaders all over the world.



Bishop Cynthia Halmarson, ELCIC Saskatchewan Synod.
© LWF/B. Schneider

Bishop Cynthia Halmarson, Saskatchewan Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, underscored the significance of the gathering of Lutheran women leaders: “As the only Lutheran woman bishop in Canada, to be able listen to the experiences of other women leaders, and discuss together common concerns is important not only for me but also for the entire church.” (466 words)

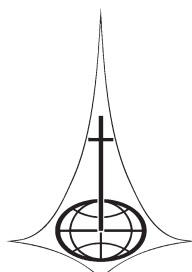
(Christine Hallenbeck, youth trainee in the LWF Office for Communication Services contributed to this article.)

FEATURE: How Can the Church Be Renewed Amidst Growing Secularization?

GENEVA, 30 June 2005 (LWI) – The growing secularization in central and western Europe, as well as in the Nordic countries, affects the churches tremendously. Less and less people see themselves as believers or attend church services. What needs to be done against this development and how can the Church be renewed? These were two of the main questions that Lutheran women bishops and presidents dealt with at a recent consulta-

tion organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) desk for Women in Church and Society (WICAS).

Hamburg Bishop Maria Jepsen, North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church, described the current situation in Germany: Many churches remained empty on Sundays. Due to the economic downturn several years ago the church’s income had dropped considerably. Now the church was urgently looking



for new ways to sustain itself. “In the meantime, churches are being sold. In the last six months I had to decommission five churches in Hamburg, and the end is not in sight,” Jepsen said.

While clearly stating that the grim financial situation was a heavy burden for the German churches, she admitted that the church crisis was not just finance-related. It was also about spirituality and the value of biblical reflection itself. She emphasized the importance of reading and telling Bible stories, pointing out “this is not only a task for theologians but for every Christian.”

“We need to get the ‘grand narratives’ back into our lives. They are the emotional and social engines of society, of the church and in our personal lives.” Despite their old age their value and meaning still endured, lasting for longer than any money in the world could, she stressed.

The situation in Sweden echoes Germany’s—an increasingly secularized society with fewer and fewer church



Hamburg Bishop Maria Jepsen, North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church. © LWF/B. Schneider

goers. The Church of Sweden has preserved much of the teaching and liturgy of the old, undivided church while undergoing some major changes. In 2000 it gained new status within the country. Having been a state church under the influence of state bodies for past centuries, it is now independent and has more freedom for own decisions, for example, on the choice of books of worship and the appointment of new vicars, deans and bishops, Bishop Caroline Krook, Stockholm Diocese explained.

She spoke of the need to link closely the necessary renewal of the church to burning issues like the church’s treatment of homosexuals. “We need to find a position, which combines an adherence to the Bible with a current interpretation and use of the biblical texts.”



From left to right: Bishops Caroline Krook, Stockholm Diocese, Church of Sweden; Wilma Kucharek, Slovak Zion Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and Ms Aleksandra Blachut-Kowalczyk, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland. © LWF/B. Schneider

“Church renewal is not something we achieve by [looking for it.] It is when the Church returns to its roots, to its task to proclaim in word and deed the good news to the marginalized, and to those who suffer in concrete situations that renewal comes to us as a free gift, *sola gratia*,” Krook told the women church leaders attending the June 16-19 LWF Conference of Women Bishops and Presidents and Leaders with Ministry of Oversight. (516 words)

(By Julia Heyde, youth intern, LWF Office for Communication Services.)

Estonia: Tartu’s St John’s Church Re-inaugurated

St John’s Church in Tartu, Estonia, which dates back to the Middle Ages, was re-inaugurated on 16 June 2005 after 16 years of reconstruction. The 14th century church, an exceptional monument, is famous for its 2,000 terracotta sculptures, of which 1,000 are still intact. More than ten years will be needed to restore these sculptures. The church was burnt down by Soviet Russian troops in 1944, and became dilapidated during the Soviet era. During this time it was used as a prison and storage facility.

Bishop Bärbel Wartenberg-Potter of Lubeck, North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church stressed St John’s

rededication “for the Lutheran churches in Estonia and North Elbe is also an expression of the bond of our practical partnership—marked by an official agreement—for over 20 years.”

The North Elbian church contributed over EUR 650,000 toward the church’s reconstruction, targeting work on the building’s interior and the organ. Additional funding came from Tartu’s partner city, Lünenberg in Lower Saxony and from within Estonia itself.

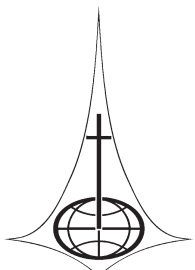
(171 words)

LWF Europe Area Secretary Andreas Wöhle to Join German National Committee

Rev. Dr Andreas Wöhle, Area Secretary for Europe in the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) will be taking up a new post with the LWF German National Committee (GNC) in Stuttgart, Germany. Wöhle, 47, has worked as DMD area secretary since October 2001. Effective 1 October 2005, he will become the LWF/GNC executive

secretary and chairperson of the Committee for Church Cooperation and World Service in the Stuttgart office.

Born in Brunswick, Germany, Wöhle studied theology at the universities of Hamburg and Göttingen in Germany, and in Utrecht and Amsterdam in the Netherlands. He is a pastor of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. (117 words)



LWF Committee Approves Position Paper on Genetically Modified Organisms

Guidelines on Use of Genetically Modified Food in DWS Field Operations

MONTREUX, Switzerland/GENEVA, 30 June 2005 (LWI) – When the Zambian government prohibited the distribution of genetically modified maize during the 2002 drought, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) country program there was put in a difficult situation.

LWF/DWS Zambia was required, on the one hand, to keep 3,000 tons of maize locked in a warehouse. On the other hand, the country program had to justify its actions to a population in need of food aid. Such a situation, according to the program's director, Rev. Enos Moyo, points to the urgent need to establish guidelines for distributing genetically modified foods.

In a position paper on the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that was addressed to DWS, Moyo reported that the government's decision at the time did not include an analysis of the potential consequences of such action for the population.

One step toward a clearly spelt out distribution procedure is the Position Paper on Genetically Modified Organisms in Emergency and Development Operations, which the LWF Standing Committee for World Service approved in Montreux, Switzerland in early May. The document is the result of a consultation process between DWS and ecumenical organizations, churches, partner agencies and civil society organizations. Two years ago the Standing Committee proposed the development of guidelines for the use of genetically modified foods as food aid.

The DWS country programs' initial response to this paper has been broad approval, according to Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, DWS Program Officer for Sustainable Development and Environment.

GMOs Threaten Traditional Agricultural Practices

Rev. Silvio Schneider, Director of the Lutheran Diakonia Foundation (Fundação Luterana de Dia-

conia—FLD), Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, points out that GMOs threaten traditional agricultural practices in Brazil. "In Brazil, the Monsanto company has begun charging royalties for genetically modified seeds," Schneider says.

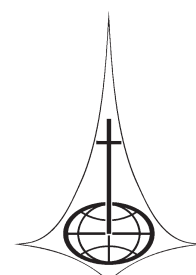
Until a year ago, large quantities of such seeds had been smuggled into the country via Paraguay and Argentina. When genetically modified seeds were legalized, the farmers who had cultivated the illegally imported grain were put under pressure. According to Schneider the problem lies in the patenting of GMOs, which now enables the corporate conglomerates to demand royalty payments.

Bueno de Faria believes widespread use of GMOs promotes monopolies in agriculture. "Six multinational corporations control 98 percent of the genetically modified plants and 70 percent of all pesticides," he observes. He cites BASF, Bayer Aventis, Dow, DuPont, Syngenta and Monsanto, saying the latter alone owns 90 percent of all genetically modified seeds.



LWF/DWS work in Tanzania through the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Services (TCRS): Refugees carry away bulk relief food distributed by the TCRS at the Kibondo refugee camp, western Tanzania. © LWF/TCRS/J. Stevens

The most critical problem associated with the distribution of genetically modified grain as relief assistance is the possibility to eliminate native seeds' during cross-pollination. There is a risk of "destroying the people's cultural and historical roots. The use of native and varied seeds is part of their culture and way of life," Bueno de Faria adds.



In its position paper, the Standing Committee calls for the rejection of GMOs. It says: "Not enough is known about GMOs to categorically state whether they will be harmful, harmless or beneficial in some aspects to human health in the longer term."

"In order to guarantee food security and food sovereignty for [all]," the committee stated, "it is essential for food to be produced through diversified, community-based production systems. Food aid will be bought as much as possible locally, nationally and in the region."

DWS is also required to provide information about the food's origin. According to the position paper, "DWS will NOT buy any genetically modified food with the resources administered by it, even if the food comes from the local market."

Beneficiaries Must Access Information on Food's Origin

If the distribution of donated genetically modified food aid is unavoidable, in order to alleviate an insurmount-

able hunger situation, DWS field programs must take several precautions. They first need to ensure that all beneficiaries have access to information about the food's origin. The beneficiaries should also have the right to know whether the food is genetically modified and to choose whether to receive such food.

In addition, the Standing Committee for World Service stated that DWS would not distribute whole kernel genetically modified crops as food aid, it must be milled. The Committee's statement is in line with decisions taken by the governments of Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe during famine in 2002. These countries require that all imported genetically modified maize be milled before distribution to ensure that it is not used as seeds for cultivation.

The Position Paper on Genetically Modified Organisms in Emergency and Development Operations is posted on the LWF Web site at www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DWS/Focus_Areas/DWS-Position-Paper-GMOs-2005.pdf (779 words)

(A contribution by Barbara Schneider, youth trainee, LWF Office for Communication Services.)

G8 Summit: LWF General Secretary Calls for Extension of Debt Relief Program

Debt Cancellation Initiative a Significant Breakthrough, but Not Yet a Solution

GENEVA, 5 July 2005 (LWI) – The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Convenor of Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, urged the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, to take steps to extend even further the debt relief program for poor countries announced in June. The agreement was reached in the lead up to July 6 Group of Eight (G8) Summit at Gleneagles, Scotland, chaired by the United Kingdom.

In a letter to the British Chancellor, Noko called the new debt cancellation initiative "a significant breakthrough," but "not yet a solution." He encouraged Brown to stay committed to the debt cancellation process. "If the momentum which it has created can be built upon and the wider dimensions of the problem addressed, a more complete and sustainable resolution of the debt crisis may yet be within reach," Noko said.

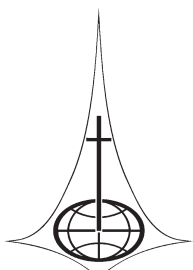
In June, finance ministers from the world's wealthiest nations—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and United States of America—agreed on canceling 100 percent of the debt, worth USD 40 billion, owed to the major international financial institutions by 18 of the world's poorest countries.

The countries immediately benefiting from the debt relief are Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, Madagascar, Mali,

Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. All of them have completed the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries program (HIPC), which is based on criteria laid down by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Launched in 1996 as a first comprehensive approach to reducing the external debt of the poorest countries, the program was reviewed three years later, and enhanced to provide further debt relief.

Noko pointed out that there are many other countries, some of which are excluded from the HIPC altogether, requiring cancellation of their multilateral debts in order to have at least a chance of achieving their Millennium Development Goals. "All of the countries that need debt cancellation should receive it," he stated.

The LWF general secretary stressed that all of the unsustainable and/or illegitimate debts of these countries should be cancelled. He expressed his concern for poor Latin American countries, many of which "owe more to the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) than to other international institutions. However, the IADB debts of the countries concerned do not appear to be included in the agreement." He noted that the question of unsustainable and illegitimate debts owed to private commercial entities also should be addressed.



Call to De-link Debt Relief from Economic Liberalization

Furthermore, Noko requested that “debt relief should be de-linked from the adoption of economic liberalization policies.” Loans and debt relief from international financial institutions are often only granted under conditions requiring the wholesale adoption of neoliberal economic policies including cuts in public spending, privatization of public utilities and services and the opening of domestic markets. The countries concerned have become more vulnerable to domestic and international economic volatility, Noko noted.

He deplored the fact that “the new debt cancellation agreement is predicated on the HIPC process,

which continues to require the adoption of such policies as a condition for debt relief.”

Noko also emphasized the question of legitimacy, and criticized the fact that “the new debt cancellation agreement is still founded on the calculation of how much a country can *afford* to pay, and does not consider the *legitimacy* of the debts.” He called for the establishment of independent mechanisms for the prevention and just resolution of future debt crises. These mechanisms are needed for testing the legitimacy of debts before they are contracted, and for “mediating and resolving debt difficulties before they become humanitarian emergencies,” he said. (634 words)

(By Julia Heyde, youth intern in the LWF Office for Communication Services.)

LWF General Secretary Expresses Shock Over Terrorist Attacks in London

Conveys Condolences to Archbishop of Canterbury

GENEVA, 8 July 2005 (LWI) – The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, conveyed condolences to Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Rev. Dr Rowan Williams, expressing deep shock over the July 7 terrorist attacks in London.

Referring to the many innocent victims affected by the violence, Noko wrote: “The prayers of the worldwide Lutheran communion are with the citizens of London and the United Kingdom. In our thoughts and prayers we remember those who have lost their loved ones and those who

have been injured and traumatized by these events.”

Noko assured the archbishop that the LWF “in our ecumenical and inter-faith efforts” would continue to work for peace, reconciliation and justice across ethnic, ideological and religious boundaries.

More than 50 people of different nationalities died as a result of the three explosions on the London underground train system, and one on the top of a double-decker bus. Over 700 people were injured, some losing limbs and suffering from multiple injuries, including burns. (189 words)

Challenging, Provocative but Useful, Theologians Say of LWF Seminar on Bible Authority

An Open Dialogue on Critical Questions about the Word of God

WARSAW, Poland/GENEVA, 6 August 2005 (LWI) – Challenging, often provocative, but all in all very useful was the general opinion expressed by participants in a Lutheran World Federation (LWF) seminar on the subject, “The Authority of the Bible in the Life of the Church.”

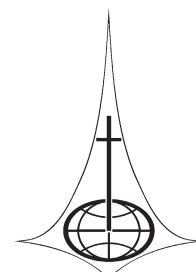
Some at the meeting held at the European Center of Communication and Culture in Warsaw, Poland, described it as a “liberating experience” as they could seek answers to critical questions that allowed for a better understanding of the Word of God without putting their own faith to question.

Thirteen representatives drawn from LWF member churches in Central Eastern Europe took part in the June 24-30 seminar organized by the LWF Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) in collaboration with the Department for Mission and Development’s Bratislava (Slovak Republic)-based regional office. Participants came from

the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia-Montenegro and Ukraine.

Rev. Dr Reinhard Böttcher, DTS Study Secretary for Theology and the Church, responsible for the seminar’s content, said the meeting’s objective was to “support member churches in their efforts to take the Bible seriously as the Word of God and as the decisive norm for preaching, teaching, and practice of Lutheran churches, and also to bear in mind the historical and contextual conditions that inevitably determine our understanding and interpretation of the Bible.” The seminar, he remarked, was not aimed at indoctrinating the participants, rather at serving as a forum for discussion and dialogue.

Four key subjects areas were discussed, with a teaching staff team member responsible for each of the four sessions. The DTS study secretary started



the sessions with the provocative question: “Is the Bible the Word of God?” In addition to describing the historical process of how the Bible developed, the theologian questioned to what extent it could be perceived as either the Word of God or that of humankind, how both these dimensions related to each other, and what implications this had for the authority of the Bible itself.

Canonized or Continuous Revelation of God?

Citing experiences with charismatic groups and Pentecostal churches, Rev. Dr Wilfried John from Malaysia sought an answer to the question whether “the Bible is canonized or whether it is a continuous revelation of God?” Prof. Jürgen Ziemer from Leipzig, Germany, presented methodological interpretations of the Bible, which among others, included the historically critical, textually critical, feminist and the theological liberation methods. He also gave insight on how these approaches could be applied to specific biblical texts.

A presentation titled “The Bible—Liberating Gospel or Oppressive Law?” by Dr Marta Cserhati from Hungary focused on the notion of contextual

definition, with participants reflecting on their own personal experiences.

A Russian deacon explained: “I was very narrow-minded until now when it came to understanding and interpreting the Bible. This seminar has broadened my outlook considerably.” From the Czech Republic, a congregation member discovered that “I now have better insight into my own situation as I consider also experiences that others have had.” A teacher from Eastern Europe remarked: “I had always feared that something was not quite right with my faith when critical questions about the Bible arose. Now I know that I need not worry about this.” A retired lecturer and member of a church committee added: “I have problems with the feminist interpretation of the Bible that seems to query its content. Nevertheless, I have learnt a tremendous amount that will help me with my work.”

DTS Study Secretary Böttcher felt that the seminar represented a “forum to review how to deal with differences in the solidarity of faith.” Many participants had clearly pursued “a path of experience and insight” which ultimately enabled them to perceive and appreciate the plurality of possible ways of approaching the Bible and the related analyses from a content view point. *(652 words)*

Rev. Ane Hjerrild, General Secretary of Danish Church Council on International Relations Dies

The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, conveyed deepest condolences to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (ELCD) following the death of **Rev. Ane Hjerrild**, General Secretary of the church’s Council on International Relations.

Hjerrild died on July 16, aged 62, after a short period of illness.

Hjerrild was a person of “strong ecumenical commitment, eager to strengthen human bonds, compassionate in relations with colleagues and friends all over the world,” Noko wrote in his condolence letter addressed to Ms Kirsten Auken, Acting General Secretary, ELCD Council on International Relations.

He further expressed the LWF’s tribute to Hjerrild for her active contributions over many years in the context of LWF Assemblies, Council meetings, consultations, and various other occasions. “She will be remembered as a thoroughly dedicated ecumenist, with a sharp view of crucial issues, relentless in promoting the full universality of Christian unity,” Noko added.

Hjerrild was born on 5 March 1943 in Denmark. She was a member of the executive committee of the Ecumenical Council in Denmark, 1972–1978. In 1975, she graduated with a Master of Arts in Literature and Theology from the Theologi-



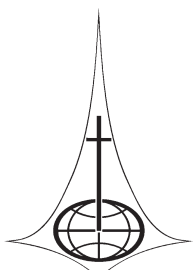
Rev. Ane Hjerrild.
© WCC/Peter Williams

cal Faculty of Aarhus University, Denmark, and was assistant professor for ecumenical and mission theology at the university, 1975–1978. From 1979 until 1980, she taught theology at the Silkeborg Teacher Training College, and was deputy director of a social institution, Kofoed School, 1980–1982. She was executive secretary for church and society in a Danish church organization, 1982–1989.

Ordained in 1989, Hjerrild served as a pastor of the Cathedral of Copenhagen until 2005. She was appointed General Secretary of the ELCD Council on International Relations in 1990, the same year she was elected to the LWF Council, where she served as an adviser on the then Standing Committee for Ecumenical Affairs until 1997. She was also a member of the LWF Tenth Assembly Planning Committee that coordinated preparations for the July 2003 Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada. Since 2001, she was a member of the Executive Committee of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe—Leuenberg Church Fellowship.

The LWF was represented at Hjerrild’s funeral July 22, by the Director of the Department for Mission and Development, Rev. Dr Kjell Nordstokke.

Rev. Ane Hjerrild is survived by her husband Rev. Frederik Hjerrild, their three daughters and two grandchildren. *(418 words)*



FEATURE: Central American Lutherans Warn Free Trade Pact Threatens Sovereignty

DR-CAFTA Will Increase Poverty, Undermine Indigenous People's Rights

MANAGUA, Nicaragua/GENEVA, 6 August 2005 (LWI) – Lutheran churches in Central America warn that a free trade agreement with the United States of America poses a threat to the region's most disenfranchised people, and are calling for broader consultation before any such deal goes into effect.

Prior to the US Senate's approval of the pact June 30, followed by the July 28 House of Representatives' endorsement by a narrow margin, the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope had voiced its opposition to the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA). The DR-CAFTA, the church argued, would only benefit large US businesses and the 10 percent of Nicaraguans who control 85 percent of the country's wealth, perpetuating "the system of poverty, hunger, malnutrition and dehumanization in which we live ... so that every day the number of poor people increases and the rich become richer."

The June statement by the Nicaraguan church is one of several issued in recent months by the region's Lutheran churches over the free trade agreement, previously referred to as CAFTA, as it originally included the USA and the Central American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. When the Dominican Republic joined the negotiations in 2004, the pact adopted its current name, DR-CAFTA.

The Lutheran Costarican Church warned that DR-CAFTA would threaten the environment and jeopardize the livelihood of small farmers and other workers, eroding labor rights, creating unstable employment, and stripping away benefits such as social security, pensions and maternity protection that had been secured only after years of struggle.

Small-Scale Farmers, Women Workers Especially Affected

Women, who make up a large percentage of the work force in small and medium-size businesses, will be especially affected, and the trade agreement will



*Demonstration against the ratification of DR-CAFTA in San Salvador, El Salvador, April 2005.
© LWF/DWS El Salvador/Raúl Gutiérrez*

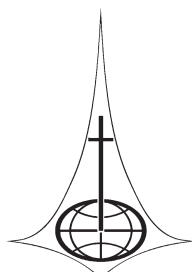
undermine the rights of Indigenous People, the Costa Rican church said.

Like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), DR-CAFTA would pose a particular threat to small farmers, who will be unable to compete with cheaper, subsidized agricultural products flooding into the region from the USA. The Nicaraguan church warned of the danger of this unfair competition and the threat of the privatization of natural resources, including water and bio-diversity, which would undermine food security and increase migration from rural areas to cities as farmers find it impossible to earn a livelihood.

Another area of concern for the region's churches is DR-CAFTA's impact on health, especially access to affordable medicines. By extending patent periods, the pact would raise the cost of critical medications, such as those for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

"When there is an ethical conflict between the pharmaceutical industry's trade rights and the people's right to health, our choice is very clear—we always choose life," the Lutheran churches of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua said in a joint statement issued May 13, during an HIV/AIDS regional consultation for Lutheran churches in Central America.

The DR-CAFTA was signed by negotiators from Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and USA in May 2004, after just 16 months of negotiation. The parliaments of El Salvador,



Guatemala and Honduras have ratified it, but ratification votes are still pending in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. For the free trade agreement to come into effect, it still must be approved by the parliaments of the other parties to the agreement. But it is not a treaty, therefore not legally binding.

Churches Urged to Study Agreement's Implications

One criticism has been that little information about the pact was made public during the negotiations. In a statement issued in May, Costa Rica's Lutheran church called for open debate about the agreement "to incorporate a concept of greater solidarity that benefits the great majority of people ... and is conducive to an improvement in the lives of the poor."

It also urged churches to study and preach on the implications of the free trade agreement from a faith perspective of justice and peace. The Lutheran church stressed the need to accompany grassroots organizations as they mobilize in search of a more just form of human development. Such action should include

collaboration with other churches in the region and calls for the solidarity of North American churches, "informing them of the consequences of the free trade agreement for both peoples through visits and campaigns," and seeking their assistance in lobbying the US Congress to reject the pact.

In its statement, the Costa Rican church said, "We express our total opposition to the policies that the agreement attempts to establish in Costa Rica and other countries, as they will have a negative impact on peace and national sovereignty. (793 words)

(By Barbara J. Fraser, Lima [Peru]-based freelance journalist.)

***This article is part of the ongoing *LWI Features on Healing* focusing on the LWF Tenth Assembly theme, "For the Healing of the World." The series highlights the relevance of the Assembly theme in the different contexts of the worldwide Lutheran communion by presenting projects and activities aimed at promoting reconciliation and healing. This theme continues to be an important aspect of LWF's work even after the 21-31 July 2003 Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada.**

Kazakhstan: Rev. Juri Nowgorodow Installed as Bishop

Rev. Juri Nowgorodow is the new bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Kazakhstan (ELCRK). The ELCRK's 14th Synod elected Nowgorodow, 49, with an overwhelming majority at its June 14-16 meeting at the Astana congregation, Republic of Kazakhstan.

Nowgorodow succeeds Bishop Peter Urie, who resigned from office for health reasons. Rev. Georg D. Kretschmar, former archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States (ELCROS) presided over the June 16 installation of the new bishop, assisted by Bishop Sigfried Springer and visiting Bishop August Kruse.

The synod members welcomed Nowgorodow's proposed priority areas of work, which, among others, included sustaining the ELCRK theological seminary in Astana. They agreed to set up a commission to review the seminary's teaching curriculum and course structure. The new bishop stressed that the Kazakhstan Lutheran church was stable despite the fact that its 228 congregations in 1993 had declined to the present 52

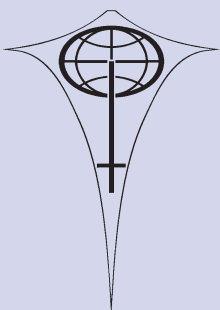


Kazakhstan Lutheran Bishop, Juri Nowgorodow. © ELCRK.

following the emigration of many members. Ten ordained pastors, 35 preachers, and 17 Sunday school teachers are serving these congregations.

Nowgorodow emphasized that the ELCRK, as a church of a religious and national minority in Kazakhstan, needed a steady relationship with neighboring churches that have the same confession, and Russia was particularly emphasized in this context. The partnership with the German sister churches in Mecklenburg and Westphalia was equally important. The ELCRK is an autonomous member church of ELCROS, the regional body of Lutheran churches with a combined membership of 16,000. It joined the Lutheran World Federation in 1989.

Prior to his new post, Nowgorodow worked as assistant bishop in the ELCRK for more than a year, and had been in charge of the church office for around eight years. He pursued his theological training at the ELCROS Theological Seminary near St Petersburg, Russia. The Nowgorodows have three children. (309 words)



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