

# Lutheran World Information

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ELCG President Rev. Moses Prashad. Photo: LWF/P. Cuyatti

## Guyanese Church Marks 270 Years of Witness

### The Cross, Bible and Swan

#### NEW AMSTERDAM, Guyana/GENEVA (LWI)

– The unveiling of commemorative postage stamps, a grand worship service and presentations by parishes marked the 270<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana (ELCG), held in the coastal city of New Amsterdam.

Over 600 members participated in the 16 October worship service at Ebenezer Lutheran Church, which ELCG President Rev. Moses Prashad described as one of the largest gatherings of Lutherans in Guyana for some time.

Founded on 15 October 1743, the church currently has 13,000 members in 14 regional parishes.

In collaboration with the Guyana Post Office, the ELCG on 6 October is-

sued commemorative postage stamps at a national youth service. The 20 and 80 Guyanese dollars (10 and 40 US cents) denomination stamps bear the church's logo of the cross, Bible and swan.

“When you look at 270 years for any organization, much less a church, it is symbolic and significant, and very, very important,” Prashad noted. He said that God has been good to the ELCG, which has struggled over the years with the migration of members and pastors.

However, he added, “we are still able to reach out to others and draw them into the church.”



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

A Communion  
of Churches

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## 30 Years of LWF Support in Central America

In October The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) marked 30 years of humanitarian involvement in Central America.

The LWF member churches in the region invited General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge to preach on the subject “Seeking Justice, Peace and Reconciliation,” in one of the world’s most vulnerable regions in view of social, economic, environmental, and political conditions.

“My presence is an expression of a concern of a global communion of churches because of the bulletins we hear of increased violence, of indigenous people being put under pressure because of international mining projects, and women suffering and being particularly targeted,” Junge said during an ecumenical service in Guatemala. “Peace without justice and reconciliation is imposed peace,” he added.

At a ceremony in San Salvador, Bishop Medardo E. Gómez Soto of the Salvadoran Lutheran Church said, “These have been 30 years of saving lives. Lives have been saved. History

has been made, and we have been strengthened in our mission as a church.”

Started in El Salvador in 1983, DWS work in the region includes Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.



*Hundreds attended the ecumenical worship service in the Catholic Cathedral of Guatemala. Photo: Luis Valencia*

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## Active Role of Pastors and Deacons

Prashad said that while the church faces the challenge of mobilizing able and well-equipped pastors, deacons and lay leaders for the future, he is grateful that in May the ELCG ordained five deacons as pastors.

It is the first Christian denomination in the Caribbean country to embark on local training for its members to become pastors and deacons. The ELCG Lutheran Lay Academy (LLA), launched in 2005, offers a two-year program with pastors serving as lecturers and resource persons for biblical studies, church history, homiletics, worship and liturgy. External experts in theology provide additional support.

Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti, area secretary for Latin America and the

Caribbean at The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) said the active pastoral role of deacons makes it possible for the Guyanese church to develop innovative ways of responding to its ministry. The ELCG currently has 14 deacons working in its congregations.

“The active role of deacons and pastors in local congregations is key for supporting and developing the capacity of the ELCG, especially training and opportunities for lay leaders on issues of Lutheran identity,” Cuyatti said.

The Guyanese Lutheran church began in 1743, when a group of Dutch colonists assembled at the home of Lodewyk Abbenstets to start a church at Fort Nassau. Nine years later it received its first pastor, Johan Henrik Faerkenius, and constructed a sanctuary.

Describing itself as a national communion of Christian congregations in the Lutheran tradition, the ELCG at-

tempts to relate the gospel to the needs of people in both its denominational and ecumenical witness. It considers its relationships with other churches and Christian organizations as important in developing sharper perspectives for its own ministries, struggles, weaknesses, strengths and gifts.

“The ELCG must be sensitive to issues such as marginalization, discrimination, poverty and gender bias, and use the Word of God to address these concerns,” Prashad noted.

A Guyanese pastor represented the church at the 1947 founding Assembly of the LWF. In 1950 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in then British Guiana was received into LWF membership.

Prashad said membership in the LWF exposes the ELCG to both diverse forms of celebration and the needs of people globally. “Partnerships that complement each other are very important,” he added.

# Junge: Moral Dimension Must Be at Center of Syria Negotiations

## LWF Calls for Peace in Syria, While Pledging More Humanitarian Assistance

**GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) joined church leaders from Russia, Syria, Turkey, the United States of America and the European Union (EU) in calling for a political solution as the only way toward peace in Syria.

“The LWF insists on international law and humanitarian principles to be applied,” said LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge following a consultation on Syria convened by the World Council of Churches (WCC) on 18 September in Bossey, Switzerland.

The WCC consultation was joined by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and UN-Arab League joint representative for Syria Lakhdar Brahimi. Both Annan and Brahimi challenged the churches to continue to be a voice for peace, to work with other religious communities toward a post-conflict Syria and to intensify their humanitarian response.



Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (right) greets LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge at the WCC consultation. Photo: Peter Williams/WCC

Speaking to *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* after the consultation Junge said, “We are concerned with the perceived paralysis of the international community to address the issues

at stake. The delay is causing more harm and death, particularly among the civilian population. Every day of delay is costing the lives of hundreds of people.”

“The moral dimension needs to be at the center of negotiations,” Junge emphasized.

WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit invited the LWF to attend the consultation because of its prominence in the ecumenical movement and its major role as a church-based humanitarian actor.

Junge pledged enhanced humanitarian efforts to refugees from the war-stricken country, stating that the humanitarian situation in Syria is of immediate concern.

The LWF is working with Syrian refugees at the Za’atri refugee camp in Jordan, which is located 70 kilometers from the Syrian border. The LWF provides shelter, camp management, psychosocial support and education services for the growing number of refugees fleeing the violence in Syria.

“We at the LWF are prepared to do more [in terms of humanitarian assistance] within the ecumenical family,

in coordination with the ACT Alliance,” added Junge. “Humanitarian efforts need to be redoubled.”

In a 2 September statement Junge and LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan urged governments to refrain from military action to address the complicated issues in Syria. In 2012, the LWF Council joined the UN in calling for an end to violence and human rights abuse in Syria.

Following the WCC consultation, Junge reiterated LWF’s stand that military action will not resolve the Syrian crisis. He highlighted LWF’s insistence on the adherence to international law and humanitarian principles, particularly around the protection of refugees and civilians.

“There is a convention banning the use of chemical weapons in our world. The convention needs to be enforced. The way this will be done needs to comply with international law and the

international community needs to work together on this important matter.

“It is not for a single country, nor for self-appointed coalitions to enforce the convention, but for the international community,” Junge said.

The LWF general secretary praised the Syrian churches for their unwavering commitment to peace building in challenging circumstances, adding that their vision of a country that allows diverse communities to live in unity is a gift in a time of extremism.

At the WCC consultation, church leaders from several denominations stated that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Syria. In a communiqué issued at the end of the meeting they said, “Churches must continue to raise their voice in their congregations, in their societies and with their governments. We must strengthen the public outcry so that those in power will protect the common interest of humanity.”

## Transforming the World through Education

### LWF President Younan Lauds Australian Lutheran Church Schools

**BRISBANE, Australia/GENEVA (LWI)** – Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, President of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), told Lutheran educators from across Australia that education can act as an instrument for peace and understanding among diverse communities.

“Education gives us the tools to transform the world,” Younan told 1,000 delegates at the Australian Conference on Lutheran Education (ACLE) on 30 September in Brisbane.

In his keynote address, “The Truth Shall Set You Free: The Transformative Power of Education in the Middle East,” Younan, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), praised the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) for its witness through education.

“Education is more than learning sums or proper grammar. Education is the light casting out the darkness; it is

love casting out fear; it is strength casting out weakness,” the LWF president emphasized. “We are shaping young minds for a future where peaceful coexistence is possible and human dignity is upheld,” he added.

“Wise Up! Transforming Mind, Body and Heart in Lutheran Education,” was the theme of the 30 September – 2 October ACLE conference. The gathering, held every four years, brings together educators from across Australia’s Lutheran schools.

Speaking about the goal of ELCJHL’s schools and educational programs, Younan emphasized that the system is vital as it teaches the Evangelical ethos in a Palestinian context. This includes molding a Palestinian, Christian and Lutheran identity among the youth, and teaching them to live with people of other faiths, especially Islam and Judaism.

“Our evangelical mission is to convert our students from extremism to moderation in a Middle East that is drowning in extremism,” he said of the four ELCJHL schools that serve 3,000 students drawn from both the Christian and Muslim communities.

In the schools, students learn that mutual regard and respect for others is a foundation of peaceful existence, something that gives Middle East communities hope, Younan added.

### Hope and Compassion

The Palestinian bishop said that many in the Middle East have given up hope for peace and can only see a future with violence and vengeance. The ELCJHL’s schools offer a different path. “Through education and dialogue, we transmute cultures of fear into cultures of hope and compassion.”





LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan meets Bishop Dr John Henderson, Lutheran Church of Australia. Photo: LCA/Rosie Schefe

Younan recently received the Al-Hussein Decoration for Distinguished Service from the King of Jordan for promoting peace among Christians and Muslims in the Middle East. He said transformative education and interfaith dialogue are needed to combat the extremism that is found in Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

The LWF president noted that while Muslims comprise around two percent of the Australian population, they bring a richness of culture and tradition from over 65 different countries. He challenged the Australian Lutheran educa-

tors and other Christians to use “the transforming power of education and the gospel of hope” to nurture acceptance of the country’s new neighbors.

The LCA, which includes the Lutheran Church of New Zealand, has 60,000 members in 648 congregations. It is known for its education programs and diversity, with 7,000 members coming from indigenous communities.

Teaching a culture of peace and relationship restoration are key parts of the Lutheran education system, which teaches more than 38,000 students

across Australia. In Queensland alone Lutheran schools employ 2,630 staff.

“Our schools have always been singled out for excellent pastoral care—the way we help grow the student’s whole being and their soul,” said Sue Kloeden, director of Lutheran Education in Queensland.

In his address, Younan invited the ACLE to begin a conversation around developing a deeper partnership between the Lutheran schools and colleges in Australia and the ELCJHL schools. “By sharing resources, skills and technologies, we can enrich the lives of our students and teachers,” he said.

In a 29 September sermon at St Peter’s College in Brisbane, the LWF president underscored the church’s role in bringing peace and understanding to diverse communities in the Middle East.

“Because of faith, Palestinian Christians are instruments of peace, brokers of justice, ministers of reconciliation, and promoters of human rights, including women’s rights. Because of faith we are initiators of dialogues with others and apostles of love,” Younan stressed.

*(Caryn Rogers from the LCA contributed to this article.)*

## Called to Accompany One Another

### European Churches Aim to be a Voice of Hope

**HELSINKI, Finland/GENEVA (LWI)** – Representatives of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches from across Europe meeting in Helsinki, Finland, agreed to strengthen their efforts to be a strong voice for hope, advocacy and diaconal service.

“European LWF member churches, as a part of a global communion, understand that their advocacy is not limited to the European region and recognize some important issues in the global communion that should be highlighted and supported,” 40 leaders drawn from 24 LWF member

churches in the region stated in a message from the 30 September – 2 October consultation.

“We are concerned about the situation in the Middle East that challenges our churches to continue to pray for peace, and [about] climate changes taking place, affecting us all, but especially the poorest and most vulnerable,” they noted.

The consultation called to follow up on LWF themes and issues brought together Council members and advisors, National Committee representatives, ecumenical officers and regional

coordinators of the LWF Women in Church and Society (WICAS) network. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland hosted the meeting, which was organized by the LWF Department for Mission and Development Europe desk.

The church leaders received the document “From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration in 2017,” published by the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity to encourage a common commemoration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.



A group discussion at the European region church leaders' consultation. Photo: Johan Ehrning

They shared possible plans for celebrating the anniversary, including a series of 14 animated stories on the Reformation from Hungary; and from Denmark, a “Luther beer” and Lego bricks to ‘construct’ Luther sites.

The LWF member church leaders highlighted the ongoing need for cooperation and dialogue between Roman Catholics and Lutherans and the importance of working together for the renewal of the Church and bearing common witness in a secularized society. They underlined the need to be informed about LWF’s plans and tools for the 2017 Reformation anniversary commemorations.

## Learning from Each Other

While expressing thanks for the churches’ independence, the consultation affirmed the significance of togetherness and companionship between smaller and larger churches in the region and the common desire to learn from each other.

In his address focusing on “Claiming the Gift of Communion in a Fragmented World,” General Bishop Dr Miloš Klátik of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic, noted that LWF member churches have responsibilities as autonomous churches, and as communion members.

“We are called to accompany one another, assess the complex implications of church decisions, and enhance interaction and bridge building,” Klátik said.

## Full Participation of Women

Speaking about the Gender Justice Policy, which was adopted by the LWF Council in June this year, Rev. Ulrike Hansen from Germany, WICAS coordinator for the Central Western Europe region, said the document serves as an instrument for the communion and its member churches to achieve equality between women and men and promote justice and dignity.

“The Gender Justice Policy is grounded in biblical and theological concepts. Today the question is how to move from having women present to the full participation of women,” Hansen said.

Participants encouraged study and discussion of the policy.

## Intervening for Immigrants

During regional discussions at the Helsinki gathering, LWF Council member Ms Dagmar Magold from Switzerland noted that churches in Central Western Europe face a big challenge in

knowing how to assist immigrants and refugees.

“Churches intervene for these immigrants, but more often, public opinion is reacting critically to the welcoming of those people. We work together with other groups in society but it is difficult and tireless work to convince society to engage,” Magold said. “In the near future, churches will have to deal more intensively with the demographic changes.”

Hungarian Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny, LWF Vice-President, said that maintaining a church presence in society in the Central Eastern European region is a challenge, but he added that the Reformation anniversary can assist, as it asks churches to articulate how they see themselves as Lutheran.

## Relations with State

Presiding Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien, Norway, emphasized that for the LWF member churches in the Nordic region, relationships to the State are of central significance alongside the role of churches in secular society.

“For the big churches, the question is how to determine their specific functions in a secular and pluralistic society,” she said.

The Helsinki meeting was the first gathering of church leaders from the three LWF regions in Europe since the May 2012 European Church Leadership Consultation in Ostrava, Czech Republic.

**The full text of the message from LWF European Regions’ Meeting:**

[www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/Message%20from%20the%20LWF%20European%20Region.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/Message%20from%20the%20LWF%20European%20Region.pdf)

# LWF Delegation Meets Pope Francis

## Strengthening Churches' Commitment to the Poor and Vulnerable

**VATICAN CITY/GENEVA (LWI)** – During an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican on 21 October, leaders from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) expressed gratitude for the partnership with the Roman Catholic Church that makes it possible for churches to strengthen their commitment to the poor and vulnerable.

“As people who have been encountered by Christ, we are called to accompany the poor and vulnerable. The message of reconciliation entrusted to us turns into the hope for our fragmented world and its yearning for peace with justice,” LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan said in LWF’s greeting to the pope.

Yunan expressed gratitude for the ecumenical milestones of the partnership with Catholics, including the recent publication of the report “From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration in 2017.”

By jointly approaching a shared history which includes elements of pain “the promise of healing appears on the horizon,” Younan said of the publication that outlines the mutual responsibility by Lutherans and Catholics for a common approach to the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

The June 2013 report by the Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commission on Unity marked the first time that both partners have worked together at the global level to tell the history of the Reformation as part of their commitment to deepen Christian unity. Baptism is the focus of ongoing dialogue by the commission, which will mark its 50th anniversary in 2017.

In his response, Francis said confronting the historical reality of the Reformation is important as it also enables Catholics and Lutherans to rejoice together “in the longing for unity which the Lord has awakened in

our hearts, and which makes us look with hope to the future.”

### Protecting Refugees and Migrants

LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge thanked the pope for his clear and passionate reminder to the human family and governments of the duty to protect migrants and refugees, during the pontiff’s recent visit to the island of Lampedusa, an arrival port for migrants from Northern Africa.

this dimension of ecumenism, the ecumenism of martyrdom.” Persecution, he noted, “does not know denominational barriers. Religious divisions do not define people fleeing conflict or migrating in order to safeguard their own lives. They are ultimately defined by what they are: children of God,” Francis added.

The LWF delegation included Vice-Presidents—National Bishop Susan C. Johnson (North America), Rev. Dr Gloria Rojas Vargas (Latin America and the Caribbean) and Ms



*During the audience with the LWF delegation, Pope Francis received a refugee’s teapot as an invitation to work together for the suffering neighbor. Photo: Osservatore Romano*

Junge presented Francis with a teapot from a Somali refugee woman at the world’s largest refugee camp – Dadaab. He explained that the hot tea made in the kettle was almost the only thing that sustained this group of refugees as they fled to neighboring Kenya.

“As people who have been met by Christ, we are freed and sent to meet our suffering neighbor. Let this gift therefore be an invitation to do more together for the sake of the suffering,” the general secretary added.

The pope expressed sincere appreciation for the tea kettle, saying it is a gift that he will keep “as a reminder of

Eun-hae Kwon (Asia)—and Bishop Dr Milos Klátik (Chairperson of the Council Committee for Theology and Ecumenical Relations). Other members were Rev. Dr Kaisamari Hintikka, LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations; the Commission’s co-chairperson Bishop emeritus Dr Eero Huovinen (Finland) and Prof. Theodor Dieter, director of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France.



# Lutherans Launch Institute to Promote Sustainability of Churches in Latin America and Caribbean

## LWF Collaborates with Churches to Develop Curriculum

**PORTO ALEGRE, Brazil/GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have launched an institute that will enhance resources that strengthen the churches' presence and service to society in the region.

The LAC Sustainability Institute was inaugurated on 24 October at the Church of Reconciliation in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

The LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) LAC desk collaborates with the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB) in developing the institute at the Faculdades EST [Higher School of Theology] in São Leopoldo.

The move comes following talks among LWF member church leaders in Managua, Nicaragua, earlier this year, which indicated need for such a school to promote the sustainability of churches as they attempt to strengthen their service to society.

The Sustainability Institute will work with civil society, the business sector and state organizations to develop programs. Discussions at Managua focused on the challenges imposed on churches by the complexities of the new economic, social, political and religious reality in the region.

IECLB president Rev. Dr Nestor Friedrich underlined the value of the institute, saying it is an "important tool and space for the mission that God entrusts to the church as it is endowed with qualified persons, leaders, and ministers."



LWF LAC representatives at the launch of the Sustainability Institute in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Photo: Dilceu Witzke

The Sustainability Institute builds on the spirit of the document, "Linking Theological Research and Sustainability," which was presented at Managua by Mr Gustavo Driau of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELU) in Argentina. It is connected to the Good Governance and Transformative Leadership Program in DMD.

"During the last three months, the planning team has been developing content, methodologies, activities and the elaboration of a draft founding document for the institute," said Rev. Dr Patricia Cuyatti, LWF area secretary for LAC.

The team includes Driau, who is the regional coordinator of the sustainability program; Miltom de Oliveira, reference person from the IECLB sustainability program; Faculdades EST Provost – Chancellor Rev. Dr Valério Schaper;

and Déborah Conrad, a catechist who serves as IECLB formation secretary.

The institute's curricula, which is being developed in consultation with member churches in the LAC region, considers the sustainability and spirituality emphases and is grounded in contextual faith formation.

Cuyatti expressed gratitude for the support, reflection and prayers that have been received from member church leaders throughout the LAC region as the Sustainability Institute has been taking shape.

"In a clear demonstration of what it means to be part of the Lutheran communion, the Sustainability Institute is a courageous commitment to continue searching for new paths that contextually respond to the needs of member churches in their own realities," Cuyatti emphasized.

# Early Disaster Preparedness Reduced Risks from Cyclone

## Lutheran World Service India Trust Thanks Volunteers

**KOLKATA, India/GENEVA (LWI)** – Lutheran World Service India Trust (LWSIT)

says community-based volunteers trained in disaster preparedness in

Odisha and Andhra Pradesh states, significantly contributed to minimizing



the risks from the cyclone that struck India's coastal region on 12 October.

Cyclone Phailin, the severest storm to strike India's eastern coastline in 14 years, left 28 people dead in the two states, flattened hundreds of thousands of homes, destroyed paddy crops worth USD 400 million and killed thousands of animals. It disrupted the lives of nearly 14 million people in the disaster-prone region.

LWSIT, an associate program of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service, has been working with about 2,000 communities on disaster preparedness and risk reduction programs following the devastating 1999 cyclone that killed 10,000 people in Odisha.

In October community teams trained by LWSIT in early warning signs including information dissemination, evacuation and search skills and management of shelters joined local authorities in evacuating nearly 900,000 people to cyclone shelters and schools in Odisha, avoiding a repeat of previous disasters.

State and non-governmental organization spokespersons described the preparedness training and evacuation efforts by groups such as LWSIT as the biggest in India's history.

"During Cyclone Phailin the real heroes were the trained community

volunteers and animators who helped in the evacuation and managed the residents at the shelters safely," said Dr James Vijayakumar, LWSIT director. "These communities were equipped with much needed food and drinking water locally during the cyclone."

In the initial training phases, "there were challenges in motivating people to think more proactively towards preparedness than material assistance," Vijayakumar said.

"But, once they were convinced and got motivated it had a triggering effect and neighboring communities came forward and invited LWSIT to teach

such lessons on disaster preparedness," he noted.

LWSIT's slogan "Either Prepare or Perish," was translated into vernacular language and struck a chord with those who encountered it, the LWSIT director emphasized.

"People really got serious and did their best and because of this the loss of life has been minimal. Nevertheless it was not possible to save standing crops and trees from the fury of nature since the intensity of the cyclone was so strong," Vijayakumar added.

*(Lutheran World Service India Trust Kolkata office contributed to this article.)*



Villagers returning to their homes after Cyclone Phailin. Photo: LWSIT

## Fun and Learning for "Climate Heroes" at First LWF Online Game

### Inspiring Young People to Be Change Makers in Society

**GENEVA (LWI)** – More than 200 "climate heroes" from 42 countries participated in The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) online game "Journey to Climate Justice" on 26 October. The initiative that was developed by the LWF is aimed at helping young people advocate for change while connecting them to the global Lutheran communion.

The participants took part in a digital journey around the world, discovering the various types of ongoing work for

climate justice by listening to speakers from different countries, contributing their own ideas and gaining points by answering quiz questions correctly.

Twelve keynote presentations focused on theology, climate justice, urban gardening, reforestation projects, advocacy efforts against seabed mining, a climate sail camp and Dalit liberation theology. The speakers included LWF youth, United Nations representatives and theologians engaged in interfaith issues.

The game is part of the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) program on Capacity for Advocacy, which encourages member churches to become more engaged in advocacy for justice and human rights alongside ecumenical and civil society activists and marginalized people.

It is part of the LWF's efforts to respond to the urgent challenge of the adverse effects of climate change by seeking new ways to reach out and



involve young people as change makers in society.

“This pilot project was a true success,” said Caroline Richter, LWF Youth secretary at DMD. “Participants gave extremely positive feedback on the methodology of a social game that provides learning, networking and fun at the same time.

“They wish to continue this kind of educational and advocacy work on climate justice,” Richter added.

Participants said they learned a great deal from the game and vowed to adapt some of the ideas for their daily lives.

“This is indeed very educational,” said \*Tamesha from Guyana. “I have learned so much: and be sure that I will share and practice what I learned on this journey.”

\*Carolina from Argentina added: “I’m loving the game, and learning so much.”

\*Patrick from Chile noted, “I want to download the presentations to have them for later and show them to more young people.”

## Theological Resources

Participants were offered a variety of theological resources to assist in their climate justice work. Dr Guillermo Kerber, the World Council of Churches (WCC) program executive for climate change, emphasized that the Bible underscores both the sanctity of creation and the call to justice.

Martin Kopp, French theologian and a member of the LWF delegation to the 2013 UN Climate Change Con-

ference in Warsaw, said that there has been a tradition of reading the biblical creation narrative incorrectly as calling for human being to subdue creation. “On the contrary, the Bible calls for both stewardship of the earth and a just distribution of resources.”

Rev. Brian Konkol, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) urged an “Olive Agenda” that combines the green agenda of protecting the environment and the brown agenda of eradicating poverty. “Only this [Olive Agenda] is compatible with the ideas of *oikos*, the one household of God.”

Commenting on Luther’s declaration that Christians live as both “saints and sinners,” Konkol said that while it is true that Christians contribute to climate change, they must confront it honestly and with humility “so that we may boldly seek ways and means that bring life in its fullness to all of creation.”

All the major world religions, including Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, offer great resources in fighting together for climate justice, said Rev. Dr Simone Sinn, LWF study secretary for Public Theology and Interreligious Relations at the LWF Department for Theology and Public Witness (DTPW).

Reuben Mete representing the Papua New Guinea Watut River Development said that while indigenous people in his country own most of the land, foreign mining companies reap most of the profit while at the same time contributing to the high level of pollution in their areas of operation.

Participants heard that in Canada collective gardens are helping young people reflect about their relationship to nature and food, while in Germany youth are experiencing the effects of climate change first hand by sailing on a boat in the North Sea.

Tsiry Rakoto and Chris Böer from Madagascar and Germany respectively recounted their experiences as members of the LWF delegation to the 2012 Conference of the Parties (COP 18) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Doha, Qatar.

The “Climate Change Statement” approved by the LWF Council in June 2013 urges all LWF member churches to combat climate change at national and congregational levels. Together with the insights from the “Journey to Climate Justice,” it will motivate the seven young members who make up LWF’s COP 19 delegation to call for more action on behalf of the Lutheran communion, Richter noted.

## Personal and Community Lives

Discussions during the “Journey to Climate Justice” focused on the practical changes needed in people’s personal and community lives, such as eating less meat, initiating climate change education in Sunday schools and advocating for climate justice on a local political level.

Matilda Mattson, a participant from Sweden who will also join the

LWF delegation to COP19, noted that more and more people in her church are becoming vegetarians and vegans.

“For my youth group with its international interests, there’s no question it’s the right thing to do for the climate. Hopefully it will spread from the

church to families and friends outside the church,” Mattson added.

But participants also acknowledged that a lot still needs to be done to convince the wider public. “We all have our part to play in combating climate change and those countries

that have the greatest pollution emissions should be held accountable for their actions,” said \*Cassandra from Guyana.

(\* In some cases, only first names of the online participants have been used.)

## LWF Concerned about Attempt to Violate Freedom of Religion in Malaysia

### Court Rules That Christian Publication May Not Use “Allah” Name

**GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has expressed deep concern over a Court of Appeal ruling in Malaysia, forbidding a Roman Catholic publication from using the Malay-language word “Allah” for God.

In a 5 November letter to LWF member church leaders in Malaysia, LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan, and General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge called the ruling an attempt to suppress freedom of religion and expression in Malaysia that could lead to confusion, resentment and discord.

“This ruling ... goes against the centuries-old, well-accepted use of the word ‘Allah’ by Arab Christians in the Middle East and other parts of the world; violates the freedom of religion and freedom of expression of Christians in Malaysia; and threatens

to create unnecessary division and discord between Christians and Muslims in Malaysia,” they said.

In a 14 October ruling, the Court of Appeal of Malaysia upheld that the Roman Catholic weekly *Herald* must refrain from using the word “Allah” in its publication and that a ministerial decree did not infringe on the newspaper’s constitutional rights.

The court found that use of the name “Allah” is not integral to the faith and practice of Christianity and that such usage would cause confusion.

In their letter to the Malaysian churches, Younan and Junge noted that Christians have been using the word “Allah” for more than 2,000 years.

“If Malay-speaking Christians would be forbidden to address God as ‘Allah,’ then their teaching, practice, worship

and observance would no longer be free,” they emphasized in the letter to the leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia, Basel Christian Church of Malaysia, Protestant Church in Sabah and the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore.

Younan and Junge pointed out that the very fundamental rights of freedom of religion and expression that are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are also applicable in the Constitution and laws of Malaysia. As the right to hold opinions without interference is integral to freedom of opinion and expression, the court’s “ruling interferes with the opinions of the Malay-speaking Christians, and with their actual practice,” the LWF leaders noted.

“While religious intolerance is a source of violence and suffering, religious freedom provides a source and basis for peaceful co-existence,” the Lutheran leaders added, referring to observations by the LWF Council at its meeting last June.

In a 2011 visit to Malaysia, Younan and Junge met with government officials and discussed the need to promote interreligious and interethnic understanding and cooperation through dialogue in order to further unity in diversity in the country.

Muslims comprise around 60 percent of Malaysia’s 28 million people. Christians make up around 9 percent of the population in a country that also includes Buddhists and Hindus among other religious groups.



Rev. Philip Lok from the Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore is a member of the LWF Council.  
Photo: LWF/H. Putsman-Penet



# LWF President Younan Greets WCC 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Busan

## Lutheran Leader Encourages the Church to Raise Its Prophetic Voice

**BUSAN, Republic of Korea /GENEVA (LWI)** – In his greeting to the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on 4 November, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan assured churches of LWF’s accompaniment in efforts to raise a prophetic voice for justice and peace in a fragmented world.

the Lutheran communion’s contribution towards sustainable development and disaster response through the ACT Alliance network. “Our joint service as churches has transformed not just the communities we serve, but has become an important conduit of greater understanding among Christian communions,” he added.

Referring to LWF’s involvement in the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, Younan emphasized the increasing need to strengthen the link between theological discernment and diaconal service.

As bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and an Arab Christian, Younan also brought “greetings from the Holy City of Jerusalem, a city yearning for wholeness and peace.”

The LWF president said that with the entire LWF communion, he continues to believe that “peace based on justice, and reconciliation based on forgiveness is still possible in the Middle East.” He reiterated the call by the LWF for a two-state solution—Palestine living side by side with Israel—and a shared Jerusalem for the three monotheistic religions Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

Younan expressed gratitude to the WCC for ongoing support through both the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), which together with LWF’s work on the Mount of Olives and other Christian ministries in Jerusalem, remain “powerful signs of hope that need to be sustained.”

### Lutheran Contribution to Assembly Life

The assembly included confessional meetings to facilitate the contribution of the respective Christian World Communions to WCC’s life and work. At Lutheran confessional meetings organized by the LWF on 1 and 7 November, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge spoke on “LWF, WCC and the ecumenical movement in Busan.”

Other contributors focused on human security, peace and human rights,



*LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan greets the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan, Republic of Korea. Photo: Peter Williams/WCC*

“The Church has to raise its prophetic voice in our fragmented world, and to address issues of justice and peace and human rights, including gender justice, economic justice, environmental justice and religious freedom,” Younan said in LWF’s greeting to the WCC Assembly, held 30 October – 8 November in Busan, Republic of Korea.

There were around 3,000 people including Lutheran delegates participating in the highest governing-body of the WCC, meeting under the theme, “God of life, lead us to justice and peace.”

Younan underlined LWF’s commitment from its very beginnings to serve “our vulnerable and marginalized neighbors.” He expressed gratitude for

Younan noted that the quest for Christian unity has been an integral part of the self-understanding of the LWF since its founding in 1947. Ecumenical engagement with the different partners had enabled the LWF to learn that in as much as ecumenical dialogue is about theological discernment, “it is also about accompanying each other, sharing the journey of faith, listening carefully to each other’s experiences, and seeking justice in all contexts,” he said.

Theological engagement, the president noted, “can be transformed into processes of healing memories, leading our churches from fragmentation and conflict toward growing communion and joint witness in the world.”



the 500<sup>th</sup> Reformation anniversary in 2017 as well as the Twelfth LWF Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia, among other topics.

A photo exhibition highlighted LWF's contribution toward a just, peaceful and reconciled world. It showed the Lutheran communion's work in theological reflections, diacon-

al programs, humanitarian response and advocacy across the world.

During the Women and Men's Pre-Assembly, Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt, LWF secretary for Women in Church and Society (WICAS), addressed the issue of "Identifying and dismantling patriarchy and other systems of oppression for women."

She noted that in order to transform systems of oppression and achieve gender justice, there is a need for clear processes, strategies and policies that promote and encourage the equal participation of women.

## Philippines: Pastors Initiate First Response to Typhoon Devastation as LWF Assures Support

### Lutheran Church Leader Says Homes and Church Buildings "Are Totally Destroyed"

**MANILA, Philippines/GENEVA (LWI)** – Thousands were feared dead in one city alone following the super-typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda that struck the Philippines' central region on 8 November, a pastor of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP) reported on 11 November.

In Mahayag and Albuera in Leyte province, the area which has been worst hit by the storm, "almost all houses in this area, including those of our members are either totally destroyed or significantly damaged by the winds. The church building and the parsonage were not spared," LCP President Rev. James Cerdenola said. He added he was yet "to receive communication from the pastor of the congregation in the Tacloban area," also severely hit.

Wherever possible, LCP pastors began reaching out to those affected. In Mahayag suburb, an hour's ride from the nearest city of Ormoc in Leyte, Rev. Xavier James Palattao was able to cross to the nearby island of Cebu to seek help and provisions for members of his community. "We are now starving. No relief has yet come. If there were relief that did come, it would be confined to the cities. It did not reach us. And we are out of money," Palattao said.

As The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) received reports from the LCP

and news about the extensive loss of lives and destruction from the typhoon, General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge assured the Philippine church of support from the entire LWF communion "during this very difficult juncture of your journey as a nation and as churches."

"Our thoughts and prayers go to the entire nation and its people as it copes with the shock and trauma over so much destruction and loss of lives," the general secretary said in a letter to the LCP president earlier today. "You are not alone," Junge assured the Lutheran church leader.

It is estimated that over 4 million people have been directly affected by

the typhoon, which packed winds of up to 300 kilometers an hour. Many people are now said to be struggling without food, clean drinking water and shelter.

In his letter to the 18,000-member LCP, Junge noted that while the church is also directly affected by the disaster, its role for the devastated communities is crucial.

"In as much as churches themselves are suffering the pain and losses, communities are looking up to the church for a word that would bring peace to their minds, for loving arms to embrace and hold fast those lives all of a sudden being perceived in



The super typhoon Haiyan that struck central Philippines killed thousands of people and destroyed infrastructure, homes and churches. Photo: REUTERS/Zander Casas courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

all their fragility, for a hand that would hold a bowl of rice, or a cup of clean water,” Junge said.

The general secretary pointed to the words of Saint Paul (in 2 Corinthians 4: 8-10), which urged the first Christians to carry on in the face of adversity: “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”

The team leader of the LWF emergency hub in Asia was deployed to assess the situation in the typhoon hit areas and support the ACT Alliance network in its emergency response to the affected communities. ACT, of which the LWF is a founding member, coordinates emergency relief for



Volunteers from the LWF-supported National Council of Churches in the Philippines pack relief items for distribution to the most vulnerable families. Photo:NCCP/ACT

churches and their related organizations globally, has issued an alert for food and non-food items in the aftermath of typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda.

## Clean Water for Remote Villages in Andean Region

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Mission and Development together with the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELB) is helping to bring much-needed drinking water to remote and vulnerable villages in the Andean highlands.

Many of Bolivia’s citizens lack access to basic services such as clean drinking water, sewage, electricity and primary health-care. Seventy percent of the population of 10 million people lives in poverty.

Periodic droughts and flooding, as well as severe frost, are characteristic of the highland regions of the Latin American country and often frustrate the attempts of rural communities to



In Altarani, the process of building a new water pipe for the village is well underway with local people digging holes for the trench. Photo: LWF/I. Dorji



Thanks to the Diakonia in the Andean Highlands project, villagers in Quillu Javira, now have access to running water and sanitation services. Photo: LWF/I. Dorji

improve their living conditions. ‘Project Diakonia in the Andean Highlands’ is part of LWF’s wider mission to improve sanitation and water security in the region.

Through the project, the LWF is empowering villagers in Agua Blanca, Japo, Altarani and Quillu Javira to actively participate in developing their own water supply infrastructures. The construction of latrines and clean water sources is achieved through a tripartite working system involving the government, church and local municipalities.

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# Hope amid Pain in Drought-Hit Angolan Regions

## Bishop Ndwanapo Expresses Gratitude for Lutheran Communion Assistance

**LUANDA, Angola/GENEVA (LWI)**—In Angola’s southern province of Cunene, Lutheran congregations in the rural community of Chavikwa “are closing down, and the pastor is moving out because the people have left and he cannot stay there by himself. These are small congregations without much sustainability, and most of their workers are volunteers supported by the local people. [What to do] if the people are no longer there, no rains and nothing to eat?”

This is how Bishop Tomás Ndwanapo of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Angola (IELA) describes the impact of a severe drought in Angola that is becoming unbearable for subsistence farmers and cattle herders especially in the five southern provinces that also include Namibe, Kuando Kubango, Benguela and Huila. More than 1.6 million people are directly affected by the prolonged food and water crisis.

In Onepole, one of the driest places in Cunene, with no rainfall recorded for three consecutive years, “there is nothing,” Ndwanapo says. “Herders and their animals are moving out towards Onjiva town, which is already a very far distance by walking,” he adds.

The Southern African country, with a population of 21 million people, has been experiencing a prolonged dry spell since 2012. Cunene, neighboring equally drought-stricken Namibia, is the most adversely affected region with nearly 600,000 people—half of its population—facing a food and water crisis including lack of pastures for animals.

The little rains anticipated in November are not expected to provide much relief, says the Lutheran bishop. “Maybe we will get more rain in January to March. But still farmers will need to plant short-term grains because getting rains for three months only will not be enough for normal crops to mature,” he adds.



*Young boys look for water in southern Angola. Photo: Nzakumiena Daniel*

### Reaching Out to Vulnerable Families

Still, there is hope. Response to a drought appeal by The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and partners in the ACT Alliance has brought relief to thousands of vulnerable families, who are currently receiving basic food stuffs—mealie-meal, beans, cooking oil and salt. The distribution coordinated by the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) country program in Angola and IELA will continue until early next year when some harvest is expected. During the most critical periods of the drought 6,000 people are targeted including women and orphaned children.

Ndwanapo recently hosted a delegation of Lutheran leaders visiting Angola and Namibia led by LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge. The group including LWF Vice-President for Africa, Presiding Bishop Dr Alex G. Malasusa (Tanzania); DWS director, Rev. Eberhard Hitzler; and LWF area secretary for Africa, Rev. Dr Elieshi Mungure visited communities in Cunene province and local partners collaborating with LWF and ACT in supporting rural communities affected by the crisis. Other Lutheran communion leaders visiting

the drought-hit countries included Ms Colleen Cunningham (South Africa) and Bishop Dr Frank O. July (Germany).

“Your coming to Angola was, is and will be historical. It is an active living testimony of our communion and our Christian commitment to the proclamation of the gospel and assistance to those who suffer,” Ndwanapo said of the September visit.

He gave the example of an LWF-donated truck which recently delivered 32,000 liters of clean drinking water to the rural community in Onepole, bringing a measure of relief to more than 500 people there.

Still, the shortage of food and water persists in many other areas and “coping mechanisms have been weakened, leaving the population fragile. “Youth are migrating to the cities to search for work to support their families, teachers are abandoning schools, children are absent from school or leaving early and those who remain in the region often must walk up to 15 kilometers to obtain water,” an LWF/ACT Alliance report states.

The report points out that the government’s response to the emergency is not showing any tangible indications and the poverty level in the affected communi-

ties is still endemic, despite the country's economic growth. "Families are eating one meal a day, which consists of maize meal or millet, or go without a meal."

Poor sanitation is a concern. There are reports of health problems including cholera, artificial dams or "chim-paka" have dried up and families are attempting to dig wells themselves to get water. More vulnerable households have fallen into poverty and are turning to alcohol abuse because it is accessible and affordable, the report adds.

The LWF delegation assured the affected communities of the Lutheran communion's solidarity with the Angolan people and churches as they seek ways of coping with the drought. "In Onepole, the community was able to talk about their difficulties and by doing so, regained some hope for their future," said Malasusa, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

"I want the people in the affected areas to know that they are not alone and that we as the LWF are committed to help. Their thirst is our thirst, and their hunger, our hunger," the LWF vice-president remarked.

Malasusa emphasized the need to work towards long-term solutions such as drilling bore holes for water and reforestation so that resilience can be developed for communities that are prone to drought and other disasters. "We heard that this was not the first time that drought had hit the area. There have been three years of drought in a row already," he said.

Advocacy with the government is also crucial, the LWF vice-president noted, and encouraged IELA and other churches in Angola to strengthen partnerships in this area. "Mothers and children are the most vulnerable section of the suffering population and it is important that the government re-

sponds to this through own programs and budgets," Malasusa added.

LWF general secretary Junge said he had witnessed moments of both pain and hope during his meetings with community members, pastors and local authority leaders in Angola. "Seeing young boys digging wells using their hands—this was a very painful moment. Yet, I also saw community leaders pulling together their determination and resources to tackle the difficult situation. That the church is present, wanting to be with people who are suffering and reaching out to offer support was a real blessing," Junge added.

The DWS program has been operational in Angola since 1986, with its regular work focusing on supporting rural communities to build sustainable livelihoods and enhance food security.

IELA has 48,000 members, and it joined the LWF in 1997.

## LWF Congratulates Bishop-Elect Antje Jackelen

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) congratulated Lund Bishop Dr Antje Jackelén upon her election as the next Archbishop of the Church of Sweden.

In a letter to Jackelén on 16 October, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge expressed gladness that the Swedish church had elected a leader who would bring to her new role "rootedness in the global church" and understanding of "the richness and diversity of the global Lutheran communion."

Junge said, "Your gifts of theological understanding, pastoral care and discernment, and principled leadership will be put to good use in this new chapter of your ministry."

In the 15 October election in Uppsala, Jackelén received 55.9 percent of the votes cast in the first round to choose a successor to outgoing Archbishop Anders H. Wejryd. She will become the first woman to head the Swedish church.

Jackelén is a member of the LWF Council, and serves on its Committee for Theology and Ecumenical Relations. The general secretary underlined her leadership role in the LWF governing

body and other international settings, as well as her experience while studying and teaching in Germany and the United States.

Junge noted the LWF celebrates Jackelén's election also as an affirmation "that one of LWF's gifts to the global church is the commitment to the full participation of women and men in church and society." Still, he expressed his hope that the day would come "when the news is not going to be anymore the gender of the elected leaders, but the special gifts he or she brings to the ministry."

Jackelén studied at the universities of Tübingen (Germany) and Uppsala and Lund (Sweden), and taught systematic theology at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, USA. After her ordination in 1980, she served as a parish pastor in Stockholm and Lund, and became the Lund diocese bishop in 2007. She will be installed as Church of Sweden Archbishop in June 2014, succeeding Wejryd, who has led the church since 2006.

Church of Sweden is LWF's largest member church, with over 6.5 million members.

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