

Includes LWF Sunday 2013
Liturgy

Lutheran World Information

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God's Free Gift of Grace in Market-Driven Times

2013 Reformation Day Letter from the LWF General Secretary

GENEVA – As the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 approaches, the question intensifies about the relevance of the theological insight that surfaced in those remote days. What is the meaning for today's people of the message that we are justified before God not because of who we are and what we do, but because of who God is and what God does?

This question about the relevance of reformation after 500 years of history was the subject of intense reflection among members of a special committee of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) tasked with developing a conceptual framework for LWF's approach to the Reformation anniversary.

"Not for sale," was a phrase strongly emphasized in the final report of the LWF Special Committee on "Luther 2017 – 500 years of the Reformation," which was approved by the LWF Council in June 2013. The phrase links directly to Martin Luther's strong and firm stance on what had become subjected to trade, yet it actually escapes the control and dominion of human beings and cannot, therefore become goods to be exchanged in commercial relationships: God's abundant and overflowing grace that forgives and calls people into new life. What God has given for free through the works and merits of Jesus

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LWF Sunday 2013: Celebrating God's Gift of Grace I-IV

Wanted: Climate Justice Heroes!

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is responding to the urgent challenge of climate change by engaging and training youth through an online game, "The LWF Journey to Climate Justice."

On 26 October, youth from member churches, partners and related agencies throughout the Lutheran communion will have the chance to "journey around the world" discovering the vital work for climate justice that is already taking place, said Caroline Richter, LWF Youth Secretary.

Participants will get to know each other, work together and become "climate heroes" as they learn through various speakers about efforts for climate justice, contribute their own ideas and become active "climate change makers" online and offline, she said.

Participants will compete with each other by answering quiz questions. They also will propose ideas for the LWF delegation to the 19th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations (UN) Framework Convention on Climate Change in November. An online "youth hostel" will provide opportunity to chat.

Keynote presentations of 16 projects from around the world will highlight activities such as urban gardening, waste management, theology of the marginalized, sustainable city projects, tree planting and climate camps.

"The LWF Journey to Climate Justice" is part of ongoing efforts by the LWF Youth Desk to engage youth on climate change using the internet, Richter said.

It is also part of the Department for Mission and Development Capacity for Advocacy program, which aims to get member churches engaged in advocacy for justice and human rights alongside ecumenical partners, civil society and the marginalized.

Register for the online game: <http://climate.lwfyouth.org/>

Read more about the event: www.lutheranworld.org/content/event-lwf-journey-climate-justice

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Christ can't be subjected to trade and profit making!

With this earnest word of protest, the joy and the freshness of the gospel shone anew on a multitude of people that was otherwise desperate for the evidence of God's favor and mercy, which they needed to apprehend for their broken and ambivalent lives.

Framed this way, the vitality of this core perspective of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it unfolded in the 16th century, acquires breathtaking actuality. It challenges the constant and ongoing attempts to subjugate, control and trade what ultimately cannot be defined as a commodity, and should therefore never be subjected to trade. It questions the uncontested and prevalent market idolatry that is so fundamentally reshaping the value system of individuals and societies, undermining social cohesion and challenging financial and ecological balances.

The afore-mentioned special committee offered three specific dimensions to illustrate the relevance of that medieval "not for sale."

- **Salvation is not for sale:** While there won't be any value in reediting old disputes of the 16th century between Catholics and Lutherans, which in any case have been substantially reframed after the signature of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in 1999, the Reformation anniversary still offers a great opportunity for deep self-examination in view of ongoing trends that continue pushing religion into the market place.

Indeed, people's questions and expectations have shifted in many respects today, yet the longing for wholeness among millions, their aspirations for a dignified life and the painful intuition of multitudes that only miracles can secure their prosperity, continue to nurture a flourishing religious market. The message of justification by faith alone is not self-evident and should never be taken for granted, even among churches in the Reformation tradition, as they too have their struggles in letting God's justice prevail over our human sense of justice. Salvation and wholeness, healed relationships, life in dignity, the longing for prosperity—none of these are for sale.

- **Human beings are not for sale:** Recent research publicized on the conditions of foreign labor force in big construction projects raises the appalling question: is slavery really over? Or did it not find other, more subtle ways to continue with its unacceptable practices of trading with the labor force, organs, children and women—human beings altogether? For hundreds of thousands, human trafficking continues to be a nightmare. The liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ speaks to these realities and to these people too, laying a foundation of solid values that affirm a clear stance: human beings, their rights and their dignity are not commodities to be traded. They are not for sale.
- **Creation is not for sale:** Admittedly, when Luther spoke out in the 16th century he did not think

much about creation as something to be seen in the context of God's redeeming action. In those days, ecological challenges were not at the same scale or scope as they are today. During my recent travels to African LWF member churches I have become aware of the tremendous pressure for safe water, as well as of the ongoing selling or leasing of huge extensions of communal land. Water and land—goods which pastoralist communities were holding in common—are now moving into the market place. They have become commodities, pushing the communities to migration and urban slums. The Reformation reference to "not for sale" could become a strong contribution to the public and global discussion by reminding the human family about the very fact that there are dimensions and aspects in life and this world, which—for the sake of both eternal and earthly life—must never become commodities.

There is a liberating power in the message of justification by faith alone. It has the potential to reach far beyond the hearts of believers and the walls of the church. Yet, it will require the churches to be intentional in their pastoral and diaconal service so that the stories and experiences of women, men, youth and children as they undertake their life journeys are heard, and the freeing message can be received that not everything is to be sold.

Rev. Martin Junge
LWF General Secretary
October 2013

It Takes Courage to Work for Unity

African Region Affirms Commitment to Host 2017 LWF Assembly in Namibia

WINDHOEK, Namibia/GENEVA (LWI) – Leaders of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) visiting member churches in Na-

mbia participated in the handing over of the LWF Assembly symbols from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

Württemberg (Germany) to the United Church Council of Namibia Evangelical Lutheran Churches (UCC-NELC).

During Sunday worship at the Inner-City Lutheran Congregation in the Namibian capital, Windhoek, on 22 September, Presiding Bishop Dr Alex G. Malasusa, LWF Vice-President for the African region, received the LWF Eleventh Assembly symbols—banner, bread and bag—from Württemberg Bishop Dr Frank O. July.

The Württemberg church hosted the July 2010 LWF Assembly, meeting under the theme “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.” At its meeting in June 2013, the LWF Council unanimously accepted an invitation by the three LWF member churches in Namibia—the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) and the German-speaking Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (GELC-ELCIN)—to jointly host the 2017 Twelfth Assembly in Windhoek.

Receiving the symbols on behalf of the African region, Malasusa emphasized that hosting the next LWF assembly was also a commitment by the African region. He then handed over the symbols to ELCRN outgoing Bishop Dr Zephania Kameeta, ELCIN Presiding Bishop Dr Shekutaamba V. V. Nambala and GELC-ELCIN Bishop Erich Hertel.

In his sermon at the Sunday worship, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge encouraged the Namibian Lutheran churches to continue to work for a good, common future, saying he trusted that they would grow even closer together as they sought to achieve their goals of bridging, reconciling and serving both church and society.

The general secretary said: “It takes courage to work for unity, because there seems to be so much that is driving us apart such as history, culture, poverty and violence. Yet God calls us together to express the vision that unity in reconciled diversity is possible. I come with a word of thanks for the courage that is among you, and encouragement that you continue witnessing to unity.”



*LWF delegation with Namibian Prime Minister and church leaders
Photo: LWF/Klaus Rieth*

He also emphasized the need to be in solidarity with each other. “Stories about sharing bread are the most frequent in the Bible. As Christians we are called to share bread. And that is why it is our task to sit together at one table and share our food.”

Serving the Neighbor

Junge led an LWF delegation to Namibia and neighboring Angola from 19 to 24 September, which visited communities that are impacted by severe drought in the two southern African countries. With support from the LWF, the three Namibian churches are coordinating an ACT Alliance drought response initiative that includes a cash relief payout to help families across the country meet their basic food and other needs. In southern Angola, the Department for World Service (DWS) country program and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Angola are distributing food to vulnerable families living in remote areas and supporting efforts to strengthen food security and protect agricultural and livestock assets.

“As a global communion we believe that we should live together and serve one another. Through justification we are free because God has freed us. Free to serve the neighbor. And that is a freedom we can count on,

and which our suffering neighbors can count on,” Junge said in his sermon.

Dr Nashilongo Shivute, Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement greeted the congregation and the visiting Lutheran leaders and thanked the LWF for its longstanding commitment to Namibia. “The LWF was here during our liberation struggle and for the repatriation of our fellow countrymen. And that not just with fine words, but physically with staff and an office here. We will never forget that,” she emphasized.

Worshippers at the Sunday service included Namibian Prime Minister Mr Hage Geingob. LWF delegation members Ms Colleen Cunningham, Moravian Church in South Africa; Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, DWS director; and Rev. Dr Elieshi Mungure, area secretary for Africa at the Department for Mission and Development also attended.

An estimated 800,000 Namibians are faced with critical food and water shortages, and reduced pastures for their livestock as a result of the worst drought in nearly three decades. In southern Angola more than 629,000 people are severely affected by a prolonged dry spell.

(Written for LWI by Klaus Rieth, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, who accompanied the LWF delegation to Namibia.)

LWF Launches Youth Program: “Young Reformers Network”

Ten thousand young reformers for 2017

WITTENBERG, Germany/GENEVA (LWI) – Looking ahead to the Reformation Anniversary in 2017, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has launched its youth program “Young Reformers Network.” It was inaugurated in Wittenberg, Germany, during the 26 September to 1 October meeting of the international steering group that coordinates the initiative.

Participants at the gathering developed the basic structure and framework for the program contents. Over the next four years, the program aims to initiate a series of projects relating to the Reformation involving 10,000 young people in the LWF member churches. The program will make suggestions and offer funding support.

A key area will be the formation of a global network, with a first virtual conference planned for 2014, and a meeting of 175 young adults in 2015 in Wittenberg.

New Challenges for Young People

A central focus of the program will be the contribution youth make to the

church. Young people are the future of the church. But they have to face challenges that have never been seen before, according to Lee Darius Zhen Ying, a steering group member. “These challenges are accompanied by great opportunities, and for this we need ‘ongoing reformation.’” Based on this principle, the Youth Program is associated with one of the three guidelines of the LWF for its activities leading up to the Reformation Anniversary in 2017.

“We want to bring new life and energy into our churches,” said Monica Villareal from the USA. “But that doesn’t mean that everything will be changed, and the churches don’t need to be frightened,” she added.

We want to confront the changing world with our Lutheran identity and our Lutheran heritage,” was how the nine-person Steering Group summarized their plan.

Internet Conferencing and Personal Encounters

As well as the contents of the program, the general structure was also set out.

A network of young people from the LWF member churches will be built up gradually. The first step will be the establishment of an internet platform in the spring of next year.

Young adults will be able to use the platform to exchange ideas about the meaning of Lutheran identity for today and to develop projects together relating to the Reformation, which they would like to implement in their own home churches. The international exchange of ideas would play a crucial role in this: “In the process of presenting our own local projects, we want to build up a global project,” said 26-year-old Gints Graudiņš from Latvia.

On Reformation Day 2014 there will be a big internet conference involving all the active members of the platform. Internet use is taken for granted by the younger generation. Nevertheless it is planned that a selected group of the young reformers will meet in person at the 2015 global youth conference in Wittenberg with delegates from all the LWF member churches.

Alongside the core team there will be more young people involved in developing Reformation projects for their churches, with an estimated 10,000 expected by 2017. While the first results will be seen at the 2017 LWF Twelfth Assembly in Namibia, the steering group emphasized that it will carry on its work after the assembly. “We are Lutherans, we live in ongoing reformation,” 21-year-old Carolina Huth from Argentina added.

The steering group consists of a representative each from the seven world regions of the LWF, along with two creative advisers: Julia Braband (Evangelical Church in Central Germany, for Central Western Europe); Gints Graudiņš (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, for Central Eastern



Young adults get the church moving: the Steering Group of the Youth Program “Young Reformers Network” during their first meeting in Wittenberg on 1 October 2013. Photo: LWF/GNC/F. Hübner

Europe); Carolina Huth (United Evangelical Lutheran Church, Argentina, for Latin America and the Caribbean); Helvi Nasiwa Muremi (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia - ELCIN) for Africa;

Karin Rubenson (Church of Sweden, for the Nordic Countries); Monica Villarreal (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, for North America); Lee Darius Zhen Ying (Lutheran Church in Singa-

pore, for Asia); along with the creative advisers Moti Daba Fufa (The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus) and Pamela Schulz (Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil).

A Prophetic Voice in Argentina

River Plate Church President Welcomes Reformation Day Recognition at Provincial Level

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina/GENEVA (LWI) – The leader of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate (IERP) in Argentina says the declaration of Reformation Day as a public holiday in Entre Ríos province offers possibility for official recognition of Protestantism as a religion in the Latin American country.

On 5 July the central province of Entre Ríos established 31 October as an annual “Day of Protestant Reform,” following a two-year campaign. Roman Catholicism is the official religion of Argentina, and Judaism and Islam, after much struggle, have been recognized as religions, and their members can rest on the respective day of worship and observe religious holidays.

“[The] recognition is important because for the first time we are being officially recognized as a religion,” said IERP president, Rev. Carlos Duarte in the weeks preceding the 31 October Reformation Day celebrations in the province.

“Being a church of the Reformation in our society means having the role of pricking people’s consciences,” he added. “Our desire is simply to be a sign of the Kingdom, that is, of the new heaven and earth, within a community of Jesus Christ in which all are welcome.”

“Given that qualification, I do believe that it means [the IERP ought] to be a prophetic, critical voice in a society deeply marked by injustice and the irresponsible use of renewable and non-renewable natural resources,” he emphasized.

Rev. Narciso Weiss, an IERP pastor who had served in the community of General Ramirez led the campaign to establish Reformation Day in the province. He wanted to draw the attention of his church members and the wider community to the importance of the Protestant Reformation as a religious, political and social movement, and

therefore he began to lobby local officials for the day’s recognition.

“And, thanks to the recognition granted [to Reformed Protestantism] in the province of Entre Ríos, there is a possibility of its being extended to other provinces and ultimately to national level,” Duarte added.

Lutheran and Reformed Tradition

The IERP is a denomination of both Lutheran and Reformed traditions which had been known as the German Evangelical Synod of the River Plate. In 1965 the synod approved a new constitution and became independent from the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).

It has 25,000 members in 42 congregations in Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. Seventy percent of the members live in Argentina.

The church is a member of both The Lutheran World Federation and the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Reformed Protestants have populated the region of South America since 1820. Following independence from Spain, traders and merchants from Austria, Germany, Russia and Switzerland settled around the port of Buenos Aires. Farmers settled in the area between 1853 and 1870.

“From then on to today the principles of the Reformation brought by those communities continue in the basic values in the identity of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate,” Duarte said.

He however noted that it was only in “very limited areas [that] we have



Rev. Narciso Weiss, IERP pastor in General Ramirez community, led the Reformation Day campaign. Photo: IERP

had some influence, but it is not possible to claim that the Reformation has put down roots in Argentina.”

Still, the IERP president said the church is proud of its heritage. He emphasized that the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s launching of the Protestant movement to be marked in 2017 offers opportunity to deepen those roots.

The church will mark the anniversary with special publications in its magazine *Vida Abundante*, events at the Evangelical Institute for Higher Theological Studies (IU-ISEDET) and workshops and seminars on mission and education.

Duarte cautioned, however, that the Reformation anniversary runs the risk of a degree of Euro centrism,

which would make mission difficult for the IERP, in view of its European roots.

“Even today many Latin Americans ask us, in total naivety, whether it is all right for them to attend our services. It is a matter of the image that they have of us,” Duarte said.

Strengthening Churches’ Response to the Suffering 500th Anniversary of Reformation to Focus on Present and Future

GENEVA (LWI)— The 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 will draw on the heritage of the past to strengthen churches in responding to the suffering of people and creation today, the general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Martin Junge, has vowed.

Speaking at the “Word and World” conference at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota, on 12 September, Junge noted that while the Reformation led to religious and social transformation in the 16th century, the anniversary will focus on the present and future.

“The question is about today and, as much as possible, even about tomorrow, and about how that powerful Gospel of justification and freedom by grace continues unfolding its power,” said Junge, a Chilean theologian.

Human Beings, Creation Are Not Commodities

In his address, “Reformation and Inculturation: Towards the 500th Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation,” Junge said that the anniversary commemorations will adopt the statement, “Not for sale!” that Luther stressed over the practice of indulgences, emphasizing that salvation, human beings and creation are not for sale.

While Luther’s protest was directed against the practice of using indulgences to make money off the despair of people needing evidence and security of salva-



LWF North America Regional Consultation 2013
Photo: ELCA

tion, Junge emphasized the theme in 2017 will be broader in order to reflect the diverse ways that churches today are working for a more just world.

“‘Not for sale!’ is therefore not a nostalgic reframing of old disputes of the 16th century ... It is a way to address one of the issues at stake today: the commodification of the despair and the longing for wholeness, relationship and healing of billions of people in our world.”

Junge said the church is called to pastoral and diaconal accompaniment and that he prays that the anniversary of the Reformation will support churches around the world as they respond to human suffering and the groaning of creation.

“It is about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not about Martin Luther. It is about the

human family, not about Wittenberg or Germany. It is about a deep theological and spiritual process with far-reaching consequences for the way we understand the world and are invited to conduct our lives,” Junge said.

The LWF general secretary added that it would be a tragedy if the commemoration of the Reformation ignored recent ecumenical developments, including the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, signed with Roman Catholics, and the reconciliation with Mennonites.

Global Dimension

The 2017 Reformation celebrations will also emphasize the global dimension of the Lutheran Reformation. The

Lutheran Reformation is now a global citizen, Junge suggested.

“It has traveled the world and put down roots in all continents. Churches have sprung up, in which the Reformation message is culturally anchored, developed and supplemented by new, specific perspectives,” he said.

One place it took root was among the Dalits, so-called “untouchables”, in India, where through the Lord’s Supper they have been able to come to understand how God’s unconditional love can affect their lives.

“By touching the untouchable, the Lutheran Reformation found a powerful way to speak about God’s unconditional love,” he concluded.

North America Meeting

During his visit to the United States, the general secretary met with the leadership of the LWF North America region to discuss different questions of relational expression and relationships.

At the regional consultation on 12 September in Chicago, Junge also

greeted the presiding bishop-elect of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton.

“It was a good opportunity to get acquainted with the new leader of our member church in the USA, and talk about the vision and mission of the LWF,” Junge said.

[Read more about the LWF and Reformation 2017: www.lutheranworld.org/content/reformation-2017](http://www.lutheranworld.org/content/reformation-2017)

Argentine Church Forges New Direction in Congregational Ministry

First IELU Lutheran Deaconess to Serve as a Pastor

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina/GENEVA (LWI)

– The United Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELU) in Argentina has for the first time called a deaconess trained in diaconal service to serve as a congregation pastor.

Deaconess Maria Elena Parras was installed on 1 August as pastor of the Maria Magdalena Lutheran Church in Resistencia municipality, northern Argentina. IELU’s initiative to encourage diaconal workers to serve in the pastoral ministry is supported through The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Transformative Leadership and Good Governance program. Church sustainability is one of the focus areas of the program coordinated by the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD).

“The call of deaconess Elena responds to the challenge to grow as a church, opening other spaces of service and enhancing the concept of preaching the word in the framework of holistic ministry,” said IELU President Rev. Gustavo Gómez.

The Maria Magdalena congregation is located in the Juan Bautista Alberdi community in Resistencia, the capital of Chaco province. The city is considered as one of the poorest in



*Maria Elena Parras at a June 2013 women theologians’ meeting in São Leopoldo, Brazil
Photo: A. Gastellu*

Argentina, with more than 50 percent of its inhabitants living in poverty.

Gómez noted that the congregation which has been serving the Resistencia community for the past 20 years has a grassroots diaconal ministry that emphasizes solidarity with vulnerable persons as a mark of the mission of the church. “Deep love that drives into service is rooted in the biblical teaching and understanding of the sacraments, which is an invitation to humbly serve the neighbor,” he said.

“The Maria Magdalena Church is at the vanguard in understanding and setting up the church’s agenda in the mission of God because it responds to the critical challenges of its members,” the IELU president added.

Gómez explained that the decision to call a diaconal worker to serve in the pastoral ministry was the result of a long process of discerning how to connect the various IELU ministries while at the same time ensuring the sustainability of congregations. “It is

important to have the right gifts and resources,” he emphasized.

The LWF Transformative Leadership and Good Governance program promotes an integrated approach to ministry that includes peer learning and a focus on developing leadership models that increase churches’ capacity to serve their respective communities, said Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti, LWF area secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean region at DMD.

“It is exciting to see IELU affirming the church as a community that is gifted with lay and ordained men and women. Using all the available

human gifts and talents makes the church more sustainable to carry out God’s mission among people in need,” Cuyatti noted.

Elena, who has been managing projects and coordinating workshops on diaconal involvement at the IELU, said she believes her experience in bringing together a network of women pastors in Latin America will strengthen her new ministry.

She said the calling to the Maria Magdalena congregation was an important step for her and for the church. However, she noted, this pastoral ministry is also about the commitment

that is needed in order for this move not to be seen as a simplistic solution that the IELU should adopt everywhere.

“We are being challenged as a church to become more deeply aware of the gifts people have and how they can be developed by using traditional assets and especially creative resources,” Elena said.

“I am strengthened by the thought that everything has its time, its place and happens for a reason,” she concluded.

The IELU has 31 congregations in Argentina and Uruguay with a total of 11,000 members. It has been an LWF member church since 1951.

Together against Violence

“Never give up!” Lutheran Churches Affirm at Consultation in Brazil

SAO PAULO, Brazil/GENEVA (LWI) – The theme of violence was the focus of a global gathering of Lutheran churches, 6–12 September, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (ELCB) organized the consultation, attended by representatives from 16 Lutheran churches, in order to reflect together about problems and solutions related to the theme.

“Violence has many faces,” said Dr Nestor Friedrich, president of the host Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB). “So it is

a great opportunity for us to listen to your experiences,” he noted, adding that it was part of the core task of every church to fight against all forms of violence.

Similar Problems all over the World

The more than 30 participants attending the consultation discussed different forms of violence including: violence between drug cartels, violence against homosexuals, people of

other faiths or those with disabilities, violence on the roads, psychological violence, and the violence of human beings towards nature.

All the churches taking part in the conference identified violence within the family as a critical form of violence. “It is horrifying for example that domestic violence is a huge problem virtually all over the world,” observed the Bavarian synod president Dr Dorothea Deneke-Stoll.

Hungarian Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny, Vice-President of The Lutheran World Federation Central Eastern Europe region, added: “Also the roots of this violence are similar, and for that reason the solutions may also be similar for all of us, and for that very same reason it is so important that we talk to each other about it.”



Leaders of Lutheran churches attending the consultation in Sao Paulo, Brazil
Photo: Brigitte Vordermayer

Together against Violence

In the closing declaration, titled “Never give up!” the possibilities for churches to work together to combat violence were strongly underlined. A worldwide church body, such as that represented by the Lutheran communion has a common duty to draw attention to the local effects of global actions, partici-

pants stated. “As part of the one body, our churches have different roles. Some churches can be the ‘eyes’ and ‘ears’ to see and hear people’s suffering, while other churches can be the ‘mouth’ to bring the situation to the ears of those in power.”

The declaration took particular note of Lutheran theology as a common basis of the churches and emphasized its potential for peace efforts. “Lutheran theology is a great resource for peace making. It encourages us to

understand law as an instrument for peace which protects the weak and the poor from injustice.” At the same time, “We learn to rely on the theology of the cross, not a ‘gospel of prosperity’ which promises material wealth as a direct consequence of faith.” The churches plan to use the declaration to inspire their local congregations to engage in further action on the theme of violence.

The ELCB partner churches participating in the consultation included

Lutheran churches in Australia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Honduras, Hong Kong, Hungary, Kenya, Liberia, Malaysia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Singapore and Tanzania.

In addition to presentations from individual countries, the program included visits to IECLB congregations and projects, as well as meetings with representatives of other denominations, and officials from the local authorities and business community.

Reading Confessions in Life-Giving Ways

Apology to Mennonites Brings Convergence on Peace

GOSHEN, USA/GENEVA (LWI) – Reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites initiated at The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Eleventh Assembly has brought the two traditions closer on peace issues, says the chair of the LWF Task Force on the Mennonite Action, Rev. Michael Martin.

“In Germany there can be seen a convergence between Mennonites and Lutherans dealing with peace ethics,” Martin, who is also head of ecumenical affairs for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, told the task force at its meeting, 20–24 July in Goshen, Indiana, USA.

The meeting, which forms part of the ongoing process between the LWF and the Mennonite World Conference, focused on the meaning of the 16th century Lutheran confessional writings in the 21st century, particularly those that had expressed historical hostility towards Anabaptists, who Mennonites regard as their predecessors.

During open and friendly conversations, which included input from Prof. Dr John Roth, a Mennonite consultant from Goshen College, the task force looked at how mutual reconciliation can be achieved in light of early Lutheran teachings about Anabaptists.

Through the Mennonite action at the LWF Assembly in 2010, the LWF apologized for the Lutheran persecution of Anabaptists in the 16th century, the ignorance towards these actions till the present day and for inappropriate and hurtful portraits of Anabaptists by Lutheran authors. The Assembly prayed for healing of memories and reconciliation between Lutheran and Mennonite sisters and brothers. The task force is seeking ways to implement the promises locally, regionally and globally, particularly in light of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation to be commemorated in 2017.

Rev. Dr Timothy Wengert of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, a member of the task force, noted that there has been a renewed sense of the importance of the Lutheran confessions in the aftermath of the apology.

“Lutherans are invited to reflect on how to read their central confession, the Augsburg Confession, in new, life-giving ways, and they are challenged to receive from the Mennonite World Conference more of the gifts God has bestowed upon that communion.”

One area of historic divergence has been the question of collaboration with the State. The task force, however, emphasized that there is a common challenge for the two traditions to take



Rev. Prof. Dr Timothy Wengert, member of the LWF Task Force on the Mennonite Action
Photo: Ivo Huber



THE
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LWF Sunday 2013 Celebrating God's Gift of Grace

The Lutheran World Federation invites churches and congregations to make use of the following liturgy or its elements on or around Reformation Day. With this worship, we want to celebrate that we are liberated by God's grace, knowing that our hope comes from God who is our mighty rock and refuge.

Opening and Gathering

Hymn: *Cantai ao Senhor* (Agape N° 12)

**In the name of God, the Father, and the Son
and the Holy Spirit.**

Amen.

Reading from Psalm 62

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.

He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall never be shaken.



Foto: stock.xchng

For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.

On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us.

Confession and Words of Forgiveness

Confession

In the first letter of John we read (1 Jn 1: 8-9): *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Most holy and merciful God, we confess to you and to one another, and before the whole company of heaven, that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. Have mercy on us, o God.

Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison adapted from Estonian Mass number 3: Urmas Sisask

Issand, halasta, Kristus, halasta

Lord, have mercy. Christ have mercy.

Words of forgiveness

(Rom 5: 1-5) *“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”*

In the mercy of the almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo! (Agape No 27)

Kyrie eleison

First time men
Second time women

adapted from Estonian Mass Number 3: Urmas Sisask



Is - sand, ha - las - ta, Is - sand, ha - las - ta, Is - sand, ha - las - ta,

All

Kris - tus, ha - las - ta, Kris - tus, ha - las - ta, Kris - tus, Kris - tus, Kris - tus, ha - las - ta.

All

Is - sand, ha - las - ta, Is - sand, ha - las - ta, Is - sand, ha - las - ta,

Lord, have mercy. Christ have mercy.

Word

Readings

Epistle: (Rom 3: 21-28). **The word of the Lord.**
Thanks be to God.

Acclamation of the Gospel: **Hymn** *Rakanaka Vhangeri* (Agape No 76) [verse 1]

Gospel: (Mat 5: 2-10). **The Gospel of the Lord.**
Praise to you, o Christ.

Apostolic Creed

Sermon

Intercessions

Almighty God, gracious Lord, we pray for your church. Fill it with all truth and peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in need, provide

for it; where it is divided, reunite it. Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Faithful God, cleanse and renew us and fill us with your love that we may love one another as you loved us when you gave us your only Son. Give us a heart to honor and serve our sisters and brothers every day of our life. Shape us into communities of respect and affection. Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Creating God, your name is written on every leaf, every bird, every river, every stone, every living being. We praise and worship you for the magnificence of your creation. Make us attentive to the wounds of the earth and willing to work for the healing of the whole creation through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

Peace and sending forth

Peace

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid,” says Christ our Lord. Peace be with you all.

And also with you.

Blessing

(2 Cor 13:11) Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice. Put things in order, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Closing hymn: *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*
(*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 503-505)

This liturgy was prepared by the LWF Department for Theology and Public Witness
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responsibility for the poor, to engage in just cooperation and to establish and sustain peace.

The opportunities to meet and worship with Mennonites and Amish in Goshen helped clarify the task of providing resources for the LWF member churches in their relationships with Mennonites, Wengert noted.

Rev. Anne Burghardt, secretary for ecumenical relations at the LWF Department for Theology and Public Witness (DTPW), added: "We all were impressed by the deep sense of community that has been preserved by the Amish, as well as the deeply rooted peace ethics both by the Amish and by the Mennonites."

The task force emphasized that reconciliation with Mennonites continues and that it will look at ways to nourish this in LWF's pastoral training, and find opportunities to allow grassroots expressions of reconciliation, particularly during the Reformation anniversary in 2017.

ELCA Elects First Female Presiding Bishop

LWF Offers Prayer for Past and Future Leadership

PITTSBURGH, USA/GENEVA (LWI) – The 2013 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Churchwide Assembly elected Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton to be its fourth presiding bishop. Eaton was elected on 14 August and succeeds Bishop Mark S. Hanson, who has been in office since 2001 and served as President of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) from 2003 to 2010.

In a congratulatory letter to bishop-elect Eaton, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge assured Eaton of his prayers for the new role and responsibility that she is taking on.

"I pray that our Lord will continue to bless you with faith and discernment, courage and compassion, generosity and a thirst for justice, vision and groundedness, and joy in the work," Junge said.

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly meet 12–17 August in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, under the theme, "Always Being Made New."

Eaton is the first female presiding bishop of the ELCA, which is a member church of the LWF. In her acceptance speech she paid tribute to the women who had gone before her and said they were "pioneers that made it possible for me." She will take office on 1 November.

Eaton holds a Master of Divinity degree from Harvard Divinity School and has served as bishop of the ELCA Northeastern Ohio Synod since 2007. She is married to Rev. Conrad Selnick, an Episcopal priest. The couple has two daughters.



*ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton
Photo: ELCA*

A Continued Commitment to the Global Expression of the Church

The 58-year old Eaton was a delegate at the LWF Eighth Assembly in 1984 in Budapest. In her acceptance speech she underlined the challenge of the ELCA to embrace the global expression of the church.

"We are an overwhelmingly European American church in a culture that is increasingly becoming more pluralistic," said Eaton. "We need to welcome the gifts of those who come from different places and other cultures; that is a conversation we need to have as a church."

Junge welcomes Eaton's concern. "This rich and diverse world is often at the doorsteps of our many churches because of migration and increased mobility, yet churches seem to have difficulties to relate and express such diversity within them," he said.

The general secretary also underlined LWF's commitment to ensure that as the global communion approaches the 2017 Reformation anniversary, the global nature of Reformation is captured and enriched by the various ways in which it is expressed by Lutheran churches around the world.

Eaton succeeds Hanson, former LWF President, who currently serves

on the LWF Council. The LWF said it joins the ELCA in deep gratitude for the leadership of Bishop Hanson, who was met with a standing ovation as he addressed the Assembly after the election his successor.

During Hanson's 12-year term as presiding bishop, the ELCA had continued and deepened its commitment to be part of the global communion of Lutheran churches, and part of the Church universal, said Junge.

The LWF was represented at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly by its President, Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

Addressing the Assembly on 15 August, Younan reiterated that the LWF appreciates greatly ELCA's participation including the longstanding commitment and contributions of past and present leadership to the life and work of the LWF; accompaniment of churches around the world; and generous support that allows the LWF to alleviate suffering among the poor and oppressed.

"As a Lutheran communion, we share the commitment to hold together proclamation of the gospel, diaconal service and advocacy for justice," said Younan. "We rejoice in our unity in

Christ and collaboration in joint witness, through which each one of our churches is enriched and strengthened."

Younan celebrated the commitment to the ELCA Assembly theme. "We realize how much we need constant renewal through the Holy Spirit in order to remain faithful disciples amidst the many changes and challenges in our world today," he said, adding that the renewal of the church is closely connected to the journey towards the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

"Your ministry of love is a living and strong witness affirming that the Reformation did not stop in the sixteenth century but continues through the Holy Spirit who molds us to live out our discipleship," he said.

An Assembly Marked by Renewal and Vivacity

The ELCA, which has 4 million members in nearly 10,000 congregations, marked its 25th anniversary at the Churchwide Assembly.

About 63 percent of ELCA congregations are in the process of developing a mission plan and among the numerous topics addressed by the 952 Assembly voting delegates was a report on congregational renewal.

"Congregational renewal is recovering the 'first love' of mission which birthed our congregations," said Rev. Ruben Duran, director for new starts at ELCA church-wide ministries presenting the report. "I see renewal happening throughout our church. In every place where the Spirit is moving us, in every place where the context calls us, renewal in our first love of mission is driving the renewal of our congregations."

The Assembly also voted on the proposal for a first-ever major fundraising campaign to raise more than USD 190 million over a five-year period beginning in 2014. It is designed to increase the church's capacity to support congregational renewal, form leaders for global mission, support the walk with global companion churches in shared witness, and expand efforts to address poverty and hunger, including the ELCA Malaria campaign.

In his report to the Assembly, ELCA Vice-President Carlos Pena said that "we have become a church that is freed in Christ to love and serve our neighbors in our communities, our country and around the world. We have so much to be thankful for, not just as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, but as a respected leader in the Christian world and beyond."

LWF Called to Assist Chinese Church in Diaconal and Pastoral Training

Coping with Church Growth in World's Most Populated Country

GENEVA (LWI) – "I am impressed by the dynamic developments that are taking place in the church in China," said The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge following an official visit to the Republic of China 22–27 July. "At the same time, the growth of the church raises important challenges as to its sustainability regarding leadership and infrastructure," Junge reflected.

"Christianity is the fastest growing religion in China. It is a good but chal-

lenging sign," said Mr Jiang Jianyong, vice-minister of the Chinese State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA), "because the church is unable to cope with the growth in terms of raising or training enough pastors to look after the flock." Along with the Chinese Christian Council, SARA is encouraging the LWF to provide support to the Chinese Church to cope with the challenges of growth.

The LWF delegation visited the Protestant Church in China, the Three-

Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM); the Chinese Christian Council; as well as government representatives. The aim of the visit was to engage in dialogue on how the LWF can accompany the fast-growing Chinese church. The delegation met with both government officials and church leaders including Rev. Gao Feng, President of the Chinese Christian Council and Elder Fu Xianwei, Chairman of TSPM.

Junge said that throughout the visit he had heard a repeated refer-



LWF delegation in China, July 2013
Photo: LWF/Philip Lok

ence to three major tasks with which the TSPM is confronted: “to equip lay and ordained leaders, to strengthen the diaconal profile and diaconal capacities of the congregations, and to contribute to harmonious inter-faith relationships in local neighborhoods and in the Chinese society at large. Altogether, these tasks point at the eagerness of the church to claim its citizenship in the context of China in new ways,” emphasized Junge.

240 Pastors Serving 2 Million Members

TSPM is experiencing explosive growth in a country with 1.3 billion citizens, a majority of which is atheist. In Jiangsu province alone, one of the areas visited by the LWF delegation, there are an estimated 2 million Christians. “And this is not unique,” said LWF Area Secretary for Asia Rev. Dr William Chang. “The church in Jiangsu is growing with thousands of people a year but to serve all the congregations [in Jiangsu] there are only 240 pastors,” he said.

The Chinese Christian Council is in charge of pastoral training, church order and publication of Bibles and hymnals. In addition, it manages the diaconal organization The Amity Foundation, the largest charity in China, which, in their own words is “serving

as a bridge for the Christian Church and society.”

LWF member churches in the Asia and North America region and mission partners in the Nordic countries already have bilateral connections with some churches of TSPM and provincial Christian Councils through which they support diakonia and training.

The subject of diakonia as a theological discipline is largely untouched in the theological curricula taught at protestant seminaries, said Dr Joergen Skov Soerensen, General Secretary of the Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark and member of the LWF delegation. “My impression is, that the China Christian Council is convinced of the potential merits of a theological curriculum including diakonia and the fact that this would eventually benefit the Protestant Church in China vis a vis society.”

Re-connecting LWF’s History with the Church in China

“Throughout the visit, we were able to witness the wondrous groundwork which has been done by a few Lutheran member churches in Asia and mission partners,” reflected Ms Eun-hae Kwon, LWF vice-president

for the Asia region and member of the delegation.

“Therefore, Lutheran churches were recognized and remembered as a good old friend among the church leaders in China, which contributed to strengthening and deepening the relationship between [the] LWF and the churches in China.” There were high expectations and visions for the next phase of mutual accompaniment in God’s mission, Kwon said.

Junge said that his visit to China was a way to reconnect to a long-standing history of the LWF with the church in China. He referred to the *LWF China Studies Series*, a collection of publications ending in 2003 which raised awareness among LWF member churches about the history, development and present realities of Chinese churches.

“My visit was also an opportunity to connect to the many ways in which Lutheran seminaries, churches and specialized ministries are currently supporting the Church in China. There is great appreciation among the local leadership for these meaningful ways to accompany and support their witness,” said Junge.

The LWF delegation was welcomed warmly throughout their visit and left with an impression of a church that is developing in a dynamic way.

“The LWF has accomplished a solid first step toward a relationship of accompaniment, mutual respect and global perspectives with the many dimensions of Chinese Christian community,” reflected Dr Peter Shen, a North American delegate.

Junge said the LWF will now look into how to follow up the visit to China in a concrete way. “I return to the Communion Office with the commitment to explore ways to respond to the many requests inviting us to continue supporting the churches in their processes of consolidation and growth,” he concluded.

Encouraging Unity

Focus on Baptism in New Phase of Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue

KYOTO, Japan/GENEVA (LWI) – Lutherans and Roman Catholics have entered a new phase of dialogue that focuses on discovering what kind of unity might arise from their understanding of baptism.

The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, which leads the bilateral dialogue between the two Christian traditions globally since 1967, met 13-20 August in Kyoto, Japan, in its fifth study process on the theme, “Baptism and Growing Communion.”

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) organize the commission’s meetings, which this year was hosted by the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) on behalf of the LWF.

“It was very encouraging to see how the commission was able to enter a new study process on baptism so soon after finalizing the previous study document, ‘From Conflict to Communion,’” said Rev. Dr. Kaisamari Hintikka, LWF assistant general secretary for ecumenical relations and director of the Department for Theology and Public Witness.

Hintikka noted that while the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue approaches the theme of baptism from the perspective of how it creates communion between the two Christian traditions, it is also linked to the parallel trilateral dialogue that includes Mennonites.



*Lutheran-Catholic commission members worshipped at St Agnes Episcopal Cathedral in Kyoto.
Photo: LWF*

The work of the commission is based on thematic papers prepared by its members from earlier meetings.

The current phase of study began in 2009 but was interrupted by the preparatory process of “From Conflict to Communion,” which tells the history of the Reformation from the point of view of both Lutherans and Roman Catholics.

The co-chairpersons of the commission are Lutheran Bishop emeritus Dr. Eero Huovinen of Helsinki, Finland, and Roman Catholic Bishop William Kenney from Birmingham, United Kingdom. Commission member Prof. Augustine Suzuki comes from JELC, which was scheduled to host the 2011 meeting, but it was moved to a differ-

ent venue because of the earthquake in Japan that year.

The commission members also visited the Kansai Seminar House, where they met with JELC president, Rev. Tadahiro Tateyama, and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church in Japan.

They participated in a Sunday service at JELC’s Kyoto Church, enjoyed ecumenical hospitality at the Episcopal Church in Japan which offered the St. Agnes Cathedral for the daily prayers of the commission, and visited Buddhist and Shinto shrines and temples in the region.

The PCPCU will host the next meeting of the commission, 20–28 July 2014.

“Refrain from Military Action” in Syria

LWF Leadership Calls on International Community to Urgently Seek Peaceful Resolution

GENEVA (LWI) – In a joint statement issued on 2 September, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) President Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan and General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge expressed great pain and deep con-

cern over the continued brutality and horror of the conflict in Syria.

Yunan and Junge urged governments “to refrain from any military action as a means to address the complex matters at stake in Syria” and

instead seek a political and diplomatic solution to the conflict.

They reiterated the 2012 and 2013 LWF Council resolutions on Syria, which affirm “support for those who seek dialogue instead of further fight-

ing, for the good of all people in Syria as well as its neighbors.”

The president and general secretary emphasized LWF’s call on the international community “to work together through the United Nations systems and instruments in order to support efforts for a durable process of resolving conflict without the use of violence.”

In a 30 August statement in Jerusalem, Younan, who also serves as Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, stated that “the only ones who will benefit from Western military intervention in Syria will be extremists on all sides.” Younan said that “as an Arab Christian, I am concerned for the effects this violence will have on every community in Syria, whether they are Sunni, Shiite, Alawite, Druze, or Christian.”

In their joint statement, Younan and Junge condemned the use of chemical weapons in the strongest possible terms. They lamented the difficulty of the international community to cope with the challenges posed by the developments in Syria and called for urgent “reform of the systems and instruments of the United Nations so that they indeed serve humankind as it strives to live together in justice, peace and dignity.”

The LWF is present in Jordan, where it is supporting Syrians who have sought refuge in the Za’atri refugee camp as well as in neighboring communities in

the northern part of the country. The UN refugee agency estimates there are some 482,000 Syrian refugees registered in Jordan including nearly 130,000 residing in Za’atri.

Within Za’atri camp the LWF offers psychosocial support and material assistance to refugees. In the host communities, the LWF trains Syrian and Jordanian women in income-generating activities, as well as youth leaders in conflict prevention, mitigation and peace building.

“Our direct involvement in the Za’atri refugee camp in Jordan—the second largest refugee camp in the world today—has brought our attention to the plight and the suffering of

the civilian population,” Younan and Junge said in their joint statement.

The president and general secretary stressed that “looking at the Syrian refugees and at the suffering civilian population in Syria, we are convinced that a reformed UN Security Council must work in particular for the security of those who are deprived of their rights and who bear the burden of conflict and violence.”

[Read the full text of the LWF statement on Syria, and find out more about the LWF’s work with Syrian refugees in Jordan: www.lutheranworld.org/news/%E2%80%9Crefrain-military-action%E2%80%9D-syria](http://www.lutheranworld.org/news/%E2%80%9Crefrain-military-action%E2%80%9D-syria)



*The LWF President and General Secretary visit Za’atri residents in 2012.
Photo: LWF/Thomas Ekelund*

Man of Peace

LWF President Younan Honored for Middle East Dialogue Efforts

JERUSALEM/GENEVA (LWI)—The President of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, has been honored by the King of Jordan for his efforts towards peace, co-existence and interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims in the Middle East.

In a 3 September ceremony in Amman, Jordan, Younan, who is bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church

in Jordan and the Holy Land, was awarded the Al-Hussein Decoration for Distinguished Service, First Class by King Abdullah II of Jordan.

The medal recognizes achievement in philanthropy, the arts, science, education, commerce, or public service. Younan received the medal during a conference hosted by the king entitled, “The Challenges Facing Arab Christians.”

During the Amman conference, Younan noted that Muslims and Christians needed to be working side-by-side to help promote stability and moderation in the region.

“This engagement is not just for religious understanding but for shaping our shared political future,” he said, adding that Arab Christians must refuse all types of division in society, whether along sectarian or religious lines.



King Abdullah II and Bishop Dr Younan at the 3 September award ceremony
Photo: ELCJHL

King Abdullah II urged continuing interfaith dialogue. “Arab Christians are the closest to understanding Islam and its true values. We call upon them at this stage to defend Islam, which is subject to a lot of injustice because some are ignorant of this faith, which preaches tolerance and moderation,

and rejects extremism and isolationism,” the king said.

In June 2013, the LWF Council approved a resolution on the Christian presence in the Middle East and their efforts to bring peace and justice to all.

“The Christians in this region see their Muslim neighbors to be, like them,

children of God and therefore reject forms of understanding the Muslim world that attempt to separate Muslims and Christians from one another as if they are not neighbors,” it said.

The 2013 LWF Council also issued a statement on freedom of religion or belief, and recommended “Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders” as a tool for receiving refugees and other displaced people in communities. The affirmations were an initiative initially suggested by the LWF president during the UN High Commissioner for Refugees’ (UNHCR) Dialogue on Faith and Protection Round Table in December 2012 and subsequently developed by the UNHCR with contribution from the LWF.

Consult “Welcoming the Stranger,” and LWF Council 2013 resolutions and statements: www.lutheranworld.org/content/council-2013

Strong Commitment to Namibia’s Drought-Affected People

In May, Namibia declared a national emergency and appealed for international assistance following the worst drought in nearly 30 years. More than 800,000 people, around 40 percent of the population, are food insecure.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) responded by urging the LWF communion to support churches in the southwest African country reach out to people who are facing severe food and water shortages and loss of livelihoods as the drought has decimated crops and grazing pastures for livestock, and significantly reduced water sources. Assistance was also urged for neighboring Angola, where over 600,000 inhabitants do not have enough food or water after two consecutive years of failed rains.

In a drought response initiative coordinated through ACT alliance, the LWF is supporting the United Church Council of Namibia Evangelical Lutheran Churches to reach the affected households with much-needed cash to cover their basic needs. Additional assistance will include psychosocial support; capacity to build resilience to cope with future disasters; and awareness on advocating for people’s rights.

An LWF delegation to Namibia led by General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge from 19-24 September visited drought affected areas and handed over a generous contribution from one of the many LWF member churches that are contributing to the response. “Gestures like this bear witness to the vitality of the LWF communion,” Junge said.



Rev. Martin Junge (left) and LWF Vice-Presidents Presiding Bishop Alex G. Malasusa (center right) and Bishop Dr Frank O. July (right), visit a parishioner in southern Namibia. Photo: LWB/Klaus Rieth

Namibia on the Tipping Point

LWF Response to Ease Burden on Pensioners and Livestock Owners

WINDHOEK, Namibia/GENEVA (LWI) – Sixty-five-year-old Magdaline says she was on the road for four days, travelling the 150 kilometers from her village to the closest city, Mariental in south-central Namibia. Accompanied by her brother and his four children including six-month-old David, they rode in an open horse carriage, sleeping on the road side at night. The month of August falls in the winter season, when temperatures often drop below zero at night.

Magdaline and her family had travelled to collect the USD 90 (around 930 Namibian dollars) that she receives per month as old-age pension. The family has nothing else to live off as Namibians cope with the country's worst drought in nearly three decades.

“My brother does not have a job, the animals and crops do not survive and I barely have food for the children. I was given ten goats by the government but when the town counselor came and took them back I had nothing,” says Magdaline, referring to a government program that helps farmers increase their livestock. In the current situation, many are compelled to sell some of the animals to buy fodder or they may die altogether.

When Namibian President Hifikepunye L. Pohamba declared a national emergency in May this year, he called for assistance to cope with the crisis that is affecting nearly 40 percent of the 2.1 million people in the country. The four previous years recorded heavy rains, causing flooding that destroyed crops. But meteorologists say the 166 millimeters of rainfall during the last eight months is the lowest in 30 years.

The rural population mainly relies on livestock and crop production, sectors which are now severely affected by the drought. Magdaline's family, like 80 percent of households in Namibia, own livestock—cattle, goats, sheep, donkeys and poultry—which are a source of milk and meat for the



*Magdaline's family depends on her monthly pension for survival.
Photo: LWF/Thomas Ekelund*

family, or they can be sold for money. The drought has significantly reduced grazing pastures and water availability, threatening the animals' survival and their commercial value. Estimates from the government Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) indicate that more than 4,000 livestock deaths have been reported.

Impact on Livelihoods

The impact on livelihoods is multifaceted. In the past a cow would sell at 3,000 Namibian dollars, but the value has decreased to as little as 260 dollars. Before the drought, a goat sold at 700 to 800 dollars, but it now goes for about 300 to 450 dollars. In the commercial farming areas, farmers are turning to other alternatives, including taking their cattle to neighboring South Africa where they can fetch relatively higher prices.

The World Bank lists Namibia as a middle-income country although a quarter of its people live in poverty. Unemployment is estimated at around 37 percent, with inequality of wealth and access to services being amongst the highest in the world. The current drought exacerbates the situation for

communities that normally depend on commercial farms, as they are left with little or no income at all. The abattoirs that provide seasonal labor have in some cases shut down, only adding to the unemployment levels.

While agriculture accounts for only five percent of the national economy and a third of Namibians depend on some form of subsistence farming, food production relies on over 70 percent of the country's fresh water sources. Government estimates show that cereal production in 2013 is likely to decrease by 42 percent compared to last year. Half of the households in the drought-affected areas reported that none or hardly any of the millet planted in December was growing. During a normal year, families can store grains to last up to six or seven months, but many of the households now say what they had put aside has been depleted. In some parts of the country, the yields are sinking daily.

LWF and Churches Together

Through the United Church Council of Namibia Evangelical Lutheran Church-

es, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is working with its partners in the ACT Alliance network to help rural communities cope with the drought. The overall goal is to alleviate suffering through immediate relief assistance.

It is the first time that the LWF member churches in the country—Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) and the German-speaking Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia—are responding to an ACT drought appeal. The affected households will get cash to cover their basic needs; receive psychosocial support;

gain knowledge about resilience in responding to future disasters, as well as capacity to advocate for their rights.

Long-Term Impact

For families like Magdaline's, a food crisis presents other challenges. Apart from the more obvious increased risks of malnutrition, deteriorating health and loss of income, inability to feed one's family can sometimes mean turning to negative coping mechanisms such as alcohol consumption. The prolonged dry spell also forces students to drop out of school, and for those who stay on, the learning ability is seriously affected.

As no harvest is foreseen until March 2014, an LWF assessment predicts the situation will deteriorate rapidly without urgent outside intervention.

Namibia and neighboring Angola are facing the severest drought in over a quarter of a century, with some 800,000 Namibians categorized as food insecure. In the Angolan border provinces of Cunene and Namibe, over 600,000 inhabitants do not have enough food or water due to two consecutive years of failed rains.

(By LWF communications consultant Thomas Ekelund, during a recent visit to Namibia)

Daring to Talk about a Taboo Subject for Women in DRC

LWF Supports Congolese Church Contribution to NGO Shadow Report

GENEVA (LWI) – Growing support from churches towards initiatives addressing sexual and gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is heightening awareness about “a taboo subject that continues to weigh down heavily on thousands of women” caught in the long-standing conflict in the country.

Ms Atty Mireille Ntambuka, coordinator of the RAFEJE women lawyers' network in eastern DRC, made these observations when she reflected on her participation in the 55th Session of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), held, 8–26 July in Geneva. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) supported RAFEJE's contribution to Congolese civil society shadow reports during the DRC government 2013 periodic report to the CEDAW Committee that reviews signatory states' implementation of the international bill of women's rights.

“Gender-based sexual violence is a reality that many ordinary women especially in Northern Kivu province are compelled to downplay in their struggle to survive, as different armed



Ms Mireille Ntambuka
Photo: LWF/P. Mumia

groups sporadically attack villages and drive families out of their homes in the fight for political dominance and control of minerals and other resources in this country,” Ntambuka told *Lutheran World Information*

RAFEJE works with community-based groups including the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Congo (EELCo) to raise awareness among women and men about safeguarding women's

rights. It is making an impact, although more needs to be done.

“When we convince a pastor about the need to stop SBGV [sexual and gender-based violence] in our current context, we have seen that the message goes beyond one group; they sensitize fellow pastors, women and youth groups. And slowly more people are beginning to talk openly about rape, more women and girls know where to report such

cases, and the community is becoming supportive instead of rejecting victims of such violence,” Ntambuka explained.

Rev. Solange Yumba Wa Nkulu, national coordinator of EELCo women’s network was one of the participants in a workshop in Goma organized by RAFEJE and Finn Church Aid to raise awareness about the United Nations convention and gather content for shadow reports to the CEDAW committee. The workshop was supported by the LWF through its Women in Church and Society (WICAS) desk and the Department for World Service country program in DRC.

Impunity for Perpetrators

The civil conflict that broke out in DRC in 1998 has cost more than 5 million lives, and led to an increasing number of SBGV cases, with an estimated 1 million women subjected to rape especially in the North and South Kivu provinces.

In its report to the CEDAW committee, RAFEJE noted that impunity for sexual offenses remains a major impediment to the struggle against SBGV. The group stated that out of the 8,000 reported cases of rape in

Northern Kivu between 2010 and 2011, only 960 (12 percent) had resulted in accused perpetrators being prosecuted.

“The spotlight should be put not only on the armed groups perpetrating rape, but also on generalized impunity within families, whereby solutions such as marrying the perpetrator are considered as punishment,” Ntambuka emphasized.

On the government’s implementation on the 2006 law on equality, the shadow report decried the poor women’s representation in leadership. Women, RAFEJE noted, represent 10 percent in governmental positions, eight percent at the parliament and five percent at senate level.

The report also challenged the government to allocate the necessary budget to the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children to respond to the overwhelming needs and enhance women’s awareness about their constitutional rights and participation at regional institutions both at the public and private level.

RAFEJE and the CEDAW committee opposed the assertion by DRC Gender Minister Wivine Mumba Matipa that the government had made efforts to reform the family code to enhance women’s

rights. Women and girls remain victims of a patriarchal society, with customary law severely limiting their access to land, credit and work opportunities. They still face the challenge of being the poorest among the poor, with levels of education and literacy largely inferior to those of men and boys, the committee noted.

Empowering Women and Girls

“Participating in the CEDAW committee has been a learning experience in working together and it motivates WICAS to continue working with other LWF partners to support EELCo to empower women and girls in dealing with the gender challenges in the DRC context,” reflected Maria Cristina Rendon, WICAS interim assistant

Wa Nkulu said her participation in the CEDAW preparation workshop was “an eye opener that will allow me to integrate in a more comprehensive way the gender justice perspective in EELCo’s ministry.”

The DWS country programs in Uganda and DRC continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Congolese displaced by the ongoing conflict.

Empowering Local Partners to Restore Stability

LWF Emergency Response in CAR Targets Women’s Groups

BANGUI, Central African Republic/GENEVA (LWI) – When a group of armed fighters destroyed the offices of a women’s association in Ndele, northeastern Central African Republic (CAR), they broke into the safe and took away documents and savings meant for income-generating activities that sustain community livelihoods.

Like thousands of other civilians caught in the 2012 to 2013 rebellion between the Séléka rebel group and CAR government troops, members of the women’s association fled their villages to the isolated countryside, where they adapted to surviving on what could grow there.

Fragile peace has been restored in CAR, with a transitional government in

place since May, but the security situation remains highly unstable.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is among humanitarian organizations that will provide assistance to support and protect war-affected vulnerable communities in the country where an estimated 227,800 people have been displaced internally and over 62,000 have fled to neighboring countries.

Restoring Livelihoods

The LWF’s intervention, coordinated under ACT Alliance, will prioritize collaboration with local partners to restore livelihoods destroyed by the prolonged

civil instability and lawlessness in the country of 4.6 million people.

In an interview with *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, Daniel Bangui, coordinator of the LWF’s Department for World Service (DWS) emergency program in CAR which was set up in August 2013, explained why the LWF’s support, starting with the northeastern region of Ndele, primarily will seek to rebuild socio-economic structures and empower women’s groups to restore micro-credit activities.

“The current crisis in CAR adds on to previous ones of mutinies and rebellions that have left deep marks in society. Vulnerability of populations which were already fragile before has increased,” said Bangui.

In a country where the majority of people live in rural areas and unemployment is growing, it is critical to rehabilitate local groups that provide income-generation opportunities for entire communities, he said.

A Productive Force

Bangui underlined the role of women in the rebuilding the country. "It is important to understand that women take care of households, work on the farm, fetch water, go to the market and so on. They are a productive force."

The LWF's support to the women's association, an umbrella body of 73 women's groups, will include rehabilitating the office that was pillaged, securing capital to resume income-generating activities, and training on emergency preparedness.

The women's groups will engage in small-scale trade supported by both agricultural and livestock-based activities, Bangui said.

Training on emergency preparedness will help the population to understand the minimum one should take when forced to flee, such as identity documents and how to keep such papers safe. Basic measures will also be taught on how to purify water for drinking to avoid diarrhea among children, and how to make enriched flour, among other survival and safety skills.

Meeting Critical Humanitarian Need

An LWF assessment in July identified the Ndele region as one of the areas facing the most critical humanitarian



*Bohong villagers had to flee their homes after a Seleka rebel attack in mid-August.
Photo: EELCAR*

needs. High food prices have compelled populations to consume seeds meant for planting during the current agricultural season. Cattle have been stolen or killed, considerably reducing the local population's means for survival. Degradation of infrastructure and lack of latrines has exacerbated poor sanitation and chronic inaccessibility to clean, safe water.

Other LWF intervention areas will include the Nana-Mambere prefecture where civilians were subjected to armed banditry and extortions. Institutions that were looted in the area included a health center run by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Central African Republic in Gallo town, and an ambulance that provided mobile clinics was pillaged. In Paoua town and surrounding territories, where entire villages were burned and populations were displaced into relatively safe remote areas, emergency response will include rehabilitation of basic social services and psychosocial support to

address the widespread fear to return to the villages.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is a core supporter of the LWF's intervention in CAR, with a contribution of USD 250,000.

"The situation is bad and will only keep getting worse if action is not taken," Willibroad (Willie) Langdji, of the ELCA Global Mission's West Africa Desk, told *LWI*, and underlined the call of Christians to respond to the needs of other people.

"We hope our support will encourage others in the communion [to support the response] as well," said Anne Ruedisili Langdji, who serves as ELCA West Africa regional representative together with Willie Langdji.

[Learn more about the LWF's response in CAR: www.lutheranworld.org/content/emergency-war-affected-communities-car](http://www.lutheranworld.org/content/emergency-war-affected-communities-car)

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