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– A Communion of Churches**

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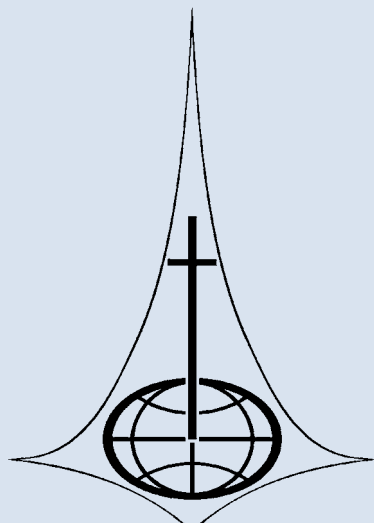
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300 Years of Lutheran Ministry in India



From 3 to 9 July 2006, Lutheran churches in India marked the 300th anniversary of the arrival of the first Protestant missionary in the country. Events included a seminar on Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg's legacy, an international consultation on Christian mission and the challenges facing the Indian churches, rededication of the church where the German missionary is buried, and an ecumenical thanksgiving service.

(Photo above) The kharagattam dance group leads the festivities.
© F. Imhoff/ELCA

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Highlights

Tribute to the First Protestant Missionary in India4

Tribute was paid to the legacy of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, the first Protestant missionary to arrive in India in 1706. The challenges facing the Indian Lutheran churches were discussed at a seminar organized during the July tercentenary celebrations held in Chennai, India.

World Church Leaders Appeal for End to Violence in the Middle East.....8

Leaders of the Lutheran World Federation, World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches have issued a joint appeal calling upon Israel and Hizbollah "to end the fighting in Lebanon" and for the United States, European Union, and Arab States "to exercise their influence toward this end."

Methodists' Affirmation of Lutheran-Roman Catholic Agreement a New Ecumenical Landmark 13

The Lutheran World Federation General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, says the formal affirmation of the Joint declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the World Methodist Council represents a new ecumenical landmark "for which we must thank and praise God together."

FEATURE: Not as Simple as ABC... 15

"Love doesn't protect you from contracting HIV." This simple truth is not easy for many women to accept, says Sonia Covarrubias, a social worker and health educator from Chile.

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Tribute to Dutch Cardinal Johannes Willebrands

The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, has paid tribute to the great contribution of **Johannes Cardinal Willebrands** to the cause of unity among the churches and with the Jewish people.

Dutch Cardinal Willebrands, emeritus-president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) died on 2 August in the Netherlands, aged 96.

In a letter of condolence to PCPCU President Walter Cardinal Kasper, Noko expressed his appreciation and respect for "the special quality of spiritual warmth and personal commitment to the cause of unity for which Cardinal Willebrands was so well known also in the Lutheran world."

The general secretary particularly noted "the strong mutual confidence" that has been established over the years between the PCPCU, its predecessor bodies, and the LWF. "It is clear that our current ecumenical work stands in



Johannes Cardinal Willebrands.
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"L'Osservatore Romano"

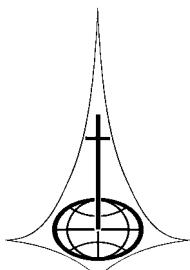
a tradition of more than forty years to which our predecessors have all contributed their parts," he added.

Johannes Willebrands was born on 4 September 1909 in the Netherlands. He was ordained into priesthood in 1934, and named bishop in 1964. He was created a Roman Catholic Cardinal in 1969, the same year he was appointed president of the then Vatican's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. He led the secretariat until his retirement in 1989, a year after Pope John Paul II renamed it the PCPCU.

The international bilateral dialogue between Lutherans and Roman Catholics led to the October 1999 landmark signing of

the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by representatives of the LWF and the PCPCU.

Noko expressed his hope and prayer that the memory of Willebrands would serve "as an inspiration for present and future ecumenists and leaders in the Church of Jesus Christ."



300 YEARS OF LUTHERAN MINISTRY IN INDIA

Jubilee Celebrations, 3-9 July 2006 in Chennai and Tranquebar

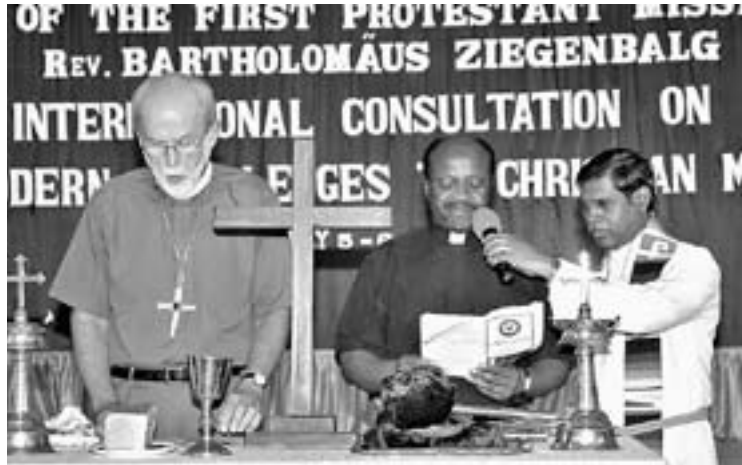
LWF President Hanson and General Secretary Noko Participate

CHENNAI, India/GENEVA, 7 July 2006 (LWI)

– The President of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Bishop Mark S. Hanson, and the General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, joined hundreds of delegates attending week-long celebrations in Chennai and Tranquebar, India, to mark the 300th anniversary of the arrival of the first Protestant missionary in the country.

Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, a German Lutheran missionary sent by the Danish king, Frederick IV, to seek converts to Christianity, arrived in India on 9 July 1706 at Tranquebar (known as Tarangambadi in Tamil), which was then a Danish colony on India's eastern coast, 300 kilometers south of Chennai. With fellow missionary Heinrich Plütschau, Ziegenbalg set about translating the Bible, prayers and hymns into Tamil, the local language. Though Plütschau later returned to Germany, Ziegenbalg remained in Tranquebar until his death at the age of 36 in 1719.

Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), described Ziegenbalg as a great figure who had laid the foundations of modern Christian mission in India. A 16-member ELCA delegation is participating in the tercentenary commemorations taking place from 3 to 9 July at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, Chennai, and in Tranquebar. Five days of seminar and consultation on Ziegenbalg's legacy and the challenges facing the Indian churches will be followed on 8 July by a rededication of the New Jerusalem Church in Tranquebar, where Ziegenbalg's body is buried. An ecumenical jubilee thanksgiving service will be held on 9 July.



LWF President Bishop Mark S. Hanson (left) presides at the eucharistic service in Chennai, India, during the tercentenary celebrations. LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, and Rev. Dr Samuel Meshack, principal of the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, assist. © Gurukul/UELCI

As well as translating the New Testament into Tamil for the first time, the missionary is credited with bringing the first mechanized printing press into India, and with compiling a Tamil-Latin grammar book that was reprinted in Halle, Germany, where he had studied. He is also known for his pioneering work in herbal medicine.

The inaugural ceremony on 3 July was followed by the handing over of more than 100 rolls of microfilm containing over 20,000 pages of manuscripts and other documents on the life and work of Ziegenbalg by Dr Thomas Müller-Bahlke, director of the Francke Foundation, Halle. The foundation is named after August Hermann Francke under whom Ziegenbalg studied theology.

"This will certainly help better research and encourage more of our students to study the contribution of Ziegenbalg and others," said Rev. Dr Samuel Meshack, principal of Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, which received the microfilm and co-sponsored the celebrations.

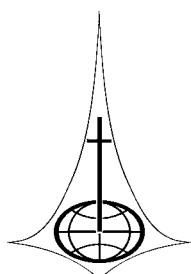
The Lutheran college organized the tercentenary events jointly with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India, which brings together 11 Lutheran churches; the National Council of Churches in India, comprising 29 Orthodox and Protestant churches; and the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church, an LWF member church since 1947.

Over 300 delegates including international guests and local government representatives attended the celebrations.

(Based on articles by the ELCA News Service and Ecumenical News International (ENI))



The rolls of microfilm on Ziegenbalg's life and work are handed over. Right: Consul Mr Erwin Wendland, Management & Cultural Affairs, German consulate in Chennai, India. Left: Rev. Dr Samuel Meshack, principal of the Gurukul Theological College and Research Institute. © Gurukul/UELCI



LWF President Hanson Says Indian Lutherans Have Much to Teach

CHENNAI, India/GENEVA, 13 July 2006 (LWI) – Inaugurating week-long celebrations to mark the tercentenary of Lutheran ministry in India, the Governor of Tamil Nadu, H.E. Thiru Surjit Singh Barnala, said the arrival of the first Protestant missionary no doubt “marked a remarkable change in the lives of the Tamils in that area (and) the beginning of modern education there.” The opening ceremony took place on 3 July at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute in Chennai, India.



Ms Vidhya Rani, secretary Women's Desk, UELCI, presents State of Tamil Nadu Governor, H. E.Thiru Surjit Singh Barnala, with a wall plate gift. Left: Bishop Gideon Devanesan, UELCI president. © M. Lankapalli/UELCI

Bishop Mark S. Hanson, president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, were among several guests who brought international greetings to the governor and to the more than 425 registered participants for the 3 to 9 July week that included a seminar and consultation exploring German Lutheran missionary Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg's impact on India and Christian mission.

“The eyes of 140 member churches in 78 nations, representing 66 million Lutherans, are now upon this city as the whole Lutheran World Federa-



LWF Deputy General Secretary Rev. Chandran Paul Martin addresses delegates during the inauguration of the tercentenary celebrations in Chennai, India, on 3 July 2006. © M. Lankapalli/UELCI

tion joins you in thanking God for 300 years of Protestant ministry in India,” Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), told the gathering. He praised the Lutheran churches in India for three centuries of coexistence in a society of multiple religions and classes: “You have much to teach us about what it means to be Christians in a pluralistic context. ...We in other parts of the world are looking to you to be our teachers,” he said.

“We are here to accompany you, to walk with you as you struggle not only with being a church of Dalit people but with being a church of Dalit people who continue to seek their full liberation and restoration to their God-given dignity and full humanity,” Hanson continued.

Recalling the contributions of the German missionary, Governor Barnala said it was “fitting to celebrate the arrival of this great missionary” who was committed “to serve the poor people,” and is credited with setting up the first public school for girls in the country in 1710. He noted that Ziegenbalg's Bible translation had laid a foundation for a culture rich in Tamil literature, adding that his translation of Tamil works into German had “built a literary bridge between the two countries.” He had also introduced a Tamil printing press in Tranquebar in 1712.

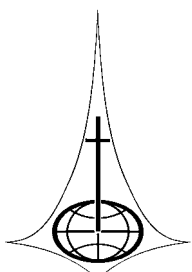
Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, LWF deputy general secretary and former executive secretary of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India, said the Tranquebar Mission was critical for LWF member churches in Asia. “It is responsible for laying the foundation of the creative solutions in freeing the gospel of Christ in very difficult circumstances and pioneering the work for social justice,” he said.

(With reporting from the ELCA News Service, and Ecumenical News International.)

Seminar, International Consultation, Look at Past and Post-Modern Mission Challenges

CHENNAI, India/GENEVA, 18 July 2006 (LWI) –Tribute was paid to the legacy of the first Protestant missionary to arrive in India, in 1706, at a one-day seminar

and a two-day international consultation, organized for 4 July, and 5-6 July respectively, during the recent tercentenary celebrations held in Chennai, India.



An Unparalleled Contribution to Civil Society

In a keynote address to the seminar on the “Contribution of the Tranquebar Mission to Civil Society,” Dr S. P. Thyagarajan, vice-chancellor of the University of Madras in Chennai, praised Ziegenbalg’s “farsightedness” in bringing Indian and European cultures together. He had made an “unparalleled contribution” to strengthening the civil society, he said, and people should consider him as a “role model.”

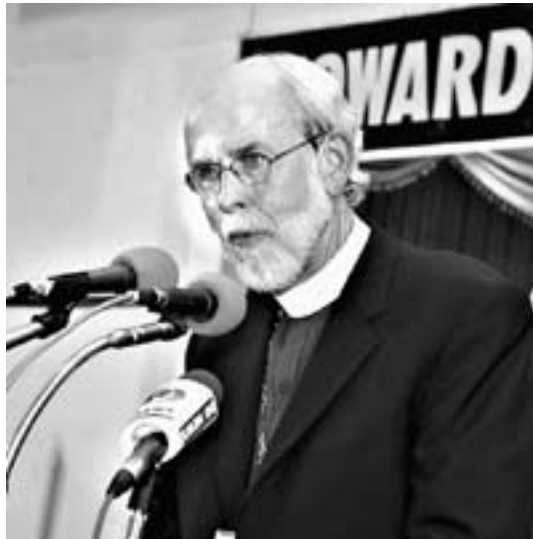
The former director of the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archeology, Dr Ramachandran Nagaswamy, pointed out efforts by the German missionary to introduce Westerners to the richness of Tamil culture and literature.

Dr Bernard D’Sami of the Roman Catholic Loyola College in Chennai, paid tribute to Ziegenbalg’s devotion “to the pursuit of true wisdom,” and urged Christians to emulate him by making their schools more open to people of all castes and classes.

Dr Daniel Jeyaraj, a theologian and professor of World Christianity, in Newton, Massachusetts, USA, underlined the Tranquebar Mission’s contribution to Indology. “Ziegenbalg wanted to empower people,” and was even prepared in the process to expose the misdeeds of the local rulers at the time, he said.

Post-Modern Challenges to Christian Mission

LWF President Bishop Mark S. Hanson delivered the inaugural address of the 5-6 July consultation on “Post-Modern Challenges to Christian Mission.” His presentation included a description of “post-modern,” what Lutherans had to offer to Christian mission in the context of Ziegenbalg’s contribution, and the emerging themes for study. “The roots of this church deeply planted 300 years ago continue to bear fruit as Lutherans in India remain steadfastly committed to being engaged in God’s mission for the life of the world. Your absolute resolve that all Dalit people must be granted human rights, dignity, and liberation, is a sign to the whole world that your discipleship is centered in the cross,” Hanson said.



LWF President Bishop Mark S. Hanson delivers the inaugural address at the international consultation on “Post-Modern Challenges to Christian Mission,” in Chennai, India. © Gurukul/UELCI

“As people of faith, we cannot be in service without being in pursuit of justice,” he added.

Bishop Dr Margot Kässmann of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover, Germany, noted that today, “The church that goes out and meets the people is a relevant church.” She urged Christians to discern the spirit of the times amid a “rapidly secularizing context,” not only in Germany, but also in India and other parts of the world.

Concerns of Poor Should Become the Churches’ Agenda

In the five panel discussions that followed, the presenters focused on Christians’ ethical responsibility toward the poor and marginalized people; response to the country’s health care needs; and greater recognition of women in church affairs.

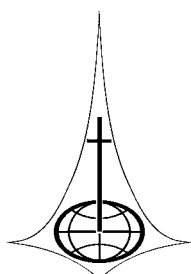
Dr William Stanley, director of the Integrated Rural Development of Weaker Sections in India (IRDWSI), pointed out that the “church has the duty to protect God’s creation,” saying that environmental protection and conservation had to be a serious concern for the church. “The poor, the marginalized and the least powerful are those who suffer most from illness and pollution caused by environmental degradation,” he said. He emphasized Christians’ ethical responsibility to “seek policy changes through advocacy and promote alternatives for sustainable initiatives.”

Ms Priscilla Singh, the secretary for Women in Church and Society in the LWF Department for Mission and Development called for greater recognition of women in church affairs. “History has proved that mission becomes a success only when it starts to include women,” who at times had served without even being acknowledged as missionaries, or when mission had made it a priority to empower them with knowledge and skills. To reiterate her plea, Singh urged the participants to pursue the model set by Ziegenbalg who gave women the opportunity to question and learn from him.

The church has an “impressive record” of developing human power for health care, according to Dr K. M. Shyamprasad, director of the National Lutheran Health and Medical Board in India, but “we have not



In one of five panel discussions during the consultation, Ms Priscilla Singh, LWF Department for Mission and Development secretary for Women in Church and Society, urges greater recognition of the history of women in church affairs. © Gurukul/UELCI



responded to the current needs of the health-care sector of the country.” Even though India has the largest number of HIV cases in the world, Shyamprasad said, “the very mention of HIV and AIDS is anathema to the church, which equates it with sexual sin.”

“Will the church dare to break new paths and new inroads to solve (the) issues related to poverty, caste and gender, which perpetuate this disease and many others?” he asked.

In his closing remarks, Dr Kunchala Rajaratnam, executive secretary of the LWF National Committee in India asserted that, “The concerns of the poor should become

the agenda of churches not only at the national and international levels, but at the local congregations also. ...We need to revise the theological curriculum to make the pastors and others respond to the new challenges.”

Ziegenbalg died at the age of 36 on 23 February 1719. He is buried at the New Jerusalem Church in Tranquebar.

The full text of this article is available on the LWF Web site at www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/1898.EN.html

(With reporting by Ecumenical News International correspondent Anto Akkara, and the ELCA News Service.)

Tamil Lutherans Rededicate Tranquebar Mission Church in India

TARANGAMBADI, India/GENEVA, 19 July 2006 (LWI) – The Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (TELC) marked the 300th anniversary of Protestant ministry in India by rededicating the New Jerusalem Church in Tranquebar (known as Tarangambadi in Tamil), on 8 July. The church was first dedicated by the German missionary, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, in 1718.

The Tranquebar Mission buildings were damaged by the December 2004 tsunami. At the weekend’s events, hosted by the TELC, many of the restored buildings were showcased, including the New Jerusalem Church. The restoration was carried out in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

On 9 July, the last day of the tercentenary celebrations, the TELC formally opened a new education compound, including the Plütschau Primary School. A procession, led by more than 100 schoolchildren made its way through the Tranquebar streets toward the church, where an Ecumenical Jubilee Thanksgiving Service was held.

Christian Witness in a Divided World

Preaching at the service, ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson emphasized the united witness of Christians in a divided world. Unity, noted the president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), does not mean sameness but embracing the other not to make them like “us,” as “Ziegenbalg did not come to make Tamil people Germans or Danes.” He came not to teach European customs, but taught Tamil people to take pride in their own ways, he said. Chris-



An official rededication of the New Jerusalem Church in Tranquebar, originally built by Ziegenbalg, took place on 8 July. © F. Imhoff/ELCA

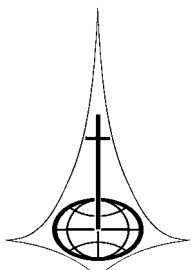
tian ministry continues to worship God and to serve “all suffering humanity,” he affirmed, emphasizing the work of Lutherans for “the full participation of Dalits in India’s society.”

According to TELC Bishop Dr T. Aruldoss, more than 10,000 local Christians drawn from different denominations, attended the concluding celebrations, which had begun on 3 July with an inauguration ceremony at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological and Research Institute in Chennai, India. In addition to more than 200 delegates led by officials of the National Council of Churches in India, which groups 29 Orthodox and Protestant churches, over 100 international delegates joined in the celebrations at Tranquebar.

Aruldoss said the highlight of the closing ceremony was the dedication of 12 missionaries (to resemble the 12 disciples of Jesus



Dr Kunchala Rajaratnam, executive secretary of the LWF National Committee in India, displays a commemorative plate for the July 2006 Tranquebar Tercentenary Celebrations in India. © Gurukul/ELCA



Christ) “to continue the missionary work (Ziegenbalg) started in India 300 years ago.” This is part of the project we have launched to send 300 missionaries to areas where the gospel has not been preached yet,” he said.

Ecumenical Academy Honors Lutheran Contribution

Earlier on July 8, hundreds of local Christians cutting across denominations attended a “missionary revival conference” calling for the number of missionaries to be raised to 3,000 instead of 300.

The Academy of Ecumenical Indian Theology and Church Administration in Chennai held a special convocation on July 7 in honor of those who have contributed to the cause for which Ziegenbalg arrived in India. Of 26 honorary doctorates in divinity, three respectively were awarded to LWF President Hanson, LWF General Secretary Noko, and LWF Department



Schoolchildren gather at the formal opening of Plütschau Primary School. © F. Imhoff/ELCA

for Mission and Development Secretary for Women in Church and Society, Ms Priscilla Singh.

(With reporting from Ecumenical News International correspondent Anto Akkara, and the ELCA News Service.)

János Ittzés Appointed Interim Presiding Bishop of Hungarian Church

János Ittzés, bishop of the West District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary (ELCH) has been named interim presiding bishop of the Hungarian Lutheran church. Ittzés, 62, succeeds Bishop Dr Imre Szebik who retired in March 2006. The church’s synod will make a final decision on the position in November this year.



Interim Presiding Bishop János Ittzés. © ELCH/G. Menyész

Ittzés pursued theological studies at the Evangelical Lutheran Theological Academy

in Budapest from 1962 to 1967, leading to his ordination in 1970. After serving as a vicar in Koszeg from 1970 until 1971, he was a congregation pastor in Takácsi from 1971 to 1981, and in Koszeg from 1981 to 2000. He has been bishop of the church’s West District since 2000.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, an LWF member since 1947, has some 305,000 members.

New LWF Publication: Spirits, Ancestors and Healing: A Global Challenge to the Church

Spirits, Ancestors and Healing: A Global Challenge to the Church is the title of a new publication of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) aimed at encouraging an open atmosphere for discussion and dialogue about spirits, ancestors and healing within the LWF member churches. Produced by the LWF Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) through its desk for Church and People of Other Faiths, this resource seeks to address such questions as: Why do increasing numbers of Christians seek support within spiritualistic groups and indigenous religions? What are the implications of this? What pastoral and theological questions does this pose?



Challenge to the Churches in Europe (LWF Studies 02/2004), and *Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in Africa and Asia* (LWF Studies 01/2005).

A final meeting discussed the results from the seminars, and suggested how these matters might be dealt with in churches. This new 56-page publication was developed through deliberations at a final January 2005 global consultation in Berlin, Germany, where outcomes of the regional meetings and their implications were discussed.

The booklet, edited by Rev. Dr Ingo Wulhorst, DTS study secretary for Church and People of Other Faiths (2001-2006), can be ordered from the LWF Department for Theology and Studies, 150 route de Ferney, P.O. Box 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland, Tel. +41/22-791 61 11, Fax +41/22-791 66 30, E-mail Liesch@lutheranworld.org. It is free of charge with postage and packaging charged for bulk orders.

