

Highlights

Association of German Lutheran Churches Celebrates 60th Anniversary 3

The United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany feels committed to “keeping up the ground water level of Reformation theology in congregations,” says VELKD Presiding Bishop Dr Johannes Friedrich...

LWF Nepal Representative Welcomes Support to Bhutanese Refugees after Fire Disaster 5

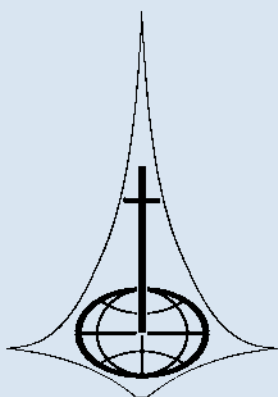
The Lutheran World Federation representative in Nepal has welcomed the generous response toward shelter reconstruction and resettlement of thousands of Bhutanese refugees...

Israel-Palestine: LWF Calls for End to Self-Destructive Cycle.. 6

The Lutheran World Federation condemned recent acts of violence in Israel and Palestine, and appealed for an end to “this infernal and self-destructive cycle” that cannot bring the region’s people closer to peace...

FEATURE: Money for School Fees, Food and Medication ... 14

Mid-February 2008 marked the second month of the implementation of a pilot project for a basic income grant (BIG) in Namibia...



FEATURE: A Fishing Town Rises Again



No longer a sunken village: Some of the houses built with ELCA's assistance in Kuala Bubon, North Sumatra, Indonesia.
© YAKKUM Emergency Unit

LWF Member Church Helps Rebuild Indonesian Village

KUALA BUBON, North Sumatra, Indonesia/ GENEVA (LWI) – Kuala Bubon, a fishing town in North Sumatra, Indonesia, can no longer be called a “sunken” or “lost village.” Washed away by the tsunami that struck South East Asia three years ago, it has risen again with concrete homes built on “pilings over water.”

Its rebuilding has been “a remarkable story of collaboration among many—members of the community, local government, Christian non-government organizations, Christian companions outside of Indonesia, and others” according to Rev. Joseph Chu, program director for Asia Pacific,

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Global Mission.

Through its partnership with the YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU), an Indonesian disaster response organization, the ELCA helped rebuild 118 houses in the village. They “are constructed of concrete and built on pilings over water in exactly the same spot where the previous village stood. Most other post-tsunami houses being built are made of wood, but the concrete houses are much sturdier construction

Continues on page 11

Contents

Communio

- 3.....LWF Leaders Pay Tribute to Ecumenist William Lazareth
- 3.....Association of German Lutheran Churches Celebrates 60th Anniversary

LWF Secretariat

- 5.....LWF Nepal Representative Welcomes Support to Bhutanese Refugees after Fire Disaster
- 6.....Israel-Palestine: LWF Calls for End to Self-Destructive Cycle
- 7.....Warmer Relations Sought Among Global Lutheran Organizations at ILC – LWF Meeting

Features & Themes

- 1, 11...FEATURE: A Fishing Town Rises Again
- 12.....Interfaith Partnership with Global Nutrition Company Provides Water to Thousands in Rwanda
- 14.....FEATURE: Money for School Fees, Food and Medication

News in Brief

- 2.....Michael Bünker Installed as Bishop in Austria
- 4.....Germany: Theme of Kirchentag 2009 – “Mortal, where are you?”
- 4.....General Secretary Leads LWF Meeting with German Partners in Hanover
- 8.....Church of Norway Council Adopts Guiding Principles for Interreligious Relations
- 9.....ELCA ‘Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality’ Now Available
- 9.....German Protestant Development Organizations to Merge
- 9.....LWF General Secretary Pays Tribute to Lukas Vischer
- 10.....Samuelsson Joins DWS as Program Officer for Eastern Africa
- 10.....Valeriano Named LWF Regional Officer for North America
- 10.....Bouka Coula Becomes DWS Program Officer for Central and Southern Africa
- 16.....Tribute to Lay Movement Leader Chiara Lubich

Michael Bünker Installed as Bishop in Austria

The new bishop of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria, **Dr Michael Bünker**, was installed on 27 January 2008 during a worship service at the Austria Center Vienna, in the Austrian capital. Bünker succeeds Bishop Mag. Herwig Sturm, who has retired.

In his sermon, Bünker, 53, said he would devote the coming years to working for a church in mission and diakonia. “I invite everyone to join me on this path,” he stated. He underlined: “Protestant faith, as understood by the apostle Paul, will never resign itself to existing circumstances, never lose hope or become cynical. Nor will it ever give way to illusion and lose sight of reality. It will stretch out to God’s new world, with great vigilance and passion.”



*Bishop Dr Michael Bünker
© Evangelical Church of the
Augsburg Confession in Austria*

The Church must “take up a position and stance” in the fundamental questions of living together in society, stressed the new leader of the Austrian church. The bishop’s office is to be understood as a synodal office, according the theologian, who plays percussion in a band during his free time. “The bishop should set the pace and provide the basis for the church members to play together”.

Bünker was elected bishop in June 2007, and assumed his new duties on 1 January 2008.

The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria has around 320,000 members. It joined the Lutheran World Federation in 1947.

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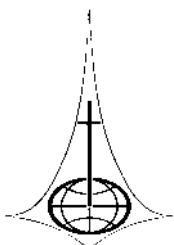
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LWF Leaders Pay Tribute to Ecumenist William Lazareth

William Lazareth Former ELCA Bishop Dies

GENEVA (LWI) – Leaders of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) paid tribute to the ecumenical legacy of Rev. Dr William H. Lazareth, former bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), who died from illness on 23 February, aged 79.

“A most eloquent voice in witness to the gospel is now silent,” said LWF President and ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson. He noted Lazareth’s ecclesial, theological and ecumenical legacy “will bless the people of the Church for generations to come.”

LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko described the former ELCA bishop as one of the Lutheran communion’s “outstanding contributions to the ecumenical movement.”

Lazareth was co-president of the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue from 1991 to 2002, and director of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Faith and Order Commission from 1980 to 1983.

The LWF leaders praised his role in the drafting of the document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM), with Hanson describing it as “one of the most influential documents of the 20th



*Rev. Dr William H. Lazareth (1928-2008)
© Carthage College, Kenosha, Wisconsin, USA*

century [which] continues to shape theological dialogue in the quest for deeper church-to-church relationships.” Lazareth’s work on the WCC commission and the BEM document “will be a lasting tribute to his theological clarity and passion for the unity of Christ’s Church,” Noko added.

After working for three years with the WCC Faith and Order Commission, Lazareth served as a pastor of

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, New York, from 1983 to 1987, and was visiting professor of the Union Theological Seminary, New York, from 1987 to 1996. He was elected bishop of the ELCA Metropolitan New York Synod in 1988 and served until his retirement from active ministry in 1992. From 1996 to 2003, he was a member of the executive staff, Center of Theological Inquiry, Princeton, New Jersey, USA, and a visiting professor at Princeton University. At the time of his death, he was serving as Jerald C. Brauer Distinguished Professor of Lutheran Studies at Carthage College Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Ordained in 1956, Lazareth earned a doctorate in doctrinal theology from Columbia University – Union Theological Seminary, New York, in 1958. He earned a master of divinity from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 1953, and a bachelor’s degree in history from Princeton University in 1948.

He is survived by his wife Jacqueline and three children.

(With contribution from ELCA News Service)

4 March 2008

Association of German Lutheran Churches Celebrates 60th Anniversary

Emphasis on Commitment to Ecumenical Dialogue and International Cooperation

WITTENBERG, Germany/GENEVA (LWI) – The United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) feels committed to “keeping up the ground water level of Reformation theology in congregations,” says VELKD Presiding Bishop Dr Johannes Friedrich.

Speaking on 2 March at the VELKD’s 60th anniversary celebrations in Wittenberg, Germany, Friedrich underlined the significance of the association of eight Lutheran

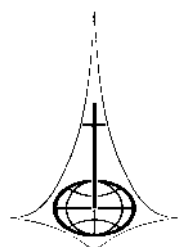
churches. In their confession of faith, the Lutheran churches had recognized the power, “that holds the churches to their cause and at the same time, offers the opportunity to constitute communion in faith over territorial borders,” he noted.

The broadening effect of this confession had worked not only within Germany but also far beyond, according to Friedrich. Lutheranism, he said, had gained a sense of its international dimension. The Lu-

theran World Federation (LWF) was founded in Lund, Sweden, in 1947 and the VELKD followed on 8 July 1948 in Eisenach, Germany.

As a confessional church, the VELKD was always committed “in a special way” to ecumenical dialogue. The dialogue with Roman Catholics, Methodist and Old Catholic churches had been fostered, leading to ecumenical agreements, Friedrich stated.

In a greeting brought by Ms Karin Achtelstetter, Director of the LWF



Office for Communication Services, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko emphasized the similarities between the LWF and VELKD through their common past, present and future challenges at national and international levels.

He cited changes in the ecumenical landscape in view of the structural rapprochement between VELKD and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), and spoke of the global perspective with respect to the new constellations and international networks through which the LWF endeavors

to strengthen its collaboration with various partners. Coupled with this is the permanent quest for “an individual profile and the redefinition of our specific identity,” he stated.

Noko noted the “renewal process in which the LWF is engaged, through dialogue with its partners and member churches, and the results of which will be available by 2010, involves precisely the redefinition of our self-image.”

On the theme of the LWF 11th Assembly—“Give Us Today Our Daily Bread”—Noko highlighted

the need to find mutual responses to the many challenges confronting the global Lutheran communion. The 11th assembly will be held in July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany, hosted by the Evangelical Church in Württemberg.

The VELKD includes eight Evangelical Lutheran churches in Bavaria, Brunswick, Hanover, Mecklenburg, North Elbia, Saxony, Schaumburg-Lippe and Thuringia, with a total membership of more than 10 million people.

25 March 2008

Germany: Theme of Kirchentag 2009 – “Mortal, where are you?”

The 32nd German Protestant Kirchentag will take place from 20-24 May 2009 in Bremen, Germany, under the theme “Mortal, where are you?” The wording, chosen by the Kirchentag presidium at the end of January, alludes to the biblical creation story.

The theme is meant as a challenge “to take responsibility for the future,” and at the same time as an expression of God’s concern, said Kirchentag President Karin von Welck. The Kirchentag, according to the Hamburg Senator for Cultural Affairs, is an invitation to “a festival of faith, to a dialogue with God.” It is an opportunity “to discuss the burning issues of our age” and seeks “to send a signal for humanity in our world.”

Kirchentag General Secretary Ellen Ueberschär said God’s question, here addressed to Adam and Eve, marks the begin-

ning of the “story of freedom.” After all, it is their free decision on good and evil that enables and commits human beings to take responsibility for their lives and action in the world. Only the tension between freedom and responsibility can give rise to the “fantastic feeling of being a human person.”

An estimated 100,000 people are expected to attend the Kirchentag in Bremen in 2009. It will be followed in 2010 by the 2nd Ecumenical Kirchentag in Munich, and in 2011 by the 33rd Protestant Kirchentag in Dresden, Germany.

Established in 1949 as an independent Protestant lay movement in Germany, the biennial convention of Christian lay movements understands itself as a “free movement of people brought together by Christian faith and their commitment for the future of the church and the world.”

General Secretary Leads LWF Meeting with German Partners in Hanover

“Historic” was the way the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, described a meeting between LWF German partners—representatives of the LWF National Committee in Germany, mission agencies and Protestant development organizations Church Development Service (EED) and Bread for the World.

“It has become clear to us that the LWF is an indispensable platform for the international work of its German partners,” said Noko.

The LWF General Secretary was accompanied by eight LWF Cabinet members at the 28 February meeting in Hanover, Germany. The consultation was aimed at increasing mutual understanding of their respective activities and improving communication between the partners.

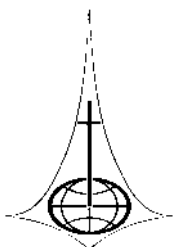
“We will take home a better understanding of Protestant church structures and working conditions in Germany,” said Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, LWF Deputy General Secretary, summing up the outcome of the discussions. “Talking to each other is quite different from exchanging documents. What we have heard today will also influence the further strategic planning and renewal process of the LWF.”

Deliberations focused on the situation of churches and agencies in Germany and the LWF 11th Assembly in 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany. Also discussed was the LWF’s strategic planning for the next few years. This will include the Federation’s self-understanding as a communion of Lutheran churches in an ecumenical context and in interfaith relations.

“In Germany it is a particular challenge for the LWF to find ways of cooperating with so many church actors,” said Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, director of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS). “In other countries there may be only one or very few contacts, whereas here there are many with responsibilities ranging from mission work to development activities,” he said. “We have a specifically Lutheran profile that we should not hide in our work,” noted the DWS director.

“This meeting was not about the LWF from Geneva visiting Germany,” said Bavarian Bishop Dr Johannes Friedrich, chairperson of the LWF National Committee in Germany. “It was about the LWF from Geneva coming to visit the LWF in this part of the world,” he added.

The LWF Cabinet comprises the general secretary and directors of departments and offices of the LWF Secretariat in Geneva.



LWF Nepal Representative Welcomes Support to Bhutanese Refugees after Fire Disaster

Nearly 80 percent of Camp Residents Rendered Homeless

KATHMANDU, Nepal/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) representative in Nepal has welcomed the generous response toward shelter reconstruction and resettlement of thousands of Bhutanese refugees, after a fire on 1 March in the Goldhap Bhutanese Refugee camp razed down nearly 90 percent of the residential houses and personal belongings.

“The spontaneous and generous support from various LWF partner agencies, the local people and Nepalese government to ameliorate the suffering of the victim refugees is highly praiseworthy,” Mr Marceline P. Rozario, country representative for the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) in Nepal told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*.



Residents of the Goldhap camp take refuge in a nearby opening after the fire which gutted down their houses.
© LWF/DWS Nepal



All that remained of the more than 1,200 houses after the 1 March inferno. © LWF/DWS Nepal

The Goldhap camp is one of the seven Bhutanese refugee camps in south east Nepal, where the DWS country program has been providing humanitarian support and advocacy for refugees’ rights since the early 1990s. There are currently 107,000 refugees living in exile in the camps.

Rozario said the funding support primarily through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refu-

gees (UNHCR) will enable the LWF program to provide the necessary emergency provisions, put up new shelters, set up water and sanitation systems and other infrastructure.

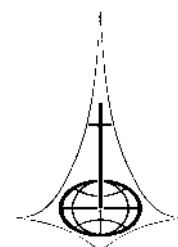
The LWF representative confirmed UNHCR approved USD 300,000 toward a DWS Nepal proposal to re-establish internal roads and proper drainage systems in the camp. DWS will start the rehabilitation and reconstruction work

soon, “but it will take approximately two months to have all the shelters ready,” he noted. The Government of Nepal has also pledged around 3 million Rupees (USD 50,000) for emergency relief.

The fire that is suspected to have started in one of the camp’s huts on the evening of 1 March 2008 completely destroyed 1,284 huts out of a total 1,512. “Even though so many shelters have been destroyed and the belongings of the refugees have been burnt, [no] life has been lost due to this fire,” noted Rozario. He said 78 per cent (7,000) of Goldhap’s 9,000 residents are destitute and without homes.

During the current crisis DWS Nepal’s relief support to the camp’s residents in partnership with the UNHCR, other international and local non-governmental organizations, the government and its relevant units include provision of tarpaulins for temporary shelter; food and non-food items; firewood; construction of temporary shelters; and installation of water and sanitation facilities.

The LWF representative said the latest disaster only complicates the



situation for the refugees who have been languishing in the seven camps in eastern Nepal. “These refugees are disaster survivors who have come across many risks and problems, constantly going through difficult times for the last 17 years. Their life in the camp has been merely survival, with external support received from

different organizations including the LWF in Nepal,” he noted.

Rozario affirmed DWS Nepal was “tirelessly working round the clock in collaboration with its local and international partners to assist the refugees so that the situation goes back to normal as early as possible.”

More information about DWS Nepal is available on the LWF Web site at:

www.lutheranworld.org

To donate toward the various activities of the LWF Department for World Service, please go to:

donations.lutheranworld.org

5 March 2008

Israel-Palestine: LWF Calls for End to Self-Destructive Cycle

General Secretary Rejects Violence as a Means of Resolving Political Disputes

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) condemned recent acts of violence in Israel and Palestine, and appealed for an end to “this infernal and self-destructive cycle” that cannot bring the region’s people closer to peace.

In a statement released on 13 March, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko affirmed that the LWF rejects violence as a means of resolving political disputes and condemns “all attacks on civilian individuals, communities and infrastructure prohibited under international humanitarian law.”

Noko described as “unacceptable and intolerable” the armed assault on the Merkaz Harav yeshiva on 6 March, saying “no political grievance can justify such an inhuman attack upon young students in a place of learning and religious instruction.”

Likewise, he condemned the repeated hail of Palestinian rockets from Gaza into Israeli communities, collective punishment of the people of Gaza, as well as Israel’s decision to approve further settlement expansion in the West Bank, as constituting violence against all hopes and plans for peace in the region, including the stipulations of the Roadmap for Middle East peace.



West Bank Palestinian patients and students trying to reach Jerusalem in order to be treated at the LWF run-Augusta Victoria Hospital or go to classes at the LWF vocational training center pass through numerous checkpoints such as this one. There is often tension between the Israeli soldiers and the Palestinian pedestrians at the checkpoints, which are commonly flashpoints for violence between the two. © LWF/K. Brown

“Each such action plants ever more seeds of mutual hatred and violence. They can never lead to the emergence of a normal healthy society of Israelis and Palestinians in the Holy Land,” said the LWF general secretary, citing the humanitarian impact on civilians especially women, children, the elderly, sick and people with disabilities.

Noko appealed to the armed Palestinian groups, Government of Israel, Palestinian and Israeli communities, and the international com-

munity through the Quartet – United Nations, United States, Russia and the European Union – “to find a way to prevent the next turn of the spiral, and to break the chain of violence.”

The LWF is present in the region through its member church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and its Jerusalem-based Department for World Service regional program.

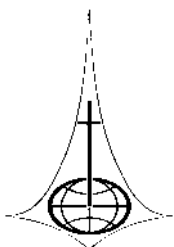
The full text of the LWF statement follows:

Statement by the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation on the recent violence in Israel-Palestine

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is committed to the preservation of human life and the promotion of human dignity. We reject violence as a means of

resolving political disputes, and we condemn all attacks on civilian individuals, communities and infrastructure prohibited under international humanitarian

law. Such attacks can only promote further violence, and undermine the most basic recognition of the dignity and value of all human beings.





A mother carries her young child, entering Nablus at the Huwwara checkpoint situated in the northern part of the West Bank. © LWF/K. Brown

For these reasons, the Lutheran World Federation finds the armed assault on Merkaz Harav yeshiva last week completely unacceptable and intolerable. No political grievance can justify such an inhuman attack upon young students in a place of learning and religious instruction, nor any of the brutal attacks specifically targeting civilians for the purpose of terrorizing an entire community. Likewise, the indiscriminate launching of rockets from Palestinian territory into Israeli civilian communities is a violation of both international humanitarian law and the most fundamental ethical or moral principles.

The LWF expresses the same concerns about the indiscriminate effects of

the actions of the Israeli Government with regard to its closures and military incursions in Gaza. The humanitarian impact of these measures has been widely reported and is tragically obvious to all those who are involved in trying to provide basic relief and support to the people of the territory. I think particularly of the women, children, elderly, sick and people with disabilities, and of all those living in constant fear under these conditions of siege.

Even in the absence of such armed attacks, a different kind of violence continues unabated. The recent decision of the Government of Israel to approve further settlement expansion in the West Bank constitutes violence against all hopes and plans for peace

in the region, including the clear stipulations of the Roadmap.

Each of these latest developments—the brutal attack on the yeshiva students, the repeated hail of rockets from Gaza into Israeli communities, the collective punishment of the people of Gaza, and the approval of settlement expansion in the West Bank—represents another turn in the spiral of violence. These actions cannot bring the region closer to the peace that all claim to desire. Each such action plants ever more seeds of mutual hatred and violence. They can never lead to the emergence of a normal healthy society of Israelis and Palestinians in the Holy Land. Someone has to have the courage to stop this infernal and self-destructive cycle.

The LWF calls on all the actors in this process—the armed Palestinian groups, the Government of Israel, the Palestinian and Israeli communities, and the international community through the vehicle of the Quartet—to find a way to prevent the next turn of the spiral, and to break the chain of violence.

Without peace in the Holy Land, there can be no peace in the world. For the sake of Israelis, Palestinians and all the peoples of the world, we pray for an end to violence and for the dawn of a just peace in the land of Christ's birth.

Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko

13 March 2008

Warmer Relations Sought Among Global Lutheran Organizations at ILC – LWF Meeting

Different Understandings of Membership Explored

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA (LWI) – At their recent meeting, representatives from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the International Lutheran Council (ILC) held extensive discussion on a number of theological topics including the goal of relations with other Christian bodies, and the differing meanings of “membership” in the two organizations.

Guided by a 2005 “Memorandum of Understanding,” the ILC and LWF leadership meets annually in order to

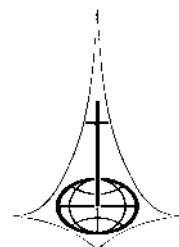
deepen mutual communication and understanding between the two world Lutheran bodies and their member churches. Together the membership in the two organizations represents most of the world's Lutherans.

A communiqué from the 25–26 February meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, highlights the main topics at the 2008 gathering.

Co-chaired by LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko and ILC Executive Secretary Rev. Dr

Samuel H. Nafzger, the Lutheran church representatives also focused on plans to observe the 500th anniversary of 1517—Martin Luther's nailing of 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg—which helped to start the Reformation and its wider ramifications for the Christian church.

At the meeting, the LWF stated its concern that the date be commemorated for its importance for the whole church, and pointed out it had initiated discussion with Roman Catholic





Representatives of the International Lutheran Council and the Lutheran World Federation met in Johannesburg, South Africa, 25—26 February 2008. © S. Nafzger

and other ecumenical partners on the celebrations in 2017. Although the ILC had not formally put the issue on its agenda, its churches also will be celebrating the anniversary. The importance of ongoing dialogue between both organizations at planning phase was noted, with emphasis on the shared desire of all Lutherans to make “this occasion one which bears witness to the renewing power of the gospel.”

Reports on current development pertaining to the life and relations of the ILC and LWF member churches included Noko’s presentation of the March 2007 LWF 60th anniversary celebrations in Lund, Sweden, including emphasis on the deepened communion among the Federation’s member churches.

Noko also mentioned the significance of the 11th Assembly of

the LWF to be held in July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany, including the churches’ presence in the place where the Reformation effectively began. “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread” is the theme of the Assembly, to be hosted by the Evangelical Church in Württemberg.

In his report, Nafzger explained decisions of the ILC’s 2007 Biennial Conference in Accra, Ghana, including reaffirmation of the organization’s identity as a “worldwide association of confessional Lutheran church bodies” who pledge to treat one another “with mutual respect and consideration.”

He said ILC membership did not require church fellowship among its members, and instead seeks to “foster, strengthen, and preserve confessional agreement which manifests itself

at the altar and in the pulpit.” The question of its members belonging also to the LWF “is a matter left to the consciences and circumstances of member churches,” he said.

Following discussion on a number of local situations in which tensions had occurred, participants expressed the importance of attitudes of mutual respect, good will, and their shared hope for strong churches with healthy leadership.

Some of the positive developments cited included reconciliation in a long-standing division in the Lutheran Church in the Philippines facilitated by the ILC and LWF, and a recent visit of area secretaries from an ILC-member church, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, to the LWF offices in Geneva.

During discussion on the possibility of ILC participation with the LWF in bilateral dialogues, a number of potential benefits and some challenges were identified, with agreement that further discussion would be required.

The ILC has more than 30 member churches bringing together more than 3 million people. The LWF’s 140 member churches in 78 countries represent 68.3 million of the world’s 71.8 million Lutherans. Eleven LWF member churches also belong to the ILC.

The full text of the communiqué from the ILC and LWF meeting is available on the LWF Web site at:

www.lutheranworld.org

20 March 2008

Church of Norway Council Adopts Guiding Principles for Interreligious Relations

The Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations has adopted a set of guiding principles for interreligious relations.

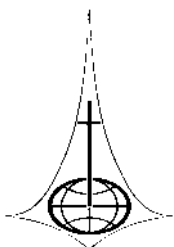
The document which was adopted on 11 February 2008 marks the first time that the Council has defined a set of guiding principles for its interreligious engagement.

According to a statement from the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, the reason for stating such principles now, is the need for marking a position in society and empowering local congregations in their interreligious engagement.

The guidelines explain the principles that the Council intends to follow in its work with interreligious issues on behalf of the Church of Norway. The document explains in a condensed and comprehensive form the basis, definition and purpose of interreligious dialogue as the Council conceives it.

Church of Norway has 3.9 million members, representing more than 80 percent of the Norwegian population. It joined the Lutheran World Federation in 1947.

The full text of the “Guiding Principles for Interreligious Relations” is available on the Church of Norway Web site at: www.kirken.no



ELCA 'Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality' Now Available

The Task Force for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Studies on Sexuality released the "Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality" on 13 March for study and response across the 4.8 million-member church. Responses are due to the task force on 1 November 2008.

Social statements are teaching documents that assist Lutherans in forming judgments on social issues. They provide theological and ethical framework for discussion, discernment and decision-making, set policy for the church, and guide advocacy and work in church and society. They are adopted by a two-thirds vote at ELCA churchwide assemblies, the church's highest legislative body, meeting every two years.

Most of the ELCA's 65 synods plan to host hearings between March and November. Based on the responses, the task force will revise and prepare a proposed social statement, due

in early 2009. The proposed social statement will be presented to the ELCA Church Council for consideration, with a request to place the document on the agenda of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly for action. The Church Council is the ELCA's legislative authority between assemblies.

The 2001 ELCA Churchwide Assembly initiated the process to develop a social statement on human sexuality. At the direction of the council, a task force was formed to carry out the process. The task force published three studies and a youth resource to invite deliberation and response across the ELCA under the "Journey Together Faithfully" banner.

The "Draft Social Statement on Human Sexuality" is available on the ELCA Web site at www.elca.org (*ELCA News Service*)

German Protestant Development Organizations to Merge

The three church development organizations in Germany—Church Development Service [Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst] – (EED), Bread for the World and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (Diakonia Disaster Relief)—plan to merge. The merger will result in a single agency for development policy and cooperation, according to a joint press release issued in late February by the Diakonisches Werk—social services of the Evangelical Church in Germany—(DWEKD) and EED.

The Diaconal Council and the EED supervisory board welcomed the plans, according to which the three church development organizations will work from one location in the federal capital, Berlin. The EKD Synod and Council set as their goal the merger of all development-related services of the Protestant churches. That the final step in this direction is now being taken was welcomed by the EKD council, the organizations stated in their press release.

The future legal form, timeframe, further procedure and financial questions will be reviewed over the coming months. It has already been determined that the merger's cost will not

be covered using donors' funds. The relocation from Bonn and Stuttgart to Berlin is planned for 2012 or 2013.

The goal is to bring together all diakonia-related work under one roof in Berlin by 2013, according to DWEKD president Klaus-Dieter Kottnik. A suitable location was being sought near the government district. Staff had been informed about the plans in advance. The merger would be implemented in socially acceptable measures.

EED supervisory board chairperson Nikolaus Schneider and Kottnik expressed the hope that developmental cooperation would be "greatly strengthened" by the merger.

EED is based in Bonn and supports projects in about 80 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Southeast Europe. Bread for the World, headquartered in Stuttgart, responds to hunger and poverty worldwide, for which it raised more than EUR 50 million in 2006. Diakonia Disaster Relief, also based in Stuttgart, intervenes in situations of crisis and disaster in Germany and internationally.

LWF General Secretary Pays Tribute to Lukas Vischer

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko said Swiss Reformed theologian **Rev. Dr Lukas Vischer** will be remembered as a "devoted disciple" who gave his life to the Church and its work.

"It would be impossible to remember the course of ecumenical understanding in the last half-century without honoring his contributions," Noko said in his tribute to Vischer, who served as director of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Faith and Order Commission from 1966 to 1979. He died on 11 March 2008 at the age of 81.

Vischer forged deep friendships with Christians throughout the world, Noko said, recalling also his contribution to the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) statement. "Lutherans have been among those who have benefited richly from the



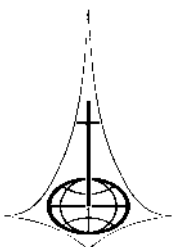
Rev. Dr Lukas Vischer (1926–2008) © WCC/P. Williams

theological range and stimulating character of this [BEM] work," noted Noko.

The LWF general secretary praised Vischer's ecumenical commitment, and remarked that "there was almost no aspect of ecumenical activity which he did not leave the better for his presence. In his own Reformed tradition he valued and encouraged not only its historical treasures of faithfulness but also its continuing capacity for transformation and renewal," stressed Noko.

The general secretary also honored the legacy of pioneering activists like Vischer for their leading role in the churches' campaign on climate change as the issue becomes more central to church work and prayers.

"He reminded all of us who honor the Reformation that this was not simply a past event but a continuing challenge to present faithfulness and risk," added Noko.



Samuelsson Joins DWS as Program Officer for Eastern Africa

Mr **Tore Samuelsson** from Sweden is the new program officer for Eastern Africa at the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) headquarters. Before assuming his new position in February, Samuelsson, 56, worked since 2001 as communications director for the Uppsala (Sweden)-based Life & Peace Institute, an organization specializing in scientific research on international conflicts from a Christian-ethical perspective.

Samuelsson's career over a period of 30 years in communication and development includes responsibility for a number of LWF/DWS programs in Africa, and several years' employment with his home church, Church (Lutheran) of Sweden, and its development and emergency relief agency, Church of Sweden Aid.

He was marketing director for the Church of Sweden newspaper *Svenska Kyrkans Tidning*, 1998 to 2001, prior to which he worked for slightly over one year as associate director of Läkarmissionen Foundation, an independent Swedish foun-



Mr Tore Samuelsson
© LWF/H. Putsman

dation supporting development and humanitarian efforts. Between 1987 and 1997, he worked at the LWF/DWS headquarters for four-and-a-half years, as program officer for six country programs in Africa, and as communications and reporting officer for Eastern and Southern Africa based in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

Samuelsson's employment with Church of Sweden Aid from 1980 to 1993 included the position of director for communications, associate development director, and consultant for media productions. From 1976 until 1980 he was a reporter for Sweden's *Dagen* daily newspaper.

He holds two diplomas—in journalism and communication from Göteborg University, and in development studies from Uppsala University, both in Sweden. He is currently pursuing further studies on the role of religion in conflict and peace building.

Samuelsson is married, with three children.

Valeriano Named LWF Regional Officer for North America

Effective 3 March 2008, **Rev. Teresita C. Valeriano** is the new regional officer for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) North America office. She succeeds Ms Kathy J. Magnus who served from 2002 until her retirement in December 2007.

Valeriano, 42, Lutheran campus pastor at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, since 2004, is a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). From 2000 to 2004 she worked with the LWF as executive secretary for the then Youth in Church and Society (YICAS) desk in the Department for Mission and Development (DMD).

Born in Malabon, Philippines, Valeriano holds two bachelor's degrees—of science in business administration from the University of the East, Manila, Philippines (1985), and in church music from the Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music, Quezon, Philippines (1994). She earned a master of divinity at Pacific Lutheran Theologi-



Rev. Teresita C. Valeriano
© LWF/H. Putsman

cal Seminary, Berkeley, California, USA. Ordained in 1998, she was a pastor of First Lutheran Church, Tulare, California, before joining LWF/YICAS.

The LWF regional office for North America is based at the ELCA churchwide office in Chicago, Illinois. In her new role, Valeriano will be responsible for coordinating work between the LWF member churches in the region and facilitating LWF activities there. The other LWF member churches are the Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Diaspora (USA) and two churches in Canada—Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad. The four LWF member churches have a combined membership of nearly 5 million Lutherans.

Information about the LWF Regional Office for North America is at www.elca.org.

Bouka Coula Becomes DWS Program Officer for Central and Southern Africa

Dr Colette Bouka Coula is the new Program Officer for Central and Southern Africa in the LWF Department for World Service (DWS). Bouka Coula, 56, from Cameroon, assumed her new position at the DWS Geneva headquarters end February 2008.

Bouka Coula's 16-year working experience with LWF/DWS includes leadership of the DWS Mauritania country program as LWF representative from September 2004 until the end of 2007. She was the LWF representative for the Addis Ababa-based DWS Ethiopia country program from 2001 until 2004. From 1996 to 2001 she worked with the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) as

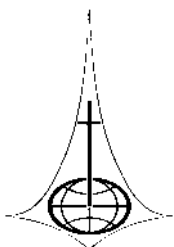


Dr Colette Bouka Coula
© LWF/H. Putsman

regional officer for the then Nairobi (Kenya)-based DMD Regional Office for Africa. She first joined the LWF in 1991 as DMD assistant secretary for Africa, a position she held until 1996.

A member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon, she served on the LWF Council's Program Committee for Mission and Development from 1990 to 1991. Her doctorate in literature from the University of Paris III includes specialization in American Civilization and the Anglophone Third World. She pursued her undergraduate studies at the University of Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Bouka Coula has two children.



FEATURE: A Fishing Town Rises Again

Continued from p. 1

designed to withstand future storms,” Chu explained.

ELCA members raised more than USD 11 million to support the immediate needs of people and long-term recovery efforts of the church’s “companions” working in areas struck by the December 2004 earthquake in the Indian Ocean, which produced a tsunami that killed more than 250,000 people along the South East Asian and East African coastlines—with about 170,000 people dead or missing in Northern Sumatra alone. Of the funds collected, USD 1 million supported the rebuilding of Kuala Bubon.



The December 2004 tsunami killed more than 220 people out of the 790 villagers in Kuala Bubon, and washed away more than one-third of the land. © ELCA

Sustainability

The project is more comprehensive than just building houses and restoring the past. “It involves the prospect for a better life, sustainable and long-term enhancements, not just immediate relief,” said Chu.

As villagers organized around the project, they created new health and education programs and learned new ways of working together to address lifestyle systems holistically.

The project included building an elementary school, fish market and community center, as well as creating a new system for waste disposal, he said. An early warning tower will increase preparedness for possible future disasters, he explained.

For YEU executive director Dr Sigit Wijayanta, the “impossible became possible. Sometimes life changes so fast, and what was only

dream and illusion [has] become reality in Kuala Bubon.”

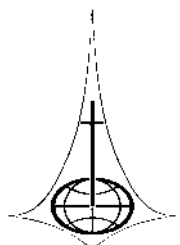
“Two and a half years ago, I came and sat together with some villagers, and we were looking at the sunken Kuala Bubon. ‘There lain our beloved and belongings. What was glorious [had been] drifted by [the] tsunami,’” Wijayanta was told. “The biggest fishing port and prominent fisherman village is now a memory. It is impossible to rebuild the village above the sunken land. And, we admit, it was a crazy idea of [convincing] the people of Kuala Bubon to return to their sunken land. The effort to regain people’s spirit was not easy,” he said.

“The people are always right,” said Wijayanta recalling the principle of YEU, an organization that has worked for more than 30 years in community development. Using scientific evidence, “we started to prove that it was possible to use the land,” he said. “Through YEU, we made the dream into reality” and built homes with the help of skilled workers, contractors and others, he said.

In February this year, the villagers began moving into their new homes. Kuala Bubon is no longer sunken land; it is a crowded settlement. The



Rev. Joseph Chu (far right), program director, Asia Pacific, ELCA Global Mission, visits Indonesia with others from around the world shortly after the tsunami. © ELCA



fishing boats rest and unload their goods along the wharfs. “The fish auction market is full of people ... fishmongers and others are doing business,” Wijayanta remarked.

Psychosocial Care

YEU is a local implementing partner of Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, the global alliance of churches and related agencies working to save lives and support communities in emergency situations worldwide. ACT is based in Geneva with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and World Council of Churches (WCC). The ELCA is a member of the LWF and WCC.

ELCA funds are needed even when groups like the Red Cross



Dr Sigit Wijayanta (far right), YAKKUM Emergency Unit executive director, sits in a tent with a Kuala Bubon family that survived the tsunami. © YAKKUM Emergency Unit



*Dr Belletech Deressa, ELCA Global Mission director
© LWF/F. Nzwili*

fund recovery efforts, according to Dr Belletech Deressa, director for international development and disaster response, ELCA Global Mission. “Church-funded recovery efforts reach people who are in need, often those who are very poor and not receiving the resources they need to recover. The church will always be there with people, regardless of their politics, ideology or religion,” said Deressa, a member of the LWF Standing Committee for World Service.

Such assistance also helps cover spiritual and psychosocial care, an aspect of disaster recovery that is

overlooked by some secular organizations, said Rev. Rafael Malpica-Padilla, executive director, ELCA Global Mission.

“After a disaster, there is an immediate need for people to tell their stories to someone who will listen. Pastors and lay people can also help [disaster survivors] struggle with the question, ‘Why God, why?’ Our partners present the love of God through every stage of a disaster from funerals to rebuilding,” added Malpica-Padilla.

(From an ELCA News Service feature by Melissa Ramirez Cooper.)

19 March 2008

Interfaith Partnership with Global Nutrition Company Provides Water to Thousands in Rwanda

A Historic Milestone for Interreligious Cooperation and Private Partnership, Says Noko

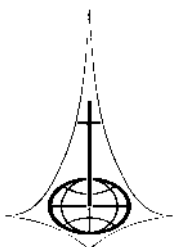
KIREHE, Rwanda/GENEVA (LWI) – A community water project inaugurated in Rwanda’s eastern district of Kirehe, offers a new model of cooperation between religious communities and public and private sectors in pursuit of human development and peace.

“This is a historic milestone for interfaith cooperation and public

and private partnerships in Africa,” remarked Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and president of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) at the project’s inauguration on 19 March 2008.

The IFAPA project will bring safe, clean, drinking water to up to 21,600

people in the vicinity of Gatore in Kirehe district. Nestlé SA, provided technical and financial support for the project, to an amount of USD 350,000. The LWF Department for World Service (DWS) program in Rwanda coordinates the implementation of the project, which is managed by the Inter-Faith Commission of Rwanda. A local water users’ com-



mittee, which includes representatives from all major religious communities in the area, oversees the day-to-day administration.

Rwanda's Minister for Water, Environment and Natural Resources Mr Bikoro Munyangani, highlighted the need for commitment, partnership and good management of resources, as he officially inaugurated the project together with Noko and Mr Niels Christiansen, Global Vice President of Public Affairs for the Nestlé group.



LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko (far right) presents a certificate to a member of the IFAPA water project committee in Gatore, eastern Rwanda, at the project's inauguration on 19 March. Looking on (far left) is Mr Niels Christiansen, Nestlé Global Vice-President of Public Affairs. © LWF/F. Nzwili

Benefits

“The provision of clean drinking water to such a large number of people fits clearly within Nestlé’s fundamental aim of making investments that have lasting benefits to society,” said Christiansen. He expressed his appreciation for the partnership “in this critical venture to create sustainable water solutions for communities in Africa.”

For Noko, the Gatore community water project “is a tangible result of IFAPA’s work to encourage practical cooperation among African religious leaders and communities across the continent to promote peace and prevent conflict in Africa.” It also addresses one of the key human development needs in Africa—universal access to safe water—and the

special burden that the lack of access to safe water places on women and children.

“Poverty and under-development in Africa provide fertile ground for conflict, but religious leaders working together can play a crucial role in promoting both development and peace in this continent,” Noko added.

Development

“This project signifies more than bringing water to those who lacked it before,” said Sheikh Yussuf Bizuru, grand imam of Rwanda’s Eastern Province, deputizing for the Mufti of Rwanda, Sheikh Saleh Habimana.

“It offers to the rest of Africa and the world a model of harmonious inter-faith cooperation for development,” he said.

Women are well represented on the water users’ committee and will play a key role in ensuring community ownership and good management of the project. “We are committed to managing the water system. When [it] has a problem we are responsible to make sure it is maintained,” said Marie Jeanne Uwanyirigira, as she received a certificate recognizing her role on the water committee.

The provision of the piped water services in Gatore supplements existing water infrastructure and contributes to efforts to ensure access to water and sanitation facilities for all in the region. This will have a significant positive impact on health, hygiene and economic output in Kirehe. Supplying water directly to schools will greatly reduce the burden on children and mothers, who can spend up to 12 hours collecting the minimum of 60 liters a family needs for domestic use every day.

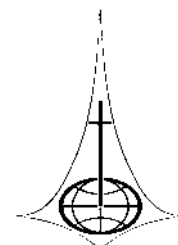


Gatore Primary School pupils wash hands at the newly installed water point in their school. © LWF/F. Nzwili

More about LWF/DWS Rwanda at:
www.lutheranworld.org

Further information
about IFAPA’s work at:
www.africa-faithforpeace.org

20 March 2008



FEATURE: Money for School Fees, Food and Medication

Lutheran Bishop-Led Initiative Brings Hope to Impoverished Namibian Community

OTJIVERO-OMITARA, Eastern Namibia/ GENEVA (LWI) – Mid-February 2008 marked the second month of the implementation of a pilot project for a basic income grant (BIG) in Namibia. This is only the beginning of a two-year trial phase, but many residents of the Otjivero-Omitara community, who will receive the 24-month payout are already counting the positive benefits of the BIG at family level, and its potential for collective development projects to improve the community's living standards.

Martha Kristian and Melca Ourum, teachers at the Otjivero Primary School said the BIG payout secures not only basic education needs for many children from poor families, it also provides opportunities for further training. "It is really a good thing as many students' school fees have been paid and the children can wear proper school uniform. They can also attend sports meetings at other schools as there will be money in the bank," explained Kristian.

Until the pilot project's implementation, the school depended mainly on irregular donations from sponsors in this community where unemployment is very high. Only those who worked on farms could afford to pay some of the schooling costs. "But now one can really see the parents have paid the school fees," remarked Ourum. Both teachers are optimistic their school will gradually manage its financial obligations without having to rely on donors' support.

USD 13 Monthly

Kristian and Ourum are among 900 Otjivero-Omitara community residents who will receive a monthly income of 100 Namibian dollars (approximately USD 13) each from January 2008 until December 2009



A resident of Otjivero shows her "Proof of Registration" for the BIG Coalition pilot project. © D. Haarmann

in the country's first BIG pilot project. The grant is aimed at fighting poverty, reducing inequality and fostering economic development.

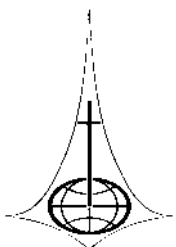
Poverty is prevalent throughout Namibian society, and is manifested in different forms among the country's 1.8 million people. According to the National Planning Commission, 75 percent of the population lives below the poverty line—on less than USD 1.50 per day—in an economy dependent on abundant mineral resources, yet known to have one of the highest income inequality rates in the world. More than 62 percent of the population lives in the rural areas, relying on subsistence agriculture. Unemployment among 20-24-year-olds was estimated at 57.4 percent in 2004, and could be as high as 60 percent today in this age group.

It is against this background that a broad-based civil society coalition including churches was formed in April 2005 to advocate the implementation of a basic income grant for all Namibians below pensionable age. The money for people who are not in

need would be recuperated through tax adjustments. The proposal for such a grant stems from a government-appointed tax commission in 2002. At the end of 2006, the coalition decided to start a pilot project to concretely show that such a grant can work, and showcase its positive effects on poverty alleviation and economic development.

Redistributive Justice, Education

Led by Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), the coalition argues that while it is the ultimate goal to lobby Government responsibility to implement such a grant, the coalition should lead by example. Its members are raising funds to facilitate the grant payout in one community, thereby setting an example of redistributive justice. They also document the implications of income security for poverty reduction and economic development.



Kameeta is the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Vice-President for the African region.

Poverty is a daily reality in Otjivero, an informal settlement which only developed in the last 10 years or so, and neighbors Omitara village. A nurse at the Omitara health clinic agreed the monthly income grant “makes the people’s lives more comfortable, as they can now educate their children and feed their families.” She was upbeat about the implications for people living with HIV. “They came to me and said they will now use the money to receive treatment from Gobabis town [in the east], while some even come to ask me for a lift to town to buy their food,” she said.

But the nurse, who chose anonymity, also stressed the need to educate the community’s residents about their long-term socio-economic security. Citing some cases, she underscored the need to understand the risks related to such income. “They [beneficiaries] must stay away from alcohol,” she cautioned. She spoke also of cases of malnutrition and underweight children, stressing education on family nutrition.

She readily offered her assistance to facilitate a positive impact for the BIG. “I will in the future be available and investigate how the

money is used. I am also busy with a program where I weigh children on given periods. With this money the people can now pay for their clinic visits and we can have funds to obtain more medicine and take weaker patients to Gobabis more frequently.” There would be added benefits for the community health center: “People will visit the clinic more often and the [health] ministry will see the need for a second nurse,” she added.

Critics

Kameeta took issue with community members who argued the grant’s beneficiaries had wasted the January money on alcohol rather than using it to improve their living conditions. “I know that there are people who do not want to let go of the past and try to justify their vested interests by all means. These are not new people, nor is their rhetoric new,” he remarked in his speech presented by ELCRN Deputy Bishop Paul Kisting at the 15 February BIG pay out.

Kameeta said he was “not downplaying the problem of alcohol abuse across all race lines and all income groupings in our society, but it is not a problem confined to poor people.” He also mentioned two new businesses started by village residents

since January that “deliberately do not sell any alcohol.”

The ELCRN bishop expressed optimism that these new businesses would finally allow the residents of Otjivero-Omitara to make real consumer choices instead of being forced to buy at inflated prices from a monopoly. He noted the principal of the village’s primary school had confirmed that more than double the number of parents who usually paid school fees did so in January.



ELCRN Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta
© D. Haarmann

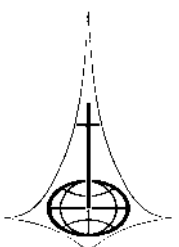
Kameeta called on critics of the BIG pilot project to be patient and allow for the necessary academic research and assessment before forming their opinions. “Because we know how easily old stereotypes are repeated, we aim to be specific and academically sound and use the research results in the assessment of the project’s success,” he added.

LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko commended the Namibian coalition for the poverty eradication initiative. “Through the Basic Income Grant, the churches and people of Namibia demonstrate that poverty can be tackled, and there is hope that the way forward is bright as long as there is political will,” he said in a message to the coalition on the occasion of the February pay out.

Noko described the initiative as an invitation to other churches and communities to explore programs that will enable those who experienced the pain of poverty to turn



During the first BIG pay out in Otjivero in January 2008 © C. Haarmann





Residents pay school fees with money from their first BIG payout. The Otjivero Primary School principal said the institution would have no financial problems in buying paper and toner for the year. © D. Haarmann

their situations around. “It is about how our God-endowed resources can be justly managed and resources are redistributed,” he added.

(A contribution from the ELCRN desk for Social Development)

More information on the BIG coalition in Namibia at: www.bignam.org

“So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth”—an LWF publication on Poverty and the Mission of the Church in Africa can be ordered at uli@lutheranworld.org

Also available, a special issue of Lutheran World Information on **Stewardship of Wealth – Overcoming Poverty** at: www.lutheranworld.org or write to info@lutheranworld.org

26 March 2008

Tribute to Lay Movement Leader Chiara Lubich

The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko expressed “deep sadness” at the death of **Chiara Lubich**, a Roman Catholic from northern Italy, who founded the international Focolare spiritual movement. Lubich died on 14 March aged 88 at her home near Rome, Italy.

“The knowledge that a woman of such deep holiness was regularly praying for us and our work offered us sustenance and strength; we will miss her deeply,” said Noko in his tribute to Lubich.

The LWF general secretary said Lubich was a “witness to the power of God to speak to the Church in every generation in fresh and unexpected forms.” Many in the Lutheran communion have drawn inspiration from “this lay woman [who] has given a generous example of faithful discipleship to the whole world,” he said.

In the midst of war, “she gave herself to a God of peace,” said Noko, referring to Focolare’s founding during the Second World War. He praised her contribution toward the search



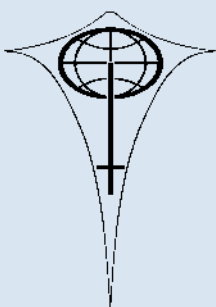
Focolare founder Chiara Lubich (1920–2008) © WCC/P. Williams

for unity among Christians: “In a divided world, she found her vocation in seeking unity among all people, whom God loves,” added Noko.

Founded in Trent, Italy, in 1943, Focolare is present today in 182 nations, reaching over 5 million people.

More LWI News at

www.lutheranworld.org/News/Welcome.EN.html



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