

Highlights

Emphasis on Lutheran Communion Response to Today's Social Questions 6

The worldwide Lutheran communion has a mission to answer today's social questions in light of the gospel, Bishop Frank O. July of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, Germany, told Lutheran leaders from across Europe...

Face Up to Corruption, South African Bishop Urges Lutheran Churches..... 9

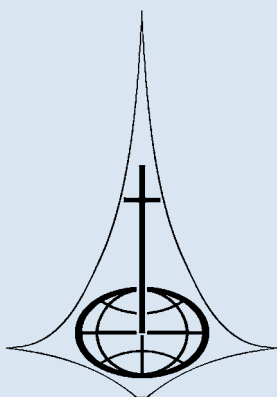
South African Lutheran Bishop Dr Ndanganeni Phaswana called on churches in Africa to be accountable in managing their own affairs so that they can be morally justified in prophetic engagement with governments and institutions on the continent...

Russian Bishops Express Gratitude for Contacts with Other Lutheran Churches 13

For the first time seven bishops from the member churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States led by Archbishop August Kruse visited the LWF in Geneva...

FEATURE: Lutherans in Britain Continue Long Tradition of Hospitality..... 15

When Leah Komen came to the United Kingdom from Kenya to complete her doctorate in development communication, her university directed her to a small nearby center that hosts students from around the world...



Difficulty Reaching Japan's Quake Evacuees in Inaccessible Areas



Rev. Naoki Sugioka of the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (right) helps unload emergency supplies in Miyagi Prefecture in northeastern Japan. © KELC/Shigeo Sueoka

Lutheran Volunteer Center Opens in Sendai

TOKYO, Japan/GENEVA (LWI) – One month after the strong earthquake that triggered a devastating tsunami off the northeastern coast of Japan, Lutheran churches there say relief delivery remains a major challenge, with many people still sheltered in places that are not easily accessible.

“There are still gaps between places in Sendai for gasoline and gas supplies. There are also gaps between emergency evacuation facilities and some places still lack enough food and living supplies. There are many people who are evacuating in mountain areas, and they have difficulties to get their needs,” Rev. Naoki Sugioka of the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC) reported in Tokyo following a 6-7 April visit to some of the affected areas in Miyagi Prefecture.

Sugioka, KELC president Rev. Shigeo Sueoka and vice president Rev. Terumitsu Hagenoshita had traveled to Schichigahama, Tagajo, Sendai, Minami Sanriku and Utazu in Miyagi Prefecture, a few days after three four-ton trucks delivered food and non-food

relief items worth YEN 4,598,800 (USD 54,748) purchased by Lutheran churches.

The KELC pastors reported on their visit at an 11 April meeting of the Japan Lutheran Emergency Relief (JLER), the committee coordinating response by KELC, Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC), Japan Lutheran Church and West Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church.

As planned, the Lutheran churches have opened a volunteer center for their joint relief operations at JELC's Sendai Church near the epicenter of the 11 March quake. Named the Sendai Lutheran Support Center Tonaribito, it opened its doors on 11 April, with Rev. Tsugu Koizumi of the Chiba Lutheran Church near Tokyo helping out in distributing relief materials and coordinating volunteer support from there.

The Japanese word Tonaribito means neighbor.

Continues on page 3

Contents

Communio

Japan Lutheran Churches' Response after Earthquake and Tsunami

1, 3Difficulty Reaching Japan's Quake Evacuees in Inaccessible Areas

- 3..... Elderly Badly Affected by Japanese Disasters, as Lutheran Churches Reach Out
- 5..... LWF General Secretary Praises Japanese Lutherans for Reaching Out

LWF European Region Consultation

6.....Emphasis on Lutheran Communion Response to Today's Social Questions

- 7..... Europe's Lutheran Churches Challenged to Have Common Expression

Africa Lutheran Church Leadership Consultation (ALCLC)

9.....Face Up to Corruption, South African Bishop Urges Lutheran Churches

- 10..... General Secretary Junge Affirms LWF Context in the Global Human Family
- 11..... Young African Lutherans Urge Leaders to Note Move to Other Churches

13.....Russian Bishops Express Gratitude for Contacts with Other Lutheran Churches

14.....Lutheran Youth Gear Up for Joint Environmental Experiment

Features & Themes

15.....FEATURE: Lutherans in Britain Continue Long Tradition of Hospitality

News in Brief

2.....LWF Congratulates First Permanent Presiding Bishop of Norwegian Church

12.....LWF General Secretary Reiterates Global Perspective of 2017 with Visiting EKD Delegation

LWF Congratulates First Permanent Presiding Bishop of Norwegian Church

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge welcomed the appointment of Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien as the (Lutheran) Church of Norway's first permanent presiding bishop, calling it a significant step toward the acceptance of women's gifts.

"While the journey toward full welcome for women's gifts of leadership is still incomplete in all of our communities, this step by your church is a significant and a welcome sign that we are continuing to walk this path." Junge said in letter to Byfuglien.

Byfuglien, 60, was appointed to the new office on 25 March by the Norwegian Ministry of Church Affairs. She is one of four women bishops among the 11 Church of Norway bishops. She will be installed in office on 2 October this year.

Byfuglien has been bishop of Borg, southeast of Oslo, since 2005. Since October 2010 she has combined the elected

position as presiding bishop with her responsibilities as the diocesan bishop. The office of permanent presiding bishop was established to eliminate the demands of such a double role.

In July 2010, she was elected LWF vice president for the Nordic region, and is a member of the LWF Executive Committee. "We have welcomed your leadership as the LWF vice president for the Nordic region, and we look forward to the direction you will help to set in your new role," Junge concluded.

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(With additional information from Ecumenical News International)

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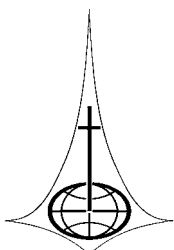
Circulation/subscription

Colette Muanda
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Lutheran World Information (LWI) is the information service of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

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JAPAN LUTHERAN CHURCHES' RESPONSE AFTER EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI

Difficulty Reaching Japan's Quake Evacuees in Inaccessible Areas

Continued from p. 1

A first assessment by a team of Lutheran pastors who had travelled to affected areas in Miyagi Prefecture from 24 to 30 March had indicated that the "serious lack of gasoline makes it impossible to distribute food to each of the evacuation centers," where an estimated 48,996 were still sheltered according to the Japanese government National Police Agency.



Unloading relief items purchased by Lutheran churches for distribution in Japan's Fukushima and Miyagi Prefectures. © KELC/Shigeo Sueoka

World's Attention

While there are currently many volunteers offering various services including clearing the affected areas, the need for human power is tremendous. "The areas need a lot more volunteers to help," Sugioka stressed.

A month after the disaster, "it is getting warmer, the smell and health problems are going to increase seriously, therefore we have to take immediate action now," he added.

He noted the world's attention was mainly focused on the nuclear plant problem, therefore decreasing focus on the needs of victims and affected places. "This is an unfortunate situation," he said, describing the debris of washed away bridges, vehicles, boats, destroyed houses, and household goods and personal effects that litter the affected areas.

At the recent meeting, Rev. Sumiyuki Watanabe, JELC president and chairperson of JLER, said the four-church grouping had approved employment of a new full-time staff person to coordinate their response in the aftermath of the disaster.

"I will enter Miyagi [Prefecture whose capital city is Sendai] within this

week and be in charge of coordinating volunteers," said Ms Yuko Endo, previously working with the Asian Rural Institute, a Christian-run international training ground for grassroots leaders on sustainable agriculture, community development and leadership.

JLER would employ two more staff attached to the local Social Welfare Council in the affected areas and for coordinating shipment of relief materials.

Psycho-Social Support

Meanwhile, Rev. Masaru Kawata, chaplain of the Tokyo-based Japan Lutheran College, said, "We are considering how we can use our expertise on psycho-social support and social welfare, possibly in collaboration with the Lutheran churches."

The program may include support for relief workers, who have to deal with their own individual loss while at the same time responding to the needs of grieving disaster victims.

Mr Hiromi Morikawa, director of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Association, a Tokyo-based non-

profit organization providing education, health and services to refugees, said his group was considering ways of supporting children who are among the victims of the disaster.

"It is good that all the like-minded organizations under the Lutheran umbrella have come together to make a plan to approach the response [to the disaster]," said Mr K.G. Mathaikutty, seconded staff from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) associate program in India, who is currently supporting JLER as an emergency adviser.

"Since we didn't have prior preparation for responding to the disaster, we are just starting from scratch," he noted.

Mathaikutty said "uncertainty prevails now," as the JLER begins its work, but he expressed hope that they would soon "have a more clear strategy on how to proceed, what we are going to do by next week or in ten days. I hope things will be much clearer."

(Written for LWI by Hisashi Yukimoto)

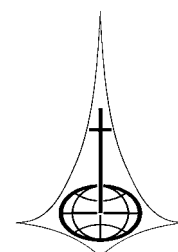
12 April 2011

Elderly Badly Affected by Japanese Disasters, as Lutheran Churches Reach Out

The impact of the 9.0-magnitude earthquake, followed by a tsunami

and now fears of nuclear meltdown are hitting elderly people particularly

badly, with this group counting high among those confirmed dead.



Of Japan's 127 million people, it is estimated that 30 million are above the age of 65. International organizations note that Japan is the most aging society and the elderly figure prominently among those killed and left homeless.

The percentage of elderly climbs significantly higher in the northeast around Sendai, the area most severely hit by the 11 March earthquake and tsunami, and police reported that many elderly were among the dead and the nearly 400,000 homeless there.



Two elderly people huddle around a wooden stove in a gymnasium after the earthquake and tsunami swept through Otsuchi, Iwate prefecture, eastern Japan. © Reuters/Ho, courtesy Trust.org - AlertNet

Church leaders know that they have barely begun with relief efforts, but they are aware that the demographics leave them with a special need to care for many aged victims.

Less than two percent of Japan's population is estimated to be Christian. The Lutheran churches there have also joined Anglicans and the bigger Roman Catholic Church in relief efforts.

JELC pastor Rev. Suguru Matsuki pointed out that congregation members had donated 5,000 kg of rice and 10,000 meals of instant noodles and various canned foods. Church workers from the Ichigaya emergency center noted that a total of four people had left for the coastal area of Sendai to assess needs.

A university professor who is a member of JELC in Sendai described how people took refuge from the

tsunami in his campus chapel after the quake struck.

"I am an associate professor of Tohoku Gakuin University, on the Tagajyo campus, on one of the coastal areas stricken by the tsunami," Shinji Nagashima wrote to the JELC Ichigaya Church. "The tsunami came as far as the Tagajyo railway station and the college chapel was filled with people who escaped from the tsunami."

One of Nagashima's co-workers told him that his house was swept away, but his family was safe. "It's a

miracle," said Nagashima. But not so for another colleague who "told me that he can't contact his parents. I'm worrying about the people who live in the coastal area." He added, "We are worrying about the accident of the nuclear energy plant too."

Despite being able to connect power to temperature control devices near some of the nuclear plants and getting water pumped onto threatening areas, fears of a nuclear meltdown remained after smoke was seen billowing from two of the reactors at the Fukushima plant on 21 March.

Still, there were some signs of hope, such as the rescue of 80-year-old Sumi Abe and her 16-year-old grandson Jin Abe, who were trapped in the kitchen of their collapsed house in the flattened coastal city of Ishinomaki near Sendai, nine days after the quake.

Water, Electricity, Medicine

On 18 March the Catholic Bishop of Sendai, Monsignor Martin Hiraga, and other bishops opened a center in Sendai to serve the areas affected by the tsunami. They noted that many shelters were without water, electricity, fuel or medicine, causing physical and mental distress for the displaced.

Some of the displaced are expected to be sent to the Kinki region around Osaka and Kobe, where some lessons were learned from the devastating quake of 1995 that claimed around 6,400 lives.

KELC president Rev. Shigeo Sueoka was a theology student in the area when the Kobe quake struck and it has made him realize the scale of the present disaster. "In the region around Kobe immediately after the quake, we could go in and start helping people. But in the case of this disaster, even emergency relief workers for the first few days could not go into the area. It will take a long time to tackle this problem," he told *LWI*.

Speaking in his personal capacity, he said, "This disaster has made us aware of how vulnerable the elderly are in remote areas such as the northeast."

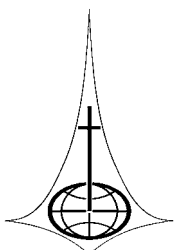
Skilled Volunteers

One of the unintended consequences of the 1995 disaster, said Sueoka, was that for the first time the need for a large number of volunteers was raised in Japan. There were scores of people willing to offer help, but many of them had not been trained, so their efforts didn't work effectively in, for example, sending relief items, preparing hot meals and clearing debris.

The Lutheran pastor noted that skilled volunteers would be needed to manage those inexperienced people who wanted to help the victims in order to cope with the current disaster.

An LWF-seconded emergency advisor will join the Lutheran relief task force to assist the churches in coordinating their response with civil society, local authorities, faith-based relief organizations and international non-governmental organizations.

(Written by Peter Kenny, with additional information from LWI)



LWF General Secretary Praises Japanese Lutherans for Reaching Out

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge has sent a Holy Week message of praise and support to Japanese Lutherans who are among those providing assistance to people affected by the devastating 11 March earthquake and tsunami.

The death toll of the calamitous earthquake and tsunami had by 19 April exceeded 14,000 people Japan's National Police Agency said, but a further 13,660 are still missing. Some 140,000 people were in shelters after they were evacuated due to radiation alerts or their homes were destroyed. More than 55,700 buildings totally collapsed and another 154,215 were partially damaged.

"Many times in these last weeks my thoughts and prayers have been with you. [...] In this Holy Week, I write thinking particularly of your situation as churches and as people of a nation ravaged by destruction," said Junge in his 19 April letter.

His letter was addressed to the leaders of the Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC), Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC), Japan Lutheran Church (JLC) and West Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (WJELC), who in the aftermath of the tsunami jointly established the Japan Lutheran Emergency Relief to coordinate assistance to those affected.



Gasoline became an important relief item. © KELC/ Shigeo Sueoka

Junge noted that readings from the Bible in Holy Week, relating the experience of the cross, "resonate in a special way" with the Japanese churches' situation during the last five weeks. "You too have had to give meaning to the experiences of powerlessness and of confusion resulting from the unleashed violence and devastation," he wrote to Rev. Shigeo Sueoka, KELC president; Rev. Sumiyuki Watanabe, JELC president; Rev. Shinri Emoto, JLC vice president; and Rev. Hirofumi Tsukuda of WJELC.

The general secretary commended the churches for reaching out to

those affected, liaising with other churches in Japan and connecting to partner churches around as well as the LWF communion through its Geneva office.

"Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, you have recognized the risen Lord in all these difficult events that have shaken your country—and then you have gone back right into the midst of the places of destruction, becoming a presence of hope and of solidarity even in such challenging contexts as those in Sendai and Kessenuma, in Minami Sanriku and Ishinomaki," he said.

"You became a diaconal presence for people looking for a hand, thirsting for a conversation or hungering to reconnect to their sense of dignity," Junge noted.

He reiterated ongoing prayers for the churches and people in Japan as well as continued support from the LWF communion in providing long-term accompaniment to those affected.

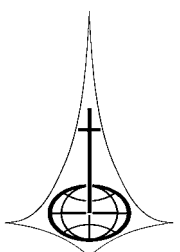
The JELC, KELC and JLC are LWF member churches.

Help the LWF assist those hard hit by the 11 March devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/ways-to-give



Rescue workers search for survivors in the wreckage of Natori City, Miyagi Prefecture, northeastern Japan. © Reuters/Kyodo, courtesy Trust.org - AlertNet



LWF EUROPEAN REGION CONSULTATION

London, United Kingdom, 6-8 April

**Emphasis on Lutheran Communion
Response to Today's Social Questions**

Lutherans in Great Britain Host Delegates from LWF European Churches



Opening eucharistic service of the April 2011 European consultation, Swedish Church, London © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

LONDON, United Kingdom/GENEVA (LWI) – The worldwide Lutheran communion has a mission to answer today's social questions in light of the gospel, Bishop Frank O. July of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, Germany, told Lutheran leaders from across Europe.

"As churches, we live in extremely varied contexts and with varying traditions, yet at the same time we are shaped by European reality and identity," July told about 50 delegates and guests on the first day of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) European Consultation on "Enhanced Regional Cooperation" in London, United Kingdom, 6-8 April.

"This is our first encounter since the LWF Eleventh Assembly [in July

2010] and I am anxious to see how we will find our common path and what shape our encounter will take. Indeed, I look forward to this," said July who is LWF vice president for Central Western Europe.

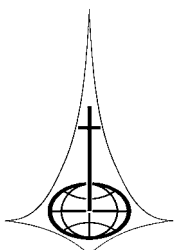
Earlier, in his sermon during the opening eucharistic service at the historic Swedish Church, July said that only when Lutherans encounter Christ could "we embark upon our journey as a fellowship, as *communio*. Only then can we learn to see the problems in society."

The "calamity" at Fukushima nuclear power plant following the earthquake and tsunami on Japan's northeastern coast showed what happened when human beings failed to understand their limitations; the

unrest in North Africa illustrated the consequences of relying on systems built on violence and suppression; and "when we close our borders without removing the causes of migration in the countries of the migrants, we will be confronted with new violence," said the Württemberg bishop.

"There would be more issues to raise and we will discuss these problems and more during our conference. But nothing will happen unless something first happens to us, in us, with us," added July, who is a member of the LWF Executive Committee.

The three-day consultation was aimed at strategy on how to strengthen connections to the worldwide Lutheran communion, and among Lutheran churches in Europe. Par-



ticipants included bishops, church presidents, LWF Council members, ecumenical officers from 18 countries, as well as representatives from the 12 LWF National Committees and the Women in Church and Society (WICAS) network.

The Lutheran Church in Great Britain (LCiGB) and the Lutheran Council of Great Britain (LCGB) jointly hosted the meeting, organized by the LWF Department for Mission and Development.

Opportunity

LCiGB Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga said in an interview prior to the gathering that it was very important for her small church to be co-hosting the European consultation. “We are aware that we are a minority amidst the very large churches. For us to be able to do something positive and concrete is important.”

She said she hoped the meeting could come up with a coherent plan for what Lutheran churches in Europe should be doing along with the structures to make the plans a reality.

Rev. Thomas Bruch of the LCGB noted that the LWF was instrumental in establishing the Council and had supported the Lutheran community in Great Britain by helping displaced persons following the Second World War and many African Lutherans who came later.

“It’s almost like an opportunity for us to say ‘thank you’ to the LWF,” Bruch said of the body that was established in 1948.

Rev. Chandran P. Martin, LWF deputy general secretary, told the European church leaders that the LWF

Council was anxious to hear from them about the organization’s future direction. “There are many windows open for your input. This for us is a very important window,” he said referring to the forthcoming meeting of the LWF governing body this June.

Delegates spoke of a variety of diaconal efforts in their churches following commitments made at the Eleventh Assembly, held under the theme “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.”

General Bishop Miloš Klátik said the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic had founded a non-profit organization to support the Roma people in his country. “This organization is about developing mutual understanding between Roma and non-Roma through improvement of intercultural communication, biblical education and other activities.”

Ms Magna Sverrisdottir of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland pointed out that while the

church had been hit hard by the economic crisis in her country, “We are doing the best we can to help people.” Poverty alleviation and food justice are the main goals, she added.

Rev. Rainer Kiefer, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover (Germany), reported from a regional meeting of Central Western European church leaders that diaconal work needed to be strengthened, with strategies outlined for both individuals and church bodies.

While the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland had struggled of late with its media image, it has managed to put the issue of poverty and food justice on the agenda of a national election, said Ms Maria Immonen.

The regional meeting continued deliberations that would provide input to the LWF Strategic Plan 2012–2017. LWF’s work in Europe is carried out under three regions—Central Eastern Europe, Central Western Europe and the Nordic countries.



Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga reads a prayer during worship at the Swedish Church in London. On the right, Bishop Dr Frank O. July, LWF vice president for Central Western Europe. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

Europe’s Lutheran Churches Challenged to Have Common Expression

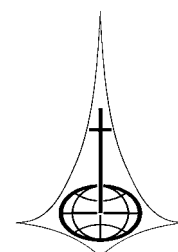
At their regional consultation last week, delegates from LWF member churches in Europe grappled with the question of how expressions of Lutheranism on the continent should look, with some emphasizing the need for new forms of collaboration and others urging caution about taking regionalism too far.

Europe’s 37 million Lutherans need a new form of collaboration, said Rev. Norbert Denecke, general secretary of the LWF German National Committee.

“Can we get a common picture? Other regions are challenging us to respond,” Denecke said in London, where he was among 35 participants

in the LWF European region consultation.

He said the LWF’s new Constitution and By-laws agreed to at the Eleventh Assembly in 2010 provided a framework for regional expressions. “For the first time we have the frame, but we must fill in the picture together.”



The LWF has seven regions including Europe's three—Central Eastern Europe, Central Western Europe and Nordic countries—and Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America.

“Yes, there are real regional issues we need to be discussing,” agreed LWF Council member Ms Maria Immonen, director for development cooperation for the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, in an interview. “One of the strengths of the LWF has been that the churches [large and small] have been able to talk. There has been unity in diversity.”

But Immonen expressed concern that emphasizing the regions too much could hurt that open sharing, and diminish the voices of women and youth. “If we speak in just a block voice, it can be antagonistic,” she added.

As discussion continued, there may be better understanding of what issues European Lutherans want to agree to put on their agenda, she said. Still, “What we really need is a Christian voice in Europe, not just a Lutheran voice.”

Ms Dagmar Magold of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein said regions could sometimes be somewhat insular.

“From a minority church point of view, it would be good to communicate more with other regions to get to know each other better, to understand



General Bishop Dr Miloš Klátik (Slovak Republic) discusses LWF strategic planning with (left to right) Archbishop Elmars E. Rozitis (Latvia), Ms Magnea Sverrisdottir (Iceland) and Bishop Niels Henrik Arendt (Denmark). © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

each other's needs. We can't stay each as its own island,” she added.

Bishop Neils Henrik Arendt, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, cautioned that having Europe as one region in the LWF would make it too dominant. He said he wanted to see closer relationships between the regions.

Secularization

“In the whole of Europe we are facing the same problems, the decrease in membership and secularization. But we come to this from different places.”

Bishop Tamás Fabiny, Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, called for “a more dynamic sense of borders” between

LWF's European regions, saying “exchange between the regions is natural.”

The Hungarian bishop said the churches in Central Eastern Europe enjoyed “rich relationships” though sometimes there were tensions. “After 40 years of limited freedom, we still have to find our voices. We have often been too shy, sometimes because of language. We have to be proactive. We want to work together on issues,” said Fabiny LWF vice president for the region.

He added that the churches in the region could offer their expertise on the question of secularization. “This is not new for us. We have been living with this experience.”

Some delegates emphasized the need for a clear agenda that crossed borders, such as the plight of the Roma people. As Rev. Kristin Molander from Church of Sweden put it, “The most important is not *that* we meet but *what* we meet about.”

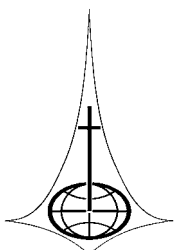
Bishop Geza Erniša, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovenia suggested that the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 would be “a good time to speak with one Lutheran voice in Europe.”

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland delegate Rev. Dr Tomi Karttunen, added, “We want 2017 to be genuinely ecumenical.”

(Articles in this section were written for LWI by John P. Asling)



Church of Sweden delegate Rev. Kristin Molander (standing) speaking from the floor during the discussion on strategic planning. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet



AFRICA LUTHERAN CHURCH LEADERSHIP CONSULTATION

Johannesburg, South Africa, 4-8 April

Face Up to Corruption, South African Bishop Urges Lutheran Churches

LWF Regional Consultation Deliberates Church's Role in Democratic
Governance

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa/GENEVA (LWI) – South African Lutheran Bishop Dr Ndanganeni Phaswana urged on churches in Africa to be accountable in managing their own affairs so that they can be morally justified in prophetic engagement with governments and institutions on the continent.

“Dictatorships are the greatest challenge facing Africa,” said Phaswana, when he welcomed representatives of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Africa, gathered in Johannesburg for the Africa Lutheran Church Leadership Consultation (ALCLC) 4-8 April. But he asked how churches could play a role in sensitizing citizens and their leaders if they themselves were corrupt.

The Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) hosted the ALCLC, attended by 60 participants. Deliberations focus on the understanding of the LWF regional expression on the continent, and will include contributions to the LWF Strategic Plan 2012-2017.

Preaching at the opening Eucharist, Bishop Horst Müller, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA N-T), reminded participants that they are called to be the “salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13), which means addressing issues that make livelihood difficult for ordinary people.

In his greeting, Bishop Alex G. Malasusa, LWF vice president for the Africa region, said the continent had experienced “remarkable transformation in all its socio-cultural patterns” in the last 30 years.

“On the one side we see gradual development of democracy in some countries,” which has been supported



Bishop Alex G. Malasusa, LWF vice president for the Africa region, emphasized that African churches should play their part to ensure that governments are democratic. © LWF/Peter Kenny

by Lutheran churches. “However, on the other side the process of democratization is overshadowed by corruption and unnecessary power struggle that is experienced during political elections,” noted Malasusa, who is presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT).

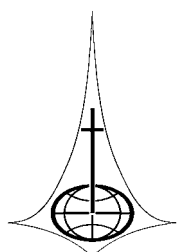
The Tanzanian bishop pointed out that political parties “end up making coalition governments that are not wished by the voters. (...) These governments become a problem to the majority and only benefit a few,” he said, while emphasizing the church’s role in building democratic governance.

Referring to the internal issues facing churches themselves, Malasusa, a member of the LWF Executive Committee, said that listening as well as understanding was needed to strengthen the Lutheran communion and its more than 70 million members globally.

Speaking from the floor after Malasusa’s address, Bishop Dr Cosmos Moenga of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Botswana noted that churches often face most of their challenges during conflict in both church and society.

Churches, he noted, should be guided by a clearly articulated Lutheran understanding of Christian faith. “We need an African theology in the 21st century. But what is the new theology to deal with corruption? We need to come with a theology that will empower people to deal with these issues,” he said.

Ms Colleen Cunningham of the Moravian Church in South Africa said, “Fundamentally we need to look at how we have been socialized. We need to look at democracy. Many theologians are leaving the Church and they become our leaders. We need to redefine where we are and how we are going to go into the future.”



General Secretary Junge Affirms LWF Context in the Global Human Family

The last Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was a powerful reminder that the life of the Lutheran communion is framed by the fundamental understanding that it is “always rooted in the global human family.”

The Lutheran communion is “here with others, and we are here for others. We are ecumenically embedded, often neighboring other religions. This is the context in which we live as a communion, and these are the relationships within which we are invited to understand our journey as a communion,” said LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, when he addressed leaders of African Lutheran churches meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, their first regional consultation after the July 2010 Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany.

Assembly clearly conveyed that the Lutheran communion is growing not only numerically but also “in depth and in spiritual richness.”

Speaking at the opening session of the 4-8 April Africa Lutheran Church Leadership Consultation, Junge said the Assembly action through which Lutherans asked Mennonites’ forgiveness for past wrongdoings toward Anabaptists emphasized that “a worshipping communion that knows about forgiveness and grace and takes from there its strength to witness in the world is best equipped to face challenges.” The assembly, he added, served to remind that as a communion of churches, the LWF was not an entity on its own.

Quoting from Luke 24:17, Junge, addressing African Lutheran church leaders for the first time since he as-

the Latin American and African regions. These include an emerging diverse expression of Christianity for which terms like charismatic or Pentecostal are used; and understanding faith holistically while struggling to hold the dimensions of proclamation, diakonia (social service) and advocacy closely together. People from both regions, he noted, also have in common memories of violence and other issues linked to conquest and colonization that still inflict pain.

Conversations and Challenges

The general secretary said that both the calling and the location of the LWF communion—with member churches in different contexts throughout the world—frames substantially the way in which its members envision their dialogue with one another.

He said part of the communion’s discussions that had not been easy focus on the subject of family, marriage and sexuality.

“If we were not in such deep relationships in the communion, we could have easily escaped this discussion. But because of our relationships, the LWF Council in Lund in 2007 recognized that we needed to face it,” he said referring to guidelines adopted to facilitate respectful discussion and dialogue on the topic.

An LWF task force established a timeline for the member churches to come back from their local conversations and to examine how these would influence the way forward.

“The year marked for that conversation is 2012,” Junge explained. He said he had sought advice from the LWF Executive Committee in November 2010, and was now proposing that next year “is not a deadline; it is a benchmark in a conversation that needs to go beyond that year. 2012 is therefore an interim stage, a moment to come together and to discern responsibly where these local, regional and bilateral conversations take us as communion.”

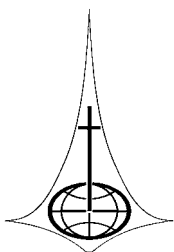


(l/r) ALCLC participants Dr Peter Bartimawus (Bronnum Lutheran Seminary in Nigeria), Rev. Dr Elieshi A. Mungure (ELCT and incoming LWF area secretary for Africa), Ms Senait Bahta (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea) and Mr Muloko Kongolo (LUCCEA) © LWF/Peter Kenny

Still on the Assembly, Junge reiterated participants’ appreciation of worship life at the gathering of the highest decision-making body of the LWF. “Eucharistic worship was the center that gathered us, not a demarcation line that divided us by underscoring our differences,” he said. Despite the full awareness of the “centrifugal forces to which we are subjected in many ways,” the

sumed office last November, asked, “What is it that you are talking about as you walk?” He emphasized his eagerness “to hear from you what it is to be the church in Africa, and what it means to you to be journeying together in a communion of 145 Lutheran churches around the world.”

Junge, a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile, spoke of the many parallels that exist between





Worship assistants (from left) Nondumiso Nkosi, Slungile Mtshali and Kulululekani Mahlangu arrive for the opening eucharistic service of the Africa Lutheran Church Leadership Consultation. © LWF/Peter Kenny

On other LWF commitments and concerns Junge mentioned the political crisis in parts of North and West Africa and the need to provide not only sustainable political solu-

tions but also to assist people fleeing conflict. Citing the work of the LWF Department for World Service, he said the question was emerging again not “only about the moral obligation

to protect civilian population but also about the legitimate ways to do so and even about the limits of a legitimate action to protect.”

While commending the churches in Africa for their important witness in HIV and AIDS response, he stated underlying moral questions. “There have never been enough funds for people living with HIV to get access to medication. However, when the financial crisis hit two years ago, suddenly billions appeared almost miraculously, within few days, to protect big and powerful banks from failure. Umbrellas for banks, but no umbrellas for struggling human beings—where is the morality of this development?”

Junge encouraged the churches to continue providing their strong and valuable leadership on these questions, and “to be a presence of hope, a hand of service and a voice of prophetic denouncement.”

Young African Lutherans Urge Leaders to Note Move to Other Churches

Young African Lutherans have called on leaders of LWF member churches on the continent to take note of youth movement to other denominations.

“Youth add a fullness and completeness to the church” and churches should ensure they have space to utilize their gifts including leadership and decision making, said Ms Helvi Muremi, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, when she presented a statement prepared by young adult delegates in the LWF regional meeting.

Muremi, a student at Paulinum Theological Seminary in Windhoek, Namibia, said the youth representatives at the Africa Lutheran Church Leadership Consultation wanted to present their concerns to the older leaders.

“We think if they are addressed by our leaders in the various sub-regions, it will bring vibrant youths to the activities of our churches in Africa,” she said.

In addition to LUCSA, ALCLC brought also together representatives

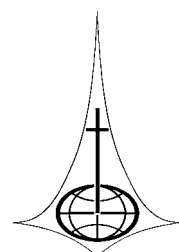
from the Lutheran Communion in Central and Eastern Africa (LUCCEA) and the Lutheran Communion in Central and Western Africa (LUCCWA)—the three sub-regions

under which the Lutheran communion in Africa coordinates its work.

The youth pointed out that unemployment “has become another virus in most of the African sub-regions



Theology student Ms Helvi Muremi (Namibia) presents the youth message to the ALCLC. © LWF/Peter Kenny



of the LWF.” Most of those affected were the young people, who due to lack of both job opportunities and financial support to advance their studies “are now moving to other denominations seeking greener pastures. Our leaders please take note and act promptly.”

Ms Uduak Etim Ikang from the Lutheran Church of Nigeria affirmed the need for those in leadership to act on the young people’s concerns. “The Church can be an industry. Some of our church members should use their industries to ensure that our youth have something to do.”

The youth group said the role of young people should be clearly defined through the strategic plan being drawn up by the LWF with its member churches, in order to allow young people to fully participate in decision-making bodies and processes.

In his response to the youth message, Bishop Dr Paul Kofi Fynn, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana, said, “This is a dynamite statement. It came in a small package, but it is potent.”

Fynn said he was pleased to note that youth had also said in their statement “that all Lutheran young people in Africa should not be part of the leadership conflicts, power struggles, external forces, repression of staff members (conflict managements), nepotism, and tribalism ... etc.”

He commended the LWF for its commitment to achieving gender balance including youth participation.

Mr Muloko Kongolo, LUCCEA administrative secretary, said he was concerned about the inability to get the youth together in the sub-region. He appealed for financial support to enable young people build relationships and work together.

Addressing the consultation earlier, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge spoke of the particular importance of the participation of both women and young people in church life. “It is not just an action of compassion, a token, to involve youth and women. It is a matter of justice, and it is about getting the set of questions and perspectives for the churches to continue projecting themselves into the future,” he emphasized.

He recalled his visit in March to Indonesia during which young people asked him questions and some particularly difficult ones about “language used in worship and music, but also about the content of sermons and overall of church life.”

(Articles in this section were written for LWI by Peter Kenny)

14 April 2011

LWF General Secretary Reiterates Global Perspective of 2017 with Visiting EKD Delegation

During the visit of a delegation from the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) to Geneva 6-8 April, Rev. Martin Junge, general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) reiterated LWF’s invitation to the global church family to join in commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 within a strong global perspective; ecumenical accountability; and as churches in an ongoing process of reformation.

Junge was speaking at roundtable discussions with general secretaries of the Ecumenical Center-based church organizations and members of the EKD delegation led by Präses Nikolaus Schneider.

Enthusiasm for 2017 was voiced by all. This event of worldwide significance has been extremely influential in German religious, cultural and political history. Against this background Junge stressed that the Lutheran Reformation is also a “global citizen.” He invited the group to “see not only the developments that have spread from Wittenberg to the world but to see also what is coming back from the various contexts in the world where Lutheran Reformation has taken roots.”

Others speaking at the roundtable discussions included Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit (World Council of Churches); Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi (World Communion of Reformed Churches); Mr John Nduna (ACT Alliance); and Rev. Dr Viorel Ionita (Conference of European Churches, interim general secretary).

On priorities in the coming years, Junge, referring to outcomes from the July 2010 Eleventh Assembly, emphasized the understanding of the LWF as a polycentric body—not having one center but with many centers—that strengthen “our journey together as a Lutheran communion.”



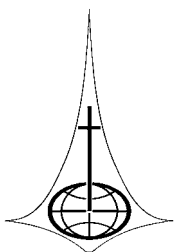
Left to right: LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge; Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, director, Department for World Service and EKD Council chairperson Präses Nikolaus Schneider exchange views. © WCC/Peter Williams

He noted that the “polycentricity of the [LWF] communion of churches” enables people from widely different backgrounds to meet and explore “the ecology of knowledges”—not just “knowledge”—in the respective contexts.

Talking on ecumenical engagement, Junge underlined LWF’s many contributions to dialogues and practical cooperation across the different contexts. “We cannot be ecumenical on our own,” he stressed during one of the sessions.

EKD Council member Tabea Dölker expressed the visitors’ gratitude by presenting a sculpture depicting 16th century German reformer Martin Luther. The title of the work is “Hier Stehe Ich...” (Here I Stand), a reference to Luther’s statement before the Diet of Worms in 1521.

(With input from WCC communications)



Russian Bishops Express Gratitude for Contacts with Other Lutheran Churches

Bishops' Council Holds Inaugural Meeting in Geneva During Visit to the LWF

GENEVA (LWI) – For the first time seven bishops from the member churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States (ELCROS) led by Archbishop August Kruse visited The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Geneva from 21 to 26 March 2011.

The Geneva visit also served as an occasion for the inaugural meeting of the new ELCROS association (Bund) and its bishops' council. The body of independent regional Lutheran churches in the Russian Federation was recently reorganized into an association ELCROS' recent reorganization into an association representing its member churches.

ELCROS comprises 450 congregations representing 76,000 Lutherans in Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. In terms of territory, it is the largest Lutheran church in the world. Many parishioners still recall the atheistic, Soviet period, when it was difficult to survive as a church.

Welcoming the ELCROS bishops, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge said, "There is no church too small to be able to give, nor too large to receive."

The visiting group was briefed and accompanied by the LWF area secretary for Europe, Rev. Dr Eva Sibylle Vogel-Mfato. Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt, executive secretary for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) and LWF Youth secretary Rev. Roger Schmidt presented their respective areas of work.

The visit to Geneva has provided "new nourishment," said Kruse. "We are happy to feel we are part of the global Lutheran family and are grateful for all the support we have received from the LWF for so many years," he added.

Bishop Jurij Nowgorodow of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the



*The ELCROS delegation and LWF staff representative during the visit to Geneva.
© LWF/H. Putsman Penet*

Republic of Kazakhstan stressed the vital importance of contacts with other churches. He also envisaged the publication of a greater number of LWF texts in Russian in the future. The church, hwehe said, needed also to completely reconsider issues concerning women.

It is good to know that one is part of the great Lutheran family, conceded Dietrich Brauer, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of European Russia (ELCER). He said he would like to expand his church's Internet presence and was thankful for the LWF's support in reaching out to and working with youth.

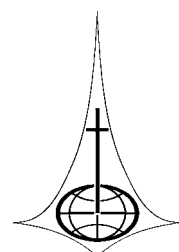
Bishop Hans-Joachim Kiderlen of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Georgia indicated that 80 percent of church work is carried out by women. It is thus fitting that the role of women be cast in an entirely new light. He greatly appreciated the spiritual unity among all LWF member churches and had high expectations with regard

to efforts to build a global network of young Lutherans.

The bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kyrgyzstan Rev. Alfred Eichholz, who is also the group's moderator, expressed his admiration for the work of the LWF Department for World Service. He also commended the activities of the LWF Department for Mission and Development and its missionary initiatives.

For Bishop Kornelius Wiebe of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Uzbekistan, whose last visit was 20 years ago, it was important to come again to Geneva and meet new faces.

Bishop Otto Schaude of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Urals, Siberia and the Far East expressed his appreciation for the ties between the LWF and other Lutheran congregations around the world. He indicated that often there was a good understanding among ecumenical leaders, but sometimes,



at congregation level, ecumenical fellowship was difficult to achieve.

The delegation also included the archbishop's personal assistant Elvira Zhejds and the director of the church office in Saint Petersburg, Marina Khudenko.

All the ELCROS bishops agreed that good ecumenical contacts and relationships, which the LWF made possible with all its member churches, contributed to preparation for ecumenical activities locally. They noted that such encounters are a

good instrument of cooperation at the local and global levels. The bishops recommended that similar meetings between the communion office and church leaders take place on a regular basis.

13 April 2011

Lutheran Youth Gear Up for Joint Environmental Experiment

"LWF together" Kicks Off on 1 May

GENEVA (LWI) – On 1 May 2011, over 100 youth groups from the seven regions of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) will embark on a six-month long common journey.

Within the framework of an experimental global LWF program, they will exchange ideas and organize activities around a shared concern: environmental justice.

The program, "LWF together – the earth needs you," introduces a new and innovative methodology to the Lutheran communion.

Using the Internet, local Lutheran groups of young people aged 15 to 30 will team up with two other groups on different continents. They will read relevant Bible passages together and develop an understanding of God's creation and humanity's responsibility toward it.

Then they will put these newly-acquired insights into action by tackling an environmental issue in their home context.

Lutheran young people have responded enthusiastically, according to Rev. Roger Schmidt, LWF youth secretary with the Department for Mission and Development.

To date, 107 groups representing 47 LWF member churches have registered for "LWF together," with a total of over 900 individual participants.

"Both the idea of connecting with other young people and the issue of ecological justice were big drawing points," commented Schmidt, who is coordinating the program.

Member churches from across the Lutheran communion have groups taking part in "LWF together" and several churches are represented by more than one group.



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea lead the list with 14 and 12 groups, respectively, with the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

Bavaria (Germany) rounding out the top five.

For LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, this is a sign of the desire and need to experience communion in concrete forms.

"As a communion of churches, the LWF is a space for reflection and prayer, for joint learning and action," noted Junge. Living, breathing networks like LWF Youth enabled the communion to learn and act more effectively, he said, adding that this was something the LWF needed to utilize better in all aspects of its work, not just in youth ministry.

"I am eager to see how this experiment plays out," Junge remarked. "I am grateful to the participants for their pioneering role on behalf of the entire LWF communion."

"LWF together" runs until Reformation Day on 31 October.

More information:

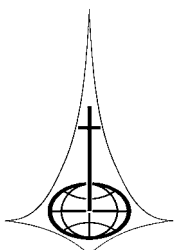
www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/themes/lwf-together

29 April 2011



At their July 2010 Pre-Assembly, LWF Youth named sustainability as one of their priority issues.

© LWF/GNC/F. Huebner



FEATURE: Lutherans in Britain Continue Long Tradition of Hospitality

Low Profile Does Not Inhibit Diaconal Work

LONDON, United Kingdom/GENEVA (LWI) – When Leah Komen came to the United Kingdom from Kenya to complete her doctorate in development communication, her university directed her to a small nearby center that hosts students from around the world.

The Lutheran community in Britain has been welcoming migrants, workers, displaced persons, students and visitors since the 17th century. The International Lutheran Student Centre in London, which is run by the Lutheran Council of Great Britain (LCGB), was opened in 1978 and provides accommodation and pastoral support to international postgraduate students.

Komen, 38, says her experience at the center has helped ease the pain of the separation from her family including her husband and two children. “The staff is very friendly and they want to make you feel at home,” she told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* in a recent interview.

The International Lutheran Student Center hosts 80 postgraduate students from 35 countries, who come from every region of the world and represent many Christian traditions and other faiths. A student chaplain provides pastoral care for the students and makes contact with students throughout the country.

Religious life in the UK is dominated by the Church of England, the official established Christian church.

Still, there has been an organized Lutheran presence here since the Great London Fire of 1666, when craftsmen were brought to England to rebuild the city. Many of these workers came from Hamburg, and they were Lutherans.

While the Conventicle Act of 1664 prohibited worship that was not according to the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, Lutherans were able to meet for worship in the 1660s using their own rites.

The first Lutheran pastor, Gerhard Martens, arrived in England from Germany in 1668 and worked



Kenyan development communication student Leah Komen has found a home away from home at the LCGB-run International Lutheran Student Centre in London. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

under the supervision of the King of Sweden, conducting worship at Covent Garden and the Swedish legation, where Scandinavian and German Lutherans worshipped.

By 1672 the King’s Charter had granted local Lutherans, known at the time as followers of the Augustana Confession, permission to erect a church near the current site of the Mansion House underground station in London.

Other German and Scandinavian congregations were started during the 18th and 19th centuries, and in the 20th century there were a number of waves of European immigration that brought refugees to Britain, each with its own distinct form of Lutheranism.

Today, the number of Lutherans in Britain has grown to more than 183,000 as the European Union has opened the borders among its member countries, and Lutherans from East Africa and the Horn have arrived in large numbers.

There are Lutheran services in all parts of the country and they are conducted in a wide range of languages, including Amharic, Cantonese, Danish, English, Estonian, Faroese, Finnish, German, Hungarian, Icelandic, Latvian, Mandarin, Norwegian, Oromo, Polish, Swahili, Swedish and Tigrinya.

Working with the Displaced

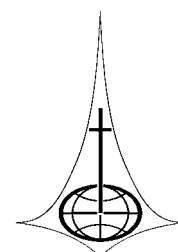
In welcoming Lutheran church leaders to London for the recent regional consultation of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Europe, Rev. Thomas Bruch, former LCGB general secretary, told delegates that Lutherans in Britain have a history of working with the displaced.

“We have welcomed tens of thousands of refugees and displaced persons to our country over the years,” said the recently retired Bruch, who came to Britain from the United States 41 years ago and was ordained a Lutheran pastor here.

He mentioned in particular how Lutherans in Britain collaborated with the LWF following the Second World War to assist displaced persons from across Europe and then brought Lutheran pastors over to help nurture their spiritual lives.

The LCGB, an LWF recognized Council, was established in 1948. It includes 10 national churches with congregations or chaplaincies in Britain, who, while they have their own particular ministries, collaborate on several initiatives.

They provide spiritual and material assistance to Lutheran churches and projects that are not self-supporting;





Former LCGB general secretary, Rev. Thomas Bruch at the LWF European region consultation in April.
© LWF/H. Putsman Penet

promote fellowship and cooperation among Lutherans in education, mission and worship; provide the public with information on Lutheranism; promote Lutheran ecumenical participation; and run the International Lutheran Student Center.

“It provides a ministry of hospitality and a ministry of welcome,” Bruch noted. Still, Bruch told *LWI*, Lutherans in Great Britain have a low profile. Even some of their ecumenical partners here have little understanding of who they are and think they are all German or “foreigners.”

One of the Council member churches is the Lutheran Church in Great Britain (LCiGB), which is marking its 50th anniversary this year. The LWF member church was founded as the United Lutheran Synod in April 1961 with just four congregations.

Today there are about 4,000 members in congregations, worship centers and chaplaincies in 13 communities, including Manchester, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Cambridge and London. In addition, LCiGB serves many people of Lutheran heritage who are in the

UK for longer or shorter periods, but are not official members of the church.

Distinctive

LCiGB Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga helps raise the profile of Lutherans in Britain as one of the four presidents of Churches Together in England (CTE), the national ecumenical body in England. The other presidents include the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of Westminster (Roman Catholic) and the Free Churches’ moderator.

Though she doesn’t underestimate the challenge of giving Lutherans a profile in Great Britain, Jeruma-Grinberga told *LWI* that their theological and doctrinal strength as well as their cultural diversity makes them distinctive.

Because of their history of working with migrants in Britain, Lutherans “can challenge the status quo; we can speak out on injustice. And we can do this, not as foreigners. We are a well established church.” She added: “Our congregations are full of people who came to this country as refugees.”

Diaconal outreach is an integral part of both the LCGB and LCiGB’s contribution to Britain and the international scene.

The Council is closely associated with Bethphage Great Britain, an organization with close links to Lutherans that works with persons with severe learning disabilities. Bethphage has a number of small residential centers in the Midlands and offers support to families at home as well. It is also working with Lutherans in Germany, Norway and the United States to develop services in the Dominican Republic, India, Kenya and Tanzania.

At the Swedish Church in London, Ms Camilla Persson, the welfare officer, works alongside deacon, Ms Maja Inde, to support around 80,000 Swedes in London through home visits, seniors’ lunches, youth groups, gatherings for au pairs, and children’s activities.

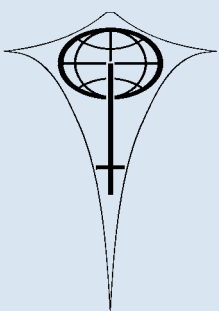
The congregation reaches out to the Swedish community through its newsletter that goes to about 10,000 people. Some have been here since after the Second World War; others come for short stays and return home. “Sometimes they just need someone to talk to. It can be very lonely if you don’t know where you are going to stay here,” said Persson.

In addition the Swedish Church in London works with the city’s other Nordic churches to run a guest house and hostel for visitors from the region who need a welcoming place to stay.

(Written for LWI by John P. Asling)

***The article is in the continuing LWI features’ series focusing on the topic “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread,” the theme of the LWF Eleventh Assembly, held 20–27 July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany.**

9 May 2011



Published and distributed by:
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