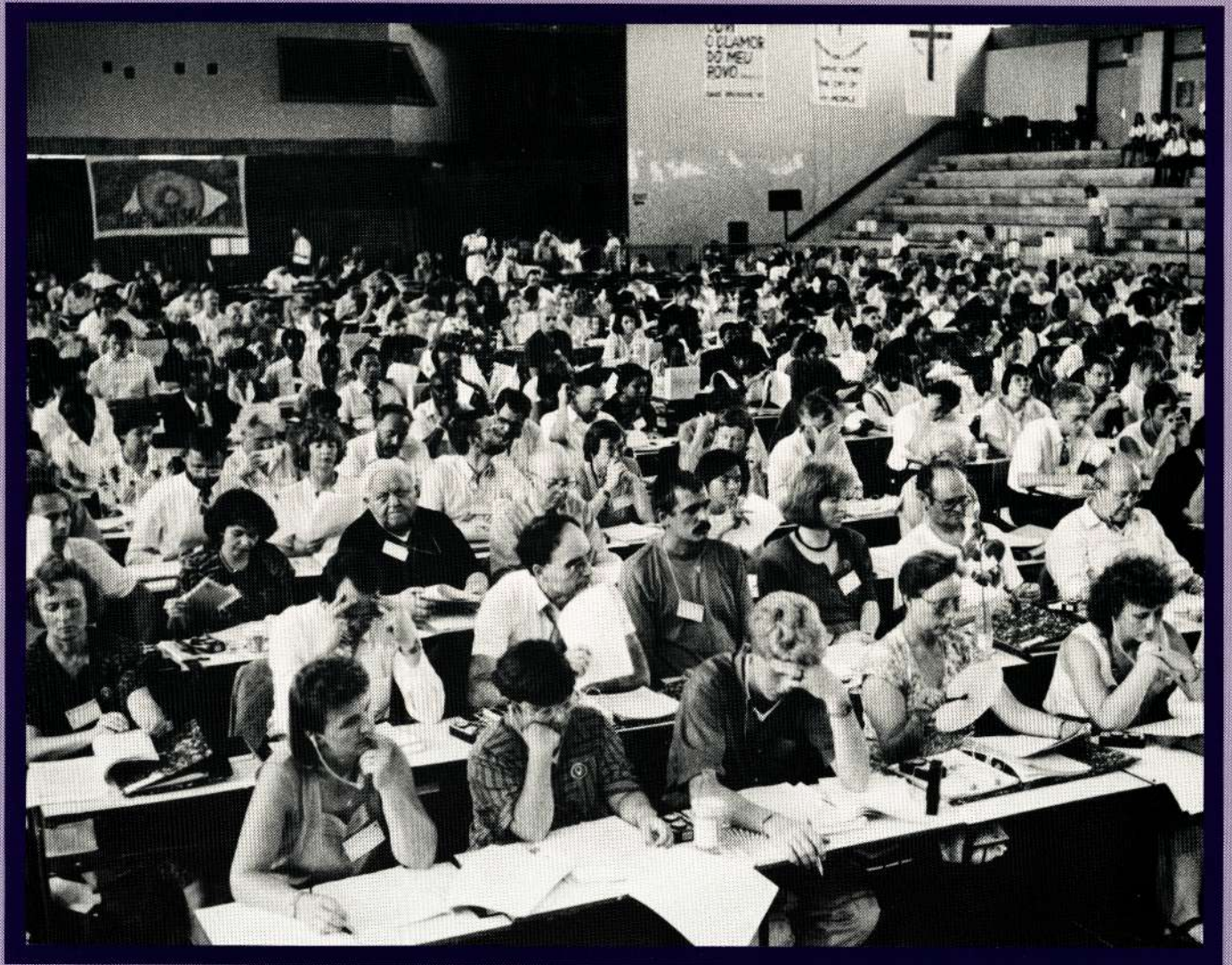
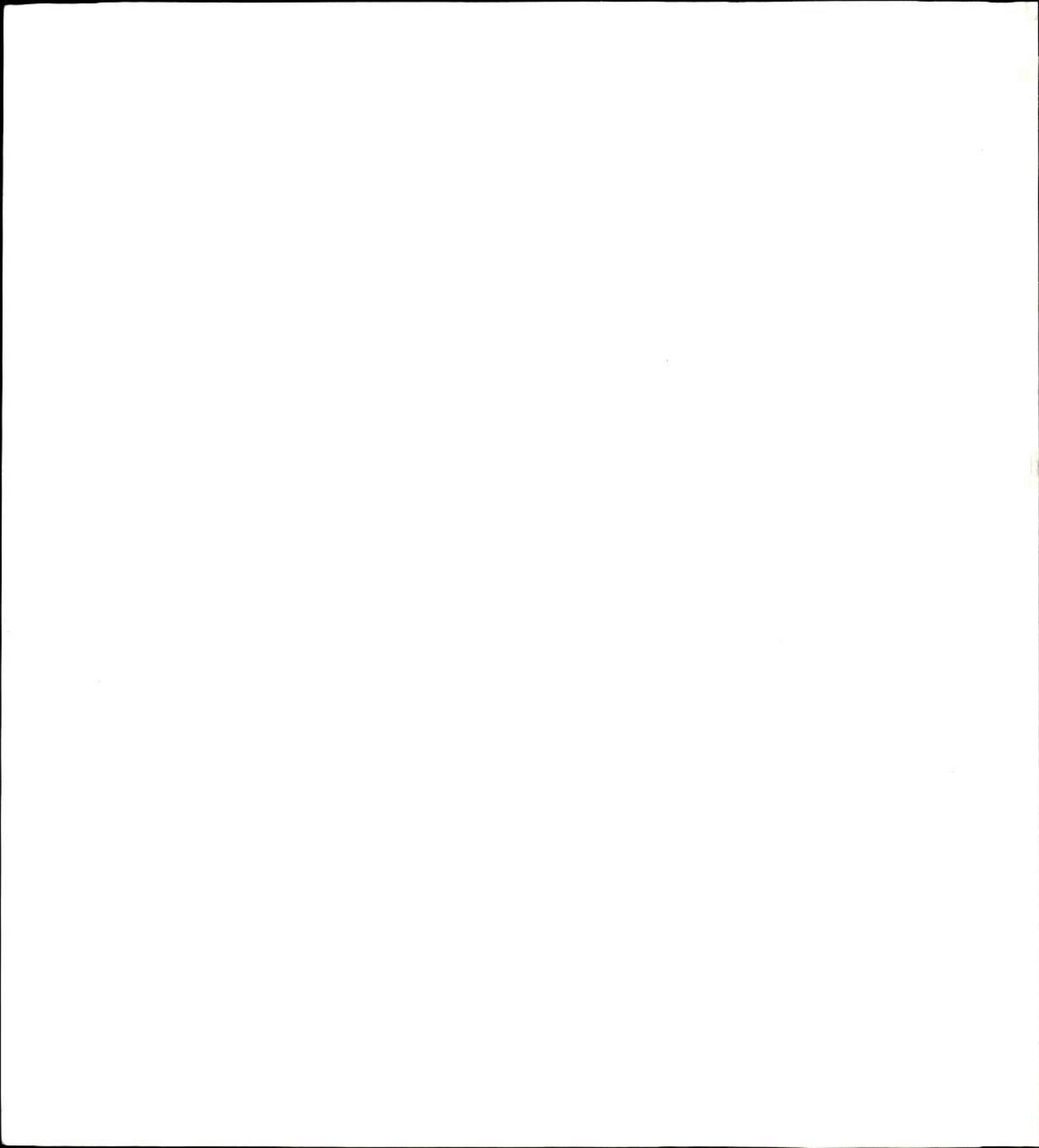


The Continuing Journey



**Women's Participation in the
Lutheran World Federation**



The Continuing Journey: Women's Participation in the Lutheran World Federation



**Lutheran World Federation
Dept. for Mission and Development
Women in Church and Society
B.P. 2100
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland**

1992

Printed in Switzerland

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
540 SOUTH EAST ASIAN AVENUE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60607



UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY

★ Acknowledgments ★

★ The members of the Advisory Committees on Women in Church and Society (1986-90):

Gunvor Lande (Chairperson), Bonnie Jensen (North America), Ana Villanueva (Latin America), Emma Mujoro (Africa), Prasanna Samuel (Asia), Inge Schintlmeister (Europe) and Sabine Rudiger-Hahn (Youth Representative), and former WICAS Executive Secretary Eva von Hertzberg had the idea to do the research in this book.

★ Due to her long experience with women in the LWF, Dr. Lois Leffler was named by the Advisory Committee to work together with the WICAS staff to design and carry out this study. In 1989 Violet Cucciniello Little was engaged as research assistant. After retiring from her job at the National Council of Churches of the US, Dr. Dorothy Marple graciously accepted a request to assist with the research. The first and second phases were done by this team. Their tasks included reviewing the literature, carrying out interviews, and designing and analyzing questionnaires. In these tasks other people helped to type and to review the questionnaires. They are in many ways part of this research too.

★ The third phase of the study was done by a group of women coming from all the regions. Many thanks go to Ruth Beshu, Martha Satou, and Enittah Nyoni (Africa); Debora Sinaga, Regina Samuel, and Yoshiko Ando (Asia); Eva von Hertzberg, Inge Schintlmeister, Gerta Scharffenorth, Gudrun Diestel, Gunvor Lande, Irmgard Kindt-Siegwald, and Siv Limstrand

and Christa Held (Europe); Haydée Canelos and Anna Lange (Latin America); Diane Doth Rehbein, Dorothy Marple, Lois Leffler, and Violet Cucciniello-Little (North America); Aruna Gnanadson (World Council of Churches); and Ana Villanueva and Musimbi Kanyoro (LWF/WICAS staff).

★ Thanks also go to the many women who took the time to respond to the questionnaires and to the others who have expressed interest in the research.

★ Thanks are due to Dr. Ishmael Noko, the Director, and members of the Department of Mission and Development of the Lutheran World Federation who have given moral encouragement to this project, and to all those who have contributed to making it a success. This research was initiated when WICAS was still lodged in the Department of Studies. Thanks are due to its staff, especially to Dr. Erika Reichle, Dorothea Millwood, and Iris Benesch.

★ Janet Bruin, of *Peace and Justice Graphics*, has been responsible for the layout, and to her also thanks are due.

This research was coordinated by the staff of WICAS, which has had the privilege of seeing it grow from idea to reality. Because of our unique position of having collected everyone's work and preparing the final manuscript for publication— we take responsibility for errors and omissions.

(Cover photo by Peter Williams)

Foreword

ISHMAEL NOKO

In 1997, the Lutheran World Federation's member churches will celebrate 50 years of consciously and consistently living together. Living together has been a journey characterized by different experiences. Every generation, nation and community within this family of Lutherans, who have opted to live together, has a particular story to tell about this journey.

Twenty years ago, the Lutheran World Federation made a commitment to be an inclusive community of believers. This has become part of its vision and, since then, attempts have been under way to realize this vision. It is, therefore, a community that understands itself to be a place where there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female. The establishment of the Office for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) was an attempt to give concrete expression to this commitment.

The publication in your hands provides you with an opportunity to listen to the voices of women around the globe, whose experiences are a story about the journey. You are invited to listen, to reflect and to translate this invitation into acts of faith within your context. It is 20 years since the establishment of WICAS. Therefore, we cannot afford to remain indifferent to the plight of a large segment of the church.

In this regard, the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19) is very instructive. As Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem and the crowds welcomed him with enthusiasm and excitement, they shouted, "Alleluia, hosanna is he who comes in the name of the Lord". The disciples are eager for Jesus to silence the crowd, but Jesus counsels them and says that if he silenced them, there would be an even louder chorus of stones.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	i
ForewordIshmael Noko	ii
IntroductionMusimbi Kanyoro	•1
Part I: Beginnings	
★ The Past As Prologue: Women in the LWF.....Violet Cucciniello Little	5
Part II: Women in Global Community	
★ The Position of Women in Africa: A Life of Endless Struggle.....Ruth M. Beshu	65
★ Asian Women Speak Out Against Discrimination and Degradation...Debora Sinaga	74
★ A Perspective on Women in Europe.....Gudrun Diestel	78
★ Misery, Machismo, and Migration: Latin American Women's Situation....Anna Lange	84
★ If I Am Created in the Image of God: A Picture of North American Women in Church and Society..... Diane Doth Rehbein	88
Part III: Reflections	
★ Women and Theology in the LWF.....Gunvor Lande	99
★ Women As Innovative Groups (Volumes I-VIII).....Irmgard Kindt-Siegwalt	105
★ Women As Innovative Groups (Volume X).....Gerta Scharffenorth	113
★ Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women....Aruna Gnanadson	117
Part IV: Women in Church and Society in the LWF - Research Findings	
★ Women's Participation in the LWF: Summary of Research Reports "Twenty Years Ago and Now" and "Future Programme Emphases".....Lois I. Leffler and Dorothy J. Marple	123
★ Issue Emphases by Region	128
Part V: Where Do We Go From Here?	
★ Challenges, Opportunities, Needs and Possibilities for Women's Groups and Organizations in the Churches	133
★ Planning for the Future: The Tasks Ahead for WICAS	140
About the Contributors	143



Introduction

MUSIMBI KANYORO

The Fifth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, held in Evian, France, in 1970, authorized the establishment of the Office for Women in Church and Society (WICAS). Two years later, WICAS was officially organized and a staff member was hired to work on women's issues part-time.

The decision taken by the Evian Assembly was prompted by recommendations made during a Pre-Assembly Conference for Women held in Båstad, Sweden, in 1969. These recommendations proposed that:

- women be recognized as full partners in the work of the LWF by appointing them to LWF policy, planning and decision-making commissions and sub-committees;
- projects be designed that enable people to "help themselves", include leadership training, exchange of information, and ecumenical discussion;
- the appointment of an LWF woman staff member to develop programmes for meeting the "unmet concerns of women and their organizations of member churches"; and
- the appointment of an Advisory Committee with relationship to an appropriate LWF Commission to counsel with such a staff person.

These recommendations provided the framework for the initial work of WICAS.

The year 1992 marks the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of WICAS within the LWF.

While two decades is a brief period of time to reflect on the history of any organization, these years have been significant. Profound political, economic and social changes have taken place in all parts of the world. These changes have had an impact on the mission of the Christian church and the lives of women, men and children everywhere.

The LWF has also changed during these twenty years. Member churches have increased in number. The Federation has matured in its self-understanding as an expression and an instrument of the communion of Lutheran churches which "is rooted in the unity of the apostolic faith as given in the Holy Scripture and witnessed by the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions". This communion "finds its visible expression in pulpit and altar fellowship, in common witness and service, in the joint fulfillment of the missionary task, and in openness to ecumenical cooperation, dialogue and community". (Statement on the Self-Understanding and Task of the Lutheran World Federation, Seventh LWF Assembly, Budapest, 1984)

From the very outset of the establishment of WICAS, women in LWF member churches fully recognized that they have been created in the divine image of God and have the promise of salvation through Christ. Women have yearned, worked, and struggled to be active participants whose gifts of leadership are affirmed and used in the "common witness and service" and joint missionary task of the Federation.

In anticipation of WICAS' celebration of twenty years of faithful and vigorous service, the LWF launched a three-year research project on "Women's Participation in the Lutheran World Federation" in 1989. The mandate for the project, undertaken by WICAS, was to record and analyze in a systematic study the factors which have impacted the role and participation of women in the LWF since its founding.

Phase I is a result of a review of women's participation as recorded in LWF documents and oral history interviews with women leaders. They spearheaded the effort to establish WICAS and who have guided, supported and energized WICAS' work in the ensuing twenty years.

Phase II of WICAS' research was a survey of women leaders from all LWF regions to identify issues which should receive major attention in programming. A summary of the survey results which offers perceptions of the emphases in programming and work with women twenty years ago and at the present time are the subject.

WICAS initiated Phase III in June 1991 by convening a Research Working Group. Women from all LWF regions who have been active in the work of WICAS, beginning with its actual organization in 1972 and continuing throughout the twenty-year period, comprised this group.

Meeting together for five days with a full agenda, the working group reflected on the past participation of women in the LWF and, in light of present conditions, on the concerns and challenges facing women in both the church and society in all parts of the world. To broaden the base for understanding this context and what is happening in church and society, various members of the Research Working Group presented perspectives on women in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America. They identified programming needs and projected possible courses of action to meet these needs.

A significant part of the richness of the LWF is the diversity of the member churches, their heritage, societal conditions, cultures, and traditions. Programming for women in such diversity can never be carried out in a singular way. Rather it must be addressed to women in the context in which they live and participate in God's mission. The working group examined the results of the two surveys of women from all LWF regions about past, present and future programming. And they probed issues, needs and opportunities for the future.

The global perspectives are enhanced by the hope of a new community of women and men in Christ. From the earliest years of WICAS, theological reflections have undergirded the service of this Office. Theological perspectives have supported the participation of women in the LWF. The Working Group reflected on "Women and Theology in the LWF" and also revisited and reviewed the research done on "Women As Innovative Groups". The relationship between the LWF and its ecumenical partners has been well covered in Volume VIII of "Women As Innovative Groups". Programmes currently being carried out through the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women are seen as a continuation of this ecumenical partnership.

Women in the LWF see their witness and service in the church and society as a thrust forward, an initiative towards a new realization of being Christ's body in a global community. Yet in moving forward to such a realization and in endeavoring to comprehend and fulfil God's will for the future, we must at the same time become more knowledgeable and concerned about the issues and be able to see how our past impacts on the present and the future.

This book is presented in five parts. Part I is based on literature review and interviews. Part II contains papers giving the global situation of women today in their regional perspectives. Part III is a reflection on theology, past, present and future and a challenge that the World Council of Churches

initiated – Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women poses. Part IV presents results of the survey for the past and the present activities of the WICAS office. Part V, "Where Do We Go From Here?", concludes with challenges and opportunities for future planning. The section identifies issues, needs and possibilities for action plans in the coming years that would lead WICAS towards the 21st century. While it is intended to provide a broad background of current realities and future possibilities for WICAS, it is a useful resource for women leaders and women's organizations in member churches.

Planners in each region are urged to examine the perspectives on the situation of women in their respective areas and to study the issues identified which call for attention and response.

This book attempts to do many things. It is a book about women in the LWF, but it also shows the events and programmes carried out by WICAS since the LWF was founded. It must not be seen out of the context of the men with whom these women are working to build a community. The LWF has come a long way since February 1973, when *Lutheran Forum* published a special issue focusing on the Federation's history. The story was told in a number of articles written by those who had been present at the birth of the LWF in Lund, Sweden, in 1947. Printed across the middle of the front cover was the title, "Men, Meetings, Ministry, Mission: The LWF Story". The title was surrounded by photographs of twenty-three men who had been significant in the creation of the LWF.

There is no question that the work of these early "fathers" was characterized by compassion, commitment, and a strong love of the gospel. Their stories should rightfully be told, and their names should rightfully be remembered. But even as our Holy Creator made it impossible for a newborn life to come into existence without both man and woman, the birth and continuing growth of the

LWF involved the efforts and the sacrifices of women as well as men.

Although the situation today is different, we are painfully aware that the contributions and the gifts of women have all too often gone unrecognized. Their stories were not considered important enough to record. We know the names and the faces of the "fathers"; yet we still search for the names and faces of our "mothers" in the LWF.

This is a beginning attempt to recover some of the "lost" stories of those women who participated in the history of the LWF. They are an attempt to name those names that we otherwise might not have heard. They are an attempt to paint with words those faces that we otherwise might not have seen. The stories in these pages have to be read in the spirit in which the LWF was founded, one of reconciliation and understanding. Yet it must be said that there is a certain sadness in not having been able to find photographs of some of the most important "mothers" of the LWF. Their absence is a symptom of the same neglect that has resulted in the writing of history without taking note of women's rich and varied participation. Let the text on these pages, then, correct this grave omission and guarantee these women's places in official LWF history.

In an address given by Käte Mahn in Lund, celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the LWF in 1987, she said the following:

When an address is to be given at a family gathering, it is usually an older person who is asked to speak – one who has known the family all along, who can remember the high points in its history from his or her own experience, and who has known and met most of its members and can tell who was most influential in a certain situation, who was daring and outspoken, helpful and guiding, uniting and convening – and would be able to name them.

I cannot and will not do so...if I start to name people from my rather short experience with the LWF, I fear I will wrong many people; namely all those whom I would not be able to name because I do not know them and never heard or read about them...

In putting together this publication we share those same fears. This work is at best only a partial beginning. Its continuation depends upon you, the reader. When you discover something that is missing or incorrect, share your findings with WICAS. We are only beginning to uncover a wealth of hidden treasure that exists in our history. Our hearts yearn for the stories of women who have been part of this story but whose names are not recorded here. We also yearn to recover the stories of women whom we could not reach due to limited resources. The names are so many that we dare not mention

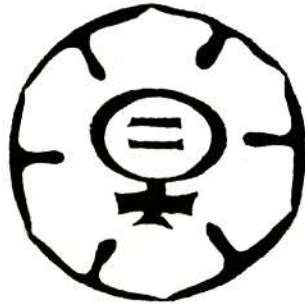
them, but we appeal to women historians to come to our rescue and to save *herstory* in the LWF.

It could be asked today whether history would be different if women wrote it. We must continue to pose this question, and we must begin here and now to answer it. We hope that what words do not tell in this book, the pictures that we have been able to find in the LWF archives will help to say.

It is the sincere prayer and hope of the Research Working Group and the staff of WICAS that the many gifts and talents of women, including their leadership skills, will be fully used in the communion of Lutheran churches. Building upon present strengths and forging ahead in the mainstream of life, women will be partners in witnessing before the world to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To God be the glory and praise.

*Geneva,
International Women's Day, 1992*

Part I:
Beginnings



WICAS



The Past As Prologue: Women in the LWF

VIOLET CUCCINIELLO LITTLE

The Lutheran World Federation was born in the ashes of the Second World War. It was a war like no other. It was fought in Asia and the Pacific, in parts of Africa, on the oceans and in the skies as well as on European soil. Even the outlying shores and islands of the Americas found themselves in the area of conflict. Millions of civilians were caught in aerial bombing raids, and by the end of the war, atomic bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In all, sixty million lives were lost and devastation was widespread.

An era of naked aggression – characterized by invasion, occupation, extreme violation of the most fundamental human rights, and genocide – had been brought to an end. The United Nations was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, but at the same time new divisions were arising that would poison international relations for decades to come. Against this background, Gudrun Diestel, a German Lutheran woman from the Confessing Church whose family resisted the Nazis, spoke of "practical needs" and reconciliation.

According to the Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology, the English equivalent for the word *reconciliation* is *atonement*. Atonement is further described as "the condition of being at one

after two parties had been estranged from one another". In the New Testament, we find the word for this (katallage-Greek: 502) in Romans 5:11: "...We even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. In 2 Cor. 5:17-18 we read: "So if anyone is in Christ there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God who to himself and has given us the ministry of reconciliation".

Women and men in a world broken by war were seeking to be "at one". It was a time for forgiveness, a time to become new again. For Christians, it was a time to remember the promises made to us by the God to whom we had been reconciled through Christ Jesus, and for Lutherans in particular it was a time to look with eyes of hope to the Confessions upon which their church had been founded.

It is against this background of material need and spiritual hunger that the story of the LWF begins to unfold. It is in the midst of a world torn to pieces by war and a church divided by the false promises and evils of a Nazi regime that the miracle of this international federation of churches began to come together, and it is the peaceful university town of Lund in southern Sweden where our story now continues.

The Lund Assembly - 1947

The year was 1947. The rubble of war was being cleared away and efforts were being made to heal the wounds of war. A socialist bloc was taking shape in Eastern Europe. In one country after another, centuries of colonial rule and foreign domination were beginning to give way to independence.

The diary of Anne Frank was published and many stories of bravery and courage began to be openly told. It was a year for new discoveries. The Dead Sea Scrolls, dating from approximately 22 B.C. to 100 A.D. were discovered in the Wadi Qumran. Across the world, the airplane first began to fly at supersonic speed and scientists invented the first transistor. 1947 was a time of beginnings and fresh starts, and in Lund, Sweden, 1947 was the year in which an Executive Committee gathered for the first pre-Assembly meeting of the LWF.

The LWF was rooted in the former Lutheran World Convention, founded in Eisenach, Germany five years after the end of the First World War. Although the Lutheran World Convention began as an organization designed to meet the needs of another post-war world, it had become primarily a theological discussion group.

Theological renewal was an important aspect of what was needed in 1947, and in that first Assembly in Lund, theological confidence clearly marked the event. A new and deeper understanding of the Lutheran Confessional tradition seemed to arise throughout the Assembly. Eivind Berggrav, who was there, boldly proclaimed, "It was a joy to sling Luther in the face of the Gestapo. His theology was our best weapon in the fight against the Nazis." (*Lutheran Forum*, 1973) New life was given to an existent theology.

Theological discussion was important, but it was not enough. The world was filled with disease

and death, hopelessness and unbelief. It was time for theology to be acted out. At such a time, Sylvester C. Michelfelder was sent to Geneva as a messenger of hope and reconciliation to bring assistance to Lutherans in war-torn Europe. Michelfelder had been a special commissioner of the American section of the Lutheran World Convention. At first he focused on church-to-church resuscitation, offering "first aid to pastors and their congregations". After a short while, however, of witnessing firsthand the "practical needs of the war", Michelfelder became adamant in the cause of "bread and blankets before Bibles and buildings".

The Lutheran World Convention no longer met the needs of the post-war world, and so in June 1947 the Executive Committee gathered for a pre-Assembly meeting. The agenda of the upcoming Assembly was to be reviewed, committees were to be appointed, and last minute decisions were to be made. It was at this meeting that Hans Lilje, the newly elected bishop of Hannover, was elected to the Executive Committee. Lilje, who had been nominated by the National Committee of Germany, was later chosen president of the Lutheran World Federation at the Hannover Assembly in 1952.

Another appointment made at the pre-Assembly conference was that of Carl E. Lund-Quist. Lund-Quist, appointed recorder of minutes, was Director of Public Relations for the National Lutheran Council in New York. In 1951 he was called to Geneva to serve as Michelfelder's assistant. When Michelfelder died suddenly in 1951 in the midst of preparing for the Hannover Assembly, Lund-Quist carried on.

A balance was to be maintained between theological debate and material relief. It is not surprising that in this era, a time of post-war reconstruction, resettlement, and mission, the Assembly's theme would be "The Lutheran Church in the World Today."

One of the first official acts to take place at the

The LWF constitution was signed in Lund, Sweden, in 1947. Shown here are Dr. van Heest (Netherlands) signing the document as Bishop Lilje (Germany, seated at left) and Archbishop Eidem (Sweden) look on



First Assembly in Lund was the adoption of the Federation's Constitution. Although there were two main areas of debate regarding the proposed Constitution, it was suggested that any revisions be discussed the following day. On 1 July 1947 at 12:25 PM, after a joyous singing of the doxology "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow", the Constitution was "unanimously adopted without alteration". Thus the Lutheran World Federation came into formal existence.

The next day the debate began on two issues regarding the Constitution. Because these issues were to be significant in terms of representation and identity of the newly formed Federation, they should be noted in detail. The first area of debate concerned the ecumenical position of the LWF regarding its confessional identity. This was stated in Article III: "To achieve a united Lutheran approach to ecumenical movements..." This article seemed to imply a Lutheran bloc and needed to be

expressed differently. To better represent the spirit of what was intended, the article was rephrased in the following way: "To foster Lutheran participation in ecumenical movements". The amendment then added the statement: "To develop a united Lutheran approach to responsibilities in missions and education".

The second area of debate dealt with the issue of representation. It was later to have implications for the struggles regarding the role of women in the LWF. This time, the articles under question were Articles VI and VIII. Delegates from member churches for future Assemblies were allotted as follows: "Denmark-10; Finland-10; Germany-40; Iceland-5; Norway-10; Sweden-10; North America-40; and other countries, 5 each". The Executive Committee, consisting of 15 members, was to be comprised of one Dane, one Finn, four Germans, four North Americans, one Swede, and four additional members from "other countries".

A delegate from one of the "younger churches" (as they were called at the time), Pastor S. W. Savarimuthu of Madras, led the debate. It focused on what Stewart Winfield Herman has so aptly named the "pejorative anonymity" given to "other countries".

From its earliest roots, member churches of the LWF questioned "imbalances of power" such as the one represented in the Scandinavian-German-North American delegations of 40 members each. This distribution, based on questionable church statistics with regard to size, was also clearly based on the power of the dollar.

Alterations were made, and instead of naming a specific number of delegates from each country, the amendment now read:

The allocation of the representatives in the Assembly shall be made to the member churches by the Executive Committee with the advice of National Committees, and due regard shall be given to such factors as numerical size of the churches, geographical distribution by continents and countries. Adequate representation of the younger churches and minority churches and the right of each completely independent member church to have at least one representative in the Assembly.



Delegates to the Lund Assembly (from left to right): Dr. Franklin Clark Fry (US), Prof. Abdel Ross Wentz (US), the Rt. Rev. Hans Meiser (Germany), Dr. Johan Arnd Aasgaard (US)

Appropriate changes were also made in Article VIII – representation on the Executive Committee – limiting the Committee to sixteen members. Of the twelve nominations presented by Bishop Lilje for members of the Executive Committee, none were women.

Women's Representation at Lund

Where were the women in this historic Assembly at Lund? Checking several available resources in an attempt to discover the number of women present as delegates, there seem to be conflicting reports. According to one source, two women were present, both of whom were from the former United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA). They were Sister Anna Ebert and Dr. Nona Diehl. In another source, *Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, the author notes that four women were present at Lund. This seems to be more accurate. Mrs. J. A. Aasgard (Minnesota, US) and Norma Arneson (Norway) should be added to the list.

More recent information suggests that five women were present as delegates at Lund. Even if five of the 178 delegates were women, this would still represent less than 3% of the total delegation. It should also be noted that a small number of women were invited as "visitors" to this first Assembly. They were distributed as follows: Czechoslovakia-2; Denmark-10; Iceland-2; India-3; Norway-2; and Poland-1. Although visitors had no official "vote" at the Assembly, the presence of these additional 20 women must have had some impact on the Assembly to follow. We do know that a motion was made at the Assembly to get women on the programme in 1952.

What do we know of the women who were there? Prior to the 1947 Assembly, Nona May Diehl, born in York, Pennsylvania, was a secondary school teacher. At the time of the Lund Assembly, Diehl was serving as the Executive Secretary for the

Women's Missionary Society, United Lutheran Church in America. She had also authored several publications, leaflets, and periodicals including a publication entitled "Serving Around the World." Diehl had firsthand experience of what it meant to serve around the world. Her work had taken her to Japan, China, Argentina and the West Indies.

After the Assembly in Lund, Dr. Diehl (whose graduate work included study at the prestigious University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University) was to remain involved with the LWF. By the time she was a delegate to the Third Assembly in Minneapolis in 1957, she had become the Executive Secretary for the United Lutheran Church Women.

In an article written shortly after Diehl's appointment as Executive Secretary for the Women's Missionary Society, we read the following:

Miss Diehl's experience, consecration to duty, and wide contacts make her eminently fitted for the position for which she was called by the women of our Church...She is known as a good speaker, with a clear and careful delivery and an attractive personality. Her audiences report that she always has something to say, and that she says it well.

Sister Anna Ebert, a second delegate from the ULCA, was 91 when she was asked to recollect the events that took place at Lund in 1947. She was assisted in telling her story by Sister Mildred Winter. The two women became good friends when the Board of Deaconesses decided to promote deaconess work in the US and asked Sister Mildred to assist them. (Prior to that, only pastors – who were, of course, all men – promoted the work of the diaconate. No woman had ever served as president of the Lutheran Deaconess Conference in America.)

When Sister Mildred went to the Deaconess Conference, she was shocked. The deaconesses

had absolutely nothing to say, and after the pastors had discussed everything about the deaconesses they announced that they would go downstairs to decide what is a deaconess, leaving the deaconesses upstairs to talk about the food or some other 'preparation'. Sister Mildred recalls coming home wild and convinced that something had to be done. She concluded that a deaconess, a woman, had to serve as president, and she began her own campaign. She spoke about the situation on her visits to the different motherhouses, meeting no resistance from within the community. The overall response was unanimous: "We know just the woman. Sister Anna Ebert!"

Sister Anna had begun as a young deaconess of a large motherhouse in Philadelphia and later became its Directing Deaconess. She was elected the first woman president of the Lutheran Deaconess Conference in America (General Secretary-Board of Deaconess Work, ULCA) in 1945. She later served as another "first" when in 1969 she was elected the first woman president of Diakonia, a federation formed to "further ecumenical relations between deaconess groups of different countries, to reflect on the nature and task of 'diakonia' in the New Testament sense, and to strengthen a sense of mutual belonging through giving mutual aid and undertaking common tasks." At the time of her election, Diakonia consisted of 35 deaconess organizations in 21 countries with 45,000 members.

There were many women who were not at the Lund Assembly but whose presence during the war years was to have significance for the LWF in the years of its infancy. Two such women were Dr. Antonie Nopitsch and Liselotte Nold (Germany). Dr. Nopitsch was the leader of the Mutterdienst (Mother's Service), and Mrs. Nold was her associate. At the end of the war they went to the prison where the Nazis had interned Hans Lilje and they were able to bring a secret message from him to his wife. Then they went to the American military government and tried to get him freed. Since crimi-

nals and political prisoners were kept there, Lilje could not come home immediately. He ended up staying at the Mutterdienst for a couple of weeks.

The Mutterdienst was located in Stein. Dr. Nopitsch knew both Dr. Michelfelder and Dr. Lund-Quist because the Mutterdienst was very active in refugee work among other things. And yet, as we read through the pages of recorded history, we see that only a few women were allowed to be present at the first LWF Assembly.

The overall themes of reconciliation and theological confidence permeated the mood of the Assembly at Lund. Attempts were being made to rebuild the shattered post-war world. This aspect of stewardship was made real in a number of different ways. There was a resolution to support orphaned missions with a view to restoring them to their parent bodies. Another resolution, made in conjunction with the report "Facing the Problems In A Troubled World", focused on refugees and displaced persons. The LWF was the only vehicle in the Lutheran Church that was "feeding the hungry and clothing the naked".

It is important for us to remember the numerous Women's Missionary Societies that had been in existence even before the First World War. One such group, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, organized in July 1942 and representing a number of women's groups that had combined to form a synod-wide organization, came together "to promote missionary education, missionary inspiration, and missionary service." Its sole source of funds were the free will offerings used to support missionary projects otherwise not included in the synod budget. It is only in recent years that these stories of giving, commitment, and self-sacrifice have been recorded and made known.

The Assembly at Lund helped to shape the direction of the LWF for years to come. In Lund, Lutheran churches combined their resources to meet



Lutheran delegates to an ecumenical world conference in Lund, Sweden, 1952 Svenskt Pressfoto

all areas of human need, not only in Europe, but in all parts of the world as well. In comparison to the meeting of the Lutheran World Convention held in Paris in 1935 – where of the 91 delegates, 26 were French Lutheran pastors – Lund initiated some breakthroughs in diversifying participation.

However, in the Executive Secretary's report

(1948-49) to the LWF Executive Committee delivered in Oxford, England, it is not until page 15 (of a 19 page report) that women are even mentioned, and they are only included in one sentence, along with mention of brotherhoods and men's societies:

Brotherhoods and men's societies as well as representing women's work ought to get to-

gether at such an Assembly (Hannover, 1952) and be given an important place on the programme...

In 1949, women were in one sentence on one page of a report, but they didn't stay there. At least not for long.

The "Responsible Church" - Hannover, 1952

The theme of the Assembly in Lund, "The Lutheran Church in the World Today", included sub-themes reflecting a world devastated by war. These sub-themes, "Confessing the Truth In a Confused World," "Performing Her Mission In a Devastated World," and "Facing the Problems In a Troubled World" emphasized a movement towards mission and providing assistance for those in need. The Assembly, responding to physical need, centered with a common confession of faith. Woven throughout with ecumenical concern, it was to shape the LWF until the early 1970s.

At the Assembly, held in Hannover in 1952, the theme was "The Living Word In a Responsible Church." Of the six Commissions, I - IV dealt with foreign missions, inner missions, theology, stewardship, and evangelism, topics which were described as "being derived from the convention theme." They had been closely linked to those issues discussed five years earlier at Lund. Commissions V and VI, however, were described by the Secretary General as "sociological divisions." They concentrated on women and youth.

Why weren't women and youth included in the convention theme? What were the implications of excluding these groups? Were women and youth not part of what was understood as "The Responsible Church"? It is interesting to note the traditional grouping of women and youth. This pattern,

repeated in the decades to follow, carries its own set of implications. If women and youth are viewed as one reality, it becomes more difficult to insist upon a balanced representation of women in decision-making roles. In part, the grouping was a sign of the times.

Estrangement from the Church?

The world of 1952 was still a time of refuge. During the month of August, 16,000 people left East Berlin for the West. Reconciliation was still in process. Israel and Germany had agreed on compensation for damages done to Jewish people by the Nazis. Albert Schweitzer was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. At the same time that reconstruction was proceeding, however, even greater and more destructive weapons were being developed. Winston Churchill announced that Britain had produced an atomic bomb, while President Truman announced that the H-bomb would be tested in the Pacific Ocean.

In religion in North America, Reinhold Niebuhr had just published *Christ and Culture*. For Protestants, a new translation of the Bible, *The Revised Standard Version*, prepared by 32 scholars over a period of fifteen years, was completed.

It is difficult to know what the lives of women were like in various regions of the world at this time. We do, however, have some glimpses of the atmosphere that prevailed for women at the 1952 Assembly. In an article of the *Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church* (Augsburg, 1965) by Nona Diehl (delegate, Lund), Dorothy E. L. Haas (Minneapolis, 1957), and Liselotte Nold (assistant to Dr. Nopitsch), we read the following:

Since about 1950, most interesting and exciting events have occurred in women's organizations in the local congregations in America and all other parts of the world. A complete



Hannover, 1952



history of women's organizations cannot be given here; suffice it to say that women have always banded together to meet certain needs, needs that were different from time to time.

The women of Hannover had come together to meet some very specific needs. They focused on post-war women and concentrated on topics as discussed in the Study Document for Section VI: "Home and Family", "The Question of Birth Control", "Women in Public Life", and "What Does the Bible Say About Men and Women?" Women came together to discuss what seemed to be their ever-increasing estrangement from the Church at a time when new challenges to religion were being posed by the rise of communism.

At the same time, new possibilities were opening to women and new attitudes were developing. A noticeable increase in women's participation in public life was taking place as cooperation between men and women increased in all fields. The introduction of the contraceptive pill ushered in a new era of women's liberation from the endless reproductive cycle.

The Second World War proved that women in many countries were capable of doing "men's work", having entered the workforce to support their families while the men were at the front. In countries that suffered so much destruction, loss of life and economic dislocation, women found a strength they never before knew they possessed. What was this to mean in terms of women's participation in the Church?

In regard to the Second LWF Assembly in Hannover, Germany, in 1952, the *Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church* recorded that:

Today's trend is toward integration of women's work into the work of the church as a whole, rather than toward autonomy...We love the church because it implies a burning desire

for unity among the disciples of Jesus Christ.

This statement reflected the Hannover Assembly's proceedings, but at this point, let us take a step back.

In November 1949, the LWF Executive Committee appointed a Commission on Evangelism, which later became known as Commission IV. It met only once (in Columbus, Ohio, US) to prepare a study document for the Hannover Assembly.

The document, "Women of the Church - the Living Word Gives Woman Her Place in Church and Society", was written by Vikarin Elisabeth Hahn (Germany) and was "based on the contributions of various Lutheran Churches all over the World." Hahn came to be known for her study entitled "Partnerschaft" (Partnership), which was later used in ecumenical discussions.

When women came together to study the document, they realized that the work of women not only affected other women, but could be felt in all aspects of the church's life. It is out of this realization, this understanding of the profound influence that women were capable of manifesting in every part of the church, that they made the following recommendation to the Executive Committee:

We wish to say with all possible emphasis that we are not interested in securing rights for ourselves. Something much more vital is at stake: the proper place, the God-intended place of women in the fellowship of the Christian Church...women should find their place not in a separate section, but according to their interests, experience, and gifts, in the general sections.

Recommendations from the Women's Section and the Youth Section of Commission IV requested a new kind of Commission that would stress the unity of stewardship and evangelism and the in-

separability of the work of the laity – men, women, and youth. According to the Report of the Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life (1952 - 53), "It was pointed out that the laity is not divided, that it includes all of these groups (men, women, and youth), and that all can work together as a total partnership in the work of the Lord".

The women at Hannover knew that something was not quite right about being placed in a separate section. They realized that they had strength and gifts that could touch every part of the church's life. It was natural for them to request that women become involved in all parts and on all Commissions of the LWF. What was the result of this recommendation? A new commission was, indeed, formed. It was called "The Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life". Three women were appointed to serve on it. Unfortunately, however, women had not been appointed to any other commission within the LWF.

Nevertheless, the event was significant to the lives of women in the LWF. For the first time in its history, women had been appointed to serve on a commission! Listed as they are named in official LWF documentation, they were: Mrs. Antonie Nopitsch, Dr. (Germany), Mrs. Charles W. Baker, Jr. L.H.D. (USA); and Miss Oddrun Karstad (Norway).

As mentioned earlier, Dr. Nopitsch was a woman of creativity and courage and a tremendous sense of social justice. She had risked her own safety delivering secret messages to and from the imprisoned Hans Lilje. She was a German economist who also taught social work. When she lost her teaching position, her compassion and organizational skills led her to found the Mutterdienst. She started her work in 1932, when there was a great wave of unemployment and deep economic crisis. She noticed that it was easier for women to get jobs because they were paid lower wages. These women were terribly overworked because they would get up

early, travel long distances to their workplaces, and after long hours, they would shop, go home, prepare dinner and use what little time was left over to care for the children, which was nowhere near enough. Dr. Nopitsch wanted to do something to assist these women who were the core of their families.

The Mutterdienst was a place of respite for tired and overworked mothers. It was a place of healing and of education. It was a stopping place for Hans Lilje after his release from prison. The work that took place at the facility in Stein was done in support of Christian women's groups. Nopitsch had discovered early the importance of Scripture as a source of women's strength.

The Mutterdienst provided leadership training and empowered women through Bible study. It was here that women also received the medical care that they needed to heal their bodies as well as their spirits. In addition to the other activities that occurred at Stein, there was also a small publishing house. This came into existence so that study and reading material could be easily available. It was here that Elisabeth Hahn spent some time while working on Partnerschaft.

The center was generally geared towards younger and rural women. Referrals came from a number of sources including physicians, churches, and the women themselves. Funding was provided in a number of different ways, so that even the poorest woman could afford a stay at the Mutterdienst. One method of raising funds was through a "street collection" whereby volunteers literally collected money on the streets to support the project. Dr. Nopitsch was friendly with the wife of the first Federal President, who assisted her in maintaining support for this badly needed programme. Prior to the Assembly in 1952, she served as the Coordinator of Preparatory Practices for the women in Germany. This involved promoting enthusiasm and preparing for the upcoming Assembly.

There was another aspect of the Hannover Assembly in which the women who met in Stein were involved, and that was in the practical preparations of the city itself for this global meeting. Because Hannover had itself been destroyed during the war, it was not an easy task to house the arriving visitors. There was a shortage of food and other supplies needed for such a large gathering. The women who met in Stein became a supportive strength for the Assembly. Dr. Antonie Nopitsch was to become one of the first women in a leadership position in the LWF.

Women's Participation in the "Responsible Church"

Minerva Irene Taughinbau Baker, officially listed on the Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life as Mrs. Charles W. Baker, Jr., was born in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (US). She was a high school counselor and had done her graduate studies at Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania. Her doctoral degree was in the field of education. She served as president of the United Lutheran Women and on the Board of American Missions. From a registration form she completed prior to the Assembly, it was noted that Baker had traveled extensively in more than a dozen countries. Her interest in bringing women together from around the world would lead to the active role she was to have in raising travel funds for a number of women from the "younger churches".

The third woman appointed to the Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life was Oddrun Karstad from Norway, about whom little information is available. Perhaps in the reading of her name a memory will be jolted, a letter uncovered, and a story will be told. From what we know of Drs. Nopitsch and Baker, Oddrun Karstad must have come to the Commission with a great deal of competence and experience, not to speak of the respect she must have had from her peers.

There were other women connected with the Second LWF Assembly at Hannover. One was "Prostinnan" Ellen Oesterlin of Svedala (Sweden), who was listed as chairing the Commission on Women of the Church in 1952 just prior to the formation of the Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life. A letter written by Oesterlin to Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, then the Executive Secretary in Geneva, revealed the following lines of thought:

Now the question remains if there in the future still ought to be a commission on women of the church. Dr. Hermann Ullman has left out this passage. Evidently he has not been of my opinion. It is, of course, possible that we have not come so far after another five years. Anyhow, I was not sure that there ought to be a women's section again, though I should think it wise to have a women's commission follow up the development of our problems in church and society. The experience of this commission could be used in other sections where they naturally would fit...theology, education, missions, evangelism and so on...

Oesterlin's question seemed to be a prediction of what was to follow at Hannover. What has yet to be uncovered is why Dr. Ullman ignored her.

Another woman present at the 1952 Assembly was Eva Benedictine Lyngby, born in Aarhus, Denmark in 1898. Sister Eva was noted as having been a "consultant of the Executive Committee" since 1952. She was a deaconess who had trained as a nurse. In 1947 she was elected to the governing board of the International Federation of Deaconess Work in Utrecht.

Sister Mildred Winter, mentioned earlier in the discussion of Lund, was another delegate to the Second Assembly. She had been serving as the Executive Secretary of the Board of Deaconesses

for the United Lutheran Church in America. When asked to share some of her memories of the meeting at Hannover, she mentioned another delegate, a woman whose name she could not remember, but she had served as an interpreter for Sister Mildred during the Assembly.

The story of this unnamed woman is included here as a remembrance of all the women who served as delegates to the various Assemblies, but whose names, for one reason or another, have not come down in the history of women in the LWF. She was German and had served, along with her family, as a missionary to China. When the war broke out, the family had to be repatriated to Germany, but this was not possible since Germany was not repatriating its missionaries, so the ULCA re-patriated the family to the United States and settled them in California. The children were sent back to Germany to be educated and the family was separated for years. The mother was chosen to be a delegate to the Assembly in Hannover, and it was there that the happy reunion of this woman and her children was to take place.

From Sister Mildred's account, the "spirit" of Hannover was remarkable. "One of the first things about that Assembly," she said, "was whether or not we should even consider meeting in Germany. Although we had been invited, this country had invaded, occupied, or annexed surrounding countries and had unleashed an unbelievable amount of death, destruction and suffering. It was finally decided to accept the invitation".

Sister Mildred went on to describe how the first president of the LWF, Anders Nygren, Scandanavian Bishop of the famous Lund School of Theology, greeted his successor, Hans Lilje, the German Bishop. "You have to understand," said Sister Mildred, "the terrible feelings existing in the world at that time. Norway had been betrayed and occupied by Germany, so to see this Scandanavian Bishop extend his hand to a German Bishop, and

to see the two of them embrace, well, this was a high moment. People were weeping. We now had become one as Christians".

That spirit pervaded the Assembly. When people in the East Zone were not granted the promised visas to attend, the president, along with others then turned to the Assembly and said, "All right, when we close the Assembly in Hannover, the Assembly will not adjourn. We will fly all the delegates to Berlin and we will have a second Assembly!" All the delegates were, indeed, flown to Berlin. Meetings were held outdoors and delegates were housed with different families. In its own way, the LWF was making itself known as a federation whose intent, at least, was to be inclusive. For women, however, inclusivity was far from becoming a reality.

Section VI of the Report entitled "Women of the Church" summarizes women's sentiments. "An epitome, in one sentence, of all our work would be: 'We women love our church.'" This was to be the force guiding women in the frustrating and joyous years to follow. Women were now on a Commission and advising the Executive Committee, but this was nowhere near the full participation that women were hoping for. At Lund, there were five women delegates; at Hannover there were thirteen. This represented 2.8% and 6.4% respectively. That was not nearly enough.

On to the Minneapolis Assembly, 1957

In a small booklet published by the LWF in the 1980's, the world in which the 1957 Minneapolis Assembly took place was described as "a world of new nations and cold war". Israeli forces were withdrawn from the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip was handed over to UN forces. "The Six" signed the Rome Treaty establishing the Common



Opening plenary session of the Third LWF Assembly, Minneapolis, 1957

Market. Because of the increasing potential of atomic power, the International Atomic Energy Agency was established. In the United States, where the Assembly was to take place, the "Eisenhower Doctrine" was formulated to 'contain' communism and prevent it from making headway. The African nations were beginning to achieve their independence.

1957 was a year of scientific and technological

growth as well. An oral vaccine was developed by Albert Sabin against polio. Transatlantic cable telephone service was begun. In the USSR, Sputnik I and II, the first earth satellites, were launched.

For Lutherans in North America, the year prior to the Assembly was the year in which the first steps were taken towards the formation of the Lutheran Church in America. With this spirit of unity, reflected in the Assembly theme, "Christ Frees and

Unites", Lutheran women in the United States and Canada joined to make women a visible presence on the international scene.

It was decided that one way of doing this was to sponsor international women visitors to the Assembly in Minneapolis as "visitors". Although there were only nineteen women delegates in comparison to the 255 men, the addition of these visitors was one way of increasing, at least slightly, the presence of women at the Assembly.

On the suggestion of Minerva Baker, member of the Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life, and Dr. Clarence Stoughton, the Commission's chairperson, Lutheran women from the "younger churches" were invited to be the guests of the American Lutheran Women. The funds were raised as a joint effort of several different Lutheran Women's church groups. According to L. DeAne Lagerquist in *From Our Mother's Arms, A History of Women in the American Lutheran Church*:

The Lutheran Free Church WMF..contributed three hundred dollars to the travel fund and appointed Iona Olson, their executive secretary, to attend planning meetings. The group, which formed to plan for preparatory Bible study, to gather the necessary funds, and to arrange schedules for the international visitors, took the name Lutheran Women's Coordinating Committee (LWCC).

The plan that resulted from the LWCC was two-fold. First, it suggested that the \$20,000 raised be used to bring twelve visitors, as noted above, to the Assembly. According to Doris Spong, former president of the American Lutheran Church Women and the later the Lutheran Church Women, (in *Led By The Spirit, A History of Lutheran Church Women*), "Throughout the history of the LWF it was pretty hard for men to let women be the delegates for these conventions." This was one way women would be included in the proceedings. A second reason,

however, was so that American women would be able to receive the gifts that these international visitors would bring. More will be said later about the "Echo" groups that formed as a series of post-Assembly meetings.

Between 1952 and 1957, the newly formed Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life, consisting of twelve members, met twice, once in Kiel, Germany (1954) and once in Oslo, Norway (1956). An important outcome of the Kiel meeting was the joining of the women's and youth work and the stewardship and evangelism forces into one solid unit. The Commission in Kiel planned to hold a small meeting of women in Europe to begin to prepare for the LWF Assembly in Minneapolis.

Some of the issues raised prior to the Minneapolis Assembly are worth noting. In a letter to Dr. Lund-Quist from Dorothy Haas, who at that time was serving as national president of the ALC Women's Missionary Federation, and seven other women, the following questions were posed:

- Will there be a pre-Assembly conference for women? Who will have to call such a conference?
- Which sections will the women be able to attend?
- What, if anything, shall be included on the agenda concerning women?
- Is it possible for the LWF to assist financially and otherwise in sponsoring area conferences for women on different continents using international church leaders?
- Is it possible, through the Executive Officer, to suggest that women be included as members in the study groups of the various national committees?
- Is it possible for women to be included as consultants to the Commissions of the LWF?

These questions resulted from the small group meeting that was held at Stein in 1955. According

to Gudrun Diestel, women were beginning to investigate the means by which their inferior status was maintained. She noted, for example, that "the (German) constitution provided equal rights...but it was the "father" who had the final say. There was no full social security for women...no equal wages. At Stein we were especially anxious to alert women to the meaning of becoming responsible citizens, especially in the new democratic country...We sought dialogue with women from other countries".

Some of the means by which that dialogue was to take place was through the World Day of Prayer, a movement of prayer and study. As noted earlier, Stein had a tradition of being a center for women's leadership at a time in which the social reality for German women left much to be desired. The women present at the Stein meeting were listed as follows: Mrs. Blauenfelst (Denmark); Mrs. Lindstrom (Sweden); Mrs. Hartmann (Austria); Mrs. Bruckner (German Democratic Republic); and Mrs. Grosch, Mrs. Nold and Dr. Nopitsch (Federal Republic of Germany). Some of these names had appeared earlier; others would appear again.

Lieselotte Nold, as described by her assistant Gudrun Diestel, was "a great woman. She had married young. Her husband was a member of the Confessing Church. Her training went no further than German High School, but she did receive an honor-

ary doctorate. She was creative, an organizer who knew how to deal with all kinds of people". Nopitsch and Nold were a dynamic team. They had great trust in their young and inexperienced staff, whom they sent to all kinds of meetings. They had a tremendous sense of the needs in other parts of the world, a sense of vision and imagination. Representatives from churches in India, Tanzania, and Brazil worked with them.

But what happened to the idea of a pre-Assembly meeting for women? We have only bits and pieces of what actually took place. One report listed recommendations growing out of "informal conversations" with Clarence Stoughton, Chair of the Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life. Dorothy Haas reported giving background for the material received as a result of the thinking of the group (Stein). She said that Bishop Lilje was asked whether he would look with favor upon a women's meeting in connection with the 1957 Assembly. He replied in the affirmative providing the discussion centers on practical matters, and not theological.

Women would be allowed to gather, but theology was not to be discussed. Only "practical" matters – such things as food, housing, and hospitality – were to be on the agenda. Important, yes; but the women of Stein were interested in much more.

Hats protected participants from the sun at a festival held during the Third LWF Assembly in Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1957. More than 125,000 people took part in the event.



"Practical Matters" and Women's Organizing

In the "Report of the Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life" (1952-57) and under the heading of "Oslo, 1956", three meetings of women leaders were noted. These were the above mentioned 1955 meeting at Stein, a 1955 meeting held in Ohio, US, and a 1956 meeting held in Chicago, Illinois. The hoped-for pre-Assembly conference never actually took place.

Women met in small gatherings to discuss Assembly issues. There was, however, no gathering financed by the LWF and attended by official leaders at which women from all regions could meet to discuss their needs and accomplishments.

Prior to the 1957 Assembly in Minneapolis there was no separate women's commission. This was in accordance with the previous recommendation of Hannover that women be "recognized as full partners in the work of the LWF". As it turned out, only three women were assigned to one commission; no women were hired as executive staff.

Many people began to criticize the recommendation formulated in Hannover. They wondered whether women had missed an important opportunity in coming together as a separate "Women's Section". It should be noted that some wonderful things had resulted in connection with the Third General Assembly. Let us return again to the group known as the Lutheran Women's Coordinating Committee (LWCC).

This group of women, known simply as the "Hospitality and Entertainment Committee", was responsible for arranging drivers, interpreters, shopping trips, sightseeing, lodging and all meals, including special Sunday dinners in the homes of local families. Within the context of Christianity, hospitality has been an especially significant con-

cept. In Romans 12:13 we read: "Contribute to the need of the saints, practice hospitality." In Greek the word literally means "loving the guest", an expression of relationship and caring whereby the visitor is welcomed as family. What better way to manifest the theme of the Third Assembly, "Christ Frees and Unites" than by practicing hospitality?

This group consisted of women leaders from eight Lutheran Church groups in North America. They raised \$20,000 to pay the expenses of ten women visitors from Europe, Asia, and South America to participate in a series of twelve post-Assembly area meetings throughout the United States. What this teaches us is that early on women knew the importance of coming together with other women. They knew the importance of exchanging stories, sharing struggles, and celebrating together. They knew that if they really wanted such a gathering to occur, they would have to finance it themselves.

Two incidents concerning this group should be mentioned. The first concerns a complimentary luncheon that was planned for women leaders in all Lutheran congregations within the Minneapolis area. A letter went out from Paul Luther Wetzler inviting all pastors "to name three lady leaders" whom they desired to represent their churches. It was suggested that "before making the appointment, they confer with the ladies."

Here was one man in a position of power writing to a group of men in positions of power asking them to choose women to participate in a group that was being planned, led, and organized by women! While this was unusual for the time in which it was taking place, the women of Stein had begun to question the procedure of men determining how women's gatherings should be organized.

The matter of finance should also be noted. Written into the "philosophy" of this committee, the chairperson included the following:

Since this committee is to receive very little money from the budget, its procedures must be carried on within the lines of what can be arranged in other ways.

What is important to remember here is that groups designated as "women's groups" were rarely given adequate funds. Despite this, women would

devise, in some creative and self-sacrificing way, a means by which their project could be carried out. Too often, however, women's resourcefulness has either been ignored or assumed when it has come to designating funds for services and programmes involving women. Women have always done much for little, which has not always worked to their advantage.



Minneapolis Assembly Plenary, 1957 Audio-Visual Service Photo

Minneapolis, 1957



There is no question that the work of feeding and hospitality are necessary and important. Jesus himself gathered his closest friends around a meal the night before he died. Jesus, who teaches about true hospitality, continues to gather us in his presence around the table.

We celebrate the work of these women who received little or no mention in the press releases. We celebrate these women who seemed to have virtually "disappeared" from all the official documents. We celebrate the work of these women, but at the same time we must look at our history with a critical eye.

Women and Theology

Why weren't women encouraged to participate? Was it because they might take part in theological discussions? Why was it that the number of women serving as delegates increased from only 13 at Hannover to only 18 in Minneapolis, representing only 17% of the total delegation? In the "Proceedings" of the 1957 Minneapolis Assembly there is only *one* line in which women are mentioned. In the "Report" from that same Assembly, women are specifically mentioned in only *two* lines. Mrs. Charles "Minerva" Baker was referred to only in her capacity

of having "introduced the women guests who had come to the Assembly invited by the women in America".

Despite the lack of acknowledgment given to women in the "official" documents of the Third Assembly, we know that the women offered a powerful presence. In the search to uncover some of the untold stories of women in Minneapolis, a listing of "Special Interest Groups" was discovered. These groups were held at lunch time during the Assembly in order to cover a number of different topics that were not included in the Assembly's agenda. Average attendance at most of these luncheons was 50 - 100 people. The special interest group on "Women's Leadership Luncheon" had more than 1,300 participants!

Women were hungry for participation, and they discovered ways to come together despite their exclusion. There is no written record describing what took place at that luncheon. A general invitation was found announcing that 37 separate interest groups would be held. There was nothing describing the one called "Women's Leadership" other than an attendance list. On the whole, very little was written about women in the publicity surrounding the Assembly.

There were several articles describing a group of visiting nurses, members of the National Lutheran Nurses Guild and a few others from Europe and Asia. There was a short clipping on Gladys P. Graham of New York who was sent to cover the LWF Assembly. There were photos of some women featured with their fathers or husbands.

Finally, there was a photo of Miss Minnesota 1957, Ardyce Gustafson, described as "the prettiest Sunday School teacher in Minnesota." Gustafson is pictured at a booth displaying some of the Federation's activities. The caption reads: "Beauty Mans A Lonely Booth". (*Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 22 August 1957)

Something significant had happened for women at the Third Assembly in Minneapolis in 1957. Women had begun to realize their need to come together. They had begun to realize that full participation in the LWF was nowhere near a reality for them. Their concern was reflected in a suggestion made by the Committee on Women's Work:

The Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life asks the Executive Committee to recommend that the national committees seriously consider the appointment of women in all future commissions (theology, education, Lutheran World Service, mission, and stewardship.)

Something had happened in Minneapolis. Women fed thousands yet they were left hungry. That hunger would later lead to exciting events.

The First International Conference for Lutheran Women - Schmalensee, July 1963

Following the Minneapolis Assembly, the North American Lutheran Women's Coordinating Committee sponsored a number of post-Assembly meetings under the theme "Christ Frees and Unites". These meetings had two basic goals: to "echo" the Assembly by means of a short talk given by guest speakers expressing their impressions of the Assembly and a sharing and report on church life presented by a panel of people from different parts of the world.

Two women - Minerva Baker and Evelyn Stark, both of the United States - assumed leadership positions in planning these meetings at which women began to speak of a women's conference with an eye towards the next Assembly.

The request to hold this First International

Conference for Lutheran Women was met with some resistance from the LWF on procedural and logistic grounds. Approval was granted, however, by the Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life, and plans were begun for a three-day pre-Assembly gathering which would be limited to fifty participants.

In July 1963, a Women's Pre-Assembly Conference was held in Schmalensee (Germany). The conference, entitled "Christian Women Today", had representatives from 22 countries. They were mainly delegates and official visitors appointed by member churches to participate in the Helsinki Assembly scheduled for 1963. Financial support for this gathering came mostly from women's organizations in North America, but resources from a number of women's groups were offered. According to Gudrun Diestel, "The American women had the money, and the Germans were very poor, but we gave what we had. We had very good methods of Bible study, and having gone through the Nazi experience, we had some very strong lay leadership. We knew the power of the Bible in times of persecution and resistance. So together, we made up the programme".

There were, indeed, resources being shared in putting together the programme at Schmalensee, but the LWF did not provide any financial resources for this meeting, and no LWF executive staff members attended. Nevertheless, many of the names of the women who participated were very familiar to the LWF: Minerva Baker and Dorothy Haas (US); Henriette Westerman (Netherlands); Liselotte Nold (Germany); and newer names reflecting a widening internationalism within the LWF, such as Julia Seakamela (South Africa), Mrs. Hsiao (Hong Kong), Farney Rodriguez (Colombia), and R. B. Manikam (India).

The list of participants was exciting in its diversity, but we were still learning about what it meant to be an inclusive organization. Insight into the situation was provided by Gudrun Diestel, who

helped organize the women's pre-conference meeting at Schmalensee:

What developed quickly in those days was a growing knowledge of other continents – Asia, Africa, South America. It was a time when people were still working under the concept of 'younger churches'. What happened was that the Northern Hemisphere made up the programme so that we would have people from other countries make presentations. We had women represented from all over the world, and these same women were invited to the Assembly at Helsinki...

Mistakes were made in those early days, and the women learned from them. Madeline Dubot, a European woman, spoke on the situation of women in Asia and Africa. Today we would never think of doing such a thing. Nevertheless, perspectives were being broadened. We learned from Schmalensee.

The focus of this meeting was stewardship. Women brought a new understanding to the concept of stewardship in the church, expressed, in part, by the questions that were being asked. From the "Report of the Findings Committee" we read the following:

Often women feel frustrated or without any opportunity to fulfill their tasks in church life. The world is expecting women to share in many tasks. Should women expend all their energy and talent to meet the world's needs but neglect to use their gifts in the church? Are women being encouraged in the best stewardship of their lives? (Schmalensee, 1963)

Women knew that stewardship included the appropriate use of one's gifts as well as the opportunity to use those gifts. This was not so different from the cry of the women at Hannover "that women be given the opportunity to contribute to every

Minneapolis,
1957



sphere of work of the LWF." What was new was the realization of how important it was for women to come together. The appointment of three women to one Commission was simply not enough. The voices of women needed to be heard in every part of the LWF.

As a result of the meeting in Schmalensee, it was suggested that a "Standing Committee" related to an appropriate LWF Commission (such as Congregational Life) be appointed for the following purposes:

- to encourage and stimulate women in their tasks of service in the Church;
- to keep alive contacts and provide communication with women's groups in the world;
- to study theological bases for participation of women in the work of the church, women

in the world; and

- to explore the possibility of a chosen working relationship between men and women in fulfilling the task of the Church.

What were the women of Schmalensee in effect saying? They wanted encouragement and stimulation. In order for this to happen, communication and shared information was essential. Women's participation was not a matter of "sociology" (Hanover, 1952); rather, it was a theological question, one that needed to be taken seriously within this federation of churches. Also, it was important for men and women to work together. Women knew that full participation meant the participation of all people on an equal basis.

Something new was added to the cries of the women at the Schmalensee meeting. This was the

request that a woman be hired to fill a staff position in Geneva. To sum up the mood of Schmalensee in the words of the women who were there, "In each (member) congregation there are many dedicated women. Their God-given gifts are waiting to be used".

One woman who had the opportunity to be part of the LWF staff in Geneva was Christa Held. She arrived with little information about the LWF and no special interest in working for the church. She was a professional plant breeder but was looking for something new. "I couldn't think of anything more exciting, more challenging, and probably with more work than the LWF..."

Christa Held was the first of the Administrative Assistants, a position which she described as "a little step to give recognition to this middle level of responsibility (neither secretary nor executive)". Today she holds an executive position in the LWF, but the road was not easy. The women of Schmalensee had helped to pave the way for Christa Held and all those who were to follow.

Continuing Women's Work - From Schmalensee to Helsinki, 1963

The theme of the Fourth LWF General Assembly held in Helsinki was "Christ Today". What was the today of 1963? It was a world that had narrowly escaped US-Soviet nuclear confrontation. Once it did, there was so much awareness of the negative effects of nuclear testing on human health that the US, UK and USSR signed a partial test ban treaty prohibiting nuclear testing in the atmosphere.

It was a world of political unrest. France had left Viet Nam and the US had begun escalating its military involvement there. In the US itself, an anti-war movement was organized and the struggle for racial justice gathered momentum with a 350,000 strong march on Washington, D.C. to hear Martin Luther King proclaim "I have a dream". National

Dr. Christa Held, Associate Director for Project Coordination and Administration, Department for Mission and Development

Photo: Christa Rothenbühler



liberation movements in Africa were winning independence in one country after another.

It was a time of miracles in science. On earth an artificial heart was being used for the first time to take over the circulation of a patient's blood during heart surgery, while in space the first close-up photographs of the surface of the moon became available.

In 1963, Roman Catholics and many others mourned the death of the great reformer, Pope John XXIII, who had done so much to foster cooperative relations among the churches. This ecumenical spirit was one that would be reflected in the Assembly at Helsinki, for it was there that the LWF would endeavor to amend its constitution to allow the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod to see fit to join the Federation. Although the Missouri Synod did not join, relationships between the Lutheran Church in America and the Missouri Synod grew warmer. This was to have a significant effect upon the representation of women at the Assembly in Evian in 1970.

The story of women at Helsinki was difficult to construct. The publication, *Messages of the Helsinki Assembly* did not include any "messages" given by women. Could this have meant that women had nothing to say? From the events that took place earlier at Schmalansee, we know that women had plenty to say. The Findings Committee of the Women's Pre-Assembly Conference presented a report on the events at Schmalansee which included a summary of women's work in the LWF from Hannover to Helsinki. The report highlighted the need for a special committee to deal specifically with women's work. The result of these findings was the formation of the "Continuation Committee on Women's Work".

The controversial and well-fought for recommendation that was to change the history of women in the LWF was listed as follows in the "Proceedings"

from the Helsinki Assembly, report of Section VI, Stewardship and Congregational Life:

That approval be given to the recommendation of the Women's Pre-Assembly Conference in regard to the formation of a standing committee related to Stewardship and Congregational Life and assisted by a woman staff person in Geneva with the purposes as stated in the findings of the conference.

The Schmalansee Conference had submitted a proposal calling for more participation of women in the LWF and requesting a staff position. When it was sent off to the Assembly, it was clear that they had no intention of including an item in the budget for women's work. Women would always ask for funds or for a specific project like the Continuation Committee, and the men would discuss it, but no action would be taken.

According to Gudrun Diestel, "The question was officially brought before the Assembly and then there was an official 'yes' to our requests; but no money would be budgeted. It would then be said that there really wasn't a need for something like a Continuation Committee. Finally, possibilities would be presented on how to forward the question. Things would then be referred to the incoming Executive Committee 'for serious consideration.'"

Something happened for women at the Assembly in Helsinki, however, because the story did not end with the women's request being referred "for serious consideration". Diestel then went on to tell what happened next:

As the two men in the chair continued to present this recommendation, the recommendation became watered down, and watered down even more. But then Doris Spong got up, and she was familiar with the procedures of the Assembly. She was strong and she rescued the recommendation.

What do we know of Doris Spong, this "strong" woman who "rescued" the women's recommendation at Helsinki? She had helped to bring international visitors to the Minneapolis Assembly in 1957. One of her colleagues, Dorothy Marple, who has also had a significant role in the history of women in the LWF, described Spong as her mentor in the LCW (Lutheran Church Women, North America) of which Spong was the second president. Spong was very active in Foreign Mission (now called 'global mission'). It was through such women that contacts were made with women overseas. Along with Dorothy Haas, and through the Lutheran Woman's Cooperating Committee, Spong also became engaged in several publication projects with the women from Germany.

The main purpose of the Continuation Committee once it was formed was to plan a Pre-Assembly Conference. Gerda Voss was appointed to carry the responsibility of the Committee in Geneva. Voss described the work of the Continuation Committee in this way:

The task of the Continuation Committee along with preparing the (pre-Assembly) conference was also to maintain all the contacts that had been made at the previous conference on women's work and to follow up the work on any problems that had already been dealt with or that would crop up in the future – tasks which can't readily be seen from the title by the committee as "Continuation Committee".

The nomination of the Continuation Committee took place in 1965. Margit Lindstrom (Sweden) accepted the position of chairperson. Others to be named were Gannela Walom (Ethiopia), Dr. Prodduki R. David (India), Dr. Dorothy Haas (USA), and Dr. Antonie Nopitsch and Rev. Gudrun Diestel (Federal Republic of Germany). Dr. Dorothy Marple succeeded Dr. Haas in 1968. After the appointment of the Committee members, an additional year and

a half went by before the Committee actually began to function. Gerda Voss left the LWF in 1965.

No woman, however, was appointed to the Executive Staff in Geneva. As had been predicted, this was due to "financial reasons".

The Continuation Committee held two meetings, the first in Geneva in 1966 and the second in Lund in 1969. At the first meeting, the discussion focused on "Women's position and responsibility in the church, the family, and changing society." Two theologians present at the meeting, Anita Diehl (Sweden) and Gudrun Diestel (Federal Republic of Germany), were asked to serve as advisors for the Continuation Committee.

This was a significant step. Women were now turning to other women for advice, especially in the field of theology, the once-forbidden area in which women had been previously unable to participate!

They decided to bring to the Executive Committee the suggestion to hold a Pre-Assembly Conference in Porto Alegre. The theme would be "Sent Into the World – The Challenge to Women in a Changing Society". A programme was developed for the conference, but this time the request was being made for 100 rather than 50 participants.

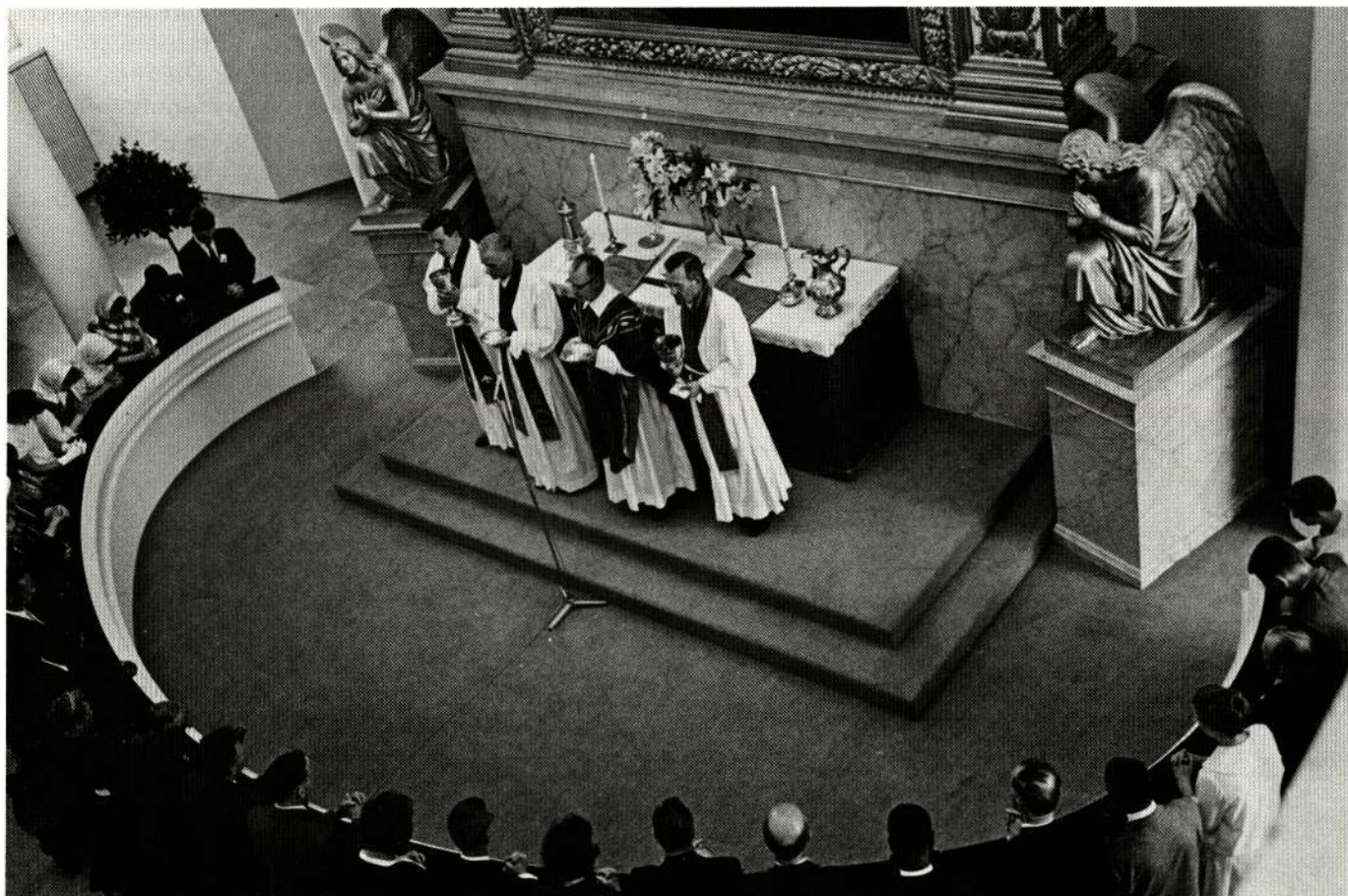
When Dr. Nopitsch, Gudrun Diestel, and Margit Lindstrom met in Stein in August 1967, they were informed that the Executive Committee would not support plans for a Pre-Assembly Conference for 'financial reasons'. A week or two later, the women appeared in Geneva. The Executive Director said he understood the difficulty, but that there was no money. The women were given a very nice dinner, but that didn't help.

How were they going to be involved in the preparation of the next Assembly? It was decided that a questionnaire be sent out to women's organizations, as well as to individual women in LWF

member churches, a decision approved by the Executive Committee.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections corresponding to the three Assembly sections. In addition, the questionnaire included the

an early Pre-Assembly Conference in Europe with only 30 participants. This meeting, which finally occurred in Båstad, Sweden, in the summer of 1969, was approved by the LWF Executive Committee in Geneva. It was funded, however, by the Lutheran Woman's Cooperating Committee in the



Helsinki, 1963

following open-ended question: "What do you think the LWF can do for the concerns of women?" It seemed to be a helpful vehicle of communication in most parts of the world. It was also agreed to hold

US and from the national committees of the LWF in the US, Germany, and Sweden, as well as the Women's Church Council and the Women's Council of the diocese of Lund.

The work of the Continuation Committee was voluntary. This greatly limited what these women were capable of doing other than to plan the Pre-Assembly Conference. Money was not easily accessible, and if women had not volunteered their time and energy, if they had not raised their own funds, many events would never have taken place. A letter written by Dorothy Haas to Gerda Voss illustrates the deep sense of frustration that so many women felt:

I have had a heavy heart since Helsinki. The women can put so much into a meeting of that kind and yet they always feel that it might have been better if they had not been there.

When I think of all the time we gave to plan post-Assembly meetings here in the US and in Canada, and how we made this federation come alive for so many people – something which the men had never done – then I do get very discouraged and wonder what the next step should be.

Why should we women always need to struggle and wear ourselves out and then get slapped down? I do not think we would keep doing unless we felt that it is all for our Lord's glory...

This letter was written in February 1964, yet its words have been just as relevant many times since then in the history of women in the LWF. The struggle would continue, and the women would "keep on doing" in the years to come.

Turning Point at Båstad, 1969

The Pre-Assembly Conference which took place in Båstad, Sweden, in 1969 was attended by 40 women from LWF member churches in Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. There

were also a number of women representing churches other than the Lutheran Church. The combination of women from the 'younger' or 'Third World' countries (nearly 50%) along with the ecumenical representation (speakers from the World Council of Churches), gave the meeting at Båstad a distinct character.

Dr. Dorothy Marple, who was present at the Båstad Conference as a member of the Continuation Committee, helped to put the meeting into context:

At the time of the conference, we realized that the Assembly was going to be in Evian, under the theme "Sent Into the World". This was the first time the LWF ever had a theme like that; all the previous themes had been Christological.

Our programme had such people as Dr. Kitagawa (WCC) whose field was urban mission. I remember him so well talking about the 'global village'

There were Roman Catholics present. That was new. But we were also interested in Tina Franz, a woman from Indonesia. I so well remember her talking about her struggle with the Muslims...this was 1969, and the women were talking about the worldwide spread of Islam!

For Marple, the conference was significant in its balance between Third World and European countries. "We had learned from Schmalensee," she noted.

The atmosphere at Båstad reflected the times. The wounds of the Second World War were healing and despite East-West tensions, Europe had managed to avoid hostilities. Regional conflicts flared, however, and the decolonization process was not yet complete. Students in many countries

intensified their protests against the war in Viet Nam, and the women's liberation movement was beginning to spread like wildfire.

The LWF General Secretary, Dr. André Appel, addressed the Pre-Assembly Conference. This was the first time a member of the executive staff in Geneva had been present at an LWF international women's conference.

The content of the meeting was also significant. It took place shortly after the Swedish churches had decided to ordain women, and the first woman to be ordained led the others in Bible study. Various topics were presented. Justice Annie Jiagge (Ghana) spoke on political responsibility. Ways in which this political responsibility might make itself manifest were offered by Dr. Maria Alberta Lukker, President of the International Grail Movement. Brigalia Bam, reacting to an address given by Dr. Daisuke Kitagawa (both staff officials of the World Council of Churches), emphasized the need to educate children for the future. Tina Fransz spoke of religious and cultural pluralism in her homeland, Indonesia. Båstad was a conference in which diversity was recognized as a gift, not a threat.

This meeting marked an overall turning point in the history of women in the LWF. What was the thinking of all those women who were unable to attend the conference?

As noted earlier, a questionnaire had been developed and sent out by the Continuation Committee. The findings of the questionnaire were discussed and evaluated at Båstad. Concerns of women in the areas of educational, vocational, and leadership training, the need for educational resources, and the desire for increased communication and information for the LWF were among the major findings of this questionnaire.

Based on the results of the questionnaire and in light of the various addresses presented at the

conference, several recommendations were made to the LWF Executive Committee. The focus was on increased participation.

It was resolved that:

- Women be recognized as full partners in the work of the LWF by appointing them to the policy, planning, and decision-making commissions and sub-committees of the LWF.

In order to implement this recommendation, it was resolved that:

- The member churches and nominating committees of the LWF be apprised of the above recommendation.

New, strong words were beginning to creep into the vocabulary of the women in the LWF. Words like *policy*, *planning*, and *decision-making* erupted in the recommendations. A new understanding of the sources of power and ways in which that power might be shared rang through the simply stated recommendations. There was also a growing awareness that it was necessary for LWF member churches and nominating committees to be able to "see with new eyes" in order for full participation to take place.

A second recommendation focused on specific and urgent needs for projects in which people would be enabled to help themselves. They included developing skills to prepare educational materials; a listing of available resources; regional leadership training experiences; exchange programmes among women in member churches; shared information regarding ecumenical discussion and dialogue; studies done by the LWF to meet the concerns of women; and producing a newsletter designed to facilitate the exchange of information among women in member churches.

The third recommendation dealt with staff personnel and committee needs. This was seen as necessary for the implementation of the second

Helsinki, 1963

recommendation. It called for a woman staff member who would develop a programme "to meet the unmet concerns of women and their organizations of member churches". (*Report, Pre-Assembly Women's Conference, Båstad, Sweden, 1969*). With-

out the 'internal' staff support of a woman in Geneva, there was really no one to advocate and push for the needs of women.

This staff position was to be called "Continuing

Education for Women". It was also resolved that a committee be appointed to advise the staff, and that this committee should be related to an appropriate LWF Commission (such as the Commission on Studies and Consultative Service).

Dorothy Marple tells of what happened with these recommendations in the days following the meeting at Båstad: "The Continuation Committee met immediately afterwards in Bishop Lindstrom's house. They flew the UN flag for us. Our job as the Continuation Committee was to take the recommendations from the meeting and sharpen them for the Assembly. It was the last time the Continuation Committee met".

The gist of the meeting at Båstad was advocacy for a stronger role in the decision-making process of the LWF. Of a total of 73 people involved at that time on the LWF's 30 executive positions in Geneva, there was only one woman holding a top position, and that was Christa Held, Director of Community Development Services.

It was time for women to be included in the decision-making process. But what would happen at the Fifth General Assembly? Would the women be taken seriously? From a press release on the Båstad conference we read the following:

The name of the conference – International Consultation on the Continuation of Women's Work – sounded complicated, but it turned out to be a gathering of a number of cheerful and giggling "aunts" from all over the world. "Aunts" who listened with relentless concentration to deep lectures and discussions, but who in high spirits laughed at the simplest jokes all the social evenings, so that a poor man felt completely lost.

(From press release "Colorful Lutheran World Federation Women at Conference in Båstad", *Vir Kyrka*, No. 29 Hakan Fondell)

What, indeed, was to happen at the Fifth General Assembly?

Breakthrough for Women in the LWF – Evian, 1970

In many ways, the Assembly at Evian was not like any of the previous Assemblies. The LWF had officially announced that the Assembly would be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil; but in June 1970 it was announced "that the necessary conditions for meeting in Brazil were no longer assured and that the officers had regretfully decided to change the place of meeting" (*Sent Into The World, The Proceedings of the Lutheran World Federation*).

The decision caused a wave of protest. It was felt that the change of location was a betrayal of the Assembly's theme "Sent Into the World". Additional protest followed when it was decided to hold the Assembly in Evian, a French resort on the shores of Lake Geneva.

Dorothy Marple, an Assembly advisor at Evian, described why the site of the Assembly had been changed:

Two conditions must be present for a country to host an Assembly: no one should be excluded because of difficulty in obtaining a visa; and there should be freedom of both speech and press. There was no freedom to speak out in Brazil in those days, and the Federation wanted to be sure that everyone who was a delegate would be able to get a visa to attend. The local church was very disappointed when the LWF moved to Evian at such short notice.

For their part, the Brazilian churches were angry, and Evian became a place of genuine encounter.

At Evian, for the first time in LWF history, young people (18-25 years of age) were allowed to participate as full voting delegates. Doris Spong, Vice-President of Lutheran Church Women (North America), was named to the Business Committee of an LWF Assembly. Representation of women, however, was still small. The 122 women delegates appointed accounted for only 9.6% of the total Assembly participation. Despite their small numbers, the recommendation made by the women who had met at Båstad to have a woman staff person representing them in Geneva was adopted at Evian.

This resulted in the establishment of the Women's Desk of the LWF. It would not be until two years later, however, that the Reverend Eva Zabolai-Csekme would assume responsibilities for the staff position entitled "Continuing Education for Women". During the time of this Assembly, the LWF underwent a change in structure, and the Department of Studies was established. It was decided that the Women's Desk would be located in this Department.

Eva Zabolai-Csekme, chosen as the first Secretary of the Women's Desk, was responsible for Continuing Education for Women (half-time) and for church structures and worship (half-time). She was described by her colleague and successor, Eva von Hertzberg, as "a pastor with a special gift for worship, a truly good person who had the ability to analyze and summarize".

At the time of her appointment, Zabolai-Csekme, born in Hungary, was pursuing studies in sociology in Berkeley, California (US). Her particular area of interest was in Feminist Studies and Liberation Theology.

In an unofficial document identified only as "The Work of the LWF Women's Desk", Eva Zabolai-

Csekme was described as a "young, emancipated, and fighting person. The feminist approach to theology was completely new in the LWF spheres, as was the challenge to include women in the life and work of the LWF".

Despite the numerous gifts Eva Zabolai-Csekme brought to the LWF, those early 'ground-breaking' days were not easy. The unofficial document mentioned above referred to the infancy of the Women's Desk by noting that "the first phase was difficult, working against total misunderstanding, ridicule, and prejudices".

In practical terms it meant that it was very difficult to get the necessary finances for the programme and for staff positions. The Women's Desk was located in the Department of Studies, which at the time was very much under the critique of the more conservative LWF members".

The same document went on to describe other obstacles as follows:

The patriarchal way of sanctioning the behavior of the women in the office was to constantly raise the question of whether or not a Women's Desk should continue to receive funds; another way of domestication was to make fun of women's issues, or not respond to the letters of the Women's Desk. This was done by either not sending the women asked for, or by sending letters of complaint to the General Secretary without a copy to the Women's Desk...

Despite these obstacles, and in spite of the many struggles faced by women during this period in LWF history, many events occurred in the 1970s. It was a time for systematic development of women's work, a time of rapid growth. We will explore these years in closer detail.



Evian Assembly, 1970

Developing Leadership in the 1970s

In *LWF Reports 1970-77* a statement appears under the heading "Women In The Church" which describes how most efforts that had been made to include women in the life of the church were seen basically in terms of human rights and justice. It reads as follows:

Efforts to change church orders and practices prohibiting the participation of women

and the various activities and the occasional efforts to include women in the decision-making processes and structures are undertaken mainly in response to human rights questions. (paragraph 298, page 122)

The full participation of women in the life of the church and society is a question of human rights and, consequently, an issue of justice. Full participation of women in the church became, as well, a matter of theology. That same *Report* went on to say:

Therefore...the Church needs to understand that effective proclamation of the message is possible on the basis of the new community in Christ, a community which transcends the barriers between rich and poor, male and female, young and old, people of different races and nations.

The struggle of women to be recognized by the church and to be totally integrated into the Christian community has to be taken seriously not only as a human rights issue, but also as a struggle for creating a basis for effective proclamation. (paragraph 302, page 123)

This statement, written in preparation for the Sixth Assembly which was to be held in Dar Es Salaam in 1977, reflected a radical change in attitude towards the participation of women in the church and in the LWF. At Hannover, women were seen as a "sociological division" and not as part of "The Living Word In a Responsible Church". Twenty-four years later, women were being recognized – officially – for their importance as part of "the New Community in Christ".

What took place in the 1970's for women in the LWF? The early years of the decade were a time of great change for women in different parts of the world.

On 26 August 1970 in the United States, tens of thousands of women went on strike. Together they commemorated fifty years of women's suffrage in that country, and together they protested the inequality that still existed in the work place. The National Organization for Women in the US was gaining increasing strength. In Switzerland, 1971 was the year that women were granted the right to vote for the first time in national elections. In 1972, the following could be read in an editorial commenting on the tenth anniversary meeting of the AAWC (All Africa Women's Conference) and the power of "consciousness-raising":

We believe...that this liberation (of Africa) will evolve a new consciousness, and that from the womb of this new consciousness will be born an even greater awareness of the task that must characterize not only (woman's) role in the liberation of Africa, but her entire life.

(As quoted in *Lutheran World*, Vol. 22, 1975 from *Daily News*, Dar Es Salaam, 24 July 1972)

During the 1970s, the number of Lutheran churches ordaining women increased. The Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church authorized the ordination of women in 1970. In 1975, proclaimed International Women's Year by the United Nations, the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil ordained women. In 1976, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria (Federal Republic of Germany) also recognized the call of women to ordained ministry.

The Reverend Dr. Constance Parvey, ordained in the Lutheran Church in America in December 1972 and later to be made Secretary for the World Council of Churches' Study, "The Community of Men and Women in the Church", commented in *Lutheran World* on the question asked in the early days of her ministry: How does it feel to be a woman in a man's role?

To participate in this transformation of a powerful image is an adventure. It involves not merely the impact of my personal attitudes, training, and actions, but much more: the impact of my mere presence as female in a role long tailored 'for men only'.

Just as blue jeans need to be adjusted to the female figure, so my liturgical alb had to be re-cut to fit a woman's shoulders. And the role of the clergy in the future will have to be similarly sculptured, transformed, if women are to feel comfortable, at ease, and creative

Rev. Dr. Connie Parvey during her leadership as director of the study on the Community of Men and Women in the Church. The study has influenced many decisions taken by Protestant churches concerning the place of women and men in the church.



in moving within its heavy tradition.
(*Lutheran World*, Vol. 22, 1975)

Overall, the understanding of women's participation in the church as a theological issue also affected the methodologies employed by the LWF during the seventies. Chapter Five of the work "Women As Innovative Groups", entitled "Eva, wo bist du?" (Where Are You?), looked at the participation of women in both the LWF and the World Council of Churches:

...the new approach to methods is the procedure used by the Department of Studies of

the LWF, especially between Evian and Dar Es Salaam, and which is still being used there to some extent...to begin with the controversial issues leading to sometimes painful conflicts for the churches and the societies in which they live, to try to analyze these conflicts and to understand them better in the light of the Biblical and Christian tradition, and to ask how, by their faith, order, and action in the world the churches could achieve a credible and truly Christian witness.

(U. Duchrow, *Conflict Over the Ecumenical Movement*, 1981)

Developments in Geneva

As noted earlier, the Reverend Eva Zabolai-Csekme did not assume her position until January, 1972. The early years, as might be expected, were ones of establishing contacts and determining needs, ones of 'shaping' what was later to be called the Office of Women in Church and Society. Again, in "Eva, wo bist du?" Zabolai-Csekme summarizes the first period as follows:

New social realities demand new answers. Women of Western countries now have to identify with those sisters who are victims of oppression, exploitation and injustice. The witness of the church is credible only if it is congruent in word and deed.

One of the ways that the LWF Women's Desk was to be "congruent in word and deed" would be through a series of leadership training events. Leadership development, voiced in many different ways as a need from women in the member churches, became a high priority. In the first issue of the newsletter in October 1974, Eva Zabolai-Csekme made the following comments:

One of the most obvious obstacles to finding satisfactory solutions is the lack of adequate

leadership among women on all levels. This lack is strongly felt in the local situations, but also at national, regional, and international conferences, which are in most cases entirely, or at least predominately male.

Therefore we regard the development of adequate female leadership as the *number one task* of the LWF Women's Desk.

In 1973, the first leadership training workshop was held in Ethiopia. Between 1974 and 1977, ten similar leadership development seminars were held in different parts of the world, their content determined by each local church. The seminars were not a matter of "doing it our way"; leadership was being



Eva Zabolai-Csekme, first Executive Secretary of WICAS/LWF from 1972 to 1980

redefined, and women were now given the opportunity to help shape that definition.

The topics of these seminars were as varied as the part of the world in which they were held. In Madagascar (1973) the focus was on evangelization, prayer, and social justice; in Ethiopia (1973) it was on a more national level with topics such as "The Economic Commission for Africa," the Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association" and "the International Labor Office." Madras, India, was the site of a 1974 workshop at which various aspects of Indian women's lives were dealt with, including education, family planning, and women's participation in politics. Other seminars were held in Nigeria (1975), Hong Kong (1975), Indonesia/Malaysia (1975), Yugoslavia (1976), Tanzania (1976), Botswana (1977), Brazil (1977), and Guyana (1978).

The workshop in Hong Kong, for example, included women from various Lutheran churches in Hong Kong, the Taiwan Lutheran Church, the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (Japan) and the Lutheran Church in the Philippines. Eva von Hertzberg noted that there was some difficulty among the member churches, but that the women managed to come together. Sessions on conducting meetings and moderating discussions constituted these leadership training seminars. The main purpose of the exercise was to supervise how these groups could work together.

The women learned that not all methods worked well in all regions. von Hertzberg spoke of "having to learn to work according to where we were and discussing how decisions were made in that particular culture. African people were used to a consensus model; others were used to different ways. We always had to adapt".

The "Leaders of the Leaders"

Who were the "leaders of the leaders"? The list



Participants in the first leadership training seminar, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1973.

could not possibly include all those women who helped to carry out these workshops, women such as Eva Zabolai-Csekme and Eva von Hertzberg, Rose Gurupathan (India), Charlotte Duncher and Basenuc Haku (Papua New Guinea), Anna Lange (Brazil), Barbara Kniest, Janet Luvanda, Veronica Swai (Tanzania), and Brigalia Bam (World Council of Churches) were instrumental in those early days of leadership training. There was one name, however, that clearly seemed to be almost equated with leadership training by many of the women interviewed in the course of this study, and that was Dr. Lois Leffler (US).

One of the first to participate in these leadership training workshops, Leffler had worked for years with the Lutheran Church Women, an auxiliary of the Lutheran Church in America, serving as Director of Field Programme with specific responsibilities for leadership education.

In 1969, Leffler participated in the pre-Assembly

conference of Lutheran women at Båstad. She later served as a delegate to the International Consultation of Women in Sri Lanka (1976) and became chairperson of the Women's Advisory Committee (1978-85). The wealth of experience that she had gathered as a result of her work in leadership training within her own church was to be shared at the regional meetings mentioned above. She also served as both a resource person and group facilitator during the LWF 10-week Advanced Leadership training Seminar for women in Bossey, Switzerland (1978).

Leffler was largely responsible for many of the workshops of the 1970s. They were very effective at including all groups of women. They imparted a view of the Bible and church history and helped to recruit women into church groups. Issues of concern, such as women and work and women on their own were explored. As a result of those workshops, women received skills and encouragement and gained hope.



Dr. Lois Leffler, Chairperson, Advisory Committee to WICAS from 1978 to 1985

The staff in Geneva faced an enormous task and challenge. Inquiries and requests were coming in to the Women's Desk at an amazing rate. In order to help meet the challenge of responding to these needs in the best possible manner, an Advisory Committee was appointed. It consisted of five women from five continents. As its name implies, the committee was appointed to 'advise' both the staff of the Women's Desk and the Commission on Studies.

Dorothy Marple, one of the women appointed to that first Advisory Committee (1975-77) described its objective as assisting the Secretary in charting some direction and some actions for the Women's Desk. It was to be an egalitarian committee with no one chairperson. Facilitation was rotated to avoid elitism and to promote democratic decision-making.

The Advisory Committee helped prepare the programme for the International Consultation for Women in Sri Lanka, and after that Consultation, the Committee worked on its recommendations for the Assembly in Dar Es Salaam. Others appointed to the Committee, which first met in January 1975, were Anna Lange (Brazil), Gudrun Diestel (Federal Republic of Germany), Sarah Kamala (Tanzania), and Rita Wang (Hong Kong). Elizabeth Karorsa (Ethiopia) soon replaced Sarah Kamala.

Communication

Another major area of development for the Women's Desk was the launching of a newsletter. The newsletter was done in response to the need for information sharing and communication among women all over the world. It focused on women's



Eva von Hertzberg, Executive Secretary of WICAS from 1980 to 1987



Prof. Dr. Anna Marie Aagaard from Denmark, a great pillar in the LWF theology

concerns through articles and art work. At long last there was a concrete way in which woman might touch woman, sister might touch sister.

Eva von Hertzberg describes *WOMEN* as "her baby". "When I came," she recalled, "Eva (Zabolai) said we needed a newsletter; and I had just produced one that distributed only 200 - 300 copies of a few pages each. From the second volume of *WOMEN* I started taking over. The first issue was done in 1974 and the second a year later. We changed the cover and the layout. We did not have the money to hire a professional, so we did it ourselves. It would take hours just doing the layout."

Looking through each volume from the first one in 1974 to the most recent, one has a sense of

history unfolding before one's eyes. The cover is now more permanent, the volumes are now thicker, and the contributions have become representative of an increasing number of member churches and countries. *WOMEN* has become an important element in the ever-strengthening global women's network.

The Importance of Research

During this time, the importance of research was becoming increasingly recognized. Why was it that full partnership had taken so long to develop? What were some of the obstacles faced by women in the LWF and its member churches? It is with these questions that the LWF Department of Studies sponsored a study project entitled: "Women As Innovative Groups". The study, described elsewhere in this book, was carried out through the



Gudrun Diestel, left, appointed to WICAS Advisory Committee in 1975, with delegates to the Evian Assembly. At the right is Bondu V. Subbama

German National Committee of the LWF in cooperation with the LWF/Department of Studies. Suffice it to say here that the group of researchers and writers who took part in this 11-year project represented some of the finest thinkers and theologians of their time.

Several other research projects were carried out in the areas of women and education; women and worship, liturgy, theology and ordination; human rights; development; and communication.

From Sri Lanka, 1976, to Dar Es Salaam, 1977

The 1970s were significant for women worldwide and within the LWF. In preparation for the Sixth General Assembly in Dar Es Salaam, the International Consultation for Women was held in Colombo,

Sri Lanka, in 1976 "to create a forum for women of the member churches to discuss the needs of women in their churches and societies, to deal with those topics which emerged from the leadership development seminars as having most urgency, and to enable them to plan the future of the LWF Women's Desk as well as activities of women's organizations on the local, national, and regional levels". (*Reports, 1970-77*) Seventy-five participants from 37 countries attended.

The participants were asked to write reports reflecting the problems, victories, and hopes of women in their countries. The findings were discussed in small working groups that focused on areas of education, rural development, women as agents for change, economic development, and population education. The priorities seemed to be those of awareness-building and education. Two major topics of the consultation, "Women and Human Development" and "Women and Proclama-



*International Consultation
for Women, Colombo,
Sri Lanka, 1976*

tion", were chosen on the basis of the priorities that emerged from the various leadership development seminars.

One of the things that Anna Lange (Brazil) remembers most about the Sri Lanka Consultation was that every issue that was discussed was important. "We learned how to put our questions into a form that would be acceptable in the Assembly at Dar Es Salaam, and we learned how to behave in the Assembly".

Eva von Hertzberg, who succeeded Eva Zabolai-Csekme as Secretary of the Office of Women in Church and Society in 1981, viewed the Sixth General Assembly in Dar Es Salaam as a "major breakthrough for women" and attributed the success of the Assembly, in large part, to the knowledge gained in Sri Lanka. According to von Hertzberg, "The networking among women and the women's center at the Assembly...helped the women to get their acts together and to plan successful strategies".

Women at this pre-Assembly consultation learned a new language – the language of structure and procedure in the church and in the LWF. They learned much more as well. Anne Lange noted the "significant worship" that took place, including a "washing of the feet" through which women in worship and prayer learned the power of being a footwisher.

The main focus of the event in Sri Lanka was on women's social and economic status. Recommendations were addressed to the Executive Committee, the Assembly, the LWF and its member churches, the Commission on World Service, the Commission on Church Cooperation, and the Commission on Studies.

A mandate for the Women's Desk, reaffirming what had been stated at Båstad, listed women's additional needs as: training for professional lead-

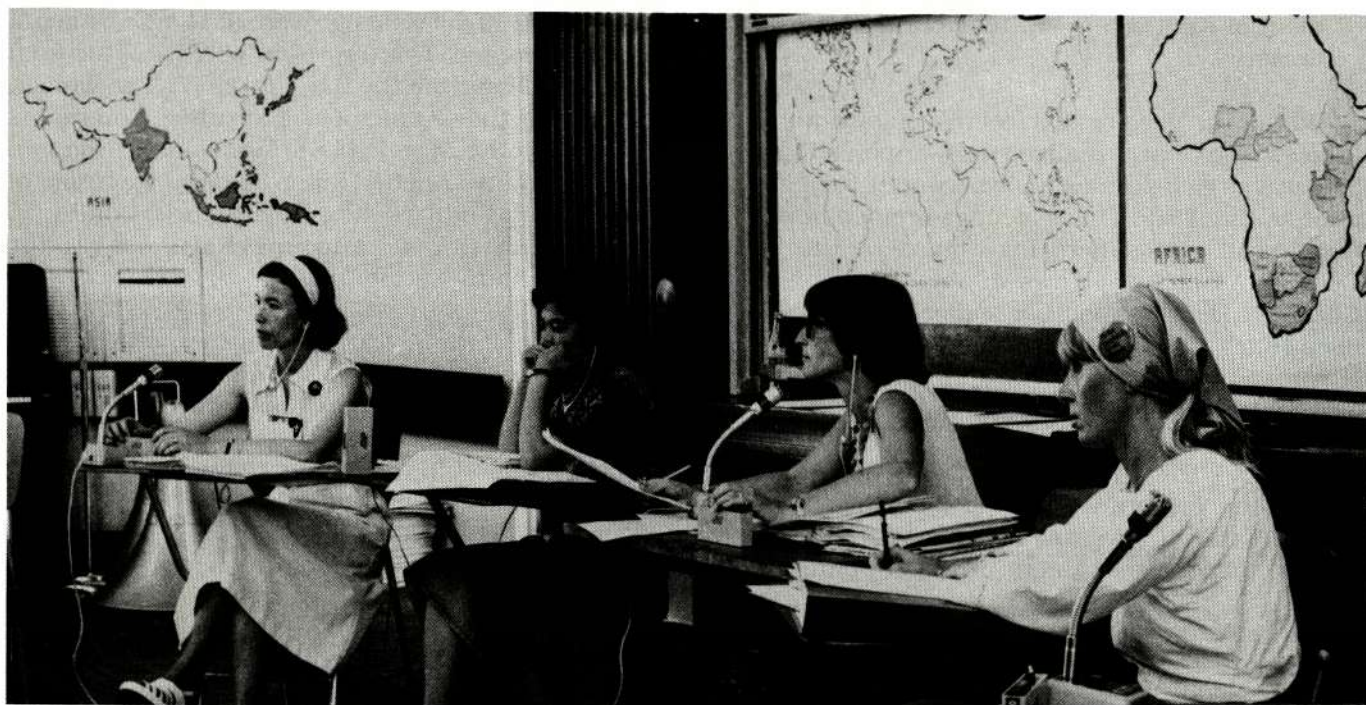
ers of women's organizations, consultative services to assist in the designing of programmes and projects, assistance in educating people to be responsible parents, and ways in which the world's resources might be more evenly distributed.

The particular recommendations made to the Commission on Studies and approved by the Commission called for **two** full-time executive staff members within the Women's Desk. They also called for funding so that the Women's Desk might be able to meet the needs of women in the LWF member churches. In addition, involvement (real participation!) of women in biblical and theological studies was requested.

In a letter written to the member churches by the participants in the Consultation in Sri Lanka, several questions regarding women's participation in development projects were posed. This was to help sensitize the Federation and member churches to women's needs and to ensure that women, especially in rural areas, would be involved in initiating, planning, and implementing development projects as well as benefiting from them. The questions were listed as follows:

- Do women participate in the initiation and the direction of these projects?
- What are the benefits of these projects for women?
- Does this project increase women's options?
- What are the political, economic and cultural implications of this project with regard to women?
- Do they reinforce church and social structures that exclude women?

These questions represented a new awareness, a new consciousness on the part of the women present in Sri Lanka. Despite the pain and difficulty that was sure to follow in the answers, the questions in themselves were cause for celebration.



Women's meeting during Dar Es Salaam Assembly, 1977

Unless the questions were asked, the answers would never be changed.

It was with this spirit of asking the difficult questions that women entered the Sixth General Assembly of the LWF in Dar Es Salaam in 1977.

The Dar Es Salaam Assembly, 1977

An article in *Lutheran World* written by Kathleen Hurty, a US delegate to the Assembly in Dar Es Salaam, captures the joy of togetherness, participatory Bible study led by outstanding and diverse teachers, and the positive grappling with significant issues. She went on to describe what took place at the Assembly:

The invisibility of women in the LWF Assemblies in language and worship and decision-making was altered slightly at Dar Es Salaam. Visions of a new community of women and men in authentic partnership...expanded into tentative clarity with the election of six women to the LWF Executive Committee. It is a hopeful beginning.

Hurty further noted that:

being a woman at the Assembly was a bit like being a twist of lime in a glass of tonic water. We were distinctly visible, we affected the flavor, but we were hardly an equal part of the drink. How seriously full partnership of men and women in all areas of church life will be taken was a necessary question for the Lutheran World Federation; increased involve-

ment of women is not a temporary window dressing.

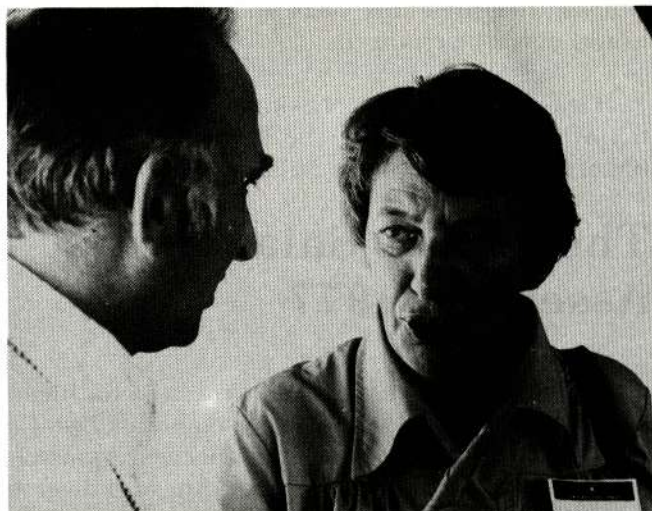
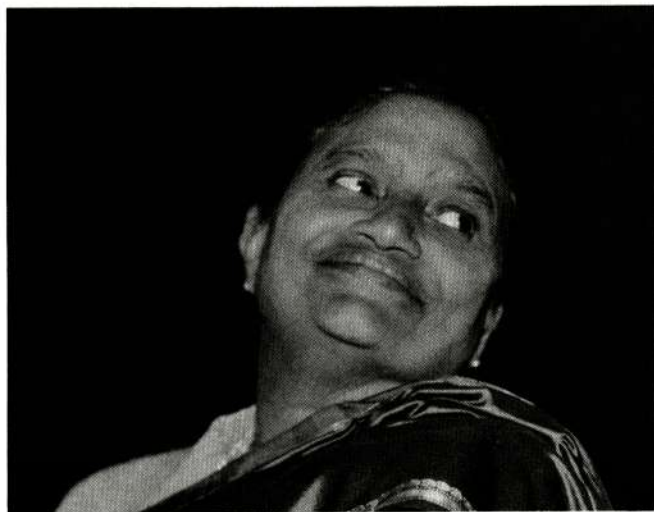
While Hurty expressed feelings of joy and hopefulness, she clearly realized that women still had a long way to go before actually becoming full participants in the LWF. These feelings seemed to reflect the overall atmosphere for women at the Sixth General Assembly. It was at this Assembly that Elizabeth Bettenhausen, a leader of Bible Study, used "she" when referring to the Holy Spirit. Not surprisingly, quite a few participants were upset.

It was also at this Assembly that Annette Nuber presided as the only woman pastor one morning during the celebration of the Eucharist; at the closing worship, it was arranged so that one did not need to take the sacrament from a woman.

The solidarity of women at Dar Es Salaam was resistant to any attempts at division. Although the problems experienced by women in different parts of the world are expressed differently, they basically have the same roots.

Of the 250 delegates present at Dar Es Salaam, 55 were women. This represented 22% of the total – quite a leap from the 2.8% in 1947! The women elected to the 30 member Executive Committee were: Dorothy Marple (US); Fibi Nadah (Nigeria); the Reverend Annette Nuber (Federal Republic of Germany); Bodil Sølling (Denmark); Bondu V. Subbamma (India); and the Reverend Audur Vilhjalmsdottir (Iceland).

Representation of women on the various commissions and committees also grew. The ten-member Committee on Communications named two women; the Commission on Church Cooperation, whose total membership was twelve, named one woman. The Commission on Studies named four women of twelve members; the Commission on World Service established a 25% representation quota, and for the first time a woman was chosen to head an LWF Commission. The Community Development Services Governing Committee, whose total membership was seven, had two women. The LWF was taking a further step towards a 'new community' of equal participation of men and women.



WICAS Advisory Committee members Bondu V. Subbamma (left) and Bodil Sølling (right) at Dar Es Salaam Assembly, 1977

WICAS Gets Underway

From the Dar Es Salaam Assembly onwards, the Women's Desk became known as the Office of Women in Church and Society, or WICAS. Recommendations included the establishment of a full-time WICAS staff person in the Department of Studies. This meant that the Secretary would have to be released from her additional responsibilities for church structures and worship.

The statement adopted by the Assembly to be communicated to the member churches reaffirmed the theme of the Sixth Assembly, "In Christ, A New Community". The opening paragraph of this statement contains a strong message of inclusivity:

The word of God states clearly that God created human beings both male and female in the divine image (Gen. 1:27). Although the equal partnership of men and women has been broken by human sin, establishing barriers and causing exploitation, humiliation, and different kinds of suffering for both sexes, in the salvation given in Christ there is a promise of a new community between women and men: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28)

Women distributed hundreds of green buttons bearing the slogan "The New Community Includes Women". Never again were women to be silent about their exclusion from the church and from the decision-making bodies of the LWF.

From Dar Es Salaam, 1977 to Budapest, 1984

The 1977 Assembly decided to formally estab-

lish WICAS with staff who would be free of responsibilities in the areas of church structures and worship. The staff consisted of one programmatic supervisor, one research assistant and one secretary. Led by Assembly statements concerning the new community, the Commission on Studies made new appointments to the Advisory Committee to WICAS. The Committee met in 1978 and consisted of six women from five continents. They were Ruth Beshu (Tanzania); Alida Nababan (Indonesia); Rev. Ingeborg Köhler (German Democratic Republic); Dr. Pirkko Lehtiö (Finland); Grace Yisu-Das (Guyana); and Dr. Lois Leffler, Chairperson (US). In 1982, a youth representative was added.

Consistently mentioned as a high priority was the need for leadership development. Between 1977 and 1983 a total of 37 seminars and workshops had been organized. They reached nearly 1,500 women!

During the period following the Sixth Assembly a number of Regional Consultations also took place. Their purpose was "to enhance opportunities for exchange, learning, and sharing within the world regions". (*From Dar Es Salaam to Budapest*, No. 17/18) Five major consultations were held in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

In 1978, the Commission on Studies accepted the proposal for what would become the Regional Consultants Programme. The responsibilities of a regional consultant included regional planning and programme development in the particular geographic area to which the Regional Consultant was assigned. It was originally intended that six Regional Consultants – three for Africa and three for Asia – be appointed. By the end of that same year, four women had been appointed with three-year terms open to renewal.

The first four Regional Consultants were Nancy Y. C. Chow (Hong Kong), Bondu V. Subbama (India), Eva Jorkey (Liberia), and Kaanaeli Makundi (Tanzania). Training meetings for the Regional Con-



Above: Some of the participants at the 10-week Advanced Leadership Development Seminar for Women, Bossey, Switzerland, 1978; below: Lutheran Management Seminar, Baguio, Philippines, 1981



sultants took place in Geneva in 1979 and 1981. A fifth consultant, Rosalind Daniel (Malaysia), was added in 1983. At the same time, Prasanna Samuel succeeded Bondu Subbama as Regional Consultant for India, an area that had formerly been grouped with Malaysia.

In 1986, another change was made. Consultative services to Malaysia and East Africa were discontinued, and service to southern Africa began. Tabitha Nehabeleng was appointed Regional Consultant.

Eva Jorkey, whose association with the LWF dated as far back as the Evian Assembly, shared some of her thoughts on being a Regional Consultant:

I have had the joyful experience of seeing the women in my country (Liberia) become concerned about literacy. We have a programme called "Each One Teach One". When one learns to read, she can go back to her neighborhood and teach another one to read. Our objective has been to get the women to read the Bible so they can understand it.

The women decided to run a farm to support the construction of a convalescent home near the Phebe Hospital to accommodate patients who are still recuperating but who do not need full hospital care. They made a big peanut farm and later the church came to help. That house is there today!

Jorkey recalled how happy the grassroots women were to be remembered by the LWF in Geneva, happy to know that somebody cared about them and took their needs into consideration.

Regional Consultants worked at the grassroot level of the LWF member churches. They became the eyes and ears for women in their regions, the hope that every voice would be heard and every cry

recognized. These were the women whose hands would help to wipe away the tears and whose arms would be held open in warmth and compassion.

From 1978 to 1984, WICAS entered a phase of "stabilization and expansion". Priorities remained virtually the same – networking, leadership training, and biblical and theological study. However, there was an ever-increasing awareness of the gifts being offered by women in the South and East.

Several changes could be noted in the WICAS programme. There was a clear emphasis on developing better channels of communication and cooperation between WICAS and the World Council of Churches. Work was begun towards the development of a Women's Task Force in the Geneva headquarters. There was increased participation in staff committees such as worship, Community Development Services, and the committee on scholarships.

Another emphasis that was strengthened during this time was on that of biblical and theological study. Bible studies became a regular feature in *WOMEN*. Joint efforts were made in the publication of "No Longer Strangers", a resource of women's worship produced by the LWF, World Council of Churches, Young Women's Christian Association and the World Student Christian Federation.

During the 1980s, leadership development, still a strong priority for WICAS, continued with a more decentralized approach. There were fewer initiatives directly from Geneva, although WICAS assisted with funding and resource persons from the regions. The work of the Regional Consultants was improved by training and an increased budget.

In 1984, an International Consultation for Women was held in Geneva. Its theme was "Let Us Share The Hope". It had been chosen in connection with the upcoming Seventh LWF Assembly which was to be held in Budapest.

The goals of the Consultation, summed up in *From Dar Es Salaam to Budapest, 1977-1984*, were as follows:

- to be together to strengthen and affirm women in their ministry;
- to reflect on the contribution women can make to the 1984 LWF Assembly;
- to plan for on-going work in church and society.

Recommendations included a strong plan for women's groups in the LWF to fight against the injustice of racism. Of particular concern was the worsening situation in Namibia and South Africa.

Other issues on which recommendations emerged included peace and justice, violence against women, the quality of life for women, leadership development, and the need for increased cooperation with ecumenical groups and other women's groups and movements. The hope was there to be shared, and the challenge to share it would be voiced louder still in Budapest.

The Budapest Assembly, 1984

The theme of the Seventh Assembly was "In Christ - Hope For The World." In the study book prepared for the Assembly, the theme was divided into sub-themes. These were 'hope for creation', 'hope for humankind', and 'hope for the church'.

A manifestation of that hope was in the resolution of the Seventh Assembly to develop a plan by which 40% of the delegates to the Eighth Assembly would be women and that by the Ninth Assembly the proportion of women would be increased to 50%. The resolution also called for at least a 40% representation of women on the Executive Committee, the appointed advisory/governing committees,

and in the group of officers as well. Other factors were included, such as regional representation and a fair balance between clergy and lay people. It was also resolved that the Executive Committee should exert efforts to increase the number of women employed as programmatic and supervisory staff until there was at least 50% representation in these areas.

The scholarship programme was also being looked at in terms of this quota. The minutes of the LWF Joint Commission Meetings (Geneva, 1987) noted: "We have paid much attention to the scholarship programme with regard to the women's issue. Since the Assembly put much emphasis on the full participation of women in the Federation, we recommend that at least 40% of scholarship funds should be set aside for women..."

This was a dramatic step for the LWF. It was now setting quotas and giving definite time frames in which these quotas were to be met. With the vision of a reality as God intended it to be, the LWF was taking action to deal with reality as it existed in its brokenness. Quotas, at most, could only be part of a solution; but the fact that this resolution even came into being was a sign of hope.

At Budapest, 32% of the delegates were women. Resolutions were adopted affirming the theological basis for full participation of women in the life of the church and society. Women were getting closer to the ideal of full participation, but there was yet a way to go.

Inge Schintlmeister of Austria, who became a member of the Advisory Committee for Women in 1986, tells of how her own delegation was selected during the Budapest Assembly. "When the delegates were chosen for Budapest, there were all men and one woman. The Bishop said he would not go to Budapest so that a woman might have his slot on the delegation. Then one of the other men offered to give up his place so that another woman could go."

In Budapest women demonstrated for greater participation and visibility in the Assembly. After the demonstration, two women were asked to chair sessions, and at the end of the Assembly, three women were appointed as chairpersons of Commissions (Christina Berglund, Studies; Dorothy Marple, Church Cooperation; and Ruth Abraham, Communication). This was an improvement over Dar Es Salaam, where only one woman, Gudrun Diestel, had been elected as chairperson of the

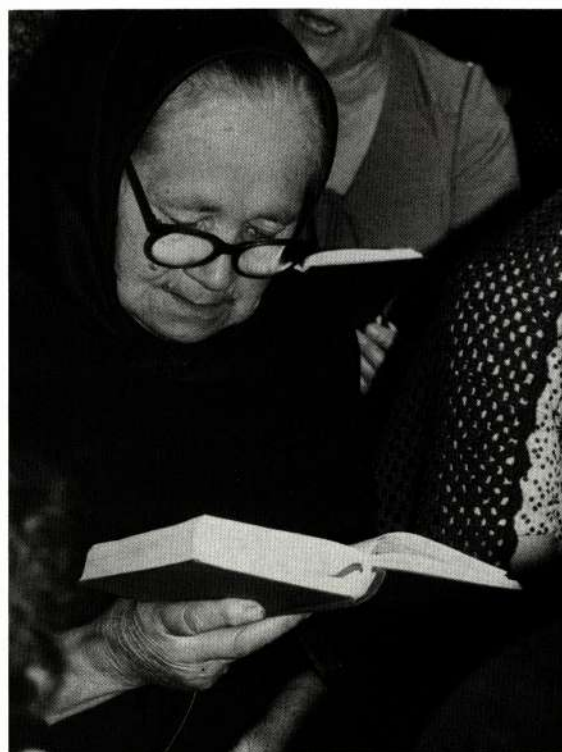
Commission on World Service. There was also improvement in Executive Committee composition with the naming of seven women: María Gomez, Aida Haddad, Sieghilde Hoerschelmann, Lois Lefler, Käte Mahn, Christina Rogestam, and Susana Telewoda. The Executive Committee later elected Susana Telewoda as Vice-President, and in 1987 Aida Haddad became the second woman Vice-President. A number of other women were also elected to governing bodies.



Women demonstrating at the Budapest Assembly, 1984 Photos: Peter Williams

Right: Participant at the Budapest Assembly

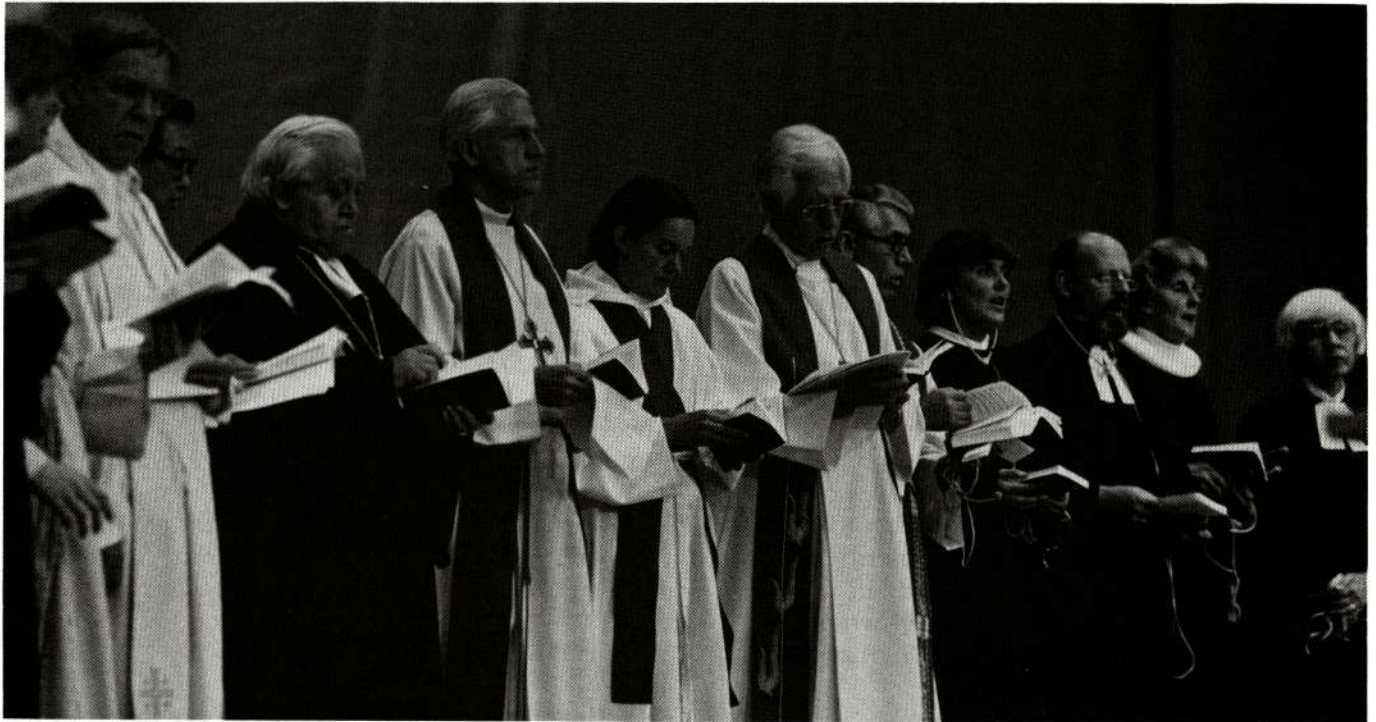
Photo: C. Rothenbühler



Below: Bodil Sølling, member of the LWF Executive Committee, with the Rt. Rev. Dr. Josiah Kibira, LWF President, and the Rev. Dr. Carl H. Mau Jr., LWF General Secretary, at the Budapest Assembly, 1984

Photo: Peter Williams





Above: Worship; below: Executive Committee constituted at the Budapest Assembly *Photo: Peter Williams*



The Sin of Sexism

It was clearly time for the women to have their turn. What it would take would be the awareness, sensitivity, and the willingness to "let go" as exemplified by Dieter Knall of Austria. From a report of the 1984 Assembly we read:

Since the New Testament times, women have been recognized as significant carriers of the Good News. Today, they comprise a majority of the members within the Christian global community. Nevertheless, the church is handicapped in its witness and service because the fights of all members are not fully recognized and valued. For the advancement of the Gospel and the enrichment of the churches, the sin of sexism, which denies and restricts the participation of women in church and society, must be recognized and overcome.

Despite the on-going struggle for women in church and society, the LWF had taken an important step in 1984. The sin of sexism had been openly confessed. Now was the time to seek mercy and healing.

1985 was a year of endings and beginnings. It marked the end of the United Nations Decade for Women and the beginning of the agenda set by the 1984 LWF General Assembly in Budapest. Equipping women for new models of leadership and shared power was reinforced through the WICAS Office. WICAS became actively involved in advocacy for women's access to all forms of technology and how that technology might be used to ease women's work throughout the world. WICAS also strengthened its links with Non-Governmental Organizations (such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the YWCA), NGO Committees (especially the one concerned with women and development), and the United Nations

and its Specialized Agencies so that its knowledge, contacts, and resources might be broadened.

After the Seventh General Assembly there was also a movement towards affirmation of women and awareness-building. Stories of the contributions of women in the family and in society were highlighted in *WOMEN*. The publication also included special articles on racism, violence against women, including family violence, and sexual harassment. Theological reflections by women were greatly encouraged. WICAS compiled *A Bibliography on Feminist Theology 1980-86* and distributed it around the world. In 1986, a workshop was held at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland entitled "Women in Church Leadership". Co-sponsored by the Ecumenical Institute, the sub-unit of Women in Church and Society of the World Council of Churches, and the LWF, the discussion focused on "issues of power and what power means to the church today, especially for women".

How did the member churches respond to the powerful resolutions of the Budapest Assembly? At the Executive Committee Meeting in Viborg, Denmark, in 1987 a "Progress Report on Women's Participation in the LWF and in the Member Churches" summarized a response to a letter sent to all the member churches by Dr. Gunnar Staalsett, General Secretary in which he stressed the importance of the participation of women in the life of the church. He had asked them to evaluate their own involvement regarding increased participation of women in their individual member churches.

The date requested for the return of the responses was 1 May 1987, but only eight responses arrived in Geneva by that date. Six of the eight responses dealt substantially with the letter sent out by the General Secretary. These churches included the Evangelical Lutheran Churches of Southern Africa, Tanzania, Malaysia and Singapore, the Church of Norway, the Evangelical Church of Greifswald/GDR, and the Evangelical Lutheran

Church of Saxony/GDR. Other churches which responded were the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church in Japan and the Church of Sweden.

Summarizing the responses, the Report noted the following: "This report confirms that the participation of women in the member churches as well as within the structures of the LWF still leaves a lot to be desired. Social as well as cultural conditions are amongst the major reasons preventing a positive development...the church is largely a mirror of its environment as regards questions concerning justice, the recognition of human values and dignity, and the offer of equal opportunities".

Only eight out of 104 member churches responded to the General Secretary's letter. What did this say about the attitude of member churches towards women in the church?

At the Viborg meeting the General Secretary spoke of the "pain in the body of Christ which cries out for healing." He was referring to the pain of women's exclusion. Although women had come a long way from the 2.8% representation at Lund to the 32% representation at Budapest, they were not yet accepted as full partners in the new community.

Eva von Hertzberg completed her term as WICAS Executive Secretary in 1987. When asked to share what she thought were her most rewarding experiences, she mentioned her direct work and contact with women, her travel, and the workshops and seminars. There was joy connected with the empowering work of WICAS. It helped women connect at the various workshops, assisted with scholarship aid, and encouraged those in seminary and those seeking ordination. She found it most rewarding to strategize successfully with other women on how to get more women into LWF structures.

von Hertzberg also faced some frustrations as WICAS Secretary. One of them was that she was not usually approached until shortly before a meeting

or workshop with the "urgent request" to produce names of women who could be invited since there were not enough female participants. "The criteria for selection," she said, "were impossible to fulfill since they had to be from a certain region, have a certain expertise, and represent a certain church, all in one person".

How did she cope with the difficulties involved in her position? She summed it up this way: "I think I received my strength mostly from women's meetings. Women have a different way of conducting business and a different way of relating to each other. There were ways to combine work with support, encouragement, celebration, laughter and fun!" Women coming together and loving their church. Women celebrating together in common love of their God. This would be the bond that nothing could destroy. 1987 also saw the appointment of Dr. Erika Reichle as Director of the Department of Studies, the second time in LWF history that a woman was appointed a Director.

A New Secretary and the Consultation in Mexico

In February 1987, the WICAS Advisory Committee met to discuss several important issues, including the next International Consultation for Women. In the closing remarks of the meeting, farewell and thanksgiving was given to Eva von Hertzberg as she prepared to leave her position. In a "Statement of Concern," the qualifications and background required of the new Secretary were listed as follows:

- That the secretary have a background in theological training and experience which enables her to function skillfully in settings within the LWF context...that she be able to articulate the biblical and theological foundations for the calling of women to full participation in church and society... that she be knowledgeable and conversant in Lutheran



Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro, WICAS Executive Secretary since 1988

and feminist theologies...

- That she be a woman of maturity who will be respected by women and church leaders, having significant life experiences with women in church and society...
- That she be able to manage and coordinate a multitude of communications with member churches and women leaders, and have skills in developing agendas and processes for conferences and meetings...

The demands of the position were heavy, and women were cautious as to who would be chosen to represent them in a world that was not so readily accepting of women. The woman chosen to succeed Eva von Hertzberg was Musimbi Kanyoro.

In her first editorial column in *WOMEN* (Summer, 1988, No. 30), Musimbi Kanyoro introduced herself as follows:

I come from Nairobi. I was educated in both Kenya and the US. My interest and involvement in women's issues really began in the US, but it was at the end of the UN Decade for Women when we as Kenyan women were preparing to host the end of the Decade Forum and Conference that I really became involved in a deep analysis of women's issues and in women's leadership. It was also the events of the Decade that helped me to contextualize my theology. Without a doubt, my interest in women's issues must be linked to the Bible. Therefore I put a lot of emphasis on the study of Scripture and the place of prayer in our lives.

In 1988, the same year that the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women was launched, the Commission on Studies met in Geneva. At that meeting, a priority agenda for the new WICAS Secretary was set forth: "That (she) acquaint herself with the administration of the office...including correspondence, reports, budgets, and LWF staff responsibilities. Getting to know LWF structures - knowledge of women's programmes and the church from which they operate. Travel should be limited". One and a half years later, in an address given at the International Consultation for Women in Mexico City, Dr. Kanyoro reflected on her work in the LWF:

When I moved to Geneva one and a half years ago, I could not help likening the work in the office to the farming that women do back home. In Africa, where we lack technological assistance for farming activities, farming takes on quite a hopeless picture when compared to what happens in the mechanized world. When faced with a field to till and only a small hoe or machete to break the ground, a num-

ber of questions always come to the surface. How shall I begin? Where shall I begin? What must I do and what must I leave undone?

The question of choosing a priority is inevitable, especially when it is quite clear that if you do too much, by the time you reach one end, the weeds will have already choked the plants in the area where you started. It is not surprising that more often than not, African women like to work together in communities, preferring to work on one person's farm together, and then move to the next person's rather than struggle alone in the farm without seeing immediate results. An added aspect of this African community work is that a mother may send a young child to represent her...It is not the individual's work that is valued, but the spirit of community.

What Kanyoro expressed in these opening comments was not so much a new concept for the

LWF. Life in the communion would be a major theme in the Eighth General Assembly; rather what was being expressed in new images was a method of leadership based on the concept of shared power.

With increased participation of women in leadership positions, new images and new visions would be set forth. The question remained, however, whether the member churches of the LWF would be able to welcome the gifts of members in the communion with new eyes for seeing.

"Open Our Eyes"

"Open Our Eyes" was the theme of the fifth International Consultation for Women in Mexico City (held in August 1989). Though a major thrust of this Consultation was to prepare for the Eighth General Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil, it was to be more than a "pre-Assembly" meeting. As described by Kanyoro, the tasks were threefold:



Participants at fifth International Consultation for Women, Mexico City, August 1989

- to affirm and strengthen our faith through sharing in worship and celebrations, Bible study and personal testimonies;
- to reflect on the contribution that we as women can make to our communities and to the forthcoming LWF Assembly on issues pertinent to our world today; and
- to plan together for the on-going work of women's participation in our churches and society.

The Consultation was especially important. Three categories of participants attended: delegates to the Assembly, leaders of women in member churches, and ecumenical delegates from churches and organizations with a special assignment in matters related to women. At the time of the Consultation, the research project "Women's Participation in the LWF", which is described in depth in this book, was in its earliest stages.

Eighty women representing forty-four LWF member churches and ecumenical guests participated. All told, they came from fifty-one countries. The issues explored related to the upcoming Assembly. They included poverty, the debt crisis, militarism, violence, the integrity of creation, and women and church structures.

In addition to the rich sharing of experience and information on these themes during the discussions, there were exchanges on all aspects of church life and women's participation in it. There were women who were angry because their churches had not met their quotas for women's participation in the Eighth General Assembly. There was pain and there were cries of frustration.

Participants had the opportunity to share these experiences in meetings with Mexican women during visits to base Christian communities. They witnessed Mexican poverty firsthand and learned of how their sisters were organizing to combat *machismo* in their homes, to improve living conditions

in their communities, and to redress the widening gap between rich and poor in their society.

A great feeling of solidarity existed among the women present, a sense of solidarity in struggle. Biblical images came alive as the participants donned head scarves and enacted the bent-over woman during a Bible study. A symbolic stole was presented to Enittah Nyoni in recognition of her ministry in Zimbabwe, where women had not yet been granted ordination. (The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe ordained its first woman in 1990). A poem was shared by Esther Tse (Hong Kong) expressing the pain of the lives lost in the student demonstration and massacre in her homeland, China; and a joint letter was drafted expressing concern that Rev. Emma Mujoro of Namibia and other Namibian and South African delegates were denied visas to enter Mexico. Those who were not there were as important as those who were.

Bible studies led by the Reverend Constance Parvey (US), Susana Telewoda (Liberia), Bärbel von Wartenberg-Potter (Germany, Jamaica), Esther Tse (China), and Raquel Rodriguez (Costa Rica) filled participants with strength and renewed courage. Worship was empowering and rich in its diversity. Songs were sung in many languages, and Pentecost was lived anew.

The Consultation was a great success due to the tireless efforts of the members of the Advisory Committee and the WICAS staff in Geneva – Iris Benesch, Ana Villanueva and Musimbi Kanyoro. The December 1989 issue of *WOMEN* was dedicated to the Advisory Committee. These seven women, described by Kanyoro as having given "their time, resources, and skills to advise on the LWF work on women in church and society" and who had "struggled with issues and with people, with the ultimate goal of helping to create an inclusive church and society" included: Reverend Gunvor Lande, Chairperson (Norway); Reverend Emma

Mujoro (Namibia); Prasanna Samuel (India); Bonnie Jensen (US); Ana Villanueva (Argentina); Inge Schintlmeister (Austria); and Sabine Rüdiger-Hahn (Federal Republic of Germany).

Ana Villanueva, who had assisted in preparing the International Consultation in Mexico, became a full-time LWF staff person. She is one of the women who have contributed immensely to the development of WICAS in the capacity of secretary. The others have been Iris Benesch, Karin Rossato, Christa Evans, and Eva Segal. Also to be mentioned are Christina Lövestam and Deressa Belletech and many youth interns and research assistants who contributed greatly to the life of WICAS. Dorothea

Millwood and Inge Klaas, who have been present from the beginning, are WICAS' memory.

The Curitiba Assembly, 1990

Between the Seventh and Eighth General Assemblies, it became a priority of the Advisory Committee to work towards making the goal of 40% representation of women a reality. The Advisory Committee sought to ensure that the recommendations of Budapest were carried out.



Brazilian participants on stage for introduction to Bible study, Curitiba Assembly, 1990

Photo: Peter Williams

The Assembly, whose theme "I Have Heard the Cry of My People" was based on an expression first found in the Book of Exodus, satisfied the recommendation set forth by the Seventh General Assembly concerning the representation of women. Forty-three percent of the delegates were women, and women comprised more than 40% of the "decision-making body of the Federation" It was no longer difficult to find women's names among the main presenters and speakers in the Assembly; half of the allocated speaker time was filled by women.

In the *LWF Report*, December 1990, No. 28/29 General Secretary Gunnar Staalseth notes three distinctive characteristics of the Curitiba Assembly. The theme, "I Have Heard the Cry of My People", represented "a shift in Assembly themes toward the world situation, the context in which the Christian message is to be sounded."

The second distinct characteristic involved the self-understanding of the LWF. "The delegates...gave formal approval to a constitutional statement which makes unambiguously clear that the churches of the Federation understand themselves to be an expression of the worldwide communion of Lutheran churches. In place of the former constitutional description of the Federation as a 'free association of Lutheran churches', the Assembly adopted language which gives new testimony to the intimate and binding relationship based on faith, mission, and service which unites Lutheran churches throughout the world: The LWF is a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God, and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship."

LWF President the Rev. Dr. Gottfried Brake-meier expressed this concept in what was, perhaps, the most significant implication for women in the LWF: "Communion is expressed...through mutual participation in joy, suffering and struggle, hard times and sharing material goods...What does Christian communion mean in a situation of actual

inequality, and what does it require?" How, indeed, would this concept be lived out with regard to women in the communion?

The third special characteristic of the Assembly was the decision to undertake a massive re-structuring of the LWF. It was done with the intent of "expressing more adequately the self-understanding of the Federation as a communion of churches, and enabling the secretariat of the Federation to be more coordinated in the carrying out of its mandates in theological studies, mission and development, world service, communication, human rights and ecumenical affairs." For the WICAS Office, this would mean relocation to a new Department, the Department of Mission and Development.

At the Curitiba Assembly, 43% of the delegates were women. In addition to these, many other women attended as visitors. The Brazilian women provided a great deal of hospitality for Assembly delegates. They made the flags that decorated the Assembly hall, provided lunch bags for visitors going on tours, and hosted a center where women delegates could meet every day during the lunch hour to familiarize themselves with the Assembly theme, sub-themes, and procedures.

The women's center took on a broader purpose for many people. It was called 'O recanto', meaning 'hidden place' or 'resting place' in Portuguese. It served as a center for education, meditation, and recreation. Here women shared knowledge and empowered each other. Christine Grumm and Dorothy Marple (US), Olga Dysthe and Gunvor Lande (Norway), Prasanna Samuel (India), Ruth Abraham (Ethiopia), Käte Mahn (Germany), Bea Cook (Canada), Rose Loe Mbise (Tanzania) and many others helped to provide the leadership for the meetings.

In Curitiba, the women of the Lutheran churches made a conscious shift in assessing their participation. They began to ask whether their presence at



Above: Women meeting in 'O recanto' centre at Curitiba Assembly. Below: US delegation to Curitiba. Christine Grumm, appointed LWF Deputy General Secretary in July 1991, is on bottom row, right.

Photos: Peter Williams





Some of the keynote speakers at the Curitiba Assembly:

*Above (l to r): Mary Henry (US), Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway
Below: Prasanna Samuel (India), Rose Loe Mbise (Tanzania)*



the Assembly would make a difference and whether 'presence' means 'participation'. They began to analyze the impact of their presence and the long-term commitment of the LWF and its member churches to issues affecting them in the life of the church.

In Curitiba, Martina Huhn (German Democratic Republic) and Sophia Tung (Taiwan) were appointed as Vice-Presidents. Christina Rogestam (Sweden) was appointed Treasurer. Seventeen women were appointed to serve on the Council and Executive Committee. Prasanna Samuel (India) was appointed chairperson of the newly-formed Programme for Theology and Studies. Their stories have been recorded in Issues 34, 35, and 36 of *WOMEN*.

WICAS - Past, Present and Future

The activities described above illustrate the breadth of women's activities around the world. It is yet too early to tell what the full effects of the Eighth General Assembly will have on the LWF and on women in particular. Because history is a dynamic process, the story never really ends.

Following the Assembly, WICAS has continued to be "the LWF ear to listen and interpret issues raised by women." Empowering women through advancement has become a high priority. In addition to supporting workshops organized by women in various parts of the globe, WICAS continues to organize regional events to promote women's advancement.

Four regional meetings of Lutheran women theologians have been held in Malacca, Malaysia; São Paulo, Brazil; Loccum, Germany; and Addis Ababa,

Ethiopia to discuss "Women in the Lutheran Tradition". Leadership training seminars have continued. WICAS has sponsored 12 national leadership training seminars for women, six in Asia, five in Africa, and one in Latin America (1990-1991).

1992 marks WICAS' twentieth anniversary. The celebration takes place during an entirely new historical era which contains new dangers and new opportunities for women. This was evidenced at a meeting of the Research Working Group held in Geneva in June 1991. It brought together representatives from the different regions to present information on the situation of women in their countries. The following chapter will convey the richness of their discussions and will serve to illustrate how far women have yet to come in church and society before their equality in the eyes of God is reflected on this earth.

Perhaps the most important mission of the Office of Women in Church and Society in the years to come will be to keep alive the hopes and dreams, the frustrations and the celebrations of women throughout the world. The struggles will continue, and a structure to assist in these struggles is in place. Communications are established, a network has been created, and solidarity has been forged.

Thanks to the efforts of WICAS and of all the women who came before us, women have come a long way within the LWF. An African proverb captures how we have gotten there:

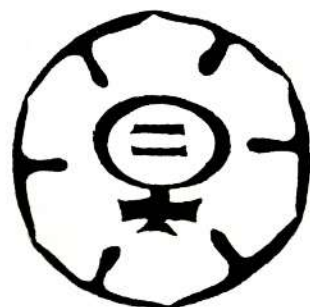
If we stand tall, it is because we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.

Women in the Lutheran World Federation do, indeed, stand tall. We stand on the shoulders of so many women who paved the way over the years - women empowered by loving their church and loving their God. Rooted in the power of the Holy Spirit, we will never be bent over again!



Participants at the International Women's Consultation. Mexico City 1989.

Part II:
Women in Global Community



WICAS

1901

WORLD IN GLOBAL ECONOMY



1901

The Position of Women in Africa - A Life of Endless Struggle

RUTH M. BESHA

When I started thinking about this paper, I subtitled it "signs of hope". But all the evidence before me, including the research that my colleagues and I have conducted over the last five years or so in Tanzania, the many monographs produced from around the continent on the position of women, the themes and papers presented at various conferences(1), and the plight of women everywhere did not offer many hopeful signs, at least not yet.

At the same time, one is aware of the many programmes, plans, and even strategies which have been worked on in the last few years, in particular during and after the UN Decade for Women. We must admit that these efforts have not been in vain. It is to the credit of such efforts that we can boast today of a very high degree of gender-sensitization and awareness among the governments and other planning agencies. There has been a lot of awareness-building among the great majority of men and women, but especially among the women. The rhetoric has helped to ensure that no one in society can ignore the "women question", even if the admission that there is a problem is grudgingly made.

When the rhetoric has ended and the papers are read and put away, when the books have been

published and research findings are finally presented, one is forced to deal with reality.

The question that we are forced to ask can be summarized as follows: How much in actual economic, social and moral terms has the position of women in Africa really changed? We could go further and ask: Having raised women's expectations, can the goods be delivered? The answer to both questions, unfortunately, cannot be in the affirmative. In this paper, we will try to show the realities in which African women find themselves.

From the outset it must be stated that some very tangible progress has been made in the situation of some women as a result of all the efforts. A few more women occupy positions in which their presence would have been unthinkable a few years ago. A number of projects have been initiated and positive results obtained. Some governments have set up ministries to deal with women's affairs. Donor agencies and charity organizations have made funds and expertise available to help women grapple with the problems they face (2). But when the roll call is made, it becomes clear that only a small - a very small - proportion of women have been touched by these efforts. The successes of this small proportion have sometimes overshadowed the continuing underdevelopment of the many (3).

The Constraints

The type of constraints which have hindered real progress can be divided into two groups: the economic and the social. The economic problems of women are thought to be the most glaring. Women's dependence on their husbands or fathers has been the basis of their lowly position in society, and it was felt that if only women could be helped to become economically independent, most, if not all their problems would be over. Thus there was a consistent call to the women to involve themselves in "income generating projects".

Both governmental and non-governmental organizations spent a lot of resources to create projects which would put some cash into the hands of women. These have been well documented in various reports (4). What has not always been appreciated are the reasons for their limited impact on women's lives. Some of the reasons given include lack of involvement of the women in the planning and execution of the various projects, reliance on outside assistance, the small nature of the projects, etc. While it is true that these were among the reasons for general failure, on closer examination they appear to be rather superficial. A number of research projects have convincingly shown that one of the basic problems was the nature of the projects themselves.

Taking Tanzania as a prototypical example, the majority of these projects concentrated on traditional "women's" activities such as needlework, handicrafts, etc. Sewing machines were purchased (mostly with money from donor agencies) and distributed to many villages where women were encouraged to form into groups. Handicraft materials were similarly distributed, and so on. At one time the tie and dye business was popular among women's groups in urban centres like Dar Es Salaam. However, very soon the market for these products was exhausted, and in any case, most of

these groups did not last long. Thus the economic returns from these enterprises were minimal.

But most importantly, these activities seemed irrelevant to the needs of the women. Many of them required spending a lot of time outside the home, time which the majority of women did not have. In the end, most women lost interest in these activities. What was forgotten in the planning of these projects was that the majority of the women were full-time mothers and housewives, and that the activities connected with these jobs had not changed or diminished. The women were already suffering from too heavy a workload, especially in the rural areas where women are involved in a third full-time job as agricultural producers. This may be true of urban situations also.

The rhetoric on this has developed into the well-known clichés: "women are the backbone of agricultural production", or "women work harder than anyone else", and similar ostensibly well meaning pronouncements. The point at issue here is not that these statements are not true; in fact they are too true. And because they are so true, they make the call for women to involve themselves in any additional time-consuming activities even more ridiculous. Terming them 'developmental' does not change this truth.

More fundamental is that production relations in the rural economy have not changed. In fact, the call for women to engage in income-generating activities came at a time when most African countries were facing critical economic crises dominated by the foreign debt burden. So most governments were frantic about generating foreign exchange in order to service their debts.

Most African economies are based on raw material production. In order to generate foreign exchange, peasants had to be coaxed, or even forced to produce more cash crops. In Tanzania, for example, there is a current rule in the rural areas that

every household must have a minimum half acre of a stipulated cash crop. These cash crops are centrally decided for every zone. The implications for women are quite clear. It just means that the already overworked women had to work even harder than before.

The women have had few options. Increased cash crop production, although it did not put more cash into their hands, meant more time spent on planting, weeding, harvesting and processing of these crops. It needs no repeating here that cash crops are generally 'owned' by the men, who also control the proceeds from the sales (5). At the same time, the women are almost solely responsible for the production of the food consumed by the family. There is no way in which they can reduce the acreage of these crops.

The consequences are obvious. It has now been generally accepted that as the underdeveloped economies are drawn further into capitalist production relations, the women are forced to take on more of the burden of supporting the family while men assume less responsibility (6).

Referring to the situation above as 'economic' is in fact a misnomer. When we look at the situation more closely, it boils down to unequal gender relations that persist in our societies. There is a rather curious reluctance on the part of policy makers, planners and even some women leaders to acknowledge that the social constraints that women face are a greater hindrance than the economic ones. A generally accepted fact among most researchers now is that the economic problems which women face are a consequence of the inequality that has rendered women powerless to act.

It is not difficult to see why there is such resistance to acknowledging such an obvious fact. Cultural norms and long held traditions are very difficult to change. Even with the sensitization and awareness-building that has been mentioned ear-

lier, one still hears women apologizing: "But this is the tradition", or "The woman is expected to do these things and to behave in this way". Unfortunately, this apologetic attitude has made change difficult to introduce.

Most of us have come to accept the patriarchal relations that rule our lives as almost God-given. But it also seems that many people realize that changing the social relationships will require nothing less than social revolution. When the majority of women, collectively or individually, start asking the relevant questions, then the fabric of society, sewn tightly with the thread of women's subordination for so long, will inevitably be torn to pieces.

Some of these relevant questions are: Why should I/we do most of the work and reap the least benefit? Why can't I/we own land and the other means of production? Why is it that in the event of a divorce or separation it is I/we who have to quit without anything? What are my/our rights and what does the law say? Why is it that it is I/we are the ones who have to do all the household work and to take care of everyone else? When these 'why's' increase and multiply and become a genuine song, then things will change.

If we expect this to happen soon or without concerted effort, we will be indulging in wishful thinking. At the same time, while the prospects for such a transformation in Africa is a projection for the future, the women are living today and have to grapple with their day-to-day problems. How are they coping? We need to examine the strategies which they have evolved in order to make their lives more tolerable because in these strategies might lie the seeds of a dynamic movement for change.

Women's Options

The inflationary policies adopted by many of our governments in order to comply with the master

international money lenders have hit the poor sections of our countries – the majority – the hardest. Women, the poorest of the poor, have fared worst of all. This has been well documented in many reports (7). Women in the urban ghettos have tried to cope with the situation by involving themselves in informal business such as hawking, running food stalls, beer brewing, etc. (8). These activities bring in just the minimum to ensure that their families have at least something to put in their stomachs each day. Given that many urban women have to make do with hardly any help from the men, the urban woman's life becomes intolerable.

Women have always had to supplement the low wages paid to workers. Those women who remain in the rural areas when the men migrate to town have always subsidized the men's wages (9). For even if the men were to turn over all their earnings to the family purse, the amount would not be sufficient to keep the family alive for more than a few days. In the case of Tanzania, it is actually less than seven days.

As a result of inflation, a woman must produce almost twice as much as she did during the previous season in order to meet the same needs. Since it is sometimes absolutely beyond her powers to produce more, the woman has to turn to other means to generate income. Most of the activities in which the rural women are engaged are connected with their agricultural activities. Rural women have opted for those projects that would least disturb their other production and domestic duties.

While all these activities are helping the women to cope with the situation, on their own they would not help much in empowering women to change social systems. What is noteworthy is that the women are working together more and more in their various activities and therefore developing a sense of solidarity and community which will in the long run be a key factor in effecting change. These joint efforts are based on age-old cooperative activities

among women. In many societies women came together to help one another in such situations as childbirth, marriage, death, initiation ceremonies, etc.

These cooperative efforts have been taken a step further in keeping up with current demands. Because of the difficulties faced by women in obtaining credit to start their own small concerns (10), they are running their own lending systems which are simple but effective. Women save some money from their various activities, put it together, and when there is a substantial sum, it is given to one of the members to meet a need which otherwise she would not be able to fill. These payments are made in rotation. Among women in Tanzania, this system is called *upatu*, among the Gikuyu *matega* and in Sierra Leone *osusu* (11).

These mutual aid systems operate in urban and rural areas. Sometimes women provide one another with raw materials, like grain for beer brewing, thus making sure that none of the members of the group has unnecessary hardships. The power of such groups has sometimes been seen as a threat to the menfolk, and there are cases in which husbands have beaten up or threatened to divorce their wives if they continue to belong to these groups (12).

The final point also brings into focus some of the social options which women sometimes face. A number of women are redefining their relationships, especially if it is to choose between a beneficial scheme and an encumbering marriage. There is evidence to show that many more women than before are opting to move out of such relationships and to set up life on their own with their children. This is happening more often now in urban areas. The many cases in cities such as Dar Es Salaam with which social welfare departments are dealing with shows that a growing number of women are not willing to accept oppressive relationships any longer. There is also an increasing tendency for

women to choose to remain single rather than to marry. These changing social relationships will definitely have an effect on established cultural and even religious practices. Women have begun to ask "Why?" As one writer puts it, this is "a dramatic sharpening of sex-gender contradictions within underdeveloped capitalism"(13).

The Role of the Church

Christian women find themselves in a very difficult position. The history of the church has been one of reinforcing the patriarchal values that exist in society. In fact, when it comes to dealing with the issue of gender inequality the church has usually lagged behind secular institutions. The church has been involved in a lot of social work, and the women have been in the forefront of such activities; but in general, there has been a separation between women's life in the church and their personal lives. The same person is expected to operate with two moral codes.

Some examples will illustrate this point. It has been noted that one choice which women have to generate income is beer brewing, at least in the case of Tanzania. This is most often condemned by the pastors in Sunday worship services because, presumably, it erodes moral values, being associated with men's drunkenness on the one hand and women's prostitution on the other. The question of why the women have to become engaged in such activities is not usually asked. It is doubtful whether critics ever consider that for some women the choice is between selling beer or raising malnourished children.

The church has made great strides in the last ten years to ensure that women participate more in the decision-making bodies of the church. Reports from various churches confirm this (14). There is no reason to applaud church leaders for such a belated step, as it is no innovation at all. History has

shown that women have held positions of leadership in many societies, especially African societies. The Christian church reversed this trend, coming as it did at a time when patriarchal relationships in Europe were very strong.

At the same time, the participation issue is just one among many which hinder the equality of men and women in the church. Women today are grappling with economic and social issues which need to be addressed. Hiding behind lofty pronouncements and social/charity work will not assist women. Reports and studies from various areas show that many church women's groups correctly identify the constraints but that the mainstream leadership of the church still has to show that these issues are a priority (15).

It often happens that because the church has not tried to address the issue of gender inequality in society at large, the women are forced to choose between belonging to the church or quitting. There is evidence that a number of women are taking the latter option. In particular single women and single mothers are increasingly having to re-define their relationship with the church. Some of those who take the former option end up in religious extremist groups.

Today's church in Africa must begin to seriously address the burning issues that affect and impact upon the lives of women. The church is still alive in Africa, and its members sincerely identify with it. Of course, the majority of those members are women, and for a long time to come the life of the church will depend on them.

The issue of fighting inequality and injustice in whatever form it manifests itself has always been – or should be – the central message of the gospel. Christ never compromised with injustice. He acted and spoke against the oppression of women in traditional Jewish society (16). The church today has to ask itself whether it is adhering to these

principles. When we speak about gender inequality, about women suffering under heavy workloads and discriminatory tradition, we are also talking of Christian women, about relations that exist in Christian families. This should not be forgotten. While the church can be applauded for speaking out against global injustices, it is its fight against problems which ordinary people face in their day-to-day lives that will eventually decide the continued life of the church in Africa, as elsewhere.

Conclusion

The discussion so far has indicated that despite all the efforts of the last two decades or so, women are operating from a position of weakness, of powerlessness.

Women have, for too long, behaved like martyrs, trying to do the impossible without complaining. Thus they have managed, even in the face of a hostile world order, to keep the heart and soul of humanity together. But the problems which face the underdeveloped world today, and Africa in particular, are far larger than the women can handle on their own, even given the efforts they are making to cope with the situation.

Consequently we find that the questions of food security, high maternal and infant mortality rates, child malnutrition, just to mention a few, have become endemic problems everywhere, and there does not seem to be great progress in sight. Many reports have shown a very clear link between these problems and the unequal gender relations that exist in society (17). Thus child malnutrition and infant mortality have often been connected, especially in the rural areas, not to a lack of food, although that is a contributing factor, but to the heavy workloads of women (18).

A great deal of rhetoric has characterized state-

ments and studies dealing with the 'women question'. Concrete action to deal with the problems identified has been rather superficial, sometimes ad hoc, and in the main still 'top down'. So far the emphasis has been directed toward redressing the imbalance in public positions. Thus many governments, and even women's organizations are quite satisfied when quoting the number of women on such and such a body or in particular positions. We are accustomed to donor agency reports of how successful some projects have been in putting 'more money' into the hands of women and presumably making them more 'independent'.

All the efforts made have been in the name of 'involving women in development', the assumption being that development is taking place. We must face the fact that there is no development taking place in much of Africa, at least not 'development' as popularly understood or as defined by the United Nations ("the introduction of new and modified technologies, inevitably accompanied by changes in economic and social organization, with a view to increasing the total output of society's productive resources, human and non-human"). What we are witnessing in Africa is acute stagnation everywhere. So the whole question of involving the people in development is a bad joke.

Where do women stand in all this? One thing is clear. Women have to start acting on their own to make sure they have more control of those areas which will make their lives more tolerable and worth living. At the same time, they have to take it upon themselves to make sure that the rest of society also plays its role. We should aim at reaching a point at which we no longer have to talk about 'women's workload' contributing to malnutrition.

The issue of empowering women has to be addressed seriously, not only in the sense of giving women more positions in decision-making bodies but in a broader sense of devising strategies to ensure that women are able to fulfill their roles in

the most effective way, without being exploited (19). Short of this, even after another two decades of 'talking', women in Africa will still be living the same life of endless struggle. Unfortunately, this will also mean that our society will not be able to get out of the vicious cycle of powerlessness, poverty and exploitation which characterizes it today.

Fortunately, as we have seen, the women have started to get angry about their position and seem more ready now than ever before to act. There is need to help each other to articulate that anger positively, to direct it and channel it toward creating a better society for us all.

Notes and References

1. Most of the research on which I draw for the main part of this paper was conducted during and after the UN Decade for Women. They include:

- Beshu, R. and B. Koda, *Participation of Women in Political and Public Life, Case studies of Igunda village and Magomeni ward*. Institute of Development Studies Women's Study Group. Report for UNESCO, January 1988.
- Nkoma-Wamuza, A., B. Koda, M. Ngaiza, and R. Beshu, *Role of Women in Decision-Making at Household and Community Levels, the case of Iringa and Kagera Regions, Tanzania*. UNICEF, Dar Es Salaam, 1989. (a)
- Nkoma-Wamuza, A., R. Meena, and B. Koda, *Women's Strategies in Coping with Household Management in Poor Areas in Dar Es Salaam*. UNICEF, Dar Es Salaam, 1989. (b)
- Beshu, R. and F. Leiser, *Socio-Economic Study in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania* (Iringa and Mbeya Regions). Swiss Intercooperation, Bern, Switzerland, 1990.

The most recent conferences which critically addressed the current position in both urban and rural areas are:

- AAWORD-YWCA (Kenya) Conference on Sus-

tainable Development with Women: Gender Relations, Development and Change. Nairobi, 27 November-2 December 1989.

- University of Dar Es Salaam Convocation Seminar on Sustainable Social Services Delivery Systems in Tanzania. Dar Es Salaam, 3-4 April 1991.

2. The reports of the various governmental and non-governmental organizations are a good source of such efforts. The many documents which have been presented at the two UN Conferences on Women in 1980 and 1985 contain a lot of valuable information.

3. The small impact of all these efforts is very clearly discussed in the *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace*. Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (UN, New York, 1986). Paragraphs 43-50 are particularly clear on the obstacles to equality. Here we will quote paragraph 43 in full:

"One of the fundamental obstacles to women's equality is that de facto discrimination and inequality in the status of women and men derive from larger social, economic, political and cultural factors that have been justified on the basis of physiological differences. Although there is no physiological basis for regarding the household and family as essentially the domain of women, for the devaluation of domestic work and for regarding the capacities of women as inferior to those of men, the belief that such a basis exists perpetuates inequality and inhibits the structural and attitudinal changes necessary to eliminate such inequality" (p. 17).

4. In particular, reports of the African Training and Research Centre for Women, UN Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A useful reference on the successes of some of these projects is Muntamba, Shimwaayi (Ed), *Rural Development and Women: Lessons Learned from the Field*. Inter-

national Labor Office, Geneva, 1985.

5. The following statement about Rwanda generally applies, with some local differences, to many women in the rural areas of Africa: "Rwandese women produce 90% of the rural food supply. Men plant the banana trees and are responsible for the main cash crop, generally tea and coffee. However, women are responsible for drying the coffee, one of the most important operations; they also do the picking and help men in the depulping process". (*Development, Evaluation Study No. 3*, New York, June 1980, p. 80)

6. Supposedly this is a result of the "development process which requires...ever larger units of economic and social organization. As a result, the family progressively loses its role as a relatively independent economic and social unit. Gradually, a large number of both decision-making and other functions are transferred to society at large. In the course of this transformation, men's and women's functions in the private and public spheres of life tend to become more and more lopsided, with men losing touch with family life and problems and women understanding less and less of the workings of the public machinery". (*Rural Women's Participation*, op. cit., p. 7)

7. The reports of the UN Conferences on Women are good summaries.

8. One study which deals with these issues in the Tanzanian context is Nkoma-Wamuza (1989b), op. cit.

9. One writer puts this very well: "At present it is the woman who has to make the meager salary stretch so that the whole family can manage to survive on it. She spends hours in the market searching for the cheapest goods or a cheap alternative. In the rural areas it is also the woman who has to work harder and longer coaxing the land to produce more to feed her family, including, in some cases, the workers

and teachers who have not been paid for months". Ayesh Imam, "The Myth of Equal Opportunity in Nigeria," in Miranda Davies (Ed), *Third World Second Sex*, Zed Books Ltd, 1987.

10. Quite a few of the papers at the AAWORD-YWCA Conference already referred to have shown how cumbersome the process of getting credit is, so that many women have given up trying. The interest rate in many cases is also a prohibitive factor. Even though there are now some credit facilities specifically for women, these can only reach a few women, as the majority are too poor and therefore not 'credit worthy'.

11. These are described in many reports, but especially in:

- For Tanzania: Beshu/Koda (1989), op. cit., and Nkoma-Wamuza et. al. (1989b), op. cit.

- For Kenya: Patricia Stamp, "Kikuyu Women's Self Help Groups: Towards an Understanding of the Relation between Sex-Gender System and Mode of Production in Africa", in Claire Robertson and Iris Berger (Eds), *Women and Class in Africa*, Africa Publishing Company, 1986.

- For Sierra Leone: Filomina Chioma Steady, "Women's Work in Rural Cash Food Systems: The Tombo and Glouster Development Projects, Sierra Leone", in Muntemba Shimwaayi (Ed), 1985 op. cit.

12. One example is quoted in Patricia Stamp, op. cit., p. 41.

13. *ibid*, p. 41.

14. Particularly the reports in *WOMEN*, December 1989, No. 33, Lutheran World Federation.

15. *ibid*.

16. A good study is *By Our Lives...Stories of Women Today and in the Bible*, World Council of Churches,

Geneva, 1985.

17. The case of Tanzania as discussed in Nkoma-Wamuza et. al. (1989a) seems to be typical of the situation in underdeveloped countries.

18. One article in the *Daily News* (Tanzania) of 22 May 1991 was headed, "Women's Workload Frustrates Mortality Reduction Programme". To quote Nd. Kinyunyu (Ag. Iringa R.D.D.), who said that

"the number of child deaths due to malnutrition was higher in the first four months of a year, as it was during this time that womenfolk were engaged full time in farming activities having little time to care for their children".

19. Achola Paya Akeyo, "Towards a New Theory in the Study of Women in Africa", in Mary Adhiambo Mbeo and Oki Ooko-Ombaka (Eds), *Law in Kenya*, Public Law Institute, Nairobi, 1989, p. 11.

Asian Women Speak Out Against Discrimination and Degradation

DEBORA SINAGA

Asia is a large continent with many nations and peoples, many different cultures, religions and beliefs. The major world religions originated in Asia. National situations differ from one nation to another, so it is not easy to generalize the issues of concern that Asian women have. But there are some points that the great majority of Asian women have in common. They have experienced colonization, and dictatorship assaulted their personal dignity and worth, thus worsening their plight.

In June 1990 a Women's Forum of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) was held at Laguna, Philippines, prior to the CCA's 9th General Assembly. The participants represented women from thirteen Asian countries. They came together in order to analyze the national situation of their countries and to explore the economic, political, social, psychological, religious and cultural aspects of their societies from a woman's perspective. They listened together to stories from all parts of Asia and shared their struggles, concerns, visions, hopes and dreams.

Many points raised during that Women's Forum are reflected here. The situation of women in Lutheran churches in Asia will also be covered.

Culture plays a large role in the life of Asian people, and customs and traditions are deeply rooted in the life of the continent's many ethnic groups. It is difficult to find a religion unaffected by culture. Perhaps we could say that religion is culturally conditioned. Unfortunately, almost all of Asian cultures can be characterized by entrenched patriarchal structures. Under such conditions, Asian women experience oppression, although the nature and degree of oppression may vary from one culture to another.

In Asian societies the manifestations of patriarchy are recognized in many ways, among them through:

- acts of physical violence perpetrated against women and children, such as rape, sexual abuse, domestic violence and bride-burning. Since women are taught to keep silent (especially in the cultures of the chopstick-using peoples where it is taught that, for women, silence is a virtue), these acts of physical violence go unreported.
- acts of sexual violence such as prostitution (evident in Thailand and the Philippines). Reverend Su-Jen Su from Taiwan has reported that child

prostitution (among children aged 9-15) occurs to an alarming extent. This phenomenon cannot be separated from the promotion of tourism and a country's need to attract foreign currency to repay its debt. As a result, sexual violence is worsening in Asia.

- the effect of the debt crisis which has strangled economic development of Asian countries, resulting in even greater exploitation of the labor of women and men to pay off debts which they had no responsibility incurring and from which they receive little benefit;
- the special exploitation of women's labor at low pay and often under dangerous conditions. Hence, their worth is unrecognized and undervalued. In the case of migrant laborers, women are subject to abusive treatment, especially as housemaids. Such conditions have contributed to a high suicide rate.
- the effects of militarization, evident in Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Japan, and Korea;
- the practice by which women are regarded as the property of men and must therefore be devoted and respectful to their husbands and families;
- traditional practices such as *dowry* in South Asia and *suttee* in India;
- women being deprived of the right to inherit property by certain ethnic groups (among others, the Batak people in Indonesia, most of whom belong to Lutheran churches);
- consumerism which exploits women and men for commercial greed;
- mass media and advertising which distort the image of women;
- the exploitation and degradation of the environment.

In the churches of Asia (including the Lutheran churches), the manifestations of patriarchy are recognized through:

- the limited participation of women in the churches' decision-making bodies and processes;
- the barriers to the ordination of women;
- the barriers to the service, function and place of women ministers;
- the exploitation of the gifts of women on the basis of gender alone;
- the use of biblical texts to limit the full participation of women.

In the light of these patriarchal manifestations, the transformation to a just society and church can only be brought about through the eradication of patriarchy. How can the Lutheran churches contribute to this goal?

In the two decades since the establishment of WICAS, questions involving the full participation of women in church and society, partnership of women and men, the new community of women and men, and equality of women and men have slowly had an impact on LWF member churches in Asia.

By 1980, all the Lutheran churches in Indonesia, for example, had amended their constitutions related to women. Women may now be elected as elders/deacons and may now belong to the council of the local congregation which is the local decision-making body. The churches also allowed ordained women to serve as pastors and women evangelists to continue their assignments when they are married, whereas in the past they had to stop serving full time upon marriage. This rule did not apply to men evangelists.

Today there are women ministers in most Lutheran churches, but they are still very few in number. The Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (HKBP), the largest church in membership, has only five female pastors among 600 male pastors.

At present about 30 young women are studying at the theological seminary, but it cannot be said that discrimination has been eliminated.

Church members still do not give serious consideration to women's issues. The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women is a good example. Four years have passed, but most of the churches have not yet undertaken concrete plans of action.

This means that the body of Christ is not yet healed. Full and inclusive partnership of women and men in all aspects of the life of the church is not being practiced. One still hears the old arguments that "the time has not yet come"; "it will only happen when there are more well-educated women"; "there are not enough suitable, capable women for leadership positions". But at the same time, the churches make little serious effort to develop women's potential.

A young woman member of the Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea had the following tale of discrimination to tell. She had finished three years of training and had become an evangelist. After two years' service, she intended to continue her studies and applied to the theological seminary. The bishop agreed and gave her a letter of recommendation; but the principal of the theological seminary, who is a foreign missionary, was against women studying theology and becoming ministers. His wife, who is a member of the education board, was also against the ordination of women.

Similar conditions exist in the Lutheran churches in the Philippines. When I visited there in 1987 I asked whether I could preach on Sunday and was told "No way!" Women are not allowed to stand in the pulpit. This was surprising since the cultural standard concerning men-women relationships in the Philippines is said to be freer than in other parts

of Asia. This must be the missionaries' teaching.

So the coming of the Gospel is often not Good News for women in Asia. It is oppressive, it denies them their freedom, and it degrades their dignity.

In addition to finding ways to work for the eradication of patriarchy, steps should be taken to facilitate the full and equal participation of women, to work toward full humanhood, to build a just society as the Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us. Some examples include:

- programmes empowering women, as they are essential to developing the leadership of women;
- encouraging the participation of women in international or regional programmes of the LWF by being sensitive to language barriers that prevent the participation of women. In the Asian context, there is a need to provide opportunities for theological education for women from the grassroots levels in urban and rural areas by developing new models.
- the educational programmes of the churches incorporating the feminist perspective for Sunday school work, Bible studies and theological studies so that the Bible is studied in all its fullness;
- since Christianity in Asia is a minority religion, there is a need to facilitate interfaith discussions with the purpose of fostering the awareness of the present position of the women in society and of building solidarity among women.

All of these points should be supported by LWF church leaders and by all people in influential positions, especially in Asia.

Let us work together hand in hand to advance the date by which a new community of women and men in a just society is created.

I Am Woman

by Shiranee Mills, Sri Lanka

I am woman
I depend on you
Just as You
Depend on me
There's no you
Without me
Accept me then
As equal to you.

I am woman
And I am yours
Just as
You are mine
My dowry is me
Not what you demand

Respect me then
For the woman I am.

I am woman
The world needs me
Shackle me not
With household chores
No more suppress me
With "thou shall nots"
For together we build
And together we grow.

I am woman
Not your inferior
If you want

The best of life
Pull me out
From the pit you've dug
My place is up there
There next to you.

I am woman
Your partner
Look not behind
I'm no longer there
I am where
I rightly should be
I am there
Just there beside you...

A Perspective of Women in Europe

GUDRUN DIESTEL

Who are the women of Europe? There are the women of Bulgaria living in a predominantly rural country, working in agricultural enterprises organized by the communist government a couple of decades ago; they have hardly any contact with the Western part of Europe. The fact that after the breaking down of the socialist system many were in a period of hunger was little known to the outside world!

There are the women in Russia who for the first time in history have elected their president. But amidst perestroika and glasnost, that is, change and openness striving for new ways, people in the Soviet Union find themselves disoriented. Tensions open up into fights even with paramilitary forces. Uncertainty leads to looking back to what was a confined totalitarian world but at least you knew how it functioned.

Women in Europe...there are the women in the Scandinavian countries playing their part in a democratic society with high standards of education and participation, integrated into modern welfare systems which serve as models for other countries. There are the women of Britain, of that great island which for a long time was much more oriented toward 'overseas', that is, to the countries in the British Commonwealth, than to what they

call 'the continent'. Britain is a country with strong traditions, even now with a certain consciousness of belonging to different 'classes' within the nation, but also a country struggling hard to integrate new groups who immigrated from various countries of the Commonwealth.

There are the French women known for a specific art of life, the Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and not to forget the Greek women living in societies where old patriarchal settings and styles are still alive, at least in rural areas.

In mentioning these women and their most different situations I have picked a few examples out of many others – countries like Roumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Austria, Switzerland and the West European Benelux states have their own specifics. And there is my own country, Germany, where at present we experience the challenges and the problems of growing together after a division into two different political systems lasting for 40 years.

To speak of Europe means to speak of great variety and plurality. You may wonder why I mention this? If you speak of Africa or Asia or the Americas, do they not include much more variety than this Europe which is geographically just a

small annex to that big continent of Asia? This is certainly true and yet Europe has reached a new period in its history when this is precisely one of the major issues: how can this variety of cultures, of lifestyles, of languages, of traditions find a way to cooperation, to some kind of unity? In this presentation and in our discussion today we are not able to do justice to the varying situations in the European countries. We should, however, keep this new challenge in our mind.

Where Are We Now in Europe?

Ten years ago the situation was quite clear: there was the West of Europe, 'West' in a political sense, including the North and most of the South – countries with a free society and democratic governments, and there was the East of Europe – countries with a communist rule and a society which was rather closed. Between East and West was the "Iron Curtain".

There were cautious political, economic and personal contacts and negotiations. However, if there was cooperation in certain fields, it was clearly on the basis of two different systems which, at best, dealt with each other as 'co-existing' – a co-existence which always carried mistrust if not hostility with it.

Now drastic changes have taken place as we all know. The socialist system in Eastern Europe has broken down and the Iron Curtain fell. Now we see again the countries with their characteristic individuality emerging...in Poland differently from Hungary or Czechoslovakia and, again, differently in Roumania and Bulgaria.

If I say this, it sounds quite positive and it certainly is. But this process also carries problems: old tensions between different ethnic and cultural

groups revive as we see in the Soviet Union, in Roumania, in Bulgaria, in Czechoslovakia and in Yugoslavia.

The division of Europe into two separate parts was the result of the Second World War, a war caused by Germany which began as a war among European nations, spread to Asia, and drew in the United States and troops from several African countries. The war ended with terrible losses of life and immense destruction on our continent. A long period of history in which the European countries had built up their national self-esteem against each other came to a destructive end in 1945.

Is this all past and gone? In a way, certainly, yes. A new nationalism, however, seems to grow in these countries where national identity was suppressed through the doctrine of 'socialist brotherhood'. The present tensions between different ethnic and cultural groups show that it is not enough not to fight out your differences by war (and in Yugoslavia and in some parts of the Soviet Union they are not far from a civil war). It is necessary to learn to live constructively in a multi-cultural and even multilingual society. We have countries like Switzerland or Belgium where this art has been developed successfully. Europe needs to learn this as a continent.

It is not only the East of Europe which is undergoing drastic developments. The Western countries are also preparing for a step which will create a new situation.

On 1 January 1993, the 12 members of the European Community will be economically united in one Common Market with freedom of movement "for goods, persons, services and capital". There will be no frontiers for the citizens of the member states within the community. It is expected that this step will strengthen the European Community economically, making it a stronger partner particularly for the United States, Japan and the Soviet Union,

stronger than any of the member countries could be on their own. It will mean that the countries have to adjust in many fields: in their educational systems, in the recognition of vocational and academic training; in their legal systems insofar as it is relevant to the economic sphere, and so on.

The governments, that is, the elected national parliaments and governments will be reduced in their power. Decisions made by the organs of the Community will rule. At a later stage the aim is also to adapt the system of social security to a more equal level (so far this has not been possible; the differences among the countries is too great) and also to work for a political union.

This may sound rather abstract, but if things develop as planned, they will affect peoples' lives in many practical ways. There may be new jobs and a higher living standard for the village people in Greece, Italy, Spain or Portugal who now live on or close to (the European) poverty level. There may be new prospects for the jobless in urban areas. But there may also be people more uprooted from their social environment, more mobility – not voluntary but forced for economic reasons, etc.

How this will change the faces of our countries we do not know yet. There is no doubt that this growing together is necessary, but it is also essential that it not happen with social costs which are too high, that is, the rich becoming richer and the poor getting poorer. It is necessary that the economic drive come in a sound balance with social and cultural growth. A big community of people cannot be kept together by economic ties only. It needs more common ground to become stable and responsible toward its partners inside and outside.

The European Community (the Common Market) has been growing from small beginnings to the present stage. Now and then there were set-backs but there was also a steady development which led to the new phase. Unexpected, maybe not unfore-

seen by insiders, but in the timing certainly unexpected, this process was confronted with the opening of the Eastern European countries. Whilst the European Community still is busy trying to bridge the gap between the highly industrialized Northern members with their high living standard and much poorer areas in the Southern member countries, Eastern European countries are also turning their expectations toward the Community. Some of them have already entered negotiations (or maybe, pre-negotiations) about future membership. All of them expect support, mainly economic support.

People are concerned that instead of the fallen Iron Curtain, East and West Europe might be divided by an "Economic Curtain" in the near future. Many people are also concerned that the difficult economic situation might lead to a greater stream of migration, particularly but not only from the Soviet Union, westward. We are aware that this touches very complex issues, not only the relationship between East and West Europe but also differences among the Eastern nations.

Women in Europe

Women have their share in all these developments. They had their difficult share in the early stages of the socialist movements, before the Russian Revolution in 1917, fighting both against the exploitation of the poor working class in general and for the women who were at the low end of the impoverished in particular. Women also had their share in building the socialist states and in the totalitarian systems, first in the Soviet Union, and later in the other East European countries. All of these countries demanded that women take part in the productive work force. They proclaimed equal rights for women in the productive sphere, in the Communist Party and in the socialist administration and government. So there was a high percentage of women everywhere, even in fields which demanded heavy physical labor.

But, of course, women also had their share in the various resistance movements: in writing, in speaking up, in being imprisoned or expelled. Women contributed also in leading positions to the liberation in Eastern Europe.

Now a new orientation is required. But the women in the Eastern European countries are facing a certain set-back. With the rise of unemployment, the family mothers, and particularly those women who bring up their children alone, are among the first to be fired. Social services, for example, kindergartens and nurseries are shut down because of lack of public financing. Prices for food, housing and services go up.

In general, women's participation in public affairs, such as membership in parliaments, has declined. Old patriarchal structures are showing up again and the women will have to watch out afresh that they are not made to carry the major burdens of their societies. They will need realistic analyses, creative thinking, courage and energy for necessary action and they will have to determine themselves what is necessary.

At the same time our solidarity and our support are required. But this is not easy. The doctrine of the "Cold War" limited information between East and West, as did indoctrination in many ways. All this makes it difficult at this stage really to communicate. It needs a lot of listening on both sides. We experience this especially in Germany, a country separated for forty years and now again united. But I am sure this is also true for the communication between women of other countries. The degree to which people in Eastern European countries were deprived of contact with other countries, even of open communication among their own folk, varies. But it is only eventually that we realize what this means in detail and how we have to start afresh.

An open dialogue is important for both sides. Whilst women (and men) in the Eastern European

countries experience many things new to which Western Europeans have become accustomed, from the goods in the shops to the ideas about public life, and education of children, they are raising questions. These are questions about the truth of our system – how much we really do what we claim to stand for. While there is, of course, a longing for a better living standard there are also questions raised whether this is an end in itself (which it is not) and how we practise our social responsibility inside our own country and toward other parts of the world.

The historic chance to start a new phase of nation-building and to build it in the greater context of a free Europe and of a world interdependent in many ways is not only a political and economic task. Although it is certain that it has also its spiritual dimensions particularly for Christians.

In the European Community women will also have to watch out how things develop. There will be more economic competition. Will that mean that women, who are often less able to move to other places than men, get the lower paying jobs? There are already indications that women are more dependent on jobs with less social security. The European Community has made several efforts to push equal rights for women, particularly in the working world. But the national governments and the business organizations are slow to put those guidelines into practice.

The points in question are: access to the labor market, the quality and pay of the jobs, social security and the access to professions and management positions. To facilitate women's access it is also important whether there are enough services like nurseries and kindergartens, regulations for care when children fall ill, and last, but not least, the possibilities of further training for women who have their family jobs when the children are small but want to work outside the home again at a later stage. At present, the 12 member states of the

Community follow different policies in these fields. It will take time and attention to better the situation in general, and not only for the betterment of the minority.

Lutheran Women in Europe

To look at the Lutheran women in Europe is to be asked to look not only at the general context of life, as we have done so far, but also to look at the spiritual context in a more specific sense of the word "spiritual". Lutheran women are sharing the situation of the churches. In the Northern countries and in the Western part of Germany the key word to characterize this has been "secularization" and *Volkskirche* (folk church).

These key concepts address a shrinking of Christian tradition in society. They address the difficulties we have trying to interpret the Good News, the gospel, in a world which is determined by modern scientific and technical thinking. They address a change of lifestyle where people attend the Sunday service less than in earlier times, where there is less common morning or evening prayer in the homes, less knowledge of the Bible, etc. They refer to all majority churches in Europe, including the Roman Catholic church and they are being worked at on many levels. But while we have to acknowledge them we should not overlook the fact that there are also spheres of an intensified life – maybe not in traditional forms and critical to the church – but lively and creative.

The new women's movements, controversial as they are, have vitalized theological thinking, local women's groups, the work of evangelical academies, etc. Certainly they need some discussion in detail. Unfortunately, at least in my country, the official church institutions and the theological faculties are very slow to enter into real discussion

and not at all into an examination of the issues.

In the West and in the South of Europe, Lutheran churches are minority churches. I have not had enough contacts with the women of these churches recently to be able to refer to their situation here.

In Eastern Europe we find a much more differentiated situation. In several countries Lutheran churches are not only a minority vis-a-vis a newly strengthened and also politically active Roman Catholic church, in the recent past they were also faced with a militant atheism propagated by the communist governments. But in several countries even those governments took a more lenient attitude toward the Christian minorities.

So now the churches have to work out afresh where they stand. Lutheran churches are often organized according to ethnic groups, e.g. in Roumania there is a Lutheran church of Hungarian origin and another Lutheran church of German origin (German farmers who migrated to Roumania more than 800 years ago).

In the Soviet Union, Lutherans either belong to the original population of the Baltic republics or to German groups which have been living in Russia for more than 200 years. They live now in Kazakhstan, one of the Asian republics. In Czechoslovakia we find a Czech Lutheran church and a Slovak one; in Poland we find Poles and originally Germans in the Lutheran church.

This raises the question of how far the Lutheran churches, and that means the local members of these churches, are drawn into or even suffer because of the present ethnic tensions. The German-speaking Lutheran church in Roumania has diminished rapidly during the past years. The members went back to Germany by the thousands. The same is true of the Lutherans in Kazakhstan, in the Soviet Union, and there will be more leaving.

While we in the West discuss secularization, some of these groups have preserved their faith under the horror of the Stalinist regime with a tremendous death toll. They live by their faith, like their mothers and fathers did, with a few hymnbooks and Bibles which, literally, have been used for generations. Their style of living and expressing their faith is different from ours. So there is a need to find new understandings on both sides.

The Lutheran churches in Germany are in a specific situation. The churches of East and West are now uniting again on the Lutheran level and on the Federation level as *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*. So the differences of past experiences, of church membership and practice and of theological thinking and in financial matters meet in one church structure. This is also the case in the church women's organizations. Church bodies and local congregations and particularly women's groups had kept contact across the Iron Curtain as much as possible during the past years. It is only since we are uniting again that we realize how deep the separation was between the East and West of Europe, even in a country with the same language, the same history and cultural tradition. It will take a long time to overcome this. We hope that the women will make a special contribution to the process of better understanding.

Conclusions

I have concentrated on a few inner-European aspects of the present development. We are, of course, conscious of the fact that all this is happening within the global interdependence of today's world. We need to look carefully at how the developments in Europe are affected by what is happen-

ing in other parts of the world and how the European actions are affecting people on other continents.

I was also not able to go deeper into the historical background of Europe. The new challenges and the problems require examination on the basis of recent and also of former history. We need to understand the background of current events, particularly in Eastern European countries, in order to understand the dynamics behind them.

Also, I had to neglect the ecumenical situation in Europe which is of significance not only for the churches but also for the understanding of the societies in the various countries and the relationship between various countries. It is, of course, also significant when we come to consider the specific challenges to WICAS/LWF with regard to the Lutheran women in Europe. There are tasks which can only be taken up by a joint ecumenical effort, e.g. with regard to the developments in the European Community.

There are other tasks which are related more specifically to a Lutheran context, such as the dialogue with women in the Eastern European Lutheran minority churches. All of us will surely agree that any Lutheran programme should also be a contribution to ecumenical openness and, if possible, ecumenical cooperation. To be practical, we have to look at, or to find out, what the Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women in Europe, the YWCA and the World Council of Churches (Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women) are already doing and not forget the Conference of European Churches which plans to install a desk for women's work – if they have not already started with it.

Misery, Machismo, and Migration: Latin American Women's Situation

ANNA LANGE

The situation of women in Latin America is an extensive subject. What I will try to do here is to give some insights into the situation of Brazilian women, whom I know best, and whose circumstances are pretty much shared with most women in Latin America. This will give a sense of the major problems facing our continent.

Although it cannot be denied that there have been some great advances for women, there are problems that can only be solved by massive government efforts and even by changes at the international level.

The people of Latin America are being subjected to continuous impoverishment. Responsible for this poverty are, on the one hand, an unequal distribution of wealth within countries and on the other, the economies of the countries of the First World that make it difficult for the people of the severely indebted Third World to survive.

This impoverishment reflects directly on family life. An increasing number of women seek work outside their homes or work they can do at home in order to stay close to their children. This is not done by choice; rather, these women are driven by the

absolute necessity of supplementing the family income.

This impoverishment is also reflected in the moral patterns of the society. Violence and prostitution are on the increase. The abandonment of children and aged people is becoming more and more common.

With rare exceptions, the educational system is at present in a poor condition in Latin America. We have high illiteracy rates and many children leave school after only a few years and sometimes after only one year.

Sanitation and health represent another challenge for the governments. For the people they are matters of life and death. Endemic diseases reach vast regions of our continent and some contagious diseases that do not exist in developed countries still plague our people. The menace of cholera is the center of attention today.

Parallel to these problems that are typical in poor communities is the violence of traffic in big cities and on major highways. This is responsible for countless deaths and permanent damage.

Although it may be small in comparison with First World countries, the increase of drug consumption among young people is frightening. The use of drugs is also responsible for the increase in AIDS. Ecological problems – the devastation and misuse of soil, the destruction of forests, the poisoning of air and rivers – are well known through the global discussion about Amazonia.

Latin American nations are made up of people of many backgrounds. There are those of Hispanic and Portuguese descent and there are people of African descent who were brought to the continent against their will. There have been more recent colonizations of European and Asian immigrants. The consciousness of the native or indigenous population – the people who are the true owners of the land which was taken from them by the "discoverers" – is awakening. The 500th anniversary of the "discovery" of America in 1992 prompts reflection on the exploitation of the people as well as the dependency and exploitation in present relations between North and South.

The Lutheran Christians represent a small minority among the inhabitants of Latin America. The largest church, the IECLB (Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil), represents only 0.05% of the population.

In the last decades, many religious movements from Asia and Africa have proliferated, and esoteric groups are growing in strength around the country. Pentecostalism is gaining attention in the churches, and mysticism is growing in the Catholic church.

Despite its small numbers, the Lutheran church has a significant voice in the areas where there are large concentrations of Lutherans – in southern Brazil and in the new colonization areas in the midwest.

From the beginning, the church has understood education and health to be part of its responsibility.

Women had an important role in the organization of services for prenatal care, in the organization of kindergartens that eventually developed to first and second grade schools, and in providing homes for aged people. Although illiteracy exists among Lutheran church members, the rate is lower than that of the whole country.

The women's work that was initiated in 1910 had its model in Germany, where the Brazilian church originated and which was for a long time its mother church. The way the tradition from overseas was kept and loved represented a big uniting force, but it also hindered a full melting with the Brazilian people. Only slowly was this position overcome. Up to this day, many women's groups use the German language in their work.

Today, the OASE (Ordem Auxiliadora de Senhoras Evangelicas), as women's work is known, has about 950 units scattered throughout the six regions and new colonization areas of Brazil. About 35,000 women take part in this organization which was officially started on a churchwide basis in 1984. For a long time, the OASE had full-time paid workers, but now it has no paid help due, in part, to the financial situation. In conventions and seminars, at different levels (parish, district, region), themes of interest to women are discussed. The local units are places where sharing and Bible study play an important role.

The OASE units assume tasks within their own congregations and communities (for example, assisting an institution, raising money for a special project, visiting ill or aged people, developing projects in poor neighborhoods, etc.).

Together with other units, women develop projects proposed by the National Board of the OASE. This is usually done during the OASE Week observed in the beginning of spring. Some projects have included raising money to enable personal contacts with women who had moved from the

south to the new colonization areas; ecology projects such as 'planting a tree'; and at the churchwide level, carrying out a survey of members who are physically and mentally deficient. Occasionally OASE addresses polemic questions such as television programming, social security for the rural woman worker, and other critical issues.

The participation of women in the church was accomplished in the past only through the women's organization, the work of deaconesses and pastors' wives. Today there are women chairing parishes and participating on parish, district and regional boards. For the Directive Board of the Church, the last Assembly appointed five women. This participation is, no doubt, a result of women's work that has as one of its aims to help women to value themselves and accept decision-making positions in the church.

For the last 17 years, the IECLB has had women pastors. They are working in congregations or on special tasks. Together with other church workers (catechists and deacons) they have gotten together to seek definitions of their position and participation as women workers of the church.

Theological training is the responsibility of the theological school of the church. This year it began a course on Feminist Theology.

The Motherhouse for Deaconesses (Casa Matriz de Diaconisas) has about 70 sisters working in different areas (education, health, social work). It prepares parish workers and has pioneer programmes of education in the north of the country.

The following are some points that need attention in which women are involved as helpers or victims. They are not listed in any specific order:

- *Daycare centers:* The number of daycare centers did not grow proportionately to the number of children who need such care. Bigger firms are

supposed to have their own daycare centers or to maintain places in other institutions. This does not always happen. The government has announced a new school system that will also provide daycare centers and prenatal care all over the country.

- *Maternal leave:* This was a great victory of the feminists. New mothers have the right to stay home with their child for four months. This period is paid by the employers who have problems replacing the new mothers in their jobs. This situation is causing a preference for men or older women for jobs, the embarrassment of proving that the woman to be employed is not pregnant and sterilization of a large number of women.

- *Street children:* A great number of children are on the streets either working with their parents (collecting garbage, selling fruit, objects or food, polishing or maintaining cars) or living by themselves by begging, assaulting, and stealing and using drugs. There are efforts to give them better conditions, but up to this time they have been too few. Headlines in the world press have focused on the related problem of the extermination of Brazilian street children.

- *Television programming:* Television plays an important role in Brazilian life. The TV channels are owned by private companies which compete for bigger audiences. Many programmes portray violent and morally inappropriate scenes. The subject has been discussed by the Deputies and self-censorship undertaken, but unfortunately there have been few results.

- *Machismo:* This is very much accentuated. The constitution adopted in 1988 changed some concepts. For example, the head of the family is no longer just the father but both parents. But there is a long way to go until this situation is a reality. In evangelical families, the misunderstanding of biblical text sometimes hinders better, more equal, relationships.

- *Violence in the family:* The creation of police stations in big cities with female personnel is helping to give better information on what is happening to women in their homes. In these police stations and at the "Board for the Female Condition", women find women ready to hear them.

- *Migration:* Many families are migrating within the country. People from the northeast look for work in the industrialized south. People from the south migrate to the midwest and north seeking land for agriculture. People from the rural areas made redundant through mechanized work and monoculture have moved to the cities to seek better living conditions. There is the drama of those who lost their land because of floods resulting from the construction of new hydro-electric plants. Members of the church are involved in this migration process and must be accompanied. Such problems raise theological questions as to the positions to take regarding landlessness and homelessness and how people can achieve a better standard of living.

- *Radio programme:* Although very traditional in its way of working, the OASE is finding areas where it can reach out with the Gospel. One example is a 3-minute daily radio programme which is prepared by a group of women and broadcast over a number of radio stations in the south of Brazil.

- *Resource material:* For many years the OASE has been publishing resource material for the use of groups in the hope that women themselves will lead the meetings. Still, most of the groups are led by the local male pastors, and this is also the wish of the majority of the women. Leadership training is being

given, but it must be continued with very clear aims.

- *Seminars and international exchange:* The LWF has promoted in the past two seminars for leadership development in Brazil. These were the first opportunities for us to meet at a churchwide level in a bigger group. We are indebted to Lois Leffler, Eva von Hertzberg and Eva Zabolai-Csekme for the possibility of this beginning, followed by many other seminars promoted by the OASE.

Also we did have the opportunity to have two seminars in Latin America for international participants. One was for Spanish-speaking participants; the other one was for women from Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil. Here we noticed language to be a barrier to communication. Communication between women in Latin America is poor and visiting programmes should be developed.

It is not the purpose of this paper to present only negative views of countries, the church or women's situations. It must be noted that women are holding positions they never had before. Some are even ministers and state secretaries, and there are signs of change in many fields.

Although we are having the worst recession in the last 30 years and despite the many serious problems we face, we try to see the present situation as a crisis that must, and hopefully will, have a solution. In this situation we pray that God will help us look with more confidence to the future and show us our present responsibility to make a better future possible.

If I am Created in the Image of God - A Picture of North American Women in Church and Society

DIANE DOTH REHBEIN

Introduction

Many women find the church to be a life-giving community, a place where their faith grows and their spirit is nurtured; other women find the church to be a spirit-killing ground.

Many women feel included, welcomed into the life of the church; other women feel excluded from the life of the church because of poverty, racism, family structures and expectations of the role of women.

Many women struggle with issues of power and authority within the church; others believe these matters do not affect them and are not concerned with issues raised.

There are women in our churches who are content with the status of women and men in church and in society, who believe that any changes would be detrimental to the church. There are women in our churches who feel pain, anger and alienation as they participate in the life of the church. There are women who are no longer able to be a part of the church community and have chosen to leave the church forever, concluding that it is the

most "unloving and unlovely community" (*Turning the World Upside Down*, Lois Wilson, 1989, Doubleday Canada, Ltd., Toronto).

It is important to know this dichotomy within the North American Lutheran churches if one is to understand more fully the reality of Lutheran women. When using the term Lutheran church, I speak of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). There are other Lutheran church bodies in North America whose women members may share in some of the realities described in this paper.

The Lutheran church in North America is an urban church as well as a rural church. Over half of the congregations are located outside of urban centres; over half of the members are located within urban centres. It is a church that in 1990 celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the ordination of women. It is also primarily a white, middle-class church. There are relatively few people of color who participate in the life of these white congregations. There are a small number of Hispanic, African-American, Asian and Native American congregations.

In Canada, the changing face of Lutheranism seems to support Canada's ethnic mosaic rather than the United States' melting pot. This is seen as separate congregations within a shared building, and as separate congregations in their own buildings. Women in these congregations live a different reality than white, middle-class Lutheran women. This paper will not address the reality of these women, except as a common experience of all women in North America.

As I write about the reality of women in the church, I write from the biased experience of a woman who has at times felt much pain, anger and alienation in my church life. I write as a woman with a passion for justice for women in church and society. I write as one who has felt held against my will by the church. I write as one who has also experienced joy, hope and spiritual sustenance from other church women and a few church men. It is good having other North American Lutheran women present who may expand, challenge or affirm the perceptions that I present to you. For that I am thankful as it is not always possible to see beyond the pain.

A struggle for me in preparing this presentation was how to organize it. The reality of women is vast, including every facet of one's life. I have chosen to discuss those areas that seem to have the greatest and most universal effect, that is, the white male system, language, violence, marriage and family life, church structures and health care issues and will be using stories of women to illustrate these effects.

White Male Systems

A North American reality is that the church actively participates in and enables the white male system. This system surrounds us not only outside the church, it permeates the life of the church. Power, authority and influence in the church are

held by white males. There are 72 North American Lutheran bishops, all but 2 are white and all are male. Less than 10% of clergy are women. Women executives at the churchwide office of the ELCA are paid on the average less than men in comparable positions (*The Lutheran*).

In *Women's Reality*, Anne Wilson Schaef writes of the "myths, beliefs, rituals, procedures and outcomes"...of the white male system and how this system "affects everything we think, feel and do..." The following are examples of this system functioning in the church.

Myth:

Women do not know what is best for themselves.

At a recent national convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, although almost half of the delegates were women, in the abortion debate over 90% of the speakers were men.

Procedures and Outcomes:

Elect women that support white male systems to leadership positions.

One may ask, why didn't those women speak? As one reflects on the white male system in the church, it becomes apparent how important it is, in order to maintain the functioning of this system, that women not be empowered. An empowered woman, that is a woman who has the ability to use her voice of experience, to claim her own authority, to give witness to a system and a theology that values people and does not give a higher priority, position or power to men, does not necessarily support the white male system.

Rather, a woman who is empowered works toward disabling the sources of pain, anger and alienation of women in the church. In filling gender quotas recognition is beginning to expand to include the need to identify people who will not perpetuate this system.

Ritual:

Important decisions are made during male-bonding activities.

Another example of this system in action was shared with me by a white male member of the Merger Commission, a group of ELCIC church leaders, both men and women, called to work together to bring about the merger of three major Lutheran church bodies. The work of the Commission went on for years. Soon after the merger happened for two of the churches involved, this man shared with me how the merger had really come about.

It was not because of the Commission but because of discussions, the give and take that became part of the bridge games that took place late into the evening after the Commission concluded its work for the day. He indicated that if it weren't for those bridge games, merger talks might still be going on. My guess is that those bridge games were played by four white men.

Belief:

Only men are capable of preaching and administering the sacraments.

In 1990 Lutherans celebrated the 20th anniversary of the ordination of women. It is important to note that there are Lutheran denominations in North America that do not ordain women. (Among them are the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Lutheran Church Canada, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and a number of smaller Lutheran groups.)

There are also Lutheran churches that do not allow women to participate in decision making. This same belief at times arises in the Lutheran churches that do ordain women. As one woman pastor says, "A male pastor refuses to call me 'pastor'...He makes it clear that he sees me as an abomination..."

Language

Language has power. It affects people's attitudes--shaping their inner views of themselves, the world and others. Language can hurt and it can heal. It can limit the perceptions we have of each other, it can exclude people, or it can expand our reality to include others and celebrate the dignity of all. Language affects the prejudices one has. It also affects the prejudices the church has.

Some women believe that language which uses only male pronouns and examples when referring to human beings excludes women's reality and experience. Others do not believe this. (*Stories Women Live*, Canada Lutheran, April 1989).

When discussing this issue, some women will say that it is not important to them, that when they hear male pronouns they fully understand men to mean men and women. Other women share stories that are quite different, stories that describe the effect that the church's use of male language has on them such as:

"I have sat in a church with tears streaming down my face, feeling pain, anger, exclusion, and alienation. Many hymns, much of the liturgy, and all too frequently the sermons, support my feelings of exclusion. I have stayed away from church when I could no longer bear it".

"Every time I hear myself or God referred to with male language, I experience anger, worship is blocked and I struggle to silently edit. I feel personally insulted and separated from the worshipping community".

"I learned that I could not stand in the pulpit, or lead worship, and deliberately obliterate myself in the words I read. Either we use inclusive language or women are publicly humiliated by participating in worship leadership".

"The use of male pronouns, examples, and imagery is crushing to the self-image of females, especially young females who are just forming their own images of self".

How the church describes or names God is an issue that is being voiced within the Lutheran church at this time. Many people are fearful when conversations are directed to naming God in words other than Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Such is the situation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with the rewriting of their *Guidelines for Inclusive Use of the English Language*, particularly the section, "Language about God". The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada has been directed to expand its *Guidelines for Inclusive Language*, adding a section on language about God.

Naming God will be a difficult issue, one filled with emotion, one that will require study, and for many people, new learnings. It is an issue that is part of women's reality.

Some of the responses shared by women include:

- "If I am created in the image of God, I cannot see God as only male...My spirituality has changed because of seeing the feminine in God. I see the sacred more in the common now."
- "Of late, I am having difficulty saying, 'In the name of the Father and the Son'".
- "Reliance on male imagery has made me feel second-class in the church. After all, men – a male God, male prophets, and male gospel writers – prescribe what is to be".
- "I struggle with how to call out to God in prayer. I know that female language for God is also exclusive, but maybe we all need to experience such

sound to clear our ears of 2,000 years of male terminology".

Describing or naming God will be an issue for the church for a long time to come.

Male Violence Against Women

Another...woman is beaten within her own home every one to three minutes; another...woman is raped every two to five minutes; another...little girl is molested every five to ten minutes; another...daughter is molested by her own father every thirty minutes; another...woman is killed by her partner every three days (based on US and Canadian government statistics, *Mandate, Special Edition, The Feminine Face of Poverty*, The United Church Publishing House).

Male violence directed at women is very much a part of North American society. It is being called a national epidemic. Women live daily with the threat of violence. Male violence against women is a multifaceted problem encompassing physical, sexual, economic and psychological violations of women. It is so prevalent that most women expect to be a victim of violence, overwhelmingly perpetuated by men.

Male violence against women has been linked to social, economic, political structures, values and policies that support gender-based discrimination thus maintaining women's inequality. (Brief to the House of Commons Subcommittee on the Status of Women, *Male Violence Against Women: The Brutal Face of Inequality*, Feb. 13, 1991, Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women). It is a burden that women in church and society have suffered for years. Too often women's suffering has been in silence. Too often the church has perpetuated this silence.

Physical, Sexual and Psychological Violence

One in four women have been sexually assaulted, 50% before they are 17. One in ten women yearly are physically or sexually assaulted by their live-in partners. Women are much more likely than men to be attacked by someone they know. Forty-one percent of all sexual assaults include victims and perpetrators known to each other. The Disabled Women's Network of Canada reports that 53% of women disabled since birth have been raped, abused or assaulted. In North America women who are victims of sexual assault are 5 times more likely to have breakdowns and 8 times more likely to attempt suicide than women who have not been assaulted.

Through violence and the threat of violence, women's fears for their safety are escalated. Women are afraid to walk alone, afraid of men in authority (sometimes this includes church leaders), afraid for their children's safety, afraid of sexual harassment in the workplace and afraid of the justice system.

A May 1991 study by the Manitoba Association of Women and the Law indicates that abused women and children are routinely discriminated against by a judicial system that frequently lets offenders go free or imposes inadequate sentences (*Winnipeg Free Press*, May, 1991).

Two of Winnipeg's most "prominent" male lawyers attacked the report labelling the authors as "feminist fanatics." The justice system indeed is part of the white male system and as one of the authors of the report says, "they're looking at all of this from the male perspective. It's in their interests to say it's all hogwash".

On 27 May 1991, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) presented a government report

on abuse of women by physicians. The findings were incredible. Many, many women had stories to share of being sexually assaulted by their physicians. Such too was the situation in the US where the State of Minnesota enacted stiff laws and procedures governing the behavior of physicians. The CBC also reported how the white male system, that is, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, protected its own, as very few charges were ever dealt with, allowing the abusers to continue to practise medicine placing women at risk.

Marc Lapine was also part of the white male system. He felt that society had broken the promise that he was superior to women. In December 1989 he walked into a university in Montreal and massacred 14 young female engineering students, shouting, "You're all a bunch of feminists. I hate feminists". The response by the Lutheran community was minimal. No official condemnation was put forward. No calls for prayers. It is difficult for people who enable this white male system to respond. It is not so for those victims of the system. In various cities across North America vigils are held by women every time a woman is murdered by a man. In my city, this at times is more than a monthly occurrence.

Violence against women is a daily occurrence. In one day in a city of 500,000 people a newspaper (*Winnipeg Free Press*, May 1991) reported the rape and attempted murder of a 16 year-old girl and the rape of a 29 year-old handicapped woman. This is not an exceptional day.

Psychological violence also is the silencing of women. This includes devaluing women's experiences and discriminating against women because of gender. The church enables this violence by not breaking the silence. It does not offer a place where women are confident they can come to tell their stories and to receive healing. Most clergy do not know how to intervene in situations of male violence against women. Some still deny its existence.

Three years ago a Lutheran pastor wrote a letter to the editor of a seminary publication refuting an article written by a woman about her being a victim of childhood incest. The writer of the letter stated that almost all of these stories of childhood incest are made up by women. This pastor had just completed 40 years service to the church.

Many pastors facilitate violence through their denial and their silencing of women. Pastors have sent women home to abusive husbands, quoting Bible verses out of context, laying the blame fully on the woman and telling her not to upset her husband in the future. Pastors have asked women who were raped what they did to bring this on. Pastors have denied that such an outstanding member of the parish could have been sexually assaulting the neighborhood girls.

Some pastors have also been able to provide support to women who are victims of violence. In a small suburban Lutheran congregation of less than 200 members, the pastor reported that over the course of two years he had counselled two women who had been battered by their husbands, intervened with the police to bring a woman and her child to a women's shelter, and counselled 2 victims of incest. This pastor had also counselled a woman who had been raped while in a counseling situation with another Lutheran pastor. The difference in this congregation is that women were not silenced, for Lutheran women throughout our churches are victims of violence.

When women are fearful they tend to isolate themselves, withdrawing from the community. When this happens, communities begin to die. The church has the potential of being such a community. In a congregation in a city of over 3 million people, a woman is afraid to walk unescorted in the hall of her inner-city apartment building. In order to attend her women's Bible study meeting, two male members of the congregation meet her at her door and return with her to her door after the study.

Male violence against women is rooted in the values which perpetuate women's inequality. A US survey found a high tolerance for violence by men against their partners, with one in three husbands believing that hitting their partner is normal behaviour (1980). The church has yet to be the prophetic voice in this matter even though women want and expect it to be a part of the solution and to work to end violence. There is no safe place for women.

Poverty

Poverty is violence. Sixty percent of adults living below the poverty line are women. More than half of poor families are headed by single women. Women experience significant economic hardship as a result of personal crimes of violence, from the costs of legal and medical expenses and damage to their homes. To escape abusive partners, they often leave behind their home, possessions, financial support and even their church. Women on the whole in the US earn 66% of what men earn and in Canada 63%. This has not improved over the last decade.

Many of us in the church are insulated from poverty where poverty often is hidden. It will be present but most often we will not recognize it.

For many North American women we could be poor tomorrow. Work and child rearing have not allowed for much of a safety net to be built. One such story is shared by a church woman named Georgina as circumstances suddenly altered her comfortable lifestyle: "I came to be poor because my husband died. That was it...and it happened in 45 minutes, because that's how long it was between the heart attack and my husband's death. No preparation, no time to train or retrain myself for a job".

Her poverty has caused her to frequently wrestle with God about her lot. "I stopped going to church...I

just could not face going into church every Sunday in the same old coat and same shabby shoes and same dress...Because those of us in the situation where we are living in poverty and trying to survive, we cannot reveal this to people... the only thing we have left is our pride". (*A Fine Line, Task Force on the Feminization of Poverty, Ecumenical Decade for Churches in Solidarity with Women Coordinating Committee, Toronto*)

Older farm women are at risk of becoming poor because they have traditionally had no income. They have worked equally hard, yet are not paid. They have no job skills other than farming. It has only been in recent times that the courts recognize equal ownership of the farms in estate matters. Farming has been such a male-dominated culture that some farm women have very little sense of self-worth. A lot of women farmers are so isolated that they easily go into hiding emotionally. They also hide this from the church. (*Sowing Circles, Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada, Toronto*)

Seventy percent of women in poverty in the US are over 65 (Older Women's League). Because of Canadian social programmes for those over 65, in Canada women who are poor are overwhelmingly single women with responsibilities for children. (*United Church Observer*) Society depends on these women to be poor. Industry needs a pool of cheap labour and women have become this source.

Often there is only part-time work available and a lack of interest by young women to pursue employment outside the stereotyped, low paying careers for women. With some women having to pay over 50% of their wages to purchase daycare for one child, for many women day care is not affordable.

In rural areas it has been found that over 40% of children under age 10 are regularly left unattended because of lack of available daycare (Federated Women's Institutes of Canada). Last week in my province, one such unattended 4 year-old died.

Many women are caught in the 'Cinderella Syndrome', that is, they believe that Prince Charming is going to come and rescue them, that they don't need to be economically self-sufficient because they are going to be taken care of. The consequences can be seen in various ways in society and in the church community, particularly when women are divorced or widowed and their source of income (the man) is lost.

These are but a few of women's experiences of violence. There are many other expressions of the sins of sexism and racism that could certainly be included. Before concluding this section on violence, I believe it important to strongly note that white North American Lutheran women, along with the white male system, are also perpetrators of racism, sexism and the resulting violence in our society.

Marriage and Family

"The church and society in general focus to a large extent on marriage and the nuclear family as the norm for adult life. For example, this focus is apparent when there is an emphasis on church events for families and married couples. It is also apparent in the frequently used reference to the community of faith as being a family. Such direct, as well as many indirect, emphases on marriage and the nuclear family, may result in a single woman (never married, widowed, or divorced) feeling less than a complete person because she is not married.

Another result may be a married woman feeling that she must preserve her marriage even if the relationship is destructive to herself or her children. For other women the norm of marriage and nuclear family used in society and the church is affirming and comfortable". (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada Bishop's Consulting Committee on Women and Men)

Some women shared the following related stories:

- "As a young, single woman in the church, I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing for me here...I feel very much alone...and I find church gatherings tailored to the family".
- "I work full time. Sermons indicated to me that I am abnormal and uncaring. I have been told that I am selfish to work, that I am damaging my children..."
- "The church perpetuates the myth that women get married and live happily ever after...Women are expected to be caregivers and the church offers no support for women who, for whatever reason, feel they have to leave their husbands and sometimes their children".

Another reality of this section on family and marriage is homosexuality. Women's realities are being confronted by this issue in a number of ways. They are learning that their children, husbands, relatives, friends, children's friends or pastors are homosexual. The church is not necessarily a place where women are able to share their pain as they personally deal with the issue of homosexuality or a place they will receive education or study about the issue. A friend of mine who has been a member of the church women's organization for over 30 years has known for the last 5 years that her daughter is a lesbian. She has never shared this at church or with friends who are members of her congregational women's group, indicating she does not want to have to deal with the church's condemnation of her daughter.

The AIDS crisis is a part of the reality of women regardless of whether they live in urban or rural North America. A former president of Lutherans Concerned North America, a Christian ministry for lesbian and gay understanding, spoke of the help that congregations in rural areas will be needing as

more and more gay men with AIDS return home from cities to die. Homosexuality is a part of the life of all congregations, and many are now being called upon through the AIDS epidemic to recognize this and not turn their backs. Study and discussion are necessary, including the ordination of homosexuals. Like the issue of naming God, the issue of homosexuality will be present for a long time to come as congregations learn how better to understand and relate to lesbian and gay people and their families.

Church Structures

"In all of society's major institutions, including religious, government, health and business, positions of power and privilege are almost exclusively occupied by men." (Bishop's Consultation on Women and Men) The ELCA has defined in its constitution a quota system in which gender representation for lay members of churchwide assemblies, councils and boards is set at 50% women and 50% men. The ELCIC has no such system, rather relying on the wisdom of the voters to ensure that similar positions are so represented. It doesn't work. There are national committees without women members. Most also have far fewer than a 50% representation. When appointments are made, often only men are appointed.

The quota system does not permeate all areas of the ELCA. Structures in the church do not always allow for women to participate. There is no reimbursement for salary lost, often making it impossible for single mothers (and those women earning two-thirds of men's salaries) to participate. Daycare or reimbursement for daycare expenses while attending meetings or conventions is usually the exception.

Through the church women's organizations, women receive leadership training that enables them to provide competent leadership to support

the structures of the church. When women are not allowed to be part of this leadership the whole church suffers.

Stories that women have shared include:

- "Seeing mainly men in leadership roles has been hard for me. It made me feel isolated, like I was the only woman who wanted to be a church leader and that everyone was against me".
- "The male structures do not speak to and for me. What I find most reprehensible is that the church has remained so static and consistent in its attitude toward women and women's needs".
- "Women were and are, I think, largely valued in the church for their cooking (keeping the meals coming and the coffee pot brewing so that men are not distracted from important business), for their sewing, and for their child care...I have felt I had to prove I could be as much a church leader as a man could, against considerable odds".
- "I am so tired of being a 'doer' in the church...I'm a planner, organizer, dreamer, thinker, analyst. But if you're a woman and want to get involved, you have to be a 'doer', carrying out plans made by others". (*Canada Lutheran*)

Health Care

Health care issues differ between the United States and Canada. Citizens, legal immigrants and refugees in Canada are assured of access to free health care through legislation. Health care is a right.

This is not so in the US where health care too often is a privilege for those who can afford it or for those who are able to obtain medical insurance. An increasing number of people in the US are facing insufficient or no medical coverage. When people become unemployed or retired, often access to

health insurance is lost. Prenatal and preventive health care are not being received by many women. For those who do not have insurance, too often the cost of necessary medical care is prohibitive. The reality for women is that health insurance is not usually available for part-time employees, for women who leave the labor force, and in many areas of employment where one may typically find women working. Many women lose their health insurance when they divorce or are widowed as their coverage was through their husbands.

Women's access to medically safe, legal abortions is being threatened as states and provinces pass legislation limiting access. In a number of states, government medical coverage for low-income women will not pay for abortions. In a number of provinces women must appear before hospital boards who determine whether or not an abortion will be done.

The legality of abortion has come before federal, state and provincial legislative and judicial systems during the past few years. Both the ELCA and the ELCIC are in the midst of study on the issue with serious differences among members being expressed. There are serious differences among women on this issue too. This issue has raised hostility and fury within the Christian community in North America. It is not an issue that will see easy, if any, resolution in the near future.

AIDS is another area of health care that is part of the reality of women. AIDS presented itself to the church as well as to all North America within the context of a homosexual disease. This has changed as all of society is faced with an incurable, fatal, sexually-transmitted disease, a disease passed on in utero or transmitted through the sharing of needles and blood products. Women are victims of this disease. They also are part of families affected by AIDS. The ELCIC and ELCA have been working to move beyond the debate of how God views homosexuality and other practices associated with

AIDS to appreciation, affirmation and caring for all persons and families affected by AIDS.

Other Pictures of Women's Reality

A number of other pictures of women's reality in North America could have been included in this paper.

Discrimination continues within the educational system. Girls are tracked in the 'pink ghetto' stream. Men predominate on university and seminary faculties as well as in administration and secondary education.

Homelessness is becoming epidemic in North America, with a growing number of women and children depending on shelters, soup kitchens and food pantries.

Maternity leave, pensions and other economic justice concerns for women could have been discussed. The economy, in particular the 1991 recession, is causing a disproportionate number of women to fall below the poverty line. This recession also seems to have focussed people on domestic economic issues away from the international debt crisis.

The Gulf war has brought changes in the discussion of peace and justice. Kurdish refugees in Iraq and the peoples of Ethiopia and Bangladesh have brought relief efforts to the forefront of the church and society.

Prostitution, pornography, women in prisons, child and elder abuse could have been included in the section on violence; alcohol and drug abuse, aging, physical and mental disabilities, mental illness, eating disorders, human sexuality, infertility and healing in the section on health care. The

section on marriage and family could have addressed working parents and workloads of women, divorce, the empty nest and the death of a spouse. It also could have included discussions regarding the conflicts between women who choose not to work outside the home and those who are employed outside the home. Inclusivity and racism deserve their own paper.

The feminist movement in North America has entered the church and has for some women become the link that holds them in the church. The area of emphasis in the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women in Church and Society that speaks of women's spirituality and women doing theology is an area that is receiving increased attention as more women prepare for the ordained ministry, as more people celebrate women's contributions in this area and as women's stories, including biblical stories, are told and retold.

As the church becomes aware of the Ecumenical Decade and struggles with how to become a part of it, "The Decade spirit of altering gender relations blows where it will. It can no more be demonized as 'feminism' than it can be promoted as 'non-feminist'. It clearly threatens to 'get out of hand' by inhabiting the whole church and, through rock-breaking, earth-quaking activity, changing its mission, structure, liturgy, theology...all into something quite new". (*Women's Concerns*, Spring 1991) The influence of non-feminist or anti-feminist groups such as *REAL Women* or *Women Aglow* is also a part of the reality of the church.

Conclusion

It is not an easy task to make generalizations about women's reality, to uphold women's experiences through their stories. Often generalizations must be made to describe a dichotomy and often stories have not yet been told. It is my hope that through describing the reality for women in the

areas of the white male system, language, violence, marriage and family life, church structures and health care, a picture of this reality has begun to be created. In order for the church to contemplate gender justice in a serious way, the use of power must be open for discussion, reflection and analysis. This is an exciting time for the Women's Desk, a time to celebrate the past and to plan for the future. May this contribution assist in this future planning.

Bibliography

Quotes of women's stories, unless otherwise noted, were taken from stories gathered by the ELCIC Bishop's Consulting Committee on Women and Men.

Magazines and Newsletters:

- *Canada Lutheran*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, 1512 St. James Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3H 0L2, Canada. (\$16.50 Canadian/US one year, outside North America add \$5.)
- *Daughters of Sarah*, Circulation Department of Daughters of Sarah, P.O. Box 411179, Chicago, IL 60641, USA. (\$16 US/year, outside of USA add \$5.)
- *Esprit*, Evangelical Lutheran Women, 1512 St. James Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3H 0L2, Canada. (\$14 Canadian, ?US one year, outside North America add \$10.)
- *Horizons Magazine*, Presbyterian Women, Presbyterian Church-USA, 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY, 40202-1396, USA. (\$12 one year, outside North America add \$2.)
- *Groundswell*, Canadian Ecumenical Decade Coordinating Group, 77 Charles Street West, Toronto, ON M5S 1K5 (\$10 CDN one year, inquire about outside Canada rates.)
- *Lutheran Women Today*, Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Circulation: Augsburg Fortress, 426 S. Fifth Street, Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN, 55440, USA. (\$8 one year, outside of USA add \$5.)
- *Mandate*, Special Edition, *The Feminine Face of*

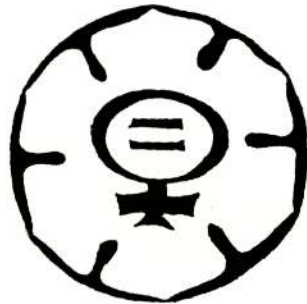
Poverty, The United Church Publishing House, 85 St. Clair Ave., Toronto, ON M4T 1M8.

- *The Lutheran*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Circulation: Augsburg Fortress, 426 S. Fifth Street, Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN, 55440, USA. (\$8.50 one year, outside of USA add \$8.50.)
- *The Observer*, The United Church of Canada, 84 Pleasant Boulevard, Toronto, ON M4T 1J8. (\$17 CDN one year.)
- *Women's Concerns*, Division of Mission in Canada of The United Church of Canada, 7th floor, 85 St. Clair Ave., Toronto, ON M4T 1M8. (\$9.63 CDN one year, outside Canada inquire about extra mailing charges.)
- *Women's Concerns Report*, Mennonite Central Committee US, Peace Section, 21 South 12th Street, Akron, PA, 17501 and Mennonite Central Committee Canada Peace and Social Concerns, 50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, ON, N2G 3R1. (\$10 one year.)

Other Resources:

- Brief to the House of Commons Sub-Committee on the Status of Women, *Male Violence Against Women: The Brutal Face of Inequality*, February 13, 1991, Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
 - *Guidelines for Inclusive Language*, ELCIC, Office for Communication, 1512 St. James St, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3H0L2.
 - *Guidelines for Inclusive Use of the English Language*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Office of the Secretary and the Commission for Communication, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL, 60631.
 - *Turning the World Upside Down*, Lois Wilson, Doubleday Canada Limited, Toronto, 1989.
 - *Women's Reality*, Anne Wilson Schaefer, Winston Press, 1985.
- ### Videos:
- *A Fine Line*, Task Force on the Feminization of Poverty, Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women Coordinating Committee, Women's Inter-church Council of Canada, 77 Charles St. W., Toronto, ON, M5S 1K5.
 - *Sowing Circles*, Women's Inter-church Council of Canada, 77 Charles St. W., Toronto, ON, M5S 1K5.

Part III:
Reflections



WICAS



Women and Theology in the LWF

GUNVOR LANDE

"Women's Participation in the Lutheran World Federation" is a research project that seeks to analyze the factors which have affected the role and participation of women in LWF since the organization was founded.

Twenty years is not a long time in an historical perspective, but when we refer to "Women's Participation in the LWF", the situation has changed significantly in the last twenty years. This paper will dwell on the theological perspectives of the participation of women in the LWF.

In doing so, I will use the pedagogical tools of three strings of yarn in three different colors. The thickness will vary, sometimes thick, sometimes thin; sometimes these pieces of wool are parallel, sometimes they are intertwined and always interrelated.

The three strings of yarn represent three themes. I also divide the twenty-year period into three stages, one following after the other. All the strings are there all the time, but in each of these stages, one of the colors is predominantly stronger than the other two. Each color has its own stage where it is the strongest color. This comes to mean that the three themes are emphasized differently in each stage, so that one of the themes is predominantly

stronger than the other two in each stage.

My reflections are based on printed material (see bibliography) and my own experiences in this process.

The first line, the red string of yarn, is representing the first stage from the beginning of WICAS until the Budapest Assembly. In this stage, the vision was clear: a renewed community with women's full participation (cf. theme of LWF conference, Singapore, 1980, "Women's Full Participation for a Renewed Community").

The base and the ultimate goals were there but the task was enormous. In this first stage, it was relatively easy to agree on what goals to set because the lack of women's participation was so obvious. The important first priority task was, therefore, to get the women themselves involved, to work on awareness building and conscientization. Also, the work of opening up the structures to allow women's participation was started.

But to do all this, theological arguments had to be formulated for equal participation of women and men on all levels in the LWF and the member churches. This was something new and it was challenging. In this first stage, the press for partici-

pation was used and functioned as a means of educating others about the theological concept of participation.

The catch-words for the first stage are, therefore, theological base, goals set, awareness building and participation. The line is strong and thick from the beginning of WICAS and, even before WICAS was established, there is a thin line representing these issues. The first line continues into the present stage and also into the future... however, now as a thinner line. The color I have chosen for this line is red because it is the lifeline of the work of WICAS.

Some may think that in the first stage there was not enough emphasis on theology and theological studies. This depends on how one defines "theology". Given the resources, the structures and the small number of women with awareness, it is easy to see why the task of women doing theology could not be given priority in this stage.

In the second stage of WICAS, the women of LWF reach the main goal they have struggled for in the first stage. Women become participants.

The Assembly in Budapest (1984) can be seen as a symbol of the turning point. Before, the women struggled to get into the structures, the Assembly, the Executive Committee, the Commissions and the staff of LWF. After this symbolic turning point the women were there taking part, however in too small numbers. Little by little the effect of what happened in Budapest started to be seen in the member churches as well.

The year of the Budapest Assembly, 1984, may not be the right year to be considered a turning point for all parts of LWF or its member churches. Some experienced this turning point earlier, most later; some had a very gradual increase of women's participation, so that it is really difficult to pinpoint one year and say 'that is when things changed'. Therefore, 1984 is a symbolic turning point.

When women are inside the structure, taking part in the decision making process, instead of being outside struggling to get in, the question at stake changes. From then on the question becomes: what difference does it make to have women as participants on all or most levels of the Federation?

Does it make any difference? What is women's contribution anyway? While it was easy in the first stage for women to agree on goals, policies and strategies, in the new situation it must be expected that different women come with different opinions on the various issues that are discussed, although there will often be a unifying women's perspective on the issues.

On the whole we see a need for greater differentiation, for women with a variety of backgrounds – culturally and educationally, and the need for unity in diversity. In the first stage the theological task was to find a safe and sound foundation for women's participation, for a new concept of human being.

In this second stage the theological development outside the LWF, which is reflected also in the LWF, is the whole explosion of women doing theology. Women do Bible studies on women in the Bible, go into research in all theological fields and take up issues that have never been dealt with in theological research: women in the New Testament, in the Old Testament, in church history, and so on. Hundreds and hundreds of years of work that was not done now needs to be done. The typical aspect is that women, as subjects, carry out research on women as objects in all theological fields.

The color for this second stage is green, the color of the grassroots and participation. This yarn-string has its thickest and fattest point starting around 1984 and stretching into today and even the future. It will get gradually fatter because of improved participation and the feminist theology being done. I think it will continue like that for some

time into the future before the line gets slightly thinner because of a gradual shift in theological interest. Before 1984 I make the line thin and nearly invisible to show that the concern was always there but not much was done. To use the symbol of the yarn, there is an interrelatedness between the two lines. The red line is strengthened by the green one.

The third line represents the third stage and I would start it around the time of the Curitiba Assembly in 1990. The line is thin and weak but goes back to the beginning of WICAS. After 1990, I hope it will grow strong and thick and lead us well into the next century. This line I would like to call "women's contribution to the renewal of theology".

In the second stage, women are on their way to equal participation in church structures as well as in society. There is yet a long way to go but at least they are there and new questions about the consequences of women's full participation can be asked. Also in stage two, women as subjects do theology on women as objects.

Unlike in stage two, in stage three, which is given a purple color, the emphasis is on the need to work through the theology that has been dominant all through church history, rethinking, examining, complementing and correcting this theology from women's perspectives and thus renewing theology.

The third stage has only just started, so not too much can be said about what has been accomplished but the needs are clear. Let us, in the language of the threads, remember that this string has also always been there, however weak and small, but now this theme of women's contribution to the renewal of theology becomes the predominant one. This is more a projected impression than the result of a survey. To underline the point with my own experience, I know that in university circles it is difficult to encourage young women theologians to go into research because they have the idea

that as women they need to do research on women. When they grasp that they can use their women's perspective on any issue, that is often seen as a relief and also as encouragement.

Renewal of theology can be done by theologians with professional qualifications and experiences and can thus, in theory, be done by women and men. That is why we talk about "women's contribution". Women doing theology from a feminist perspective make their specific contributions. There are also other contributions that are necessary for a renewal of theology, for instance, liberation theology and various indigenous theologies. By now there are women as professionals in all fields of theology and an increase in numbers will be needed. At some point in stage three, inclusive participation of women and men doing theology together from new perspectives should be hoped for and encouraged.

So much for the different stages following chronologically: the first stage from the beginning of WICAS (1972) to the Budapest Assembly (1984); the second stage from Budapest (1984) to the Curitiba Assembly (1990); the third stage from Curitiba (1990) to some years into the future. These three stages each represent a predominant theme: the first, "reaching for" participation (red, lifeline); the second, women's participation in structure and feminist theology (green) and the third, women's contribution to the renewal of theology (purple).

The Concept of Theology

After the end of the Second World War, most of the people who took part in what was later to become the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) were male European or American theologians. In the Lutheran tradition, theology was valued highly, the four important disciplines being New Testament, Old Testament, church history and systematics. Full-time workers in the member churches were

male theologians/pastors. Those who had a further degree would have a doctorate in one of the four classic disciplines. Many of these would be scholars and specialists on Luther.

This sociological sketch only serves to make us once more aware of what we all know, that the delegations and the staff persons of LWF were drawn from these circles. The ecumenical movement was not new but nevertheless not yet established or rooted in the various churches we are talking about.

In this setting "theology" came to be defined as further studies undertaken by those who wanted to qualify for church pastors and the research and scholarly work being undertaken at the universities or institutions that educated these pastors. They were mainly male, north or central European and were occupied with the classical disciplines of theology.

On the whole, new fundamental questions were not asked because there was no need to ask them. All were relatively evident and most had been answered a long time ago.

When we look back those 40-odd years, the situation has changed drastically. Women's participation in LWF is only one of the significant changes. What caused these changes?

- The independence of many nations in Africa and Asia. This led in due course to further independent developments.
- The ecumenical movement gained strength, was established and rooted around the world. This had its impact on the LWF also.
- The feminist movement started out and has caught fire, influencing society at large and also the churches. This became a global movement with the consequence of more emphasis on girls' education

and more women in paid jobs.

- Lutheran indigenous churches from around the world joined the LWF. They were no longer part and parcel of the mission organizations that had started the work in these churches. They became sister churches.
- The lay movement, where lay persons gradually took over responsibility and were empowered.
- The development of new church structures with more people, especially lay persons, involved in paid (not voluntary) church work.

When the churches today send delegations and staff persons to LWF, they do this from a completely different sociological setting.

The churches themselves represent the whole globe and the delegates or staff persons are (ideally) chosen from "the whole people of God" where no discrimination on the basis of gender, age, geography, and so on should be known.

These changes have also influenced the concept of theology and gradually, over the years, changed its content. "Participation" and "liberation" are now included in the central parts of the concept of theology.

One of the consequences is that this has opened up vast new areas, in addition to the classical ones, where theological work is urgently needed. Also it is harder to define "theology" than before. But the development has created more space and a greater need for women's participation.

Needs

Perhaps the rainbow might have been a better symbol for the first stage, with later stages each picking up their colors. Certain predominant inter-

ests and needs become visible in each stage.

Stage 1: The whole range of needs is made visible (like the rainbow that contains all the colors). This can be difficult to live with because it is demanding. "Everything" is needed. The need is to analyze the situation, set the goals, take steps, set priorities. In short, make a plan.

Stage 2: The need here is differentiation because one starts picking out a thread and begins to delve deeper into some issues from a feminist perspective. This stage is demanding of the churches/the secretariat because the threads come apart and each thread/theme demands full attention, deeper professional involvement and more specialization (e.g. leadership training, doing theology, awareness building). Also the target groups get differentiated (e.g. theologians, church workers, lay grassroots women, young women, pastors, etc.). You see the consequences of work expanding. There is a need for differentiation and integration, the need to not go too fast, of specializing the work and at the same time holding it together.

Stage 3: The need is for renewal of theology and women's contribution to meet this need. The renewal has to be referred to all theological disciplines. There is need for integration of women's issues and perspectives in all departments and desks of the LWF, in all the work of the member churches. The LWF can help with coordination on the global level (women theologians can be asked to make surveys on where renewal has occurred, who brought it about, and what remains to be done. The LWF can share this and help coordinate so that not too much duplicate work is being done.)

Conclusions

- The Decade can be used for all three stages, in all churches and in the LWF.
- The underlying impulse is the belief that it is

possible to work from inside the structures and LWF and change things in the process toward the goal of "Inclusive participation of women and men in church and society". The frustration of women who have struggled and seen few results and therefore either leave the church altogether or make their own church with space for women should be understood and should help us see the urgency of the issue of women's participation. Theology is not the only factor needed to change the whole picture, but it is certainly a vital one.

References:

- Minutes of the Advisory Committee Meeting, 1986
- *Women's Full Participation for a Renewed Community*: All Asia Conference for Theologically Trained Women, Singapore, 17-22 November 1980
- *Women and Men in the Body of Christ: A Report of the Advisory Committee for the Study on Women and Men in the Body of Christ*, ELCA, 1987
- *Asian Women's Theological Experiences*: Proceedings from the Asian Lutheran Women Theologians' Meeting, Malacca, 23-29 September 1990
- *European Women's Experiences in the Church: Proceedings of the European Women Theologians' Conference*, Loccum, 19-23 November 1990
- *Our Advent--African Women's Experiences in the Lutheran Tradition*: Proceedings of the African Lutheran Women Theologians' Meeting, Addis Ababa, 2-7 December 1990



Eucharist Procession at the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, 1987

From left to right: LWF General Secretary Gunnar Staalsett; Erika Reichle, Director, Department of Studies until 1990; Eugene Brand, Secretary for Ecumenical Dialogue and Ecclesiological Research, Dept. of Studies until 1990; Bishop Munshi Tudu, Chairperson Commission on World Service until 1990; Christina Berglund, Chairperson of Commission on Studies until 1990; Ruth Abraham, Chairperson of Commission on Communication until 1990.

Photo: Peter Williams

"Women As Innovative Groups"

IRMGARD KINDT-SIEGWALT

Introduction to the Study Project

In 1973, the LWF National Committee in the Federal Republic of Germany, after the publication of research related to a number of social issues by UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO and several other international organizations, convened a group of women and men to carry out follow-up studies offering theological reflections and practical implications for the mission and life of the church. The purpose, in view of the crises and challenges of modern life, was to seek some valid theological criteria and possibly a new set of values which would aim at developing a community of women and men that would allow for equal recognition and full participation.

The study drew on the findings of other disciplines, namely psychology and sociology. The collection also reflects, to a certain degree, some initiatives of women in other countries and within a larger ecumenical context. It was published in 1977 by the National Committee and with the support of the LWF Office of Women in Church and Society. It concentrated on the following areas:

- theological studies on the exegetical and historical understanding of the cooperation between men and women within the church;
- empirical analyses of women's activities in church

life in comparison with other societal areas;

- pedagogical and educational material regarding the self-understanding of women and their role within society;
- documentation of the issue of housekeeping as the traditionally central place of women's responsibility;
- studies on the diaconal engagement of women and their experience in new forms of living together with men.

The study resulted in the publication of ten volumes in *Kennzeichen*. This section focuses on Volumes I through VIII, and in the next section, Gerta Scharffenorth summarizes Volume X. Volume IX has been omitted due to its specialized content (mothers and children with handicaps).

A Summary of Volumes I through VIII

Volume I, entitled *Becoming Friends in Christ* takes an historical approach by looking at ancient societies as well as at the time of Luther.

In the Greek and Hellenistic times, as is explained in the first part of the volume, women were rather free. Those from upper classes could choose professional training. They were present in the marketplace and were allowed to travel. Sometimes they could even assume a political ministry, al-

though they were not always given civil rights status.

The ancient Jewish and Roman societies were much more exclusive. Women were not granted the same political and religious rights which men enjoyed. A catalogue of virtues restricted their lives considerably.

The charismatic character of the early Christian communities, however, allowed for equal participation of women in the different ministries of the church. Women as well as men could teach, baptize and take care of the needy. It was only at a second stage, when the church was developing its hierarchical structure, that women were excluded from certain responsibilities. The ministry of deaconesses, exercised by virgins and widows, disappeared. A different understanding of the church, deeply connected with the juridical thinking of the Roman society, was developed in the course of time, namely since the beginning of the Constantinian era. It was only in the monastic movement, with its definite ideals, that women could find some way of exercising responsibility and leadership.

The second part of the volume provides, on the basis of Luther's theology and ecclesiology, a rather positive understanding of the role and the place of women within society. Created in the image of God and by the saving work of Christ, being called into the priesthood of all believers, women and men alike could carry a fundamental ministry in society: a parental stewardship.

Making this the primary order, prior to all the other orders in society, a new ethic, a new understanding of law and legacy could be developed. Thus Luther wanted women to engage in the field of education in schools and churches, to be responsible as midwives, to look after the sick and the dying, and even to prepare worship, although he did not yet address the issue of ordination for the ministry. Luther's innovative ideas have indeed

had some impact on church constitutions. It is unfortunate that much was lost very soon after his time, when a static understanding of God's order of creation and the relation of men and women once more predominated in church and society.

Volume II, called *Created as Man and Woman*, analyzes those passages of the Old and the New Testaments that function as the main points of reference in different theological positions with regard to women and men and their place within society and the church.

As is the case in other oriental cultures, family life in ancient Israel was based on certain economic conditions which resulted in a patriarchal structure. In order to guarantee survival, each member of the family had to be economically productive. Although women enjoyed a certain autonomy in the organization of their work, they were subject to the jurisdiction of the men. If they got married, they had to move, while men could remain in their places of birth. Only male filiation was recognized. The Old Testament proves, however, the presence of women in leading positions (Deborah and Jael). Three books are devoted to women and their lives (Ruth, Esther, Judith). In the Song of Solomon, a woman is the speaker. Have women also been the authors? It is interesting to note that scholars interpreted the Old Testament with the eyes of men for so long.

Eschatological theology in the New Testament, however, tends to overcome the gender differences by developing the idea of a new creation and a new order.

The second part of Volume II is mainly devoted to famous passages in the letters of St. Paul concerning the role of women. The author emphasizes the charismatic character of the early Pauline communities and the understanding that all the different charisms derived their validity from Christ and must be understood in a Christocentric context. Accordingly, there can be no room for discrimi-

nation against women in their Christian service and status. Everything has to be seen in the light of the new order of life that is established in Christ. Marriage as well as the charism of celibacy is appreciated. Whereas the author regards with other scholars the famous prohibition for women to speak up in the congregation as a later interpolation, he admits that Paul's manner of arguing in I Cor. 11 gave room to some restrictive tendencies which became dominant later in the church.

The following conclusion is drawn: Social structures as well as expectations of the role of either men or women should never be taken for granted but must be measured according to what is regarded as God's will for the present society. Changes should therefore occur quite regularly.

Volume III is called *Women on New Ways*. It deals with the actual situation of women in West German society. The first part looks at women who take care of the house and therefore remain completely dependent on their husbands as far as pensions and social security are concerned. Women are indirectly discriminated against in professional life in terms of their salaries and pensions, usually receiving much less than men. In times of recession, women lose their jobs earlier and have more difficulties obtaining new positions. The author cites claims for protective measures to be taken in favor of women as well as equal quotas to grant just participation.

One of the essays included in this volume is about women working on a volunteer basis. While men are taking the leadership and decision-making posts also in this field, women are confined to inferior positions. However, within organizations that have women's issues on their agenda, as well as in the so-called civil initiatives in German society, women are increasingly taking responsibility.

The volume also contains a study on the recognition of female theologians and pastors in Ger-

many in the twentieth century. Being for decades limited to the exercise of only a few tasks in the church, such as teaching and taking care of special groups, while at the same time living without corresponding security, not to speak of the right to ordination, women were granted the same status as male theologians in virtually all regional churches in 1978. Besides some remaining special conditions, basic recognition and legal participation have been achieved after a long period of struggle.

A short review of the practice within the Roman Catholic Church on the basis of the declaration of the Congregation for Promoting the Doctrine of Faith in 1976 is presented. Some examples from the Netherlands and the US highlight the achievements of women's movements in these countries and show the greater influence of these movements and efficacy in the churches in comparison to Germany. A brief analysis of different ways to understand the meaning of partnership in the theological work of some German speaking authors completes the volume.

Volume IV, *Because Only What Makes Money Counts*, is entirely devoted to women in charge of the home. The book presents a comprehensive sociological theory on this issue, reports on different theoretical positions of scholars and evaluates the place women hold in the family. We learn that only with the beginning of capitalism has house-keeping become detached from other elements of professional work. Only then were women left with "reproductive" work without being paid. Among the different activities to keep family life going (such as preparing meals, cleaning, and taking care of children), one most important factor appears to be the relational work which women carry out. The care for the well-being of the couple as well as that of the whole family gains increasing importance within a society that becomes much more anonymous.

The following part includes interviews and their evaluation by pointing to the many difficulties

women who are entirely confined to the house are experiencing. Among these are the lack of recognition for their work, the necessity to be ready to be called for at any moment, without having much of a life of their own. Even though these problems may appear differently in different social classes, the need to bring about a change becomes very clear in the study. Material factors as well as psychological ones – remuneration and recognition – have to be taken into account as well. The husband must take greater part in sharing responsibility for the family.

Volume V, entitled *We Women in the Church*, describes the work of women in one of the regional churches in Germany, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg. Twenty-nine partly autonomous organizations are members of a central body which was created in the early 1970s. Through these organizations that represent deaconesses and catechists as well as pastors' wives and laywomen of different backgrounds and professions, women are present in the various dimensions of social and diaconal life. They engage in education and training, in counselling and in pastoral care according to the many needs of modern society. Although they are legally independent, they work in close association with secular and church institutions.

The volume presents the evaluation of a questionnaire on the specific activities of these groups. The questionnaire had been sent to the participants and, in addition, to pastors and lay presidents of parish councils. The positive resonance of the women who are engaged in these organizations comes through strongly. Difficulties arise only when the expectations are too high, when there is not enough money for activities, and when training is limited. Communication with the church as an institutional body must still be improved.

The volume as a whole mirrors the growing self-awareness of women and their readiness to assume responsible leadership in the church.

Volume VI is on *The Role of Gender and the Formation of Women*. It proves that the traditional system of education in Germany is reproducing certain stereotypes which pigeonhole women and men. It reports on the examination of selected schoolbooks portraying women in passive and submissive roles. Consequently, the author pleads for new models of identification that stimulate activity and critical faculties. A common education for boys and girls should be provided at an early age.

The volume continues with an example of lessons on the subject of attitudes towards house-keeping. For this reason students of an 8th grade primary school are interviewed. The latter part of the volume explains the programme for organizing a curriculum with students on the high school level concerning the development of a specific identity by women and girls. The programme is providing a historical overview of patterns and values that condition understanding and judgment. Students are invited to engage in overcoming the traditional dichotomous value system with its limitations of the sexes. In this respect, particular attention is given to 'work', 'language', and 'domination' as repressive and liberating forces.

Volume VII, entitled *Fantasy for Oneself and for Others*, demonstrates the rich variety of women's groups that already exist in the church. A large number of subjects of interest is listed, ranging from traditional activities to quite innovative ones. The two authors present the results of their extensive empirical analyses of women who already engage in those groups or who would be ready to do so. The evaluation of the interviews provides an interesting overview of facilitating and impeding factors in this work. The age of participants as well as their level of education seems to play an important role concerning who would be ready to engage in new areas of social distress (foreigners, refugees, people with disabling conditions).

The church has to discover the rich potential

which is provided in these groups, a potential which also challenges the church to revise traditional forms of communication and to open itself to having women participate fully in its life.

The title of **Volume VIII**, *Eve, Where are You?* is taken from an essay written in 1934 by Henriette Visser't Hooft. The volume documents the participation of women in international organizations over a period of four decades. It begins with an exchange of letters between Visser't Hooft and Karl Barth. It reports on the involvement of women in the LWF and the difficulties of fully integrating women in its life and work. It shows that women are underrepresented not only at the Assemblies but also in the various bodies of the Federation.

Chapter III of the volume reports on the World Council of Churches (WCC) which, already in its beginnings, allowed women to assume an independent place. This did not yet mean, however, full recognition and full representation. Here, too, there was the danger that women's concerns would be put aside.

Even the name of the desk led by Madeline Barot reflected this: "Co-operation of men and women in church and society". In addition to carrying out research on the question of cooperation, the desk inaugurated a study on the ordination of women. After the World Conference of Church and Society (Geneva, 1966) the desk explicitly addressed social and political questions as well the question of single mothers and mixed couples.

When the WCC decided on a new structure in Nairobi in 1975, the women's desk became part of Unit III and began a new phase of work which included more participants from non-Western countries. Together with the "Faith and Order" programme, "The Community of Women and Men in the Church and the Renewal of Humankind" was initiated. It is worth mentioning that an appropriate place in the study was given to Orthodox

members. Analyzing theological, cultural, and psychological factors, the study enjoyed its first summit in the Sheffield Report.

The next chapter looks to the other ecumenical organizations. Whereas in the World Student Christian Federation, women today enjoy almost full recognition and participation, as is also the case in the work of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, the Conference of European Churches has some difficulties guaranteeing full participation of women. The different political systems in Europe might have contributed to this, but women themselves should also be more self-confident and assertive in assuming leadership functions.

The last section of Volume VIII is devoted to a collection of short essays that evaluate experiences of women in ecumenical organizations and addresses some questions and goals for the future.

The first part deals with the difficult learning process. Available also in English, it culminates in five hypotheses which may be explained as follows:

- The problems in the organization of work with women point to unresolved theological issues. Addressed by this is the problem that autonomous member churches may or may not accept decisions that have been agreed upon by ecumenical bodies. Further, the gap that exists between theory and reality with regard to a just participation of women seems to require that a quota be set.
- Ecumenical cooperation demands new theological efforts. Insufficient attention so far has been given to cultural as well as confessional differences in view of the resulting understanding of the relation between women and men. A theological anthropology which takes more adequately into account the challenges of the modern world and comprehends at the same time all other elements essential to Christian faith should become a basic concept of ecumenical theology. It would have to use new

methods of interpretation in order to overcome traditional dualism and also to do justice to the complexity of issues. In this context the problem of ordination is of vital importance.

- Structural factors constitute obstacles to the realization of the community of men and women in the church. Among these obstacles are the shortage of money; the under-representation of women, youth and lay delegates at conferences due to the mechanisms of selection; the non-flexible organization of administrative work, which often impedes women assuming WCC leadership; different concepts and different levels of training and education.
- The way women work is a contribution to the necessary change in the contemporary view of work. This paragraph suggests leaving standard patterns of work by inventing new methods which stimulate creativity, vitality and solidarity. Women also have to convince their male colleagues of a different concept of work, one which develops human qualities rather than constraints.
- The renewal of the relationship between men and women makes forces available for the ministry of the churches. The hypothesis addresses the unfortunate need for repetitively claiming the same basic changes and, accordingly, dealing with the same questions and answers again. When no progress is made, energy seems to be wasted. Apparently new forms of communication on the basis of new experiences of community need to be made.

The following essay is dealing with possibilities and dangers women and their movement will have to face in the future. According to the author, Eva Zabolai-Csekme, the problems of the modern world demand a revision of the traditional value system as well as the strategies to secure it. The result of confining women to the house and the care of relationships is a one-sided ethic and an incorrect concept of social security based on an incorrect definition of the gross national product. Society as

a whole has to recognize the cultural dimension of the services carried out by women and to acknowledge their political and economic significance.

As for the establishment of a new world order and a renewed human society, a just partnership between two equal subjects has to be created in regard to the relationship of the Northern and Southern hemispheres. A just give-and-take should be achieved. The church's contribution to the renewal of humankind could be the basis of the priesthood of all believers.

Finally, questions posed by women do not concern only women but humankind as a whole. In order to create a democratic sensitivity in society much needs to be done.

The volume closes with some reflections on what women have practised in times of war and conflicts to safeguard peace. The experience of their own discrimination seems to lead women to engage in the peace movement and anti-nuclear resistance.

Reflections

The research material collected in the volumes of *Kennzeichen* provides a treasure of experiences, insights, and reflections of considerable value to WICAS in its discussion of which questions need to be addressed, which goals can realistically aimed for, and what solutions might be achieved. A few points should be noted:

- The research done in the area of historical and exegetical analysis, which clarifies the place and the role of women in church and society, can serve as important background material behind which a theology that is sovereign and independent will not be able to withdraw.
- Particularly valuable are the findings which result from empirical research, i.e. the evaluation of inter-

views and group discussion as addressed in different ways. It seems clear that women alone cannot develop the autonomous identity which is needed within the society we wish to establish. All learning processes and change must be brought about as a result of a common experience shared by women and men. A change of attitudes towards women and the development of a new sensitivity – a conversion – is never going to take place if it is not deeply rooted in, and therefore sustained by, a self-experience which is lived together with the other gender.

- It is obvious that much attention should be given to training and education. The more educated a larger number of women are, the easier it will be for them to assume responsibility and leadership.
- In a world which is still so dominated by male values and attitudes, it is women who will be the pioneers in handling things differently, i.e. tensions, conflict, and leadership. Some examples are particularly mentioned in Volume V.
- The question of an equal share and just participation of women in the church cannot be solved separately from the development that takes place in society as a whole. The two have to go together. However, the church might set an example.

Many of the conclusions which were drawn in these volumes are still valid. However, since the early 1980s the world has changed to an almost unbelievable extent. On the one hand, there are new dimensions of social distress. There are new epidemics such as AIDS; the problem of refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrant workers due to economic dislocation, growing poverty, and the violation of human rights; unemployment, misery, and criminality in the big cities of many countries; and a growing number of homeless children and old people around the world. Women and children are the most affected ones by new technologies. Finally, all of us are confronted with problems which arise from environmental crises.

On the other hand, many other dangers are becoming more pronounced, such as nationalism, political fanaticism, religious and cultural integritism or exclusivism which are products of these conditions. These phenomena seem to justify all sorts of animosities and may easily reach epidemic proportions.

Although these symptoms have already entered some Christian groups, a true Christian witness would certainly show how to integrate strangers rather than exclude them and how to invite differences rather than to fear them. Perhaps Christian women, who for so long have experienced male 'exclusivism', are again the ones who can teach all how to really live together, how to accept the 'otherness' of the others, and to allow them to exercise their right to express themselves differently from what is regarded as the 'norm'.

A theological example is the issue of the ordination of women in the Christian churches. At present, it seems completely unrealistic to assume a consensus in this respect. Due to the different understanding of the church and its ministry with regard to the sacramental essence, a claim for ordination on the basis of the truth of the priesthood of all believers would not work.

As we know, even churches of the same confessional families differ in their rationale and practice – as is the case within the Lutheran churches. We therefore have to learn how to accept different concepts and, first of all, to listen to them. This does not mean that we must abandon a clear theological position, but we must allow for different ones. This is the challenge of the ecumenical movement.

Lutheranism has often been affiliated with an essential conservatism. In my view, this is a misunderstanding. On the contrary, if we want to follow Luther's example, we must not fear any system or position that challenges our agreed upon norms but allow for our conscience to be taught by the

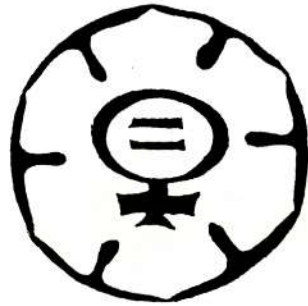
Holy Scriptures, i.e. by the lesson to be drawn from them today. We consequently do not withdraw from, but rather become involved in, church and world affairs by praying and working for what is

realistic to achieve here and now. At the same time, we do not give up hope or patience for what may be obtained later, God willing. Because principally, Christian witness is never "off limits".



Susana Telewoda, Rt. Rev. Dr. S. A. E. Nababan, LWF President Bishop Dr. J. Hanselmann, LWF General Secretary Gunnar J. Staalsett, and Aida Haddad at first plenary session of Curitiba Assembly, 1990 Photo: Peter Williams

Part III:
Reflections



WICAS

Ford III
Reflections



W. Ford

Sisters: Studies on Life and Work

GERTA SCHARFFENORTH

Volume X of "Women As Innovative Groups"

Women's communities have played a special role for about 150 years among women working in the church, in either paid or voluntary capacities. They do a great deal of the work which is part of the calling of the church, at least in the Protestant understanding: helping and supporting people who are ill or disabled, neglected children, elderly persons and groups we now call "socially marginalized". The sisters run good training centres for the caring professions and they also do a lot of youth work. Although they act on behalf of the church and congregations, officially they are hardly noticed in synods or church bodies. The lack of esteem for women's work is particularly clear in their case, as in the case of housewives. Today there is only partial cooperation between these groups and Protestant women's associations, so let us take a closer look at them to see what they mean to the life of the church.

Reasons for the Study

Historically speaking, women's communities

have been typical "innovatory groups". During the industrial revolution enormous hardship was rife, families were uprooted, and labor was exploited. Starvation and misery prevailed. Women got together on the basis of their faith to take action. Step by step they founded diaconal services, cared for and brought up children, helped expectant working women and young mothers, set up kindergartens and sewing schools for women, and gave one another mutual assistance.

Hitherto such services had only been run by individuals or by Catholic orders, and at first the church was very sceptical of them due to their critical approach to society. At the time, theologians and church leaders were amazed: "Wherever a branch of female diakonia is planted in the earth it soon brings forth other branches and so, increasingly, the whole work of mercy, inasmuch as it falls to women, is being taken on by professional care givers (i.e. sisters)" (1885).

The sisterhoods fostered training for women, unmarried women in particular, and thereby won social recognition. They brought about a change in attitudes in the church and society and contributed to the renewal of church life. Later it was said: These women's communities are a "strengthening of the church", "a rich treasure bestowed on it by

God's grace" (G. Uhlhorn). The ministry of deaconesses known to the early church was renewed in these communities.

However, theological writings only refer to Th. Fliedner, W. Lohe, F. Zimmer and their work. Women's initiative, commitment, imagination and faithfulness to their work have remained largely nameless in church history. Such devotion has been expected of women to this day. After 1950 there were more career opportunities for women, and the number of young would-be sisters fell abruptly. The communities underwent a crisis. There was more interest in society in a high standard of living and earning money.

The idea of joining a group of women and restricting one's own needs to help the sick, weak and helpless was uninteresting and unattractive. Yet this has always been a way of bearing witness and leading a Christian life: sharing, showing love to the needy and being there when needed. We wanted to find out how it happens that these women have been so overlooked by the church despite the importance of their work. Can our complacent church congregation learn something from them? Do they perhaps need our sisterly solidarity? Those were our questions.

Methods and Approaches

This study naturally had to be carried out with the aid of the sisters themselves. We first drew up a questionnaire about their activities, forms of life and work, leadership structure, and participation in their respective centres. A small group from the project team made two-day visits to 15 communities and areas of work, proposing that they undertake a self-study.

We conducted interviews according to a checklist with five questions. After two years we had a list of problems and an idea of the sisters' aspirations.

In the meantime they had become very interested in the study. They invited us to share in clarifying their problems and discussing new approaches to their work. This took place successively in four centres in weekend meetings, seven of which were held over a two-year period. We requested written reports on all important questions and perspectives. Through this combination of methods we learned a lot on both sides, removing prejudice and gaining important insights into women's work in the church.

The sisterhoods paid for conference costs themselves and the German National Committee bore the travel costs of our study group, which had worked without pay since the inception of the project in 1973. In the second phase we received a scholarship (worth approximately a third of a university research post) for a woman theologian among us to collect, analyze, and evaluate reports and documents. This was a modest budget for such a comprehensive study!

Some church people said: "That is a mammoth task and it is long overdue." Others prophesied: "You'll never get any reports out of the sisters. They are too busy and are not used to writing anyway." Our experience did not confirm this. Ninety sisters assisted us in different ways; fifty-four of them submitted written reports. We involved twenty leading (male) theologians in the project in addition to two lawyers and one doctor. We requested reports from seven of them and were pleased to include them.

Findings of Crisis Analysis and Self-Study

It turned out that the crisis of the women's communities is part of the crisis of the church. The reconstruction of church life and diakonia in the course of the economic upturn was not accompa-

nied by a renewed theology of serving love. The congregations felt relieved of the task of offering social services in their own area due to many different forms of diakonia. The shortage of new candidates as deaconesses, for which there were also external reasons, did not lead to the conclusion that the old picture of the "serving sister" had to be revised under changed working conditions.

The traditional women's role model, characterized by submission and serving tasks, overshadowed the participatory elements in the concept of sisterhood. It hampered the necessary openness to changed living conditions and occupations in society. Serving in the name of Jesus Christ cannot be reduced to the women's role. The difficult task of assisting the ill, disabled and marginalized calls for mature women's communities who share the organization and responsibility for their lives and common service.

The self-study raised a host of tasks, ways of life and also styles of devoutness. This pluralism is a rich resource for the church, for the sisterhoods, and for women sharing in the renewal of church life. Work in the sense of humane activities with and for others cannot be measured in terms of achievement. Their understanding of work always includes the cultivation of human relations. That is not always easy in an age of increasing technology and bureaucracy at the workplace.

The sisters share the problems of other women in society. Through basing their lives on solidarity with the needy they succeed in giving them a space in which their fears and shortcomings are accepted. Compassion with others is an event that calls forth humanity and spreads to one's surroundings. Within the limits of human ability, about which most of them are under no illusion, they try to live according to Jesus' command: to love one's neighbor without regard for status, to help the weak in patience, to obey God more than persons and to love him over all things, to trust him and to

hold together in the sharing of joys and sorrows, breaking bread and prayer.

New Branches from the Old Tree

We discovered that these communities understand service in terms of a philosophy of life, giving unconditional priority to shared humanity. Weaknesses in practising this conviction were overcome step by step in a difficult learning process (which began in the period under Hitler).

This kind of development went unnoticed due to lack of communication with the communities. In addition to the prejudice that deaconess service was outdated, the language usually used to describe the work was in itself, to some extent, a barrier. Yet traditional forms of speech concealed living experience and activities. Our common research led to an improved capacity for written expression. The shortcomings of the sisters helped us to see our own shortcomings.

Here are a few new tasks or modified activities in light of the present:

- *Learning with the younger generation:*
Different kinds of support are given to trainees in their courses and in the first stages of their working life.
- *Common life with elderly people:*
In old people's homes the approach is to involve the residents in activities as much as possible in order to improve the quality of life.
- *All-around care in hospitals:*
Besides caring for and observing patients the sisters try to supplement the technical aspects with a friendly, human approach.
- *Communities offering a home and hospitality to others:*

In our hectic times, in which family life often falls apart, sisters take in lonely individuals, people in conflict situations, and relatives of seriously ill patients on weekends, public holidays and for recuperative breaks free of charge.

Conclusions from the Research Project

The new approaches to deaconess service reflect a deep sense of fellowship by contrast with the individualistic attitudes of society. We discovered that their communities, where members had equal rights and responsibilities, were able to draw on different gifts and skills to do fruitful, life-enhancing work. In these women's communities we found important components of a diaconal church that are encouraging for us all:

- The care for spiritual life, common prayer, singing and celebrating in the context of work necessary for society.
- Involving varied human experience in everyday life (taking seriously the searching and experience of old and young, healthy and ill people, fit and disabled, local residents and people from elsewhere).
- The willingness to preserve solidarity despite conflicts of interest and allowing different groups to be themselves in working for common goals.

- Cultivating a warm, welcoming atmosphere in the community as a basis for trust; the atmosphere of a place depends on external factors, above all, what we perceive with our senses; it is important for trust to be able to grow.

So in a recognized church institution we found many examples of what women, women's work and women's life-style mean to a common life. We discovered that households run by women did not mean the preservation of outdated role models; rather, human elements from a women's context are included in the community's way of life and preserved in the changed conditions of the modern world.

In our encounters with the deaconess orders it was brought home to us how important it is to seek an appropriate language for proclamation. How rapidly words become clichés; language can "ex-communicate" and be hurtful. We need the support of the Holy Spirit so that our language can express more than our own thoughts and feelings.

Our experience must flow into the biblical concepts and Christian tradition in order to open up this language to present reality. At the same time we need the biblical images to keep us open to what sustains and upholds us and our lives. That is certainly a lifelong task. The sisters have understood this, above all, in the ecumenical association, DIAKONIA. Our cooperation at the intercultural level in the LWF is also important for this task.

The Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women: Is It Too Big a Dream?

ARUNA GNANADSON

"The Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women is a gift from God to the churches. It is now up to the churches to nurture it and see it grow, bear fruit and have strong branches and firm roots", said a woman from India in a discussion on women's hopes and aspirations for this Decade. Her words express the deep longing of women the world over to see crystallized in concrete action some of the commitments that the churches have made to women for many years now.

The churches have to uphold the humanity of women if they are to be faithful to the liberation promise offered to all in Jesus Christ. Therefore the demand of women for a new community in Christ is not an unrealistic or utopian vision. It is a demand for faithfulness. It is something that must become possible and real if the church is to be the Church of Jesus Christ.

How can this dream of a new and living community be realized in the next ten years? This is the question that is being asked by women and churches all over the world. As the churches and women pray for this community and plan in specific ways what must happen in different countries we become even more conscious of the odds we are fighting against.

How can a new community be realized? Is it too big a dream?

The Decade is now in the fourth year of its existence. Another way of looking at it is to say that we have only six or seven years left to achieve some of the goals we have set for ourselves! There continues to be some confusion as to what the Decade really implies. There is a demand from some quarters that there be some centralized instructions as to what must be done. Since the inception of the Decade we have resisted setting a global agenda for all the churches and all the regional situations. The focus has been on each area or local context identifying issues that need solidarity action from the churches and planning a strategy for bringing about change.

Origins of the Decade

The idea of a Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women grew out of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-85). The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, at its meeting in 1985, when listening to a report on the achieve-

ments of the UN Decade, decided that there was a need for some kind of follow-up to ensure continuity. Such a commitment took more concrete shape when, at its meeting in 1987, the Central Committee decided to observe a Decade of the Churches for Solidarity action with women so that the tempo that the UN Decade had generated could be sustained. It was clear that the UN Decade had not addressed the churches in a direct way. The need for more focused action by the churches, therefore, was a crying need.

The Ecumenical Decade was launched in 1988 by many churches around the globe. There was a spurt of enthusiasm and many plans were made to act in solidarity with women. Mercy Oduyoye describes succinctly what has been done in various regions during the first years of the Decade in the booklet *Who Will Roll the Stone Away* (Risk Book Series Number 47, World Council of Churches Publications, 1990). Reports in the booklet provide vivid demonstrations of solidarity actions by churches around the world. But what is more significant is that the women of the churches have grasped the moment to articulate some of their deepest aspirations and longings in an attempt to ensure responsive action on the part of the churches.

As we look back with joy at the positive achievements of the years that have passed, we are concerned that there is a slowing down of the initial enthusiasm. Church leaders have been reported to be saying that they have had enough of this "Decade talk"! In some contexts, women are themselves getting frustrated when they see that the churches are not willing to ensure real change.

The next two years are to be devoted to evaluating the changes that have been achieved and to recognizing actions of solidarity wherever they have been taken. The evaluation is also to include an enumeration of the obstacles that still stand in the way of real change in order that a more definite strategy can be planned for the remaining years of

the Decade. Of course the Decade must be seen only as a small beginning for the realization of the dream.

Purpose of the Decade

The purposes of the Decade are wide enough to encourage all concerns that women are working on locally, nationally, regionally and globally. As one hears of issues from around the world that women are dealing with, one is struck by the amazing similarity of concerns. However, there is no doubt that there are variations from context to context. It is, after all, the same patriarchal structures in church and society that keep women "in place" all over the world!

The Decade is focused on empowering women so that they can be the ones to determine the agenda of concerns the churches will act on. Women have often, with the churches, articulated what institutions or practices need to be challenged in their churches, their countries, their regions and elsewhere in the world. However, this is the Churches' Decade and not a women's decade. Change can come only when the whole society and particularly the community of women and men in the church will act in solidarity with women.

For this solidarity to be realized, it becomes imperative for the churches to affirm the leadership and the decisive contributions women can make to the decision-making tasks and the theological and spiritual life of the church. This implies that in the remaining years of the Decade the churches must continue to carefully evaluate their patterns of administration and ministry to make them more inclusive of the gifts and talents women yearn to bring into the life of the church.

The Decade is linked to the struggles for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. In all parts of the world, women have been at the forefront of such

movements and have begun to articulate new and alternative political visions which are life-centred and creative. These new voices and visions have to be embraced by the church as it seeks ways to be prophetic at the cutting edges of its mission in the world.

Similarly, what needs to be recognized are new theological perspectives that have been brought alive by women around the world through the feminist theology movement. Theology from the perspective of women in struggle has very crucial and important insights to make. This must be affirmed and allowed the space to become visible and recognized for its rich contribution to the life of the church.

The key to the cry for greater participation is, therefore, not just a demand for a few more token women representatives in committees, etc., nor is it merely a question of encouraging a few more women into ordained ministry, nor is it just a demand for a few more resolutions and statements of support.

The cry is for far more. It is for more inclusiveness. It is a cry for genuine partnership between women and men. It is a cry for faithfulness to the new community promised in Christ. It is a cry for the church to be truly in solidarity with women.

The Societal Context

This solidarity with women can never be restricted to a few structural or ecclesiastical changes within the life of the church, important as these changes are, because the church is placed in a societal context which seriously threatens any semblance of community. We live in a context where death-dealing forces are rampant and have a particularly deleterious effect on the lives of women. A new community cannot be realized in a context where women face institutionalized and blatant expressions of violence in their daily lives.

The Decade has to respond to the struggles of women in a context of global economic, social, political and cultural injustice. We recognize the extent of suffering which women everywhere experience in a world built on unjust human relations where some have access to power and millions live on the periphery. Women face the worst consequences by whatever yardstick we may use to count the consequences of injustice. The Decade has to address itself to immediate concerns and issues women identify in the context in which they are placed if it is to work towards the realization of the dream of a new community.

Proposals for Joint Action and Solidarity among Women

Since the inception of the Decade, the World Council of Churches has attempted to play an enabling role in promoting the concept of the Decade. This has been done in various ways. The Decade was announced with a widely circulated message. Worship resources have been prepared and a series of background material has been planned. The first, which focuses on *Women, Poverty and the Economy*, has already been published. Other ways in which the Decade has been promoted is through a logo, posters, a pamphlet, and most of all through correspondence to the many people who have requested information. The *DECADE LINK*, which is published occasionally, has also shared information on the various events taking place around the world in order to build a network of Decade-related activities.

But there is still so much to do to ensure that the remaining years of the Decade will be productive. The World Council of Churches seeks your partnership in this. Of course this includes the need for a comprehensive and detailed evaluation process. It

is important that we engage the churches, the National Councils and the Regional Councils in a process by which we can assess the successes that have been achieved as we review the obstacles that have stood in the way of change and make concrete plans for a strategy to ensure resolute action.

Women around the world have identified areas in need of follow-up. Many of these concerns were reiterated by the WCC Canberra Assembly and therefore call for immediate action and response:

- The Decade has not adequately responded to the women under racism constituency. 1992 seems to be a logical point at which we can mobilize the voices of women who have suffered the worst consequences of 500 years of colonialism. Canberra recommended that the programme of Women Under Racism be fully incorporated in the Decade and that a global gathering of women who are the primary victims of racism be organized.

It is intended that a comprehensive strategy be designed at this gathering to challenge the churches to take seriously their commitment to this constituency of the churches and society during the Decade. Such a gathering is being planned for fall 1992.

- Violence against women has been identified by women around the world as an issue for concerted action. The World Council of Churches has mandated a staff task force to make some concrete programmatic plans so that the whole Council can express its solidarity with women who experience various forms of violence in church and society. Sexual harassment has been identified as an area for immediate action.

The whole area of violence against women is complex and far-reaching because it has intrinsic links with structural inequalities that allow some to wield gross levels of power and many to be subjugated. No one will deny that within a patriarchal environment it is women who suffer the worst

consequences of these inequalities. It is important that the churches be mobilized to respond to women's demands for a violence-free world.

- Controversial issues related to the discussions on Gospel and Culture came into focus once again due to the outstanding contribution of the Asian feminist theologian, Hyung Kyun Chung at the Canberra Assembly.

The feminist theology movement around the world is affirming a new life-centred culture that needs to be taken into account. It is, therefore, important for us to garner the spiritual and theological contributions women are making to this debate and to help the churches to recognize these contributions as a gift to be nurtured and strengthened. The church must be encouraged to listen to these new voices of women as a new paradigm that will enrich its mission and its ministry.

- It is in this context of nurturing new visions that we see the need to focus on the value systems that the women of eastern and central Europe have to contribute to Europe and to the world. Is there a liberation paradigm that emerges out of their experiences of suffering and hope that still remains unspoken or not heeded adequately? How can we facilitate a process whereby they will be able to identify the specific contributions they can make, rooted in their own experiences?

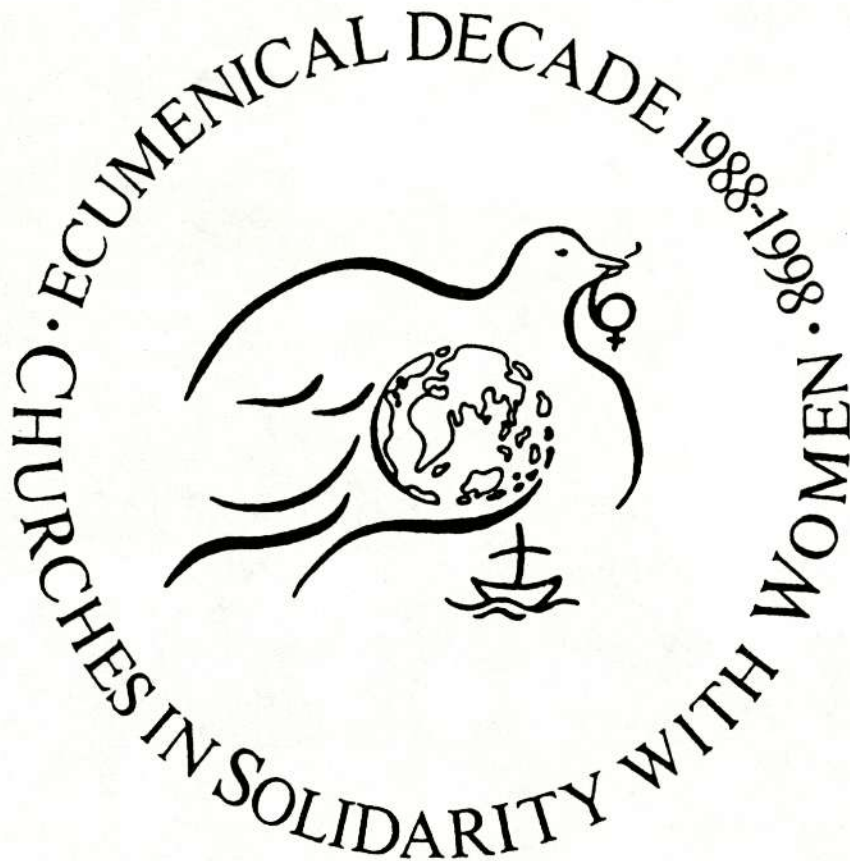
These are questions we hope we can raise with them as we attempt to find ways in which they can be empowered to have their own reflections on some of these issues.

The Hope

There are many other areas and priorities that have been identified and we plan to play a facilitating role to enable women to respond to issues of urgency in their own contexts. The hope lies in this:

that women continue to take initiatives in their own contexts. We also recognize the growing consciousness of the churches that something must be done and that this Decade provides a framework for action. This is being fostered by women who are already engaged all over the world in struggles for greater participation in the life and ministry of the church and in movements for justice, peace and integrity of creation. The hope lies in making this

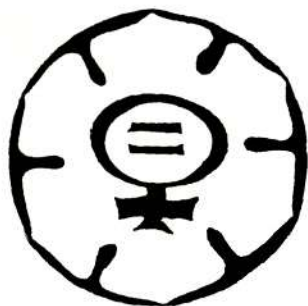
Decade work so that women will no longer be on the fringes of church and society and that they can play a creative and challenging role in transforming the church into becoming a new and living community in Jesus Christ. The hope lies in our recognizing during this Decade that men and women in the church can be the salt of the earth and the light that turns the darkness into a new dawn. The dream of Jesus Christ is never too big to be realized.





A celebration during the International Women's Consultation "Let Us Share The Hope", Geneva, 1984

Part IV:
Women in Church and Society
in the LWF –
Research Findings



WICAS

1912

Received of the Treasurer of the University of Michigan

the sum of \$100.00

for the purchase of books

for the Department of
Geology

for the year 1912

Women's Participation in Church and Society in the LWF: A Summary Report of Surveys of Women Leaders in LWF Member Churches

LOIS I. LEFFLER AND DOROTHY J. MARPLE

"Twenty Years Ago and Now"

Twenty years ago the Lutheran World Federation established a desk for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) to serve the LWF member churches. Phase II of the research project concentrated on emphases in programming twenty years ago and now and on programming for the future. Two surveys were carried out among women leaders. The results are summarized in the sub-sections 'Twenty Years Ago and Now' and 'Future Programming'.

The study explored the following questions: What were the emphases in programming and work with women during this period? How have these emphases changed over the two decades? What are the major emphases today? More particularly, how were LWF decisions regarding programming for women reflected in the actual work of women's organizations, departments for women's work and related units of the member churches?

These are fascinating and important questions. Profound changes have taken place in our global society and within the growing number of LWF member churches. The LWF has endeavored to be a faithful, responsible and effective instrument of the churches. In an effort to explore these questions and to provide background material that will assist in the planning of future programme emphases, a questionnaire study was undertaken to find out what women who have been actively involved in work with women perceive as changes in emphases during the past two decades.

Sixty-three women active in women's work in LWF member churches in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America were selected to participate in the study. All of these women were actively involved in their churches and women's organizations over the last twenty years.

Decisions made by LWF governing bodies, such as the LWF Assembly, Executive Committee and Commissions, and the results of WICAS-sponsored



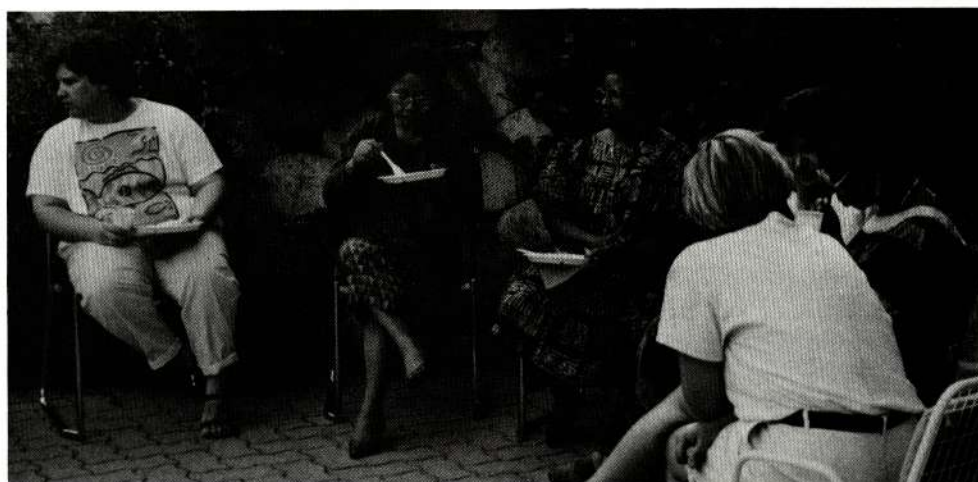
*(Left to right): Siv
Limstrand (Norway),
Marta Satou
(Cameroon), Gunvor
Lande (Norway), Anna
Lange (Brazil), Enittah
Nyoni (Zimbabwe)
Diane Doth Rehbein
(Canada)*

Members of the Research Working Group



*Gerta Scharffenorth
(Germany)*

*Diane Doth Rehbein
(Canada), Debora Sinaga
(Indonesia), Ruth Basha
(Tanzania), Violet
Cucciniello Little (US),
Musimbi Kanyoro (WICAS
Executive Secretary), Iris
Benesch (LWF staff)*



international and regional consultations, seminars and conferences for women have shaped the programme emphases of WICAS during the last twenty years. Forty issues included in these LWF governing body decisions and WICAS programming were identified. The women were asked to rate what they felt to be the degree that each was emphasized in the early period (15-20 years ago) and the degree to which they feel that each issue is being emphasized today (during the past 5 years). For each rating, the participant marked one of the following: no emphasis, little emphasis, some emphasis, or much emphasis.

The ratings were used to derive two scores for each issue: a score showing the amount of change (emphasis now minus emphasis in the early period) and a score showing the amount of emphasis now. These scores were based on the averages of all persons rating each issue. (A full list of the "Twenty Years Ago and Now" questionnaire items may be found in the next chapter.)

Forty-three (68%) useable responses were received in time for analysis and inclusion in the written report of the findings. In general, respondents felt that there has been increased emphasis in all areas over the twenty-year period. No issue showed an average pattern of downward emphasis from the early period to the present time. This suggests that these respondents feel that women and churches have become more involved in these issues over time.

However, there were no consistent patterns of overall increases in emphasis. The ratings for almost every issue ranged from a few who felt there had been a decrease in emphasis to those who felt there had been great increase in emphasis. Similarly, the ratings for degree of emphasis now ranged, on almost every issue, from 1 (no emphasis) to 4 (great emphasis).

Although the number of responses from various

countries is too small to support reliable analysis, these variations seem to reflect differences in emphasis in different areas and different churches. As one respondent noted, "We in our country emphasize this, but I'm not sure what role the women's desk played."

These two findings – increasing emphasis in all areas and considerable variation in emphasis – seem to raise questions for WICAS. Can WICAS be "all things to all people" and, if not, how shall priorities be set? The parallel study asking a broader group of women what they feel should be emphases now may give some help in answering these questions. (See "Future Programme Emphases for LWF Women in Church and Society")

Greatest Increases in Emphasis

Ten issues showed average increases in emphasis, that is, from "no emphasis" 20 years ago toward "some emphasis" now; or from "little emphasis" 20 years ago toward "some emphasis" now. These issues are, in order from greatest increase downward. (The letter identifies each issue in the questionnaire. See the next section for the full list of questionnaire items.)

- Supporting employment for women in the church (d)
- Peace, justice and the integrity of creation (kk)
- Encouraging women to develop their own style of leadership (h)
- Expressing solidarity with women, locally and globally, in the struggle for justice and equality (r)
- Working for the ordination of women in LWF member churches (f)
- Violence against women (jj)
- Participating in exchange programmes among lay women (i)
- Advocating participation of women in decision-making in the church (j)
- Eradicating cultural and traditional stereotypes

which discriminate against women in the church (w)

- Working toward changing policies and procedures which discriminate against women in the church (x)

Greatest Emphasis Now

While the preceding section reports on growth in emphasis over the 20 year period, the issues can also be rearranged to indicate those which the respondents rated as receiving the greatest emphasis now. The twelve top issues shown in the order of greatest emphasis are as follows:

- Encouraging women to contribute their views and experiences to understanding and interpreting biblical texts (c)
- Developing spiritual life (b)
- Developing leadership skills in women (g)
- Advocating the participation of women in decision-making groups and processes in the church (j)
- Strengthening the partnership of women and men (v)
- Affirming the gifts and potential of women (n)
- Working to change policies and procedures which discriminate against women in the church (x)
- Learning how to reach out to others with the Gospel (a)
- Developing women's self-understanding and worth (o)
- Peace, justice and the integrity of creation (kk)
- Peace building (hh)
- Violence against women (jj)

"Future Programme Emphases"

The second survey was designed to project major directions and feasible strategies for work with and among women in LWF member churches during the 1990s. A sample of women of LWF member

churches was surveyed in 1991 to identify future programme emphases for WICAS.

The survey questions were based on actions taken at the International Consultation for Women in Mexico City in September, 1989 and the Eighth LWF Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil, in February, 1990. These actions set forth a long list of issues or concerns that should be addressed by WICAS.

The sample was drawn at random from the circulation list of WICAS' publication, *WOMEN*. Two hundred and eighty-nine (289) women were in the sample; 105 or 36% returned questionnaires in time for the preparation of the findings. In addition, 16 questionnaires were returned by women from Lutheran churches not members of the LWF or from other Christian churches. Eleven questionnaires arrived too late for the initial analysis.

The diligence of the women was impressive in completing a complex questionnaire in a second language. A number of the participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share in the shaping of the future work of WICAS.

The study participants came from all regions of the LWF (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America). Eighty-eight percent (88%) were heavily engaged in church activities and three-fourths (73%) in their women's organization. In both categories, they served as leaders locally, synodically or regionally, and/or nationally. Some were official representatives from their church to ecumenical organizations.

Despite high activity in both the church and women's organization, many were also employed. Seventy percent (70%) indicated employment either within or outside the church. Within the church, many served in local congregations in both lay and clergy occupations as well as in synodical and national departments, in seminaries and ecumenical organizations. Participants employed in

women's organizations held both administrative and programme responsibilities and also served as Bible women.

For those employed outside the church, occupations most frequently mentioned were teaching at various levels (including the university), nursing, library work, retailing, professional musician, chief executive officer of a corporation, civil servants in local and national agencies and in the United Nations organization.

Because WICAS, like other desks and departments in the LWF, could not carry out all of the Mexico City and Curitiba decisions due to financial and personnel constraints, study participants were asked to identify issues which should receive the most attention and the least attention. From a list of twenty-three issues or concerns, six were to be identified as those needing the most attention and six the least attention. The remaining eleven issues or concerns received moderate attention.

The responses of the study participants were analyzed in two ways: responses for the total group from all regions, and responses for each region.

Six issues were identified by the total group as needing most attention in formulating future programme emphases for WICAS. These issues are, in order from the highest rank downward, as follows. (The letter after each issue is the one used to identify the issue in the questionnaire. See the next section for the full list of questionnaire items.)

- Promote leadership development to equip women for full partnership in the life and mission of the family, church and society (q)

- Focus on justice for women with particular attention to poverty, violence, racism, illiteracy, militarism and displaced women, including refugees, migrants, foreign workers, prostitutes, AIDS sufferers, widows, etc. (g)

- Involve women in theological studies for a deeper contextual understanding of the biblical message and its implications (a)

- Assist women to become more informed and involved in the social, cultural, economic and political realities of the world (d)

- Expose the violation of women's rights by men, by social, political and economic structures and by women themselves (j)

- Encourage the LWF member churches to incorporate into their thinking and teaching women's perspectives in theology (b)

As noted earlier, the responses of women from churches not members of the LWF and those received too late to be included in the initial report were analyzed separately. Remarkably, in both of these groups, the same six issues were identified as those needing the most attention though the rank order varied slightly.

Several regional issues were identified by the study participants reflecting the diversity of societal conditions and church traditions within the LWF. The entire list of issues ranked by the study participants, from those needing the most attention to those needing the least attention, appears in the following section on issue emphases by region.

Issue Emphases By Region

Ratings are from most important (1) to least important (23)

	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America	North America
a. Involve women in theological studies for a deeper contextual understanding of the biblical message and its implications	17	1	3	1	3
b. Encourage the LWF member churches to incorporate into their thinking and teaching women's perspectives in theology	7	7	5	8	8
c. Encourage and equip women to contribute toward the renewal of liturgy and worship, for example: critical re-examination of its language and structure, re-thinking of words and images describing God, and striving for a partnership between laity and clergy	23	22	11	16	15
d. Assist women to become more informed and involved in the social, cultural, economic and political realities of the world.	6	3	4	9	5
e. Help women to become more aware of the inequitable distribution of the world's resources and to understand and promote a just economic order	12	23	9	13	22
f. Help women to become economically literate and self-reliant	10	10	12	7	11
g. Focus on justice for women with particular attention to poverty, violence, racism, illiteracy, militarism, and displaced women, including refugees, migrants, foreign workers, prostitutes, AIDS sufferers, widows, etc.	11	6	1	3	2

	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America	North America
h. Promote and understand development as being linked with health, nutrition, power, knowledge, literacy, etc.	2	9	23	4	9
i. Foster information to help women become more aware of human rights issues	18	4	17	17	13
j. Expose the violation of women's rights by men, by social, political and economic structures, and by women themselves	3	11	6	5	6
k. Equip women to be active peacemakers	19	16	7	22	17
l. Foster non-violence in the home and family as well as in society-at-large	8	14	10	10	7
m. Disseminate information on the critical situation of the environment today	21	15	20	19	21
n. Raise awareness of the relationship between women, the environment and sustainable development, and empower women to act	13	5	13	11	4
o. Encourage women to undertake theological studies for the ordained ministry	4	17	14	20	18
p. Create forums for discussion, debate and sharing of ideas regarding the acceptance of women in ordained ministry in all LWF member churches	14	20	18	23	14
q. Promote leadership development to equip women for full partnership in the life and mission of the family, church and society	1	2	2	2	1
r. Encourage the self-reliance of women and promote their earning capacity	15	21	22	14	19
s. Assist women to develop skills to function as leaders in women's organizations and in the church	16	12	15	6	20

	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America	North America
t. Provide communications education for women	9	13	21	21	23
u. Use mass media (radio, television, print, etc.) to promote a dignified image of women	20	19	8	18	16
v. Promote the objectives of the Decade as initiated by the World Council of Churches	22	18	16	15	10
w. Provide opportunities for both men and women to discuss women's concerns	5	8	19	12	12

Questionnaire Items in the Survey "Twenty Years Ago and Now"

The items listed below are referred to in the previous chapter. The full list appears here for easy reference.

- a. Learning how to reach out to others with the Gospel
- b. Developing spiritual life
- c. Encouraging women to contribute their views and experiences to understanding and interpreting biblical texts
- d. Supporting employment for women in the church
- e. Equipping women for employment in women's organizations or in the church
- f. Working for ordination of women in LWF member churches
- g. Developing leadership skills of women
- h. Encouraging women to develop their own style of leadership
- i. Participating in exchange programmes among laywomen, locally and internationally, to promote understanding and interdependency
- j. Advocating the participation of women in decision-making groups and processes in the church
- k. Suggesting the names of women to be considered for leadership roles in the church and LWF
- l. Suggesting the names of women to be considered as LWF scholarship recipients
- m. Establishing ecumenical relationships to address common needs
- n. Affirming the gifts and potential of women
- o. Developing women's self-understanding and worth
- p. Developing support groups and building community among women
- q. Understanding women as being part of a global community and developing respect for various cultures
- r. Expressing solidarity with women, locally and globally, in the struggle for justice and equality for women
- s. Encouraging Christian family life
- t. Advocating family planning
- u. Providing education in nutrition and health
- v. Strengthening the partnership of women and men
- w. Eradicating cultural and traditional stereotypes which discriminate against women
- x. Working toward changing policies and procedures which discriminate against women in the church
- y. Advocating for inclusive language
- z. Promoting basic education for women
- aa. Supporting the education of girls
- bb. Providing consultative services to women in designing programmes and projects appropriate to regional and local needs
- cc. Developing small scale projects to benefit women
- dd. Analyzing the impact of development programmes on the lives of women
- ee. Poverty
- ff. Sex tourism
- gg. Militarism
- hh. Peace building
- ii. Human rights
- jj. Violence against women
- kk. Peace, justice and the integrity of creation
- ll. Boycott of commercial goods from South Africa
- mm. Substance abuse
- nn. Literacy

From the WICAS Album

Twenty Years Ago.....



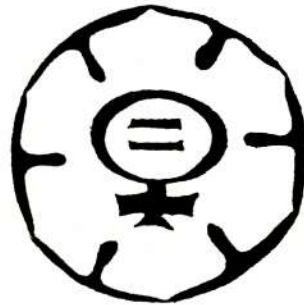
and Now.....

Christine Grumm training women in the rules of procedure at Curitiba Assembly, 1990



Part V:

Where Do We Go From Here?



WICAS



Part II

History of the ...



...

Challenges, Opportunities, Needs and Possibilities for Women's Groups and Organizations in the Churches

The goal of Phase III of the research project "Women's Participation in the Lutheran World Federation" is to articulate major directions and possible courses of action for future planning and programming during the 1990s. Pursuit of this bold goal rests on the affirmation of the continuing activity of God in a global society constantly undergoing change.

As Christians, we are called to active engagement in God's mission and challenged to use our God-given resources in the proclamation of the Gospel in both work and deed. In planning for the use of these resources, we acknowledge that God is already creative in the future and will care for us. The gift of forgiveness enables us to live with past decisions, and through the power of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to hope that our plans for the future will fulfill God's will.

Planning should allow God's creative power to break through our customs, traditions and usual ways of seeing with new challenges and new sources of power. Priorities are needed in order to make the most effective use of limited resources.

Using the rich background and reservoir of

information presented at the Research Working Group meeting and the insights and experiences shared in the discussions (see Part II, Women in Global Community), attention centered on six issues. These six issues had been identified by women leaders in LWF member churches as needing the most attention in programming in the research study "Future Programme Emphases of LWF Women in Church and Society". The issues were probed, the needs to be addressed were highlighted, and possible courses of action for programming by WICAS, by women as individuals, and by women's groups and organizations were identified.

A summary of the discussion for future planning on each of the six issues appears below. The order in which the issues appear here is based on related sequence. The order in which they appeared in the worldwide survey is noted.

- **Promote leadership development to equip women for full partnership in the life and mission of the family, church and society.** (1)

Empowerment

Issues and concerns:

- women learning how to record in their own language God's acts and presence in their lives and faith as Christians
- women's organizations strengthening their educational programmes including theological/ Biblical/ world realities and understanding especially as they impact the lives of women
- enlarging understanding of what theology is and engaging in study of various theologies including feminist theology
- sensitivity to cultural differences in sermons, liturgies and prayers
- learning from other religious groups such as the charismatic/spiritualistic in their outreach to people in poverty

Needs to be Addressed:

- helping women recognize their doing of theology in daily life
- gaining a renewed understanding of what theology is and the importance of context for doing, learning and expressing theology
- understanding and connecting life's experiences with the biblical message
- thinking theologically – seeing where God is at work in the lives of individuals and in the world

Suggested courses of action:

- developing popular theater through the arts within local areas--hymns, songs, dance, and other forms-which illustrate the connections between the Christian faith and various cultural expressions
- developing Bible study methods which address the experiences of women in their particular contexts
- providing training for women to reflect on God's actions in their lives and to learn how to record in personal journals their experiences and reflections

Communications

Issues and concerns:

- worldwide availability of resources in numerous languages for worship, Christian education, leadership training, social issues and other areas of the church's ministries

Need to be addressed:

- women being able to receive resources, information, ideas for mission in their own language

Suggested courses of action:

- securing or raising funds for translation of resources
- utilizing the LWF Human Resources Department in the translation of resources

Global Sisterhood: Building Community and Working for Justice for Women

Issues and concerns:

- increasing awareness and sensitivity to the struggle for affirmation and liberation of women in many parts of the world; understanding the social, cultural, political, economic realities in which women live
- dealing with the sharing of resources in North- South relationships which recognize not only monetary gifts from the North but also the gifts, such as theology, leadership, witness from the South
- keeping abreast of changing systems (political, economic, etc.) which oppress women and men
- valuing women who are performing traditional roles and at the same time encouraging

movement into new roles

- understanding the gravity of cultural traditions and norms which deprive women of equality with men and contribute to women's oppression

Needs to be addressed:

- helping women understand the social, cultural, political, economic realities for themselves in their particular location and for other women globally
- finding creative and useable ways to experience the interdependence of Christians globally and particularly of the global community of women
- understanding customs, traditions and laws which discriminate against and oppress women and learning how to be change agents in penetrating these barriers
- providing supportive services and activities for women who are struggling for affirmation, liberation from oppression, and justice
- exposing sexism as experienced in male-female relationships

Suggested courses of action:

- study, analyze, draw conclusions and plan concrete plans of action for affirming women struggling for liberation from discrimination and oppression
- provide opportunities for exchanges of women: South-South and North-South, and for seminars and other educational experiences for exposing women to the realities of women in other parts of their region or continent or worldwide
- provide resources in local languages which include laws dealing with the rights of people, especially women
- providing educational experiences which sensitize, analyze and mobilize participants to action to deal with sexism

Literacy

Issues and concerns:

- identifying the connection between being literate and being a Lutheran

Needs to be addressed:

- learning to express the Christian faith in various modes besides the written or printed form

Suggested courses of action:

- providing activities and encouraging relationships which use and value various forms of expressing and celebrating the Christian faith and not only by means of written forms with emphasis on the 'head'

Church Structures

Issues and concerns:

- how can the representation of women in many areas of the church's life and work be increased in order to express the inclusiveness of the body of Christ
- how should power be perceived in the church and what does this mean for empowering women
- how to develop a vision of the church which is consistent with the biblical message that transcends church organizations which are not inclusive and do not educate and equip women to be pastoral and lay leaders, decision makers, etc

Needs to be addressed:

- understanding the church as the community of women and men

- expanding awareness and understanding of the inclusiveness of the Gospel and of the church as the Body of Christ
- developing basic leadership abilities and skills for service in all areas of church

Suggested courses of action:

- provide events and activities which expand awareness and understanding, identifying and probing basic questions about the nature of the church, about sexism in the church, and which help women and men to develop skills and plans to deal with this issue
- provide leadership training to enable women to function in leadership roles in the church (local, regional, national, international)

Human Resources

Issues and concerns:

- better utilization of the time, ability, resources of older persons in the LWF and especially through WICAS

Needs to be addressed:

- how to sensitize the LWF and WICAS to use resources available in both older clergy and laity for service in various programmes of the Federation

Suggested course of action:

- providing a resource bank of older persons and developing strategies for involving them in meaningful tasks/assignments planned by WICAS

Health

Issues and concerns:

- understanding the connections between poverty and poor health practices, conditions, etc.

Needs to be addressed:

- information about existing health conditions, preventive measures, steps needed to alleviate poor conditions and training in appropriate techniques, procedures, etc.
- discovering local wisdom and traditions in medicine

Suggested courses of action:

- working with other LWF departments and desks in providing consultations, seminars, etc. which concentrate on health issues especially as they relate to women

- **Focus on justice for women with particular attention to poverty, violence, racism, illiteracy, militarism and displaced women, including refugees, migrants, foreign workers, prostitutes, AIDS sufferers, widows, etc.** (2)

- **Expose the violation of women's rights by men, by social, political and economic structures and by women themselves.** (5)

Women in Poverty

Issues and concerns:

- How Lutherans can more effectively reach out with the Gospel to people living in poverty conditions; what can be learned from charismatic/spiritualistic groups who work among poor people;
- What are the effective means of educating women who are not living in poverty and oppressive conditions to help them identify

with their sisters around the world who do live in such conditions;

- How can women be helped to deal with guilt when they see other women living in poverty;
- How can women around the world be mobilized to address basic issues affecting our common humanity.

Needs to be addressed:

- Understanding the root causes of poverty (theological, economic, socio-political) around the world, in specific regions and in local settings;
- Developing alternative solutions to poverty in specific contexts.

Possible courses of action:

- Sponsor an international consultation on the root causes of poverty;
- Work with LWF Area Desks in the Department of Mission and Development in promoting research and practical training for dealing with basic causes of poverty and alleviating suffering of people in poverty situations;
- Broaden exchange of information within regions and continents about actions taken by women and women's organizations which are workable and effective in dealing with poverty;
- Focus on poverty from a woman's perspective in one or more issues of *WOMEN*.

Violence, Culture and Traditions, Race, Social Class and Human Rights

Issues and concerns:

- How can women working through WICAS address women's intense suffering in places such as Liberia, in areas where women are silenced, etc. and the increasing violence

against both women and children;

- Finding ways which enable women to penetrate cultural traditions and norms (ex. men and women relationships) which deprive women of equality with men and contribute to the oppression and burdens of women;
- Finding ways to educate women to develop new value systems based on equality for use in the rearing of girls and boys;
- Developing support for women as their roles change and as changing social systems may oppress both women and men;
- Helping women understand their identity as women and utilizing this self-understanding in facing societal realities;
- Learning to build and sustain bonding among women in various parts of the world in order to break down barriers, such as race and social status that separate and divide the human family and global community;
- Learning to deal positively with the psychological and communication problems that men have as women stand in solidarity with other women.

Needs to be addressed:

- Enabling women to express the violence they and children experience in their daily lives;
- Understanding from a theological perspective and in concrete terms the cultural norms and traditions which discriminate against women and learning ways to deal with such discrimination;
- Development of new value systems which are non-discriminatory;
- Examination of the interrelatedness and impact of modern developments (scientific and technological innovations such as birth control methods), social policies and structures and cultural norms on discrimination against women.

- Dealing with growing tensions in many areas of the world between ethnic and religious groups which lead to violence;
- Establishing two-way communication between WICAS, women's organizations and individuals.

Possible courses of action:

- Sponsor regional consultations (with some global representation) on the most pressing issues identified in emphases g and j.
- Keep women in LWF member-churches informed about ways in which women are dealing with violence in their particular setting;
- Include the issue of violence against women and children in leadership training seminars;
- Encourage women's organizations/groups to work ecumenically to provide opportunities for dialogue and cooperation between different ethnic and religious groups in their area;
- Use both formal and informal channels of communication between WICAS and women's organizations/groups and as individuals;
- Equip regional coordinators with communication and networking skills to facilitate linkages between women in the regions and WICAS.

- **Assist women to become more informed and involved in the social, cultural, economic and political realities of the world.** (4)

Women in Europe

Issues and concerns:

- Need to focus on women in Eastern Europe;
- Significance of the Common Market for women;
- Challenges for living in religiously and cul-

turally diverse communities where Lutherans are a minority group.

Needs to be addressed:

- Helping Eastern European women identify their special needs and assume responsibility for meeting them;
- Understanding the economic, political and social implications of the Common Market;
- Learning how to develop interpersonal relations skills for conversing and living with people of various national and racial-ethnic origins.

Possible courses of action:

- Plan consultations with Eastern European women and provide a regional coordinator to work with them;
- Take initiatives with the help of women's organizations wherever possible and the Ecumenical Forum of Christian Women in Europe in starting dialogues between women in Eastern Europe and all other parts of Europe; involve some global representation in the dialogues;
- Work with the European desk in the LWF Department for Mission and Development to assure inclusion of women from Eastern Europe in LWF conferences, consultations, etc;
- Work with LWF desks for Christian Education and Dialogue with Other Faiths and European women's ecumenical organizations in developing programmes which address the needs of people living in religiously and culturally diverse communities.

- **Involve women in theological studies for a deeper contextual understanding of the biblical message and its implications.** (3)

- **Encourage the LWF member churches to incorporate into their thinking and teaching women's perspectives in theology.** (6)

Women and Theology

Issues and concerns:

- Understanding that theology is concerned with God's Word addressing all human beings; doing theology is interpreting the Gospel in the whole context of life in order to sustain the wholeness of life;
- Understanding that theological study includes both formal and informal training processes as well as the life experiences of every believer;
- Understanding that a truly inclusive church takes seriously the life experiences of women; anything less does not speak of God's wholeness.

Needs to be addressed:

- Awareness building and renewed understanding of theology as supportive of the wholeness of life;
- Re-education of pastors and church leaders for understanding feminist theology and the particular needs and views of women from a theological perspective;
- Understanding that the worship life of the church should be culturally sensitive and inclusive;
- Encouraging women to engage in both formal and informal theological study and to

record their theological perspectives on the happenings in their lives.

Possible courses of action:

- Training programmes such as conscientization for pastors, church leaders and men in the church which acknowledges the particular needs and views of women from a theological perspective;.
- Encourage women's groups to communicate their experiences of God's presence in their lives by means of written liturgies, tapes, photographs and to write the history of the struggle of women in their church;
- Urge organizing a mentoring system for women entering seminary in order to relate a female student to a female pastor;
- Provide information about scholarships for women's theological training;
- Work with the LWF Desk for Theological Studies to include the participation of lay women in order to broaden the contextualization of theology for ordained and lay leaders;
- Work with the LWF Desk for Theological Studies to introduce into seminary curriculum i) the context and work of local groups engaged in theological study and reflection and ii) immersion experiences in the world of working people;
- Create small groups of women and men for Bible study, community building and training;
- Work with LWF and/or church structures to ensure women's participation in the planning and implementing processes of conferences and consultations.

Planning for the Future: The Tasks Ahead for WICAS

The findings from the survey "Future Programme Emphases for LWF Women in Church and Society" (see page 128) highlight the need for WICAS to plan programmes which deal with issues common to women in all parts of the LWF and with other issues prevalent in particular regions which reflect diverse societal conditions, church traditions, and situations of women. The six issues indicated by the total group as needing the most attention provide a broad framework for WICAS programming. Such a framework is essential in nurturing a global community of women and in exercising responsible stewardship of both people and financial resources.

As has been the custom of WICAS, considerable attention will continue to be given to regional perspectives and needs. The variation in the order of issues needing moderate attention, and to some extent those needing the least attention as shown in the complete listing for each region, illustrates this necessity. The formulation of plans should be done in consultation with women leaders of each of the major regions - Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. At the same time, contextual differences within regions call for attention since these regions are continents with many nations, cultures and churches!

In analyzing the complete listing of issues for both the total group and the regions, it is important to recognize that some issues are tied in rank, reflecting the difficulties the participants had in making choices. Further, several of the issues are

closely related in subject matter. For example, "fostering information to help women become more aware of human rights issues"(i) could be a part of "exposing the violation of women's rights"(j). Similarly, promoting "leadership development to equip women for full partnership in the life and mission of the family, church and society"(q) could encompass assisting women "to develop skills to function as leaders in women's organizations and in the church"(s). This similarity in content should be taken into account when considering the issues for programme planning.

A rigorous assessment should be undertaken by WICAS in consultation with an international group of women leaders to decide which issues calling for most attention should be developed into specific programme plans for use in worldwide consultations, events and experiences and which issues should be designated as primarily the responsibility of women leaders, women's organizations and/or departments for women's work in LWF member churches. Also, questions such as the following should be explored and resolved in determining strategies for programme development and implementation.

- What should the role of WICAS be in programme development?
 - Should WICAS initiate and staff programmes? worldwide? regionally?
 - Should WICAS be primarily advisory or consultative to women leaders, women's organi-

zations and/or departments for women's work in LWF member churches?

- What are the criteria that should be used in making the determination?

• What alternatives for programme planning and implementation might be considered when all or nearly all regions indicate the same issue(s) as needing most attention? The following are illustrative of some of the possibilities:

- WICAS plans and implements an international seminar with the persons trained being responsible for follow-up in the development of the issue and implementation of plans within their own area/region;

- WICAS staff provides primary leadership and financial resources for regionally planned and implemented strategies;

- WICAS provides consultative services but primary responsibility for staffing and financial resources resides with a member church(es)/region(s);

- WICAS secures a person(s) as consultant(s)/leader(s) for specific regional events and assumes responsibility for travel reimbursement for this person(s); all other responsibilities reside with the church/region;

- WICAS employs persons to work in assigned geographic areas with job descriptions focussing on specific priorities;

- WICAS facilitates the linkage of women's organizations/departments of women's work with other organizations that can assist in meeting specific needs.

• What role can WICAS play in providing printed resource materials requested by women for specific leadership responsibilities?

• What role can *WOMEN*, the publication of WICAS, play in providing information about the issues needing most attention and in offering suggestions

for specific action in addressing them? How could the circulation of *Women* be expanded so that more women serving in leadership roles within the member churches might receive the publication?

• What channels of partnership and cooperation exist within the LWF structure and the member churches that should be more adequately utilized to meet the issues identified by women as needing the most attention? How might WICAS strengthen and broaden these channels?

• What possibilities exist or could be developed for working ecumenically in addressing issues needing most attention? How can participation in the Ecumenical Decade for Churches in Solidarity with Women contribute to addressing these issues?

The LWF and the Ecumenical Decade

The Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women in Church and Society (1988-1998) has the following aims:

• Empowering women to challenge oppressive structures in the global community, their country and their church.

• Affirming – through shared leadership and decision-making, theology and spirituality – the decisive contributions of women in churches and communities.

• Giving visibility to women's perspectives and actions in the work and struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

• Enabling the churches to free themselves from racism, sexism and classism; from teachings and practices that discriminate against women.

- Encouraging the churches to take actions in solidarity with women.

The LWF seeks to enable churches to achieve these aims by being in partnership with the churches in programmes that affirm their solidarity with women. Solidarity begins with the realization that our vision is to break through the cycle of injustice as realized through poverty, violence, illiteracy, lack of theological training, and many of the issues discussed in depth in this book. All of the Governing Bodies of the LWF have affirmed LWF's participation in the Ecumenical Decade. The Eighth Assembly in Curitiba declared in its Message:

"...We commit ourselves and our member churches to intensify our efforts to be a sign of an inclusive communion in the world. To that end, we will work

out a clear plan of action in every member church which fully expresses the equality of men and women within the life of the church and enables the churches to benefit from the potential which women are able to give to all areas of the church life. We will undertake, through consultation and cooperation of all member churches and in a climate of mutual respect, practical efforts to open the way for women to enter the ordained ministry of all our member churches, and initiate and participate in programmes of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women..."

As one of its contributions to the Ecumenical Decade, WICAS is in the process of producing **A Clear Plan of Action** that can be used in every member church and by women's organizations around the world.



WICAS Advisory Committee members, 1985 to 1990: back row from left: Bonnie Jensen (US), Inge Schintlmeister (Austria), Emma Mujoro (Namibia), Gunvor Lande (Norway, Chairperson); front row: Prasanna Samuel (India), Ana Villanueva (Argentina), Sabine Rüdiger-Hahn (Germany)

★ About the Contributors ★

★ **Dr. Ruth Beshu** (Tanzania) has been involved with WICAS since 1978 as a member of the Advisory Committee. She has participated in many LWF events, particularly those between 1972 and 1987. She is a linguist, a prolific writer, and a specialist on gender analysis. She has conducted many leadership workshops in Tanzania.

★ **Rev. Gudrun Diestel** (Germany) has had an association with LWF since the Second Assembly in Hannover. She served on the Commission on World Service from 1977 to 1984. She was also associated with the research on "Women As Innovative Groups".

★ **Aruna Gnanadson** is the associate convenor for the World Council of Churches section on Justice, Peace and Creation. She is also responsible for the activities of Women in Church and Society, formerly known as the Sub-unit on Women.

★ **Dr. Irmgard Kindt-Siegwald** is a theologian who was invited to give a critical analysis of the study on women as innovative groups.

★ **Gunvor Lande** is a pastor from the Church of Norway. She was chairperson of the Advisory Committee between 1985 and 1990. She was a delegate to the Budapest Assembly in 1984 and one of the initiators of this research.

★ **Anna Lange** (Brazil) was a member of the Advisory Committee from 1970 to 1978. She has helped to organize many LWF events in Latin America and has taken part in international exchange programmes and leadership workshops. She was

president of OASE, the Brazilian Women's Organization, for many years.

★ **Dr. Lois Leffler** (US) was the Chairperson of the Women's Advisory Committee from 1977 to 1985. She participated in the 1969 women's pre-Assembly meeting in Båstad (Sweden) which recommended the establishment of WICAS. She was involved in the development of goals and programmes of WICAS from 1972 onwards. Dr. Leffler was the chief facilitator of more than thirty leadership development workshops in all regions and was present at all women's pre-Assembly consultations from 1969 through 1989. Within the Lutheran World Federation she served as a member of the Executive Committee from the Budapest Assembly until the Curitiba Assembly in 1990.

★ **Violet Cucciniello Little** (US) was a student of theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia at the time that she was engaged as a research assistant. She is a gifted writer with special interest in presenting women's oral histories. She researched the LWF archives for the material for Part I of this book. She attended the International Consultation of Women in Mexico City in 1989 and the Research Working Group meeting in Geneva in 1991.

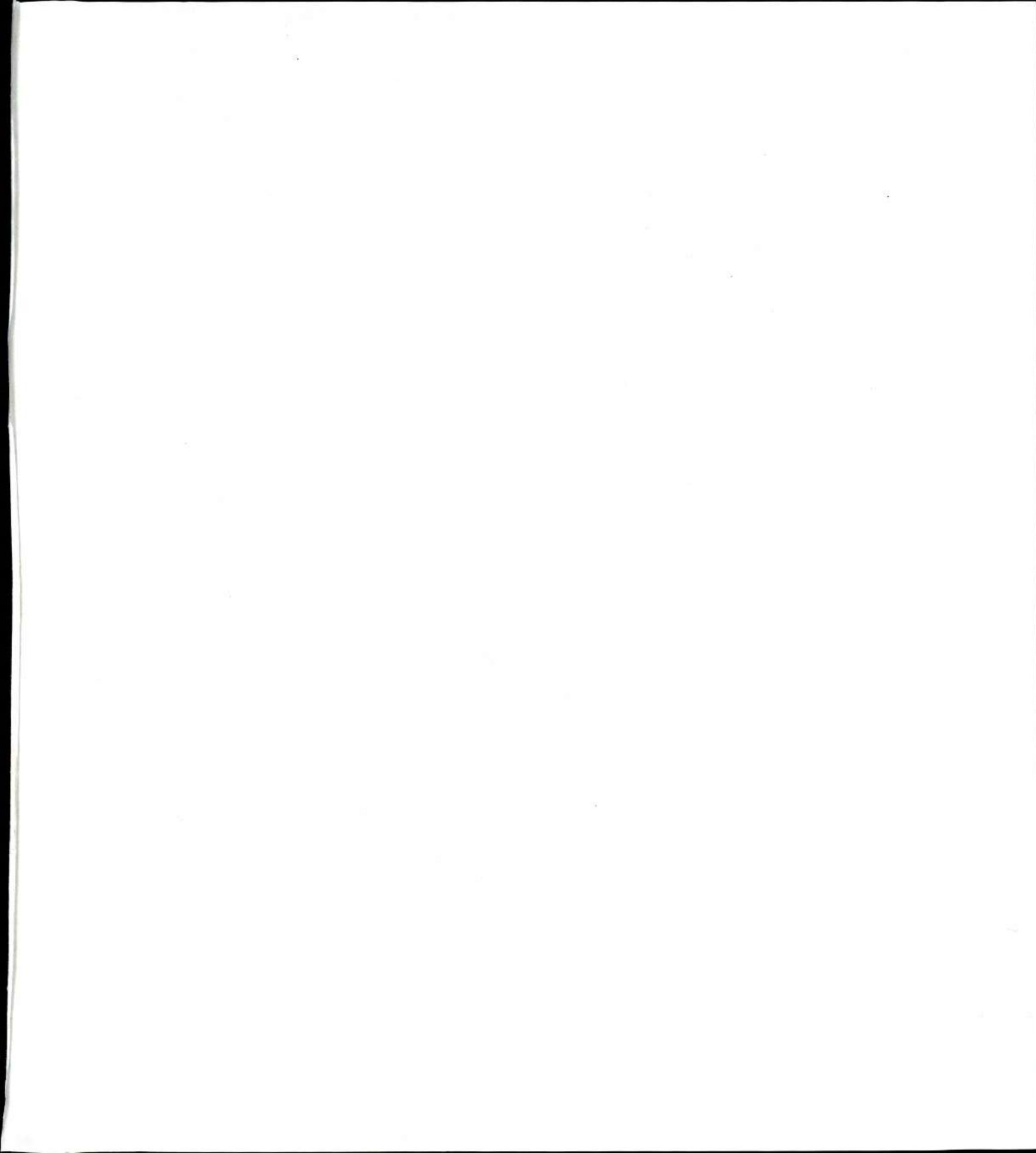
★ **Dr. Dorothy Marple** (US) attended the Evian Assembly in 1970 and served as the chairperson of Church Cooperation until 1990. She was a member of the Continuation Committee that prepared for the Båstad women's pre-Assembly meeting and was elected to the first WICAS Advisory Committee.

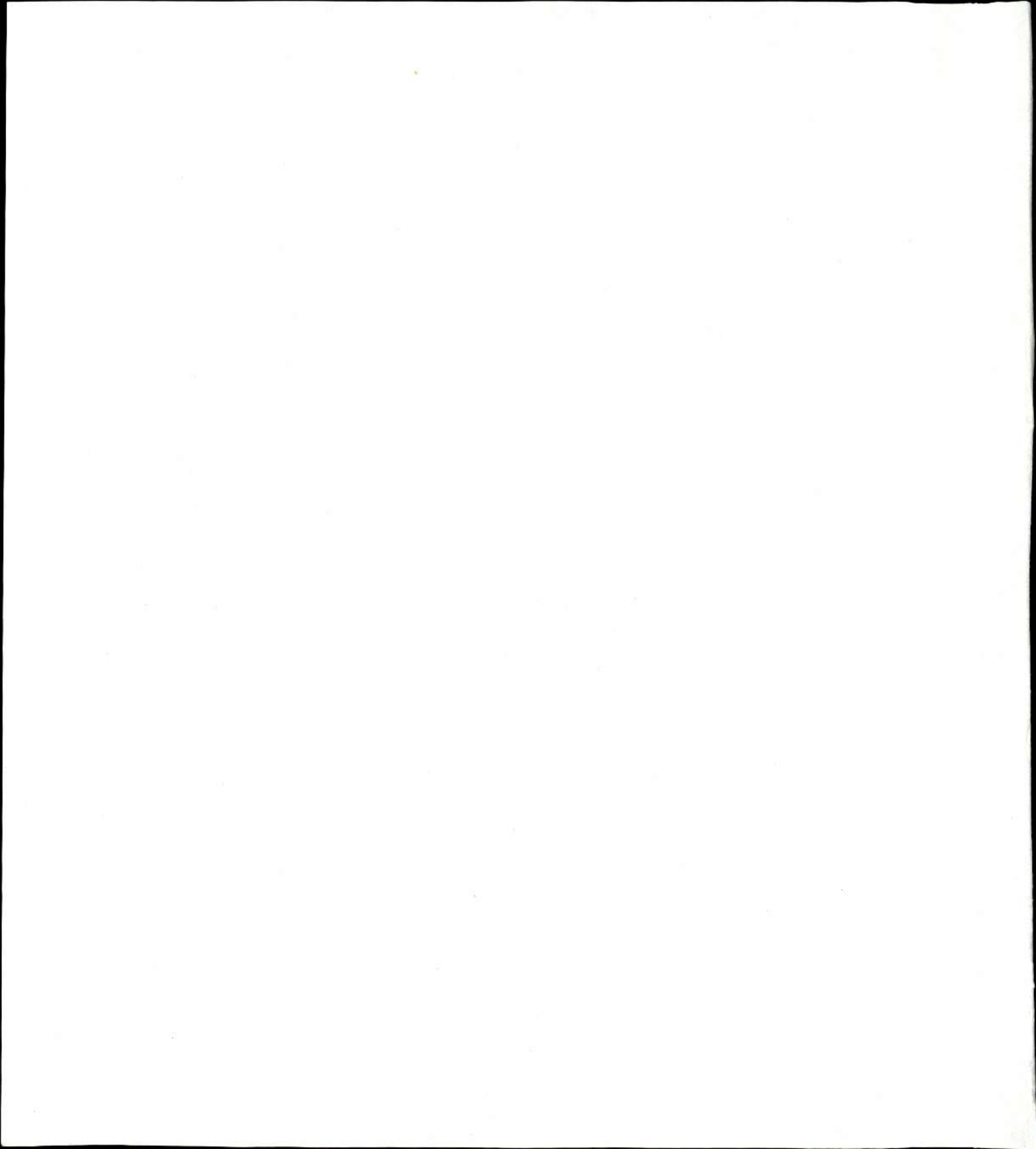
Her interest in the women's programme continued even after she was no longer a Continuation Committee member. She has also assisted in leadership development, especially on matters relating to procedure, structure, and rules of participation in meetings. She served as Chairperson of the Commission on Church Cooperation from 1984 to 1990.

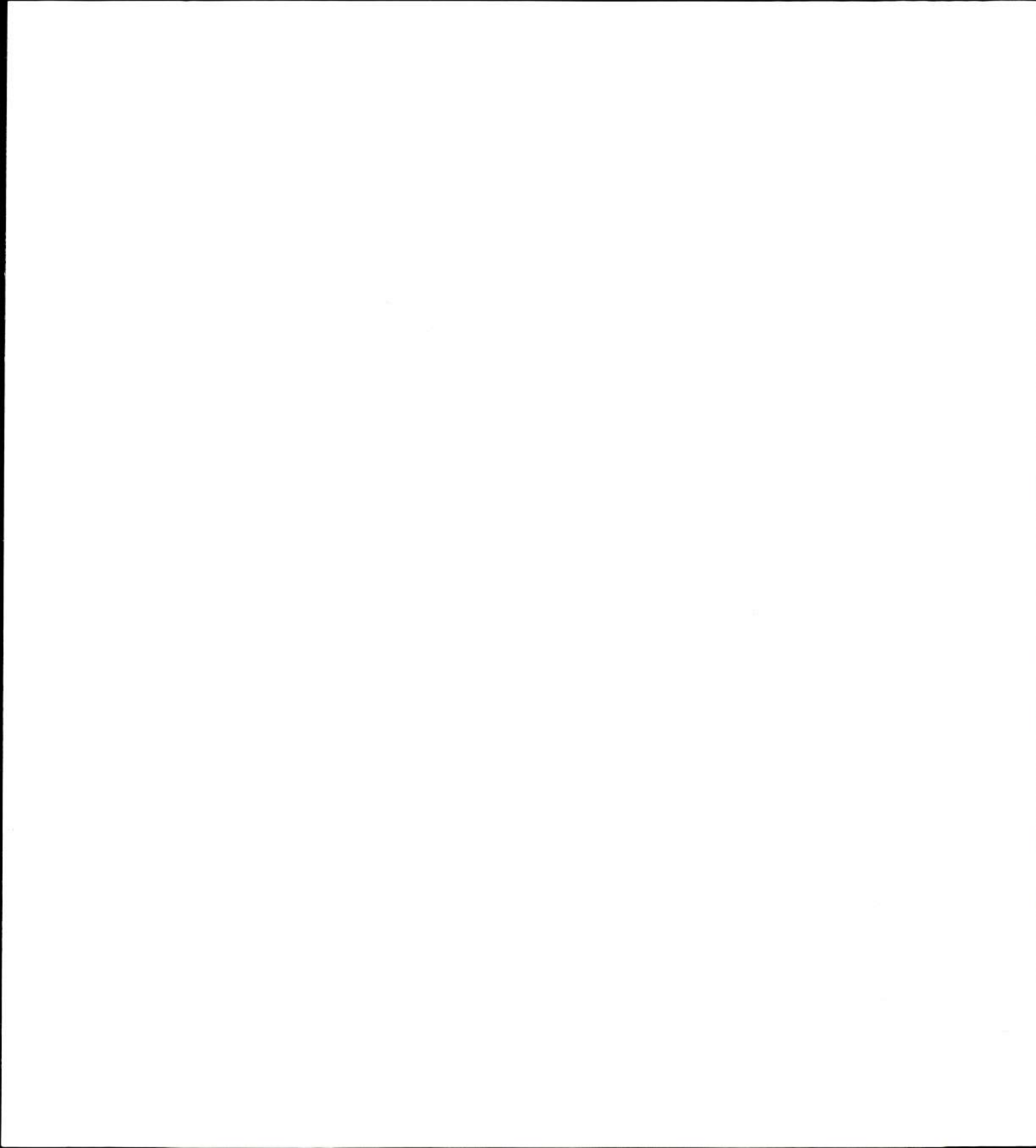
★ **Diane Doth Rehbein** (Canada) is the Director of the Women's Organization in the Lutheran Church in Canada. She attended the International Consultation of Women in Mexico City.

★ **Dr. Gerta Scharffenorth** (Germany) directed the monumental 10-volume study entitled "Women As Innovative Groups". During the 12-year research period she worked closely with WICAS and attended the Research Group meeting in 1991.

★ **Debora Sinaga** (Indonesia) was a regional consultant with WICAS from 1985 to 1990. She attended and organized several LWF leadership seminars in the Philippines, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. She has participated in several international LWF events.







Twenty Year Celebration...

Women have come a long way in the Lutheran World Federation and its member churches between the First Assembly in Lund, Sweden, in 1947 (shown in the photo below) and the Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil, in 1990 (shown on the front cover).

This book, published to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Office of Women in Church and Society (WICAS), chronicles women's struggle for equal participation in the LWF, its member churches, and society at large.

