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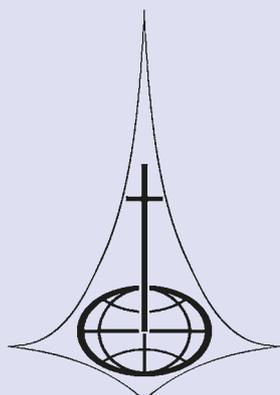
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LWF Virtual Conference Prompts Enthusiastic Interest in Ecological Justice



Moving and shaking the Earth on the children's climate day organized on 20 October 2011 to conclude the Evangelical Church in Central Germany's "Climate Change, Life Change" eco-justice initiative. © Gerhard Seifert

Hundreds of Lutherans Across the Globe Gather Online for green&just

GENEVA (LWI) – An initial poll of some of the 400 people who took part in The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) first virtual conference on the church's role in environmental justice say the event prompted their greater involvement in ecological justice issues.

Most of the participants in the 12 May green&just" virtual conference—who logged on from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America—stayed online for more than three hours. In the preliminary survey of a smaller group, more than two-thirds of the respondents said they were likely or would definitely become actively engaged in issues on ecological justice.

The 17 presentations including speeches and web-based workshops (webinars) were met with high interest by participants, with lively online discussions after the speeches and during the workshops, said Rev. Roger

Schmidt, LWF Youth secretary, organizer of "green&just."

Speakers and participants at "green&just" called for marshalling of church and community resources to address the environmental, economic and development crises.

In a video address LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge pointed to a distorted view of freedom that has led to overconsumption in some parts of the world, which has meant that billions of people elsewhere, who rely on nature for their sustenance, starve.

"In the era of climate change, the old theological formula according to which sin is a person's withdrawal into oneself, severing relationships, takes on a new dynamic. Our existence repeatedly threatens to withdraw into itself," Junge said.

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Cardinal Koch Visits the LWF on Mount of Olives

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan thanked Kurt Cardinal Koch for the common work between Lutherans and Roman Catholics, when the Vatican official visited the LWF offices on the Mount of Olives, East Jerusalem.

During the 24 May meeting with Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), Younan said the 45 years of bilateral discussions between the LWF and the PCPCU had resulted in productive dialogue “in our continued search for Christian unity.”

The LWF president urged that in the time ahead, both partners “jointly lift up what we have achieved together in our patient, hard and hopeful work, and point together gratefully to all the agreements we have reached.”

Younan, who is head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), noted that Lutherans

and Roman Catholics share a vision for just peace in the Middle East, supporting a two-state solution with a shared Jerusalem.

Through its congregational and educational ministries, the LWF member church ELCJHL reaches out to thousands of individuals and families each year in Jerusalem, other parts of the West Bank and Amman, Jordan.

The LWF Department for World Service presence in East Jerusalem include the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH), a health facility offering emergency and specialized care in the Occupied Territories.

(By Rev. Elizabeth McHan, ELCJHL communication assistant)

The full article is online at:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/cardinal-koch-visits-the-lwf-on-mountain-of-olives.html

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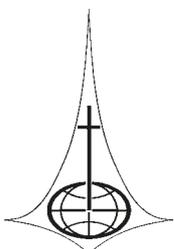
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LWF General Secretary Urges Active Church Involvement in Global Issues

European Church Leaders Meet in Ostrava, Czech Republic

OSTRAVA, Czech Republic/GENEVA (LWI)

– Churches must be global citizens addressing issues that can only be tackled at the worldwide level, Rev. Martin Junge, general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) told Lutheran leaders from Europe.

In a keynote address to the LWF European Leadership Consultation in Ostrava, Czech Republic, held 11-14 May, Junge noted that the church's global citizenship is rooted in the call to participate in God's mission in the world.

"This notion of 'global citizenship' calls upon the LWF member churches to express their role in its global dimension, becoming actively involved in the burning global issues that no longer allow for narrow national or regional approaches," he said at the meeting jointly hosted by the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren and the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession.

"Churches," stressed Junge, "need to address the moral question of why resources are available to rescue a financial system that collapsed because of its 'casino' addiction, while few resources are found for the unemployed, young families and those with HIV and AIDS."

"More than ever before, the church is called into the public arena and to advocate for those becoming victims, and those being marginalized in our world," Junge said.

Expressing Communion in Different Contexts

In his address titled, "On the Way to 2017: The Church in Transformation in Changing Times," The general



Eucharistic worship during the 2012 LWF European Church Leadership Consultation in Ostrava, Czech Republic © SCEAV/Libor Sikula

secretary elaborated the LWF's approach to the 500th anniversary of the reformation and outlined three cornerstones; Lutheran reformation as global citizenship; ecumenical sensitivity and accountability; and churches in ongoing reform. He also emphasized the gift of communion among churches in their respective contexts.

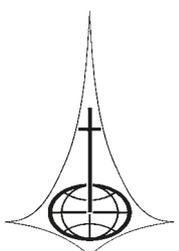
Referring to the challenges arising from the fact that churches are rooted in different contexts he underscored: "Let us meet each other with the basic assumption that churches in their diverse theological traditions, piety, and contextual challenges are altogether indeed attempting to faithfully relate to the Scriptures."

The Chilean theologian underlined relationship building as a core dimension of the Christian faith, saying the gathering of Lutheran leaders presented a prophetic sign. "It powerfully

questions the painful consequences of today's general tendency to withdraw into comfort zones, and to accept hostile fragmentation as an unchangeable reality in our world," he said.

In their feedback to the keynote address, the different regions emphasized the need to focus on studying Luther's notion of authority in conjunction with the Reformation anniversary; assessing the role of women in the Reformation; and the possibility of Roman Catholic and Orthodox involvement in the 2017 events. They also deliberated on issues facing larger churches and the challenges of assisting the needy while attempting to build confidence in the church itself as a relevant institution.

In their greetings to the LWF gathering, Silesian Bishop Jan Wacławek and Rev. Joel Ruml, Moderator of the Evangelical Church



of Czech Brethren, expressed their delight that this meeting was taking place in the country.

The consultation participants and other worshippers attended a festive Eucharist service at the Christ Church in Ostrava, which is shared by the Silesian and the Czech Brethren congregations. There was daily

prayer life at the conference venue, and Sunday parish visits and worship.

Bishop Waclawek described the Christ Church as a strong expression of ‘communio’ in Central Eastern Europe. “Although the two LWF member churches in this country have been shaped by different historical and Lutheran traditions, our unique context

has challenged us over the years to share and learn from each other’s strengths and support each other. Each Sunday and for many other events like this one, this church building becomes a living example of that solidarity,” he added.

(Written for LWI by Aleš Wrana, Ostrava, Czech Republic.)

16 May 2012

Europe’s Lutherans Pledge Support for Diaconal Services Despite Diminishing Resources

Europe’s Lutheran leaders pledged to continue to advocate on behalf of their local and global neighbors, even as they cautioned about a growing demand for diaconal services on the continent amid diminishing resources.

In the final message of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) European Church Leadership Consultation held in Ostrava, Czech Republic, 10-15 May, the 80 leaders from 38 churches noted that despite a strong tradition of churches providing social services (diakonia), the work faces serious challenges.

“Increasing indebtedness, rising unemployment rates especially among the young, and diminished communal resources have caused an increased demand in social and diaconal services,” the leaders said in their message titled: “With Passion for the Church and for the World.”

“Although Europe may appear to be one unified, social political and economic region, there are emerging economic gaps between rich and poor and especially among migrant workers and marginalized populations,” they noted.

Lack of funding had compelled churches to re-examine their reliance on professional service workers and rely on volunteers, the Lutheran leaders noted at their meeting jointly hosted by the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren and the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession.

They however reiterated that the biblical and theological focus of human beings as being made in the image of God (Imago Dei) challenges them to examine their diaconal work from a renewed perspective.

In discussions, participants shared the richness of diaconal efforts that churches around Europe are undertaking: a congregation in Amsterdam (Netherlands) opens its doors to neighbors for community and friendship; in Baden-Baden (Germany) and Budapest (Hungary) church artisans sell their works to raise money so the poor can buy medicine and food. Other examples were cited from Riga (Latvia), where a diaconal program provides 2,000 meals a week; in Rome (Italy) churches are open to the poor; in France church members volunteer in state-run charities; and in Sweden church doors are opened to the unemployed.

“We believe that diakonia within the LWF European regions should include the active role of coordinated advocacy on behalf of the neighbor around the world,” said the church

leaders representing the Central Western, Central Eastern and Nordic regions of Europe.

The three regions agreed to strengthen their level of cooperation by organizing annual pan-European gatherings on themes relevant both to the European context and the global communion of Lutheran churches.

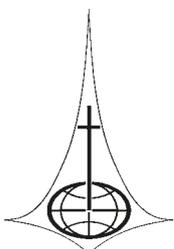
(Miriam Paszova from the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession contributed to this story.)

The full text of the message from the church leadership consultation is at:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Message-from-the-LWF-European-Church-Leadership-Consultation.pdf



Youth leaders like Diana Drewstad, Church of Sweden, play an important role in strengthening exchange and cooperation in the LWF European regions. © ČCE/Gerhard Frey-Reininghaus



LWF Virtual Conference Prompts Enthusiastic Interest in Ecological Justice

Continued from p. 1

“Climate change and the catastrophic consequences thereof are a direct result of an extension of freedom accompanied by increased disregard for the relationships that are integral to humanity,” the general secretary said.

Noting the specific role of religious leaders in major historic struggles across the world including the civil rights movement and apartheid, Naidoo praised the LWF “for taking the kind of leadership you are through this conference—taking environment and justice, development

biblical texts and their challenges for ecological justice.

Participants of the virtual conference gave enthusiastic feed-back.

Rev. Dr Anja Stuckenberger of Reading, Pennsylvania, a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, who participated in some of the webinars, considered the conference an energizing space and praised the opportunity to listen to presentations from all over the world and converse with people from different perspectives.

Rev. Sonja Skupch, general secretary of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate, Argentina said: “It is encouraging to know that there are more people fighting for justice than those who benefit from excessive greed.”

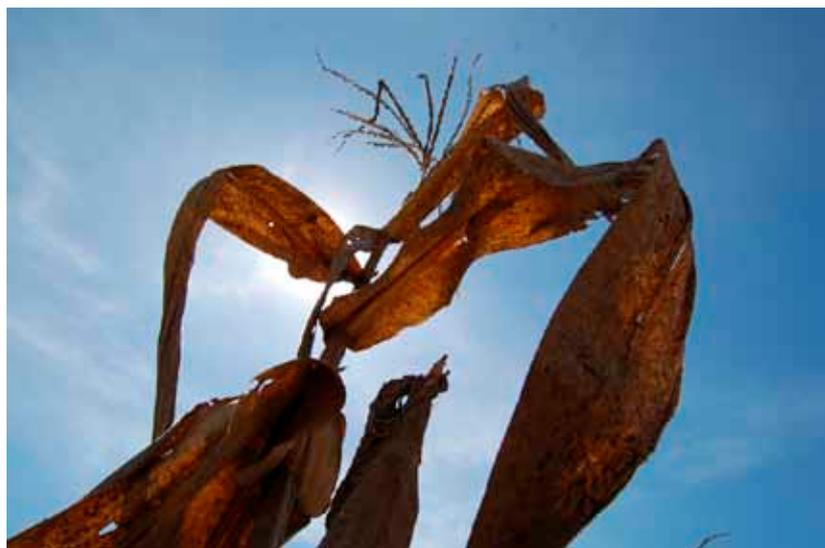
Moti Daba Fufa, a youth leader in his congregation of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, praised the use of social media in grappling with environmental justice. “We met each other from different countries and got to raise issues from our different angles.”

Eighty percent of the participants came from Lutheran churches, including pastors, youth and women leaders. “The conference has been a great success because it has engaged our church members at the grass roots to engage theologically on critical issues such as climate change and economic justice,” Schmidt added.

Some of the input for the virtual conference is still available at

<http://lwfconference.org/?p=72>

18 May 2012



25 October 2011, San Francisco Menéndez, Abuachapán, El Salvador: The sun is shining again but Tropical Depression 12E has left devastated fields in its wake. © LWF/DWS Central America/M. Boulogne

In his keynote address Kumi Naidoo, executive director of Greenpeace International, criticized the “business as usual approach” to getting the world aligned and moving toward a clean green energy direction. He described climate change as an urgent cross-cutting issue “that threatens the very fundamental existence of human life on this planet” and stressed the need to broaden the base of those engaged in order to move the issue forward.

and climate change; and bringing them together—and asking what can we do as a faith community?”

Peruvian activist Esther Hinojosa spoke about the struggle of women in mining areas battling both environmental degradation and poverty. Lutheran theologians Rev. Dr Monica Jyotsna Melanchton of Gurukul Theological Seminary in Chennai, India, and Rev. Dr Barbara Rossing from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, USA explored

Churches Encouraged to Offer Safe Places for Forced Migrants

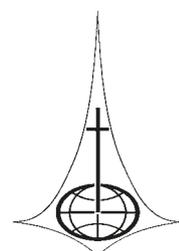
LWF Symposium Underlines Centrality of Trust in Relationships

GENEVA (LWI) – Churches accompanying forced migrants should consider adding “remembering and reconciliation as a fifth and sixth ‘R’ to the ‘4R’” approach in refugee work, a Lutheran pastor told participants in

a Lutheran World Federation (LWF) symposium discussing the notion of trust in a multi-disciplinary approach to work.

In a moving presentation, Dr habil. Drea Fröchtling, a pastor of

the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover (Germany), spoke of the major psychological and spiritual challenges in restoring trust in the aftermath of trauma based on her work with a group of female survivors



of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in a context of civil conflict.

Fröchtling explained the 4R approach alluding to repatriation, rehabilitation, reconstruction and resettlement in refugee work, and suggested an additional role for churches in such settings.

Congregations, she said, can be safe spaces to remember—tell stories of violence, injustice and human rights abuses, and therefore provide a framework for alternative discourse on survival and victimhood. They can also be a place for reconciliation, offering justice and reconnection between victims/survivors and perpetrators, and between parties and individuals.

Describing her work at the symposium organized by the LWF



Lutheran pastor Dr Drea Fröchtling delivering her paper at the Trust workshop.
© LWF/M. Haas



A cross section of participants at the LWF workshop.
© LWF/M. Haas

Department for Theology and Public Witness (DTPW), Fröchtling pointed out that for victims of forced migration with nobody to turn to, prayer emerged as an important coping mechanism. A mental recollection of central biblical passages was essential for all the survivors, she noted, adding how one shared Bible became a source of hope, and was “seen as a portable home, the only home they had left.”

Post-Trust Society

We live in “a post-trust society” marked by distrust and suspicion, said Rev. Rudolf Renfer, a Reformed

Swiss pastor, recently retired as director of the LWF Human Resources Office. He underscored the importance of trust building as a human resources management tool focusing not only on individual job satisfaction, but also on the success of the organization and its models of cooperation.

Dr Christoph Stückelberger, founder and executive director of Globethics.net, which provides an electronic platform for ethical reflection and action, said some of the factors that build trust include trustworthy persons and institutions with characteristics such as competence, reliability, integrity, honesty, openness and a caring attitude.

But he also listed weaknesses that undermine trust in politics, including greed, egoism, narcissism, nepotism and mistrust, among others, and cautioned that the present lack of trust in politics was explosive.

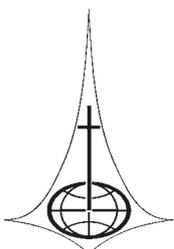
In a paper on trust in the medical field, Dr Samia Hurst, professor at the Institute of Biomedical Ethics at the University of Geneva, said doctors who were not trusted could not obtain the information needed to treat patients well.

“None of us can ‘do’ medicine on our own. We need trust to collaborate in fostering this common good,” said Hurst, who is also president of the Swiss Society for Biomedical Ethics.

Electronic Media

On trust and the electronic media, Stéphane Gally, responsible for the design of publications and web at the LWF communications office, argued that “trust is about people, not tools.”

He identified three pillars of trust in cyberspace—identity, reputation and output—which are easy to spoof, but also to verify online. Electronic media, he said, enables users to bypass hierarchies as high-ranking people can be reached fairly easily and very often directly. It facilitates access to social circles, which again make it easy to corroborate informa-



tion through “someone who knows someone.”

The symposium’s organizer, Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, DTPW study secretary for Lutheran Theology and Practice, pointed out that in the last three years, the collapse of financial and banking institutions had inflicted severe losses in investments. There was growing unemployment and conditions had worsened for people living on the margins of society.

Other speakers were Prof. Sandro Cattacin, a sociologist teaching at the University of Geneva, and Prof. Edward Dommen, a Quaker and specialist in economic ethics. Respondents included Anna Biondi, deputy director of the Bureau for Workers’ Activities at the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Prof. Moses Cui from Liaoning University in China, among others.

At the end of the symposium, participants listed a range of top-

ics that merit further research and reflection. These include the relationship between trust and justice; relations between trust and truth; the importance of openness and transparency; and possibilities of building structures of trust.

(Written for LWI by John Zarocostas)

15 May 2012

Lutheran Churches in Mekong Identify Gender Justice as Priority

Pledge to Work Collectively to Be More Effective in Mission

GENEVA (LWI) – Representatives from Lutheran churches in Asia’s Mekong region have underlined gender justice and women’s ordination as priorities, following an appeal to address the growing inequalities in the participation and leadership of women among churches there.

Addressing the Mekong Mission Forum (MMF) and Partners’ Consultation held 16-20 May at Yangon, Myanmar, Myanmar theologian Dr Anna May Say Pa called for the rejection of “religious and cultural norms and practice that denigrate and marginalize people because of race, sex, age, class among others” and pressed for empowerment and opportunities for the marginalized, including the indigenous.

She appealed for leadership models that are based on the servanthood of Jesus rather than on power and exclusion.

Pa, former principal of the Myanmar Institute of Theology, urged the 60 delegates from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in the Mekong region, mission agencies and consultants to take up an ecumenical approach to leadership that would transform and empower the church.

Discussion focused on transformation, empowerment and reconciliation within the diaconal life of the churches and they were urged to

work collectively and ecumenically to be more effective in their mission in society and to emphasize the “priesthood of all believers” as they engage in the world.

The MMF consultation rejected “top-down” and “giver-receiver” mission models, calling for the equipping of people for self-sustenance and independence. There were also pleas for reconciliation where conflict exists within or among churches and in society at large.

Participants proposed greater emphasis on capacity building in holistic mission, especially in diakonia and proclamation, and emergency preparedness, and engagement in disaster response. They noted the

continuing need for training and empowerment, advancement in theological education and information sharing and cooperation among MMF members.

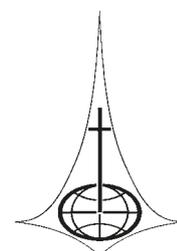
Greater awareness and ownership of diakonia in the churches also were needed, the representatives indicated.

MMF moderator, Rev. Dr Traugott Farnbacher, secretary for Papua New Guinea, Pacific and East Asia for Mission OneWorld, expressed hope that the meeting would help enhance future engagement among MMF members.

LWF Asia secretary Rev. Dr William Chang emphasized the urgency of empowering Lutheran churches in the region to engage in holistic mis-



Mekong Mission Forum 2012 participants
© LWF/W. Chang



sion, especially proclamation, and a holistic response in particular to the needs of marginalized people, citing emergency preparedness in areas that are prone to storms, flooding or drought, among other disasters.

The MMF is comprised of churches in Cambodia, Hong Kong, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, and partners from Australia, Europe and the United States of America. It

meets annually to facilitate cooperation, with the LWF Asia Desk serving in a coordinating role.

1 June 2012

Vice-President Malasusa Welcomes New Church to the LWF

Three German LWF Member Churches Merge to Become the "Northern Church"

GENEVA (LWI) – In brilliant sunshine almost 20,000 people met on Whitsunday (Pentecost), 27 May, in Ratzeburg (Germany) for a colorful festival to celebrate the founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany. The church was formed through the merger of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mecklenburg, the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Pomeranian Evangelical Church. "It was a perfect example of a founding festival of biblical dimensions," declared Bishop Gerhard Ulrich (Schleswig) with great satisfaction.

Many national and international visitors were in attendance to mark this festive occasion. In addition to the special service of worship, there was a rich and varied program, fea-

turing a communal sit-down lunch, stage performances and many other cultural offerings. The guest list included German Federal President Joachim Gauck, himself a former pastor from Mecklenburg, and the premiers of the three federal states involved.

Presiding Bishop Alex G. Malasusa, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, attended the founding festival as an ecumenical guest and representative of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

On behalf of LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, Malasusa, who is LWF vice president for the African region, welcomed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany to the LWF and promised that it would find ac-

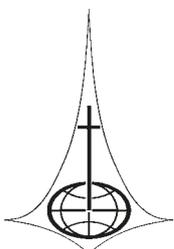
companiment and communion there. "You will certainly notice that you are by no means alone in your continuing commitment to galvanizing local energies and gifts, nor in your work for regional and global concerns." The three churches making up the Northern Church had been "convinced members" of the LWF, Malasusa affirmed, adding that he was looking forward to the new church's contribution to the Lutheran Communion.

At Ratzeburg's townhall square, 3,500 guests from the entire Northern Church had watched and participated in the festive service via huge screens. "Trimming our sails is the motto of this founding service," were (Greifswald) Bishop Dr Hans-Jürgen Abromeit's opening words. "On board a ship that is an order," he added. "Today it is an invitation to everyone." After the service the invitation continued: 5,000 people ate sandwiches, sausage, cheese and strawberries at 625 tables. "This first communal meal of the Northern Church was incredibly moving," said Peter Schulze, its organizer.

For the city mayor, Rainer Voss, the festival was "like a small-scale Kirchentag." The event, which had run smoothly thanks to hundreds of volunteers, was "something very special in the history of the city," said Voss. At the central town hall square, the atmosphere was still exuberant during the evening of the festival. Over 2,500 people attended a concert, the celebrations then concluding with a blessing and people waving sparklers to make a sea of light.



Bishop Alex G. Malasusa (Tanzania), Vice President for the African region, brings greetings on behalf of the LWF at the founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany. © Pittkowski/Nordkirche



The union of the three churches is the first union of its kind across the former intra-German border. The new church has about 2.3 million members and is now the third largest LWF member church in Germany.

On Whitsunday Bishop Gerhard Ulrich from the North Elbian region, who is also the chairperson of the German National Committee of the LWF (GNC/LWF), was elected Chairperson of the Provisional

Church Executive of the Northern Church. The LWF Council will officially welcome the new church to the LWF at its meeting in June.

1 June 2012

Interview: Tanzanian Presiding Bishop on Interfaith Delegation to Nigeria

Support Religious Leaders as Bridge Builders

Presiding Bishop Alex G. Malasusa, vice president of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for the African region, took part in an international Muslim-Christian delegation to Nigeria, co-organized by the World Council of Churches, on 22-26 May 2012.

The objective of the solidarity visit was to convey the concerns and anxieties of the international community for the people and religious and political leadership of the West African country, following recent acts of violence against citizens and places of worship there.

Lutheran World Information (LWI) interviewed Malasusa, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, after the visit.

LWI: Please give us as an impression of what you witnessed on the ground?

Bishop Malasusa: The delegation traveled to Abuja, Kaduna and Jos, and we met with local leaders, both Christians and Muslims. We also listened to and met individuals who had been directly affected by the violence. The tension is real: the many security checks, which are absolutely necessary after what had happened; the unspoken fear among ordinary people wondering if this would happen again, to who and where?

In Jos, a group of women made a strong appeal for an end to all acts of violence in the name of religion, whether carried out by a group or arising from differences in the community. It does not matter whether

you are a Christian or a Muslim, they said. The violence is mainly perpetrated by men but it is the women and children who suffer the most—either killed, maimed or displaced, but in many cases they are also raped.

LWI: How are religious leaders playing the role of bridge builders for peace and reconciliation between communities that are hurting? What challenges do they face?

Bishop Malasusa: The religious leaders play a crucial role in helping communities heal, and also in just listening to people and their fears and concerns. In Kaduna, the local governor said he wondered how God viewed Christians and Muslims if religion makes us fight each other.

In Abuja, the delegation visited the mosque and held discussions with the Imam. We also visited the ecumenical cathedral in the city. One of the questions I had was “How can religious leaders stand in front of their followers and give them comfort and hope when they themselves are hurting inside?” It is urgent that we support them through such visits and in other ways so that they can build peace and reconciliation.

LWI: What message do you bring back to the global Lutheran communion, especially about signs of hope that you witnessed?

Bishop Malasusa: I felt that our visit was very much appreciated; we were received warmly, and both religious and government leaders, as well as community members, felt

there was solidarity from the faith community around the world.

I learned that religion is a very sensitive issue even in Africa where it is assumed that people are openly religious. As religious leaders, we need to be very cautious about what we say. Fortunately, both Islam and Christianity affirm peace and, as Christians, we are called to be peacemakers.

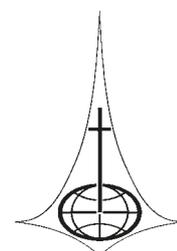
From a practical point, I would encourage that we look again at the interfaith profile in our theological seminaries. From Nigeria, I was encouraged to envision elements of Islamology in theological education so that our church workers and especially pastors are exposed very early to the other faiths.

In our churches, confirmation classes would be a good place to start teaching the basics about other religions and how people of different faiths relate. In today’s global village, we cannot afford to exclude the reality of other faiths. The Lutheran communion needs to support our churches living in such contexts so that they can accompany their faithful and nurture interfaith relations.

Interview conducted in June 2012

The LWF has two member churches in Nigeria—the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria and the Lutheran Church of Nigeria—representing over 2 million members.

The joint statement of the Christian-Muslim delegation to Nigeria is available at: www.oikoumene.org.



FEATURE: Jubilation after Historic Women's Ordination in Cameroon

"We Want to Contribute Not to Compete"

NGAOUNDÉRE, Cameroon/GENEVA (LWI) – It was one of many such national church events. But at some moments, tears of joy and disbelief rolled down Jeannette Ada's face as she participated in the liturgical order that would add four pastors to the roster of ordained ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (EELC).

Today was the historic turning point for the church she had served for decades. Ada, 45, and two other female theologians would become the first ordained women in the EELC.

"The path towards ordination was not easy," she told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* in an interview after the festive eucharistic service at the Cathédrale du Millénaire in Ngaoundéré, northern Cameroon, on 6 May.

Over the years of study and work in the church, women theologians had received support and encouragement but also suffered discrimination and humiliation.

"Today is a glorious day. I lack the words to say what I feel after being ordained," she said following the ceremony, attended also by local and regional Lutheran and ecumenical guests, and representatives of partner churches from other parts of the world, including from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

The mother of four, currently pursuing a doctorate in theology, said she attributed the prevailing opposition to women's ordination to lack of awareness about gender equality, which is openly manifested in many ways in the congregations, including having only male catechist teachers, evangelists and preachers. It is also visible in statements and messages that disparage the value of women's participation in decision-making.

Ada is director of the national movement Women for Christ, re-

gional coordinator for the LWF Women in Church and Society (WICAS) network and coordinator of women's programs for the Lutheran Communion in Central and Western Africa (LUCCWA), one of the LWF's sub-regional bodies. She was one of the respondents to the keynote address at the July 2010 LWF Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany.

in 2005. I had to wait a bit longer to see this historic day arrive. We had people in the congregations who discouraged us but also those who were encouraging."

The mother of three studied theology and education locally, and went on to teach religion and ethics in EELC schools, later becoming the first headmistress of a special school for the hearing impaired. Married



Jubilation outside Cathédrale du Millénaire in Ngaoundéré, following the historic women's ordination in the EELC. © LWF/E. Mungure

She said her ordination alongside that of Rita Dewa and Eliane Djjobdi contributed not only to a sense of personal fulfillment and development but she hoped it would also open the doors for women to become church leaders nationally and at other levels. "I took my vows and I feel committed to a ministry that is both important and sensitive," she concluded.

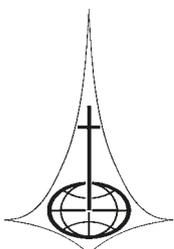
Long Years of Patience

Djjobdi, 37, described this as the day that she had "harvested the fruits of long years of patience and resistance. My male classmates were ordained

to a theology student, currently she is pursuing further theological studies at the Protestant University of Central Africa in Yaoundé, while at the same time taking up special education courses at the school for the hearing impaired (EFESDA).

"We come with our gifts and our talents, something new to contribute. We want to contribute and not to compete. We are going to rely on Christ to conquer prejudice and not on ourselves. The Lord will be our strength," she added.

For Dewa, 40, who waited 12 years between her theological studies and ordination, this had been a very





(Left to right) Rev. Eliane Djobdi, Rev. Ada Maina and Rev. Rita Dewa, the first women ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon. © LWF/E. Mungure

hindering women from ordination and leadership responsibilities in the name of culture.”

Mungure, an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, said that while there were varying opinions because of different legacies in the churches, “not all African culture is against women’s leadership in religious and spiritual matters.” Throughout Africa’s history, there had been women leaders in all spheres of society. “But what we see in some churches and communities is a result of power dynamics and gender misinterpretation and misuse,” she added.

LWF Secretary for WICAS Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt said the women’s ordination in the EELC was not only historic but “it goes a long way in affirming the commitment of being an inclusive communion where women’s vocation in the ordained ministry is received and embraced as a gift in the missional task of the church, and as an expression to practice gender justice.”

The ordination was also a first for Saidou Abba, 36, who became EELC’s first Fulani pastor. The Fulani people are traditionally nomadic cattle keepers in Central and Western Africa and they are mostly Muslims.

“Today I have become a shepherd of people. They are made in the image of God and their souls are precious in the eyes of God,” said Abba after the ordination, also attended by some Muslim family members and friends.

The EELC joined the LWF in 1971. It has over 296,000 members served by around 180 pastors.

(Interviews for this feature article were conducted by Simon Djobdi, EELC communications coordinator.)

14 June 2012

long process. “There were five women in my graduation class. One passed away, another dropped out. The others are still waiting,” she said.

“I am the only one elected to this office. I thank the women from all over the world who have accompanied us during these times of waiting. They helped to lighten the burden for us,” added the mother of three.

Integration into Parishes

For EELC National Bishop Dr Thomas Nyiwé, the question of women’s ordination was complex in Cameroon. Some argued that the country was too influenced by Muslim practices and that ordaining women would hurt interfaith relations. Others said it would affect relations with other churches that don’t ordain women, while some said it was not suitable to African culture.

But, he explained, the church had set two theological goals in 2000: the episcopacy and the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry. Episcopacy was accepted in 2007,

and today the EELC has ten regions (dioceses) each headed by a regional bishop.

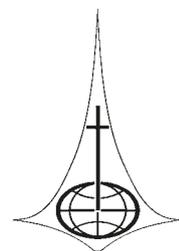
Nyiwe especially thanked the LWF for the support it had given the church over the years with the issue of women’s ordination. He however noted that the three women ordained already work in different institutions in posts that lay people can fill. The next steps will involve discussions with the regional church leadership with the goal of integrating the women pastors into parishes.

“There are regions that do not always agree to work with women. We will not force them. We will start with those that are favorable to the idea, and continue to raise awareness wherever people still hesitate,” he explained.

Power Dynamics and Gender Misuse

Preaching at the ordination ceremony, LWF Area Secretary for Africa Rev. Dr Elieshi Mungure said, “It is time for the church in Africa to stop

**More LWI News at
www.lutheranworld.org/lwf**



THE LWF ON WORLD REFUGEE DAY

20 June 2012

“One refugee without hope is one too many,” was the theme of the United Nations World Refugee Day 2012, marked on 20 June.

When The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was founded in 1947, its first service program provided assistance to refugees in Europe. Today the LWF continues to work with and for refugees and displaced persons. The LWF World Service provides service and care for 1.2 million of the world’s refugees and displaced persons, working in 18 refugee camps in Africa and Asia. In these camps people from many nations live side by side seeking refuge from drought and conflict.

The feature stories in this section offer more insights. Read also the Message from the LWF General Secretary on World Refugee Day and other stories at: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/education-hope-future-wrd2012.html

South Sudan: Back Again at the Reception Center

Overcrowding at Kakuma Camp as Southern Sudanese Seek Safety

KAKUMA, Kenya/GENEVA (LWI) – Violence along the border between Sudan and South Sudan over territorial control and resources, and clashes between communities during cattle raids in the newly independent South are bringing back hundreds of families to a refugee camp in neighboring Kenya, where they lived several years ago.

The growing numbers are putting pressure on already strained services at the Kakuma refugee camp in northwestern Kenya, according to humanitarian organizations providing services there, including The Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

Established in 1992 to accommodate 90,000 refugees, it had 96,000 people by 22 May, and the numbers are expected to reach 100,000 by the end of June. The new arrivals are mainly from South Sudan, with more than 1,000 registered per month since February, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics. The relatively high influx from Sudan brings the total number registered from both countries to 34,000 refugees, second only to Somalis who comprise 47,000 people.

The LWF is in discussions with the local authorities and UNHCR about taking part in the establishment of a new camp that is planned to accommodate the increasing numbers.

Seeking Refuge Again

Nob Jakot, 19, is back at the reception center where he was registered for the



Playful singing and dancing at the Kakuma reception center © LWF/DWS/R. Karimi

first time in 2000, then slightly older than six years accompanied by older relatives, and they lived in Kakuma camp until 2002, when they opted to go back home to in search of better opportunities.

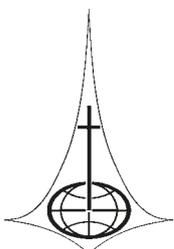
Tension over local election results in South Kordofan state, Sudan’s oil-producing region, prompted recent protests that were followed by military attacks on civilians. “[They] raided and shot our people, bombed our homes and farms,” recalls Jakot, who was in primary school in Umsardiba village, which is inhabited by many communities who support South Sudan.

His family members—mother, father and seven other siblings—were

at first scattered as they fled for their lives but they reunited later and eventually found their way to a congested camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South Sudan’s capital Juba. Jakot and his brothers proceeded to Kakuma camp.

Namach Chuol Malual, 26, from Jonglei State in South Sudan, escaped to Kakuma with her three children, two brothers, one sister and a nephew after cattle raiders attacked their village, Akobo, near the southeastern border with Ethiopia.

“We all ran in different directions, including my mother and the other siblings,” she said. But her father and husband were not so lucky: “The



attackers shot them dead,” she adds. Her eldest brother has been missing since.

At Akobo trading center, government officials told them that there was no food or shelter available, but military vehicles transported them to a UNHCR transit camp in Jonglei, and then to the IDP camp in Juba. “I decided to join a group of asylum seekers who were organizing public transport to come to Kakuma,” she says.

Others like 32-year-old Rina Mulangari “have not been to Kakuma before and know no one here.” Before the escalation of military attacks on Kualip village in South Kordofan, “I used to farm the fields for my family’s food, and my husband was self-employed,” says the mother of two young children, one born in a nearby village where she and others fleeing villagers had sought refuge. “The military airplanes’ bombing during the daytime was bad for my unborn baby, I would have lost the baby,” she recalls.

Psychological Support

The LWF runs the reception center at Kakuma camp, where new arrivals are registered and provided with basic needs such as food, clothing,

shelter and household goods. Female-headed households, unaccompanied minors, one to two-person families and child-headed households are considered to be the most traumatized and thus needing more time to settle down.

Families such as Mulangari’s can stay up to two weeks at the center, which will allow child protection and gender units to conduct a special category assessment, including tracing any residents from her community or distant relatives or neighbors who would be willing to offer the family social support.

Malual, whose family arrived in Kakuma on 20 April, says the reception services were good. “At least I can rest and the children are getting used to the changed climate and surroundings. The people here are welcoming, warm and friendly,” she adds.

Many of the refugees have survived traumatic experiences and require psychological support, says Okello Arweny, the LWF area coordinator for Kakuma.

“Support by professional social workers will make it easy for the majority of refugees to quickly settle down in the camp with fewer incidences of violence, community conflict and delinquency,” he explained.

The center can accommodate up to 600 people a day

Services Are Run Down

Through its Department for World Service (DWS) country program in Kenya-Djibouti, the LWF manages some of the services to refugees at Kakuma camp, which for more than two decades was home to mainly Southern Sudanese fleeing the conflict at home. With peace agreements and independence in July 2011, tens of thousands repatriated to South Sudan, where the LWF also supports returnees.

DWS Director Rev. Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, recently visiting the Kakuma camp, expressed deep concern about the upsurge of violence between the neighboring countries. “Last year, we were hoping that after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement [2005] and the creation of the newest nation of South Sudan, Kakuma would soon be empty and that Southern Sudanese refugees would be able to go home,” he noted.

The camp is now run down and needing funds to rebuild, says Hitzler. “I was deeply embarrassed when we visited a school building in which the LWF provides educational services. There were classrooms without books, old desks and chairs for half a dozen students while the classroom fills up with hundreds of students.”

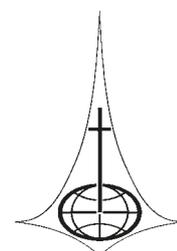
“It is a miracle that teachers and students can still perform under such circumstances. But it is a shame that neither UNHCR nor LWF is able to find funds to improve these conditions,” adds the head of the LWF humanitarian arm, which provides services to refugees and other marginalized people in more than 30 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Sign of Hope

Some additional help arrived recently at Kakuma’s reception center. Through an appeal of the global



*Southern Sudanese register for non-food items.
© LWF/Melany Markham*



emergency network ACT Alliance, of which the LWF is a founding member, USD 58,000 was donated to expand the kitchen facilities, pay additional staff and install water tanks and children’s play equipment.

Despite the difficult situation at Kakuma, Hitzler says he is heartened by the fact that students from 13

nations are learning to live peacefully together and to understand each other in the camp.

“It is for me a sign of hope for peace and reconciliation in Africa. [...] I pray that the people who now live in Kakuma will soon leave the camp and spread all over the African continent and beyond their experi-

ence of a peaceful co-existence of various cultural, ethnic, religious, national and political backgrounds.”

(Written for LWI by Rose Karimi, LWF gender equity and human rights officer at Kakuma camp)

25 May 2012

Higher Education Remains a Challenge for Somali Refugees in Djibouti

LWF to Assess Secondary School Program Needs

ALI ADDEH, Djibouti/GENEVA (LWI) – Shafi Abdu Lahi, a 15-year-old grade eight pupil at the Ali-Addeh refugee camp in Djibouti, recently concluded his final exams. Education has been very good, says the young Somali refugee, but there are no prospects for studying beyond primary school.

Alongside thousands of refugees, he awaits relocation to Holl-Holl camp, which was closed down in 2006 following repatriation of refugees to Somaliland. Since mid-2011, drought and insecurity increased the influx of Somalis into neighboring countries including Djibouti. By 11 June, Djibouti was hosting 16,449 refugees from Somalia according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Nearly all of them reside at the Ali-Addeh camp, which was designed to

accommodate a maximum of 7,000 people.

Lahi is just one of the 83 pupils who completed their final grade eight exams and are not sure of the next step in their education life. They could cross over to neighboring Ethiopia to pursue secondary education there but this option is too costly.

As a result, he will just add to the number of youths already idling in the camp. As he said, “Some [former] students they grazing [sic], they eat *khat* [a local stimulant drug plant]. They clean the ways [street] in Djibouti because they don’t have any high school [education].”

“We are young students; we need to continue our education because education is life, our life is dependent on education,” Lahi added.

He says his dream of becoming a business entrepreneur is hampered by the lack of a secondary school in the camp. “If you don’t have any education, you will not achieve your goals, your objectives.”

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has been involved in the provision of education at Ali-Addeh since 2009. For a long time, education provided in this refugee camp has been limited to the primary school level, without any secondary system or vocational training programs. Currently there is only one primary school program hosting 1,573 pupils, and four pre-schools with 987 pupils.

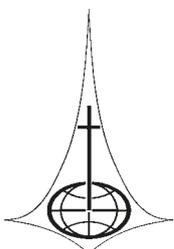
This has been partly as a result of the difference in the national languages of the host country (French-speaking) and the refugees’ country of origin (Somali-speaking). However, the LWF will assess the needs for secondary education or vocational training system in September, according to Robai Naliaka, project coordinator for the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) program in Djibouti.



Kindergarten pupils taking a lesson in one of the tent class rooms in Ali Addeh camp, Djibouti.
© LWF/DWS Kenya-Djibouti

Children with Disabilities

Recently, the LWF constructed four kindergarten classrooms for children aged three to six who had previously been studying in tents. “Due to the hot temperatures, the tents at times would become stuffy and because of



poor ventilation this led to fainting by some of the pupils,” says Feqede Moreda, LWF child protection assistant at the camp.

In addition, the lack of a school feeding program means most youngsters miss out on education, as they are sent out by their parents to beg for money and food in Djibouti city, adds Moreda.

The system does not allow for children with disabilities adequately to benefit from education.

“Pupils with disabilities are not able to enroll in the camp school because the teachers do not have the capacity to assist them and [these] children also lack wheelchairs to move over the rugged terrain of Ali-Addeh from their homes to the school,” adds Mustapha Warssama, the school’s headmaster.

Aweis Mohamed Ahmed, one of those selected for relocation to Holl-Holl camp, is optimistic that he will continue with his work as a teacher in the new camp. However, he acknowledges that, even in the new camp, the education system will only cater to primary education.

Limited Resources

Still, given the large number of children enrolling for kindergarten, there is a need to have more classrooms in



A group of parents and pupils celebrate the opening of new pre-school facilities in Ali-Addeh refugee camp, Djibouti. © LWF/Melany Markham

the primary school to accommodate the pupils once they graduate from the pre-school. Paul Lagat, LWF quality assurance and standards officer, explains that the current average number of students per class in the primary school is 71, far above the acceptable standard. In addition, some of the classrooms are too small.

“Due to the influx of Somali refugees and the closure of the Holl-Holl camp in 2006, the camp [Ali-Addeh] has overstretched its capacity and hence the need for re-opening [Holl-Holl],” says UNHCR field officer, Dr Rafou Makou.

The new camp set to be opened near the old Holl-Holl site in mid-September is expected to hold more

than 3,500 Somalis who have arrived so far this year. The UNHCR notes that the influx of refugees is straining already limited resources, and much work needs to be done to care for the increasing numbers.

The LWF Djibouti program began in 2009 as part of the Kenya program, and includes livelihood support to refugees through small grants for income-generating activities.

(By LWF/DWS Djibouti staff)

Read more about the LWF’s assistance to refugees:

<http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/wordpress/refugeeday2012/>

20 June 2012

Chad: A Profession That Was Hard to Stop

LWF Chad Works with Women to Stop Female Genital Mutilation

MARO, Chad/GENEVA (LWI) – Sitting in the heat of the midday sun in the small town of Maro, southern Chad, Suzane Dangel, a refugee from the Central African Republic, explains how The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has helped changed her life.

Dangel, 60, has been living in the Moula refugee camp close to the border between Chad and the Central African Republic since it was established in 2008. The camp hosts more than 5,800 refugees from the Central African Republic.

The LWF Chad program manages the camp, working closely with vulnerable women.

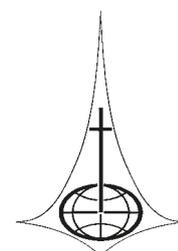
Dangel, who had worked as a female circumciser in her home country, first continued to practice the tradition at Moula. Today, the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) program in Chad provides new opportunities for women who previously engaged in this practice.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a cultural practice that has been around for more than 2,000 years. It

involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other procedures that injure the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is carried out on young girls between infancy and age 15.

In Africa, an estimated 92 million girls of 10 years of age and older have undergone FGM, according to the World Health Organization.

“Last year I circumcised two teenage girls in the camp. It’s our tradition and it brings me income. The police arrested and imprisoned





Suzane Dangel has stopped working as a female circumciser following awareness raising and livelihood generation efforts by LWF/DWS Chad in Moula camp. © LWF/DWS Chad/A. Palmén

me for six days because this practice is illegal in Chad,” Dangel said.

LWF Chad has been organizing training workshops and activities on health issues and sexual awareness in order to empower women in the camp. Because of this support, the women can sell handicrafts and food products in the local market. The LWF also provides goats for the women and their families to improve their livelihoods.

“I will never again circumcise a girl, because now I understand the severe health problems that it’s causing for women, such as infections and bleeding problems. This has been a tradition in our culture for decades and brought an income for my family. It was hard to stop that,” Dangel explained.

In communities where FGM is practiced, it is widely believed that a woman cannot get married if she has not undergone the operation, and

that a girl will not become a woman without going through the procedure. However, Dangel said she is now determined not to return to carrying out the practice.



Sudanese refugee girls at LWF-run camp in Chad © LWF/DWS Chad/Anna Palmén

“I’m very grateful for the help and support that I have received from the LWF. I hope I never have to practice again my old profession,” she added.

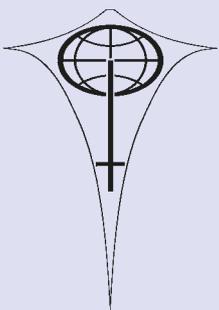
LWF/DWS began working with Central African refugees in the south of the country in 2008. The current activities emphasize self-sufficiency and increased food production in host communities. At the Moula camp, the LWF is responsible for agriculture, education and psycho-social assistance, and handles the camp’s monthly food distribution.

(Written for LWI by Anna Palmén, in Maro, Chad)

Read more about the LWF’s assistance to refugees:

<http://blogs.lutheranworld.org/wordpress/refugeeday2012/>

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