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– A Communion of Churches**

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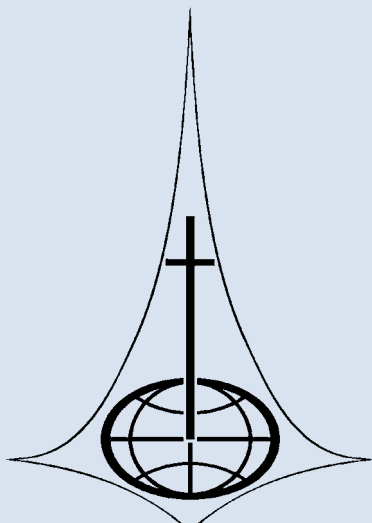
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LWF Council Meeting and 60th Anniversary Celebrations



“Living in Communion in the World Today” was the theme of the 20–27 March meeting of the Council of the Lutheran World Federation, a Church Leadership Consultation and celebrations to mark the Federation’s 60th anniversary in Lund, Sweden. Around 500 participants, including 105 church leaders from around the world, attended the LWF events hosted by the Church of Sweden and its Diocese of Lund.

Photo above: A liturgical dance performance during the Council’s opening worship at the Lund Cathedral.

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“Give Us Today Our Daily Bread” is the theme of the 11th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation which will be held from 20 to 27 July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany. Delegates attending the 20–27 March LWF Council Meeting agreed on the proposed theme and dates during discussions on the Report of the Assembly Planning Committee.

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After eight years of preparation, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation has adopted an historic statement on the episcopal ministry. The full title of the statement is “Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church—The Lund Statement by the Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches.”

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Brazilian Theologian Carlos Bock to Head Mission and Development Committee

At its March 2007 meeting in Lund, Sweden, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) elected **Dr Carlos Gilberto Bock** from the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB) as a Council member, and as chairperson of the Program Committee for Mission and Development. He effectively becomes a member of the LWF Executive Committee, replacing IECLB president, Rev. Dr Walter Altmann, who since February 2006 is moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.

Bock, 43, is currently advisor to the IECLB president at the church’s headquarters in Porto Alegre, Brazil. His

previous positions included executive secretary of the IECLB development projects unit from 1997 to 1999, and in 1996, advisor to CESE, an ecumenical humanitarian body through which Brazilian churches including the IECLB work with grassroots organizations to overcome social injustice. He was assistant executive secretary of the National Council of Christian Churches in Brazil (CONIC) from 1989 to 1995.

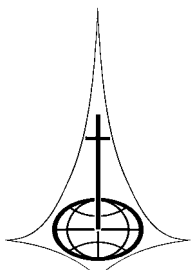
The Mission and Development committee reviews and evaluates the work of the LWF Department for Mission and Development.

Indian Pastor Augustine Jeyakumar Joins Communication Committee

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) elected **Rev. A. G. Augustine Jeyakumar**, executive secretary of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI), as a member of the Program Committee for Communication Services. He replaces Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, former UELCI executive secretary, who in June 2006 took up the position of LWF Deputy General Secretary at the LWF secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland.

A member of the Arcot Lutheran Church, Jeyakumar, 59, has served the Chennai (India)-based UELCI in different capacities for more than three decades. Prior to his March 2006 election as head of the body of Lutheran churches in India, he was executive secretary of the LWF National Committee in India and director of the UELCI Division for Social Action.

The communication committee oversees the work of the LWF Office for Communication Services.



Inclusive Dialogue Encouraged in LWF's Discussion on Marriage, Family and Sexuality

General Secretary Noko Highlights Major Issues at Press Conference

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 20 March 2007 (LWI) – The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko encouraged the LWF member churches to dialogue on the issues of marriage, family and sexuality in an inclusive manner in order to avoid making it a church-dividing issue.

Noko gave the cautionary note during a press conference at the beginning of an eight-day event including the LWF Council Meeting, a Church Leadership Consultation and celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of the LWF taking place in Lund, Sweden, from 20 to 27 March 2007.

Nearly 500 participants, including 105 church leaders from around the world, were expected at the LWF events hosted by the Church of Sweden and its Diocese of Lund. “Living in Communion in the World Today” was the theme of the LWF meetings, held mainly at the Scandic Star Hotel in Lund.

Responding to a question on the issue of polygamy, Noko emphasized the need to also focus on the broader aspects of marriage and family, saying that polygamy was one of the concerns that could be taken up again in a communion-wide discussion. The aim of the LWF task force appointed by the LWF Council in 2004 was not to give a Lutheran position on the issue of marriage, family and sexuality, but to provide guidelines on how the member churches could deal with discussion around this issue, the general secretary stressed.

The task force was to present a report entitled “The Proposed Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue” to this year’s Council to help member churches discuss the changing realities in



LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, during the 19 March press conference. © LWF/J. H. Rakotonianina

relation to marriage, family and sexuality in the world today.

Welcoming the journalists on behalf of the LWF Council host church, the Church of Sweden, Bishop Christina Odenberg of the Diocese of Lund, pointed out that there were no women bishops at the LWF’s founding Assembly in 1947, while around 20 women bishops and presidents were expected at this year’s 60th anniversary celebrations.

Odenberg was appointed Bishop of Lund in June 1997, becoming the first Lutheran woman bishop in Sweden. The Swedish church—a national church that is the largest LWF member church—welcomed the idea of hosting other Lutherans

from all over the world to “connect with its global roots,” she added.

For Bishop Victoria Cortez Rodríguez, vice president of the LWF’s Latin American and Caribbean region, and head of the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope, being “in communion is our way of sharing our faith although there is a lot of diversity in the Lutheran communion from country to country and from continent to continent.”



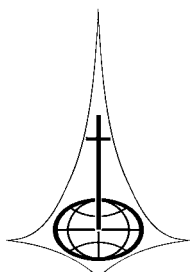
Bishop Victoria Cortez Rodríguez, LWF vice president, Latin America & Caribbean. © LWF/J. H. Rakotonianina

Noko pointed out that the 1947 formation of the LWF immediately after World War II was a time for healing because Europe was in a shambles after the war, inflation was high, and Africa was not represented. “There is still a need to assume the responsibility to bring about healing in living the faith in our communion,” he said.

The LWF 11th Assembly in Stuttgart Germany in 2010, will be a turning point from a stand-alone stance to that of fostering communion and facing toward each other, Noko added.



Bishop Christina Odenberg, Diocese of Lund, welcomes journalists to the Church of Sweden. © LWF/D. Jusaitis



The Strength of Communion Lies in Being Inclusive

Argentine Pastor Stresses Gospel Message in a World of 'Nobodies'

LUND, Sweden, GENEVA, 22 March 2007 (LWI) – At the opening worship service of the 2007 LWF Council Meeting, Argentine Lutheran pastor Rev. Sonia A. Skupch reminded representatives of Lutheran churches from around the world that the power and strength of communion lies in being inclusive of “all God’s people.”

In a world where people become “nobodies” as a result of globalization, economic injustice, neoliberalism, violence, illiteracy and misuse of power, among other forces, the biblical message that “we are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and



Argentine Lutheran pastor, Rev. Sonia A. Skupch delivers the opening worship sermon at the Lund Cathedral.
© LWF/J. H. Rakotoniaina

members of God’s household is a powerful message for us,” said Skupch, an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate in Argentina.

Worshippers at the Lund Cathedral on 21 March included LWF Council members and church leaders attending the Council Meeting, a Church Leadership Consultation, and the LWF’s 60th anniversary celebrations.

Skupch, an LWF Council member, pointed out that despite the widespread poverty worldwide that has contributed to people “*becoming nobodies*”—invisible, anonymous and insignificant because they are not useful to the actual econom-

ic system—the gospel message gives people hope.

“There are no longer people who are invisible or anonymous. There are no longer people who have more right to live than others. All people are citizens through Jesus Christ,” she stressed in her sermon based on Ephesians 2:17–22.

“We are not a group of crazy people dreaming of a better world. We are the people of God, ... with names, identities and stories to share. [And] there in lies our hope, our strength, our faith and joy,” she said.

Skupch urged participants in the LWF meetings to “deepen our communion through God” during their days together in Lund and after the meetings, as suggested in the events’ theme, “Living in Communion in the World Today.”



Members of a Swedish troupe perform a liturgical dance around the theme of communion during the Council’s opening worship service.
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Former Slovak Bishop Július Filo to Head LWF Project Committee

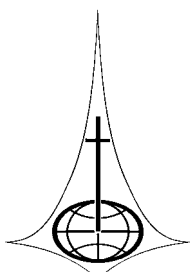
The LWF Council elected **Bishop emeritus Dr Július Filo**, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic (ECAC-SR), to replace Swedish Archbishop Anders Wejryd as chairperson of the LWF Project Committee. Wejryd was installed as the head of the Church of Sweden in September 2006.

Filo, ECAC-SR general bishop from 1994 to 2006, was LWF vice president for the Central and Eastern Europe region from 1997 to 2003, and a member of the Council’s Program Committee for Theology and Studies. He also served as president of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Slovakia. Ordained in 1974, Filo first worked as a chaplain, and later as a lecturer and dean of the Department for Practical Theology at the University of Bratislava. From 1985 to 1990 he was coordinator of a program for youth and students at the LWF secretariat

in Geneva, Switzerland. Filo, 56, is currently a professor of practical theology at the Evangelical Theological Faculty of the Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

Also elected as members of the Project Committee were **Rev. Rainer Kiefer** from Germany and **Mr Robert Granke** from Canada. Kiefer, currently a member of the Committee for Church Cooperation in Mission and Service for the LWF German National Committee, in Hanover, Germany, replaces Bishop Martin Schindehütte, director of Ecumenical Relations and Ministries Abroad, Evangelical Church in Germany. Granke, executive director of the Canadian Lutheran World Relief replaces Ms Ruth E. Jensen.

One of the major tasks of the Project Committee is to approve DMD projects.



Living in Communion Is a “Sheer Gift”

LWF President Mark S. Hanson Addresses Council Meeting

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 21 March 2007 – While living in communion takes considerable effort and can even appear to be counterintuitive, countercultural and unnatural at times, it is a “sheer gift,” said Bishop Mark S. Hanson, President of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), when he addressed participants in the 20–27 March LWF Council Meeting and 60th anniversary celebrations in Lund, Sweden.



In his opening address, LWF President Bishop Mark S. Hanson said the “hesitance, urgency and joy” marking the 1947 founding assembly characterized the current anniversary celebrations. © LWF/D. Jusaitis

In the Address of the President to the LWF Council Meeting, Hanson urged delegates to deeply consider their work as a communion, and to find strength in the many unique perspectives that individual members bring to the LWF.

Hanson is presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Hesitance, Urgency and Joy

He framed his opening remarks around three words, “hesitance, urgency, joy,” and spoke about what it would have been like to attend the 1947 LWF founding Assembly in Lund: “I can picture delegates hesitating as they first approached the entrance to that Assembly,” he said. “Could there truly be a common future for Lutherans? Did they truly belong together?”

The LWF president noted that because the churches did come together, “the roots of the LWF were forged” by the sense of urgency in which Lutheran churches around the world responded when aid and assistance were required to help several hundred thousand Lutherans displaced at the end of World War II.

The new realities that emerged because of the hesitancy and urgency led to ecumenical respect

and dialogue, and to joy. “Joy because, just as new forms of cooperation and dialogue were coming to be both among Lutheran churches and between them and long-estranged sister churches, at the same time, whole new networks of governmental and non-governmental international dialogue and cooperation were being born,” said Hanson. The new LWF, he noted, “was more than a single light in the darkness; it was part of a new constellation of hope.”

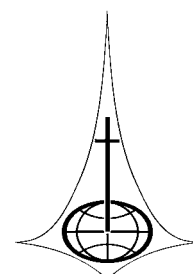
“Hesitance, urgency and joy” are still relevant words to help describe the current atmosphere and gathering of Lutheran churches for the LWF meetings and anniversary celebrations in Lund, said Hanson. He noted that there was hesitancy because of ongoing debate around political, academic and theological issues. The struggle against poverty and HIV and AIDS compels Lutheran churches to come together with a sense of urgency. The joy that was first experienced by the coming together of Lutheran churches at the first Assembly has “grown so vigorously and has developed so far in its self-understanding and work that now, the LWF finds itself in this historical moment with a rich and compelling vocation of ‘Living as communion in the world today.’”

Hanson said that these words, which form the theme of the 2007 events, are a natural extension of the theme of the founding Assembly—“The Lutheran Church in the World Today.” The shift from “Living as Lutherans” to “Living in the world” represents the LWF’s outward-looking vision and its focus on ecumenical relationships.

Reflecting on the 2007 theme, Hanson argued that while living in communion could be considered as counter intuitive/contrary to the LWF’s goal of full ecumenical communion, “If our communion is life-overflowing,” he said, “then a Lutheran communion



Part of a formal procession at the LWF First Assembly in Lund, the Swedish delegation included Lund Bishop Edvard Rodhe (wearing a cross). © LWF photo archives



can exercise profound ecumenical vocation.”

Referring to his own country, the USA, Hanson remarked that “We are now exporting not only products, we are exporting prosperity-gospel-preaching evangelists to your countries who are beckoning Lutherans away from their Lutheran churches.” He appealed for assistance from the global communion to hold “the preaching of the gospel in the United States accountable, for it to be the crucifying gospel of God’s radical grace in Christ through faith, rather than some other distortion of the gospel that we now export and is pure heresy.”

The LWF president noted that living a full communion relationship would not be easy. Rather, it would mean challenging old assumptions, listening to one another, and becoming, “accountable to others with different angles of vision, with different insights, blind spots, strengths and temptation.” But “together, we can discover how to speak the gospel more truly. Together, we can challenge each other to engage in God’s mission more coura-



Chilean church leader Rev. Gloria Rojas Vargas responds to the LWF president’s address. © LWF/D. Jusaitis

geously. Together, through the eyes of others, we will begin to see ourselves more clearly, even critically.”

Hanson requested the member churches to consider a number of difficult, complex and pressing questions as they reflect on their role in both the Lutheran and ecumenical communion. He cited issues such as finding agreement on ethical questions with other churches with whom the LWF shares little or no ecclesiological commonality; what and who establishes the LWF’s priorities; the organization’s financial future and new income sources while holding each other accountable for membership fees; and how ecumenical and inter-religious work can be done most effectively.

The number of LWF members and nuances of issues for the organization may have changed over the years. But for the LWF president, “The question for the next sixty years is the same question which brought our forebears together sixty years ago. Where is God leading us now? How do we love and serve our neighbor today?”

Lutheran Churches Urged to Build Bridges of Healing LWF General Secretary Highlights Challenges of Being in Communion

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 22 March 2007 (LWI) – The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, appealed to churches in the Lutheran communion to take up the urgent task of building bridges of healing between and among Lutheran churches which have no fellowship among themselves.

“Our credibility as Lutheran churches is constantly undermined by the fact that we are not in pulpit and altar fellowship with each other in spite of the common confessional writings. This persistent division gives the impression that there are other reasons that divide us rather than confessional stands,” said Noko in his report to the LWF Council gathering on 22



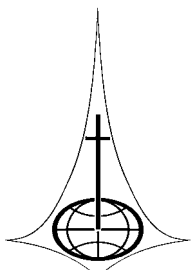
In his report to the Council, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko focused on the practical challenges of being in communion today. © LWF/J. H. Rakotoniaina



Participants follow Dr Noko’s report. © LWF/J.H. Rakotoniaina

March. He expressed hope that the dialogue between the LWF and the International Lutheran Council could lead toward such reconciliation.

The general secretary’s report focused on the practical challenges of being in communion today; the Lutheran communion and the one holy, catholic and apostolic church; renewal of the LWF, and; the 11th Assembly in 2010 as a potential landmark. Other issues included the 2017 commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Luther’s 95 theses; the issue of family, marriage and sexuality; and the episcopal ministry within the apostolicity of the church.





Rev. Dr. Walter Altmann, president of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, comments on Dr Noko's report. © LWF/J. Latva-Hakuni

The general secretary pointed out that the LWF's engagement in bilateral dialogues had led to new avenues of reflection and practice, which justified why new phases of dialogues, even with traditional partners, were being established. He mentioned, among others, the new dialogue commissions that were set up with the Anglican Communion and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and new stages that are being explored in these relationships. Noko especially paid tribute to the "meticulous work" of theologians in the member churches, the Geneva secretariat, and the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, for managing to reconcile the century-old theological differences between the church families.

On the LWF's renewal process—endorsed by the Council at its 2005 meeting in Jerusalem—Noko said it was important to genuinely and openly listen to the churches' voices. Renewal, he noted, "is not a bureaucratic exercise" but a process characterized by mutual-ity, consultation and accountability. He pointed out that "since mission and diakonia can not be outsourced, we need to design a qualitatively different LWF" that would enable the member churches and their organizations to effectively undertake its mandate together, without a sense of competition, tension and alienation.

On the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's nailing of the 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, Noko emphasized the significance of

an ecumenical commemoration, and affirmed the LWF's central role in the preparatory phase.

Turning to the next LWF Assembly, the general secretary said it would be a historical landmark achievement in the ecumenical movement if the 11th Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, could be designed to point the way to a new stage in the ecumenical participation of Christian world communions.

Inclusive Participation

Noko expressed concern that despite significant progress made so far, women continue to be excluded in both church and society. He affirmed the LWF's commitment to supporting the ordination of women and men, and encouragement to churches, in which this was not yet the case to dialogue with their sister churches. "There are about 20 women bishops in the LWF constituency, something no one would have thought of 60 years ago," he remarked.

He noted that although the LWF member churches have agreed to ensure a minimum 40 percent participation of women, many church meetings and consultations excluded women's participation. "Unless and until we attend to gender mainstreaming in the life and work of our churches, we cannot truly be witnesses to gender justice in our societies."

Noko commended the Indian churches for making the Dalit issue a central priority, and noted that the LWF member churches in India and the World Council of Churches are planning a global ecumenical gathering on Dalit liberation.

He underscored that the LWF's support toward indigenous peoples' struggles as mandated by the Tenth Assembly in 2003, and noted that an international consultation on the issue took place in September 2006 in Karasjok, northern Norway, while one is planned for the Asian region in 2007. However, it was still a major challenge to mainstream indigenous people's concerns and ensure that their "spirituality becomes a shared spiritual property of the church for the edification of all the saints," he said.

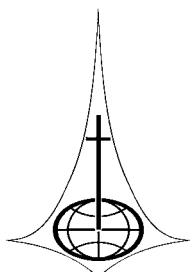
LWF Treasurer Urges Church Leaders' Support to Membership Fees' Payment

Strengthening the Communion Through More Financial Solidarity

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 24 March 2007 (LWI) – The Treasurer of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Mr Peter Stoll appealed to church leaders attending the LWF Council Meeting to support the payment of their churches' full fair membership fees to the LWF, as well as fees for the 11th Assembly in 2010.

Presenting the Treasurer's Report to the Council, Stoll also requested the church leaders to encourage their churches to contribute toward the LWF Endowment Fund.

In his report titled "Living Together – Strengthening the Communion Through More Financial Soli-





Mr Peter Stoll presenting the Treasurer's Report, 22 March.
© LWF/J. H. Rakotonirainy

“The commitment to pay the membership fee is a direct indication of the commitment to the communion. I sincerely hope that the church leaders here will encourage each other to pay the full membership fees,” he said.

Stoll explained that the calculation of a fair membership fee takes into account the respective country’s gross national income and the number of church members. Since 2005, the total request has been USD 3.5 million, which represents a steady increase of the membership fee received.

The treasurer however noted that there are still around 50 member churches that do not pay any membership fees, and some churches that pay only a small share of their fair fee. He said that if all member churches would pay the full fair fee, it would amount to an additional income of USD 530,000, which would, to a great extent stabilize the Geneva coordination budget.

The support from the member churches and related agencies goes to the Geneva coordination budget (A-budget) and to the LWF program/project budget (B-budget). Around 80 percent of the A-budget includes salaries and other personnel costs for the LWF secretariat in Geneva, even if the person works for programs or projects. Thus, the A-budget is not just administration, explained Stoll. In the last years, the share of the A-budget expenditure has been around 10–12 percent of the total expenditure.

The LWF treasurer said that the LWF Geneva coordination expenditure had been considerably reduced since 1989, but had slowed down during the last seven years. As 80 percent of the secretariat’s coordination budget are staff-related costs, the reduction directly reflects the decrease in the number of staff, with direct implications on the LWF’s programs and projects. As the programmatic work had not been reduced at the same rate as the number of staff, it meant that the staff had been under more pressure lately, he noted.

Stoll said that such a drastic change over the years necessitated a strategic plan to review and realign the available resources with realistic goals. He expressed appreciation that the LWF

Strategic Plan was now ready for discussion in the Council. The next phase will be to transform the implications of the plan into operations. “We also need to realign the Geneva Secretariat to the new context,” he stressed.

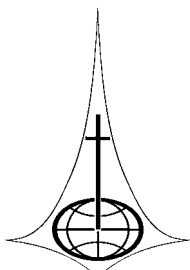
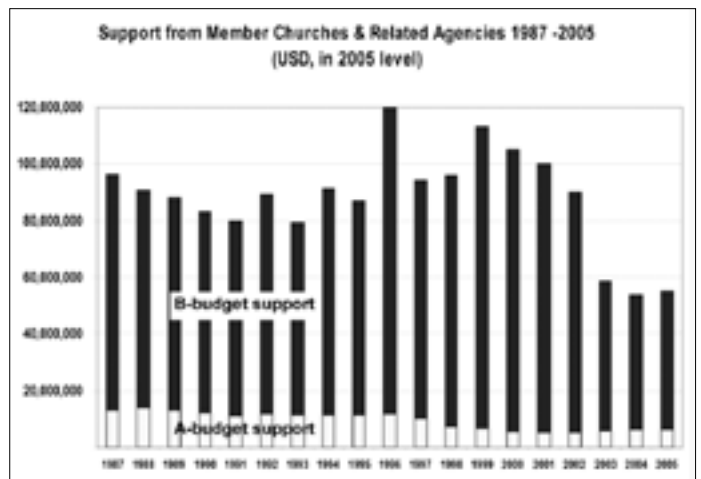
Endowment Fund

On the understanding that the churches, their agencies and societies directly raise funds for the LWF in their respective member church countries, Stoll pointed out that the question could still be asked to what extent “these owners of the LWF actually commit themselves to the communion. Sometimes it seems as if the awareness of the LWF among the constituency of the member churches could be better,” he noted. He said the LWF Sunday—Reformation Sunday—for example, could become a common awareness campaign for the whole communion, and thereby also increase the ownership of and the support to the LWF in future.

Stoll pointed out that the LWF Endowment Fund, formally established in 1999 to help to stabilize the LWF Geneva coordination budget, had reached its first goal of CHF 10 million in October 2006. The next goal is to raise CHF 20 million by 2017. The treasurer extended his gratitude to all those who had donated to the fund so far, and stressed the responsibility of all member churches in contributing their fair share to the fund. “I hope that every church leader gathered here will bring either a substantial pledge or donation to the fund,” he said. The Board of the Endowment Fund has set a realistic goal for each member church based on the fair membership fees.

The LWF treasurer said the 2006 financial statement was not available yet as last year’s accounts were being closed only now, and would be audited in May. He stated, however, that the Geneva Coordination budget in 2006 had a surplus due to currency exchange gains.

For more information about the 2005 LWF budget, please see: www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/1945.EN.html



“Give Us Today Our Daily Bread” Is the Theme of LWF 11th Assembly in 2010

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 26 March 2007 (LWI) – “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread” is the theme of the 11th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) which will be held from 20 to 27 July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany.

Delegates attending the 20–27 March LWF Council Meeting agreed on the proposed theme and dates during discussions on the Report of the Assembly Planning Committee (APC).

The APC had received responses from ten member churches and one national committee on theme suggestions following an invitation by LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko to participate in developing the Assembly theme. After much deliberation, the adopted theme was chosen because it would allow the quotation from the Lord’s Prayer to be maintained throughout the years. During discussions, it was noted that “for many Christians, the words of the Lord’s Prayer may have little meaning when the daily necessities of life seem so abundant. The inability to comprehend this most basic plea only emphasizes the injustice of today’s world and the disparities which divide humanity.”

Other subjects that will be discussed under this theme include water, HIV and AIDS, globalization, the fight against poverty, multi-cultural and multi-religious dimensions, and the spiritual and social challenges for Lutheran Christians today.

Delegate Allocation

During the presentation of the APC report, the committee members said they had noted that financial implications and the need for greater balance in the number of youth and women attendees had necessitated adjustments to the delegate allocation formula for the 2010 Assembly.

The APC report provided recommendations to the LWF Council members regarding a modification of the allocation process used at the 2003 LWF Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada. Committee member Ms Abigail Zang noted that there were two primary reasons why the committee recommended the change, firstly, “financial reasons” and, secondly, in order to “help to redress gender and youth balances.”

At the 1984 LWF Assembly in Budapest, Hungary, it was decided that 50 percent of delegates to future assemblies should be women. At the 1990 LWF Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil, delegates decided that at least 20 percent of the delegates to future assemblies should be youth.



Left to right: Ms Angelene Swart (South Africa), APC chairperson. Committee member Ms Abigail Zang Hoffman (USA), commenting on the APC report to the Council. © LWF/J. H. Rakotoniatina

The Council approved the recommended change, which will mean that smaller churches with up to 25,000 members can send one delegate, those with up to 150,000 would have two delegates, and those with up to 350,000 members can send three. The delegate allocation for bigger churches will be one additional delegate for every 400,000 members or fraction thereof. The Council also approved additional regional delegates as follows: 4 for Africa, 10 for Asia, 5 for Europe, 6 for Latin American and 1 for North America. These changes would result in a reduction of the overall number of delegates at the 2010 Assembly to 418, compared with the 443 delegates present at the 2003 Winnipeg Assembly.

Most LWF regions will see minor decreases to the number of delegates for their region, while the Africa region will receive five additional delegates over the 2003 numbers. The committee noted that changes in the allocation figures are partially due to a decrease in membership levels from the Tenth Assembly. The membership figures for the 2010 Assembly allocation are based on the membership figures as of 1 January 2006.

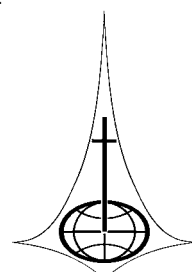
Concern for Smaller Churches

During the Council’s discussion on the report, representatives from the Asia region expressed concern that the new allocation figures would penalize smaller churches for their size and ability to meet the 50 percent women and 20 percent youth criteria from their region. A motion brought on the Council floor to revert back to the 2003 Winnipeg Assembly allocation criteria was defeated.

Zang noted that the new allocation system will “uphold the commitment to represent regions” at the Assembly



Würtemberg Bishop Frank Otfried July reiterated his church’s readiness to host the 11th Assembly in 2010. © LWF/D. Jusaitis



versus individual churches. She clarified that regions would be responsible for determining which delegates would fulfil the requirements for additional regional representatives. This will be done through a process of consultation within the region's member churches, and additional positions should be used to meet the required representation for women and youth delegates.

The Evangelical Church in Württemberg, Germany, which will be celebrating its 475th anniversary in 2010, is the Assembly host church. Württemberg Bishop Frank Otfried July reiterated his church's readiness to host the LWF's 11th Assembly. He said pietism and the

revival movements were special features of Württemberg. The Württemberg church has partnerships with 45 churches worldwide. Its LWF Assembly preparations also include the LWF German National Committee and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).

The Assembly is the LWF's highest governing body, meeting normally every six years. Past LWF assemblies were held in Lund, Sweden, 1947; Hanover, Germany, 1952; Minneapolis, USA, 1957; Helsinki, Finland 1963; Evian, France, 1970; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1977; Budapest, Hungary, 1984; Curitiba, Brazil, 1990; Hong Kong, China, 1997; and Winnipeg, Canada in 2003.

Act to Restore Hope in Zimbabwe, LWF Council Appeals to International Community

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 26 March 2007(LWI) – At the end of its March meeting, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) unanimously adopted a resolution calling on the international community to respond to the suffering of the people of Zimbabwe, and “to act to restore hope, and to promote peace.”



The consolidated garden of the Sibambene Tshangangwe project, provides its members with the nutritional and income generation needs. © LWF/ELCZ

Responding to a recommendation of its Program Committee for International Affairs and Human Rights, the Council, noted that in the midst of celebrations of the LWF's 60th anniversary in Lund, Sweden, “[it] laments the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe.”

The Council expressed its strong support for the initiatives taken by churches in Zimbabwe to open a “sacred space” for national dialogue toward a resolution of the current political and economic crisis in the Southern African country.

Zimbabweans are struggling to survive in a country with a reported inflation rate of over 1,500 percent, widespread unemployment and poverty. President Robert Mugabe, in power since independence in 1980, is resisting calls for political reforms and change.

The LWF governing body particularly affirmed the Ecumenical Peace Initiative in Zimbabwe, a group of churches and related organizations, which drafted a document on a national vision entitled, “The Zimba-

bwe We Want: Toward a National Vision for Zimbabwe. The group has condemned the national security forces' use of violence as a means to suppress opposition against the current regime and its policies.

The LWF Council also endorsed a call made by LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, in a 15 March letter to the African Union, urging the pan-African body to play a stronger role in promoting positive change in Zimbabwe.

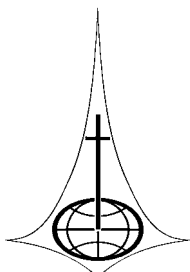
The LWF Council called on all LWF member churches to uphold the people and churches of Zimbabwe in their thoughts and prayers, and to act in solidarity with those who suffer from injustice, oppression, violence and poverty in that country.

Poverty: Governments' Responsibility

Concerning government responsibility and the mission of the church in relation to poverty, the LWF Council “affirmed that in a world of plenty, the persistence of poverty, especially extreme poverty, is a scandal and an outrage.” The governing body declared that the first and most fundamental responsibility of governments was to assure the basic welfare and protect the God-given human dignity of their citizens and of all persons under their authority.

The Council commended the LWF Department of Theology and Studies' program on economic globalization and one of its aspects, “Holding Governments Accountable: A Responsibility of the Churches with Civil Society,” and expressed hope that the program would assist the churches in holding governments accountable to this fundamental responsibility.

The Council also welcomed the outcome of the September 2006 LWF Consultation on Poverty and the Mission of the Church in Africa, held in Arusha, Tanzania, and encouraged member churches in Africa (and their partners around the world) to implement the Arusha Action Plan, which among others, proposed a coordinated strategy for confronting poverty in Africa.





Canadian Rev. Dr David Phrimmer (left) reports for International Affairs & Human Rights, with Mr Peter Prove, LWF staff. © LWF/D. Jusaitis

The Council expressed its support for initiatives by member churches to address poverty in their own contexts, and recognized especially the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia within a coalition to promote the establishment of a 'Basic Income Grant' in Namibia. It encouraged the LWF member churches to consider the potential for such an initiative in their relevant contexts.

Human Rights Violation: Philippines

The Council expressed grave concern at the many reports of extra-judicial killings, disappearances and other serious human rights violations in the Philippines, including a recent report issued by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), "Let the Stones Cry Out: An Ecumenical Report on Hu-

man Rights in the Philippines and a Call to Action" (March 2007).

The LWF general secretary was asked to write a letter to the Government of the Philippines calling for serious consideration of the issues identified in the NCCP report, including the promotion of human rights in the country.

"We call upon LWF member churches to pray for and act in solidarity with the people and the churches of the Philippines and to support and empower the Lutheran Church of the Philippines in its essential ministry to enhance human dignity," said the statement.

Crisis in Darfur

On Darfur, western Sudan, the LWF Council called the attention of the member churches to LWF statements on the situation there as an expression of the Lutheran communion's concern for and commitment to a just and lasting solution to the crisis.

Apart from its long-held advocacy on Sudan and peace-building initiatives pursued mainly through its Nairobi-based Department for World Service (DWS) country program for Kenya/Sudan, the LWF provides further support to internally displaced persons in western Sudan through the Darfur Emergency Response Operation (DERO), a joint initiative of Action by Churches Together (ACT) International and Caritas Internationalis. The LWF and WCC founded ACT, a global alliance of churches and related agencies working to save lives and support communities in emergencies.

Unresolved Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Threatens Global Peace, LWF Council Warns

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 26 March 2007(LWI) – The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has affirmed "that the core problem in the Middle East is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which, if not solved, is a threat to peace not only in the Middle East but throughout the world."

The LWF governing body stated its position while approving recommendations from its Program Committee for International Affairs and Human Rights at the end of its March meeting.

"We welcome the fact that a Palestinian government of national unity has been established, and stress the LWF Council's expectation that the new government will respect all previous agreements concerning or relevant to the search for peace in the region."

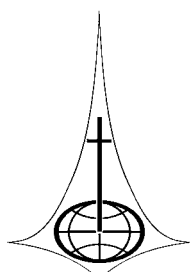
"We call on the international community to cooperate with the new Palestinian government and to end the international economic blockade in order to restore the health, education and welfare situation of the Palestinian people and the infrastructure of the Territories," the Council stated.

The LWF governing body called "upon the State of Israel to comply with international humanitarian law

and United Nations' resolutions concerning the occupation of the Palestinian Territories." It requested that an international conference be convened to resolve the long-standing issues between the parties, such as the status of Jerusalem, the return of refugees, settlements, borders and water resources.



Israeli soldiers patrol the West Bank town of Hebron where tensions are high between Israeli Jewish settlers and the local Palestinian residents. © LWF/K. Brown



The Council noted that ecumenical commemorations, under the leadership of the heads of the local churches in Jerusalem are planned in June 2007 on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the occupation of the Palestinian Territories.

“We call for actions by the international community to end the illegal occupation, and for LWF member churches to join ecumenical coalitions for that purpose, such as the 3–9 June 2007 World Council of Churches-initiated international week of action to end the occupation.”

The Council welcomed the “initiative to create an interfaith Council of Religious Institutions in the Holy Land, as a sign of shared commitment to building mutual trust and understanding among the faith communities and their peoples, and to call for this Council of Religious Institutions in the Holy Land to work to build peace among the two nations, and that

it become a reference group for Palestinian and Israeli negotiators in any future negotiations.”

The LWF Council also commended to the LWF member churches “The Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism” issued by the heads of churches in Jerusalem in August 2006.

“We express deep concern about the continued emigration of Christians from Palestine and the entire Middle East, and call on the LWF member churches to pray on Maundy Thursday for Christians in the Middle East and for their continued presence and ministry in the region, in accordance with the call from the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC).”

The Council reiterated the LWF’s continued support to its member church—the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land—in its struggle to be a “witness for peace and justice in the region through its educational, ecumenical and interfaith activities.”

Stand Firm as a Communion Despite Different Opinions, Youth Delegates Urge LWF

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 27 March 2007 (LWI) – Young adult representatives from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches urged the LWF to stand firm as a communion, and not be divided by different opinions on the subject of marriage, family and sexuality.

The young adults’ appeal to the Lutheran communion was part of a message delivered on 26 March to the LWF Council after a 16–19 March Pre-Council Youth workshop in Hoor, south Sweden. During their four-day meeting, the 23 young people from countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America, discussed a report on the evaluation of the LWF Youth in Church and Society (YICAS) desk and its strategic plan to empower young people to meaningful participation in the LWF and local churches.

The YICAS desk is located in the LWF Department for Mission and Development.

The workshop participants included stewards, youth Council members and youth delegates attending meetings that coincided with the LWF 60th anniversary celebrations.

In their message to the Council, presented through the Program Committee for Mission and Development, the young people said that through their interaction, they had realized the diversity of issues involved and the differences of opinion and ideas within the wide spectrum of membership that comprises the LWF.

At the workshop, they had deliberated on the meaning of Lutheran identity today. They noted that although “our common Lutheran identity is being lived



In a symbolic act, the youth participants collect water from all parts of the LWF communion during the Council’s closing service. © LWF/D. Jusaitis

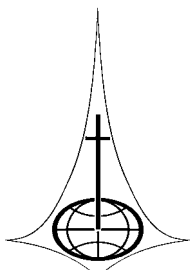
differently throughout the communion ... our faith as Lutherans is founded on the good news that is witnessed in the Holy Scriptures.”

Lutheran identity has a mission to strengthen Christianity and the ecumenical movement, the youth message said. At the same time, the different ways of worship, diaconal service and church structures should be continually reevaluated and developed “according to the good news.”

The young adults acknowledged the LWF’s efforts to become an inclusive and open communion, but also recognized that there were still many people who do not realize the purpose and activities of the organization. “We would like to encourage every delegate and Council member to carry the message of the LWF back to their local contexts,” their message, which was received by the Council Meeting, said.



Ms Sabine Neufeld (Germany) reads the Youth Message to the Council. © LWF/D. Jusaitis



In the Council's action on the recommendations of the Mission and Development committee, it was agreed that the name YICAS be changed to LWF Youth, and that more emphasis should be given to the desk's advocacy role.

Concerning the representation of youth and women in LWF events and activities, the Council agreed that

the full participation of youth be more fully integrated into the LWF strategic plan. The governing body also agreed that concerns related to gender, including the full participation of women should be identified as part of what it means to be an inclusive communion, and according to existing LWF policies.

Call for Theological Reflection on Urgent Environmental Challenges

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 28 March 2007 (LWI) – At its meeting this year, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) asked the LWF Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) to explore possibilities for theological, spiritual and ethical reflection on urgent environmental challenges, especially with regard to climate change.

Acting on recommendations presented by the Program Committee for Theology and Studies, the Council asked DTS to draw upon the realities and perspectives of member churches and field programs (through the LWF Departments for Mission and Development and World Service), and of indigenous communities.

The LWF governing body also requested DTS to collaborate with the LWF Office for International Affairs and Human Rights, the World Council of Churches, and other ecumenical partners and theologians working in this area.

The Council received proposals from the Theology and Studies committee on 26 March, the same day it decided on recommendations from other program committees dealing with various aspects of LWF's work.

Also brought to the Council's attention, was the question of theological responses to urgent issues facing the member churches throughout the world in view



Theology and Studies chairperson, Rev. Dr Barbara Rossing. © LWF

of fundamentalism. The Council therefore requested the LWF general secretary to send a letter to the member churches and related theological institutions urging them to engage in further discussion and action on fundamentals for a Lutheran communion in the face of fundamentalism. The text of this letter was adopted at a theological seminar organized in Lund under the ongoing DTS program, "Theology in the Life of the Church."

In view of the different ways in which diaconal ministry is institutionalized in the churches, the Council called upon the LWF member churches to consider strengthening

and, where applicable, establishing diaconal ministry along with pastoral ministry as part of the holistic public ministry of the church. It noted that this would imply ensuring formation and training for diaconal ministers that adequately equips and qualifies them for this ministry.

The Council also affirmed that changing historical and contextual conditions call for adapting the ordered public ministry of the church in a world in desperate need of healing, as emphasized by the 2003 Tenth Assembly. The LWF governing body affirmed diaconal ministry as an embodied witness to "God's power of healing at the fault lines of God's broken creation."

Rev. Dr Barbara Rossing (USA) is chairperson of the Theology and Studies Program Committee.

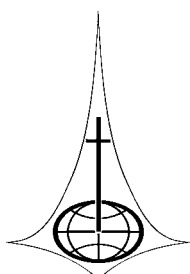
Actions on Ecumenical Affairs: The Lund Statement on Episcopal Ministry

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 28 March 2007 (LWI) – Through the Program Committee for Ecumenical Affairs, the LWF Council received the text of the LWF statement, "Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church—The Lund Statement by the Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches – March 2007." The Council affirmed the text as an appropriate current expression of the Lutheran understanding of the ministry of oversight, and thanked the member churches for their cooperation in the process that produced the text. The Council asked the general secretary to submit the text to the member churches for study and appropriation in their different contexts (see page 16).

Lutheran-Roman Catholic Relations

On Lutheran-Roman Catholic relations, the Council asked the general secretary to convey thanks to Walter Cardinal Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), for ten years of fruitful dialogue, under auspices of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, on the important topic of the church's apostolicity.

The general secretary was also requested to thank the Commission's members and consultants for their lasting commitment and valuable contributions over many years to the exploration of this topic, on which a study document, "The Apostolicity of the Church"



had been produced. The Council asked the general secretary to send the book to the member churches for study and response, and to establish a working group to process the responses received and provide a report to the Council.

The Ecumenical Affairs Committee explained that the next phase of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity would need considerable reflection and preparation, and could not begin before 2008 at the earliest. The Council therefore asked the general secretary, via the LWF - PCPCU Joint Staff Meeting, to develop a theme for the next phase of the Commission, and to submit the proposal for the theme, the Lutheran composition of the commission, and a program plan to the next LWF Council Meeting.

The Council approved a plan to create an international Study Commission on the Broader Biblical Basis for the Doctrine of Justification. The commission is to be composed of four Lutherans, four Roman Catholics, two Reformed and two Methodists (12 participants); the Council approved Lutheran membership consistent with the LWF commitment to gender and global South percentages regarding inclusivity, and recommended that other communions be encouraged to do likewise. It was agreed that the LWF general secretary and the PCPCU president would invite the Reformed and Methodist participants to the group.



*Prof. Joachim Track delivers the Ecumenical Affairs report.
© LWF/D. Jusaitis*

Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue

On Lutheran-Orthodox relations, the general secretary was asked to approve the publication of a collective volume (in English, French, German, Greek and Russian) of all statements adopted in this dialogue from 1981 to 2006, under the condition that full funding is available. The general secretary will also send the Statement on the Eucharist from the 2006 meeting of the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission to the member churches for careful study.

Cooperation between CWCs

Concerning Lutheran-Reformed relations, the Program Committee informed the Council about the November 2006 first joint meeting between the Officers of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the LWF Executive Committee. The Council endorsed the continuation of the common efforts of cooperation between the LWF, WARC and other Christian world communions (CWCs).

The Council approved the Program Committee's recommendation to approve the LWF's 2007 financial contribution to the secretariat of the Global Christian Forum (GCF), and the participation of ten Lutherans in the November 2007 meeting of the GCF in Nairobi, Kenya.

After receiving an update on the LWF's engagement in discussions on a reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement and ecumenism in the 21st century, and on the decision by the Conference of Secretaries (CS) of CWCs, including the LWF, to explore further the options for stronger participation of CWCs in global ecumenical assemblies, the LWF Council asked the general secretary to continue the common efforts for cooperation including the active pursuance of the LWF involvement in this "important area."

The Council thanked the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, for its continued support and substantial contributions to bilateral dialogues, as well as its assistance to the LWF Office for Ecumenical Affairs.

Prof. Joachim Track (Germany) is chairperson of the Program Committee for Ecumenical Affairs.

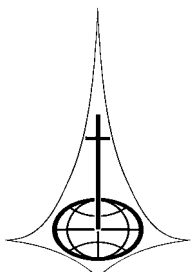


Plenary © LWF/J. Elfstrom

Communication: Development of LWF Internet Presence, Corporate Design

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 28 March 2007 (LWI) – The Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) endorsed the recommendations of an LWF Communication Audit that calls for investment in technical and visual improvement of the LWF Web sites, among other initiatives to enhance communication in the Federation.

Acting on the recommendations of its Program Committee for Communication Services, the LWF Council received the communication audit in its entirety, and agreed to the implementation of its proposals, which also call for audience identification and targeting; regional involvement in production and distribution within financial limits; and the de-



velopment and consistent use of a corporate graphic identity.

At its 2004 meeting, the Council had called for the secretariat-wide Communication Audit, led by the communication services unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the LWF Interdepartmental Committee on Publications. The process also involved participation of the LWF regions in a second phase.

At its meeting this year, the Council asked the general secretary to undertake a financial evaluation of the expenditure of all communication material in the LWF including the field offices of the Department for World Service.

In view of the small number of responses received from the member churches with regard to cooperation in transla-



Ms Klára Wagner-Balicza presents the Communication Services report. © LWF/D. Jusaitis



Rev. Heitor Meurer (Brazil) hands over a certificate to a participant in the LWF young communicators' training program. © LWF/D. Jusaitis

tion, the Council requested the general secretary to intensify efforts to get clear commitments from member churches for translation pilot projects. The Council also requested the general secretary to ensure that all communication material of the LWF respect the inclusive language policy.

Ms Klára Wagner-Balicza (Hungary), presented the report of the Program Committee for Communication Services to the Council.

World Service: Call to Actively Engage in ACT Development

LUND, Sweden/GENEVA, 28 March 2007 (LWI)—Acting on recommendations of the Program Committee for World Service, the Council endorsed the LWF's participation in ACT (Action by Churches Together) Development, and asked the LWF secretariat to continue its active involvement in the new global alliance for development. The governing body further encouraged the LWF member churches and development organizations to take part and actively engage in ACT Development.

ACT Development was officially established in February 2007, after two years of consultations and planning. The alliance comprises 55 churches and church-related organizations with programs in 157 countries, more than 14,000 staff and a combined budget of approximately USD 1 billion. The LWF is represented on its 12-seat Executive Committee comprising representation from Africa, Asia, Latin America, West and East Europe, and USA.

Among its objectives, the ACT Development alliance aims to increase the effectiveness of ecumenical work on poverty, injustice and human rights; provide a platform for sharing theological reflection and mutual learning; and to enhance the visibility of the ecumenical family's development work. The new alliance will continue



Rev. Marie Barnett delivering the World Service report. © LWF/D. Jusaitis

discussions with ACT International—the churches' global alliance for emergency response—to explore the possibilities of a structural relationship.

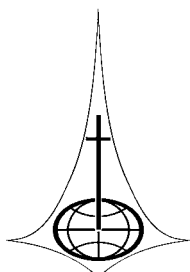
Global Strategy

Alongside the LWF secretariat-wide Strategic Plan, World Service (DWS) has developed a Global Strategy for the period 2007–2012, which was approved by its Standing Committee in November 2006. The plan has as its motto "Uphold the Rights of the Poor and Oppressed (Psalm 82:3)."

The Council agreed that the mandate of the Standing Committee for World Service be amended to include the major functions of receiving financial reports from DWS, and giving advice to DWS on all major financial issues, and that it be consulted by the general secretary on the appointment of the department's director.

The Program Committee for World Service informed the Council that the committee had received and adopted the Guidelines for Communication Procedures in Crisis Situations.

Rev. Marie J. Barnett (Sierra Leone) chairs the Program Committee for World Service.



LWF Affirms Historic Statement on Episcopal Ministry

GENEVA, 2 April 2007 (LWI) – After eight years of preparation, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) adopted an historic statement on the episcopal ministry.



Plenary © LWF/J. Elfstrom

The full title of the statement is “Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church—The Lund Statement by the Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches.” It has been developed as a clarification of how Lutheran churches understand the character and purpose of the ministry of oversight in the church, paying particular attention to how this ministry serves the church’s apostolicity (or continuity with Christ and the apostles).

Mandated by the LWF Council in 1999, the project was lodged in the LWF Office for Ecumenical Affairs, and carried out in cooperation with the Department for Theology and Studies and the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg. It builds on previous LWF studies on the topic, undertaken in 1983 and 1993.

In 2002, a consultation held in Malta of Lutheran members of the bilateral dialogues in which the LWF is a partner drafted a statement, “The Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church—A Lutheran Statement 2002.” The statement is based

substantially on material from ecumenical dialogues, and was shared with all the LWF member churches for study and response. In the course of 2001 and 2002, four regional consultations also focused on related concerns that were specific to churches in the different regions.

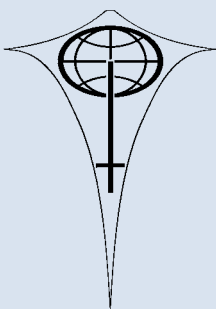
The new text presented to the Council in Lund through its Program Committee for Ecumenical Affairs incorporated the Malta consultation statement, and all input received from the regions and individual churches. Further discussion and amendments at the Council Meeting included proposals received from an international Consultation of Lutheran Women Bishops, Presidents and Leaders in the Ministry of Oversight, also held in Lund. On 26 March, the Council unanimously affirmed the Lund Statement, thereby for the first time providing an official text that expresses the current Lutheran understanding of this ministry.

LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, emphasized that the statement is not intended to be a magisterial document, but a significant contribution to an important issue, both in ecumenical relations and within the LWF as a communion of churches.

According to the Lund Statement, episcopal ministers shall “provide forms of leadership that are truly shared, facilitating collaborative styles of ministry.” They are called to “demonstrate humility and simplicity of life. The profile of their ministry is not one of domination, but of service, showing clear awareness of those on the margins of society.” In the exercise of their ministry, they “must set aside the necessary time and space for their own prayer, study and recreation, thereby also setting a much needed example for all the ordained and lay persons as well.”

The full text of the statement is available on the LWF Web site at: www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF_The_Lund_Statement_2007.pdf

The next LWI issue will include further articles and images from the 2007 LWF Council meeting, Church Leadership Consultation and the 60th anniversary celebrations.



Published and distributed by:
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