

## Highlights

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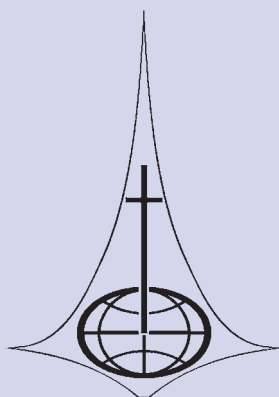
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## A Historic Step – Lutherans Ask Mennonites for Forgiveness



At the "Service of Repentance," congregants make the sign of the cross on one another's hands with olive oil from the Holy Land.  
© LWF/Arni Danielsson

### Assembly Participates in Powerful Service of Repentance

**STUTTGART, Germany/GENEVA, 22 July 2010 (LWI)** – In what Bishop Mark S. Hanson, President of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), described as possibly "the most significant legacy this Assembly will leave," the Eleventh Assembly took the historic step of asking Mennonites for forgiveness for past persecutions of the Anabaptists. Delegates unanimously approved a statement calling Lutherans to express their regret and sorrow for past wrongdoings toward Anabaptists and asking for forgiveness.

Hanson described the act of repentance and reconciliation as "communion building and communion defining. We will not just look back; we will also look forward together to God's promised future."

Through the adoption of the statement titled, "Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution

of Anabaptists," Lutherans repented for violent persecution of Anabaptists and for the ways in which Lutheran reformers supported persecutions with theological arguments. The statement asks for forgiveness "from God and from our Mennonite sisters and brothers" for past wrongdoings and the ways in which Lutherans subsequently forgot or ignored this persecution and have continued to describe Anabaptists in misleading and damaging ways.

The statement was based on work done by the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission, 2005-2009, which produced the report, "Healing of Memories: Reconciling in Christ," which was approved by the LWF Council in 2009.

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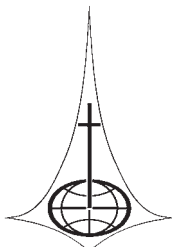
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## Human Trafficking, Leadership, and Poverty Emerge as Key Issues for Women

Human trafficking, leadership by women in churches and society, and unequal food distribution have emerged as key issues for women around the world, according to the presentation on behalf of women at the Eleventh Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). These issues were identified in the Women's Pre-Assembly meeting and regional meetings as requiring action by the LWF.

Zimbabwe said that in Tanzania some mothers give their daughters to friends, who promise to feed, clothe and educate the girls. They are then forced to watch pornography in order to learn the sex trade and are shipped to Zanzibar and then to another country. There the girls are forced to bear children, whom they are not allowed to keep. When they are no longer able to bear children, the girls are shot or poisoned.

of the LWF; some churches still do not ordain women. President of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, Rev. Dagmar Magold, said that her ministry as a pastor is measured against "what men have done." She said that some churches refuse to ordain women because some people think that this ministry is for men only, and sometimes is based not on theological but on cultural and traditional grounds.

The delegation called on member churches to adopt policies that promote women in both lay and ordained leadership positions. It further appealed to those churches that do not ordain women "to prayerfully consider the effect that inaction and refusal on this matter has on those who are precluded from exercising their God-given calling."

"The pain of exclusion and the loss of God-given gifts are experienced by the whole church," the women said.

### Food Justice For All

"Poverty has a woman's face," said Moy. A chasm separates those who are hungry and deprived, and those who consume too much. The women's delegation urged member churches to engage in advocacy campaigns with governments directed toward securing "food justice" for all. They also asked the LWF to connect member churches with one another and with civil society efforts, with the goal of achieving a "worldwide increase in food sovereignty."

As they laid a tablecloth on a table, the six women said that the cloth "sets and prepares the table" for daily bread. Rev. Annika Laats explained that, in a similar way, "the Lutheran community is also called to be a table that is set and prepared for cultural transformation."



*Women and men together make the body of Christ whole, as three strands are needed to make a braid—"a threefold cord [that] is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Heidrun Tobler from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Natal-Transvaal) helps illustrate this verse during the women's report to the Assembly. © LWF/Erick Coll*

### Human Trafficking

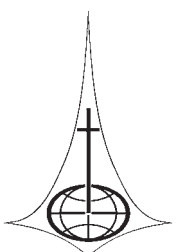
Rev. Selma Chen of The Lutheran Church of Taiwan told the Assembly that at least 27 million people—women, men, and children—are being trafficked worldwide, within their own countries and across borders. Rev. Annika Laats of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church added that in "our own backyards," people are being exploited and are being forced to work for little or no pay.

As an example of human trafficking, Rev. Elitha Moy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

The six-member delegation called on member churches "to engage in advocacy and awareness programs, to develop strategies to overcome ignorance, and denounce the sin of human trafficking."

### Adopt Policies That Promote Women

Full participation by both women and men continues the reformation and the transformation of the church, the delegation said. But this is not happening in all member churches



## Youth Identify Three “Important and Urgent” Issues

“We young people offer our enthusiasm, energy and networking skills to assist in raising the profile and visibility of the LWF,” declared youth delegates to the Eleventh Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Assembly as they concluded a creative, colorful presentation and offered themselves as gifts to the communion. “We ask only for the opportunity and the forums to do this.”

must be addressed within the context of climate change and agro-ecological approaches to food production, distribution and consumption.

Greed was identified as a great problem for the world. “Injustice between rich and poor [and] between developed and developing countries has its origins in this source,” they said in the Pre-As-

sembly message. “We look for a future in which we all finally share our daily bread.”

pillars of sustainability—society, economy and the environment—are fully integrated,” they said. The Assembly and member churches of the communion were called to advocate with governments and other relevant parties for social, economic and environmental sustainability in policy and practice. In addition, the youth asked members of the communion to purchase and promote fair-trade and sustainable products. Member churches were urged to invest only in ethical and environmentally-friendly funds and investments.



Young Lutherans acting out their call for greater gender justice and sustainability during their Assembly presentation. © LWF/Erick Coll

### Challenging Gender Stereotypes

The youth called on the whole communion to challenge the systems and practices that limit the choices for men and women on the basis of gender. In a powerful display of this message, they draped placards with common gender stereotypes around their necks during the presentation.

The presentation summarized the three issues identified as “important and urgent” by the LWF Pre-Assembly Youth Conference held in Dresden, Germany, 10-17 July 2010.

Calling for priority on the issues of sustainability, gender injustice and the role of youth in enhancing the visibility of the LWF, they noted their dismay about “the lack of knowledge and awareness of the LWF, its role and its work in our own churches and communities.” In offering themselves as gifts to the communion in order to be “active and constructive participants” in the life of the LWF, young Lutherans must be given opportunities, resources and information in order to better understand the communion’s structures and processes, they said.



From left: Youth delegates Marc Villwock (Germany) and Rabel Gysel (Chile) demonstrate their concerns. © LWF/Arni Danielsson

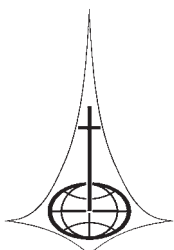
### Greed the Origin of Injustice

Underscoring the Assembly theme, “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread,” youth declared that food security

must be addressed within the context of climate change and agro-ecological approaches to food production, distribution and consumption.

Unustainable methods of production are the cause of suffering for humans through economic injustice, and also to creation. “We have to find a new paradigm in which all three

pillars of sustainability—society, economy and the environment—are fully integrated,” they said. The Assembly and member churches of the communion were called to advocate with governments and other relevant parties for social, economic and environmental sustainability in policy and practice. In addition, the youth asked members of the communion to purchase and promote fair-trade and sustainable products. Member churches were urged to invest only in ethical and environmentally-friendly funds and investments.



## A Historic Step – Lutherans Ask Mennonites for Forgiveness

Assembly Participates in Powerful Service of Repentance

*Continued from p. 1*

Several delegates spoke in favor of adopting the statement. Archbishop Nemuel Babba of The Lutheran Church of Christ of Nigeria told delegates he felt like crying as the full statement was read to the Assembly. “Forgiveness’ is a difficult word for everyone to pronounce,” he said. “[But] today has marked a milestone for two groups coming together because of the word ‘forgiveness.’”

In introducing the vote, Hanson called on Assembly delegates and others present in the plenary hall to indicate their endorsement of the statement by kneeling or standing in silence. In a watershed moment in the life of the LWF and Lutheran-Mennonite relations, the LWF President announced the statement unanimously endorsed “in a spirit of great humility.”

### Mennonite Response to Lutheran Repentance

“Today, in this place, we together—Lutherans and Anabaptist Mennonites—are fulfilling the rule of



*Assembly participants listen intently to MWC President Danisa Ndlovu’s emotion-filled address to the 22 July 2010 Assembly plenary session. © LWF/Erick Coll*

Christ,” said Mennonite World Conference (MWC) President Rev. Dr Danisa Ndlovu, in an emotion-filled address to the Assembly.

He confessed that Mennonites were painfully aware of their own inadequacy. “We cannot bring ourselves to this table with heads held high. We can only come bowed down in great humility and in the fear of the Lord. We cannot come to this point and fail to see our own sinful-

ness. We cannot come to this point without recognizing our own need for God’s grace and forgiveness.”

In a symbolic act of reconciliation and servanthood, Ndlovu presented Hanson with a wooden foot-washing tub, saying that it represented the Mennonites’ commitment to a future “when the distinguishing mark of Lutheran and Anabaptist-Mennonite relationships is boundless love and unending service.” Ndlovu described how, in some Anabaptist and Mennonite churches, the practice of foot-washing has long been maintained. “It is in our vulnerability to one another that God’s miraculous, transforming and reconciling presence is made visible in the world.”

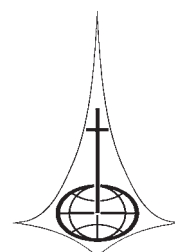
Accepting the gift, Hanson said, “In this and so many other ways, we will continue to follow [the Mennonite] example, and in this most significant day in our life there may be no more public example of reconciliation.”

### Envisioning the Future

In a solemn and powerful service of repentance, the LWF Eleventh Assembly, along with members of



*MWC General Secretary Rev. Dr Larry Miller addresses the Assembly during the “Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution of Anabaptists.” © LWF/Erick Coll*



the Mennonite community, came together to reflect on the painful past that has caused divisions between Lutherans and Mennonites for hundreds of years. The order of service called worshippers to “remember how Anabaptist Christians knew suffering and persecution, and how some of the most honored Reformation leaders defended this persecution in the name of faithfulness.”

The service, which followed the unanimous approval by the Eleventh Assembly of the statement, “Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution of Anabaptists,” included testimonies by Mennonites about the persecution and its legacies, including the impact on small communities, and the ways in which Lutheran leaders—sometimes against their own best insights—gave theological support to civil authorities who persecuted Anabaptists.

Also providing a testimony was MWC General Secretary and Co-Secretary of the Lutheran-Menno-

nite International Study Commission Rev. Dr Larry Miller. He spoke of the power and burdens of the martyrs’ stories within the Mennonite context as they continue to live in contemporary communities. “From the beginning of the movement, Anabaptists interpreted their persecution as a confirmation of faithful Christian discipleship,” said Miller. “Over the centuries and around the world, stories of faithful suffering became a vital shaper of Anabaptist-Mennonite identity.”

Miller confessed that Anabaptist-Mennonite communities are also “in need of healing and forgiveness. In this action between us there is, for Anabaptist-Mennonites also, the promise of release and renewal.”

Following prayers of confession, led by LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, the service moved into “envisioning the future together” and sowing the seeds of reconciliation and peace. Testimonies were shared on the witness of the promise

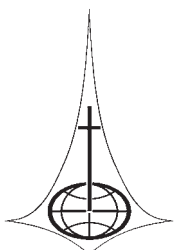
of cooperation between Lutherans and Mennonites in Colombia, witness to Lutheran interpretation of the Augsburg Confession, which makes explicit the changed relations with Anabaptist Christians, and witness to the promise of new collaborations in Canada.

In their testimonies, Rev. Susan C. Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and Janet Plenert, MWC Vice-President and Executive Secretary for Witness at the Mennonite Church Canada, spoke of how Canadian churches have worked together for years through ecumenical forums in the areas of advocacy, peace, and relief and development.

“Now we feel a call to deepen this relationship,” said Johnson, who described how the two churches have begun to develop a joint congregational resource that will assist in learning more about the shared history between the churches and help to forge new ways of collaboration.



*Following the unanimous approval by the Eleventh Assembly of the statement “Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution of Anabaptists,” Mennonite World Conference Executive Committee Vice President Janet Plenert presents LWF President Mark S. Hanson with a symbolic pine foot-washing tub. © LWF/Erick Coll*



## Mennonites Will Now Reshape the Telling of Their Story

“When you have a wound, it can be cured. What we did yesterday was more than curing a wound—it is healing,” said LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko at a 23 July press conference.

He was referring to the public act of reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites that took place during the Eleventh Assembly of the LWF. “Curing and healing are different from each other,” said the general secretary. “Healing occurs at a deeper level. Yesterday we healed memories. You don’t shed tears unless something in your soul is moved—and that happened yesterday.”

Mennonites have become known for being pacifists and peacemakers and for adopting non-violent approaches to conflict situations.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) General Secretary Rev. Dr Larry Miller said that over the past decades Anabaptist and Mennonite communities had widely adopted



*At the press conference, MWC President Danisa Ndlovu explains to journalists Mennonites’ commitment to reshaping the story of Lutheran-Mennonite relations. © LWF/Erick Coll*



*From left: MWC General Secretary Rev. Dr Larry Miller, MWC President Rev. Danisa Ndlovu, LWF Office for Communication Services Director Rev. Karin Abhtelstetter and LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko during the press conference. © LWF/Erick Coll*

mediation and conflict-resolution processes. “There is a strong focus on non-violence and constructive peacemaking,” he told journalists.

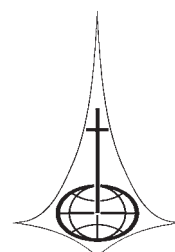
MWC President Rev. Dr Danisa Ndlovu said that the peacemaking action between Lutherans and Mennonites “speaks to the whole concept

of how we look at each other.” He said the action opened the way for the two churches to work in collaboration “after generations of divisions have rendered us incapacitated.”

The telling and retelling of the martyr stories and the expectation that followers of Christ should ex-

pect opposition from the world plays a vital role in the identity of Mennonites, Miller said. He referred to *The Martyrs Mirror*, a massive 16<sup>th</sup> century volume which records accounts of martyrdom. While history cannot be changed, Miller said, the way that history is communicated can be. He said that Mennonites have committed themselves to telling their common understanding of history in new ways. “We will reshape the telling of the story,” he said. “We will say that the Lutherans asked us for forgiveness and we forgave them.”

Miller said there has been “a natural feeling” within the Anabaptist-Mennonite communities “to feel like victims.” But he said that “the dominant sense” of the Mennonites who participated in the peacemaking action yesterday was of gratitude for what the Lutherans had done. “It is a significant change, moving us from a feeling of being recipient victims to a feeling of gratitude. This will lead to a change of attitudes.”



## Voices From the Regions

*Lutheran World Information (LWI) spoke to some of the Assembly participants about the implications of the Lutheran–Mennonite action. Some of the responses are included in this section.*

This is a “match point” for ecumenical work with other Christians, said **Mr Martin Ignacio Diaz**, Salvadoran Lutheran Church. It is a door for new beginnings for ecumenism in our regions. Both individual churches and also churches at the “macro” level need to go the same way as the LWF, because that is the real communion of Lutheran churches. “I think it is a big step for our community.”



*Mr Martin Ignacio Diaz  
© LWF/Ratna Leak*

**Bishop Susan C. Johnson** said that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada has worked together with the Mennonites for years ecumenically in advocacy, peace and justice, and relief and development work. She now hoped this [action] will open up a new avenue of mission and ministry. “Any time there is movement toward healing, toward closeness in the body of Christ, it has a ripple effect in the whole body. So, we hope that this action will help us in Canada work toward unity in the whole body—as a model and as an invitation,” she said



*Bishop Susan Johnson  
© LWF/Ratna Leak*

**Mr Ashbjoen Hyltdgaard** from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark remarked that basically, there is a problem in identifying yourself with what your forefathers have done—especially, he said, “for us in Denmark,” as opposed to our actions today. On the other hand, he noted, “we are partly defined by tradition. Personally, I identify with that past myself. If we have a tradition we cannot identify only with the good part. We have to accept it—good and bad. So, the Mennonite apology makes sense. It’s part of our tradition that we must know about and it brings it up to the surface.”



*Mr Ashbjoen Hyltdgaard  
© LWF/Ratna Leak*

**Rev. Sumiyuki Watanabe**, President of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran



*Rev. Sumiyuki Watanabe  
© LWF/Ratna Leak*

Church, said the apology will provide a stimulus to the ongoing work between Roman Catholics and Lutherans on the



*Ms Margaret Hansen  
© LWF/Ratna Leak*



*Bishop Melvin Jiménez  
© LWF/Ratna Leak*



*Bishop Dr Solomon Rajah  
© LWF/Ratna Leak*

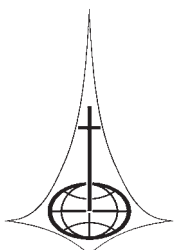
Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. “Both sides had thought they were absolutely right, and now we are reaching some settlement,” he said. “So, the meaning is that we Lutherans must continue to dialogue with others

about matters of absolute truth. We need not say that we are wrong, but find something 50-50.”

**Ms Margaret Hansen** of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia said her church has worked for reconciliation and peace in Namibia before and since independence. “Reconciliation is what the church is all about,” she said, and therefore “this reconciliation will encourage all the churches of the Lutheran communion and other churches to reconcile and move together, to move anew.”

“It is time for a new moment. We have good relationships with Mennonites in the life of our church, but it is very important to give this testimony to other churches and society that Christian churches don’t have problems working together. This is not new for Costa Rica, but is so important,” said **Bishop Melvin Jiménez**, Lutheran Costa Rican Church. He described the action as an important sign to others that Christians can collaborate on issues such as social justice, poverty and climate change.

**Bishop Dr Solomon Rajah**, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia, described the action of seeking forgiveness as “a great step for Lutherans” and “an important gesture to say that we are sorry.” In the church it is a very old idea that when we feel we have done something wrong or non life-supporting, we need to forgive and be forgiven.” He emphasized, “We are practicing our Lutheran doctrine of grace. Putting our theology into action is a good example to other Christians that Lutherans know that they have done wrong and are moving forward.”





## Ecumenical Patriarch Calls Lutherans to Seek a New Vision

The petition of the Lord's Prayer chosen as the theme of the LWF Assembly, "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread," "is exceptionally timely today in view of the tragic situation affecting such a large part of humanity," said Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, in a message delivered on his behalf to the gathering.

"This is particularly true for so many living in the southern hemisphere of our globe, who face the phenomenon of hunger on a daily basis," Bartholomew stated, contrasting their situation with the "comfort and prosperity" enjoyed by many in Western societies. For the Ecumenical Patriarch "the respect for human dignity has been lost in people's minds and hearts."

"This situation is totally inhumane and unacceptable, and constitutes a spiritual and social challenge for all Christians to create prophetic responses to humanity and to the



*Metropolitan Dr Gennadios of Sassima brings greetings from Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome. © LWF/Erick Coll*

entire world", said the Ecumenical Patriarch. His message to the LWF Eleventh Assembly was read at the first plenary session by Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima, who is co-president of the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission.

According to Bartholomew, the LWF Assembly marks "the begin-

ning of a new era in the history of [Lutheran] churches and in the ecumenical movement in general." Lutheran delegates "are called to search for a new vision for the future, for new ways of dialogue with other Christian churches, among them with the Orthodox Church, and for ways of being in cooperation and interaction with the entire ecumenical movement," said Bartholomew.

Bartholomew offered an assessment of the Orthodox-Lutheran dialogue, which has been going on for 29 years: "We acknowledge with sincerity that the path ahead of us will be long and difficult toward the hoped for and expected unity."

However, the Ecumenical Patriarch also emphasized the Orthodox understanding that "such a dialogue exists only to reach the goal of communion and that there should be no deviations from this task until the goal is reached."

## Cardinal Kasper Says There Has Been "No Ecumenical Winter"

Addressing participants in the Eleventh Assembly of the LWF, the recently retired President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) said that he felt "deep emotion and gratitude" looking back on "these years of such rich and enriching cooperation with The Lutheran World Federation."

Walter Cardinal Kasper said that "Lutheran-Catholic relations have been since the beginning of our international dialogue ... in my heart and will remain in my heart."

Referring to his recent book about the ecumenical movement, *Harvesting the Fruits*, Kasper said, "I was more than surprised to see such a rich harvest and that we have achieved much more than we could even dream before. There has been no ecumenical winter."



*Walter Cardinal Kasper, outgoing President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity © LWF/Erick Coll*

The 1999 signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification was "a milestone of the ecumenical movement," he said.

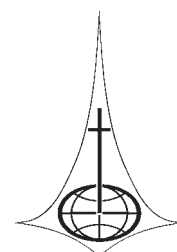
Kasper paid tribute to LWF President Bishop Mark S. Hanson

and LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko as "good friends" of Lutheran-Roman Catholic relationships.

But the ecumenical agenda is still unfinished, he noted. "We have every reason to continue and even to intensify and deepen our dialogues," the Cardinal said. Referring to the Assembly theme, "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread," he stressed that the millions of people who lack daily bread are "our common responsibility," and that Lutherans and Roman Catholics "can no longer afford our differences" when it comes to helping people in need.

"Our dialogues must continue," he said, "but at the same time we have to reflect on how to engage more in common cultural, social and environmental projects."

Kasper retired as president of the Vatican's PCPCU on 1 July this year.



## Commitment to Unity Needed “More Than Ever”

The Lutheran insistence on the fact “that we are one because we are sharing the one and same Christ, because we receive the same gift” is something the ecumenical movement needs now “more than ever”, said the World Council of Churches (WCC) General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit.

Tveit was greeting participants at the beginning of the LWF Eleventh Assembly.

Offering thanks for the contribution of Lutheran churches to the WCC fellowship “both today and in decades past,” Tveit highlighted some of the many gifts received from the Lutheran communion. “You are known for your commitment to peace with justice, to mission, diakonia and to ecumenical dialogue and inter-re-



*WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit  
© LWF/Erick Coll*

ligious cooperation. Let it be so also in the future,” he said.

The theme of the Assembly “touches the heart of the gospel and

therefore also the heart of our being one in Christ,” said Tveit. “When we pray for daily bread,” he added, “we acknowledge the body of Christ, the bread of life, given for our salvation, and we experience the hunger of justice that calls us into communion for actions of sharing.”

The WCC general secretary acknowledged that “there are several reasons given for why churches are not fully sharing the one bread in the Eucharist.” However, he added, “in [light] of your theme and the affirmation of the one bread, there are even more important theological and moral reasons why we continue to do anything we can do to come to the same table and have a common sharing of the one bread.”

## “God’s Gift of Bread Not for Our Selfish Needs”

Greetings from the Armenian Apostolic Church to the Eleventh Assembly of LWF underlined that God’s gift of bread “should not be for our selfish needs, but for the sake of reaching others, sharing with our neighbors.”

His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, in a message read by the LWF Director for Personnel Rev. Rudolf Renfer, said “beyond passing nice resolutions, we must act. We are the stewards of the Creation; this is a God-given vocation. Hence, we must act together as churches on the basis



*LWF Director for Personnel Rev. Rudolf Renfer reads a message from the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church. © LWF/J. Latva-Hakuni*

of the gospel values and in obedient response to the call of God in Jesus Christ.”

The head of the Armenian Apostolic Church urged interreligious collaboration “on the basis of common values, accepting and respecting our differences.”

“We, therefore, pray that the Eleventh Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation opens new ways to strengthen the God-given unity in the Lord’s Chalice, and safeguard God’s creation,” the message concluded.

## International Lutheran Council Head Grateful for Ties with LWF

The chairperson of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) expressed thanks for the relationships developed with the LWF, while at the same time lamenting the directions taken on matters relating to sexuality by some of the Federation’s member churches.

Addressing the Assembly, ILC President Rev. Gerald Kieschnick, who is also president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) in the United States, said he feared that “many of the sacred scriptural truths

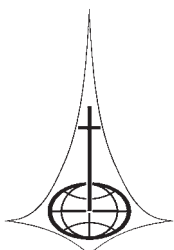
which precipitated the Reformation are in danger of being lost.”

Kieschnick said that challenges to Christian truth have “first been tolerated, then accepted, and now affirmed.” Christians today, he added, have no “general consensus of broad concurrence, not to mention complete agreement on what constitutes marriage in the eyes of God, or what is acceptable or non-acceptable sexual behavior.”

The ILC president was referring to on-going controversies in Lutheranism

and other denominations over whether to bless same sex unions or allow non-celibate homosexuals to serve as pastors and other church workers.

The ILC, a fellowship of confessional Lutheran church bodies around the world, adopted a statement last year which regards “homosexuality as a violation of the will of God,” said Kieschnick. Some of the 34 churches that are in the ILC have associate membership in the LWF. Some LWF member churches have taken steps to endorse



same sex unions and allow people who are gay and lesbian and in committed relationships to serve as pastors.

“I share these words with this Assembly neither to stand in judgment, nor ignoring the logs in my own eye,” he said, “but with a heavy heart.” Kieschnick said that such controversies can lead to “significant internal strife, serious spiritual conflict and even organic schism.”

Despite his concern that Reformation principles and biblical truth were in danger in some LWF churches, Kieschnick referred to LWF Presi-



*ILC President Rev. Gerald Kieschnick*  
© LWF/Erick Coll

dent Mark Hanson as “my brother in Christ” and expressed gratitude for his friendship. “While we do not agree on numerous matters of faith and life,” he said, “I have genuinely appreciated your fraternal collegiality and gentle spirit and pray God’s blessings on your future endeavors.”

This was the last time for Kieschnick to address the LWF Assembly as president of the 2.4-million member LCMS. Rev. Matthew C. Harrison was elected the 13<sup>th</sup> president, when the church met in convention in July.

### Pentecostals Recognize Themselves as “Children of the Reformation”

“This is the beauty of the worldwide Body of Christ, that we have been given different gifts,” said Dr Jean-Daniel Plüss, co-chairperson of the Lutheran-Pentecostal Study Group. Bringing greetings to the LWF global gathering on behalf of the Pentecostal churches, he said that “we can be good stewards, learn from one another and encourage one another.”

This year the publication, *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*, was published. It documents the progress achieved so far by the Lutheran-Pentecostal Study Group and makes the case for why it is desirable that a formal dialogue between Lutherans and Pentecostals be established by the LWF. For Pentecostals, too, “there is the wish



*Dr Jean-Daniel Plüss, co-chairperson of the Lutheran-Pentecostal Study Group* © LWF/Erick Coll

to engage in further discussions with Lutherans, as we recognize ourselves as children of the Reformation,” said Plüss.

It was in the 1990s that the LWF first expressed a desire for dialogue with “classical Pentecostals.” “The Lutherans believed that such dialogue would help them to better relate to charismatic believers among their own ranks,” said Plüss. The first meeting took place in 2004 and since then, through ongoing discussions, “bonds of trust” have been established. Within this context, “burning issues”, for example, the problem of proselytism were addressed.

The power of the Holy Spirit will transform us, he said. “This power wants to transform us; this power reunites families and brings people together in the bond of love ... And one day, the power of God will bring us together and make us one in Christ.”

### World Communion of Reformed Churches Thanks LWF for “Prayer and Accompaniment”

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has set an example of the self-understanding of communion, said Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi to the LWF Eleventh Assembly. Speaking on behalf of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Nyomi said, “We thank you for praying along with us and accompanying us on our journey.”

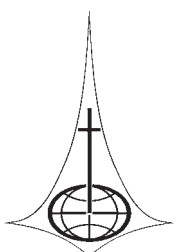
He was referring to the formation of WCRC following the merger in June this year of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed



*WCRC General Secretary Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi*  
© LWF/Erick Coll

Ecumenical Council, bringing together 80 million Reformed Christians worldwide. He expressed gratitude for the participation of an LWF delegation in the organization’s Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids, USA, adding the WCRC felt “encouraged and strengthened” by the LWF’s presence.

Nyomi affirmed a feeling of closeness between the WCRC and the LWF and a commitment, “to continue to see ways of deepening the relationship” between the two global organizations.



## “It Is Our Daily Bread, Not My Daily Bread”

“Give Us Today Our Daily Bread’ is about transforming the values that are holding together the global political, economic and social order ... which is selfish,” said the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) General Secretary Rev. Nicta Lubaale, in his greeting to LWF Assembly.

Lubaale said it was his prayer that churches “continue to work together to engage and transform” such an order. “It is our daily bread, not my daily bread, that we should aspire to and work for,” he added.

The petition of the Lord’s Prayer goes beyond “charity, compassion and relief efforts,” said Lubaale. “All



*OAIC General Secretary Rev. Nicta M. Lubaale  
© LWF/J. Latva-Hakuni*

these are acceptable to God but they

do not replace what the Scriptures demand of us and every system in place,” that is the prophetic imperative for “justice for all.”

Regarding the action taken earlier by the Assembly asking forgiveness from the Mennonites for past persecutions, Lubaale congratulated the Assembly for the “humility you have exhibited in the process of dealing with a difficult past.”

“Your courage to repent publicly has not only started a process of healing between the Lutherans and the Mennonites but also in the whole body of Christ,” added Lubaale.

## Adventist Leader Praises LWF for “Your Honesty and Sincerity”

A representative of the nearly 30 million Seventh-day Adventists worldwide congratulated the LWF for its courage in dealing with past transgressions against Anabaptists.

“As Adventists, we have our roots in the Anabaptist movement, and we appreciate very much your honesty and sincerity,” said John Graz, director of the Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, which has members in 205 countries.

Greeting the Assembly, Graz said Adventists have always seen



*Dr. John Graz. Photo courtesy of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists*

themselves as part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation and that Martin Luther

“has a very special place in their vision of history and in their theology.”

He praised LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko as a great ambassador for Lutherans in his dealings with governments and international institutions, calling the Zimbabwe-born theologian “a friend of all, a mediator, and a voice of wisdom, faith, peace and reconciliation.”

Graz also asked for God’s blessing upon the newly elected LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge.

## LWF of “Great Significance” for Germany

Since its foundation the LWF has been of “great significance” for Germany, Bishop Dr. Johannes Friedrich (Munich) chairperson of the LWF German National Committee (GNC) told the Eleventh Assembly. Thanks to LWF assistance after World War II, people experienced not just material but also spiritual support, he noted.

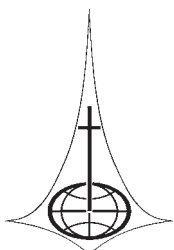
“To this day we are grateful that through the LWF we can be part of the world-embracing communion of Lutheran churches, which enriches



*VELKD Presiding Bishop Dr. Johannes Friedrich  
© LWF/Erick Coll*

our theological and, especially, ecumenical work,” he said in his greeting to the global Lutheran gathering.

Friedrich, who is also Presiding Bishop of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD), pointed out that the Assembly was “an important step forward” in preparations for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. The LWF Wittenberg Center in Germany had been founded together with the LWF, he said. It held regular seminars on the theology of



Martin Luther, and invited participation from all LWF regions.

Furthermore, a “Luther Garden” had been designed in Wittenberg—a park where churches from all over the world could plant a tree at the place of the 1517 Reformation. Churches are also requested to plant a tree at

a central place in their home area, in order to document the churches’ worldwide spread and ecumenical fellowship.

“The German National Committee has resolved to celebrate the year 2017 in a spirit of universality and ecumenism—as an event of sig-

nificance extending far beyond Germany and far beyond Lutheranism,” emphasized the GNC chairperson. “We intend to celebrate the fact that God loves us and God’s church, and constantly gives us the courage to change.”

## Importance of Witnessing and Service Together

“The preaching of the churches gains in credibility in the world when they are at one in their witness to the gospel. The gospel liberates and binds together the churches to render common service.” It was with this quotation from the 1973 Leuenberg Agreement that Bishop Dr Ulrich Fischer, executive committee chairperson of the Union of Evangelical Churches (UEK) in the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), began his greeting to the LWF Eleventh Assembly.

Fischer also brought greetings from the EKD Council chairperson Präses Nikolaus Schneider. The quotation from the Leuenberg Agreement had a direct connection with the theme of the Assembly “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.” Fischer went on to state: “Our mission to witness together to the gospel includes



*UEK Executive Committee chairperson Bishop Dr Ulrich Fischer © LWF/Erick Coll*

the fact that, in the fellowship of Christian churches, we ask God credibly for daily bread and take practical steps so that all people may receive what they need every day.”

The Leuenberg Agreement constitutes a firm theological basis for

the EKD with its Lutheran, United and Reformed member churches, he said. Since 2006 the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) and the UEK have been bound together even more intensively through agreements with the EKD “in order to achieve as much oneness of all member churches as possible, strengthen the unity of our witness, enable a distinctive Protestant presence in society and the general public, and deepen intra-Protestant ecumenism.”

In view of the 2017 Reformation commemorations, Fischer said the understanding of ecumenism “in reconciled diversity” developed in the Leuenberg Agreement could point beyond itself. “The point is to discover the wealth and beauty of the church in all its diversity as God’s work,” he added.

## Lutherans Praised for Resolutions on Justice

The General Secretary of the World Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) Ms Nyaradzayi Gumbonzwanda, congratulated the LWF Eleventh Assembly for resolutions on gender justice, human trafficking and the rights of Dalits.

In her greeting to the Assembly, Gumbonzwanda urged delegates to keep in mind that “as women and men, created in God’s image, both together are called to be God’s instruments of peace and justice for all creation.”

The YWCA general secretary reminded the Assembly that women and girls were often the most vulnerable in the face of conflict, war, catas-

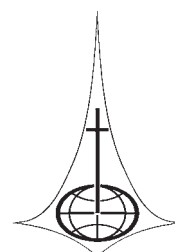


*World YWCA General Secretary Nyaradzayi Gumbonzwanda © LWF/J. Latva-Hakuni*

trophes, economic instability and the degradation of the environment.

Gumbonzwanda stated, “sexism is a sin and it has to be openly declared” and expressed her hope that the LWF would be a prophetic actor in the struggle against gender inequality. “May your voice expose clearly the injustices that will need to be overcome in church and society, trusting that God’s love empowers us to deal with even the most difficult and uncomfortable issues.”

She noted that equal access to education, leadership and decision-making for girls and boys, women and men, would ensure more inclusive and just societies, according to God’s will.



## FEATURE: “Barefoot Engineers” Bring Light to Remote Villages

### DWS Mauritania Trains Women in Solar Technology Skills

STUTTGART, Germany/GENEVA, 2 August 2010 (LWI) – Exploring the exhibition space in the Liederhalle’s Beethoven Foyer was an Assembly highlight for many participants.

The exhibits showcased diaconal programs run by LWF member churches from Cambodia to Cameroon to Colombia, and community-based initiatives by the Department for World Service (DWS).

Tilonia, India, for a six-month training course in 2008. They included Fatimetou Aleyoute from Mufth-El-Kheir; Salka Meissara from PK 48 El-Jesira; and Aichietou Mkhailig and Bowba Brahim from El Garva. All of them came from poor communities and were illiterate; and none of them had travelled abroad before.

Yet within weeks of returning to Mauritania they had managed to

set up a solar electricity system for the three small villages of about 50 households each.

#### Community Support

They did not work alone. Each of the communities had elected a local committee, agreed on a monthly amount to be paid to maintain the system, opened a bank account and built a small workshop for the engineer. In return community members received one 37 watt solar panel, one 12 volt battery, one charger, two nine watt lamps and one solar lantern.

Meissara sums up the various advantages of the solar project. “We now have day and night lighting that enables us to manage time effectively in view of home work for school-going children; and the community’s chores in the evening and at night. The accessibility to mobile telephone chargers facilitates not only contacts by telephone but consequently also reduces the amount of money and time that would be spent on road transportation.”

Many other villages have expressed interest in this pilot project.



*Bowba Mint Brahim, representing the Mauritanian solar engineers at the Stuttgart Assembly.*  
© LWF/J. Larva-Hakuni

Two women from Mauritania displayed the solar technology skills acquired by fellow women through a project run by the DWS country program there.

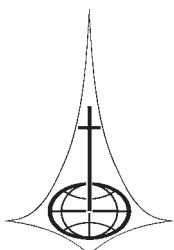
Theirs was a story about four women from three desert villages in the Trarza region of southwestern Mauritania, who have helped to bring a new way of life to their communities after training as solar engineers.

Today, women in remote villages can cook on improved stoves by solar lamp light; children are able to do homework in the evenings; lighting bills are more affordable; and women hold night meetings in good light.

Through the project supported by DWS Mauritania, the women were sent to the Barefoot College in



*After a six-month training in India, women solar engineers from Mauritania assemble a solar panel system.*  
© LWF/DWS Mauritania



## FEATURE: The Lutheran World Federation Listens to Youth

### Stewards Lend a Helping Hand at the LWF Eleventh Assembly

STUTT GART, Germany/GENEVA, 2 August 2010 (LWI) – For Dénes Horváth-Hegyí, 25, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary, it is both positive and significant that “the youth are also listened to at The Lutheran World Federation.”

Horváth-Hegyí was a participant in the LWF Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, from 20 to 27 July 2010. He explained that it could not be taken for granted that older people listened to younger people, at least not in his country and church.

A student of French literature and linguistics, Horváth-Hegyí served as a steward at the Assembly, providing organizational support, while also playing an active musical and artistic role during Assembly worship services.

Without stewards, the Assembly would not have photocopies of documents, and delegates would not have the headsets they need to follow the proceedings in the language of their choice. Stewards are responsible for much of the logistical support at the Assembly. And their work, running around and getting things done, continues long after the last delegates have left the plenary sessions.

#### Two-Year Preparation

A total of 34 stewards from all over the world worked in Stuttgart. They undergo a nearly two-year preparation process, explained Rev. Roger Schmidt, Geneva-based LWF Youth secretary. The young men and women received training in their home churches to carry out projects in their own parishes, for example, initiating campaigns against HIV and AIDS or drugs, engaging in projects related to climate change, or pursuing missionary work.

The steward training program was created as a means of involving young people and future church lead-



*Steward Sergio Eloy Rios Carrillo from the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope making music during the Assembly's closing eucharistic service in Stuttgart's Stifskirche. © LWF/Luis E. Ramirez*

ers from LWF member churches in the work of the communion.

Sergio Eloy Rios Carrillo of The Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope actually only wanted to learn to play a musical instrument when he first contacted his local Lutheran congregation, but he soon became very active in the church. Rios Carrillo learned to play guitar and drums and joined the church choir. And now at the age of 26 and with a recently earned degree in sociology, he works as an assistant in his church's office for diakonia and development. His work has focused in particular on HIV and AIDS, which, as he explained, “is chiefly a matter of education because the disease is often a taboo topic.”

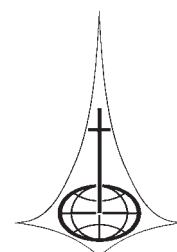
Rita Kabanyana, 22, represents a younger LWF member church, the Lutheran Church of Rwanda. The church was founded in 2002 when Rwandan refugees returned to their

country from Tanzania, Kabanyana explained. The church now has approximately 40,000 members. Kabanyana has known since 2008 that she would be present in Stuttgart and took part in the LWF training program in Nairobi, Kenya that year.

#### Long-Term Projects

One of her church's initiatives teaches unemployed women how to sew and provides them with sewing machines. Part of the income from the sale of the clothes is later returned to the church. Kabanyana explained that at both the LWF Pre-Assembly Youth Conference in Dresden, Germany, and the Stuttgart Assembly, she received a great number of new ideas for more long-term and precisely planned projects.

Richard Effiong Eyo, a 27-year-old computer specialist, represented



the Lutheran Church of Nigeria in the LWF Youth program. For 12 years, Eyo has been responsible for the youth work in his church district, Ekpene Ukim, and was co-founder of a Protestant kindergarten and an adjacent primary school, currently

attended by 250 children between one and nine years of age. He is also the vice president of his church's youth organization and is in charge of public relations and the youth Bible studies provided during his church's worship services.

Eyo's work also touches on HIV and AIDS. He explained that there was a lack of awareness about the illness in his country, as well as a lack of information; in his view, this and poverty contributed most to the spread of HIV and AIDS.

## FEATURE: Latin American Handicrafts Enhance Assembly Life

### Decorated Gourds Bring Symbolism to Daily Worship

**STUTTGART, Germany/GENEVA, 2 August 2010**—Decorated gourds brought natural beauty and Latin American culture to the daily worship celebrations at the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Eleventh Assembly.

These utensils—very popular in Brazil—are used by indigenous peoples in religious rituals and in everyday life, said Paula Galuppo, an artisan from the town of Belém, in northern Brazil.

For the mestizo population of mixed European and American Indian ancestry, the gourds' function is primarily practical: to store tapioca and, similarly to indigenous peoples, to bail water out of canoes. In some urban communities, they are used to serve *tacacá* (soup), *mingau* (a kind of porridge), juice made from the berries of the açai palm and strong alcoholic beverages, Galuppo added.

Percussion enthusiasts use the gourds to make instruments such as the *calimba*, the *maraca* and the *birimbao*, just to name a few.

The decoration technique is called “cumatê,” a word probably of Tupí origin. The entire process takes around 30 days until the utensil is ready for use. Generally, the pieces are adorned with abstract decorative figures.



Hand-decorated gourds from Belém in northern Brazil are used in worship during the Assembly.  
© LWF/Ratna Leak

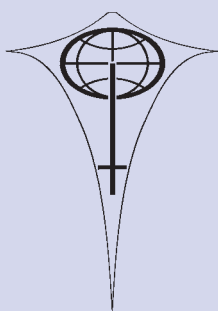
“Decoration is done by hand. People say that for the paint to adhere to the gourd, it must be applied with a feather. Ninety percent of those who paint the gourds with *cumatê* are women and most of them are elderly,” Galuppo explained.

Rev. Cibele Kuss of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, which serves the Belém community in the State of Pará, felt that the opportunity to share this facet of Brazilian culture in the daily

worship times was enriching for all Assembly participants.

“Another opportunity was the worship service and Bible study organized by the Latin America and the Caribbean region at which the gourds were used to distribute the eucharistic bread,” Kuss said.

“The objects we used were made thanks to a graphic technique known as ‘marajuara’; when empty, they symbolized hunger and, when full, sharing,” she said.



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