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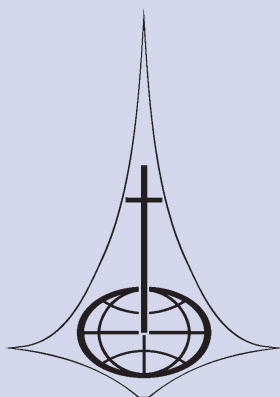
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Human Rights Violations Persist for Displaced Populations in Colombia



In Arauca Department, the LWF supports indigenous communities' right to food and a dignified life. © LWF/DWS Colombia

LWF Supports Indigenous Communities' Right to Land and Livelihoods

BOGOTÁ, Colombia/GENEVA (LWI) – The road from the city of Arauca to the rural area of Betoyes in northeastern Colombia winds through pastures, rice plantations, some remnants of forest, small parcels of land, oil exploration sites, and includes several military checkpoints.

The Esperanza (Hope) community in Betoyes is one of the reserve areas inhabited by the Makaguan indigenous group. They are among six groups in Arauca who were compelled to move from their ancestral homes because of the protracted armed conflict involving the military, paramilitary and guerrilla groups in the Latin American country over the past four decades. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS)

program in Colombia has been working with local partners and communities here, with a strategic objective to ensure sustainable livelihoods and food security, and guarantee the civilians' human rights.

The human rights situation in country was discussed at a side event organized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) prior to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Colombia scheduled for 23 April. The LWF co-hosted the panel discussion jointly organized by a consortium of local and international organizations including the LWF partner International Office for Human Rights

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LWF Gives Thanks for Pope Benedict's Ecumenical Leadership

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) expressed gratitude to Pope Benedict XVI on his last day as leader of the Roman Catholic Church for his encouragement and guidance of the church's ecumenical commitment.

"We felt encouraged by the way you have been promoting the value of profound and honest theological discernment in ecumenical dialogues, because the quest for visible unity of the church belongs also to the foundational vocations of the Lutheran World Federation," said LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan and LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge in a joint letter to the pope, 28 February.

The LWF leaders added that they cherished the memory of meeting Benedict XVI in December 2010 and the way the pope underscored the shared vocation of Lutherans and Roman Catholics, while urging reflection on their ongoing journey towards unity.

"With your leadership the Roman Catholic Church has strengthened the discussion on new evangelization and

challenged also other Christian churches to reflect on their participation in God's mission in today's world," they added.

While initially surprised at the announcement of the pope's retirement, the president and general secretary said the LWF appreciated the "wisdom and courage" of his decision, which they maintained was rooted in Benedict's profound commitment and love for the Church of Christ.

"In these days, we are praying for the Roman Catholic Church as it prepares for the papal conclave. Today our prayers are particularly with Your Holiness – may God continue to give you wisdom and his abundant blessings," they said.

The 85-year-old pontiff announced his resignation on 11 February, saying his strengths, due to an advanced age, were no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry. He had served as pope since 2005, following the death of Pope John Paul II.

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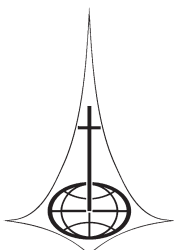
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Human Rights Violations Persist for Displaced Populations in Colombia

Continued from p. 1

Action on Colombia (OIDHACO), on 6 March in Geneva.

A state-driven mechanism, the UPR provides a platform to review the human rights practices of all UN member states once every four and a half years. Prior to the official review, NGOs can influence the process through various interventions.

The 2013 UPR of Colombia includes an assessment on whether recommendations to the country's first UPR in 2008 have been implemented, and if it is ready to show compliance for its obligations to promote and protect human rights.

OIDHACO's report on the human rights situation in Colombia between 2008 and 2013 provides a glimpse on the right to life, liberty and security of mainly civilians caught up in a conflict that has displaced between 3.9 and 5.5 million persons since the mid-1960s. It highlights cases that point to impunity by the state, compromised administration of justice and the rule of law, and increasing failure to protect the economic, social and cultural rights of the displaced populations including indigenous people and afro-descendants.

Some Progress, But Need for Continued Advocacy

"From the discussions at the panel last week, it was evident that the Colombian government had made some progress, but there is still a long way to go in several areas. I think particularly of the many internally displaced persons—one out of every ten Colombians. Will they be able to return home safely? And then there are the pressing issues of accountability for human rights violations and de facto impunity of government forces who have committed violations," noted Mr Ralston Deffen-

baugh, LWF Assistant General Secretary for International Affairs and Human Rights.

Deffenbaugh emphasized the need for continued strong advocacy, "especially during this very delicate period" of peace negotiations and continuous fighting. "There is a real danger that even more civilians will be caught up in the conflict," he added.

Peace talks between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia began in October 2012.



LWF facilitates access to safe drinking water in Betoyes. © LWF/DWS Colombia

In Arauca department, the dispute over territory between different armed actors has serious implications for the civilian population, "especially in terms of the right to live and the right to food," noted Constanza Clavijo Velasco, DWS Colombia program coordinator.

She said that indigenous families who were displaced at the time of Colombia's first UPR nearly five years ago have not been able to go back to their original homes, despite the Victims and Land Restitution Law mandating their rightful return to land that was illegally appropriated.

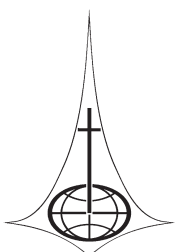
In Arauca, where the LWF supports 1,700 individuals, the indigenous land is occupied by armed groups or in some cases by oil and mining companies, therefore affecting the population's safety, health and food security. Violence against women is particularly widespread, with sexual violence being used as a strategy of war and terror, Clavijo added.

She noted that the current peace talks are a positive step forward, "but it is crucial that the process is built

on a solid foundation of respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and that it seeks to respond to the structural causes of conflict."

The international community must sustain pressure on the Colombian government so that millions of civilians driven from their lands by conflict can be able to live in their territories in a dignified way, Clavijo emphasized.

In an oral statement delivered on 20 March at the 22 session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, the LWF emphasized that mining



constitutes a major threat to indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and to their land. LWF's intervention was in response to the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on her office's work in Colombia,

"Large extractive projects are being prioritized by the State over the development proposals put forward by rural communities. The exploitation of natural resources is carried out without prior consultation and without the participation of and sufficient respect for traditional au-

thorities," said Ms Sofia Nordenmark, presenting the statement that was supported by Church of Sweden and DWS Colombia.

Nordenmark noted that the High Commissioner's report had made it clear that much work still needed to be done to achieve the full realization of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights in Colombia, which is one of the most unequal countries in Latin America. While the LWF and Church of Sweden welcome the ongoing peace dialogue, "a possible peace agreement needs to

address these inequalities in order to be sustainable," she added.

In a statement at its 2012 Council meeting in Bogotá, the LWF urged Lutherans around the world to engage in stronger advocacy for the churches and people of Colombia. The LWF is present in the country through the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia and the DWS program.

(The LWF Colombia program contributed to this article.)

Bishop Yuri Novgorodov Underlines Lutheran Church's Position in Kazakhstan

State Award Honors Bishop's Contribution to the Country's Development

ASTANA, Kazakhstan/GENEVA (LWI)—Bishop Yuri Novgorodov of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Kazakhstan (ELCRK) said a special award he received from the country's president is an honor for the whole church, "and above all, a way of recognizing the church's public position."

At the end of 2012 President Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev awarded Novgorodov the Republic's Certificate of Honor, in recognition of the bishop's achievements in promoting the country's social and cultural development and in fostering international friendship and cooperation.

"We regard this award by the state as a sign that we are faithfully carrying out the mission God has entrusted to us," Novgorodov told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* in early March. He pointed out that although the Lutheran church has diminished in numbers to about 2,500 members in the last few decades it is highly respected in the country. As bishop, he asserted, he can never be perceived independently from this role, but as a spokesperson for the church and the Christian message.

As the Lutheran church representative, Novgorodov is also involved in the international Congress of



Kazakhstan Lutheran Bishop Yuri Novgorodov
© Martin Luther Association

Leaders of World and Traditional Religions organized by the state in the Kazakhstan capital Astana every third year since 2003. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has been represented in these gatherings, which according to Novgorodov, help to create greater trust between religions and to facilitate dialogue. "They offer us an opportunity to gain a hearing for our positions both inside and outside our country," he noted.

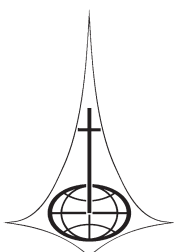
Novgorodov explained that the church's good position in society is

due to over two centuries of Lutheran tradition in the country, and its good relations with ordinary people. "I would call Kazakhstan a strange kind of Noah's Ark. You can find members of more than one hundred nationalities living here, and also many different religions." This diversity, he said, has given rise to a special spirit of friendly coexistence in which the Lutheran church, too, has been able to thrive.

The new law on religion in 2011 has made it clear, however, that the general conditions for religious communities are still not always easy. It requires every single congregation to register again in order to safeguard the legality of its activities. With the assistance of international partners, the Lutheran church has been able to complete the necessary steps and can now concentrate on its real work—carrying out its mission in society. That is a big job for a small church, Novgorodov added.

The ELCRK is a regional church of the Federation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States (ELCROS), a member church of the LWF since 1989.

(This LWI article includes material from the Martin Luther Association.)



Lutheran Leaders Affirm Tanzanian Church's Role in Interfaith Encounters

LWF General Secretary Junge Visits Destroyed Church Building in ELCT Diocese

DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) leaders visiting the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) Eastern and Coastal diocese affirmed the crucial role of congregations in offering space for interfaith encounter, healing and reconciliation to mitigate conflict in society.

for Mission and Development. They were hosted by the ELCT Presiding Bishop Dr Alex G. Malasusa, who is LWF Vice President for Africa.

The ELCT Mbagala parish is among churches and Christian buildings that were burned by people suspected to be Islamic extremists in the country's coastal region in Octo-

ber 2012. The altar and parish offices were extensively damaged. During discussions with the parish members, Junge expressed sadness for the damage and support for the church community's persistence to remain calm. He reiterated the message by ELCT bishops last October, and urged restraint from any move of retaliation but instead "set an example in showing God's great love for humankind."

ations is to comply with the commandment to love one another," and continue to be law-abiding citizens. Preserving peace and tolerance should be prioritized and taught to children and to the public at large, he emphasized.

Malasusa thanked the LWF delegation "for taking the time to visit and comfort" the ELCT diocese and to see for themselves the extent of destruction. "Your action has demonstrated your love for the church, and that you are friends indeed who love those in need," said the ELCT leader. "It was very moving for me to hear from the parish members that when they restore the church building, they want to preserve some of the damaged sections as a reminder of what happened here, so that 'it strengthens us in our resolve to say never again,'" Junge said, reflecting on the visit to the destroyed church.

The LWF general secretary expressed his deep recognition for the pastoral work done in the Mbagala parish after such painful events. "Their plan to address with strong resolve issues of poverty and lack of opportunities among the youth, and to make their congregation a place of interfaith encounter and cooperation has impressed me deeply. It tells about the vitality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of this congregation," he added.

The LWF delegation also visited some of the institutions run by the diocese's social services department including a health center, a girls' secondary school and a home for children with disabilities.

The ELCT has 20 dioceses, bringing together more than 5.8 million members. It joined the LWF in 1964.

(The ELCT communications office contributed to this article.)



The Lutheran leaders with children residing at the ELCT center in Temeke district, Tanzania. © ELCT

"Violence in various contexts leaves indelible marks as a reminder of the suffering endured individually and collectively. While it is important to commemorate such painful events, we should not be paralyzed by the violence suffered, but should instead find ways to invigorate actions for transformative witness," said LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, who led the delegation, 13-15 February.

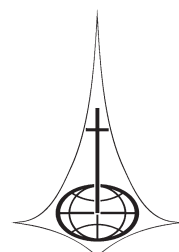
The three person-team included Rev. Dr Wakseyoum Idosa, President of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) and head of the Lutheran Communion in Central and Eastern Africa (LUCCEA), and Rev. Dr Musa Pantu Filibus, director of the LWF Department

ber 2012. The altar and parish offices were extensively damaged.

During discussions with the parish members, Junge expressed sadness for the damage and support for the church community's persistence to remain calm. He reiterated the message by ELCT bishops last October, and urged restraint from any move of retaliation but instead "set an example in showing God's great love for humankind."

Preserving Peace and Tolerance

Idosa reminded the ELCT leaders and the Mbagala parish members that "the most important thing Christians should do in such situ-



World Day of Prayer: Affirming That Faith and Action Are Inseparable

LWF Women's Networks Support Struggle for Gender Justice

GENEVA (LWI) – The World Day of Prayer (WDP), marked globally in many countries on the first Friday of March is a day for women worldwide to affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and both have immeasurable influence.

For The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the day which was marked this year on 1 March, was an occasion to reflect on the issues that relate to women's empowerment and leadership, and to gender justice in community and within the church, said Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt, executive secretary for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) at the LWF.

Neuenfeldt pointed out that the WDP movement of Christian women from many church traditions includes many women in the LWF member churches who are putting their faith into action for gender justice.

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me," was the WDP theme for 2013. This theme is directly

connected to LWF's diaconal work with refugees and with internally displaced persons, and in advocacy against gender-based violence and for human rights, said Neuenfeldt. "It is also a theological affirmation of the Lutheran Communion's commitment to be inclusive, embracing our differences as a gift that enriches our shared spiritual journey," she added.

WICAS is exploring further collaboration with WDP. During a recent visit to the LWF, WDP executive director Rosângela Oliveira pointed out that the spirituality expressed in the WDP enables "many women to open ourselves to women from countries we probably know nothing about or anybody, and let them talk to us. We pray for the other."

Oliveira described the prayerful "listening to the other and learning" as important in empowering those struggling for justice in their communities and in educating women about the injustices suffered in their own lives.

Citing some examples, she said women from Madagascar had initiated workshops on human rights and the rites of widowhood, because they had learned from those in Malaysia about "the need to seek justice without fear or discouragement." In Cameroon, seminars and training for women and youth about their rights are helping to build up advocacy on violence against women and child trafficking, and increase support for widows in prison.

For Neuenfeldt, these important initiatives inspired by WDP "help to build bridges that strengthen women's networks and make visible women's leadership in our churches and society."

The WICAS secretary affirmed LWF's commitment to continue emboldening "women and men to work hand in hand in addressing systemic injustices and transform together realities of oppression into communities of a good life centered on just relations."

'Together We Can Make a Real Change': Reflections by German Committee Member Julia Lersch

"Informed Prayer – prayerful action" is the guiding principle of the World Day of Prayer (WDP). Each year, on the first Friday in March, women in more than 170 countries invite people to ecumenical services.

The WDP in 2013 was prepared by women from France. The theme "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" invites us all to reflect on how we can work together for a culture that welcomes strangers in our midst.

There is a strong connection between welcoming strangers and empowering women to get access to their rights, and to be in solidarity with those who are marginalized. I had the chance to participate at the WDP international conference in New York last year where

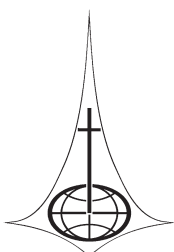
we worked on the justice issue of "migration. It was a good and transformative learning experience to share our own migration stories and perspectives within our own regions, and with our sisters from other parts of the world.

I am involved in two networks—as delegate of the German WDP committee and coordinator of the Women in Church and Society (WICAS) network of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for the Central Western Europe region.



Ms. Julia Lersch © Private

Both networks promote women's empowerment and gender justice, and define their commitment to gender justice both as a task and a vision for church and society. The two platforms also recognize that strengthening and enforcing political, economic and societal rights of women is the most effective strategy for overcoming discrimination and violence, and for improving living conditions for women worldwide.



Creating a strong link between WDP and WICAS will increase our learning and strengthen our common objectives. We are so many women involved in the church and together we can make a real change.

We invite you to a WDP service on this Friday. You can find them in almost every city.

Get in touch with your sisters in your community knowing that women from all over the world are

connected through prayer and solidarity for each other.

Julia Lersch is the secretary for Women's Ecumenism and World of Prayer at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany.

Courage and Commitment Are Key to Achieving Gender Justice

International Women's Day 2013

NEW YORK, USA/GENEVA (LWI) – On the occasion of International Women's Day (IWD), marked globally on 8 March, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) highlighted some of the critical issues for LWF's commitment to gender justice in both church and society.

"A promise is a promise: time for action to end violence against women" was the IWD theme for 2013.

The LWF Women in Church and Society (WICAS) desk also offered a worship resource to celebrate women's faith, strength and courage towards achieving gender justice in both church and society.

At the 57th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), 4-15 March in New York, United States, the LWF co-sponsored two side events, under the CSW priority theme "Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls."

LWF's contribution to the CSW was organized in collaboration with the World Council of Churches, and included the participation of Norwegian Church Aid among other organizations.

Ms Mariem M'bareck from the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) program in Mauritania discussed how the LWF had mobilized Muslim leaders' support in advocating against female genital mutilation (FGM) or female circumcision. She explained how "an LWF awareness-raising process that began with the support of two imams in 2004 has grown into a countrywide campaign that today involves 225 religious leaders, 140 non-governmental orga-

nizations and 400 community activists, and engages the government's and UN agencies' collaboration."

Ms Christine Mangale, program coordinator at the Lutheran Office for World Community in New York, and former LWF intern Tsiry Rakoto, joined some of the debates and sessions and explained how LWF member churches engage rural communities in efforts to end the cultural and harmful practice of FGM.



LWF representatives Ms Mariem M'bareck (left) and Ms Tsiry Rakoto during a side event at the 57th CSW in New York. © LWF/Dustin Wright

Discussions at the CSW panel sessions "helped to dispel erroneous assumptions about the controversial nature of reproductive rights and demonstrated instead that reproductive health includes basic protection against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. It deals with female genital mutilation and other external regulations of or ownership over a woman's own body," Mangale emphasized.

Commenting on the outcome of this year's CSW, Neuenfeldt said the agreement and commitment to end violence against women expressed at the conclusion of the 2013 CSW had reaffirmed the main declarations on women's rights such as the Beijing Dec-

laration and Platform of Action. The Commission—the highest UN policy-making body on gender empowerment "clearly pointed out that violence against women and gender-based violence are rooted in historical and structural inequality, in power relations between women and men and is intrinsically linked to gender stereotypes that perpetuate such violence," she added.

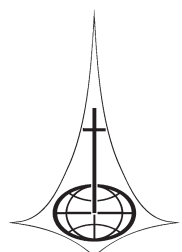
Neuenfeldt underlined the contribution of grassroots' initiatives to decisions made at CSW sessions and other related UN processes. "The strategic involvement of local communities is essentially what drives and gives meaning to global policy decisions that the LWF monitors," she added.

She said plans are underway for the participation of LWF churches and DWS country programs in the 55th and 56th sessions of the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to be held in Geneva this July and September/October. The agenda includes a review of the obligations of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Colombia on the systematic violations of women's rights, including sexual violence against women during conflicts.

(LWF's Christine Mangale and Tsiry Rakoto contributed to this story.)

Share your stories with

WICAS: If you know actions, initiatives and projects from Lutheran churches in your country or region which are keeping the promise to end violence against women, please share this experience/story with us at lwficas@Lutheranworld.org



LWF Expresses Joy for Roman Catholics on Election of Pope Francis

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) greeted the newly elected leader of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis, on his first day in office, expressing the Lutheran communion’s joy for Catholics and urging continued dialogue with Lutherans.

The Roman Catholic College of Cardinals elected Argentinian Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio on the evening of 13 March at the Vatican. The 76-year-old pontiff becomes the first head of the Roman Catholic Church from the global South.

“You have been elected to serve the Church at a time when Lutherans and Catholics are growing in mutual understanding and joint witness not only at the local level but also at a global level,” said LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan and General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge in a 14 March letter addressed to the new pontiff.

Younan and Junge expressed their anticipation for the insights that the new pontiff brings into his new ministry from the rich pastoral and episcopal ministry in Argentina. “The challenging contexts of military dictatorship, economic collapse due to external debt, of social violence and ecological devastation have shaped your life and ministry as much as the joyful hope

and deep faith of God’s people journeying and witnessing together to God’s love to humanity in the midst of these realities,” they wrote.

The LWF leaders noted that one of the most significant steps of the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue was the 1999 signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) between the Vatican and the LWF, which also included local celebrations across the globe. As then Archbishop of Buenos Aires, the newly elected pontiff actively participated in the joint JDDJ celebration organized in the Buenos Aires congregation of LWF member church, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church. “Our member churches remember with joy your active participation,” in this important event, Junge and Younan stressed.

The LWF leaders said Pope Francis takes on his ministry during a time of growth in mutual understanding between Lutherans and Catholics. The Lutheran-Catholic Joint Commission on Unity is approaching its 50th anniversary and is soon to publish the report *From Conflict to Communion*, which “constitutes a significant milestone” in preparation for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation to be marked in 2017, they noted.

“It is our prayer that this document will be meaningful to many in the world so strongly longing for peace, justice and reconciliation,” the Lutheran leaders said.

They reiterated the LWF’s appreciation for the Vatican’s commitment to ecumenical dialogue and offered their prayers that churches will continue to grow together through the witness of Christians around the world in their daily lives. “Those praying together and faithfully working together for the sake of the neighbor in contexts of injustice and violence have contributed to this growing understanding and joint witness,” they added.

“Working together in prayerful spirit is the basis of our quest for the visible unity of the church, which needs our efforts but which ultimately is given for us only through the grace of God,” the LWF leaders said.

Addressing the new pope, they concluded: “May your ministry be carried by the hope of those things that God has prepared for the world, and which inspire the witness of all Christian churches throughout the world.”

As the 266th pontiff, Pope Francis succeeds Benedict XVI, originally from Germany, who led the Roman Catholic Church from 2005 until his resignation at the end of February 2013.

Making Common Cause with Pope Francis on Serving the Poor

Leaders from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) attending the inauguration mass of the pontificate of Pope Francis on 19 March in St Peter’s Square at the Vatican, said the first Latin American pope’s concern for the poor gives him common cause with Lutherans.

“Nobody should be lost—this is the core message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” said LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan. “The compassionate service to the poor across the denominations is a compelling way of witnessing to this message.”

Reflecting on decades of dialogue between Catholics and Lutherans, Younan noted that in a world characterized by fragmentation and communication breakdown the Vatican and the LWF were not only communicating but working together, thanks to their shared faith convictions.

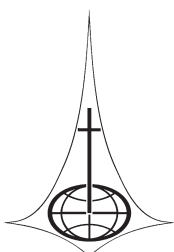
“We owe it to people around the world longing for peace, justice and reconciliation,” the LWF president added.

LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, a Chilean theologian,

expressed his delight at having a Latin American as leader of the Roman Catholic Church. “I never thought in my life that I would speak to a pope using my own mother tongue—Spanish.”

Junge affirmed that the pope is known to Lutheran churches in Argentina and that Francis knows the Lutheran churches. “This is a promising starting point to continue deepening relationships at the global level,” he said.

“We must continue journeying in dialogue and service in this world,



discerning together about ways to bring God's message of justice, peace and reconciliation to the human family and a suffering creation," Junge added.

In Argentina, Lutheran church leaders referred to the happiness and anticipation of Pope Francis' followers in Latin America.

"One inescapable aspect of the election of Francis is the joy and the hope to be seen in many of the simple humble folk, those whom we in the Lutheran churches in the region are called to accompany," said Rev. Gustavo Gómez, President of Argentina's United Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELU).

"That also gives rise in us to a wave of sympathy, as well as our prayers

and our sincere and vehement desire that the first Latin American pope should call for conversion, make sure that the voices of the many excluded persons are heard," Gómez said.

The IELU president said that those who have met the former Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio have talked about his warmth and concern toward people as individuals. Those involved in ecumenical affairs in Argentina say the new pontiff has a deep knowledge of and respect for different religious positions.



IERP General Secretary Rev. Sonia Skupsch © LWF/Erick Coll

This sentiment was echoed by Rev. Sonia Skupch, General Secretary of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate (IERP).

"Individuals in the IERP who have had dealings with him have told me of his great willingness to dialogue, his approachability, and his wide knowledge of the Protestant world and our ideas and beliefs," Skupch said.

"We are glad that a Latin American cardinal has been elected pope. He will definitely be able to contribute a different viewpoint and vision and a different leadership style," Skupch concluded.

Salvadoran Cross Offered to Pope Francis to Encourage Service

In an audience with Pope Francis on 20 March, LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan offered the new pontiff a painted cross from El Salvador to help inspire his new ministry.

"May this serve as an encouragement so that you offer your pastoral

experiences in Argentina as gifts for this new service into which you have been called. We pray for your contributions to become a blessing for the church," Younan said.

On 19 March Pope Francis said in the homily he preached at his in-

augural mass that St Joseph, known as the protector, offered a model of service that should be emulated by Christians and community leaders.

"Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be 'protectors' of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment," Francis urged.

LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge offered the pope a copy of the LWF publication on external debt, titled *Not Just Numbers*.

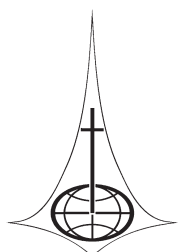
"As an Argentinean you know what the external debt, in many aspects illegal and illegitimate, can do to human beings. Our relationship and our unity, received as a gift of God, unfold their full meaning when we see them in the context of God's promise of life in abundance to all human beings," Junge noted.

The general secretary pledged the Lutheran communion's commitment to ecumenical dialogues. "A church can't be on its own. It requires the strong bonds of relationships, exchange and mutual uplifting," he emphasized.

Junge and Younan reiterated their invitation and commitment to engage with Roman Catholics as the LWF marks the 500th anniversary of the launching of the Lutheran Reformation in 2017.



LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan presents Pope Francis with a Salvadoran cross. © Servizio Fotografico "L'Osservatore Romano"



New Archbishop of Canterbury Welcomed With Joy

Lutheran Church Leaders Attend Enthronement

CANTERBURY, United Kingdom/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge welcomed with joy the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, saying it comes as Anglicans and Lutherans embark on a new phase of cooperation.

experience on shared life and serving the neighbor together,” Junge added.

In the service attended by government leaders and representatives of Christian traditions and faith groups from around the world, Welby, 57, the former Bishop of Durham, was enthroned as the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England,

the church, which includes offering shelter to the homeless and counsel to the bereaved, as well as internationally running refugee camps.

“We are asked to step out of our comfort zones and heed the call of Christ to be clear in our declaration of Christ, committed to the prayer in Christ and we will see a world transformed,” the archbishop said.



Archbishop Welby exiting Canterbury Cathedral; on his right, primates from the Nordic Lutheran churches.
© Picture Partnerships/Lambeth Palace

Diaconal Work

The Lutherans and Anglicans recently published the outcome of their meetings since 2006 in the report *To Love and Serve the Lord*, which shows how church ministries are transforming relations between churches in both communions. The report of the Anglican - Lutheran International Commission (ALIC III) focuses on diakonia in the life of the church.

Recommendations in the report, addressed to Lutheran and Anglican churches at all levels, call the churches' attention to the diaconal work in which they can join together. The ALIC III report emphasizes that “diakonia is inseparable from discipleship and belongs to the whole people of God.”

ALIC III invites the Anglican Communion and the LWF to encourage their respective churches to pursue common development of a wide range of ministries and the building up of relationships at all levels of ecclesial life and mission. The two Christian World Communions are also asked to challenge their churches to do more together at all levels for disaster relief, in advocating on issues relating to climate change, illegitimate debt, HIV and AIDS and other pressing social concerns.

“Because of these relationships between Lutherans and Anglicans in local communities and at the local level, I find participating in the enthronement of the new Archbishop of Canterbury a particular joy,” Junge concluded.

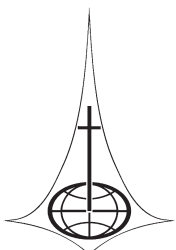
“The new Anglican-Lutheran International Coordinating Committee (ALICC) is meeting for the first time later this year, and I am convinced that this is a strong sign of our ongoing commitment for joint witness,” said Junge, who took part in the enthronement ceremonies on 21 March at Canterbury Cathedral in England.

“There are already several local and regional agreements on unity between the Lutheran and Anglican churches. They are based on careful theological discussions as well as long-time

and spiritual leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion. He succeeds Dr Rowan Williams who retired in December 2012 after ten years in office.

The contemporary international bilateral dialogue between Anglicans and Lutherans began in 1972, with joint reports on the different phases. There have been regional dialogues between Anglicans and Lutherans in the United States, Australia, Europe, Canada, Africa and Brazil.

In his first sermon, the archbishop referred to the diaconal work of



A Place to Learn, Share and Find New Hope

Diaconal Response to Ukraine's Social and Economic Challenges

ODESSA, Ukraine (LWI) – Morning classes are over in the Black Sea port city of Odessa, and some of the children head to a day-care center in the Suvorovsky neighborhood.

At “Living Hope” they can enjoy a meal, do their homework and participate in extracurricular activities, including lessons in English and German. The young Ukrainian and German volunteers who help run the center cook together with the children, talk to them about their school day and offer help with homework. Outside there is a brightly painted playground.

Sitting in the kitchen cum dining room the center's founder Nicole Borisuk speaks passionately about how it all began. “We had a vision and some money,” she says simply.

She moved to Odessa from the capital Kiev in 2000 and together with her husband Slavik founded Living Hope on premises offered rent-free by the state. She recalls how the authorities gave her a list of names of vulnerable families, and she had to visit the parents to convince them to enroll their children at the



Living Hope founder Nicole Borisuk (left), talking with one of the volunteers at the day-care center in Odessa, Ukraine. © LWF/Anli Serfontein

center. It started with 10 children in 2001. Today, the two centers in Odessa look after 40 children each.

“I think the biggest challenge was to believe in the dream we had. We were really prepared to do it for one changed life. Now we have more than one life changed and that is wonderful,” says Borisuk who is originally from Germany.

Nora Scheid, 19, from Stuttgart, is one of the two German volunteers

working this year at the Living Hope centers. She alternates between the two after-care institutions in one of the poorest districts of Odessa, spending six hours every afternoon with the children. She helps in the cooking, homework and also giving German and English lessons or supervising the children as they play.

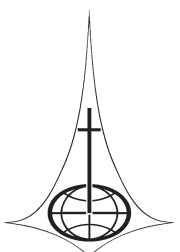
Before each meal the children stand together in a circle and pray, often sharing their own worries. After eating, the volunteers wash the dishes with the help of some of the children.

The principles of Christian faith are taught at the center, yet, Borisuk feels it is important to be independent from any specific church. “Our Christian faith is very important to us and we work on an ecumenical level. It is important for us not to be connected to one institution,” she explains.

There are successes and failures in running the center, Borisuk says. But “the single person counts, even if one person's life changes,” she adds. She talks about a girl with physical disabilities, who lives with her mother in one of the high-rise buildings nearby and how the teenage volunteers, without any pressure or suggestion, regularly visit the girl at home.



Children play at the Living Hope center in Odessa, Ukraine. © LWF/Anli Serfontein





Participants in the LWF workshop on reforming diakonia in Europe visited the Living Hope center. Rev. Avo Üprus from Estonia (far left) and Ms Kristina Soroko from Russia (far right) playing table tennis with some of the children. © LWF/Anli Serfontein

Reaching Out to Others

In a country with the highest HIV infection rate in Europe (1.3 percent of the adult population), the center also reaches out to those needing support and raises awareness about the disease.

Living Hope plans to expand and in September will open a center in a village of 6,000 inhabitants. "This is also a big challenge and we will have a different approach. We are involving politicians, local schools and young people in the planning process," Borisuk says.

In January Lutheran pastors, educators and diaconal workers attending a workshop on reforming community diakonia in Europe got a glimpse of Living Hope as an example of the various projects that address the social and economic chal-

lenges facing Ukrainian society. The workshop was part of a series which The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Europe desk at the Department for Mission and Development coordinates in collaboration with the International Academy for Diakonia and Social Action (interdiac) in Český Těšín, Czech Republic.

Bishop Uland Spahlinger of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine (DELKU), which hosted this year's meeting, said the major issues facing teenagers and young adults in the country is the lack of perspective about the future. The standard of living has declined among the population of 45 million people, and alcohol and drug abuse are widespread. "After studying, many of them [young people]

either leave the country or they face hopelessness and start drinking and using drugs," he noted.

The church provides preventive care and therapy to youth and adults dealing with drug and alcohol abuse, and care for those living with HIV and AIDS.

The diaconal services provided by the DELKU St Paul's Odessa congregation include assistance to elderly people, who "have low pensions and live under difficult circumstances," Spahlinger said. It also has an international primary school, which the bishop says was lacking in the multicultural city.

Christian Duty

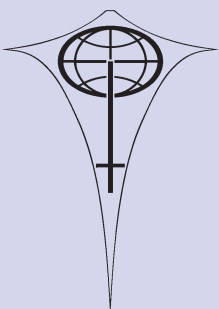
"The country is big, the church is small. If we look at what Christ did and how he acted, particularly to help those on the shadow side of society, we cannot but be involved in diaconal work. It is the action side of our mission; we see it as our Christian duty," he said.

Spahlinger underlines that the diaconal work of the church is open to all Odessa residents irrespective of faith. "Diaconal work should not ask for a confession of faith, before you do something," he added.

DELKU has 30 congregations and parishes located mostly in urban areas all over the Ukraine. It is one of the regional churches of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Russia and Other States (ELCROS), an LWF member church.

(By Berlin [Germany]-based LWI correspondent Anli Serfontein)

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