

**The Lutheran World Federation
– A Communion of Churches**

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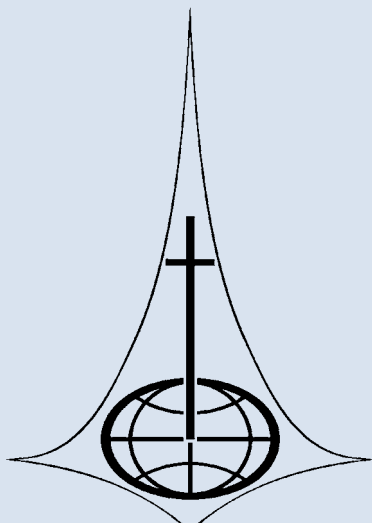
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FEATURE: Rwanda— Never Again to Genocide



A young survivor of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, at Nyarubuye in the eastern province of Kibungo. In the region's Rukira district, an LWF-supported inter-faith group comprising elected Christian and Muslim leaders is working with community members to dispel suspicion about their respective ethnic groups, rebuild trust and foster reconciliation.

Photo © LWF/DWS Rwanda/T. Lohnes

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The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) document titled "Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment—An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission," is now available in French, German and Spanish.

The title produced by the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) was first published in December 2004 in English.

It builds on the foundations of the 1988 LWF mission document, "Together in God's Mission: An LWF Contribution to the Understanding of Mission," and aims to stimulate self-analysis and reaffirmation of mission in context among the LWF member churches and other bodies.

The contents of the publication emphasize among other aspects, the church as not only missionary but as a witnessing, nurturing, messenger that serves and heals community. The document draws parallels between

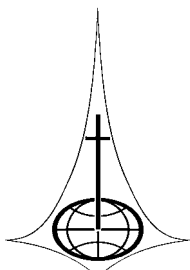


God's mission and the church's participation in it through three dimensions: mission of the creator (transformation); redeemer (reconciliation); and sanctifier (empowerment).

The PDF versions are downloadable from the LWF Web site at www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/DMD-Mission-low-F.pdf for the French; German at www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/DMD-Mission-low-D.pdf; Spanish at www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/DMD-Mission-low-S.pdf and www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/DMD-Mission-in-Context-low.pdf for the English

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Newly Launched Interfaith Commission Will Guide Africa's Religious Leaders' Action for Peace

Rwandan President Kagame Hails Faith Approach for "Removing Ambiguities"

KIGALI, Rwanda/GENEVA, 27 June 2006 (LWF)—The inaugural meeting of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Commission ended in Kigali, Rwanda, on 22 June with Africa's religious leaders agreeing to use the instrument for a peaceful future for the continent and all its people.

"We have begun the task of working together for peace. We have already gained considerable experience in responding to the challenges of conflict and poverty through our respective interfaith networks and organizations," the participants in the 19-22 June meeting stated in their final report.

Called for by the Second IFAPA Summit in April 2005, the IFAPA Commission will provide guidance and enhance the effectiveness of the ongoing process of engaging religious leaders in peace-building initiatives in Africa. The commission includes 23 persons representing the African Traditional Religion, Baha'i faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.

Inaugurating the commission on 19 June, Rwanda's President Paul Kagame commended Africa's religious leaders for choosing a faith approach that would "remove ambiguities sometimes associated with individual religious communities regarding where they stand in terms of peace."

The convenor of IFAPA, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), noted that the testing point "for any initiative for Africa, including IFAPA, is whether we are truly and genuinely leading Africa out of an 'envelope' situation into development." He had defined development as the process of setting free one's potential for self-affirmation and self-determination.

The 70 participants attending the meeting also included representatives of the international community, advisers and observers,



Rwandan President Paul Kagame addresses journalists after the IFAPA Commission inauguration in Kigali, Rwanda.
© LWF Youth Leadership Training

and an international team of journalists.

Alongside the launch of the IFAPA Commission, the participants in the Kigali meeting heard about the African Monitor, an independent body initiated by the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane, to promote an African voice in the development debate. The President of the Pan-African Parliament, Ms Gertrude Mongella, and the Vice-Chair of the African Union Commission, Mr Patrick Mazimpaka, attended the inaugural ceremony and assured IFAPA of the cooperation of these important regional governance structures and institutions.

The conference also discussed conflict and post-conflict situations in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Togo and Uganda, and proposed possible action plans by IFAPA. Other issues included the women's call for a healthy Africa under the campaign, "A Mother's Cry for a Healthy Africa."

Water as a fundamental human development goal, its religious significance, and particularly its necessity for the well being of vulnerable women and children, was also discussed.

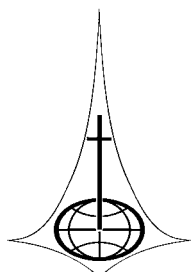


Ms Asha Hagi Elmi, a Member of Parliament from Somalia, emphasized the important role of women in peace-building initiatives. © LWF Youth Leadership Training

Noko said the Kigali meeting was particularly significant as the seven religions represented in IFAPA had agreed on a draft constitution and a proposed budget for the commission. "We have never, since the foundation of this continent, had the seven religions agreeing on principle," he told journalists at a press conference at the end of the meeting.

The draft constitution will be formally adopted at a Third IFAPA Summit planned for 2008.

The IFAPA Commission participants visited the Kigali Memorial Center and offered prayers for victims of the 1994 genocide





Rwanda's Anglican Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini (left) and the country's Mufti, Sheikh Saleh Habimana after the IFAPA Commission inauguration. © LWF Youth Leadership Training

in Rwanda, in which some 1 million people died. Throughout the meeting, emphasis was made on the "powerful motivation and inspiration" provided by Rwanda as the venue, in view of the dedicated peace

and reconciliation initiatives by the government, religious communities and the people themselves.

Anglican Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini told participants in the closing ceremony that, although the Rwandan church felt abandoned during the genocide 12 years ago, the presence of IFAPA made them feel embraced.

"If we are together, Africa will be peaceful," he said.

(*Ecumenical News International* correspondent, Fredrick Nzwili, contributed to this article.)

More information on the IFAPA Commission meeting in Kigali can be found at: ifapacommission.blogspot.com

This Web log was compiled by the Africa region participants in the LWF Youth Leadership Training in Communication program, which is jointly coordinated by the LWF Office for Communication Services and Department for Mission and Development.

Leader of German Lutheran Church Body Pays Tribute to LWF's Ecumenical Contribution

VELKD Presiding Bishop Friedrich Visits LWF Secretariat

GENEVA, 4 July 2006 (LWI) – The Presiding Bishop of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD), Dr Johannes Friedrich, has characterized the dialogue of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) with other churches as its "distinct profile."

Following discussions with the LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko on 30 June, the VELKD bishop stressed that it was indeed "thanks to the LWF that the international ecumenical movement has not come to an impasse."

Friedrich, who is also bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, particularly hailed the plans of the World Methodist Council to confirm the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) on 23 July at the World Methodist Conference in Seoul, South Korea.

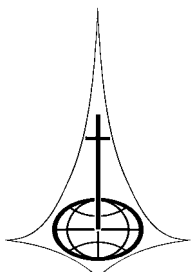
At the 31 October 1999 signing of the JDDJ in Augsburg, Germany, representatives of the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church jointly declared that the churches' mutual doctrinal condemnations regarding justification, dating back to the 16th century, do not apply to the teaching presented in the JDDJ.

The discussions between Noko and Friedrich at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, centered on preparations for the LWF's 11th Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany in 2010, and for the 60th anniversary, which will be celebrated next year in Lund, Sweden. Friedrich is also chairperson of the LWF German National Committee (GNC).



VELKD Presiding Bishop Dr Johannes Friedrich (left) and LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko during the meeting in Geneva. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

During their meeting, Noko emphasized that being Lutheran means being ecumenical as well. "In order to be ecumenical, we need to strike a balance in our



relations with all Christian world communions. The Lutheran tradition is generally understood to be a bridge between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestants. The Assembly in Stuttgart should profile this ecumenical reality without excluding any of our long-standing ecumenical partners," he noted.

The VELKD bishop called for the ecumenical movement to play a strong role in the upcoming LWF Assembly.

Friedrich was accompanied on his visit to the LWF headquarters by the GNC Executive Secretary, Oberkirchenrat Norbert Denecke, and by Kirchen-

rat Ivo Huber, who is responsible for fundamental theological questions and ecumenical affairs at the Bavarian Lutheran church.

The GNC/LWF represents 13 Lutheran churches: the eight member churches of the VELKD in Bavaria, Brunswick, Hanover, Mecklenburg, North Elbia, Saxony, Schaumburg-Lippe, and Thuringia; as well as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baden; Evangelical Lutheran Church in Oldenburg; Evangelical Church of Pomerania; Evangelical Church in Württemberg; and Church of Lippe [Lutheran Section]. They have a combined membership of some 12.8 million people.

Youth in Church and Society Evaluation Process Culminates in Recommendations to LWF Council

Representatives of LWF Member Churches Propose Renaming YICAS to "LWF -Youth"

VIENNA, Austria/GENEVA, 5 July 2006 (LWI) – Youth representatives from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches have proposed that the LWF Youth in Church and Society (YICAS) desk be renamed "LWF-Youth."

In one of three major recommendations from the YICAS International Roundtable for Youth Leaders in Vienna, Austria, from 14 to 18 June, the 22 participants argued that the title "LWF-Youth" identifies better with young people in the Lutheran communion. Their proposals for a common mission and vision for YICAS, 2008-2012, will be presented to the LWF Council at its March 2007 meeting.

The roundtable also proposed that the primary role of YICAS, a desk of the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD), be adjusted to focus on advocacy and facilitation, undertaking less programmatic work in all the LWF departments and offices, and throughout the Lutheran communion. The representatives from 21 LWF member churches said such advocacy could be carried out through the establishment of thematic campaigns that would allow for local and regional contextualization of the relevant issues.

The youth also stressed the need for consistency and follow up, and suggested that YICAS build on, and where possible collaborate with the work being undertaken by other local, regional and global ecumenical organizations.

The Vienna meeting was the culmination of a two-year evaluation process on the future direction of the LWF youth desk. The recommendations were based on the review of a draft report by Rev. Mia Wrang, LWF/YICAS consultant.

Key to the strategic planning process was what it means to be a communion of churches. Though there were marked differences in ontological

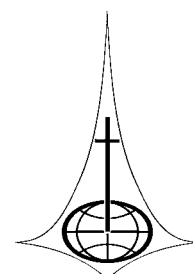
understanding and importance between regions, participants agreed that "to be in communion is to be a church for others. It is through faith that we are put in relationship with God and neighbor," they noted.

The participants, who were drawn from LWF member churches in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and North America, regretfully acknowledged the absence of three youth, who were denied visas and were thus unable to attend the meeting.

Bishop Herwig Sturm of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria, which hosted the event, greeted participants. The LWF/DMD Director, Rev. Dr Kjell Nordstokke, reminded the participants that the youth were not the church of the future, but rather the church of the present that will continue into the future. He encouraged them to "use your knowledge and use your wisdom" while recognizing that a youth voice is not limited to one opinion or one experience, but rather a variety of opinions and



Participants in the June 2006 LWF/YICAS International Roundtable in Vienna, Austria. © LWF/D. Mills



experiences shaped by people's contexts. During the five-day meeting, participants worshipped in local congregations and interacted with local youth.

The LWF/YICAS desk was established in 1981, to serve and work with young people aged 18-30 years old in the LWF member churches and their communities. Its main objectives include strengthening youth ministry

through an international network that promotes holistic ministry by proclamation, advocacy and service. It also works toward increasing the participation of young people in the life and work of the Lutheran communion.

(Reported for Lutheran World Information by Daranne Mills, representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada at the YICAS roundtable.)

Lutherans and Muslims Assess Tsunami Disaster Relief, Plan Cooperation

LWF President Hanson Speaks of Signs of Hope at Seminar on "Dialogue in Life"

MEDAN, Indonesia/GENEVA, 7 July 2006 (LWI) – Muslim and Lutheran leaders from Asia have affirmed diversity among religious leaders, the importance of dialogue to discover common and universal values, and the need to act.

Meeting 18 months after the December 2004 earthquake and tsunami disaster, 85 Muslim and Lutheran leaders from India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand—the countries the most severely affected—affirmed the harmony of Christians and Muslims in response to the tsunami, and the importance of local leadership in directing that response.

The representative from Sri Lanka was unable to attend the 27-30 June "Dialogue in Life" seminar in Medan, which was organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Mission and Development (DMD), and hosted by the LWF National Committee in Indonesia.

Addressing the seminar, LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson, said Christians and Muslims share the responsibility to preserve life beyond the members of their own faiths.



Left homeless by the tsunami, Nur Afika and her family now have a new home, built with assistance from Church World Service (CWS) in Meue village, Aceh Pidie. The United States' ecumenical relief and development body CWS, is a member of Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, the global alliance of churches and related agencies working to save lives and support communities in emergencies. © ACT/A. R. Tarigan

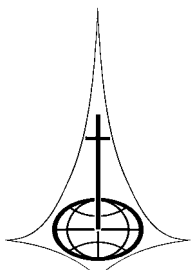


Flanked by (left) Ustad Zakaria A. Jilil, a Muslim leader from Aceh, and Malaysian Lutheran Bishop Julius D. Paul (right), LWF President Bishop Mark S. Hanson addresses the "Dialogue in Life" seminar on 30 June in Medan, Indonesia. © ELCA/F. Imhoff

Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), stressed the need to "walk with people who are suffering" and to be part of the humanitarian effort involved in rebuilding lives and homes. He reassured the Muslim participants that, in keeping with international standards for humanitarian assistance, the LWF did not proselytize or try to convert disaster victims from Islam to Christianity in exchange for its help. "We cannot work together in a relationship of trust unless we first know each other through dialogue," he said. "We build relationships by learning more about each other," he noted.

Recommendations from the seminar included forming a local continuing committee of Christians and Muslims in Aceh and Nias that would develop an action plan to address the needs there, and a proposal to build upon the network of relief agencies already created in the tsunami-affected region and around the world.

The participants listened to a series of presentations exploring Christian-Muslim relations from the





Through assistance provided by ACT member Church World Service, boat builders like Samsuar (left) and fishermen like Amuis (right), can now restart their livelihoods after the tsunami. © CWS/ACT/L. Roselim

perspective of each religion, both before and after the tsunami. They also visited Christian and Muslim communities in Aceh to learn from local leaders

what still needed to be done and how that could be addressed.

Signs of Hope

The LWF President spoke of the “signs of hope” that he had seen during his current journey as well as others around the world. Inter-religious councils in Jerusalem, Rwanda and the United States of America were signs of hope, as were “truth and reconciliation” efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, he said. Hanson also talked about the LWF-operated Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem, which mostly provides health care for Palestinians, the majority of whom are Muslim.

At a related event at the Nommensen University of the Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP—Huria Kristen Batak Protestan), HKBP Bishop Dr Bonar Napitupulu, noted that Indonesia had suffered natural disasters and social strife. He said Hanson’s visit had given the people “strength to face all these realities.”

The LWF/DMD Area Secretary for Asia, Rev. Dr Ginda P. Harahap, told the gathering that the size of the seminar and the visit to Aceh had given him hope. “I believe future programs will be just as full,” he said, adding that the Christian-Muslim relationship had been strengthened in Indonesia.

There are 12 LWF member churches in Indonesia, representing more than 4.3 million Lutherans. *(Based on an ELCA News Service report.)*

LWF World Service Program in India to Become Local NGO by 2008

A Challenging but Necessary Step

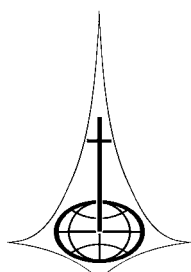
KOLKATA, India/GENEVA, 11 July 2006 (LWI) – After more than 30 years as a country program of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS), the LWF/DWS India program has started a process that will transform it into an autonomous local organization by 1 January 2008.

The decision to commence the process was reached during a roundtable, which brought major stakeholders of DWS India together in Kolkata, northeast India, where the program’s offices are based. Participants in the 7 to 9 June meeting were drawn from the program’s partner agencies, which include Canadian Lutheran World Relief, the Church of Sweden and DanChurchAid, as well as the LWF/DWS. Local partners represented include the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI), National Council of Churches in India, Church of North India, and the Church’s Auxiliary for Social Action—the relief and development organization of Protestant and Orthodox churches in India. The LWF/DWS associate program in Bangladesh, the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service was also represented.



Dr Thiru Krishnan, an eye surgeon, examines a patient at a monthly clinic in Pondicherry, southeast India. The clinic is supported by the UELCI, a member of ACT International. © LWR/ACT/L. Bonds

The roundtable helped to establish a clearer understanding among the stakeholders of the implications of localization, and to forge a consensus on how the new organization should be structured and managed. As an



autonomous faith-based non-governmental organization (NGO), LWF/DWS India will retain its current name, affirming its Lutheran and ecumenical identity. Its relief and development work will build on its existing experience and strengths. The localization should help confer greater legitimacy and freedom to pursue a progressive development agenda and widen opportunities to enhance its resource base.

The June roundtable participants acknowledged that the localization process involved a challenging, complex but necessary step that would strengthen DWS India's Lutheran and ecumenical cooperation locally, as well as its ability to address systemic poverty and vulnerability to disasters. Since its establishment in 1974, the program has worked among the rural and urban poor, with the aim to empower disadvantaged communities so improving their quality of life.

The idea of transforming DWS India into a local NGO was defined in a DWS Country Strategy Outline in 2003, and has been moot for the past decade. Prior to the recent decision, since 2004 a series of consulta-



Mr Neville Pradhan
© LWF/H. Putsman

tions and assessments has included the program's staff and local and international partners.

Meanwhile, Mr Neville Pradhan, who until recently served at the LWF Geneva headquarters as DWS Program Officer for Emergencies, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, from February 2001 until June 2006, will become the new interim director of DWS India and the LWF/DWS country representative until 31 December 2007. He will assume office next September, taking over from Mr Edwin Ramathal, who has been interim director since April 2005.

Since 1993, seven former LWF/DWS country programs in Africa, Asia and Latin America have gained the status of LWF associate program. They operate as national NGOs and are managed by governing boards comprising their local partners.

More information on LWF/DWS India is available at www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DWS/Country_Programs/DWS-India.html

(Mr Edwin Ramathal, LWF/DWS India, contributed to this article.)

Lutherans from Four Continents Visit Polish Church

LWF General Secretary Noko: Ethnic and Cultural Differences Are the Treasury of Humanity

WARSAW, Poland/GENEVA, 28 July 2006 (LWI)– Ethnic and cultural differences are the treasury of humanity and must be recognized as such, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) said during a recent visit to Poland.

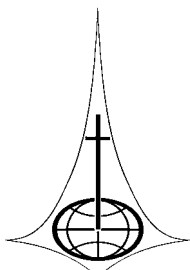
He noted that the "richness of this diversity is," however, "turned into pain and woe" when it is manipulated for political ends. Noko made these remarks when he delivered a lecture at the Polish Ecumenical Council, during the visit of an LWF delegation to the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland from 1 to 4 June.

He pointed out that "ethnic cleansing and conflict, racism, xenophobia, and caste-based discrimination are distortions and disfigurements of God's creation," and reminded churches of their responsibility to continually point to the image of God in all people.

The LWF general secretary said Lutherans strongly affirmed the present call of the ecumenical movement for churches to find "appropriate forms of visible unity." This was not primarily a "search for the reconciliation of clerical structures," although ministerial unity can also be an "important ecumenical instrument," he noted.



In Wroclaw, members of the LWF delegation laid flowers in front of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer memorial. Left to right: Dr Jamilin Sirait (Indonesia), Deacon Cristina Kilian (Argentina), Bishop Thomas J. Barnett (Sierra Leone), LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, and Rev. Dr Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mato, LWF Area Secretary for Europe. © Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland



The search for visible unity, Noko said, was ultimately “a search for shared life in the church for the sake of the world.” As a communion of churches that maintains numerous programs and projects throughout the world, the LWF was committed to be a witness to God’s peace, justice, and compassion, he added.

The general secretary was accompanied by Bishop Thomas J. Barnett, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone; Deacon Cristina Kilian from Argentina; Dr Jamilin Sirat, president of the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Christian Batak Church in North Sumatra, Indonesia; Rev. Dr Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato, Area Secretary for Europe in the LWF Department for Mission and Development; and by Rev. Ireneusz Lukas, former head of the LWF Regional Office in Central and Eastern Europe, based in Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

Noko explained the aim of the visit was to become acquainted with Lutheran life in Poland. The meeting was arranged to make it possible for Lutherans from various continents and cultures to get to know each other, providing a boost to their sense of communion.

The LWF delegation met with representatives of the LWF National Committee in Poland and the Christian Theological Academy, ecumenical dignitaries, political figures, and representatives of Lutheran parishes in the Polish cities of Warsaw, Katowice, Wrocław, and Swidnica.



From left to right: Katowice Bishop Tadeusz Szurman; Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko; Warsaw Bishop and head of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, Rev. Janusz Jagucki; Rev. Marcin Brzóska from Warsaw; and Bishop Thomas J. Barnett, during prayers in the Resurrection Church of Katowice. © Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland

In Warsaw, representatives of women’s initiatives in the Polish Lutheran church explained the situation of women in Polish society and their roles and activities within the church.

On 3 June, the LWF delegation attended the ceremonial christening of the education and rehabilitation center for people living with disabilities, now renamed the Martin Luther Center, which is run by Diakonia Breslau (Wrocław).

LWF Annual Report 2005 Is Now Available

The 2005 Annual Report of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is now available. Its contents reflect the spirit and accomplishments of the worldwide Lutheran communion, activities in the Geneva Secretariat, World Service work in 34 countries, and hundreds of programs and projects in the member churches.

The specialized activities and cross-cutting themes in the 32-page, full-color publication range from rethinking ecumenical relations, theology in the life of the churches, prophetic diakonia, and advocacy for justice, to gender mainstreaming. Also included is focus on community-



based sustainable development, breaking the silence surrounding HIV and AIDS, and developing an LWF action plan for water.

Copies can be ordered from the LWF Office for Communication Services, 150 Route de Ferney, P.O. Box 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland, Tel. +41/22 791 6111, Fax +41/22-791 6630, E-mail jbn@lutheranworld.org

The report is available in PDF version on the LWF Web site at: www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF-Annual_Report_2005-low.pdf

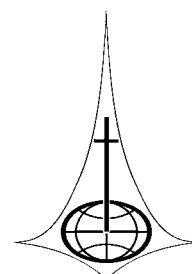
Netherlands: New Evangelical Lutheran Web Site Online

A new Evangelical Lutheran Web site www.evangelisch-luthers.nl is online in the Netherlands. The initiative was taken in mid-June by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN) in order to keep the Lutheran tradition alive in the PCN.

The Web site provides information about the PCN, and news and views from Lutheran congregations in Dutch. Some of the background information is provided in English.

The PCN is the result of a May 2004 merger between three churches of the Reformation in the Netherlands: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

Around 15,000 of the 2.5 million PCN members are Lutherans, and an advisory Lutheran synod was retained after the union. Rev. Ilona Fritz is president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.



International Christian Bodies Welcome Adoption of New Human Rights Standards

Church-Related Organizations Laud UN Council's Openness to Civil Society

GENEVA, 3 July 2006 (LWI) – International church and ecumenical organizations have welcomed the adoption of a new International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, both of which were agreed at the inaugural session of the UN Human Rights Council which concluded in Geneva on 30 June 2006.

Five church-related organizations—the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Franciscans International, Dominicans for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International—had earlier submitted a joint statement to the UN Council urging the adoption of these measures, and have been at the forefront of civil society advocacy on these issues in recent years.

“The adoption of this convention confirms a shift in international law towards the rights of victims to truth, justice and reparation,” stated Dr Guillermo Kerber, a specialist on human rights at the WCC. “It also signals that the newly-formed UN Human Rights Council is able to act decisively in support of the fundamental dignity and rights of people, and to confront impunity, and this is to be applauded.”

The church-related organizations also noted that non-governmental organizations enjoyed a high degree

of access to the discussions in the context of the Council's first session, and they welcomed this transparency. “We very much hope that this openness to civil society, and the interactive nature of this session, are signs of how the Human Rights Council will conduct itself in the future,” said Mr Peter Prove, Assistant to the LWF General Secretary for International Affairs and Human Rights, who also paid tribute to the “skilful stewardship” of the presidency of the first session.

“It is hoped that this Convention will go a long way in eliminating impunity and bringing peace to the families of the disappeared,” Etienne De Jonghe, Secretary General of Pax Christi International, stated.

In their joint statement to the UN Council, the WCC, LWF, Franciscans International, Dominicans for Justice and Peace, and Pax Christi International committed themselves to working with the new Human Rights Council “as a key international instrument for the promotion of justice and human dignity.” The five organizations also underscored that the Council will be judged by whether it “actually increases the chances for life in dignity and in sustainable communities for people suffering discrimination, deprivation, oppression and violence.”

International NGOs Call for Urgent Protection of Civilians in Gaza

Immediate Unobstructed Access Essential for Delivery of Humanitarian Aid

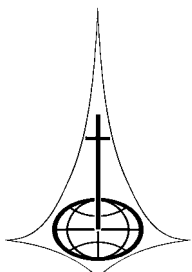
JERUSALEM/GENEVA, 7 July 2006 (LWI) – Eighteen international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have expressed grave concern about the severe impact of the recent actions in Gaza. In a joint statement issued on Friday, 7 July, they call for “the urgent protection of civilians in Gaza, as well as immediate and unobstructed access for the delivery of critical humanitarian aid and supplies necessary to provide for basic human needs.” The statement is signed by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and 17 other international NGO partners active in humanitarian relief work in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Referring to Israel's military offensive in the Gaza Strip the organizations say that, in particular, the damage to essential civilian physical infrastructure has resulted in the complete destruction of Gaza's only electrical power plant and damage to other basic services, including water delivery and sewage treatment facilities. They assert the entitlement of civilians there, particu-

larly children, to special protection under International Humanitarian Law, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention. “It is not acceptable to target the vital civilian infrastructure that supports them,” they say.

In the context of its humanitarian work in the West Bank, the LWF has repeatedly affirmed, in accordance with international law, patients' right of access to medical care. People in need of life-saving treatments are among the most vulnerable in society, says Rev. Mark Brown, regional representative of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) regional program in the Middle East. “They should not be denied access to basic essential services and have to suffer further because of severe travel restrictions or damage to infrastructure due to conflict.”

Until recently the LWF, through the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH), has been treating cancer patients referred from Gaza. The AVH on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem offers the only radiation treatment



facility for cancer patients in the occupied Palestinian territories. The hospital was planning to train more than ten medical professionals from Gaza to staff a new cancer unit there. This program had to be cancelled because of the recent military activity in the Gaza Strip. Now, neither the patients nor the staff from Gaza have any access at all to the AVH services.

The hospital is one of the projects run by the LWF/DWS regional program in the Middle East. The program regularly distributes humanitarian supplies and basic necessities to refugees and people living in poverty to meet immediate needs. Donations from partner agencies like the US-based Lutheran World



*Muna (left) and Hadiyah (right) dance while receiving dialysis treatment at the Augusta Victoria Hospital.
© LWF/DWS Jerusalem/K. A. Brown*

Relief, and Canadian Lutheran World Relief, make it possible for the LWF to assist those most in need and to promote reconciliation and cooperation in the community. In the current situation, it is no longer possible to get supplies to Gaza for distribution by the churches and partner agencies there.

The full text of the statement, in PDF version, is available at: www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/NGOs_on_Gaza_July_2006.pdf

More information on the work of the LWF/DWS regional program can be found at:

www.lwfjerusalem.org and about the Augusta Victoria Hospital at: www.avh.org

DRC Elections Provide First Opportunity for Democratic Expression Since 1965

LWF General Secretary Welcomes Independent Electoral Commission's Engagement with Religious Leaders

GENEVA, 14 July 2006 (LWI) – The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, has welcomed the engagement of the Independent Electoral Commission with religious leaders, in the context of the upcoming elections on July 30 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

In a 14 July letter to the DRC President Joseph Kabila, the LWF General Secretary stresses the importance of promoting electoral awareness. He asks President Kabila “to encourage and facilitate to the maximum extent possible the involvement of religious leaders in this enormous public education challenge.”

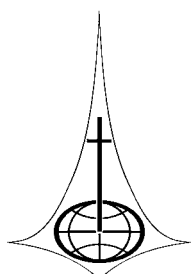
In a country in which many social institutions have been destroyed or weakened by conflict, Noko says he believes religious leaders in the DRC have an unrivalled potential to educate and equip voters to exercise their democratic rights responsibly.

These elections will provide the first opportunity for the democratic expression of the will of the Congolese people since 1965, Noko writes. In the meantime, the country has been torn apart by conflict. During the years of civil war since 1996, an estimated 4 million lives are thought to have been claimed either by violence or by attendant hunger and disease. This is a calamity, he writes, that is widely considered to have been “the most lethal conflict anywhere in the world since World War II.” The elections at the end

of July, therefore, represent “a precious opportunity to restore democracy, to hasten the rehabilitation of the country, and to re-build the foundations for a peaceful future in the DRC.”

According to Noko, Kabila and his transitional administration have a heavy responsibility to ensure a peaceful, free and fair electoral process. Noko offers his prayers that the president might find strength for this task, and that the Congolese people will be inspired and enabled to grasp this historic opportunity. In particular, Noko asks that the president “continue to exercise strong leadership for the establishment of a political culture in which a political opponent is not seen as an enemy, and in which the best interests of the nation are a broadly shared concern.”

Even the most successful election process, satisfying all the criteria of freedom and fairness, would be but a small step in a much longer journey, the general secretary writes. He assures the president of the commitment of the LWF, and of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) network, to accompany the Congolese people “until the destination is reached.” IFAPA is a continent-wide network of inter-faith groups and religious leaders from all of the major faith traditions represented in Africa, which are committed to working together for peace there. Since its inception in October 2002 IFAPA has seen the DRC as a major



focus of its common work, explains Noko, the current convenor of IFAPA.

The LWF, of which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo has been a member since 1986, carries out humanitarian relief work within the framework of its Department for World Service Rwanda/DRC country

program, as well as development programs in the eastern provinces of the DRC.

More information about the LWF Department for World Service country program in Rwanda/DRC can be found on the LWF Web site at: www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DWS/Country_Programs/DWS-Rwanda-DRC.html

Middle East: Only Extremism Will Benefit from Continuation of the Violence

LWF General Secretary Noko Denounces Current Grave Escalation of Conflict

GENEVA, 18 July 2006 (LWI) – The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, has denounced the current grave escalation of conflict in Israel, the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. There needs to be a clear rejection of all violence as a means of securing peace, together with a genuine commitment to justice for all the people of the Holy Land, in order to forestall the accelerating spiral of violence, Noko urges in a statement, issued on Tuesday, 18 July.

“If there is one lesson that the troubled history of the Holy Land teaches us, it is that violence does not bring peace,” Noko says. Only extremism will benefit from the continuation of the violence. In the face of so much experience of the cyclical nature of violence, the failure to learn the lesson of peace seems deliberate. In this situation, talk of “appropriate means” and criticism of “disproportionate responses” are simply inadequate.

Noko calls on the international community to finally move beyond platitudes, to doing what is necessary to calm the violence, restore hope, and push forward toward peace with justice. There is no hope, and no reason, in the deadly cycle of violence, he says. The violence, by whomsoever committed and with whatsoever proclaimed justifications, must cease. If peace is to be more than just a word, fundamental injustices must be redressed. It is past time for the international community to be clear, resolute and unconditional in this message. According to Noko, a different approach to peace in the Holy Land is required, in which justice is at the heart. If the members of the international community do not insist on justice as a basis for peace, they will be complicit in the inevitable perpetuation of conflict, he concludes.

The full text of the statement on the situation in the Middle East by LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, follows:

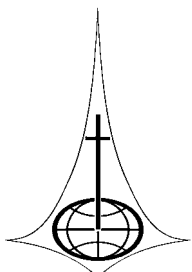
Statement by Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko General Secretary, The Lutheran World Federation Geneva, 18 July 2006

I join all those who have raised their voices to denounce the current grave escalation in conflict in Israel, the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. I lament the loss of life and the suffering that this violence has visited upon so many people, and its impacts on whole communities. And I grieve for the severe injury that these events have inflicted on hopes for a revival of the peace process in the region. Extremism, and only extremism, will benefit from the continuation of the violence.

If there is one lesson that the troubled history of the Holy Land teaches us, it is that violence does not bring peace. But in the face of so much experience of the cyclical nature of violence, the failure to learn the lesson of peace seems deliberate. In this situation, talk of “appropriate means” and criticism of “disproportionate responses” are simply inadequate. In order to forestall the accelerating spiral of violence, there needs to be a clear rejection of all violence as a means of securing peace, together with a genuine commitment to justice for all the people of the Holy Land.

I pray that all those for whom violence is the instinctive response to violence will be led to the path of peace. I pray that no more sons and daughters of Abraham, whether Israeli or Arab, will have to die in the name of violent and exclusivist ideologies. I pray that “the things that make for peace” will yet be learned, that the Holy Land will yet become a land of peace and an inspiration to the world. I pray especially for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and the other Christian churches in the region, that their witness for peace will be amplified against the louder drumbeats of war. And I pray that all those – including the staff of the LWF’s field program in Jerusalem – who are engaged in providing relief and support to communities affected by the current situation will find that their essential work is enabled and supported as it should be.

Faced with the current crisis, the international community must finally move beyond platitudes, to doing what is necessary to calm the violence, to restore hope, and to push forward towards peace with justice.



There is no hope, and no reason, in the deadly cycle of violence. The violence, by whomsoever committed and with whatsoever proclaimed justifications, must cease. Fundamental injustices must be redressed, if peace is to be more than just a word. It is past time for the international community to be clear, resolute and unconditional in this message. The international community's efforts to promote peace in the Middle

East – the Oslo Accords and the “Road Map” alike – have been mortally wounded by the continued resort to violence and by the failure to redress obvious injustice. A different approach to peace in the Holy Land is required, in which justice is at the heart. If the members of the international community do not insist on justice as a basis for peace, they will be complicit in the inevitable perpetuation of conflict.

LWF 60th Anniversary Celebrations to Include a Church Leadership Consultation

Strengthening the Bonds of Communion, Shaping a Vision for the Future

GENEVA, 18 July 2006 (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) 60th anniversary celebrations during next year's LWF Council meeting in Lund, Sweden, will include a church leadership consultation. Including women and youth leaders, it will gather together the heads of all LWF member churches.

In a letter to the member churches, LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko writes that the Council meeting and anniversary celebrations will take place 21–27 March 2007. LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson will address the event that will combine the two-day church leadership consultation and a four-day Council meeting.

Inviting the churches to consider these dates in their planning, Noko says he hopes the anniversary celebrations “in the birthplace of the LWF” will be a highly significant moment, and place, for the member church leaders “to reflect on the LWF's past and future.” He points out that, in the context of the 60th anniversary observance, a number of the LWF regional groupings have already indicated willingness to hold their meetings in Lund. The 2007 Council Meeting/Church Leadership Consultation is being planned in such a way that sufficient time will be provided for these “regional meetings.”

The LWF Council agreed, at its September 2005 meeting in Bethlehem, that its next meeting would take place in conjunction with celebrations to mark the 60 years since the Federation's founding.

An LWF staff team headed by LWF Deputy General Secretary Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, recently met

with the leaders of the Church of Sweden and the Diocese of Lund for preparatory discussions. Bishop Christina Odenberg, leader of the Diocese of Lund since 1997, told the visiting LWF team, “The Church of Sweden and the Diocese of Lund are greatly honored to host the events, and we will do everything possible to make it a memorable and meaningful” occasion.

The church has seconded Rev. Ragnar Svensrud to serve as full-time coordinator of the events. Arrangements are underway to hold the Jubilee Service at the historic Lund Cathedral, and to hold the anniversary celebrations in the university hall, where the LWF was actually founded in 1947. Various organizing committees are being set up, and to allow for fuller participation, the church plans to convene its Bishop's Conference concurrently.

Noko thanks the Church of Sweden for agreeing to host the significant event, saying, “I believe we can help shape a vision for the future of the LWF, and at the same time strengthen the bonds of communion and fellowship between us.” The meeting will be an opportunity “to renew our fellowship,” receive the input of the major ecumenical partners, and “re-imagine the future of the LWF and of the wider ecumenical movement of which we are a part.”

The first consultation to bring all leaders of the LWF member churches together was held in August 1994 in Geneva. The participants recommended that a similar consultation be held between the LWF Ninth and Tenth Assemblies, but it had to be postponed for financial reasons.

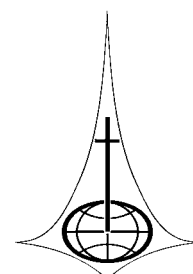
First Meeting of Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission

The first meeting of the Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission took place from 1 to 7 July 2006 in Utrecht, the Netherlands, hosted by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). Co-sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and WARC, the Commission discussed reports on the current structures and practices of Lutheran-Reformed relations from regional perspectives. The Commission is, among other things, responsible for a study project on structures of church communion, reflecting on the diversity and complementarity of ecclesiological approaches

within the two confessional families as they move toward new forms of communion.

At its next meeting to be hosted by the LWF in August 2007, the Commission will consider the different understandings of confessions, their role and authority in the life of the churches and ecumenically. The LWF and WARC have been in formal international dialogue since the early 1980s.

More information is available at www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/OEA/Bilateral_Relations/OEA-Lutheran-Reformed.html



FEATURE: Rwanda—Never Again to Genocide

LWF-Supported Interfaith Group Provides Trauma Counseling

KIGALI, Rwanda/GENEVA, 25 July 2006 (LWI) – In one video clip, a young man narrates how he watched his mother’s cold blooded killing—a gun shot to her head. In another, a young woman recalls the last time she saw their last-born sibling being carried away from their hideout by a family friend, who promised to take the baby to their parents, who had by then been killed. The narrators consider their survival miraculous.

of the genocide; to gain international recognition for the plight of the Rwandan people; and through education, to avert the recurrence of genocide in a country which is still at significant risk.

Representatives of Africa’s faith groups attending the inaugural meeting of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) Commission in the Rwandan capital visited and offered prayers at the memorial center on 22

June 2006. Their message, “Never Again,” displayed on flower wreaths laid on concrete tombs containing the remains of thousands of people killed in and around Kigali 12 years ago, affirmed the commitment to concerted interfaith action to prevent such killings from recurring in Rwanda or elsewhere in the world.

The IFAPA convenor and general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko led the IFAPA meeting’s participants to the memorial site.



*Representatives of Africa’s faith groups offer prayers at the Kigali Memorial Center mass graves.
© LWF Youth Leadership Training*

Peace and Reconciliation at Community Level

The memorial center is one of several peace and reconciliation

These are some of the flashbacks of the killings that engulfed Rwanda between April and July 1994, culminating in the death of nearly 1 million people, mainly Tutsis and moderate Hutus. These testimonies are among exhibits displayed at the Kigali Memorial Center, which was opened in April 2004 to mark the tenth anniversary of the beginning of the 100 days of the 1994 genocide in the Central African country.

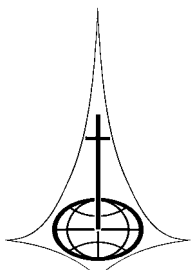
The tools used in the killings, including machetes and clubs, among others, are also displayed. Several other exhibits give a historical background of genocide in Rwanda, tracing it back to the first large-scale killings involving the two ethnic groups, Hutus and Tutsis, in 1959, three years before the country’s independence from then colonial power Belgium. It also archives genocide and ethnic killings the world over, including images from the Second World War.

The Kigali center is one of several such sites set up in Rwanda by an international body, Aegis Trust, in cooperation with the government and local communities to provide a lasting memorial to the victims

initiatives of the Rwandan government in cooperation with its local and international partners including the LWF. Ensuring that Rwanda’s ethnic groups co-exist peacefully, restoring life back to normal, and working to ensure that genocide “never happens again” are key focus areas of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) country program in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In Rukira district, in the eastern province of Kibungo, an LWF/DWS Rwanda-initiated interfaith group comprising representatives of 18 Christian denominations and Muslim leaders deals with peace and reconciliation issues at community level.

The group’s chairperson Rev. Theonesti Mugengana explained the religious leaders’ peace building efforts to a visiting group of participants in the LWF youth communication training workshop, held in Kigali from 19 to 24 June. He said the elected leaders mainly focus on trauma counseling for genocide survivors; promoting peaceful co-existence between Rwanda’s ethnic groups; and dealing with issues such as HIV and AIDS.



But the tasks are quite challenging. It is not easy to counsel someone when the counselor her/himself is living with the scars of the “genocide wounds,” Mugengana remarked.

Group member Annette (not her real name) narrated her story, demonstrating Mugengana’s concern. Her entire family of five was killed during the genocide. She survived, but with many indelible scars including rape. Coming to terms with the loss of her loved ones and the sexual abuse was not easy. She eventually remarried, and like many other Rwandans, began another chapter of life. But this took a sudden shift when she discovered she was HIV positive. Her husband, a pastor, soon died, leaving Annette widowed for the second time in about ten years. She pauses, with a distant look in her eyes. Then she breaks into a wide smile, and explains why this was not the time to sit back and feel sorry for herself—so many people need trauma counseling and healing, which she can offer.

Restoring Trust and Hope

The group members receive trauma-counseling skills through various workshops organized by the LWF/DWS Rwanda program. Discouraging tribalism among the community members and religious leaders remains a significant part of their work. They also provide shelter and security to those who do not have any remaining members of their families after the genocide. Consoling and comforting those, who on returning home after imprisonment for involvement in the genocide, find their spouses had remarried, is one of the most difficult tasks, Mugengana explained.

Equally painstaking is bringing together people who confess to have taken part in the genocide to share in the communion/community of the church or mosque. Although the government and its partners embarked on post-genocide peace and reconciliation efforts nationwide, dispelling suspicion, restoring trust and



LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko (left) and former Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik (right) pay their respects at the Kigali Memorial Center. © LWF Youth Leadership Training

faith, remained a big problem even among the religious leaders themselves. There was a lot of “finger pointing in people’s minds, that genocide happened because of so and so. Leading people who were not at peace with each other was a major challenge,” he said.

But there is hope. The Rukira interfaith group members attribute new joint community activities and restoration of relationships to the LWF’s timely intervention and vision in constituting the committee of elected religious leaders. “Sitting together with someone who killed your family members is not easy, but it is happening,” Mugengana stressed, adding that the group had become an immense source of reconciliation in the area.

In Rwanda Since 1994

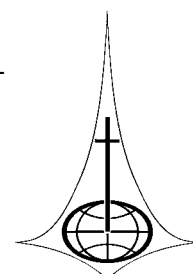
The DWS program in Rwanda began in August 1994 with emergency aid to victims and internally displaced persons after the genocide, and assistance to returning refugees. Trauma healing was incorporated to help address personal and community rage, hostility and antagonism, and to develop capacity to come to terms with the past and to live together as a community.

With the start up of the *Gacaca* (traditional Rwandan courts) and release of prisoners, the DWS program supports its partners to establish community-based counseling services and structures for conflict resolution, aimed at promoting healing and reducing the renewed trauma that prisoner release could cause. Strong support continues for partners, especially churches, in AIDS awareness raising and advocacy against stigmatization of people living with HIV.

The LWF/DWS Kibungo integrated rural development project also focuses on food security, water, sanitation and environmental protection. Workshops on micro-credit and income generation are conducted for



Children attending a church service in a Kigali congregation of the Lutheran Church of Rwanda. © LWF/DWS Rwanda/T. Lohnes



people living with HIV, and communities are supported in building shelters for AIDS orphans and the elderly.

Reported for LWI by participants in the African region consultation of the three-year LWF youth training program, "Towards a Communicating Communion – A Youth Vision." More information about the 19 to 24 June communication training workshop and the IFAPA Commission meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, is available at ifapacommission.blogspot.com

***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. The theme continues to be an important aspect of LWF's work even after the 21–31 July 2003 Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada.**

ELCA Membership Dropped 1.6 Percent to 4.85 Million in 2005

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) reports it had a baptized membership of 4.85 million in 2005, representing a decrease of about 1.62 percent from the previous year's figures.

The total figure in 2005 was 4,850,776 baptized members in 10,549 congregations, representing a reduction of 79,653 baptized members since 2004, according to the ELCA Secretary, Rev. Lowell G. Almen.

An ELCA news release dated 1 August said parochial reports indicated the loss was due to a decrease in the number of new members, the disbanding of 31 congregations and "roll cleaning" in many remaining congregations. Roll cleaning resulted in a loss of 208,436 members in 2005. Those reductions occur when long inactive members who indicate no interest in continued participation are removed

from the rolls of congregations. Twenty-two congregations with a combined baptized membership of 14,083 withdrew from the ELCA in 2005. One congregation with membership of 111 was removed.

An increase in ELCA membership last occurred in 1991, with a net gain of 4,438 baptized members that year. The current decrease in ELCA membership reflects a pattern reported by many church bodies in the United States of America during this period, Almen said.

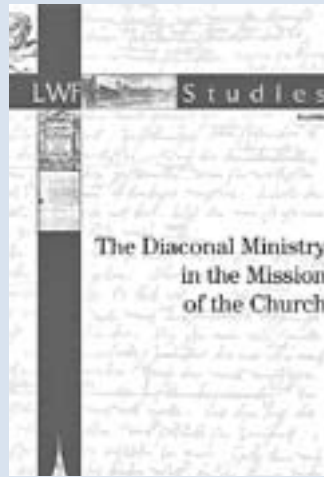
The ELCA was formally established in 1988, resulting from a union of three North American Lutheran church bodies. It joined the LWF the same year.

A table summarizing annual statistic reports is at www.elca.org/news/table.html on the ELCA Web site.

(ELCA News Service)

LWF Publication on Diaconal Ministry

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Theology and Studies has published a new book titled *The Diaconal Ministry in the Mission of the Church*. The 108-page publication includes the main presentations at an LWF global consultation on the diaconal ministry in the Lutheran churches, held in November 2005, in São Leopoldo, Brazil. The book includes the consultation's final statement, in which the representatives of LWF member churches from all over the world, request the LWF member churches to reexamine and re-order their ministerial structures in such



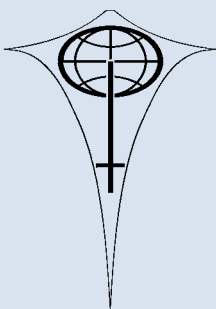
a way that they reflect diakonia as a core component of the mission of the church.

Excerpts from regional reports provide insight into the different ways in which the diaconal ministry is ordered within the Lutheran communion. It is hoped that this resource will provoke further reflection and discussion within the LWF member churches. Copies can be ordered from the LWF Department for Theology and Studies, 150 Route de Ferney, P.O. Box 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland, Tel. +41/22-791 6111, Fax +41/22-791 6630, E-mail Liesch@lutheranworld.org for CHF 12, EUR 8 or USD 10 plus postage and packaging.

Correction – LWI No. 02/2006 page 13, (article titled, "Theological Debate on Spirits, Ancestors and Healing"): Caption under the first photograph, the person in the mid-

dle is Prof. Klaus Nürnberger from South Africa and not Dr Jaap Breetvelt from the Netherlands.

This error is regretted.



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