

Lutheran World Information

LWI

Includes
Liturgical Material

Alle Menschen sind frei und gleich
an Würde und Rechten geboren.
**All human beings are born free
and equal in dignity and rights.**

**Give Us This Day
Our Human Rights**

2008

10



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Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.



Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

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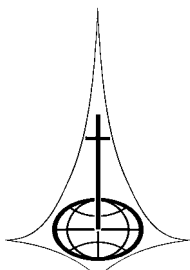
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Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Cover background: © Nathalie Pahud-Briquet





Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko © LWF/H. Putsman

This special edition of *Lutheran World Information* (*LWI*) has a dual purpose. Firstly, it is issued to mark the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which is observed on 10 December globally. Secondly, it introduces the theme of the Eleventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) which will take place from 20 to 27 July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany—“Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.”

While the connections may not be immediately obvious, they are actually very close. As some of the contributions to this publication demonstrate, Lutheran theology and Luther’s own writings explain the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer and the notion of “daily bread” in terms that closely mirror the UDHR. Both sources offer a holistic vision of the basic necessities for human life in dignity.

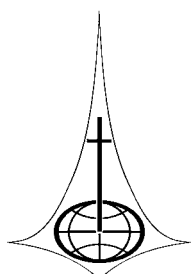
The UDHR document expresses the international community’s reaction to and rejection of the brutality and inhumanity of war and genocide. It defines the commitments of governments and societies to promote and protect the human dignity of every individual. It is the articulation of a communal commitment and responsibility for human well-being. On every anniversary of the Declaration’s adoption,

we are all enjoined to renew our commitment to human dignity for all.

Every time we say the Lord’s Prayer, and pray for “daily bread”, we renew our petition for the basic necessities for life in dignity—including peace and good government. And we pray not for “my” daily bread, but for “our” daily bread. We therefore define our need for the minimum requirements for human dignity in explicitly communal terms.

I hope that this *LWI* special issue will help identify bridges between our Christian faith and Lutheran tradition, and the principles of human rights. As we cross those bridges, I am certain that we will not only be able to relate more easily to human rights, but that we will also develop a deeper understanding of key aspects of our faith and tradition.

Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko
General Secretary
The Lutheran World Federation



VOICES FROM THE REGIONS

The comprehensive human rights provisions in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provide a framework for churches and civil society groups to promote recognition of the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. In this section, voices from the LWF regions reflect on the human rights challenges for; individuals living with HIV, indigenous people, and poor women subjected to inequality and social exclusion.

Argentina: Living with HIV in Our Time

My name is Fabián. I'm 33 years old and live in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Six years ago I was diagnosed as being HIV-positive. It is not easy for anyone to learn that one is HIV-positive. There is still a lot of fear, misunderstanding and even ignorance around this subject. Hence, it is difficult to find anyone willing to live with you and establish a stable relationship. There are many forms of discrimination, but, yet, nothing is impossible: the most important thing is to accept oneself.

We also need to remember that as HIV carriers, we are still human beings with rights! We are as entitled to freedom of expression and opinion as anyone else. We have the right to be treated with dignity, and the right to adequate health care. Such rights are guaranteed in the Universal



Demonstrators lobby for access to AIDS medication during the 17th International AIDS Conference in Mexico City, Mexico, in August 2008. © EAA/Paul Jeffrey

Declaration of Human Rights. Although much still needs to be done,

I believe that in our society the issue of equality needs to be addressed. But bringing about change depends on each one of us.

Living with HIV does not mean isolating oneself in shame ... Living with HIV means testifying to the presence of God in our lives, living with the same rights and obligations as the rest of society. Living with HIV is just that: to live!

Fabián Eduardo Kreisler is studying theology at the IS-EDET theological college in Buenos Aires. He is responsible for logistics at the United Evangelical Lutheran Church synod office.



Mr Fabián E. Kreisler © Private

LWF Program Presses Swazi Government to Improve Health Sector

Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been criticized for lacking the means to enforce compliance, its spirit lives on in various human rights instruments, including many national constitutions' bills of rights. The Declaration's comprehensive human rights provisions make it possible for specific HIV and AIDS instruments to borrow from and build upon it.

The Lutheran Development Service (LDS)—associate program of the LWF Department for World Service—works to mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS in Swaziland through prevention and home-based care. LDS faces many constraints and challenges, including resource limitations and a socio-economic and political landscape that is largely responsible for the extremely high HIV prevalence (UNAIDS: 26 percent among 15-49 age group) in the country of 1.1 million people.



This poster from South Africa was one of the entries in the 2003 Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance children's poster competition on HIV and AIDS. © EAA

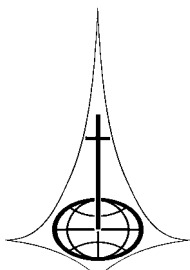
The World Service program advocates for an enabling environment for people living with HIV, ranging

from their greater involvement to access to treatment and nutrition. LDS especially presses government to implement its commitment to allocate at least 15 percent of its annual budget to improving the health sector. The dignity and protection of people living with HIV from stigma and discrimination takes precedence. As the majority and worst affected are women and girls, the LWF program therefore advocates for inclusion of women-centered methodologies in government HIV and AIDS programs, with emphasis on the right to life.

The author, Doo Aphane, is director of Lutheran Development Service, Swaziland.



Ms Doo Aphane © LDS Swaziland



Canadian Churches Seek to Work in Solidarity with Indigenous People

While they may live in one of the world's wealthiest countries, indigenous people in Canada are often faced with higher than average rates of poverty, poor health, suicide, unemployment and incarceration. For them, the ideals and standards of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights have yet to be realized.

The 1996 Canadian government Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) states that improving the lives of Aboriginal people in Canada requires restoring Aboriginal nations' political and economic power by recognizing and implementing Aboriginal title and rights, and by providing Aboriginal people with control over lands and resources in order to foster self-determination, self-reliance and cultural and political autonomy.

Some indigenous people and their supporters say that instead of working to resolve what has been described as



Assembly of Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine speaks at a May 2008 rally in Fox Lake, Manitoba, Canada. © Assembly of First Nations/B. Hendry

Canada's "most pressing human rights issue," the government perpetuates policies which "absorb Aboriginal people into Canadian society; thus eliminating them as distinct peoples."

The RCAP calls for a new relationship with indigenous people, and identifies churches as having the greatest potential to foster mutual awareness and understanding. As a church called to be *In Mission for Others*, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) participates in the work of KAIROS (Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives), an ecumenical coalition of 11 church organizations working nationally and internationally with people of faith and goodwill for social transformation.

By Ed Bianchi, coordinator of the KAIROS Aboriginal Rights program and Carl Rausch, ELCIC representative on the KAIROS Aboriginal Rights committee.



Mr Ed Bianchi
© Kairos Canada

Women Rise Against Social Exclusion in India

The Christian response to human rights' violations is best expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The principle of neighborly love, of every human being's God-given dignity and of the link between freedom and service are closely mirrored in the UDHR provisions and instruments of modern human rights law.

There is a cry for justice, equality and peace in both urban and rural India,

where terrorism and violence continue to destroy lives amid government failure to enforce the law. The migration of poor women from rural to urban areas, lack of education and skills, human trafficking and forced labor, child marriages, sexual harassment and abuse expose many women to the increased risk of HIV infection.



Dr Sarada D.
Karnatakam © Private

In a country where inequality and social exclusion condemn women and children to abject poverty, domestic violence is considered as the cause of many deaths and suicides among women.

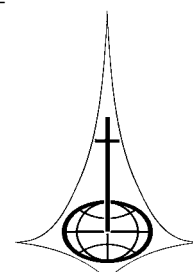
Some parts of the country have experienced brutal violence from acts of ethnic cleansing of Christians motivated by the *Hindutva* [Hindu nationalist] extremist groups. Dalit [untouchables] and tribal women have been the worst victims of communal violence perpetrated by religious fanatics who burn, kill and rape Christians and destroy churches and homes.

But there are signs of hope, as the poor become increasingly aware of their situation. Poor women in India are forming self-help groups to fight against the violation of their rights.

A former adviser to the LWF Council, Sarada Devi Karnatakam from India, works with NGOs on poverty reduction initiatives including Dalit women empowerment.



Community educators portray Dalits' suffering through drama in a village south of Chennai, India. © WCC/P. Williams



“GIVE US THIS DAY OUR HUMAN RIGHTS”

One may be tempted to ask if Martin Luther anticipated somewhat the emergence of human rights principles, given the striking parallels between his elaboration of the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The main presentation and responses in this section illustrate the close connection between the foundational instrument of modern human rights law and the vision of human dignity that is enshrined in the Christian faith and Lutheran heritage.

Martin Luther and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Upon the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Lutherans may reflect on how this modern document compares with our own theological tradition. Although some may be tempted to dismiss Martin Luther’s perspective as reactionary, a careful look at one of Lutheranism’s most important confessional documents, the *Large Catechism*, reveals a different point of view. Especially in comments on the fourth petition, Luther evinces both a pastoral heart for the dispossessed and

political acumen to expose some of the structural problems evident in his own society. Of course, Luther remained a child of his times; nevertheless, he directly connected good government with full stomachs and adequate protection for the poor.

The UDHR counted among its drafters a Lutheran theologian, Otto Frederick Nolde, professor at The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and an advisor to Eleanor Roosevelt (United States’ First Lady, 1933–1945).

Thus, it should not surprise Lutherans 60 years later that certain “Luther-esque” motifs may be found there. However, Luther’s understanding of good government as God’s gift would imply that even without such involvement, this declaration, undertaken and approved by this world’s governments, could also come from God’s “left hand,” to use Luther’s word for it, as long as it affirmed God’s good will for all creation.

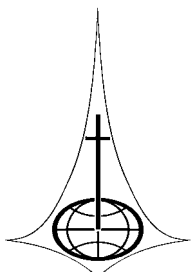
Luther had not always interpreted the fourth petition literally as regarding “daily bread” for the body. Until 1526 and following medieval models, he viewed daily bread as either the spiritual bread of faith in Christ or the Lord’s Supper. Only as it became too clear to him that God had “two hands,” one to rule and maintain good order in this world and the other to bring in the world to come through forgiveness in Christ, did his interpretation change, so that the first three petitions prayed for the coming world of faith and the fourth petition touched on “the poor breadbasket—the needs of our body and our life on earth.” (*The Large Catechism*, “The Lord’s Prayer,” par. 72, cited according to *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000], 449–52 [henceforth cited simply by paragraph number].)

To be sure, Luther was no democrat and thought that such forms of government were simply synonyms for chaos. But when one looks beyond the obvious historical differences between Luther’s time and our own, the following convergences emerge.

Prayer for daily bread requires not only prayers for food and clothing (cf. 1 Timothy 6:8) and other necessities for life “but also **peace and concord in**



Blaming the government for the sharp increase in food prices, a protester makes her point during a rally in Manila, Philippines, in April 2008. © Reuters/R. Ranoco



our daily activities, associations, and situations of every sort with the people among whom we live and with whom we interact” (par. 73). In its preamble, the UDHR, too, urges the protection of human rights as “the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” and thus connects human rights to the same blessings that Luther finds at the heart of this petition.

“Indeed **the greatest need of all is to pray for the civil authorities** and the government, for it is chiefly through them that God provides us daily bread and all the comforts of this life” (par. 74). With these words, Luther links the purpose and goal of civil authority to the basic right to live without want. The UDHR summarizes what this petition demands in Luther’s eyes: governments pledging to provide daily bread (especially art. 17, 22 and 23) and this life’s “comforts” (especially expressed in art. 3: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person”).

The centrality of good government for universally providing daily bread leads Luther to the fanciful notion that a prince’s coat of arms should be decorated with a loaf of bread, “in order to remind both princes and subjects that **it is through the princes’ office that we enjoy protection and peace**” (par. 75). In the UDHR almost all of the articles relate to the government’s responsibility to provide such protection and peace to all of its citizens. Thus, there are strictures against slavery (art. 4), torture (art. 5), arbitrary arrest (art. 9) attacks on the family (art. 12) and discrimination (art. 23), and the UDHR champions a long list of rights, including equal protection under the law (art. 7), freedom of movement and asylum (art. 13 and 14), freedom of assembly (art. 20), the right to work and rest (art. 23 and 24) and the right to education (art. 26; cf.

the Large Catechism, Ten Commandments, par. 172).

Perhaps the clearest convergence between Luther’s discussion of the fourth petition and the UDHR comes in art. 25, **the right for an adequate standard of living**, which includes a long list of necessities. Similarly, Luther includes in this petition “food and drink, clothing, house and farm, and a healthy body” (par. 76), the preservation of upright family members and prosperity in one’s trade or occupation. In addition, the blessings of rulers includes not only protection from outside aggressors (the Turkish troops reached Vienna in 1529), but also good government and the gift that “their subjects and the general populace [may] live together in obedience, peace and concord” (par. 77). At the same time, Luther realizes that, given the devil’s constant assaults on body and soul, nothing would prosper without God’s protection and that in his own day (and, as the UDHR points out, in ours) people would “wantonly oppress the poor and deprive them of their daily bread” (par. 84).

Finally, just as the UDHR condemns those who abuse these universal rights, Luther threatens oppressors with losing the “common intercession of the church” (par. 84) and having this petition turned against them.

The author, Rev. Timothy J. Wengert, is the Ministerium of Pennsylvania Professor of the History of Christianity at The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, USA. He has written many scholarly books and articles on the Reformation especially on Philip Mel-



Prof. Timothy J. Wengert © Private

anchthon and Martin Luther.

Conclusion:

As Professor Wengert has demonstrated, Lutheran theology—and the heritage of Luther’s writings—provide us with an important framework for understanding human rights, and for relating

to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the foundational instrument of modern human rights law. Indeed, the parallels between Luther’s explanation of the meaning of the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer and the catalogue of human rights articulated in the UDHR are striking. Did Luther somehow anticipate the emergence of human rights principles? That seems unlikely, given his context and some of his other attitudes which would not today be considered as consistent with human rights.

However, the parallels between Luther’s elaboration of the content of the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer and the UDHR serve to illustrate that human rights comprise a set of legal principles designed to promote the same vision of human dignity that is enshrined in our Christian faith, and in our deepest traditions and heritage as Lutherans. The UDHR’s 60th anniversary is an occasion not only for re-committing to the promotion and protection of human rights, but even more importantly for re-discovering the faith principles that inspire that commitment.

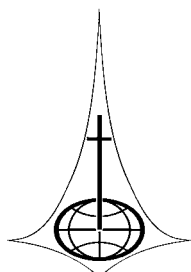
By Peter N. Prove, Assistant to the LWF General Secretary in the Office for International Affairs and Human Rights

Luther’s Comments: A Startling Wake-Up Call

I imagine Martin Luther with his comments on the Fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer in conversation with advocates of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Listening in on them as a Lutheran Christian who also is citizen of the United States of America

is disconcerting. It has been all too easy for my country to applaud the so-called “first generation” of human rights (the political and civil rights guaranteed in the Declaration’s articles 3-21) while relegating to a far lower status the economic and social rights (“second-generation human

rights guaranteed in the articles 22-27). This enables us to claim to be a nation that champions human rights, even while endorsing economic policies that increase the gap between those who have too much and those who do not have the necessities for life with dignity.





White maize is the staple food—daily bread—throughout most of Southern Africa. © LWF/DWS Mozambique/N. Ismail

Luther would “turn over in his grave” at this reversal of his emphasis. For him, Christians are to pray for good governance (or in 20th and 21st century terms, civil and political rights) largely because “it is chiefly through [civil governance] that God provides us daily bread and all the comforts of this life”. As Timothy Wengert notes, “with these words Luther links the purpose and goal of civil government to the basic right to live without want.” His insistence on good governance as essential to providing “daily bread . . . food and drink, clothing, house, and home, and health,” etc. thus

challenge my society’s tendency to take pride in civil and political rights *while ignoring* economic and social rights.

Luther’s comments on the fourth petition challenge another easy temptation for Christians in the North: charity without economic justice. Luther counters the tendency to provide economic necessities through charity without also identifying and challenging the economic oppression and exploita-



Dr Cynthia Moe-Lobeda © Private

tion that have impoverished the poor. He admonishes prayer “against everything that interferes with” the people having “daily bread.” Those interferences include “daily exploitation . . . in public business, trading, and labor on the part of those who wantonly oppress the poor and deprive them of their daily bread!” (The exclamation point is Luther’s not mine.) “Let them take care,” he warns, “lest this petition of the Lord’s Prayer be turned against them.”

Luther’s comments on the fourth petition are a startling wake-up call to any government or economic entity that would transgress or ignore economic and social rights while applauding political and civil rights. And his comments challenge all who would seek to provide daily bread for the impoverished

without challenging the “exploitation and oppression” that “deprives them of their daily bread.”

The author, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, lectures and consults internationally and nationally in theology and ethics. She teaches at the School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University, Seattle, Washington, USA.

Martin Luther on the Right to Food, and Dalit Rights

“For when you mention and pray for daily bread, you pray for everything that is necessary in order to have and enjoy daily bread and, on the other hand, against everything which interferes with it.”

In Martin Luther’s explication of the fourth petition, the above is the very essence of his interpretation. In short: pray for bread, enjoy it and reject all the forces which distort the vision of bread for all! These are radical and appropriate words to reflect on in the context of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

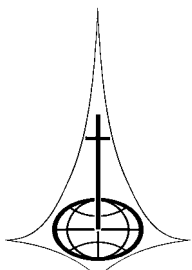
Martin Luther’s words are in fact a declaration of the right to food. Luther exhibits an understanding not only of the content of this fundamental right, but also of the way it should be protected. He points to the contexts in which the struggle for food will become necessary,



About 7,000 people, most of them Dalits and tribal people, live in this slum at the end of the main runway at New Delhi’s International airport. © WCC/P. Williams

mentioning “dissension, strife and war,” in which bread may not be available. He underlines state responsibility not

only in protecting this right but also in establishing a conducive environment to its realization. His approach sum-



marizes the prophetic words: “**uphold the rights of the poor**”.

How does the fourth petition link to Dalits’ rights or the lack thereof? Despite the UDHR and the many Indian constitutional provisions and laws to protect Dalits’ rights including the abolition of some of the worst practices of untouchability, about 170 million Dalits are still victimized through old and new forms of exclusion. They continue to be discriminated against and marginalized on the basis of caste. They are not only denied opportunities in the realm of public employment and education, or reduced to “manual scavengers” and bonded laborers, they are also subjected to structural, physical organized violence. They are still among the poorest of the poor in India, socially excluded and economically exploited,

their women sexually abused by the dominant castes with impunity.

The notion of daily bread or the right to food for Dalits should be perceived within the economic and production context of bonded and forced laborers, who lack basic housing, sanitation, health care and capital, receive low wages and are uncreditworthy, and for the most part landless. They are agricultural laborers engaged in food production but without the assurance of basic nutrition.

Martin Luther’s clarion call would therefore be for a system that affirms Dalits’ fundamental right to food and dignity, and for mechanisms to protect and monitor all basic rights. An extension of this principle would be a

call for government accountability at national and international levels, not as an option but as an inalienable obligation. In his conclusion, Luther also calls for good governance, expecting “that they may govern well.” Good governance should ensure that Dalits have food on their plates, as a right rather than an act of charity.

The UDHR remains a significant and pivotal mechanism in protecting and realizing the fundamental rights and freedoms of Dalits and others, and in ensuring government accountability.

The author, Indian theologian and communicator Chandran Paul Martin is Deputy General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation.



Rev. Chandran P. Martin
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Women’s Global Prayer for Dignity and Rights

“Sixty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), women around the world still find themselves being disproportionately affected by violence and discrimination. While the UDHR enshrines far-reaching principles of human dignity with the proclamation that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’, and the stipulation that human rights apply to all equally without distinction of any kind including sex, this rhetoric has not yet been fully translated into reality” (Every Human Has Rights Campaign, 2008, www.everyhumanhasrights.org).

Amid poverty, hunger, illiteracy, HIV and AIDS as well as wars and conflicts, the rights of women and girls continue to be abused and violated more than is the case for men and boys. Systematic discrimination against girls and women in the world’s poorest countries will prevent the United Nations from meeting its goals to reduce poverty, according to a March 2008 report by the global anti-poverty agency ActionAid.



Ms Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda
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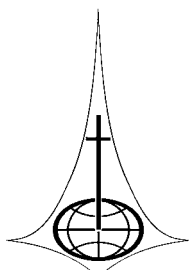


A group of women in Swaziland: women’s prayer for daily bread is “rooted in their reality of womanhood, of service, of exclusion and discrimination.” © LWF/LDS Swaziland

In its more than 155 years of existence, the World Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) has been listening and acting on women’s daily prayers for justice, rights, health and well-being. A human rights approach stresses government and other civil authorities’ responsibility to deliver on the rights of women, men and children. The state authority has the primary responsibility, hence the accountability system established by the

human rights system. As we observe the UDHR’s 60th anniversary and recall Luther’s teachings, we offer in a special way prayers for our civil authority, to especially take the necessary practical actions that end discrimination against women and girls—ensuring women, men, boys and girls live in safety and security, that their rights are protected and their dignity affirmed. Human rights must be lived, enjoyed and fulfilled.

Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, a lawyer and advocate for women’s rights and peace with justice, is the World YWCA General Secretary.



Selected LWF Resources on Human Rights

Online

All links to the following articles can be found at www.lutheranworld.org/LWI-UDHR60.html

In the article “Theology and Human Rights – The Work of the Lutheran World Federation” in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches publication, *Reformed World* (Volume 48, No. 3, September 1998), Norwegian Lutheran theologian Jan-Olav Henriksen reviews LWF’s work on a theological understanding and interpretation of human rights, during and after the 1970 Fifth Assembly in Evian, France.

Thinking It Over... is a pamphlet series of theological reflections on timely challenges produced by the LWF Department for Theology and Studies (DTS), available on the LWF Web site. Recent issues related to human rights include:

- *Why a Faith Basis for Human Rights Matters*, by DTS director Rev. Dr Karen Bloomquist, Issue 16, June 2007
- *Human Dignity Comes before Values* by former DTS study secretary for Theology and the Church Rev. Dr Hans-Peter Grosshans, Issue 17, October 2007

Statements and other presentations by LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko:

- *After Durban: Facing the Challenges of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*, 9 September 2001
- *Human Rights in the Context of Globalization*, 20 November 2001
- On the 50th Anniversary of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, 10 December 1998

- On **International Human Rights Day 2007**, 10 December 2007

An Indigenous Communion, message from the international LWF consultation on indigenous people’s concerns, 20–24 September 2006, in Karasjok, Norway

Protecting Human Dignity – How to Work Effectively for Justice and Peace, message from LWF co-sponsored workshop, 7–13 May 2007, in Bali, Indonesia

Diversity within Communion, statement from the LWF Asian region consultation on Indigenous People’s Rights, 6–8 November 2007, in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia

Print

Available in hard copy from LWF/DTS

Many human rights issues arise in relation to the challenges of neoliberal globalization, addressed in the book, *Communion, Responsibility, Accountability. Responding as a Lutheran Communion to Neoliberal Globalization – LWF Documentation 50 (2004)* Karen L. Bloomquist (ed), see especially “Economic Globalization and Human Rights,” an article by Peter N. Prove, Assistant to the LWF General Secretary in the Office for International Affairs and Human Rights

Lutheran Ethics at the Intersections of God’s One World, edited by Karen L. Bloomquist in *LWF Studies (2005)*, provides a diversity of perspectives on ethical issues within the global Lutheran communion. The following articles have particular relevance for human rights: “Conflicting Religious-Cultural Discourses of Human Rights in the World Today,” by Swedish Lutheran theologian Elisabeth Gerle, and “East Meets West: Rites and

Rights,” by Hong Kong Lutheran theologian Wai Man Yuen.

Faith and Human Rights. Voices from the Lutheran Communion, edited by Peter N. Prove and Luke Smetters, in *LWF Documentation 51 (2006)*; parallel German edition,

Glaube und Menschenrechte: Stimmen aus der lutherischen Gemeinschaft, *LWB Dokumentation Nr. 51 (2006)*

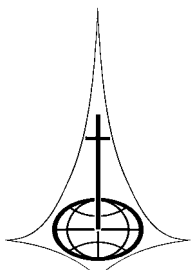
In hard copy and PDF version from the LWF Department for World Service

Rights-Based Approach to Development from a Faith-Based Perspective, a joint position paper developed in 2008 by an ecumenical rights and development group comprising Bread for the World, Christian Aid, Church Development Service – EED, Church of Sweden, DanChurchAid, Norwegian Church Aid, the interchurch organization for development cooperation – ICCO, and the Lutheran World Federation.

Uphold the Rights of the Poor and Oppressed, LWF/DWS Global Strategy 2007–2012 – The document elaborates the importance of a human rights perspective and the rights-based approach to development as a strategic approach.

Guidelines for Advocacy, LWF Department for World Service – The LWF/DWS strategic plan identifies its second priority as advancing the struggles of the displaced and marginalized people for human rights, peace-building and reconciliation at local, national and international levels.

Guidelines for Sustainable Development – Published in 2000, the guidelines elaborate the relation between human rights and advocacy, providing an understanding of the context in which advocacy can be used.



In this section, authors from different parts of the world in which the LWF is present share perspectives on; efforts to ensure the right to food, accompaniment for persons seeking asylum and protection in other countries, intervention for security and peace, and education on women's rights.

Subsidy Program Increases Food Security in Malawi

Malawi is ranked 165 out of 177 countries in the 2005 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). According to UN estimates, 50 percent of the children under five years-old in the Southern African country suffer from chronic malnutrition. In a population of 13.6 million people, over 10 percent—around 1.6 million—face hunger every day. Life expectancy has declined to 40 years, largely due to the high HIV prevalence (11.9 percent in the 15-49 age group).

Poverty continues to be the most serious and widespread human rights violation—65 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Both poverty and underdevelopment exacerbate abuse, neglect and discrimination, denying millions the enjoyment of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights and ultimately, their right to development.

Small-scale agriculture, mainly in the rural areas where the majority of the population resides, accounts for around 80 percent of the food consumed in the country. While most smallholder farms have low food crop yields due to deteriorating soil fertility and lack of fertilizers, poor infrastructure increases vulnerability to drought and flooding. The high economic growth in the agricultural sector is attributed to cash crops such as tobacco, tea, cotton and sugar, produced in large commercial estates.

The 2002 drought combined with poor management of the strategic grain reserves resulted in the worst famine in 50 years. At the height of the crisis, 3 million Malawians required food aid.

In 2005, the country confronted yet another hunger crisis and reports of people eating one meal or less per day were widespread. In 2006, the World



An ELDS agricultural project in a village near Malirana, central Malawi. © LWF/DWS/F. Orth

Food Program delivered targeted food distribution to 2 million out of the 4.8 million people requiring food aid.

Bumper Harvest

In 2006 and 2007, the country had a bumper harvest of its staple food, maize, exceeding national needs! Behind these record results was the government's fertilizer and seed subsidy program, introduced in 2005 and co-funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID). Through this program, around 2 million households bought fertilizer at a subsidized price and made a saving on seeds.

For years, fertilizer was beyond the means of millions of farmers, costing around USD 50 per bag, and buying it on credit would have been a great risk for farmers confronted with unreliable rains and poor-quality seeds. The subsidy cut fertilizer prices by 80 percent and slashed the cost of hybrid maize seeds from 600

kwacha (USD 4.00) per bag to 30 (20 cents). (Source: www.africafiles.org).

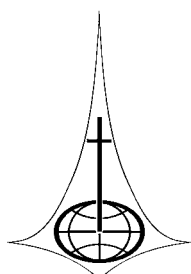
As a result, the total area of land planted with improved maize seed in the 2006/07 planting season was greater than in the previous season, contributing an additional 200,000 tons of maize to the harvest. With more maize currently available, the very poor in rural areas have better access to food, and the lower food prices mean higher real incomes for households, especially the poorest.

The fertilizer and seed subsidy program has enjoyed widespread support, including from political parties, a rare response in a politically divided country. Particularly important is the government's commitment to keep the program at the heart of its food security strategy for the future. The challenge now is to build on the successes of the past two years.

The author, Francis Ngopola, is the resource mobilization officer for Evangelical Lutheran Development Service (ELDS), the LWF Department for World Service associate program in Malawi.



*Mr Francis Ngopola
© Private*



LWF Seeks Lasting Solutions for Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal

Denied nationality and citizenship by their government, an estimated 108,000 Bhutanese entered Nepal as refugees in 1991. Since then, the Nepalese and Bhutanese governments have been trying to find a way out of what has become an impasse, with no real breakthrough yet. A joint Bhutan-Nepal team started a refugees' verification process at Khudunabari camp in 2004, which was brought to a halt following conflict over a faulty procedure.

In March/April 2007, the United States' government announced plans to resettle 60,000 Bhutanese refugees in the USA. When Australia, Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, New Zealand and Norway indicated interest

in also hosting Bhutanese refugees, attention shifted toward the option of third-country resettlement as a durable solution. While a majority of the refugees and those working with them consider the latter as the better option, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) considers both third-country settlement and repatriation as viable solutions.

Third Country

The refugee resettlement process began officially in December 2007, and



Mr Dhruva R. Pandit
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8,000 refugees will have resettled in third countries by the end of 2008. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has completed a census and registration process and began to distribute personal identity cards. After signing an agreement with the Government of

Nepal, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) established an office in Damak, eastern Nepal, and began a verification process.

The LWF Department for World Service (DWS) country program in Nepal in close coordination with the UNHCR and the World Food Program will manage the closure of the camps.

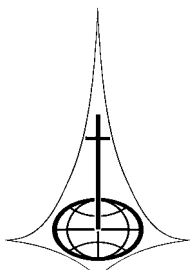
Some of the refugee groups are against the resettlement program and have protested against the process, including attacks on IOM. The situation is far from satisfactory, and armed security personnel have been assigned to all the camps. In this changing context, rather than simply provide infrastructural assistance, DWS Nepal mitigates the effect of tension among the refugees and host communities. The LWF program conducts peace and reconciliation training among refugees, with plans to engage more refugees in vocational skills training for self reliance. Disaster mitigation and food production activities are also continuing.

DWS Nepal's intervention among Bhutanese refugees is based on a rights-based development approach focused on empowering people to achieve their human rights through individual efforts. The LWF program collaborates with national human rights organizations and the international community in highlighting refugee issues and raising awareness about lasting solutions.

The author, Dhruva Raj Pandit, is coordinator of DWS Nepal's Bhutanese Refugee Project.



Children in a camp managed by the LWF/DWS Nepal Bhutanese Refugee Project.
© LWF/DWS Nepal



Standing Together for Sovereignty, Justice and Civil Rights

Human rights are a gift of God to all of humankind. They establish an entitlement to justice that transcends the laws and customs of particular societies—an entitlement arising from the Christian belief that “persons ... are of equal worth before God ... equally entitled to the things and protections they need to live in meaningful relation to God and neighbor.” (Adapted from a Social Statement of the Lutheran Church in America, a predecessor church body of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – ELCA.)

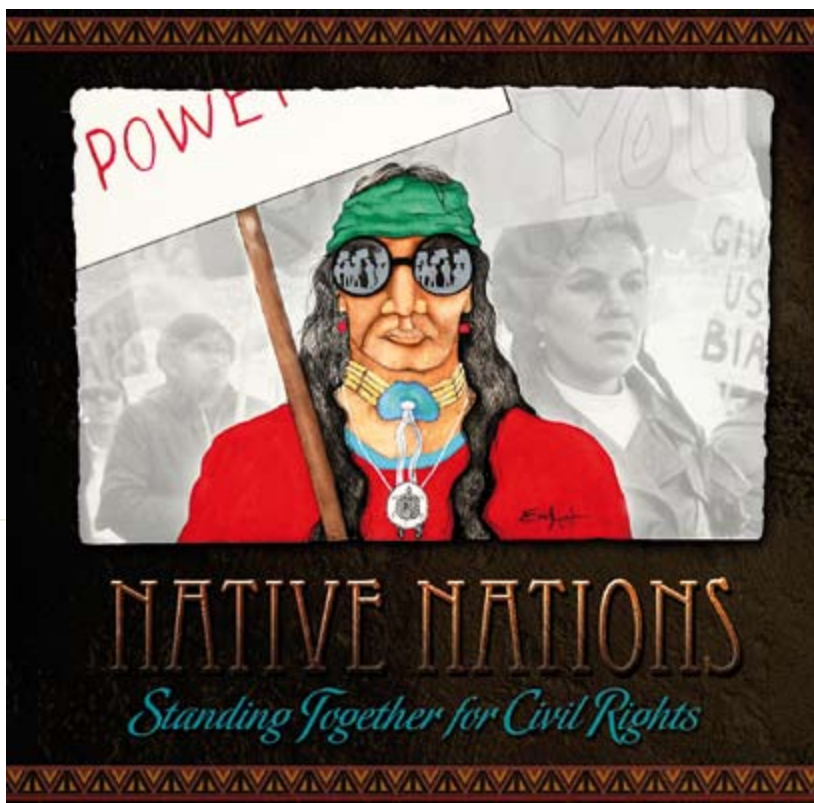
In its effort to promote human rights within the United States of America, the ELCA has long supported the struggle of American Indians.

“Does the United States systematically violate the human rights of some of its citizens?” asks an article in the *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*. The article tells the story of David Sohappy, a 61-year-old Native American religious elder who, in August 1986, was ordered to begin a five-year prison sentence for “poaching” salmon from the Columbia River, even though the United States had guaranteed the Yakima people fishing rights on the river “for as long as the sun shines, as long as the mountains stand and the rivers run.”

“Had David Sohappy been white,” the article suggests, “he could only have been fined for his alleged crime. But under a special federal law applicable only to Native American reservations, he was convicted of criminal charges and taken 2,000 miles (over 3,200 km) away from the river he and his people have fished for the past 12,000 years. Yet his story is not unique. Today only 1.5 million Native Americans survive in the United States, a mute testament to 400 years of neglect and brutality by the conquering whites. Although bound by treaty to respect Native American land rights and provide health, housing, education and other services, the United



Ms Miriam R. Prost
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Poster for the ELCA documentary, “Native Nations: Standing Together for Social Rights.”
© ELCA/Native Nations

States continues to ignore both its treaty obligations and Native American human rights. By virtually every measure they are among the poorest and most desperate of our people.”

The ELCA American Indian and Alaska Native Ministries in cooperation with Native American producers, B&B Productions, has just produced an historical documentary on the major social justice events directly related to the history of the National Indian Lutheran Board during its existence from 1970–1988.

Titled *Native Nations: Standing Together for Civil Rights*, the documentary covers the struggles of American Indians in relation to health care, water rights, tribal extinction and reservation contaminations. It concentrates on the Native American civil rights movement, 1960s through 1980s, focusing on the national social justice activities that created an environment from which a new relation-

ship was established between the Lutheran churches and Native Americans. The National Indian Lutheran Board (NILB) grew out of this union.

From the controversy surrounding the 1862 trial when 38 Dakota Sioux were executed in the largest single-day mass hanging in United States’ history, to the confrontations of the 1960s when many Indian tribes joined together to speak out with a unified voice, *Native Nations* tells the story of standing together for sovereignty, justice and civil rights.

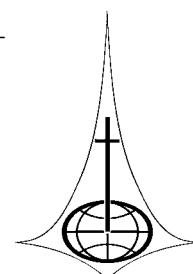
For the story of David Sohappy, see *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*,

<http://archive.elca.org/jle/article.jsp?k=329>.

For more information on the *Native Nations* documentary, see

www.elca.org/nativenations

Compiled by Miriam Reidy Prost, formerly a *World Council of Churches* web editor. Reidy Prost, provided editorial assistance to this LWI special issue.



Civil Society Groups Defend the Rights of Colombia's Vulnerable Population

Colombia has been plunged in military, social and political conflict for the past 60 years. Paradoxically this covers the same period since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The conflict has had a devastating impact on the civilian population with regard to the protection and enjoyment of basic rights.

The government which came into power in 2002 established a "Democratic Security" policy based on joint responsibility for the security of the state and its citizens. This "strong hand, big heart" strategy has been credited with numerous economic, political and social achievements, including the decline (according to official statistics) in the number of homicides and kidnappings, the supposed disbanding of paramilitary groups, several

military strikes against the guerrillas, and sustained economic growth over the last six years. But beyond these statistics, systematic and generalized violations of human rights continue. Government policies favor those who control the country's economic resources and, in many cases, include curtailment of constitutional guarantees and freedoms.

According to human rights non-governmental organizations, at least 12,547 civilians died as a result of sociopolitical violence between June 2002 and June 2007. With more than 4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), Colombia is said to have one of the world's highest numbers of



Ms Constanza Clavijo
© LWF/DWS Colombia

IDPs, and the situation is deteriorating.

Armed Groups

Still, illegal armed groups—guerrillas, paramilitary groups and gangs involved in drug trafficking—employ tactics such as forced recruitment, indiscriminate use

of anti-personnel landmines and assassinations, threatening the civilian population's rights and liberties and infringing upon international humanitarian law. Concerned by the situation, various United Nations agencies and the International Criminal Court sent five of their top officials in 2008 alone to Colombia to monitor the situation and meet with the government.

As its contribution to overcoming Colombia's social and humanitarian crisis, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (LWF/DWS) has begun an accompaniment program focusing on sustainable development, peace and human rights. Launched at the end of 2006, the DWS Colombia program bases its intervention strategy on providing financial support and protection to women, youth and peasant community groups and human rights defense organizations working for the most vulnerable people in the Arauca and Chocó regions.

Author Constanza Clavijo, DWS Colombia projects officer, monitors the LWF program work in the Department of Arauca.



Intervention by the LWF program in Colombia includes support for human rights defense organizations working for the most vulnerable people in Colombia. Photo: participants in a 2008 human rights civic march in Arauquita. © LWF/DWS/S. Nicholson

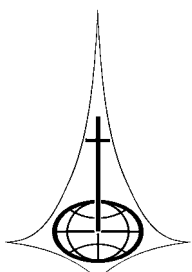
Women's Rights Awareness Raises Hope for Mozambican Families

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) program in Mozambique works in three large integrated community empowerment projects in the provinces and two slum areas of the capital city, Maputo. The LWF program focuses on enabling poor people to achieve sustainable livelihoods, increase their access to education and health services, and

reduce the risk and vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.

Mozambique has many progressive laws—on family relations, domestic violence, land, access to education, and HIV non-discrimination—which specifically protect women's rights. But local social norms and lack of awareness prevent women and girls from achieving these legal rights.

Each year, thousands of women and girls in DWS Mozambique project areas participate in non-formal education and group sensitization sessions on women's rights. Male community leaders are also involved, since real change can only take place with their cooperation and support. The impact of this approach is evident in the following short stories provided by LWF/DWS



Mozambique representative, Mr Jean L. Mutamba.

A Support Chain

Regina, DWS Mozambique’s human rights officer, was herself a victim of injustice. “When I started working in 1991, my husband died, leaving me with a one-year-old baby,” she says. “My husband’s family took everything. I was left alone with my child. My appeals to them were in vain. I did not know what to do.

“I wanted to help women obtain their rights. In 1998 we launched a project [with a perspective] on human rights and health for women. Women are suffering most, and often don’t know how to stand up for their rights.”

Maria’s husband was HIV-positive. Although he had already been tested for HIV, diagnosed as a carrier, and was undergoing treatment, he hid it from his wife. When she became very sick, he asked her to take the test. At first she resisted, replying “Why do you ask me this?” Her husband requested the medical personnel not to give her the test results.

She finally took the HIV test and understood what her husband had done. Then he abandoned her, and she lost her job and could not pay for the medicines. The LWF staff helped her to get medication and supplementary



Women participate in a non-formal adult education session in Tete Province, northwestern Mozambique. © LWF/DWS J. Eriksson

feeding. “With our support,” says Regina, “Maria could begin a new life, and she brought her case to court. It was, however, a bitter experience. Despite all proof that she had been left alone without any support from her husband, Mozambican law does not protect women in such cases.”

The project has evolved since 1998, with considerable impact on the communities it serves. HIV and AIDS was for long a taboo subject, thus the first person to break the silence and help people to stand up for their rights performed a vital task.

Alice, an animator of the human rights project, explains: “I was almost dying when I met Beatrice, the LWF nurse. She

helped me like a mother and made me understand how to live positively with my disease. The stigmatization and rejection by the community are our biggest suffering. I finally understood that being HIV-positive is a sickness I can live with and should not be ashamed of. I began to talk about my case in order to help other people to become aware. Breaking the silence led to new testimonies, and now many people come and talk to us about their sickness. Through our work, social integration is becoming easier. People have access to antiretroviral medication and have regained hope, peace and live positively.”

The author, Jean L. Mutamba, is LWF/DWS representative in Mozambique.



Mr Jean L. Mutamba © LWF/H. Putsman

Article 7.

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 16.

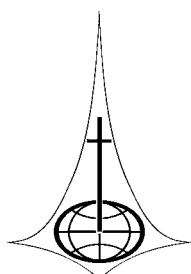
(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. ...



(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 25.

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. ...



YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

This section includes young people's views and actions with regard to human rights violations and awareness building. Some of the LWF member churches also highlight initiatives in advancing the human rights cause.

Like the Hummingbird, Brazilian Youth Seek Solidarity for Values

Young people in Brazil would like to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While much has been done over the past 60 years to guarantee the basic values for our common life, in many places, human rights are limited to the privileged few, with financial powers and profit-making taking precedence.

The goal is not to list all our problems but to give some examples. In some places, churches are more interested in their own salvation than in their members, and religion is presented as an enterprise.

As a result, people are deprived of everything they own in order to be purified and obtain salvation. In Brazil and in my community, we

could not avoid non-sustainable missionary projects.

We are reminded of the story of the hummingbird—a metaphor for solidarity in our country. The bird tries to put out a bush fire by flying back and forth from the river carrying small drops of water in its beak. The lions laugh at its enthusiasm. It seems that the lions of our world are safely ensconced in the shadows, watching the exhausted hummingbird flying to and fro.

Like the hummingbird, we attempt to promote values, ethics and compassion. The objective is not to revolutionize the world,

but just so that we and our children still have a world to live in. We want to celebrate therefore we call for reflection and awareness-raising on human rights through Christian education.

We appeal for a Lutheran training program here in Brazil and around the world to encourage our

Lutheran network to fulfil its collective function of preserving life. After all, Jesus did not need a Universal Declaration!

By Mathias Alberto Möller, a member of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil. Möller works in development cooperation at Brazil's health ministry.



Mr Mathias A. Möller
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Latin America/Argentina: Universal Declaration Incorporated in Church Statutes

At its October 1998 tenth general assembly, the Evangelical Church of the River Plate (IERP) in Argentina agreed to incorporate the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its own statutes. As a result and henceforth, the UDHR has become a constitutional basis for the IERP within the framework of the mission entrusted by Jesus Christ to His Church (Mt 28: 18-20, Mk 16: 15-16, Lk 24: 46-47, Jn 20: 21-23; Heb 1: 8).

Accordingly, the IERP expresses its belief in the UDHR's central relevance. The church relates the document's contents to the proclamation of the message of salvation within the framework of the mission entrusted to the church, and in connection with its responsibility for the integrity of creation.

By Rev. Juan Abelardo Schvindt, IERP general secretary

Europe/Germany: Bavarian Church Defends Christian Rights in Iraq

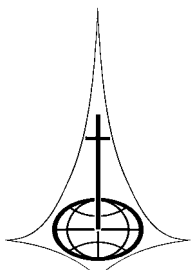
In early October 2008 the Iraqi town of Mosul, known in the Bible as Nineveh, experienced a wave of anti-Christian violence. Extremists killed around 20 persons and demanded that all Christians leave the city. Over 2,300 families fled Mosul to the relatively more secure plains to the north and the Kurdish provinces of Dohuk and Erbil. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, Germany, immediately sent emergency relief aid to the amount of EUR 50,000. Bavarian Bishop Dr Johannes Friedrich urgently called upon political leaders to ensure the security of Christians, at least in the previously safe north Kurdish and the Nineveh plains.

Already last June, a small delegation from the Bavarian church visited northern Iraq to look into the situation of Christians. The trip was a logical extension of the church's intensive involvement in the northern part of the country since 1995. Many Iraqi Christians indicated to the Lutheran delegation their

intention to remain in their country. The regions north of Mosul are indeed somewhat safer, but Christian internal refugees are often unable to find work in these remote villages. The Bavarian church and other organizations are trying to alleviate the situation by supporting the establishment of small businesses and providing training opportunities, among other initiatives.

The German church support is considered as ecumenical human rights assistance toward Iraqi Christians. Lutherans support east and west Syrian Christians and Armenians in their peaceful struggle to maintain a Christian presence there. This unity has often been celebrated locally in Iraqi worship services with a common Eucharist.

By Thomas Prieto Peral, secretary for ecumenical relations and international affairs at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria



Despite Human Rights Manifestos, Congolese Live in Fragile Peace



A rebel Congolese soldier looks at a truck captured during fighting between government and insurgents in the Democratic Republic of Congo in October 2008. © James Akena/Reuters

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a nation of nearly 66 million people, covering an area as large as Western Europe, is attempting to pick up the pieces after a decade of war and consequent upheavals that have claimed the lives of over 5 million people. In the past year alone, hundreds of civilians have been killed and thousands of women and girls raped.

Since independence from Belgium in 1960, the Central African country has produced political manifestos with a clear and achievable plan for

human rights to address intolerance, discrimination and the fight against impunity. But we still have very serious concerns, particularly with the latest violence in western Congo caused by the *Bundu dia Kongo* sect and the fragility of the peace agreements in eastern DRC.

The Congolese are human beings working to accomplish God's mission in their land, which entails

nothing more other than recognizing and proclaiming that all people, both men and women, are created in the image and likeness of God to live a life of dignity and fulfillment, and to enjoy their rights with respect for one another.

By LWF Council member Michel Ngoy Mulunda, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo.



*Mr Michel N. Mulunda
© LWF/ F. Chan*

Bavarian Youth Organization Rallies against Right-Wing Extremism in Germany

The youth organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, Germany, is concerned about the country's history during the first half of the 20th century, when many human rights were repealed by the National Socialists.

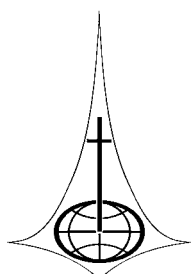
Today, we are still struggling against people who are convinced that National Socialism was a good idea, and who propagate this perception by all conceivable means.

The Bavarian church youth organization works against this neo-Nazism by providing information, participating in and organizing demonstrations, and by taking a clear position against right-wing extremism. For example, there is a memorial place in the former concentration camp in Flossenbürg where



*Ms Anna Krallinger
© Private*

international youth meetings are held and young people meet concentration camp survivors. The aim is to ensure that our history is not forgotten or repeated. In July this year, our youth sports association organized a football match against racism and around 1,000 young people participated in the event.



We also promote gender justice. Our committees are staffed with an equal number of women and men, and working groups attend to the

special interests of both. The youth organization aims to encourage young people to become responsible Christians.

By Anna Krallinger, a 22 year-old trainee teacher working in the youth organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria.

Africa/Ethiopia: Serving the Whole Person

One of the world's oldest civilizations, dating back at least 2,000 years, Ethiopia is also one of the few African countries that were not colonized. Despite its long history as a political entity, the nation of 80 million people lacks a democratic culture of tolerance and accommodation of different interests. Over the years, many Ethiopians have suffered from various injustices including undemocratic political and social structures, bad governance, unfair distribution of resources and years of civil wars, all of which resulted in gross violations of human rights.

A political transition process initiated in 1991 focused on introducing a democratization process and promoting peace and reconciliation among dissenting parties. In this context the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), on the basis of its mission of "Serving the Whole Person," established a Peace Office in 1993. The EECMY office fa-

cilitates the church's contribution toward building a peaceful society where power transfer occurs in a smooth, orderly and constitutional way rather than by resorting to violence as has been the case in the past. The overall aim is to ensure respect and protection of human rights, adherence to the rule of law and citizens' equitable access to national resources.

Since inception, the peace office has undertaken various activities including the training of trainers in conflict resolution, conducting peace and reconciliation consultations, and providing civic education especially for electoral processes. The office also develops peace education materials and lobbies policy makers to include civic education in the national curricula.

The cumulative aim is to foster a democratic culture and respect for human rights.

By Mamo Wejega, coordinator, EECMY Peace Office

North America/USA: Lutherans Stand in Solidarity with Oppressed People Globally

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) seeks to stand in solidarity with and advocate for people who are oppressed, poor and suffering, and share resources to meet human need.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC)—a joint ministry of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)—has produced a series of video interviews (<http://humanrightschurch.org>) featuring stories of human rights activists acting on their faith. The global church has a long history of involvement in human rights struggles, and the videos include voices from Argentina, El Salvador, Germany, India, Liberia, Tanzania, USA and other countries. "The stories people tell come alive on a video. You don't need access to special UN documents to understand human rights," said Christian Albers, who produced the videos during his internship at LOWC.

The ELCA also organized a consultation, 30-31 October titled "The Churches and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Marking 60 Years, Enhancing the Future." The gathering examined the history of the churches' involvement in human rights and discussed current challenges to human rights in the United States, such as illegal detention and immigration policies.

The goal is to raise awareness across the ELCA that human rights are a legal and fundamental grounding for seeking a world free from violence. The meeting also explored specific future activities to this end. The papers presented will be published in the online *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* (www.elca.org).

The Lutheran Office for World Community represents the LWF and ELCA at the United Nations headquarters in New York, USA.

By Emily Davila, assistant director, Lutheran Office for World Community

Central America/El Salvador: Water Is a Gift of God's Creation

The knowledge that water is sacred as the source of life and a human right, particularly for the poorest of the poor, compels us to advocate responsible water usage. Thus we oppose all neo-liberal initiatives that would transform water into a commodity and deprive people of access to water.

In accepting this challenge, we venture beyond vigilance and ethical pronouncements to concrete involvement alongside the poorest and most vulnerable. From this perspective, we are able to propose a holistic and gender-based focus in order to contribute to equitable solutions.

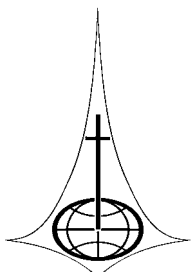
Our country has recently seen a number of community-based conflicts sparked off by the lack of institutions strong enough to guarantee holistic and sustainable water manage-

ment. We accompany the affected communities to resist violent threats to their right to water by providing them with the requisite technical and legal knowledge to campaign successfully for access to and protection of water.

Another strategy is to bring local conflicts to national attention through the media, and transmit this information to civil society organizations and networks. In collaboration with a network of organizations specialized in such cases, we also seek legal redress for the respective violations.

Thus we journey with the vulnerable, seeking to ensure the survival of the rivers of life, blessed by God's creation.

By Bishop Medardo E. Gómez Soto, Salvadoran Lutheran Church



While the Jewish approach to human rights tends to place moral emphasis on human obligation, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on the other hand, underlines human entitlement, both advocate a civil society that is based on universal access to freedom, justice and peace, writes the coordinator of a Jewish human rights network. A former UN Special Rapporteur also reflects on why the political and ideological approach to religious issues is a major obstacle to interreligious dialogue.

Human Rights: A Jewish Perspective

In *Pirkei Avot* (The Ethics of the Fathers), Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel says, “The world rests on three things: on Justice (*Din*), on Truth (*Emet*), and Peace (*Shalom*), as it is written, ‘With truth, justice, and peace shall you judge in your gates.’ (Zachariah 8:16).” The Hebrew word for world, *olam*, has connotations of universality: these pillars are meant for every human being. Without them, there is no mutual trust, fairness or freedom from conflict. While other rabbis argue that the *mitzvah* (commandment) to “Love your neighbor as yourself” is the most important obligation in the Torah, Rabbi Shimon understands that there is a need for basic rights and equal access as

the basis of civil society even before mutual understanding between neighbors is achieved.

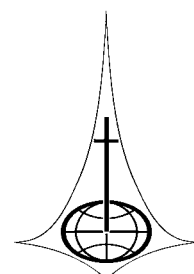
I am reminded of the first line of the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” This is the core of the UDHR’s vision for a just and equitable world. The Jewish term for inherent human dignity, *k’vod habriot*, is based on the idea that all human beings are created in the image of God. Human equality is mirrored in the idea that each of us is a reflection of the divine image. To

dishonor or oppress another is to mar the image of God.

The Jewish community understands the revolutionary nature of the UDHR document. Our experience of the Holocaust and the devastating civilian toll of World War II, which served as the catalyst for the declaration’s formulation, teach us that a universal understanding of *k’vod habriot* cannot be taken for granted. It is easy to ignore the divine spark in others, and subject them to torture or other inhumane treatment. We must instead follow the Torah’s repeated instruction to remember the heart of the stranger, because we were strangers in the land of Egypt. The lesson of oppression must be compassion.



Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR-NA) at a June 2007 rally in Washington DC, USA, organized by the National Religious Campaign against Torture and other human rights organizations. © RHR-NA



While we can find a basis for human rights in Jewish tradition, Judaism does not itself use the language of “rights” when dealing with human needs. Instead, the language of *mitzvah*—commandment—tends to place the moral emphasis on human obligation over human entitlement. Moreover, our individual rights are ultimately constrained by our obligations to God. The Jewish approach to human rights in the modern era has often been case-by-case, for example, Rabbis for Human Rights’ work on the Jewish opposition to torture.

The UDHR, by using the language of rights rather than of obligations, de-

fines the claim of the disadvantaged and the powerless vis à vis the person or state with power and resources. Jewish law, by contrast, tends to address the entity with the power to perform *mitzvot*, focusing, for example, on the *mitzvah* of feeding the hungry rather than the right of the hungry person to food. The end result, how-

ever, is the same: a civil society is one based on universal access to freedom,



Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster
© RHR/NA

justice, and peace. We are reminded of the words of the prophet Malachi (2:10): “Do we not all have one parent? Has not one God created us?” A world based in *k’vod habriot* answers these questions.

The author, rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster, is director of education and outreach at Rabbis for Human Rights - North

America where she coordinates *K’vod Habriot*, a Jewish human rights network.

Interreligious Dialogue against Discrimination and Intolerance

The political and ideological approach to religious issues is a major obstacle to interreligious dialogue today. This approach tends to instrumentalize religion as being related to power, identity or security, and nurtures a culture and practice of discrimination and intolerance. Its intra- and interreligious manifestations take the form of political violence, restrictions on the practice or visibility of religion, and ideological suspicion of religion.

Each of these manifestations reinforces the others, creating a vicious circle of discrimination and violence that, beyond a certain critical mass, reinforces polarizations and antagonisms and gives credibility to apocalyptic theories about the clash of civilizations and religions. Such theories, inherited from the Manichean thinking of the Cold War, are based on an ideological amalgam of race, culture and religion. Strengthened by a strong tendency to identify religion as a ghetto and to use it politically, this amalgam is causing a rise in racial and religious hatred.

Efforts to combat religious discrimina-

tion and incitation to national, racial or religious hatred must take into account the complex dialectic relation between two factors. Firstly, the theological, cultural and historical specificity of each religion and spiritual tradition as well as of related forms and manifestations of discrimination and defamation and, secondly, the universality of their deep-seated causes, and of how to combat these.

Phobia

The political challenge facing multicultural societies is to devise policies and programs that promote their reciprocal knowledge and, at the same time, build their interactions. It is in the field of religion and beliefs—where feelings of belonging are deepest—that the challenge is the most difficult to meet. Thus, in together combating the phobia of which all religions are the target, one needs to be simultaneously aware of what is special about each phobia and, at the same time, of their universal causes. The fundamental choice

that the victims must make as individuals and groups is between either turning in on themselves or showing solidarity toward all the victims.

Ideologists of the clash of civilizations and religions often justify their theories by pointing to the lack of solidarity between the victims of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and Christianophobia.

In this context, it is important to promote a paradigm shift from sociological idea to legal concept in human rights law: that of incitation to racial and religious hatred. This will help to refocus a debate that is polarizing around the defamation of religions.

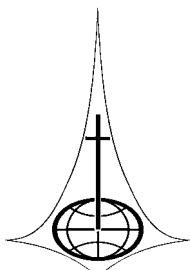
In the fight against racial and religious intolerance, governments should comply fully with their obligations to respect freedom of expression and religion as stipulated in international instruments, notably in articles 18 to 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Moreover, they should do so with a sense of respect for the complementary nature of these two fundamental freedoms.

Interpretations

Taking into account the existence of divergent and conflicting interpreta-



Dr. Douadou Diene
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Launched by the LWF in 2002, the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) works to promote what this article's author calls "... a culture and practice of dialogue." Here, Rwanda's Mufti Sheikh Saleh Habimana delivers the opening speech at the 2007 IFAPA Commission meeting in Tripoli, Libya.
© LWF/R. Lang

tions, more intensive legal reflection is needed in order to avoid the current tendency to politicize fundamental freedoms and to prioritize some over others. The Human Rights Council should consider adopting complementary rules on the reciprocal relationship between freedom of expression, freedom of religion and non-discrimination, notably in the form of a general monitoring of article 20. Given the historical and cultural depth of religious discrimination however, it is necessary to complete and base legal work on the complementary nature of fundamental freedoms on a culture and practice of dialogue between religions and spiritual traditions.

The following principles might contribute to this urgent dialogue:

- the dialectic link between recognizing the historical and theological specificity of each religion and spiritual tradition and the universality of their messages;
- promoting the ethical dimension of dialogue, particularly its concern with common human values;
- focusing the dialogue on deepening mutual knowledge, and promoting interaction and cross-fertilization between religions and spiritual traditions;
- linking the intra- and interreligious dimensions of dialogue;
- affirming the ultimate value of living together by engaging in joint action on the major issues facing all our societies: human rights, development, social justice, and the struggle against all forms of discrimination, inequality etc. ...;
- critical reflection on the internal theological, historical and political wellsprings of each religion and spiritual tradition, and on discrimination and negative perceptions of other religions;
- respect for a balance between the secular state and freedom of religion.

Author Doudou Diène from Senegal, was the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, 2002-2008.

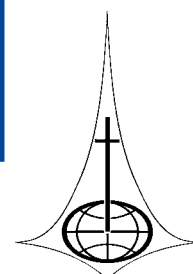
Article 18.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.



Article 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.



LITURGICAL MATERIAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

10 December 2008

The churches are called to defend human rights. The liturgical material in this section may be used or adapted accordingly for worship to mark the UDHR's 60th anniversary or for other Human Rights Day reflections.

Gathering

Call to Worship

Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him. *Proverbs 14:31*

Come, God of life, that justice will be restored and your name be praised.

God raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people. *Psalms 113:7-8*

Come, Prince of Peace, lift up the downtrodden and let their dignity shine.

Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy. *Proverbs 31:8-9*

Come, Holy Spirit, grant us courage to speak for the rights of the poor and needy.

Psalm 86 Today:
Hear Me – The Central African Woman*

¹ Bow down your ear, O Lord, hear me, the Central African woman for I am poor and needy.

² Preserve my life, for I am neglected in society you are my God; save your daughter who trusts in you!

³ Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I cry to you all day long.

⁴ Rejoice the soul of your daughter, for to you, O Lord I lift up my soul.

⁵ For you Lord, are good to all the members of the society, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon you.

⁶ Give ear, O Lord to the voice of my supplications!

Call to Confession

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear. They made their hearts adamant in order not to hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets. *Zechariah 7:9-12a*

Prayer of Confession

O God, the shouts of the oppressed are loud. The cries of the poor and needy call for a response. But often we are silent. Injustice, famine, destruction, death, the sufferings of the world glide past our souls. We fail to

care for the most vulnerable. We fail to do justice to their basic rights.

Come, O God, come into the midst of the world's woe. Turn us from our sin to live according to your will and to walk in your ways. Grant us your forgiveness and transform us by the renewing of our hearts and minds.

Assurance of God's Grace

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. *Zechariah 9:9 (New International Version)*

⁷ In the day I will be tortured, I will call upon you, for you will answer me.

⁸ You are the father of men as well as women.

⁹ All sexes whom you have made shall come and worship before you.

¹⁰ For you are great, and have made man as male and female.

¹¹ Teach the right of the woman in our society.

¹² I will manifest your name, and I will take part in the development of the world.

¹³ For great is your mercy towards me, for you have made me the generator of the human beings.

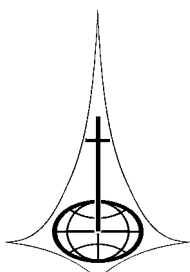
¹⁴ O God, the proud men have risen against me, and they don't respect the women.

¹⁵ But you, O Lord are God, full of compassion and gracious both to man and woman.

¹⁶ O turn to me, and give me the ability to assert myself in maintaining your order of creation.

¹⁷ Show me your kindness, that those who despise me may see that you don't hate the feminine gender; help me in my life to practice the promotion of the woman recognition in our society.

*Antoinette Yindjara Beanzovi, Central African Republic, from: Bärbel Fünfsinn, Carola Kienel (eds), *Psalmen leben. Frauen aus allen Kontinenten lesen biblische Psalmen neu*, Schenefeld 2007, pp. 168-170.



Word

Human Rights and the Bible

The Bible clearly advocates for those who are politically or economically weak and strongly criticises those in power when they violate or pervert the rights of the vulnerable. In the Old Testament, prophetic warnings as well as concrete laws aim at safeguarding the life and dignity of the poor and needy.

You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them. Dt 24:14-15b

God not only advocates for the poor, but even identifies with the vulnerable:

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. [...] Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me. Matthew 25:35f.40b

I think it is important to remember why the churches have a responsibility to participate in defending human rights. Fundamentally, our goal is informed by the hope for creation that comes with Jesus' announcement of the reign of God. Governments, churches and other social institutions are never perfect. Sin, in all its manifestations, causes division. The churches' work to promote and defend human rights must be seen in the larger context of a ministry of

The commitment to advocating for basic political, social and economic rights comes out of the exodus-experience of the Israelites. God revealed Godself as liberator and redeemer from bondage, as advocate for those on the margins and as custodian of the dignity of the deprived. This is a strong motivation to work for justice and human rights.

Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey! Isaiah 10:1-2

reconciliation where social justice is promoted when our collective relationships falter or fail, as they inevitably will. *David Pfrimmer* ("Human Rights as a Public Theology," in: *Faith and Human Rights. Voices from the Lutheran Communion*, LWF Documentation 51 (Lutheran University Press: Minneapolis 2007), p. 67)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Luke 4:18-19

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Matthew 5:6

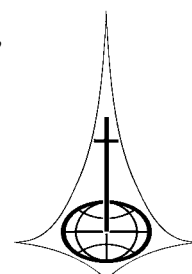
In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men

Basic social and economic standards need to be upheld in order to ensure the livelihood of everyone. These standards call for being applied not only to one's own kin, but to each and every person. They are universal. The focus is put on the need of the destitute, regardless of ethnicity.

You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this. Dt 24:17-18

shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. Acts 2:17-18

This compelling New Testament image inspires me every day to name and claim the universality of human rights. The word of God speaks of prophetic voices that are not silenced by gender, age or nationality. Under the Holy Spirit's continuous guidance and prompting, the gospel constantly calls us to judge our institutions and ourselves. This leads to repentance, to a changing of our minds and altering of structures toward becoming an inclusive communion of saints in the church of Jesus Christ. This is the very crux of defending human rights. It is about ensuring human dignity for all, providing space for the voices of difference and for those who because of certain vulnerabilities are lost and forgotten. *Musimbi Kanyoro* ("Faith, Feminism and Human Rights," in: *Faith and Human Rights. Voices from the Lutheran Communion*, p. 86)



Intercessions

God of justice and compassion we ask for your transforming and healing presence for women, men and youth who suffer from human rights violations and for human rights activists.

For those who are detained or harassed for speaking truth to power, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who experience torture by state officials and for their families, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who experience economic exploitation and injustice, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For migrants, refugees and displaced persons who do not know what future to expect, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who have nothing to eat nor clean water to drink, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who suffer violence in the family and have no means to claim their rights, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For courageous women who dare to speak up and for courageous men who dare to venture new ways, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Communion

For cultural and religious minorities and indigenous peoples who struggle to keep their identity, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For journalists, lawyers and human rights activists who bring human rights violations to the public, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For trade unionists and other civil society activists who work for participatory structures in state and society, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For religious leaders and people of faith who stand up for the rights of the marginalised and vulnerable, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

For political leaders who have the power to implement human rights, let us pray:

Lord, hear our prayer.

Eucharistic Prayer*

We thank you, Lord of heaven and earth, that you open your hand to feed all living things with your grace. You give us our daily bread, our health and strength. From the corn of the fields and the grapes of the mountains, you make bread and wine. You prepare your table for us.

Let your Spirit come upon us and upon these gifts, that we may partake of the heavenly bread and the chalice

of blessing which is the body and blood of Christ.

Words of Institution

We proclaim your death, Lord, and trust in your resurrection until you come again in glory.

May all who share in this bread and cup be made one body through the Holy Spirit, a perfect living sacrifice in Christ, to your praise and glory.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Communion

Prayer after Communion

Lord, we thank you for your inexpressible gift.

You became the answer to our prayer, the bread for our hunger.

Help us now to answer the need of those who lack the things we have in abundance.

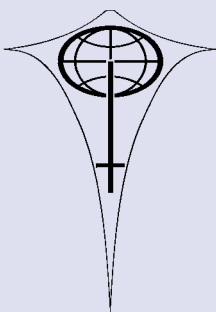
Help us to hear the cry you have heard, to understand as you have understood, to serve as you have served.

Reveal to us the secret of your table: one bread and one humanity.

Amen.

*The Church of Sweden, Service of Holy Communion, English edition

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