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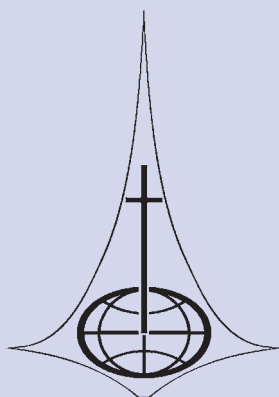
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## Call to Strengthen Role of Lutheran Communion for Churches



*At the Latin America and Caribbean Pre-Assembly: Mennonite pastor Rev. Isdalia Ortega Sanchez lights a candle during a worship service celebrating a joint commitment to peace globally by Lutherans and Mennonites. © IELCO/L. E. Ramírez*

**BOGOTÁ, Colombia/GENEVA (LWI)** – Lutheran churches in Latin America and the Caribbean reaffirmed the central role of the global Lutheran communion in the life of all member churches of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). They called for efforts to deepen this communion, including greater attention to regional strategic planning that fosters viable activities and mutual dialogue between the churches.

In a final message from the region’s Pre-Assembly Consultation and Church Leadership Conference held, 12-16 April in Bogotá, Colombia, participants who included representatives from the 16 LWF member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean pointed out that despite the “methodological challenges concerning the reception, distribution and implementation of global

programs in our region,” such activities must be “viable and visible in our continent.”

The LWF gathering commended the region’s people for affirming their identity amid resistance struggles against myriad challenges emanating from a history of colonization, slavery, dependency, dictatorship and weak economies. Participants cited illegitimate external debt and armed conflict as some of the critical issues for the region and globally, as they currently deprive “millions of people around the world of their daily bread.”

The pre-assembly underlined food injustice and its implications, environmental destruction and climate change, and the AIDS pandemic as equally urgent global challenges. Participants expressed com-

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## Jerusalem Faith Leaders Insist on ‘Prophetic’ Role of Religion

Palestinian Lutheran Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan was among faith leaders in Jerusalem who early June called for religion to take on a more positive role in peacemaking efforts in the Middle East, especially in light of the deteriorating situation there.

“Religion must be part of the solution,” said Younan, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), at a meeting organized by the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information, and attended by officials from Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities.

Instead of allowing itself to be misused by Jewish, Christian and Muslim extremist groups, religion must be prophetic,

a catalyst of reconciliation, and offer peace education, said Younan, who is LWF vice president for the Asian region.

The meeting was held before the tensions in the region following Israeli forces interception of a flotilla of ships en route for Gaza in which nine people died.

Younan emphasized the need for religious leaders to be critical of one’s own political leaders. Religion, he added, should speak “truth to power,” and “promote justice whenever faced with injustice.”

The ELCJHL has 3,000 members with congregations in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, and Ramallah, and in Amman, Jordan. It joined the LWF in 1974.

*(Ecumenical News International)*

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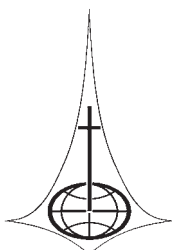
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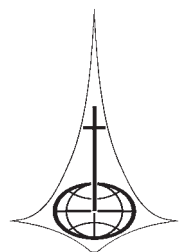
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**Includes Assembly Update No. 10**



## LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN PRE-ASSEMBLY

12-16 October 2010, Bogotá, Colombia



### Evaluating Global Contribution of a Process That Has Strengthened Regional Interaction

#### BOGOTÁ, Colombia/GENEVA (LWI)

– During their preparatory meeting for The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Eleventh Assembly this July, LWF member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean sought to determine how best to share their experience of accompanying each other as churches in communion. In their self-assessment this process has resulted in increased interaction, cooperation and emerging mutual trust among them.

Their seven-year process was one of the major discussions at the 12-16 April LWF Pre-Assembly Consultation and Church Leadership Conference for the region's churches, held in Bogotá, Colombia.



*IELCO pastor Rev. Jairo Suarez breaks the bread during Holy Communion at the opening worship of the LWF Pre-Assembly in Bogotá, Colombia. © IELCO/L. E. Ramírez*

#### Differences Are Opportunities

During the process, the churches have realized that “differences are not a threat but an opportunity for mutual learning,” said Rev. Martin Junge, area secretary for the Latin America and Caribbean region at the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD). He spoke to *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* prior to the pre-assembly gathering.

The DMD area desk coordinated the regional meeting, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO). The estimated 50 participants included 26 delegates from the region's 16 churches, representatives from mission partners, ecumenical guests and LWF staff.

A series of seven DMD-coordinated pre-assemblies since October 2009 have helped to prepare delegates from the LWF member churches for participation in the July 2010 Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany. The assembly theme, “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread,” guides

the pre-assembly deliberations, with focus on LWF's work since the July 2003 Assembly and the theme's contextual and global implications.

“The Pre-Assembly is a wonderful opportunity to come together and listen to the experiences of being the church in very different and diverse contexts in Latin America and the Caribbean,” remarked Junge, who is also LWF general secretary-elect.

#### Stories of Pain and Anger

On the Assembly theme understanding in the region's contexts, the Chilean theologian said he expected stories of pain and anger because of the many people who work hard to earn a living, yet continue to endure all forms of deprivation including hunger and starvation amid an abundance of God-given resources. “The church is called to work with communities that still do not have access to daily bread—shelter, water, food and other basic rights—based on the

conviction that in God's design there is never ‘my bread’ but always ‘our bread,’” he emphasized.

#### Stories of Hope

But there are also stories of hope, noted Junge. Within their holistic understanding of mission, churches continue to affirm that the many dimensions of “giving bread” must remain core tasks of the church's calling, he explained.

The pre-assembly agenda included a pre-conference for women and youth delegates. IELCO Bishop Eduardo Martínez preached at the opening worship.

The keynote presentation by Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti, former president of the Peruvian Lutheran Evangelical Church, highlighted some of the theological and pastoral perspectives of the LWF Eleventh Assembly theme. Other topics included a discussion on the issue of marriage, family and human sexuality; and reflections on the implications of

the LWF Renewal process for the region.

The regional gathering also included a joint session on collaboration between Lutherans and Mennonites in Colombia. This provided an opportunity to reflect on the significance of the anticipated LWF Eleventh Assembly action on reconciliation with Anabaptists, who were condemned and persecuted

by Lutherans and others during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, said Junge. “In Colombia, Lutherans and Mennonites are already connected because of their strong diaconal commitment to a population suffering from violence, displacement and marginalization. The Pre-Assembly [is] an important moment to heal memories of the past. It [is] also a moment of rich mutual empowerment for continued witness

as bridge-builders and peacemakers in the context of Colombia and the entire region,” he added.

Junge expressed his conviction that the experiences that have transformed relationships between and among LWF member churches in the Latin American and Caribbean region would be an important contribution to the Stuttgart Assembly and to the LWF globally.

## Churches Called to Fulfill their Role toward “Inclusive Justice”

Colombian Lutheran Bishop Eduardo Martinez reminded representatives of LWF member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean of their responsibility in building an equal society that provides inclusiveness in a continent demanding justice and equality.

“It’s a table of equality that we need to strive for,” said Martinez in his sermon at the opening worship of the LWF Pre-Assembly Consultation and Church Leadership Conference for the Latin America and Caribbean region, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO.)

“We have been told that in our society there will always be poor and rich people. That it is something normal, a natural condition, and that the rich are rich because they work and that the poor are poor because they are lazy, don’t want to work and always spend



*Colombian Bishop Eduardo Martinez preaches at the opening service of the regional gathering.*  
© IELCO/L. E. Ramirez

whatever savings they might have,” said the IELCO bishop in his sermon

based on Luke 14:12-13. “But the truth is that the poor are not invited to enjoy the abundance of bread that our society has. ... This thinking has to change,” he added.

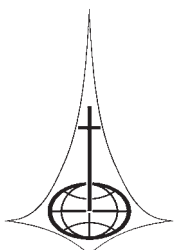
The delegates meeting in Bogotá brought bread from their home countries to share at the pre-assembly, focusing on the LWF Eleventh Assembly theme, “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.”

On a continent where a great number of people are poor, a “road of hope” and sharing is an opportunity to transform the region into a continent that demands “justice and equality” and “food for everyone,” while correcting injustices going back to the Spanish colonial era, said Martinez.

With the bread from the various countries on a table before the altar at the opening worship, Rev. Martin



*LWF Pre-Assembly participants Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann (left) and Mr. Ricardo Dalla Barba from the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil during the worship service.*  
© IELCO/L. E. Ramirez



Junge, LWF area secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean, said, "This ceremony, full of symbolism, encourages the act of sharing, but it also reminds us that there are many in the world that are left hungry." Junge, who will become LWF general secretary later this year, said "this is something that we as Christians are required to change and overcome."

LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko told the pre-assembly gathering, "It is our duty as an organization and as a church to open doors for everyone. We have to ensure that all, including women, young people, and other groups are also part of what we are trying to do.

"We have to put our theory into real practice. After all, we are all

created equal, that is what we live by and live for," he said.

In the Latin American and Caribbean region, the LWF has member churches and recognized congregations in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela.

## Churches Urged to Promote More Humane and Fair Economies

When Christians pray "give us this day our daily bread," they are praying for bread to be shared with others, said Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti, former president of the Peruvian Lutheran Evangelical Church. She was addressing participants in LWF Pre-Assembly Consultation and Church Leadership Conference for Latin American and Caribbean churches held in Bogotá, Colombia.



Keynote speaker Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti © IELCO/L. E. Ramirez

to be supportive, [as] shared bread has different flavors. ... Our daily bread is a plea for justice. It is a pastoral attention to those who have nothing in a warm way of welcoming and sharing." The failure to have bread distributed equally "in our context should never be a reason to give up in our stubborn hope that comes with the fourth petition," she said.

"For us in Latin America, amid times of crisis, individualization

and our history of colonization, the sharing of bread goes to promote and facilitate more humane and fair economies, knowing that exploitation is a sin," she added.

Cuyatti's presentation also cited the global ecological crisis and called upon churches to "urgently reconsider the way in which we relate to the Earth, which is being oppressed and suffers violence."

A panel discussion at the pre-assembly focused on the social and economic conflicts across the region. Bishop Melvin Jiménez of the Lu-

"Jesus teaches us to pray in plural: "our daily bread, give us today," she said, because bread only makes sense if enjoyed in community. "Bread without community is tasteless bread," stressed Cuyatti in her keynote address.

Citing Martin Luther's teaching on the Lord's Prayer, the Peruvian church leader said, "In Luther's explanation about the request for daily bread, he details with simplicity that the bread refers to everything that is needed in order to have life. It is a focus on the communal that includes family, work and community life."

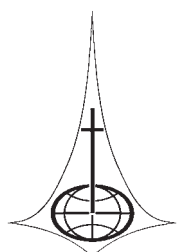
Cuyatti explained the petition's emphasis on collective community by evoking the biblical passage on Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. "Jesus didn't want to convert stones into bread: there was no community to share it, and therefore the bread did not have any meaning," she said.



Bishop Melvin Jiménez (left) and Ms Cristina Mora Ramirez from the Lutheran Costa Rican Church at the pre-assembly's opening worship, standing behind is LWF General Secretary-elect Rev. Martin Junge. © IELCO/L. E. Ramirez

### Solidarity

The prayer also calls for solidarity, Cuyatti noted. "The symbol of bread is



theran Costa Rican Church said that when facing such conflicts, Christians “are left with only one option; make the church alive, embodied in and accompanying the struggle of the people.”

Speaking about the region’s struggles, Bishop Medardo E. Gómez Soto of the Salvadoran Lutheran Church remarked, “The greater the

pain of the people, the greater their hope.” Other panelists included Rev. Luis Cristóbal Alejo Fernández (Bolivia) who affirmed the church’s crucial response to issues such as human trafficking and drug trafficking and their related consequences on people’s lives in the region.

Ms Elisa Figueroa, from the city of Talcahuano, which was hard hit

by the recent quake in Chile, stated, “This earthquake didn’t only [show] the cracks of buildings but also of our society and its values.” She was referring to the lack of solidarity among the local population after the disaster.

“The Caribbean region is amazingly rich, but the distribution of this wealth is unfair,” added Rev. Kenneth Kross from Suriname.

## Lutheran-Mennonite Reconciliation Action Can Create “New Scenarios of Hope”

Lutherans and Mennonites in Latin America and the Caribbean celebrated a joint commitment to peace in the world, as a delegation of Mennonites were welcomed at the regional LWF pre-assembly gathering in the Colombian city of Bogotá.

Since 1980, Lutherans have been seeking closer ties with Mennonites and expressing regret for persecutions—sometimes under Lutheran auspices—which Mennonites and other Anabaptists received in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

At the Latin American and Caribbean region pre-assembly, participants who included representatives from the Mennonite Church of Colombia (IMCOL) heard about the painful history that marks Lutheran-Mennonite relations, and about progress made over recent decades of ecumenical dialogue.

The LWF Council at its October 2009 meeting in Geneva, adopted a statement asking for forgiveness from God and from Mennonites “for the harm that our forebears in the sixteenth century committed to Anabaptists, for forgetting or ignoring this persecution in the intervening centuries, and for all inappropriate, misleading and hurtful portraits of Anabaptists and Mennonites made by Lutheran authors, in both popular and scholarly forms, to the present day.

“We pray that God may grant to our communities a healing of our memories and reconciliation,” the statement said.

Addressing participants during a joint gathering on 14 April, IMCOL President Rev. Tomas Orjuela cited the importance of the meeting. “Our responsibility as Mennonites is to serve the Lord and our country,” he said.

One of the traditional “peace” churches, Mennonites have generally resisted military service, often incurring penalties from governments for their pacifist stance. Orjuela welcomed Lutheran initiatives as signs of humility.

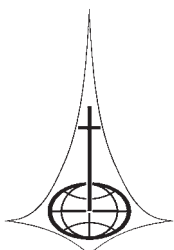
### Taking on Responsibility

LWF General Secretary-elect Rev. Martin Junge spoke of the history between Lutherans and Mennonites and of the action of reconciliation expected at the Eleventh Assembly this July. “This history can’t be erased. We must take on responsibility for it, and ensure that it is not repeated,” he said Junge.

“Peace must get concrete forms as is the case this afternoon,” said Ms Jenny Neme, a Mennonite representative, working for the Christian Center for Justice, Peace and



Mennonite church representatives with some of the Latin American and Caribbean region Lutheran church leaders at the joint meeting during the LWF Pre-Assembly.  
© IELCO/L. E. Ramírez



Nonviolent Action (JUSTAPAZ). Established in 1990 JUSTAPAZ's activities are aimed at responding to the violence and social injustice affecting communities in Colombian society. "These actions of reconciliation are a witness that has a significance that goes far beyond the churches. It speaks to humanity's longing for peace," she added.

Mennonite pastor Rev. Ricardo Pinzón, told the Lutherans, "In a world of globalization we need to globalize peace and non-violence initiatives. With your action we can build on forgiveness and reconciliation and create new scenarios of hope."

## Celebration of Peace

Lutherans and Mennonites took part in a worship service around a candle whose color blended purple for repentance and white for joyful



*Mennonite pastor Ricardo Pinzón (left) and Rev. Errol Inshanally, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana during the celebration. © IELCO/L. E. Ramírez*

resurrection. Participants embraced each other during the worship.

"I will never forget this day and this celebration of peace," said Rev. Errol Inshanally, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana. The participants spontaneously started to sing the words of Psalm 133, "See how nice and good it is when brothers and sisters are gathered."

World Council of Churches (WCC) Moderator Rev. Dr Walter Altmann, also president of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, brought greetings from the WCC, and linked the concern for global peace to the council's "Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace" (DOV). He pointed out that the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation to be held in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2011 will celebrate the achievements of the DOV which began in 2001.

## Call to Strengthen Role of Lutheran Communion for Churches

*Continued from p. 1*

mitment "to increasing our efforts and our resistance, together with all the churches of the Lutheran communion, to respond to these cries." They noted that despite the obvious "abundance of human and natural resources in our countries," suffering continued "because of the unequal distribution of wealth, and the human injustice caused by war and internal conflicts."

The final message stated appreciation for the Lutheran communion's diaconal actions and programs, which generate processes of empowerment among the most marginalized sectors of society. "These actions make it possible to take a few steps in the search for equal access to daily bread for everyone," participants said.

The pre-assembly message noted that while there had been progress among Latin American churches in "recognizing the gift of women who have taken on leadership responsibilities and been ordained to the pastoral

ministry," further challenges face the churches. The participants affirmed their prophetic commitment as "men and women, delegates and leaders of the church" to establishing processes and practices of gender justice.

The meeting also called for the creation of a regional youth network to build relationships between young people in the region, promote opportunities for further education and leadership training.

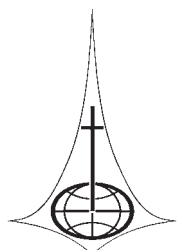
Pre-assembly discussions with Mennonite church representatives contributed to an international effort to atone for Lutheran participation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century persecution of Anabaptists—forebears of today's Mennonites—and condemnations to the present day. "Asking God and our brothers and sisters for forgiveness is also a first step that can make the journey of trust and communion possible. This step must be taken by the worldwide Lutheran communion," stated the pre-assembly message.

Referring to international discussions on issues of sexuality, marriage

and family life, the statement issued by the meeting cited the LWF document "Marriage, Family, and Human Sexuality" as a "working tool of great doctrinal value" in discussing this topic.

The LWF pre-assembly delegates pointed out that decisions made by Lutheran churches in some parts of the world on such issues as homosexual clergy have sometimes strained inter-church relations. They emphasized however, that the issue "should not be a reason for disunion in the global Lutheran communion," but should be discussed with respect, goodwill and due time, taking into account the churches' social and cultural contexts. They called upon the LWF member churches "to consider the global context with its rich diversity, and to grow in communion."

The full text of the final message from the regional gathering is available on the LWF Assembly Web site at: [www.lwf-assembly.org/uploads/media/LatinAmerica\\_Pre-Assembly\\_Message.pdf](http://www.lwf-assembly.org/uploads/media/LatinAmerica_Pre-Assembly_Message.pdf)



## LWF Mourns with Poles, One Lutheran Pastor Killed in Plane Crash

### General Secretary Noko Sends Condolence Letter to Bishop Jerzy Samiec

**GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) joined the Polish people and churches in mourning the victims of the 10 April plane crash in Smolensk, Russia, in which President Lech Kaczynski and his wife, numerous government and military officials, and several church representatives—including a Lutheran pastor—died.

Rev. Adam Pilch, the Acting Military Bishop of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland (ECACP), was among the nearly 100 passengers who died in the presidential plane that crash landed at the Smolensk airport, western Russia. Pilch, the pastor of the Ascension Parish in Warsaw, was part of an ecumenical delegation traveling in the same aircraft.

In a 13 April letter to Bishop Jerzy Samiec and members of the Polish LWF member church, Noko described Pilch as “a respected and faithful servant of your church.” The general secretary expressed the LWF’s prayers for the pastor’s family, his congregation, and the families of all the deceased. “We think also of the other churches in Poland that lost leaders and companions in Christ’s service in this tragedy, and we ask you



*Rev. Adam Pilch, acting Military Bishop of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, died in the presidential plane crash on 10 April in Russia. © ECACP/D. Matloch*

to convey our sincerest condolences to your ecumenical partners,” stated Noko’s letter to Samiec.

Noko pointed out that in the tragic accident, Poland “lost many of its most outstanding leaders—men and women who had committed their lives to enhancing the well-being of your nation, its political governance, its economy, and its social sustainability, as well as contributing to its shared

identity and to strengthening spiritual and ethical values in Polish society.”

The presidential delegation was due to attend a commemoration for Polish victims of the 1940 massacre by the then Soviet secret police at Katyn, near Smolensk. Noko pointed out that the site of the presidential plane crash “invokes in your people and in all of us in Europe and around the world painful memories of the past.” He noted that the yearning for the healing of memories and reconciliation “has been palpable over the past days, with so many Polish people gathering in public to express their mourning, and condolences reaching your country from all corners of the world.” It is hope-giving “to see the leaders of Poland and Russia come together in grief and solidarity, and cooperating in the investigation of the accident,” said the LWF general secretary.

His letter concluded by offering prayers for God’s guidance during this difficult time for the church and the people of Poland.

“May you be comforted by the Easter message of resurrection in which we are all promised to share,” Noko added.

*13 April 2010*

## LWF Expresses Shock at Second Loss by Polish Church

### Warsaw Bishop Mieczyslaw Cieslar Dies Returning from State Funeral

**GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko expressed “deep shock” at the untimely death of another bishop of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland.

Bishop Mieczyslaw Cieslar of the Warsaw diocese died on 19 April in a car accident, returning home from attending funeral services for state President Lech Kaczynski.

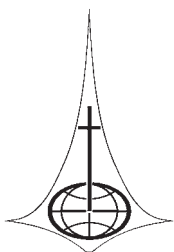
Noko said in a condolence letter to the head of the church Bishop Jerzy Samiec that the untimely death of the Warsaw bishop came at a par-



*Warsaw Bishop Mieczyslaw Cieslar © ECACP*

ticularly difficult mourning period for the country and its people. He noted that the sudden death of the Acting Military Bishop Adam Pilch had happened “at a time when he was called to assume important, yet painful responsibilities is yet another deep shock.”

Warsaw’s Bishop Cieslar was well known to the LWF as a church leader and theological seminary teacher, said Noko, citing a May 2000 visit to the Geneva secretariat by a delegation from the Polish church, including Cieslar. “On that occasion we were privileged to come closer to





him, know him as a warm hearted and committed servant of the Lord engaged in theological and inter-confessional conversations in Poland, and to appreciate his pastoral care for those who were entrusted to him in his various responsibilities,” he said.

Noko assured the Polish church and Cieslar’s family of the LWF’s thoughts and prayers “in these difficult days of transition when we are called to accept the reality of his loss from our midst.”

“We celebrated Easter at the beginning of this month and continue

to rejoice in the Easter experience, which is the basis of our faith and hope that we shall be the recipients of Christ’s gift of overcoming the power of the grave,” he said.

23 April 2010

## Icelandic Church Urges Government to Safeguard Country’s Welfare System

### Increasing Requests for Support toward Families

REYKJAVIK, Iceland/GENEVA (LWI) – The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI) has called on the Icelandic government to guarantee adequate support for every child and to safeguard the country’s welfare system.

The appeal was issued by 125 pastors and deacons attending the 27-29 April ELCI Pastoral Synod in the capital Reykjavik. “The Shepherd and Leader in Times of Reckoning and Reconstruction” was the theme of the annual meeting, held against the backdrop of a serious economic crisis and a natural catastrophe.

On the one hand, a report by a Special Investigation Commission on what led to the downfall of the Icelandic economy in 2008 had just been released. On the other, the mid-April volcanic eruption in Eyjafjallajökull was spewing lava and ash over its surroundings, wreaking havoc for farmers and other local residents and seriously disrupting the air transport system globally.

Presentations at the annual gathering indicated that approximately 15 percent of children under the age of 18 in Iceland have unemployed parents. Consequently, the church’s social service agency, Icelandic Church Aid (ICA), has seen a rise in applications for assistance. During the first three months of 2008, around 570 families applied for assistance. From January to March this year the number rose to 2,578, with women comprising the majority of applicants, and families with young children.

Serious concern was also expressed about the long-term impact of the economic crisis on young people,



ELCI Bishop Karl Sigurbjörnsson addresses the pastoral synod. © ELCI

who comprise nearly 20 percent of the country’s unemployed population.

### Global Lutheran Solidarity

The report of the Special Investigation Commission on the reasons for the economic collapse in Iceland was published two weeks prior to the synod. In October 2008 all the ma-



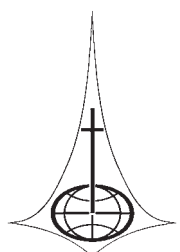
Participants in the synod included LWF Council member Rev. Kristin T. Tómasdóttir, chairperson of the Program Committee for Communication Services. © ELCI

major commercial banks of the country went bankrupt, causing huge debts to be shouldered by the citizens, including those relating to the so-called Icesave accounts, operated in Britain and the Netherlands by the Icelandic Landsbanki.

The matter received interest from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Lutheran churches in Latin America, Netherlands and Britain. This solidarity has been a tangible experience of what it means to belong to a communion, ELCI Bishop Karl Sigurbjörnsson told the synod.

In a greeting to the ELCI governing body read by Bishop Sigurbjörnsson, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko related the country’s financial crisis to situations where communities in the South have struggled under the burden of illegitimate debt.

“This is a teaching moment—a kairos moment—not just for Iceland



but for the whole world. It is a moment for recognizing what these ‘eruptions’ tell us about our global interconnectedness and vulnerability. It is a time for realizing our oneness in communion in the Body of Christ,” said Noko.

“Your interest in the debt situation in Iceland as a part of a larger economic system and on just distribution of responsibility gives us a new insight into our own situation and the situation of many nations of the world. We continue to learn about

how to live in a communion and be a part of the body of Christ that is active around the world,” the ELCI synod said in reply to the LWF.

## Gender-Neutral Marriage

The synod also discussed a government-proposed legislation on gender-neutral marriages. Further action on the issue was referred to the ELCI bishop and doctrinal committee, which will send its report to the

General Synod, the church’s highest legislative body.

The ELCI has nearly 253,000 members, representing around 80 percent of the country’s population. It joined the LWF in 1947.

*(Rev. Steinunn A. Bjornsdottir, ELCI coordinator for ecumenical affairs and interfaith relations, wrote this article for LWI.)*

More information about the ELCI is available at: [www.kirkjan.is](http://www.kirkjan.is)

12 May 2010

## Finnish Lutheran Church Elects First Woman Bishop Irja Askola

### LWF General Secretary Congratulates Helsinki Bishop-Elect

**GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko congratulated Rev. Irja Askola and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) on the election of pastor Askola as the bishop of Helsinki. She becomes the first female bishop in the Finnish Lutheran church.

“I congratulate bishop-elect Askola and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland for taking this milestone step forward,” said Noko in a statement issued here on 3 June. “It is an important sign that a woman has been elected to the office of bishop in yet another LWF member church,” he added.

The LWF general secretary pointed out that bishop-elect Askola “is well known in the ecumenical world and brings enormous ecumenical experience to her new post.”

Askola, 57, is an assistant to the bishop in the diocese of Espoo. She



*Helsinki Bishop-elect Irja Askola  
© Finnish Church Council/Aarne Ormio*

worked at the Geneva-based Conference of European Churches from 1991 to 1999. She graduated with a Master of Theology in 1975, and was ordained as a priest in 1988. Her home parish is Alppila.

Noko said, “We know her to be committed to the inclusive ministry

of men and women throughout the church.”

Askola was elected in the second round of balloting, winning 591 votes, with Rev. Matti Poutiainen getting 567.

Bishop Dr Eero Huovinen who has led the Helsinki diocese since 1991, will retire this autumn. He is also LWF vice president for the Nordic region.

Askola will take up her new position in September.

Women have been ordained in Finland since 1986, but while some, including Askola, have been nominated for the episcopate, none made it to the final balloting.

The ELCF has some 4.5 million members, representing over 80 percent of Finland’s population. It joined the LWF in 1947.

More information about the ELCF is available at: <http://evl.fi>

3 June 2010

## LWF Praise for Finnish Church Commitment to Mission Work Globally

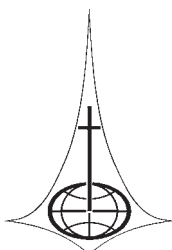
### Noko Speaks at Installation of New Archbishop Kari Mäkinen

**TURKU, Finland/GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary has praised the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) for its commitment

to church unity and its mission and service projects around the world.

Speaking at the installation, of Dr Kari Mäkinen as the Archbishop of Turku and Finland on 6 June in

Turku, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko said the Finnish Lutheran church was “deeply rooted” in the ecumenical traditions of the Nordic churches.



“Through your missionary and aid organizations you have shared human and financial resources and opportunities with people in need in Finland and abroad,” said Noko.

Finnish Lutherans have “established strong bilateral relationships with other churches within the European ecumenical movement and beyond,” the general secretary said, citing especially the ELCF’s relationship with the Orthodox Church of Finland, which he called “a very special chapter in the history of the ecumenical movement.”

Mäkinen, 55, was formerly bishop of Turku, and served as a parish pastor for over 20 years. He is a graduate of the University of Helsinki, where he was also a research scholar and assistant professor of church history. His special interests include studying the relationship between Christianity and literature. His wife Eija Mäkinen is a hospital chaplain, and the couple has four children.

In his sermon at the Turku Cathedral, Archbishop Mäkinen cited the biblical parable of the poor man lying at the door of a rich man’s house and said, “The reality we live in is the rich man’s house. At this moment, there are a billion people at the gates of wealthy countries.” These are people Mäkinen said, “whose lives depend on crumbs falling from the common table.”

A mission for the church, he said, is to make those in need feel “worthy and accepted. This is how God looks at man, this is how God comforts man, this is how God treats man.”

Noko in his address pointed out that Mäkinen had assumed his post



*The Archbishop of Turku and Finland Dr Kari Mäkinen*  
© Finnish Church Council/Markku Pibljaja

“at a very critical time, with regard to the image of the church in the public sphere.” Noting that in some countries a large percentage of the population has abandoned belief, the LWF general secretary said, “Yet I gather that Finland has between 80 and 83 percent of the population affiliated to the church. Given the challenges of secularization, Finland is still a country of strong Christian presence to this day.”

Finns were known around the world even before Nokia—the Finnish-made cell phone—became popular, remarked Noko, citing a retired pastor in Namibia whose children were named Sirkka and Veikko, Finnish names brought to the African country by missionaries.

Last week, the LWF general secretary commended the Finnish Lutherans on the election of Rev.

Irja Askola as the first female bishop of Helsinki. At the archbishop’s enthronement, Noko said, “We are grateful to God for this decision and for the confidence this church is demonstrating with respect to an inclusive Episcopal ministry.”

Mäkinen was elected on 11 March with 593 votes in a second round voting. The other candidate Rev. Dr. Miika Ruokanen received 582 votes. Mäkinen succeeds Jukka Paarma, who has been in office since December 1998.

A founding LWF member church, the ELCF has about 4.5 million members, representing around 80 percent of Finland’s population.

*(With additional information from the ELCF Communications Center and the Turku consistory)*

10 June 2010

## Lutherans Actively Engage in World Mission Conference

### Understanding Christian Mission in Diverse Local Contexts

**EDINBURGH, Scotland/GENEVA (LWI)**

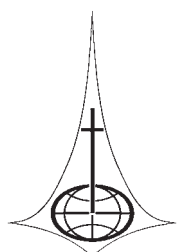
– The Lutheran delegation to the 2010 World Missionary Conference, 2-6 June, in Edinburgh, Scotland, was diverse and its members well prepared to join in ecumenical

consideration of mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), as one of the “stakeholder” organizations in the conference, was represented by a team of seven

persons, including academicians and practitioners, with a balance of gender and more than the recommended 20 percent young adults.

“We wanted to look in the direction of the future,” said Rev. Roger



Schmidt, spokesperson for the LWF delegation. “We also knew that other significant Lutheran leaders would be present in their organizational and ecumenical capacities,” noted Schmidt, youth secretary at the Department for Mission and Development.

Held under the theme “Witnessing to Christ Today,” Edinburgh 2010 marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference, also held in Edinburgh, which helped to set the course of Protestant mission outreach in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Edinburgh 1910 was pan-Protestant, with 1,200 participants mostly white men from Europe and North America. Edinburgh 2010, while smaller in size with 300 delegates, encompassed Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, as well as many varieties of Protestants, Pentecostals, and some independent Christian movements.

LWF delegates came from Germany, India, Malaysia, Norway, Ethiopia, Czech Republic, the United States and Uruguay. They joined others from 67 countries and more than 50 denominations in intense evaluation of the last century of church mission work. They discussed future mission trends, especially in terms of how Christians can work together in mission.

## Diversity

Nicolas Iglesias Schneider, an LWF youth delegate from Uruguay, was interested in how mission works in the present day. A social worker for the Latin American Council of Churches, he wondered about the impact of diversity on the content and forms of mission.

Malaysia theologian Rev. Dr Song Mee Chung said she expected to incorporate the spirit and content of Edinburgh 2010 in her work with future pastors at Sabah Theological Seminary. She had keen interest, because of where she lives, in the section on mission among people of other faiths. “We live in a Muslim context,” she said of the Lutheran communities in Malaysia.



*LWF Youth secretary Rev. Roger Schmidt  
© LWF/D.-M. Grötszsch*

Urszula Marek of the Czech Republic, working with children across the border in Poland, absorbed all she could in the study on mission and power. “The Lutheran ministry in Poland feels weak because we are a minority,” she said. “We try to appear strong and use too much energy trying to look better,” an approach she was beginning to feel was counterproductive to mission.

Church of Sweden ecumenical officer Rev. Peter Lindvall, said Edinburgh was teaching him to “listen with different ears” but was causing some concerns.

He said he was troubled that the conference included little on the collaboration among churches in the

area of humanitarian relief. He was also reflecting on how Edinburgh 2010 might strengthen the relationships between churches as such and Lutheran-related mission societies that operated with considerable autonomy.

## Continuation

There is a proposal for a continuation committee of the “stakeholders,” mostly world confessional organizations—the LWF, Vatican, World Methodist Council and similar groups—and umbrella organizations such as evangelical and Pentecostal associations.

One of the models in the section on unity in mission focused on the “Mission Today” project jointly sponsored by the LWF and World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). This project focused on grassroots experiences and reached its culmination in Argentina and the Netherlands in November 2009.

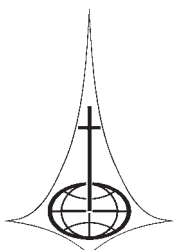
“There are many ways in which this pilot project can now be developed for broader use,” said Schmidt “This was a first run; we hope many more groups will use this model to reflect anew on their calling.”

The Holy Spirit was frequently invoked at Edinburgh 2010. The final point of the “Common Call”, the conference outcome document,



*The Lutheran delegation to Edinburgh 2010 included Urszula Marek (middle), Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession., seen here during the closing worship service.*

© Gary Doak/Edinburgh 2010





An African choir leader during the centenary celebrations held at the Assembly Hall, the venue of the 1910 World Missionary Conference. Gary Doak/Edinburgh 2010

recalls Jesus' way of witness and service, and says Christians are bidden "by God to follow this way joyfully, inspired, anointed, sent, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and nurtured by Christian discipleship in community."

Schmidt said each of the Lutheran delegates will be communicating the outcomes and their experience at Edinburgh to their respective constituencies, and that the LWF would be circulating to member churches the "Common Call," available at: [www.edinburgh2010.org](http://www.edinburgh2010.org).

*Elliott Wright a long-time religion journalist based in the United States wrote this article for Lutheran World Information.*

10 June 2010

## Young Adults Hold LWF Pre-Assembly in Dresden

### Over 120 Participants Expected

**GENEVA (LWI)** – Over 120 young Lutherans from the 140 member churches of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) will gather from 11 to 17 July in Dresden, Germany, to prepare for the LWF Eleventh Assembly convening the following week. The Assembly is the organization's highest decision-making body, meeting every six years.

The Pre-Assembly Youth Conference (PAYC) will take up the Assembly theme "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread." This concerns not only the question of food security but also broad religious and social issues such as HIV and AIDS, illegitimate debt and climate change.

All PAYC participants will also be in Stuttgart for the Assembly, either as delegates or stewards. They are preparing themselves in earnest in order to be able to effectively represent their interests among church leaders and dignitaries. "These young people so far only know each other in their own regions or through the Internet. This conference is an opportunity for them to become better acquainted

and to be able to play a more significant role in Stuttgart," said Rev. Roger Schmidt, youth secretary at the LWF Department for Mission and Development in Geneva, Switzerland. The LWF has set a quota of 20 percent representation of young people in its governing bodies.

The main feature of PAYC will be the open floor discussions or "open space sessions," in which participants will identify issues they feel should be given priority by the LWF. Schmidt says he cannot predict what these outcomes will be: "We take young adults seriously by not imposing topics in advance. They are the players in this process."

There will also be workshops to draft a position paper to elaborate lobbying strategies and to discuss the theology of the LWF. LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko and the LWF vice president for the African region, Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) will take part in the youth conference.

Schmidt says that there will of course be room in the schedule for becoming better acquainted with one another and the local surroundings. "We have youth from the four corners of the earth here. We must take advantage of that to find cohesion and forge contacts," he added. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony is organizing a program presenting the host church and the region.

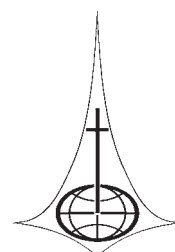
The homily at the opening worship on 11 July will be delivered by the bishop of the Evangelical Church in Central Germany Ilse Junkermann, in Dresden's "Dreikönigskirche" [Church of the Three Kings].

See the LWF Assembly Web site for related information and resources including the Assembly theme video for downloading and other video reflections; news stories, photos and blog posts from the Pre-Assembly Youth Conference; and Assembly materials such as the handbook and study brochures:

[www.lwf-assembly.org](http://www.lwf-assembly.org)

28 June 2010

**Follow LWI News during the Assembly at: [www.lwf-assembly.org](http://www.lwf-assembly.org)**



## Differences in Practice Don't Threaten Church Unity, Say Lutheran Theologians

### Bringing Hope, Healing and Liberation to God's Creation

MÜNSTER, Germany/GENEVA, (LWI) – Lutherans believe the unity of the Church is based on the gospel and the sacraments, not on how churches are organized, how the ordained ministry is structured, on rules of ethics or on specific forms of worship. This understanding in the Augsburg Confession was strongly affirmed by Lutheran theologians from around the world meeting in Münster, Germany earlier this month.

“Realizing the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church,” the marks of the church as confessed in the Nicene Creed, was the theme of the consultation organized by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Theology and Studies (DTS). Eighteen theologians took part in the conference, co-sponsored by Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Münster in Germany.

Participants included Dr Wai Man Yuen, who teaches at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong, China. In her presentation titled “Is Church an Opium of God's People?” she called for churches in her context to move from being sermon-centric to becoming more “table-centric” and relevant by responding to issues that deal with people's daily lives.

Presenting a paper on “The Church and the Holy Spirit,” Rev. Yonas Yigzazu from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) pointed out that “when moved by the Spirit,” the church becomes an active embodiment of Jesus Christ in the world, expressed through peace, justice and reconciliation. He explained that the EECMY's liturgy is structured in a way that allows charismatic practices to emerge within, rather than remain outside the worship.

The theologians stressed the oneness of the church, at a time when tensions arise between and within the various confessional families such as Lutherans, Anglicans or Reformed, over such issues as ethical understandings and who can be ordained. “Ordination of women is not necessarily a criterion but it is a decisive step toward oneness—after all, we are talking about half of humanity!” remarked Dr Else Marie Wiberg Pedersen from the University of Aarhus in Denmark, where the church ordained the first woman over 60 years ago.

A communiqué from the meeting stated that the diversity that exists between churches “is not threatening because we believe the Church is one.”

### Mission Today

The “holiness” of the church is a gift from God, the theologians said, and is reflected in the world as churches become “places and agents of reconciliation, forgiveness and healing.” Dr Eckhard Zemerich, a German working in Jakarta, Indonesia, proposed that “a church that must be *believed* as holy must be *believable* as holy.” Holiness must be lived out visibly, in word and deed.

While “catholic,” a word meaning “universal” is often used to refer to the whole church around the world and across time, the catholicity of the church is “realized locally through a congregation's worship, when the gospel is communicated and the sacraments are received by believers,” the communiqué stated.

The consultation strongly urged continuing discussion on what it means for the church to be “apostolic,” that is, carrying forward the work begun by the early church after Christ's resurrection. Today, said the theologians, this involves “continuing the mission of Jesus Christ, bringing hope to a hopeless world, justice seeking compassion for those who suffer, healing and liberation for all people and the rest of the creation.”

Dr Hans-Peter Grosshans, professor of systematic theology at the Münster university organized the consultation along with LWF/DTS. In addition to participants from the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, the Ecumenical Institute (Strasbourg) and DTS, the other theologians came from Argentina, Brazil, Hong Kong (China), Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Malaysia, Norway, Slovak Republic and Tanzania.

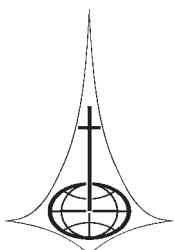
The full text of the communiqué is available on the LWF Web site at:

[www.lutheranworld.org](http://www.lutheranworld.org)

25 June 2010



Participants in the LWF consultation in Münster, Germany  
© LWF/I. J. Benesch



## FEATURE: Anticipating a Good Harvest in Haiti's Countryside

### LWF Continues to Assist Haitians after the Earthquake

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti/GENEVA (LWI)

– In the early morning sunshine in the commune of Petit-Goâve, 68 km southwest of Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince, hundreds of people are waiting. Seeds' distribution by the global church network ACT Alliance will take place any minute.

People have come from mountainous areas surrounding Petit-Goâve, areas significantly hit by the 12 January earthquake. Most of them arrived at the distribution center hours ago.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), a founding member of ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together), is distributing maize and bean seeds to the most vulnerable people in the area—the elderly, those from single parent households or families with many children. They are all members of a farmers' association which selected them to receive the seeds, says agronomist Plancher Rolnick, working with the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) Haiti program.

When distribution starts, people are called by name to come forward in groups of three. One group is given 50kg of beans to be shared among three families, and 50kg of maize for nine families.

Yvès Raymond, a young farmer from the mountains, is among the first to receive seeds. At noon, he leaves for home. "I left home by midnight and arrived here at 5am," he says. After queuing for several hours, he now has four measures of bean seeds and one of maize. He faces a long walk home under the blazing sunshine.

Like everyone else, Raymond will plant his seeds after the heavy rains in June. This way, he will be able to harvest the crop in August-September.

Joseph Galnave Norre, coordinator of a farmers' association, says that for most people the crop will only cover the family's needs. "Those who get some surplus sell it at the market.



*A woman receives her share of beans at the LWF/ACT Alliance seed distribution center in Petit-Goâve.*

© Maria Halava/Church of Sweden/ACT Alliance

Some people even go to Port-au-Prince to get a better price."

### Food Security

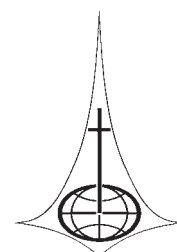
The country's food security situation was fragile long before the earthquake early this year. Decades of insufficient food production left Haitians highly dependent on imports. Since the earthquake an influx of people from the capital to rural areas has meant rural dwellers are forced to share their food with those who fled Port-au-Prince. Sixty percent of the population lives in rural areas and under the poverty line of less than two dollars a day. Keeping food production going is extremely important for farmers.

In Petit-Goâve, the locals are relieved to get the seeds from ACT. "My parents do not have jobs at the moment,

so we have had to find other ways to survive," says 16-year-old Lidor Roseline. The family with four children is living in a temporary shelter as their home was damaged in the earthquake. The maize and bean seeds given by ACT are used only for subsistence, as are the other vegetables the family grows.

In rural areas, many farmers lack cash to buy seeds and food prices have increased since the earthquake. "Seed distribution is very welcome here, since it will give people a good harvest," says Joseph Galnave Norre, a member of a farmers' association.

Aid work is not always trouble-free. The distribution was initially planned to take place a week earlier but problems with logistics forced its postponement. People who had arrived in Petit-Goâve the previous week were getting worried



that there would not be enough seeds for everybody. "This time we made sure that the truck with the seeds was already in place when the distribution was about to start," says Rolnick.

By the end of the day, 1,300 farmers have received seeds. The last 200 still need to wait until the next morning.

After the distribution, ACT will ensure that the seeds are shared equally among the designated families. The organization will continue the distribution of other items in different parts of the country as it has done since the earthquake.

In addition to the seeds' distribution and cash for work activities following the disaster, the LWF is providing temporary and permanent shelters, education and psychosocial support. DWS Haiti has been assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) in two camps in the capital's Pétionville commune. In the areas of Gressier, Leogane, and Petit-Goâve and Grand-Goâve, which were severely affected by the disaster,



Residents carry sacks of maize and beans to be shared out between families.  
© Maria Halava/Church of Sweden/ACT Alliance

around 41,000 persons have received non-food items (NFIs), 16,150 have received seeds and cash for work, while 2,250 children have had access to schooling in tents distributed by the LWF. Support goes also to families in DWS project areas which are hosting large numbers of IDPs who sought

refuge outside the city. The assistance includes NFIs and supply of hygiene kits, water and sanitation, and food distribution to the most vulnerable.

The LWF program continues to work with community members to ensure an early recovery of livelihoods, availability of clean water and sanitation, and in disaster preparedness activities.

*(Communication and advocacy advisor Maria Halava from FinnChurchAid, currently on a short-term assignment in Haiti, wrote this feature article for ACT Alliance in May, with additional input from LWI.)*

More information about DWS work in Haiti is available at:

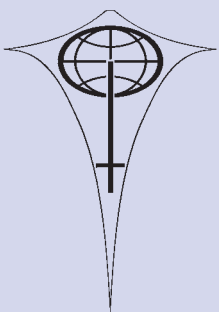
[www.lutheranworld.org](http://www.lutheranworld.org)

18 June 2010

**\*The article is in the continuing LWI features' series focusing on the topic "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread," the theme of the LWF Eleventh Assembly, which will take place 20–27 July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany.**



Residents of Petit-Goâve have their fingerprints taken as proof that they have received the seeds distributed by ACT Alliance. © Maria Halava/Church of Sweden/ACT Alliance



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