

Lutheran World
Information

LWI

600
YEARS

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION



2007

02

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Lund '47 / Lund '07

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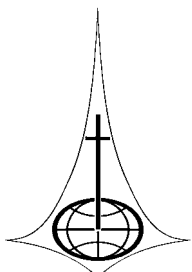
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Newly-elected LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson, USA, at the closing eucharistic service of the 2003 LWF Tenth Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada.
© LWF/D. Zimmermann

Anniversaries serve an important role in calling us to remember and honor the past, while looking forward with new vision and energy to the future. It is with gratitude that we remember those who led with vision from our earliest days following World War II. Over these past six decades we have carried their vision of a family of Lutherans who together, live out the gospel through our active presence in the world.

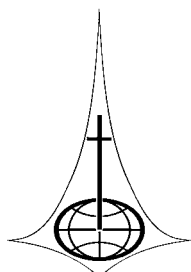
Could they have imagined the breadth and depth of what the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) looks like today? Could they have foreseen the depth of our work in ecumenical relations, theology in the life of the churches, prophetic diakonia, our advocacy for just, sustainable development, and our deep commitment to one another? We have become a communion of churches and these are the hallmarks of our life together.

The LWF is now the table where we listen to one another, share our joys and sorrows, plan, weep, pray, worship and celebrate. Together, we are a stronger voice than any one of us could be alone. We are a *com-*

munion of churches, united through Word and Sacrament. We came together in 1947 *for the healing of the world* and have continued that work, always listening for what God is calling us to do and be in the world.

In 2007, we have the opportunity to pause and give thanks for the work we have been privileged to be part of for 60 years. We look forward to a strong and vibrant future. With God's help, we will be ready to face the challenges and opportunities with strength, hope and compassion. We go forward committed to God and to one another.

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson
LWF President



Who Are These Lutherans?

This was probably a question that people unfamiliar with Lutherans and the Lutheran church asked upon discovering that there are ecclesial communities bearing this name. Today, I am sure there are more people who know something about Lutherans for one reason or other.

Lutherans globally were separated from each other and from other Christians for 400 years, and it was not until 1868 that international contacts were established in Europe. However, the question remains: “What holds these Lutherans together despite the fact that they live in different cultures and contexts all over the world?”

It is a question about unity. Lutheran unity is based on agreement on the proclamation of the gospel and the correct administration of the two sacraments—Baptism and Eucharist. Lutherans have neither a common governance structure nor a central head such as the Bishop of Rome or the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury. They have bishops, some of who are, or are not, in historic episcopal tradition. They have no common hymn book but they have a variety of liturgies and liturgical vestments. Their worship places vary from a cathedral to a simple thatch hut. While some Lutherans ordain men and women, others ordain only men. Some practice close communion while others practice open communion.

Lutherans subscribe to the Lutheran confessional writings. Nonetheless, some Lutherans do not subscribe to the entire Book of Concord but only to the ecumenical creeds, Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Small Catechism.

As Prof Warren A. Quanbeck has remarked,¹ “Some Lutherans bind themselves to the entire Book of Concord; some confess only the ecumenical creeds, the Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism. There are variations among those who accept the entire Book of Concord: Some regard the Augsburg Confession as the primary confession and see the others as subordinate to it; others regard the different confessions as having equal weight; yet others see the Formula of Concord as the spectacles through which



LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko.
© LWF/H. Putsman

the entire book of confessions must be read.”

There are many reasons for this diversity within one confessional family. Firstly, Lutheran unity was not only needed, it was a task that had to be embarked on. Thus the formation of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as a global body was welcomed as an achievement. While the LWF is considered as the most privileged instrument of Lutheran unity, there are, however, over 3.5 million Lutherans outside the LWF fellowship. As an instrument for joint mission and diakonia, the LWF brings a Lutheran contribution into the global scene in a way that no single church could do on its own. It is an instrument for ecumenical engagement, pulling together the strength of small and big Lutheran churches into the

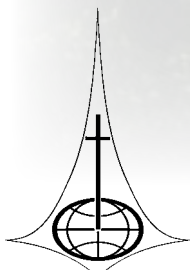
wider ecumenical arena in dialogue with other Christian world communions in search of Christian unity.

In the 60 years of its existence, the LWF has traveled a road that its founders could not have charted. On this journey together, we believe to have been guided by Christ, who walked ahead on a road unknown to us. Looking back now, we recognize the grace and compassion with which we have been guided to the point where we currently find ourselves—at the spot of our foundation for the 60th anniversary celebration. We realize that more important than the places we visited and the things we did along the way, were those with whom we traveled, and above all, the guide we followed, Jesus Christ.

The various voices represented in this special edition of the *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* dedicated to the LWF’s 60th anniversary, are not only good reading, but also point to the challenges and achievements of Lutheran churches as participants in God’s mission in the world.

Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko
General Secretary
The Lutheran World Federation

¹ Warren A. Quanbeck, *The Ecumenical Role of the LWF*, in Lutheran World. (LWF Publication Vol. 24.1977. No. 4) p. 398–399.



Anniversaries provide an opportunity to consider the events of the past, present, and future. The interdepartmental editing team of this LWI special issue agreed to honor the past by making space for the present and future. This thus begins with an evaluation of the current situation: The LWI editors asked Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Council members, youth representatives, and leaders of LWF member churches and Lutheran church institutions to answer the question: “Where are we now?”—as the LWF and as a communion of churches.

Chile: Minority Churches Celebrate the 60th Anniversary of LWF Founding

With great joy, we in this part of the world—Chile—are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). This is taking place in a continent that was colonized by Spain—or, in the case of Brazil, by Portugal—and in which the Roman Catholic Church has been dominant for nearly 500 years. The Lutheran churches of our continent are minority churches, especially since Lutheranism has been placed in connection here with piracy, Satanism, and excommunication since the beginning of the European conquest in the 16th century.



Rev. Dr. Gloria Rojas
© R. Covarrubias

We have begun the 21st century with much greater tolerance, in harmony with the Protestant and Catho-

lic world, and with much greater responsibility for and dedication to ecumenism.

The LWF’s support, fellowship, orientation, and guidance are very important to us as Lutheran Christians and as minority churches. At the same time, our life and faith experiences in a commitment to the poor and marginalized are recognized as prophetic voices that further our mutual relations and support in this globalized world. We ask God to keep and preserve our common unity in Christ Jesus.

Rev. Dr. Gloria Rojas is president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile, and moderator of the Latin American Lutheran church leadership body, COL.

Resolving Theological Controversies Remains a Challenge

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has been playing a very important role for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania. After the fall of the Soviet regime we were supported spiritually and mutually in the process of recovering. Under the Iron Curtain, we were blessed, and felt the unity and catholicity of the Lutheran family, in the same way as we do now.



Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis
© ELCL

Being members of Lutheran family today, we face similar challenges to those of our sister churches worldwide. Theological con-

troversies seem to be essentially a problem for *communio* today and in the future, and nobody seems to provide answers and solutions to solve them. This makes the future perspectives of the LWF very doubtful. We are challenged to remember again: *solus Christus, sola Scriptura* and *sola gratia*.

Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis heads the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania. He is a member of the LWF Task Force on Family, Marriage and Human Sexuality.

An Opportunity to Celebrate Our Common Witness

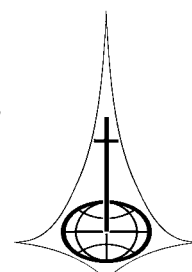
I have been involved in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) since I prepared to serve as a delegate to the 2003 Tenth Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada, where I was elected as a Youth Council member. In the Council meetings we have wrestled with several issues including conversations about biblical interpretation, the involvement of women and youth in decision-making processes and the impact of language barriers. In our efforts to faithfully live out the Assembly’s vision and commitments, we have also struggled with difficult decisions about financial stewardship, and lower levels of



Ms. Abigail Zang Hoffman
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support from many member churches who themselves are faced with shrinking membership and financial difficulties.

As the LWF grows into being a communion of churches, we are challenged to think about how our unity in baptism and our shared confessional commitments impact our response to the many issues confronting our churches. I have been blessed to be a part of our visible witness in the world as Lutheran Christians. The 60th anniversary offers an opportunity to celebrate our common life and witness, even as we acknowledge that we are still



in the process of becoming the full prophetic voice God is calling us to be.

Ms Abigail Zang Hoffman is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Intern Pastor of

Bethany Lutheran Church in Elmira, New York, USA. She is a youth member of the LWF Council on the Program Committee for Mission and Development.

Latin America and Caribbean Speaks Out on Illegitimate Foreign Debt

Asking ourselves where we stand today is, without a doubt, of great use, as it allows us to stop along the way to think about and confirm what we have achieved and what still needs to be done. The work of the Lutheran World Federation has indisputably led to considerable progress on a variety of issues affecting the member churches.

This is borne out by our region, Latin America and the Caribbean, which has joined forces to strengthen its presence on issues such as the illegitimate foreign debt of poor countries.

This became possible through the opening that has



Mr Alfonso Corzo Garcia
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arisen for our churches, as the church leaders of our region have contributed significantly to both regional and global work, particularly in regard to illegitimate foreign debt.

We must nevertheless seriously consider what it truly means to be a “communion of churches” that enables young people to have more freedom to play an active role in these processes.

Alfonso Corzo Garcia, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia, is a member of the LWF Council and the Program Committee

for Mission and Development.

We Must Be Bold, Brave to Perceive New Challenges

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”
(Isaiah 43:19).

What is it that God has in store for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) at this historic moment? We are now at a time of reflection inwardly and outwardly. As a communion of churches the LWF sincerely endeavors for this communion to be inclusive and diverse, to be relevant and mission centered.

The gospel of the Good News continues to call us to renewal in order to perceive that there is much more to do. We are now at a stage where Christian unity should be much more visible in order



Ms Angelene Swart
© LWF/B. Schneider

to continue the quest for a just and more equal world dispensation.

The LWF is in a position to be a strong initiator toward a closer unified Christian witness to address the glaring and growing economic disparities resulting in global poverty and social problems, which are indeed ongoing challenges for the church. We are ready for the new thing God has prepared for us, it has already sprung up, and we must be bold and brave to perceive the great new challenges!

LWF Council member Ms Angelene H. Swart is president of the Moravian Church in South Africa. She is chairperson of the 11th Assembly Planning Committee.

Let Us Continue to Deepen the Communion of Accompaniment

To be Lutheran and to live in communion in today’s fragmented, broken world is to walk in the theology and practice of accompaniment. I believe we have evolved from a federation of churches into churches who view one another as equal partners, each one bringing its own gifts, challenges and perspectives. We have truly begun to understand that the suffering of one is the suffering of all, and the joy of one is the joy of all. Let us continue to deepen this communion of accompaniment.

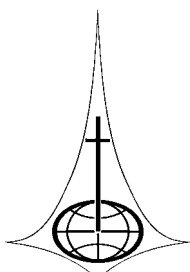
We all come out of our own histories of church and state, woven together with nation-



Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan
© LWF/H. Putsman

alism, colonialism and patriotism, to name just a few influences that promote individual and national interests more than communion. In the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), we work to strengthen each other individually and corporately, as we walk together—equal partners along the road in witness to God’s justice, peace, reconciliation and healing, in order to be the salt in our world.

Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan heads the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. He is LWF vice president for the Asia region.



Meeting Local, Regional and Global Challenges

From an outside perspective, Western Europe's Evangelical Lutheran churches may seem to vary to a great degree. While some are constituted more as state churches or traditional churches, others function as free churches; liturgies and liturgical robes may differ; and the churches can maintain different views on their social and diaconal mission. We are all, however, united in our rootedness in Holy Scripture when it comes to understanding, correcting, and molding our own lives, and the lives of our churches, societies, and politics.



Bishop Maria Jepsen
© A. Laible

In my view, it is essential that we put multilateral ecumenism into practice, thus profiling our own Lutheran traditions in an exchange with other social and religious movements.

We must meet our challenges at the local, regional, and global levels, seeking answers from within the

biblical message, and if necessary, parting from many familiar and comfortable practices.

It is our task to put Gal 3:28 into practice, and not just half-heartedly and in part, for the sake of our lives together in church and society. Only then can we discuss structural matters. This is often the other way around in current practice.

The synod of the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church elected Maria Jepsen as bishop of the Diocese of Hamburg in April 1992, making her the world's first Lutheran woman bishop. She was confirmed for a further ten years as bishop in 2002. She is a member of the LWF Council, on the Program Committee for Mission and Development.

Learning from Each Other Brings Hope

The past 60 years have been a period of transformation in the mission of the church. The context of its witness is radically different from the challenges of the post-World War II era. The requirements for the growth to independence in the life of the churches, previously dominated by Northern agencies, have produced new structures which better reflect the vision of the body of Christ in the New Testament.

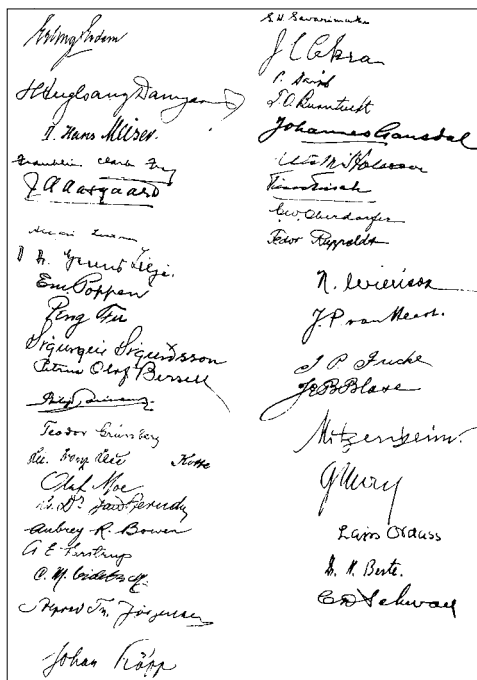


Rev. Dr. Seppo Rissanen
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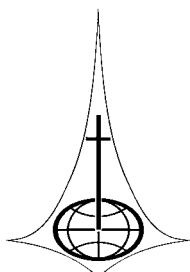
The life of the Lutheran communion has been transformed into a new kind of interdependence to help the churches in their struggle against the dehumanizing impacts

of economical globalization. Consequently, the structures of mission co-operation have been transformed to meet these challenges. The process is not finished. Churches all over the world are looking for ways to witness together in all directions and all conditions. The churches in the North are now learning from the insights of the churches in the South. This brings more hope to all of us.

Rev. Dr. Seppo Rissanen is executive director of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission.



Original signatures to the LWF
Constitution at the 1947 founding of the
Federation, Lund, Sweden. © LWF



CHALLENGES FOR THE COMMUNION An Inclusive Communion?

A global church communion is confronted with countless challenges. The editing team chose seven areas for discussion, the first of which poses the question: "What does it mean to be an inclusive communion? Two authors, Bishop Eero Huovinen (Finland) and Rev. Susan Johnson (Canada) present their thoughts on this as members of the LWF Council.

Line M. Skum of Norway's Sámi Church Council writes on the topic "Overcoming Differences," coming to the conclusion that we can only make progress if we accept the fact that these differences exist. And the feature on the LWF country program in India explains exactly how differences can be overcome. Further reflections, features, and stories fill out the other five topics: "From Participation to Ownership," "Diakonia and Communion," "Humanitarian Aid in an Ecumenical and Interfaith Context," "Toward a Holistic Understanding of Mission," and "Lutheran Theology in the Life of the Church."

An Inclusive Communion – The Temptation of Exclusiveness

The basic human temptation is to exclude ourselves and break away from both God and other people.

While praying for his disciples, was Jesus Christ aware of human temptation and the goals set by the Prince of Darkness? "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:21)

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the entire ecumenical movement were created out of a desire to be faithful to Christ's prayer. We have all painfully experienced the temptation of exclusiveness. Faithfulness to Christ's will is challenged each day, at home and in society, among family and with strangers, in the church and in the world. It is particularly challenging to remember Christ's prayer when we meet sisters and brothers with ideas and beliefs that are different from ours.

The Sacrament of Baptism forms the genesis and basis of a Christian's spiritual life, drawing us into communion, as it joins us to Christ and makes us like him. Communion with Christ is the paradoxical communion of suffering and hope. The temptations of our old self are crucified on the cross "with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. [...] "But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him (Rom 6: 6–8)."

The fellowship among the LWF member churches comes forth and materializes at the altar and pulpit. The Word and Sacraments are not only the formal principles of our confession. God joins us to Christ's body through them.

Communion Is God's Gift of Love

We do not create communion with God through our own spiritual gifts or moral



At the 2003 LWF Tenth Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada, participants respond to a youth appeal for openness in the fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic. © LWF/D. Zimmermann

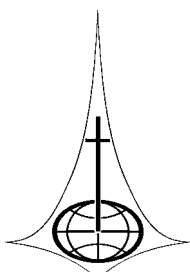
achievements. Fellowship with God and other people is given as a gift. Modern Trinitarian theology states that the most fundamental element of being is communion, which is realized through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in interaction and love. Human beings, as the image of God, are created to live in communion with one another and partake of God's love.

Martin Luther speaks of creation as the community of love, where each creature is meant to serve the other. The apostle Paul describes the church as the body where the various members join as one entity (1 Cor 12:12–27). Christ is the head that holds the body together (Eph 4:15–16). He joins various people from different countries and nations into one church. In this common body, each member shares the others' pains and aches. "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it (1 Cor 12:26)."

In the globalized world where welfare is starkly dichotomized, we can no longer shun away from the needs of others. Talk about faith working out as love is hollow



Bishop Dr. Eero Huovinen
© LWF/H. Putsman



speech indeed, unless we share our spiritual and material goods with those who still lack them. Christian witness in the world depends upon this communion of love. The LWF's nature of *communio* must not remain only a form of organizational lip service, but must be seen in the churches' lives and mutual relationships.

Through its activities over the past 60 years, the LWF has manifested the goal of drawing people to the Holy Trinity. Ecumenical work has progressed with great

strides, which the delegates gathered in Lund, Sweden, in 1947 would hardly have imagined. The new millennium has, however, brought serious and new challenges. Amidst these challenges, Christ's prayer reminds us of both the source and goal of Christian unity.

Rev. Dr Eero Huovinen is the Bishop of the Diocese of Helsinki, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. He is LWF vice president for the Nordic Countries, and a member of the LWF Program Committee for Ecumenical Affairs.

An Inclusive Communion? Encountering Our Hope and Challenge

At the heart of God is relationship—a reality most perfectly expressed in the communion between the three persons of the Trinity; a triune God who yearns to experience a similar communion with us, between us, and with the entire creation. How are we, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) faring as we grow into our understanding of what it means to be a communion of churches?



Former LWF vice president, the late Rev. Dr Prasanna Kumari (1950-2006), during celebrations to mark the signing of the Joint Declaration in St Anna Church, Augsburg, Germany, in October 1999. © LWF/K. Wieckhorst

A sign of the health of any organization is how well it incorporates all members—particularly those who are new—into its life and work. How well are we doing at incorporating all of the LWF members?

There are many positive signs that we are becoming a more inclusive communion. We continue to welcome new member churches. We also see an increasing participation of women and youth in the life of our communion of churches. In addition, we have made enormous strides in our relationships with other Christian world communions (CWCs). The 1999 signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification and the serious consideration of joint ecumenical assemblies are but two signs of that increasing closeness.



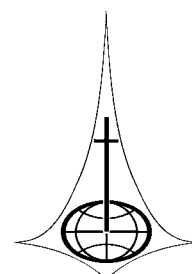
*Rev. Susan C. Johnson
© ELCA/K. Gastmeier*

Still, there are many signs indicating that we are not as inclusive as we might think we are or hope to be. The fact that we still have “quotas” for women and youth delegates for the LWF Assembly—it is difficult to meet quotas—indicates that there is not yet full and equal participation within the communion's life. We also have not achieved the goal set for women in executive staff positions within the LWF secretariat. It remains an unfortunate reality that not all of our member churches ordain women.

Although we are making significant progress in working together with other CWCs, the LWF is not moving as fast in this regard as in many of the regions, where member churches have an increasing number of full communion and other collaborative ecumenical relationships. Indeed, we are experiencing pressure from within to seek affiliation with a worldwide ecumenical movement rather than a single churchwide communion.

Is it possible that we might have structural systems that make it difficult for us to be an inclusive communion? As an LWF Assembly or Council, we decide the direction and priorities of our work together. Funding realities dictate, however, that much of our budget is met with designated funds from churches and diaconal agencies in the North. Sadly, if no particular church or agency shows interest in sponsoring a project or program, it has to wait. Is there an inequality in the way we make decisions? This reality becomes more complicated as many North American and European member churches experience decreasing financial resources at precisely the same time as the LWF's increasing need for funding.

The current work of the Task Force on Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality similarly identifies another area where our communion struggles with inclusivity. What is the place of gays and lesbians within the life of our churches? How do we as member



churches work together in the communion when we have such varied understandings on doctrine and practice?

Are we an inclusive communion? I suppose the honest answer is both yes and no. Fortunately, the God who calls us into communion continues to work

in and through us to achieve this goal. In this truth we encounter both our hope and our challenge.

Rev. Susan C. Johnson is Assistant to the Bishop of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. She is an LWF Council adviser on the Program Committee for Theology and Studies.

Overcoming Differences

Why an Indigenous People's Program?

When one deals with differences in a respectful way, they can, instead of being an obstacle or a source of conflict, provide enrichment, development, renewal and enhance what it means to be a diverse fellowship of Christ.



Chief Morris Shannaccappo, Rolling River First Nation, shakes hands with Canadian Lutheran Bishop Richard Smith during a hearing on Indigenous Peoples at the 2003 LWF Tenth Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada. © LWF/D. Zimmermann

Since the 2003 Tenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Winnipeg, Canada, indigenous communities have worked in a constructive way to establish an Indigenous Peoples' program within the LWF. The Assembly mandated¹ *The LWF and its member churches ... to support a process at the national, regional and international levels of protecting human rights of indigenous people, including land rights.*"

Are indigenous people that different from others that they need an own program within the LWF? Not only do indigenous communities face specific challenges today, they also hold wisdom and knowledge that can both enrich and even correct particularly Western theological thinking in a

context where the Earth is seriously threatened by climatic change and over exploitation.

The September 2006 LWF consultation on "An Indigenous Communion" in Karasjok, Norway, identified three major concerns for an LWF program on indigenous people—²human rights and land rights; networking through regional and international consultations and exchange programs; and the need for a theological and ethical study (gospel and culture) and indigenous spirituality.

The relationship with the land represents both a source of identity and a way to define how human beings relate to the Earth, to each other and to God. This worldview differs from a Western worldview whereby humans are considered as superior. A holistic worldview represents a hope for the future, with all creation depending on the Earth for survival, and human beings caring for this God-given planet.

Networking through consultations and exchange programs is important in highlighting indigenous peoples' issues, which might not fit



*Ms Line M. Skum
© LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch*

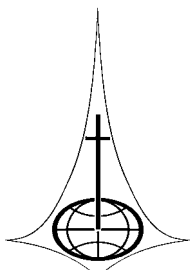
in the mainstream challenges of many churches around the world. Within the Church of Norway, for example, the Sami people come together and define their own hopes and dreams for the church and for the future. These arenas represent a source of development for new theological approaches toward church work.

Overcoming differences entails acceptance that there *are* differences, and that diversity can be a dynamic force in making the body of Christ whole.

Ms Line M. Skum is a member of the Sami Church Council, Church of Norway.

¹ *For the Healing of the World. Official Report. LWF Tenth Assembly, Winnipeg, Canada, 21–31 July 2003* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2004) p.67.

² *Final message from the LWF September 2006 consultation on "An Indigenous Communion" in Karasjok, Norway:*
www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/OIAHR/Documentation/Karasjok_Statement-2006.pdf



The Two Faces of India

In the 60th year of India's independence two distinct "Indias" are emerging. One exhibits impressive economic growth characterized by a flourishing corporate sector among other indicators. The second India, is that of the rural setting and urban slums, where the majority of the poor live.

The country's estimated population of 1.5 billion people includes an estimated more than 200 million people who subsist on less than one US dollar a day. Their children do not go to school; those enrolled in schools often do not complete primary schooling. Access to healthcare is minimal. The National Family Health Survey III- 2006 (NFHS III) shows that 79.2 percent of children between 6 and 35 months are anemic.

In the name of development and industrialization the rural poor, among them the tribal people and Dalits are being marginalized. In the last few years Orissa province in the northeast witnessed several violent demonstrations by tribal people whose land was being acquired for setting up large-scale industries. Less than 150 kilometers from Kolkata, in two different locations, farmers are protesting against the government's decision to acquire prime agricultural land to set up a car factory and a special economic zone. Several thousand farmers, who know no other occupation, will be uprooted.

Dispossessed, Discriminated

Women are subjected to many forms of discrimination, from the time of conception to death. Giving and receiving dowry is illegal, but the practice is present in almost every social group. Violence against women, particularly domestic violence is a major problem. According to NFHS III-2006 a "substantial proportion



A women's group supported by LWF/DWS India, work at their vegetable farm in Birbhum district, West Bengal. © LWF/DWS India/A. Huber

of married women reported that they have been abused, physically or sexually by their husbands at some point in their lives."

Dalits who occupy the lowest rung of the Hindu caste hierarchy are considered untouchables and are victims of caste-based discrimination, violence, exploitation, and torture. Legislation bans discrimination on the basis of caste or descent but crimes against Dalits continue, with the women doubly discriminated against on the basis of caste and gender.

Tribal communities occupy mineral-rich regions and mining is cutting them off from agriculture and other traditional forms of livelihood based on collection and sale of minor forest produce. In Orissa and elsewhere, many of them work as daily-wage laborers in mines where they are exploited and exposed to occupational health hazards. Their distinct culture, identity and social integrity are threatened.

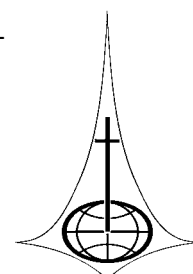
Increasing Empowerment

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service program in India works with the most vulnerable and marginalized rural communities, mostly tribal and scheduled castes or Dalits. Its activities in 2006 involved some 2,100 communities through over 4,000 community-based non-governmental organizations and groups representing around 95,000 households, with a population of 500,000 people.

The focus is on creating conditions for people to work together for a better life, a life with dignity, with emphasis on self-reliance. The right-based approach to raise the people's political awareness and deepen their understanding of their own human rights. Issues addressed include gender justice, promotion of micro credit groups, sustainable agriculture and education.



A community-based disaster preparedness meeting underway in a Dalit village in Tamil Nadu, India. © LWF/DWS India/R. Chunder



In February 2006, over 400 women, from LWF/DWS India partner communities contested in local government (Panchayat) elections, something that even a few years ago, would not have elicited great interest in these marginalized communities. The results have not been announced, but whether many from the DWS-supported communities win or not, they would have made a political statement that they want to influence the processes and decision-making structures, that control or shape their lives.



Mr Neville Pradhan
© LWF/H. Putsman

In Orissa's iron-ore rich district of Keonjhar, whose population comprises nearly 45 percent tribal people, an LWF-supported federation of 60 communities recently protested against the establishment of an iron processing plant there, despite the investor's attempted offers of money and job promises.

These are but a few examples. We are confident that our work empowers the poor in the struggle to secure their right to life with dignity.

Mr Neville Pradhan is director of the LWF/DWS program in India.

From Participation to Ownership

Survival of Lutheran Communion Demands Greater Investment in Leadership Development

Church membership statistics in the global Lutheran communion show declining numbers in the North and increasing numbers in the South. If this trend continues, the majority of Lutherans in the not too distant future will be in the developing world, with Africa probably having the highest numbers. This was not the case 60 years ago when the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was founded in Lund, Sweden.

In view of this North to South shift, how does the global Lutheran communion position the churches in the global south for leadership? What are the structures that need to put in place for leadership formation in order to strengthen and renew the communion? Currently, most of the Lutheran churches in Africa are facing leadership crises. The survival of the Lutheran communion demands greater investment in leadership development including theological education.

Closely related to the leadership issue is the perception of the LWF by its member churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite their poor representation in Lund in 1947, today, the churches in the South do not shy away from claim-



Rt Rev. Dr Ambrose Moyo
© LWF/S. Lim

ing their right to be a part of the LWF communion. Affirming these churches' visible participation in the Lutheran communion calls for reflection about their contribution to the LWF's governing structures in order to strengthen the Federation's role as an ecumenical instrument for the whole communion.

Last but not least, how do we as a communion meaningfully involve our weaker members in drafting the LWF's agenda? And how do we empower one another so that all voices are given equal weight regardless of their numerical or financial strengths?

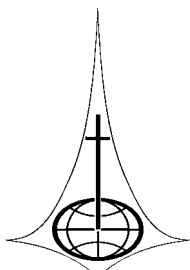
We need to reflect further on how our decision-making structures can create more space for the meaningful participation of all members in processes that determine the communion's agenda and priorities. We are called to listen to one another and ensure that no one is left behind.

Rt Rev. Dr Ambrose Moyo is the executive director of the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa-LUCSA, and a member of the LWF Standing Committee for World Service. He is a former bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe.

Tanzania: From Beneficiaries to Owners and Change-Makers

Before his enrolment in the community empowerment training program implemented by the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS) in Ngara district, western Tanzania, Hamenya M. Bitendeza considered himself as belonging to the neglected lot in Kasange village. "Never before had I been listened to or been involved in any decision-making process about our

community's affairs. Now, the facilitator has trained us to critically assess our situation and ask how we can use the resources at our disposal to get out of the vicious circle of poverty. I realize that I, like everyone else, have something to contribute, to the betterment of myself, family, village and country as a whole," he says.



Village leaders are also undergoing their own empowerment training, which according to Bitendeza, has significant impact. “They are already changing their attitude toward poor people like me. They are gradually listening to us, appreciating, respecting and recognizing our potential. Indeed, I have been enabled to know my rights and responsibilities; I have more confidence in myself than ever before,” he explains.

“Our dignity is gaining pace, as we join our colleagues, not only in offering our labor, like before, but also in devising and revisiting our village plans, setting new priorities and implementing them in a genuine participatory, transparent and accountable manner,” he adds.



TCRS staff share information with a group of refugees. © LWF/DWS Tanzania/J. Stephens

The 60th anniversary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is an opportunity to address some of the challenges facing a communion whose pioneer humanitarian work among refugees in Europe after World War II has evolved into long-term development work aimed at empowering people like Bitendeza and other marginalized communities especially in developing countries.

Established in 1964 as the then Tanganyika country program of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS), the TCRS has evolved to become an autonomous national non-governmental organization (NGO) in January 2006. Through its work among the vulnerable poor people, internally displaced persons, refugees and disadvantaged communities, the TCRS has assisted over 2 million people, about half of who are refugees and the rest Tanzanians.



Mr Mark Leveri, TCRS director © TCRS

As peace stabilizes in the neighboring countries of East Africa’s Great Lakes region, the prospects of continuing decline in refugee population are quite high. The TCRS takes this phenomenal reduction of refugees in as a challenge for its future involvement in the country. The current TCRS Country Strategy Outline 2004–2008 embodies a critical change from the traditional service provision approach to a participatory approach—the community empowerment approach, in both Tanzanian and refugee community interventions.

The TCRS Community Empowerment Programs cover 80 villages in the refugee-impacted western districts of Kibondo, Ngara and Karagwe, and the economically-distressed districts of Kilwa and Morogoro Rural in the east.

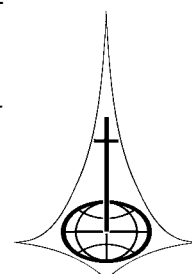
Participatory surveys are carried out to identify the poorest, vulnerable and marginalized individuals and groups. Findings from the surveys indicate that the poorest, marginalized and vulnerable people have to a great extent been isolated, hidden and forgotten in all community endeavors. It is also evident that marginalization to a large extent, is brought about by lack of knowledge in a very general sense, which for the community members, results in ignorance about their rights as citizens. The participatory surveys have also revealed that poverty among the marginalized is more extreme than previously perceived. It is

also evident that most of the development institutions, while seemingly promoting community participation, have ended up increasing the burden of the marginalized groups by choosing activities that were not based on a careful analysis of the target group’s needs.

For development initiatives to be meaningful, relevant and sustainable long after the exit of external support, the target groups must be taken through a process that enables them to appreciate their responsibility as owners of any given program or project.

Shifting of emphasis from participation to ownership is the most appropriate and rational approach that will make development projects more sustainable and enhance partnerships between communities and other development partners.

Mr Mark Leveri is the TCRS director.



Diakonia Is Not Optional

Diakonia is not optional. It is an indispensable part of the mission of the Church. Sharing and serving are basic elements locally and globally in the Lutheran communion.

Solidarity can be organized in many different ways—inside or outside the church structures. Diaconal institutions, insurance companies, mutual support organizations, systems based on sharing between generations in extended families, and elaborate welfare systems, are, but some examples. Social services organized outside church structures are of no less value or importance, as long as they are based on deep respect for human need and dignity. The social worker who provides for the disabled, the immigrants' family, the refugee or the elderly, is an expression of the extended work of God's service to humankind. As Lutherans, we have a special contribution in encouraging individuals and society to take up social issues and social responsibility seriously.

But there is an added dimension to the diakonia of churches. Many of the institution-based social service systems stipulate a set of conditions,



Ms Margareta Grape
© J. Elfström/IKON

clearly defining who can qualify as a beneficiary. Insurance thus becomes available only to those who pay their fees, family-based systems are limited to family members, while state-based welfare systems are only extended to citizens, and so on.

The churches are called to serve unconditionally. The prophetic role of diakonia must be a sign of the unconditional extension of God's love. God's creation is one, and God's healing love is extended to all, regardless of citizenship, faith, color or membership. The churches' diaconal work cannot, however, replace or be a substitute for the social responsibility of governments or municipalities. It is a sign of hope, dignity and reconciliation in the global village.

Amidst the divided and polarized forms of globalization that we experience today, diakonia remains a powerful public prophetic witness of the meaning of God's boundless inclusion of all into his love. There can be no real communion if diakonia is absent.

Ms Margareta Grape is the Church of Sweden Director for Foreign Affairs.

Lutheran Communion Plays Important Role in Transforming the World

What does belonging to the worldwide Lutheran communion mean for the Lutheran Church of Rwanda (LCR)?

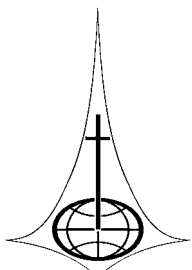
Through my childhood experiences as a Rwandan refugee in refugee camps run by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its partners in Tanzania, I was exposed to the realities of poverty and the desire to assist people during emergencies. Having witnessed the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the transition period toward repatriation, resettlement, peace-building and sustainable development makes it easy for me to write what I saw with my naked eyes as diaconal work that embraces an ecumenical approach.

The LWF's work has challenged and inspired the LCR to integrate the gospel in the church's daily life. It is clear for us that we should not take for granted the role of the Lutheran communion in transforming the world. Moreover, those of us, who have experienced this trans-

formation, have an obligation to become agents of this new world and to uphold the values of God's kingdom. We endeavor to live up to our commitment to work toward a new Rwanda, transformed by promoting the



A community member offers closing prayers at a health self-help project activity in Kibungo district, Rwanda, in September 2006. © LWF/M. Filibus



dignity and basic rights of all people, and providing resources to enable the poor to improve their quality of life.

An example is the LCR's work with members of the Mumeya community in Kirehe district, southeast Rwanda. Drawing from the practical example of the LWF's own holistic approach, the community members are contributing their different skills and expertise to building a health clinic. This approach is part of the LCR's broad understanding of its life



Rev. John Rutsindintwarane
© Private

and work as a witness and service to the broken world.

Still, Rwanda's Lutheran church needs to get out of its comfort zones by engaging young women in the country's process of healing and reconciliation. We appeal to the Lutheran communion to continue to accompany Rwandans in the healing journey.

Rev. John Rutsindintwarane is general secretary of the Lutheran Church of Rwanda.

Czech Republic: "Why Do You See Value in My Father's Life?"

Society in the Czech Republic is considered to be the most secular in Europe. It would be wrong to say that this situation is the result of Communist rule only. Forty years of totalitarian regime also played a significant role in weakening the church's position in society. The Communists knew how to do it: The church was not allowed to enter the public sphere. It was forbidden for the church to teach children at school, practice social care in diaconal and social-care establishments or run other charitable organizations. This started around the year 1950. People had gradually forgotten and, two generations on, it was hard for anyone to imagine that there could be an alternative to state-only schools, hospitals and social-care establishments.

"The Church? Does it still exist?" answered a young man to a question during a television program on the church's role in society.

The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB), with over 106,700 members is the second largest church in the Czech Republic after the Roman Catholic Church. However, its membership is only about 1 percent of the population. Despite that, the church re-established its diaconal (social service) institutions as soon as it was possible in 1989. Different social work activities were gradually developed and, to date, around 1,000 people work for ECCB Diaconia. Many of the employees are neither ECCB members nor members of any other church. Conse-



A moment of care, thanks to Diaconia ECCB
© Diaconia ECCB

quently, we are asked questions and there are questions that we ask ourselves—"Are we a church organization at all? Are we any different from other care-giving organizations? Do we follow any 'minimal standards' that would give us the right to boldly proclaim that we are a Christian organization?"

Some personal stories provide some of the answers: A middle-aged woman who had never heard about the church was amazed that it was there also for her—Diaconia cares for her father, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. She admits that she may not understand what is preached in church, but she understands that the church is there to help her and her father in a very difficult situation. She has noticed that there is

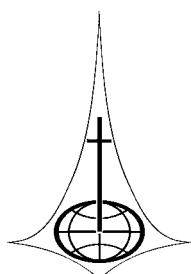
something special about the care providers' approach, something she has never thought about herself—the worthiness of a human being. It used to be the norm in our society to see the elderly, weak and handicapped people as dispensable. The woman then asks, "Why is it that you see a value in my father's life and I cannot? What makes you see it?"

If *Diaconia* serves faithfully where there is need of care, and if it makes people want to ask questions, then it would not be an overstatement to maintain that *Diaconia* is the outstretched hand of the church toward society.

Ms Eva Grollova is vice-director of ECCB Diaconia.



Ms. Eva Grollova, director of ECCB Diaconia © Diaconia ECCB



Accountability Is a Key Yardstick

Today, humanitarian organizations including faith-based organizations like the ecumenical initiative, Action by Churches Together (ACT International), work within a rapidly changing and fast developing context.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and World Council of Churches created ACT International in 1995.



Mr John Nduna (center) on his first field visit to Indonesia as director of ACT International in 2006. © ACT International

Holding up the tradition of justice and solidarity with the poor, or citing the first principle of the Code of Conduct¹ that the humanitarian imperative comes first, are not enough to justify our humanitarian response within this context. Accountability—whether to the people we assist, our own constituencies, and to those that fund our work—is a key yardstick in all that we do.

One of the many challenges facing those who respond to humanitarian need today, and one of the biggest challenges especially for the faith-based humanitarian community, is the increasing visibility of fundamentalist evangelical Christians in humanitarian assistance.

Dr Elizabeth Ferris writes that this is a challenge because the evangelising aspects of their humanitarian work often affect all Christian organizations, and that in spite of sharing a common faith tradition, they often work in different ways.²

This challenge is especially problematic within an interfaith context. The members of ACT International, with their historical church-based roots in local communities, often respond to disasters and emergencies

in a wide-ranging interfaith context in the Middle East, South and South East Asia, and in parts of Africa.

As a signatory to the Code of Conduct, ACT has committed itself to upholding the principles (and annexes) that guide its response to humanitarian disasters and emergencies through its 128 members around the world. Understanding that the code is open to interpretation and at best a guide for the willing, it does however underscore the principle that aid will not be used to further religious standpoints.

Ferris writes that in early 2005, press reports in Indonesia that evangelical groups were trying to bring the gospel as well as relief to Muslims affected by the tsunami, led to the questioning and criticism of the work of all Christians. “For this reason, the Council of Churches in Indonesia issued a strong statement, disassociating itself from evangelical groups working in tsunami-affected areas and emphasising its respect for the religious beliefs of all those assisted.”³

As part of its accountability measures to the communities its staff were assisting, ACT member Yayasan Tanggul Bencana di Indonesia had the Code of Conduct translated into two local languages, Bahasa and Nias, to enable people remind themselves and those that assist them of their rights as rights’ holders in this unusual way.

On the occasion of LWF Sunday in 2006, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, pointed out that one of the benchmarks of the “Lutheran communion is an unwavering commitment to promote justice, community, the concepts and practices of inclusiveness, and mutual accompaniment through the sharing of resources.”⁴

It is the same spirit that underpins the vision and mission of ACT, which states that called to manifest God’s love for all people, the ACT alliance works in cooperation with others, respects human dignity and restores livelihoods and communities affected by disasters and humanitarian crises, regardless of race, gender, belief, nationality, ethnic origin or political persuasion.

It is about accountability in the spirit of Christian service, with the recognition and understanding that we do not work alone and that we value the gifts of all people of good will.

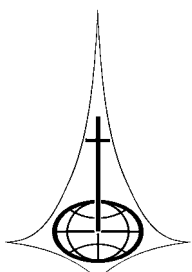
Mr John Nduna, director of ACT International and Ms Callie Long, ACT communication officer, contributed this article.

¹ Principles of the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief.

² Dr Elizabeth Ferris, “Faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations,” *International Review of the Red Cross*, Volume 87, Number 585 June 2005. p 323–324.

³ Dr Elizabeth Ferris, *Ibid*

⁴ Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, LWF Sunday 2006, *Living in Communion*.



Minority Return in the Balkans – Enduring Challenge

Amel Gutlić was born in Bosanski Petrovac, Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1971, the first of eight children in his family. The Bosnian war forced the family to flee their home and seek refuge in Travnik, Bosnia, where they remained until the end of 1995. With their own house burned to the ground, the family resorted to rental accommodation. Gutlić had to provide not only for his wife and daughter, but also for his three younger siblings. Wounded during the war, he suffered a permanent kidney damage, which limits his working ability.

Although registered with the unemployment bureau since 1996, he only found occasional summer jobs with construction companies, which helped meet the family's costs for rent, food and education. The Balkans regional program of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) and local authorities realized the family's need for urgent assistance.

With generous help from relatives and community members, the Gutlić family has used the LWF-donated materials to reconstruct their house. During a monitoring visit, LWF/DWS Balkans staff persons were happily accommodated in the comfort of the family's new home.

The LWF/DWS program in the Balkans has shared the responsibility of assisting refugees and displaced persons with the international community and the national governments since the outbreak of crises in Croatia and Bosnia in 1992, and Kosovo in 1999. The last 15 years were focussed on working beyond the ethnic boundaries with the needy war-affected populations. The context has multiple challenges such as assisting nearly 20,000 families from all ethnic groups and minorities in the Balkans to return to their pre-war homes in Bosnia (10,000), Croatia (4,500) and Kosovo (4,500).

While return is relatively possible to achieve these days, a sustainable return is less so. Security and personal safety, formal employment, access to social and health services, and education constitute the basic factors for a sustainable return and life with dignity. The evidence that speaks about discrimination against minorities in the Balkans countries, primarily in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo can be easily traced in public institutions



*The Gutlić family in front of their newly-built home, January 2007.
© LWF/DWS Balkans*

and services which employ none or few persons belonging to minority groups. What further exacerbates the tension and deepens the ethnic divide in such closed communities is the ethnically-biased school curriculum, which often discourages families from returning to their pre-war communities.

An integrated approach to programming enabled the DWS Balkans to achieve high occupancy rates and, most importantly, sustainability of return. Large-scale rehabilitation projects are complemented through the provision of agriculture inputs, social development assistance by working with women, children and youth, as well as much needed inter-ethnic mediation and peace and reconciliation efforts, which all together add to the LWF's value and impact in the region.

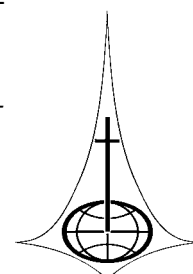
The competence of the LWF in the Balkans has secured the DWS regional program an outstanding reputation that has attracted donors concerned with the minority return issues such as Church of Sweden, FinnChurchAid, Church Development Service – EED (Germany), Swedish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (SIDA), and the United Nations Development Program in Kosovo (UNDP) among others.

The LWF's involvement in the volatile Balkans region is another proof that it takes no less than the joint effort and synergy to stand with the people affected by humanitarian and other forms of crises.

Ms Leila Dzaferovic is the regional program coordinator, LWF/DWS Balkans.



*Ms Leila Dzaferovic
© LWF/DWS Balkans*



Church's Mission Must Be Multidimensional and Holistic

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) document on mission, *Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment – An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission* presents the mission of the church as:

- participation in the mission of the Triune God involving diakonia, proclamation and dialogue; and
- flowing from the being of the church—worshipping, messenger, serving, healing and oikumene community—thus encompassing proclamation, service and advocacy for justice.



Rev. Dr Péri Rasolondraibe
© LWF/H. Putsman

person – spiritual, mental, relational, physical, and environmental needs) as well as interpersonal needs. The practice of mission is also holistic,² as it calls for the participation of the whole church, women and men, young and old. Regarding mission location, the Document says that mission “happens in all places, wherever the church is, and in all times to all generations.”³

This holistic understanding of mission is shared among our churches. For instance, in my congregation in Antananarivo, Madagascar, the whole church—individuals, departments, associations, special groups, town-

ships—engages in mission. Mission for us includes proclamation, advocacy (justice for prisoners), and service (food and work for the poor, health care and basic education for the homeless). For us, holistic mission is of the gospel, and it is the way to respond to Christ’s call to follow him. If mission is not holistic, it denotes that the church is not true to its identity, and thus unable to face major mission challenges in our century.

I wrote this a few years ago: “The distinguishing feature of the 21st century seems to be the colliding of three forces at the global level: free market economy, the struggle for human rights and justice and religious pluralism. The mission of the church has to be multidimensional and holistic in order to be meaningful in addressing these, that is, to be both faithful and effective.” I believe this to be still relevant today.

Rev. Dr Péri Rasolondraibe, Malagasy Lutheran Church, is pastor of the Hope Lutheran Church congregation in Antananarivo, Madagascar. He is a former director of the LWF Department for Mission and Development.

How holistic is the mission of the church? The LWF document explains that mission is holistic with regard to its scope, practice and location. Its scope includes¹ *the whole of creation (ecological concerns), the whole of life (social, political, economic, and cultural), and the whole human being (i.e., all people and the whole*



Produce from an LWF-supported agricultural project in Madagascar is sold in Antsirabe market. © LWF/M. Stasius

¹ *Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2004) p.36.

² *Ibid*

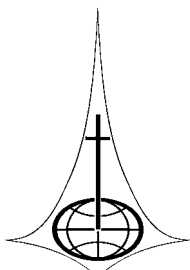
³ *Ibid*

I Am a Living Letter of Christ

I carry with me a letter in a red envelope in my handbag!

Bishop Dr Israel-Peter Mwakylile of the Diocese of Konde, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), handed it to me in June 2005. It reminds me that I am “a living letter of Christ!” The ELCT bishop

was among 29 invited representatives of our partner churches throughout the world, who addressed the letter to all members of the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Germany, at the end of a two-week visitation and consultation program.



A week of visiting church congregations, districts and institutions in three regional groups was followed by a dynamic consultation with around 50 church members joined by participants in an international women's consultation on gender justice. We shared together our experiences and recommendations, struggling to learn from each other and worshipping together in an atmosphere of fellowship and understanding.

"You allowed us into your kitchen, and really want our help!"

"Take 'Growing Up with God' as a slogan for the whole church for a couple of years, not just for the kindergarten!"

"You do so much good work for all kinds of people in need, but you seem scared to talk about why you do it."

"After visiting the shipyards in Kiel with your pastor, I realised that globalization also affects a rich country like Germany!"

At a critical time of change for the North Elbian church, we experienced the true meaning of God's "one church" in the world—helping each



Cynthia C. Lies © G. Grützmann



Partners from five continents participated in the June 2005 North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church consultation. The so-called Schleswig group comprised (left to right) Bishop Dr Wesley Kigasung (Papua New Guinea), Dr Carlos Hoch (Brazil), Ms Aluparambil George Saramma (India), Ms Varja Muradova Varsenik (Russia) and Bishop Job T. Mbwilo (Tanzania). © G. Grützmann

other as equal partners to discover God's truth and God's vision for the church.

The North Elbian synod's decision to start a campaign, "More Heaven on Earth - Communicating Our Faith Today!" is just one of the visible fruits that have grown out of this wonderful holistic mission experience.

As one organic farmer put it: "Dare to say what you believe; and dare to live what you say." Then there will be more heaven on earth!

Ms Cynthia C. Lies is the synod deputy president of the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany.

Holistic Development as a Witness of the Church

The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) has taken a leading role in reflecting on the holistic understanding of mission both in theological education and active church ministry.

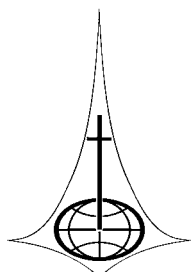
Over the past two and a half decades, the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute

has led the whole country in focusing on Dalit [India's lowest caste] theology, women's studies, ecological concerns and human development. For the first time in India, authentic theological literature related to these studies was made available in seminaries all over the country and abroad. Our action ministries were engaged in transforming the total lives of vast rural communities over the past two decades, clearly spelling out the meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ afresh.

The UELCI emphasizes its human and social development programs as a witness of the church's faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. As such, the holistic development ministries have promoted ecumenical cooperation not only amongst Christian churches but also with secular non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the villages. The integrated rural development of the vulnerable members of Indian society, carried out in Orissa district under the UELCI Division of Social Action is a



Dalits dispose of human waste. © Dalit Solidarity Network /D. Haslam



strong case in point. This approach has led to the transformation of the lives of Dalit and tribal men, women and children from abject poverty and illiteracy to self reliance and dignity.

Another great breakthrough of the church's witness is the penetration of the National Lutheran Health and Medical Board into new areas of cooperation and service.

For over 5,000 years, the Hindu social system has denied Dalits their humanity, with many of them facing further persecution while already living in inhuman conditions all over India. A significant



Dr Kunchala Rajaratnam.
© M. Lankapalli/UELCI

turning point of the UELCI ministry has been advocacy for the adoption of the issue of Dalit liberation as a core agenda of the holistic understanding of mission of the entire church on the sub-continent.

This is a huge and exciting ministry, undertaken in an ecumenical partnership between the UELCI and the National Council of Churches in India.

Dr Kunchala Rajaratnam is director of the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, and chairperson of the Lutheran World Federation National Committee in India.

Lutheran Theology in the Life of the Church

Ecumenism, Economy, Ecology: Lutheran Theology in the Life of the Church

As Martin Luther states in *The Freedom of a Christian*, “the good things we have from God should flow from one to the other and be common to all, so that everyone should ‘put on’ his neighbor and so conduct himself toward him as if he himself were in the other’s place.”¹ Lutherans affirm that as Christians, we do not live in and for ourselves, but in Christ and the “other,” the neighbor. We live in Christ through faith, and in our neighbor through love.

Luther described God’s relentless love for God’s creatures through a language of care, promise, and responsibility (detailed in Luther’s two-realm theory). The house (*oikos*) we inhabit is to be cherished as God’s gift and cared for accordingly. There is an ethical commitment for the wellbeing of the different places God has made for us to inhabit—our body, family, community or planet. “It is reflected in the spheres of human living which bear God’s promises: to govern with justice in the political sphere, *politia*, to care about the needs of God’s creatures for the sphere of economics, *oeconomia*, and to communicate God’s



Rev. Dr Wanda Deifelt
© Private

Word to our hearts and minds in the sphere of communal life, *ecclesia*.²

In the context of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), this awareness allows Lutherans to have a broader comprehension of the role of the Church of Jesus Christ in the world. Firstly, it leads to ecumenical participation and contribution. The attempt to overcome the brokenness of the household—the body of Christ—is both a command and an expectation, and the LWF has been instrumental in the work of study, dialogue, and search for visible unity.

Secondly, it supports processes that engender greater social, political, and economic participation. In a broader sense, it translates economy to reflect about the ways we administrate and share the resources of the household God created. Finally, the LWF also reflects on the work carried out by Christians around the globe to foment an ecological responsiveness, that is, to evaluate relationships (between human beings, God, and the whole creation) in light of God’s ongoing redemptive work.

Rev. Dr Wanda Deifelt, from Brazil, is a professor of religion at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa USA.

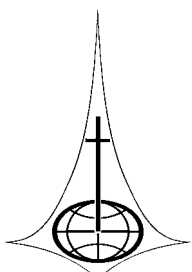
¹ Martin Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian,” in Helmut T. Lehmann (ed.), *Luther’s Works*, vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 371.

² Hans Ulrich, “On the Grammar of Lutheran Ethics” in Karen Bloomquist (ed.), *Lutheran Ethics at the Intersections of God’s One World*, LWF Studies 02/2005 (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2005) p. 29.

Mission Training Empowers People for New Challenges in Multi-Religious Asia

It is a great privilege for me to share a few words in congratulating the Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

for its 60th anniversary. The LWF, a long-term mission partner of its member churches in Malaysia, has



been an active contributor in the area of mission, church cooperation and theological education.

The LWF's contribution toward leadership development in many ways was able to transform life issues and thought patterns that could otherwise stifle growth in the areas of mission and church cooperation. The inclusive theological principle for mission has helped to promote new perspectives in theological education and mission in Malaysia and South East Asia. The bridges that the LWF has built in developing South to South exchange, such as the "Training for Mission in Asia Program" go a long way in enhancing mutual cooperation, enrichment and transformation among the LWF member churches in the region.

The ecumenical dimension of missiological study, which on the one hand establishes and maintains Lutheran identity and on the other, seeks ecumenical cooperation in mission endeavors, has been a significant LWF program for the Asia region. Through this program, the churches and their leaders including women and youth have been able to embrace new ideas, challenging methodologies and setting achievable targets for development. Current issues such as HIV and AIDS, women's empowerment, diakonia, dialogue with people of other faiths and overcoming illiteracy are ap-



Former seminary students established a diakonia center, which provides health care including home visits. © Private



Dr Thu En Yu, president of the Sabah Theological Seminary, Malaysia. © Private

propriately addressed through seminars and short-term programs.

The *Asia Lutheran News (ALN)* has become an important networking platform for raising awareness about key concerns for the churches, and is considered as another appropriate tool in facilitating the concepts of *Missio Dei* (mission of God) in Asia's multi-racial and multi-religious society. The *ALN* can promote mutually beneficial experiences in different cultures and life situations.

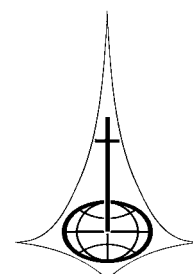
Dr Thu En Yu is president of the Sabah Theological Seminary in Sabah, Malaysia.

A New Diakonia Center

The narrative of the Samaritan woman in John 4 is inspirational for theological education.

The Sabah Theological Seminary has been in partnership with LWF in promoting new perspectives in theological education and mission. Subsequently, the mind-set of our students got liberated and transformed and they in turn became liberators of others.

Five years ago, some of the seminary's former students founded an ecumenical diakonia center (photo above) to provide material and spiritual care to the public. Not only has it become an important service center to people regardless of their religious background, it also plays the transformational role of liberating churches from their traditional approach to a new level of social awareness, racial sensitivity and ecumenical engagement.



THE LWF AT 60... VOICES

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) maintains a broad network and a great many partnerships that go well beyond the Lutheran church communion. Representatives of the ecumenical movement, interreligious cooperation, and the United Nations have all contributed to these pages to reflect on the history and the role of the LWF, each from their respective contexts.

Ecumenical Voices

Two Mutually Enriching Instruments of Christian Unity

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and World Council of Churches (WCC) were established within one year of each other, under similar circumstances. Both bodies responded as Christian organizations to the reconstruction needs of Europe after World War II, thus providing the framework for being church in the world.

They each saw themselves then and now, as instruments of Christian unity—the LWF through building a Lutheran consciousness¹ among its members, the WCC through building a fellowship of local churches. While the two approaches may appear competitive, they can, in fact, be mutually enriching.

As the LWF reflects on Lutheran consciousness and the WCC builds the churches' fellowship, both bodies are confronted with dogmatic, theological,



Ms Teny Pirri-Simonian
© LWF/D.-M. Gröttsch

historical and social issues. The agreements reached by the LWF as a communion through its bilateral contacts may facilitate dialogue within the WCC fellowship. Moreover, around half of the LWF member churches belong to the WCC. The presence of churches with membership in both organizations and the involvement of sometimes the same church representatives in issues pertaining to both bodies, contribute to enhancing the one ecumenical vision.

The LWF, WCC and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches are located at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, Switzerland. Through regular communication and consultations, the three organizations carry the potential of promoting the coherence of the one ecumenical movement.

With these thoughts in mind and prayers in our hearts, we thank God for the ecumenical commitment of the Lutheran churches.

Ms Teny Pirri-Simonian is the WCC program executive for church and ecumenical relations.

¹ *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, Edited by Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neil. World Council of Churches, Geneva. 2004, Vol.I. p.615.

An Expression of Communion in the Family of Reformation Churches

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) congratulates the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as it marks 60 years of witness and service. In a broken world rife with injustice and divisive tendencies, it is refreshing to see the LWF's commitment as an instrument of healing in the world. The WARC is privileged to have developed relationships with the LWF over the years and to have worked together to contribute toward Christian unity.



Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi
© WARC

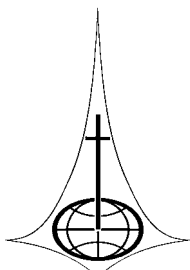
to living in pulpit and altar fellowship, we are also called upon to be in solidarity with one another. As the LWF moves beyond these 60 years of witness and service, it is my hope and prayer that its communion will be even more intentionally expressed in its response to the vast incidences of injustice, poverty, conflicts and other forms of suffering that have become commonplace the world over.

We rejoice with the LWF and thank God for our continuing work on the Lutheran-

Reformed Joint Working Group among other joint endeavors that serve as an expression of our efforts to live out communion in the wider family of Reformation churches. May God bless you all.

Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi is WARC General Secretary.

The theme of the 2007 LWF Council meeting and the 60th anniversary celebrations in Lund—"Living in Communion in the World Today"—is both a gift and a challenge. We are grateful to God for the steps the LWF has taken in embracing both the gift and challenge of living in communion. In addition



New Grounds for Better Mutual Understanding – A Roman Catholic Appreciation

We at the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) could not let the 60th anniversary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) pass without expressing our joyful congratulations to our Lutheran friends. We join you in thanking God for the many benefits that the LWF has brought in fostering dimensions of communion among Lutherans themselves, but also with other Christian world communions (CWCs).



Bishop Brian Farrell
© PCPCU/WCC

For the Roman Catholic Church, the LWF has been, and continues to be, a trusted partner in the search for Christian unity, one of the first to engage in dialogue with us after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). This important step on the path to reconciliation after centuries of separation was due in a large part to the positive experience of the LWF observers to the Council. The fact that an international Lutheran-Catholic dialogue began as early as 1967 showed that the new relationship, even then, offered depth and promise. The four phases of dialogue completed since, have produced substantial reports,

providing insights which have helped to develop significant new grounds for better mutual understanding and cooperation.

History will forever record that a major act of reconciliation took place on 31 October 1999 in Augsburg, Germany, when representatives of the LWF and Roman Catholic Church signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. A tribute to the quality of over 30 years of the theological dialogue, the Joint Declaration took Lutherans and Catholics far beyond mutual exclusion, by showing that

they share significant bonds of faith even though their agreement is not yet complete. It is a constant source of encouragement that together we are firmly committed to continuing this common journey.

We see the LWF as the efficacious instrument of our partnership with the Lutheran family as we seek to respond to the prayer of Our Lord for his disciples: “that they may all be one [...] so that the world may believe” (John 17:21).

Bishop Brian Farrell is PCPCU Secretary.

A Far Deeper Ecumenical Progress Between Two World Communions

The families of Lutheran and Anglican churches have always lived quite closely together since their distinctive identities emerged in the upheavals of the 16th century. The heritage of Lutherans—seeing themselves in unbroken continuity with the apostolic church, living out of the witness and theology of Martin Luther and his successors, and living into the fullness of a catholic understanding of the Church and Sacraments but through the lens of Reformation—has a close genetic similarity to the heritage of Anglicans. Put quite simply, many Anglicans and Lutherans recognize themselves in one another.



Rev. Canon Gregory K. Cameron
© Anglican Communion

This has enabled a far deeper ecumenical progress between the two communions than in many other dialogues, and a relationship that bears much fruit in many formal and informal ways. The Lutheran World Federation is probably the Anglican Communion’s closest cousin

amongst the Christian world communions in size and distribution around the globe, and often in its organization and structure.

On your 60th birthday, we Anglicans give thanks to God for the witness of the Lutheran churches around the world, for the “full communion” we share in some parts of the globe, for the conversations and co-operation which may yet blossom into fullness of communion elsewhere. We commit ourselves to ongoing investment in this relationship. But we also value the very many real relationships of friendship—

warm friendship and deep fellowship, help, support and advice—because it is in this rich encounter of the disciples of Jesus Christ with one another that true communion is built.

Rev. Canon Gregory K. Cameron is Deputy Secretary General of the Anglican Communion.

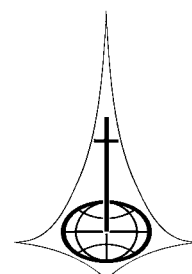
Interfaith Perspective

Religious Tolerance Cannot Be Taken for Granted

The Bahá’í Faith has been at the forefront of interfaith activities in Botswana for many years. “World Religion Day,” an event organized every January by Bahá’ís seeks to demonstrate the fundamental oneness of all religions. More recently, following the establishment by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) of the

Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), Bahá’ís have been instrumental in starting up a nascent interfaith working group, soon to be registered as IFAPA Botswana.

In their contacts with the government, Bahá’ís have always emphasized the need to recognize all



religions in the national education curriculum and in government legislation. In recent years, the Government of Botswana has been exemplary in establishing a national education curriculum that includes all major world religions, and in amending the Marriage Act to recognize as legally valid any marriage performed according to the established rites of a religious community.

Despite this promising environment of tolerance, the greatest challenge facing interfaith activities in Botswana is apathy. Perhaps because we are a very tolerant nation, and overwhelmingly members of various Christian denominations, the promotion of inter-religious understanding is not considered as necessary. It has been an uphill struggle to obtain support for IFAPA Botswana, with



Ms Lucretia Warren
© G. Warren

support coming mainly from a few enthusiastic individuals rather than from the religious organizations that they come from.

Irrespective of the current peaceful religious environment in Botswana, religious tolerance in today's world can never be taken for granted. That is why my fellow Bahá'ís and I will continue to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between religions in the country. The support of the LWF through IFAPA has been, and continues to be a great source of encouragement and inspiration for our national and regional endeavors.

Ms Lucretia M. Warren is chairperson of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Botswana. She is a member of the IFAPA Commission, established in 2006 to direct the work of the pan-African interfaith body.

Mauritania: Faith Communities Foster a Partnership That Promotes Human Dignity

When the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) and the government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania first met in the 1970s, the focus was on humanitarian intervention—to prevent the desert advancing toward Nouakchott, the capital. As time passed, I realized witnessed the strong relationship not just between two working partners but between two different religions that deeply respected each other. Mauritania's Islamic basis and the LWF's Christian grounding endeavored to promote justice, respect, tolerance and enable human beings to live in dignity.

Today, 20 years since I joined DWS Mauritania, common issues such as promoting human rights and gender equality, HIV and AIDS, poverty reduction, environmental protection and social development are being openly addressed.

When we talk about faith, I—a Muslim woman—do not see religious differences but a community



Ms Houleye Tall
© LWF/DWS Mauritania
/P. Laajalahti

of faith—men and women—sharing common values in order to promote co-existence and human dignity, as exemplified below:

Lemat Mint Elve, 31, lives in rural Mauritania. When some staff persons from DWS Mauritania recently visited her, she expressed her joy that their village now had a cereal grinding mill, thanks to the LWF's assistance. "Today, I feel that I have my dignity, I am not grinding the cereals with my hands as in the past, which leaves me ample time for my children's education and other activities."

Elve could even take part in civic activities that resulted in her election as a representative to the town's council.

Ms Houleye Tall is the LWF/DWS Mauritania coordinator for Human Rights and Peace Promotion.

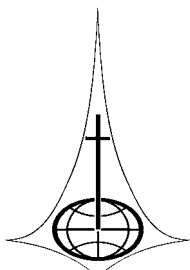
United Nations

A Joint Desire to Promote Human Dignity for Refugees, IDPs and Returnees

Over the past 60 years, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has become a beacon of hope for millions of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) all over the world. From its very inception in 1947, the LWF began serving those in need, primarily Lutheran refugees who had been displaced as a result of World War II. For six decades, the LWF has provided assistance to refugees, returnees and IDPs worldwide through emergency assistance, development aid and empowering communities.

By carefully targeting its efforts, the LWF has succeeded in becoming a recognized international humanitarian player and partner for the United Nations and especially the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Non-governmental organizations such as the LWF are an integral component of UNHCR's *modus operandi* through which the UN refugee agency continues to forge effective partnerships in order to achieve its core priorities of advocacy, provid-





Despite loving efforts of qualified teachers at this camp, a former zoo in Hamburg, Germany, after World War II, basic materials and opportunity were still lacking. © LWF archives

ing protection and assistance, and finding durable solutions.

This relationship continues to grow, from the narrow perspectives of implementing agreements, to a wider, collaborative and consultative relationship. It is an evolution that assumes added significance from the fact that protection concerns and assistance efforts for refugees and other vulnerable populations including IDPs, are increasingly linked to wider development efforts in which NGO partners will help bridge the gap from humanitarian and relief aid to development.

The UNHCR is taking concrete efforts and steps to strengthen collaboration with its partners both at field office and headquarters' levels. The participation of NGOs, particularly long-standing partners like the LWF in the initial stages of the agency's needs' assessment, Country Operations Plans, and involvement in the drafting process of the Executive Committee's conclusions are a few examples.

Collaboration between the LWF and UNHCR goes back 46 years and has taken many forms, but it is fundamentally based on our joint desire to fight for justice and promote human dignity for those in



LWF-UNHCR partnership in Mauritania, refugee women work at traditional crafts. © UNHCR/C. Shirley

need of protection and humanitarian assistance. The partnership has been further strengthened by the "Framework Agreement for Operational Partnership," signed in 2001 with the aim to enhance collaboration in favor of refugees, returnees and the displaced worldwide.

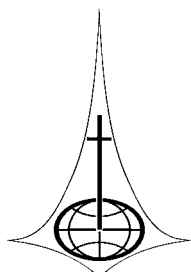
Over the past 10 years, the LWF and UNHCR have collaborated in over 16 countries and in operations at global and regional levels, with a total budget of over USD 60 million. In 2006 both organizations partnered in major emergency operations and protracted refugee and returnee operations in Kenya, Mauritania and Nepal with a budget of USD 3.5 million.

The LWF has been instrumental in delivering assistance in the education, shelter, transport and logistics sectors.

We are very proud of our joint collaboration and believe it to be of direct benefit to the millions of refugees, returnees and displaced persons the world over. We are committed to strengthen this relationship and hope for further collaboration.

Our best wishes go to the Lutheran World Federation on the occasion of its 60th anniversary, and for the years to come.

A contribution of the UNHCR NGO Liaison Unit.



My Story with the LWF...

What would the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) be without its people and stories? Former LWF president, Bishop emeritus Dr Christian Krause (Germany), and former LWF general secretary, Rev. André Appel (France), both tell their own very personal history with the LWF, along with former LWF scholarship holder, Dr Belletech Deressa (Ethiopia/USA).

From Theologically Versed Interpreter to JDDJ Signatory

The idea and reality of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) have left a strong mark on my professional life and thus my personal life as well. My first contact with the LWF already came about, chiefly by coincidence, when I was a young man. The year was 1965, and I was still a student, serving as an external interpreter for the World Council of Churches (WCC), following my stay abroad as a student in the United States. From there, I was contracted out to the LWF, an organization mostly unknown to me at the time. The LWF needed interpreters with a theological background for its first official theological discussion in Strasbourg, France with representatives of the Vatican, who were led by Cardinal Johannes Willebrands. This launched a process for the LWF



The official signing of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, 31 October 1999, in Augsburg, Germany. © LWF/K. Wieckhorst

and the Vatican that would eventually lead to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, 34 years later. Together with others, I signed this historical document on Reformation Day 1999 at a ceremonious church service in Augsburg, Germany, as the president of the LWF. What a turn of events!

From my first encounter with the LWF at Strasbourg's Institute for Ecumenical Research through the end of my presidency at the LWF Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada, I was connected with the LWF for some 40 years. I have served as a theological secretary at the Geneva headquarters, as a headquarters staff

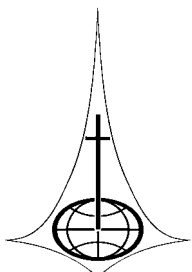
member of the LWF refugee service in Tanzania, as an *Oberkirchenrat* on the German National Committee of the LWF, and lastly as the bishop of a LWF member church. It was from this position, in 1997, that I was elected president of the LWF in Hong Kong, which had recently reunited with China. My direct link to the LWF was only interrupted by my tenure as the general secretary of the *Deutscher Evangelische Kirchentag* ("German Protestant Church Day"). But the international and ecumenical experience that I attained through my involvement with the LWF, proved invaluable for this task as well, one which I particularly enjoyed.



Former LWF President Dr Christian Krause (right) welcomes his successor, Bishop Mark S. Hanson, at the close of the Tenth Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada. © LWF/D. Zimmermann

These external facts can, however, hardly lend expression to my internal development to which they were linked. Countless trips around the world and encounters with people in every thinkable living situation have enriched my life, but have also not infrequently stretched me to my absolute limits. God's grace and mercy being universally assured and granted to everyone, even in the most extreme of situations, has thus become a crucial theme in my life experience. Communion in Christ can take on many forms. It is a miracle that this nearness can be experienced even in situations in which the human condition runs radically counter to this.

I thus remember gratefully all those who have become my sisters and broth-



ers in the fight against racism and for survival among large concentrations of refugees or in areas affected by famine, and in every foray across life-threatening borders and divides, whether they be ethnic, social, political, or religious by nature; and even across confessional lines!

I could now tell many related stories, some quite moving. These would be stories of people who walk with God. Those who clung to the institutions and positions of the LWF for the sake of their own personal influence have, as far as I am concerned, long since disappeared from the scene. What remains is the hope, taken from a wealth of strong per-



Rev. Christian Krause at the meeting of the LWF Commission on Church Cooperation, Chicago, USA, in 1981. © LWF/R. Kahle

sonal experience, that common paths of life may open up in a quest to follow Jesus, even in the face of all that may seem otherwise. With this hope, may the *Communio Lutherana* celebrate its 60th birthday with joy and without unease, even if one should of course retire at 65!

Bishop emeritus Dr Christian Krause was president of the LWF from 1997 to 2003. Until he was appointed bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brunswick in 1994, Krause was general secretary of the German church convention, Kirchentag. Krause retired as bishop of the Brunswick church in January 2002.

Challenge on Ecumenical Scene Demands Great Deal of Honesty

When I was offered a scholarship by St Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, I had no idea that this would start a chain of reactions far beyond discovering another country, educational system and church relations.

The train ride from New York took me more than 3,000 km into the heart of the United States' Midwest. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was known to an open-minded student because of its World Service department and many "reconstruction projects" under the strong leadership of Franklin Clark Fry and Paul Empie, both from the USA, whom God used to heal many war wounds.

I was not in Lund, Sweden, for the First LWF Assembly in 1947, as the French churches had sent me instead to the Central Committee Meeting of the World Council of Churches in Yale. However, I had both my feet in the bubbling ecumenical post-war activities.

My real story with the LWF started at the Third Assembly in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, in 1957 when I spoke at the closing rallies, expressing the views and hopes of the younger generation.

The LWF was constituted mainly by traditional, partly state churches, but ready to listen to the voice of the minorities. I always enjoyed a real independence as general secretary (1965–1974) with regard to the three Lutheran blocks in Europe, Scandinavia and the



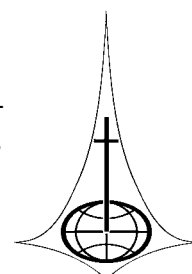
LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr André Appel (left) greets Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie when he participated in events marking the 10th anniversary of the LWF's "Radio Voice of the Gospel" station in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1973. Center: Ato Emmanuel Gebre Sellassie, the station's adviser on church and government relations. ©LWF archives



Rev. Dr André Appel © LWF archives

USA. No doubt that the LWF benefited from its minorities and I could contribute to this necessary exchange within our confessional family.

Coming onto the scene after 1965, I had to deal with the tense relationships, especially regarding Communist regimes, for example in then East Germany. Germany became an excellent observation point to see how God was using Lutherans and other Christian leaders to give direction in a world situation that was becoming increasingly explosive. Certain projects like the Radio Voice of the Gospel broadcasting station in Addis Ababa,



Ethiopia, or the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, made themselves quickly known.

Looking back to these 60 years, I can only thank God for using me in shaping the LWF, and letting the voices of the minority to be heard. The challenge on the ecumenical scene has not really changed but it

needs a great deal of honesty and humility on the part of the present leaders. We also need more courage and faith in order to overcome the many barriers on the road to unity.

Rev. Dr André Appel, from France, was general secretary of the LWF from 1965–1974.

Much Has Changed, But Women’s Participation Is Still a Major Challenge

My orientation with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) began in 1978 when I was young, energetic, idealistic and a dreamer with limited life and work experience. After graduating from an agricultural college in Kenya in May 1977, I was asked by the late General Secretary of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), Rev. Gudina Tumsa, to serve as coordinator of the women’s program in the EECMY Western Synod. I became the first Ethiopian (Oromo) woman to serve in this position.

I soon became aware of the unfortunate cultural and social system that was oppressive for women and felt determined to change it. My participation in an LWF leadership seminar in Bossey, Switzerland, in 1978, made me more conscious about the role of women in church and society, and gave me an appreciation of the LWF’s efforts in addressing women’s issues. I came to understand the challenges that we face as women, regardless of where we come from.

Upon my return to Ethiopia, the then LWF Department of Studies asked the EECMY president, Dr Emmanuel Abraham, if I could serve for one year as a research assistant in the LWF women’s desk. My tenure ended went on for two years, during which I traveled to many countries and got to know many church leaders. The desk also organized two consultations for African Lutheran women in Botswana and for Latin American Lutheran women in Mexico—which widened my horizon and enabled me to better understand women’s significant contribution in the churches.

In 1981, the LWF offered me a scholarship for a bachelor of science at Iowa State University, which I completed in one year in 1982. Due to Ethiopia’s political crisis at the time including the harassment of churches and Christians by the Marxist regime, I could not return home. Although the LWF was willing to extend the scholarship grant for another graduate study, the EECMY scholarship committee declined to endorse my request.



Dr Belletech Deressa , 2006
© Private

It was a difficult period in my life—I was stateless and had no scholarship to continue with my studies. Some friends paid my tuition and I earned a Master of Science in a year. In 1983, the university gave me assistance to carry out my research and I completed the doctorate program in 1986, and became a US citizen.

In 1987, while teaching at the Mankato State University, in Mankato, Minnesota, USA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) invited me to serve as Director for International Development, responsibilities that involve a close working relationship with LWF.

Since 1988, I had the privilege to serve as an adviser to the LWF Council, on Program and Standing Committees.

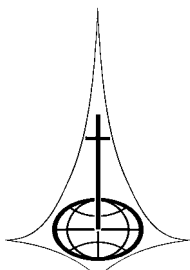
I am grateful to God that I have been part of the Federation for 29 years. Much has changed, especially for some women. Yet, there is still a challenge in churches and society to fully and equally integrate women in leadership positions.

Dr Belletech Deressa is director for international development and disaster response, ELCA Global Mission. She is currently vice chairperson of the LWF Standing Committee for World Service.



Belletech Deressa, 1981
© Private

More LWI News at
www.lutheranworld.org/News/Welcome.EN.html



What would an anniversary be without wishes for the future? The former LWF president, theology professor Rev. Dr Gottfried Brakemeier (Brazil), and former LWF general secretary, Bishop emeritus Dr Gunnar Stålsett (Norway) hazard a glimpse into the future. They are joined on these pages by the LWF vice president, Bishop Victoria Cortez Rodríguez (Nicaragua), former LWF scholarship holder Prof. Monica Melanchthon (India), and Ms Zelda Cossa (Mozambique), a participant in the LWF training program for young communication leaders.

Cooperating and Living Together in Peace: A Matter of Decisive Importance

A global world requires global institutions. This awareness was present from the very founding of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) even before the World Council of Churches and the United Nations had been called into being. The devastation of World War II and the early Cold War had clearly shown that global problems could only be overcome through common, global efforts. The need for global action has continued to grow dramatically ever since.

The network of Lutheran churches in the LWF has provided Lutheranism with a common language and a single service structure. This has helped national churches to overcome their isolation while providing a sense of common cause that bridges both the peculiarities of each context and the differences that have grown over the course of time. Despite its modest structures, the LWF has grown into an important international and ecumenical partner that represents the concerns and priorities of Lutheran churches. Its self-identity as a communion of churches underscores a will to pursue a common Protestant awareness, anchored in the Lutheran confession and in the Reformation tradition. Looking back upon the LWF's 60-year history fills one with joy and deep appreciation.

As a confessional institution, the LWF comprises only a limited portion of the global family. This is not, however, a great loss, as this family consists of a number of groups with a variety of identities. Of decisive importance is the willing-



Former LWF President Dr Gottfried Brakemeier, Brazil, an honorary LWF Council member. © Private

ness to cooperate and to live together peacefully, which is to say, ecumenism in both the broad and narrow sense of the word. One hopes that, now more than ever, the LWF will dedicate its global structure and its God-given charisma to ecumenism, which is able to reconcile unity and diversity. In doing so, the LWF will number among the peacemakers, whom Jesus pronounces blessed.

Rev. Dr Gottfried Brakemeier is a professor for ecumenism and systematic theology at the School for Theology (EST) of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in

Brazil (IECLB) in São Leopoldo, Brazil. Brakemeier was president of the IECLB from 1985 to 1994 and LWF president from 1990 to 1997.



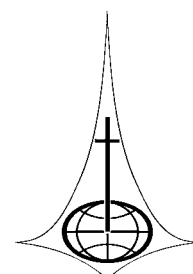
Former LWF President Dr Gottfried Brakemeier (left) with Edward Cardinal Cassidy, former president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity at the 1997 LWF Ninth Assembly in Hong Kong, China. © LWF/P. Williams

From a Hard-Won Communion Identity to a Humble Place in an Interfaith World?

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has travelled a long way in its service to member churches and to the world. Some of its prominent key words have been "witness" and "service." The contents of both words have changed with time and context, from a more introvert confessional, to an outward-looking, ecumenical understanding of the LWF's mission. This describes

the LWF's attempted transformation from federation to communion. The core Christological foundation of the Lutheran confession has remained its strength through a critical epoch of human history.

Religion is an expression of humanity's longing for justice, peace and wellbeing. At the beginning of the new millennium, interfaith witness and action





Former LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Gunnar Staalsett, Norway, and his successor Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, Zimbabwe, at the 1994 LWF Church Leaders' Consultation and Council meeting, Geneva, Switzerland. © WCC/P. Williams

present a new challenge to confessional identity and ecumenism. Globalization has been heralded mainly as the way to a brighter future, with the market mechanism being presented as the hand of God. However, a more sober reading calls for globalization with a human face and a human heart, a context in

which the world sees a resurgence of religion. It is as if humanity is in search of its soul. Our cosmic home—the planet Earth—is fragile and needs to be cared for. No one faith can attempt alone to heal the wounded creation.

For the Christian church, healing the wounded creation demands a theology of salvation that is shaped by a futuristic exploration of the cosmic Christ, who remains the servant of the world. The mystery of the Trinity is yet to be fully decoded to provide an inclusive worldly spirituality, where the truly human and truly divine are expressed in daily life. A seamless fusion of the immanent and the transcendent may open a new epoch in the interpretation of the history of Christ

and humanity. Will the LWF be able to transcend even its hard-won communion identity to find its humble place in an interfaith world?

Rev. Dr Gunnar Stålsett was LWF general secretary from 1985 to 1994. He was bishop of the Diocese of Oslo, Church of Norway, from 1998 to 2005.

Communion Is Vital for Strengthening the LWF

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has something to celebrate—this March, the worldwide communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition marks its 60th birthday.

For Latin American Christians, communion in its broadest sense means accepting the commitment to follow Jesus Christ. It is both a gift of God and a responsibility for us in the different moments of our lives, and includes the fundamental liturgical act of the Eucharist.

The Apostle Paul writes: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body? ...” (1 Cor 12:12–13a). This scripture comes to mind when I think of the LWF. I sense that some churches’ understanding of the Lutheran communion does not help to strengthen the LWF. We all simply do not see ourselves as one body,



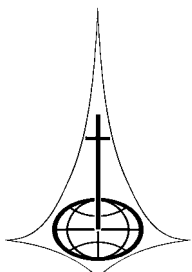
Bishop Victoria Cortez Rodríguez, Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope, commissions laypersons to work with community members. © K. Cortez

feeling and moving with the same feelings, thoughts, sorrows and joys with all the other Lutheran churches who are part of the universal body of Christ.

Although Lutheranism arrived in Latin America with the 19th century liberalization, its growth only came in the 20th century with its development in Central America beginning only in the mid-20th century.

For various historical reasons relevant to their respective contexts, the Lutheran churches in Central America were started among the poor, which led to a preferential option for the poor, excluded and marginalized people, following Jesus’ example. We uphold Lutheran doctrinal principles, particularly justifi-

cation by faith and the priesthood of all believers. The Christian freedom embedded in the doctrine of justification leads us to value the world as the place where God is at work. For us, the priesthood of all



believers emphasizes that God accomplishes his mission through all people—men and women—and for all who want to follow him, each with a role to play in the church. We tell the Good News through the integrated ministry of word (sacraments) and service. We believe that this mission is from God and is manifested in specific contexts. That is why we try to take God’s mission into the real world, in order for people to discover what God is doing in their midst. These features, specific to our context, mean that we may not appear the same as Lutheran churches in other regions, but we remain an integral part of the world-wide Lutheran church represented by the LWF.

The challenge for the LWF is to ensure that the Lutheran churches around the world do not group themselves into two categories, the North and South, or—worse still—into “poor” and “rich” churches. Any division between churches must be as a result of the different tasks that arise from proclaiming the gospel in the diverse social, economic, cultural, political and other contexts. Seeing ourselves as equals helps us

to appreciate communion as a sharing of economic, cultural, political and other resources, alongside knowledge and faith experience between members of this one family.

Moreover, we need to remember that our planet is one great living being. It is like an orange, of which one spoilt surface risks ruining the entire fruit. When we see the universal church as the whole and ourselves as one part of it, we will understand the real essence of love and solidarity between the North and South. If we want to be the church of Jesus Christ, then the churches in the world, particularly the Lutheran churches, must be conscious each of the other. The communion needs to find expression in the way in which churches relate to each other, also with regard to economic aspects, which can only be reached through dialogue and mutual transparency.

Bishop Victoria Cortez Rodríguez heads the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope. She is LWF vice president for the Latin America and Caribbean region, and a member of the LWF Executive Committee.

My Hope for a Truly Global Church, an Agent for Social Transformation

Sixty years! We have reached a milestone. As we celebrate the national, ethnic and cultural diversity that characterizes the Lutheran communion and its many achievements, it is also a significant moment to look back and see how far we have come, ponder on the future and envision together where we are heading.

We may breathe deeply with satisfaction as we look at what lies behind us, but the journey is far from over. Deep mists cloud the path ahead for the church, the ascent still lower and steeper than before. And yet, if the top of the mountain is still maddeningly far and often lost to view, we are now, at least, a stronger traveler than when we set out. Our guide is an increased sense of freedom, a refreshed spirituality, our faith in the unifying, renewing and transforming



Dr Monica J. Melanchthon
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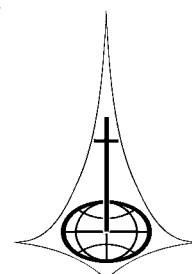
Spirit of God, our heritage and a richer sense of self. Our strength is in our differences, in the gifts we share and our commitment to building a better world for people everywhere. As we look toward the future, my prayer is that the communion of Lutheran churches will become a truly global church and an agent of social transformation, contributing to the building of a peaceful world devoid of war, conflicts and poverty. My hope is that the churches in the communion will become seedbeds for sustainable growth in promoting understanding, justice, cultural exchange, mutual support and respect between members of the human race.

Dr Monica J. Melanchthon is a professor for Old Testament and women’s studies at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute in Chennai, India.

Unemployment Is the Biggest Challenge for Mozambican Youth

Lack of employment opportunities remains the biggest concern for young people in Mozambique, a country of 19.6 million people, with an unemployment rate of over 20 percent, and around 70 percent of its population living below the poverty line. Despite the commendable efforts of the government and its partners to provide education—a basic requirement in addressing poverty and unemployment—access to quality education remains a major concern.

It is significant to note that the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) program in Mozambique has made a significant contribution in providing both formal and non-formal education in the Southern Africa country. But there are many challenges including the high incidence of HIV and AIDS (estimated at 16 percent in the 16-49 age group) coupled with slow behavioral change toward the disease despite the widespread



awareness about its infection and transmission. The lack of effective mechanisms to involve young people in decision-making processes sticks out as a missed opportunity and a statement that adults do not take the young people seriously.

Way Forward

In order to strengthen the young people's self-reliance, the church needs to strategically develop partnerships with them, including scholarship opportunities especially for the most disadvantaged.

From a practical point of view, the church and its diaconal networks should support and engage young people in income-generating activities and in managing small business enterprises. In order to contribute meaningfully to reversing the country's high HIV infection rate, the church is challenged to increase youth-based HIV prevention programs run by the young people themselves, and facilitate networking with other churches and



Left to right: Ms Zelda C. Cossa (Mozambique), Mr Johannes Hailu (Ethiopia) and Ms Grace Phiri (Malawi) at the June 2006 LWF young communicators' Africa regional training workshop.
© LWF Youth Leadership Training

their agencies, and with other religious and secular organizations.

Ms Zelda C. Cossa is a participant in the three-year (2005–2007) LWF young communicators' training program, "Towards a Communicating Communion – A Youth Vision." A member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mozambique, she currently works with the LWF/DWS country program in Mozambique.

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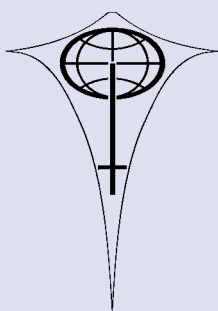
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The Lutheran World Information (LWI) is the information service of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

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Published and distributed by:
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