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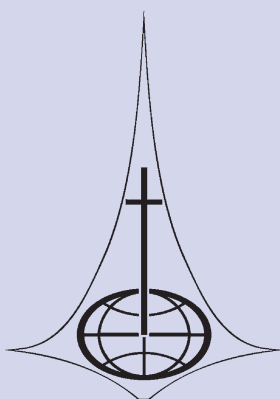
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Mahadu Biriye beams at this writer from across the desk, her headscarf artfully tied around her head. Warm and friendly, she talks about the program she runs for women in the refugee camps in and around Dadaab...



"LWF Together" Helps Transform Reality for Brazilian Group



Members of the Sapiranga youth group, Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, enjoy freshly squeezed orange juice made from home-grown fruit. © Elemar Kleber

Going Green for a Fairer, More Inclusive Economic System

SAPIRANGA, Brazil/GENEVA, (LWI) – Every two weeks for the past six months a dozen young people gathered in the northern Brazil community of Sapiranga to pray, study the Bible, discuss environmental issues and make plans to work for ecological justice.

They were not alone.

From May 2011 until the end of October 2011 groups of Lutheran young people around the globe have been sharing their faith, praying and working on environmental issues through the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) program, "LWF together – the Earth needs you."

"LWF together," a new and innovative experimental program that utilised the Internet, also put young people in touch with youth in other parts of the world, and helped them to work together on important environmental issues.

More than 900 youth in 100 youth groups have taken part in the program. They represent 47 different LWF member churches throughout the seven LWF regions. "LWF together" is coordinated by the LWF youth secretary, Rev. Roger Schmidt, at the Department for Mission and Development.

Using the Internet, local Lutheran groups of young people aged 15 to 30 have teamed up with two other groups on different continents. They have read relevant Bible passages together and developed an understanding of God's creation and humanity's responsibility toward it.

The Sapiranga group, which was part of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, was matched with

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Horn of Africa Appeal to the Lutheran Communion

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge made an urgent appeal for prayer and financial support from the Lutheran communion to help deal with the impact of the current drought in the Horn of Africa.

In a letter to LWF member churches and national committees following an LWF visit in early August, Junge said the world was facing a crisis in which more than 12 million lives in the region were at risk due to drought, said to be the worst in 60 years, and conflict.

His 11 August letter called on Lutherans worldwide to pray for refugees and displaced persons in the Horn of Africa, as well as those seeking to help them, including the staff of government, international and non-governmental organizations.

He called for financial support for LWF’s work among refugees in the region and urged members to appeal to their governments to respond to the United Nations appeal for the Horn of Africa, which had a USD1.3 billion shortfall.

He expressed appreciation for the dedication of the 120 LWF staff at the Dadaab camps, mainly young Kenyans, many

of them women. “Each person arriving at the camp was being met with dignity and treated as an equal,” Junge noted.

He urged prayers for the LWF member churches in the region, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

“The people and churches of host countries, such as Kenya and Ethiopia, need our solidarity and support not only so they can sustain their generous welcome to refugees, but also so they can sustain their own livelihoods. Churches are active in many respects already, for instance by drilling water holes, organizing schools for children and supporting farming projects.”

The general secretary urged long-term solutions, cautioning that the Horn of Africa crisis will not end quickly and that the immediate disaster response will not be enough. The effects of the drought will be ongoing and will spread, Junge added. “After the drought is over we have to prepare for mid-term and longer-term solutions for rehabilitation, climate change adaptation, and disaster preparedness.”

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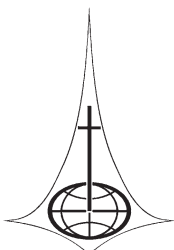
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Norwegian Lutheran Bishops Reiterate Gratitude to Global Church for Solidarity

Theme of Reaching Out to the Neighbor in Meetings with LWF Staff

GENEVA (LWI) – During a visit to the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, members of the Church of Norway Bishops' Conference reiterated appreciation for the messages of solidarity, prayers and other forms of support received from churches throughout the world following the 22 July bomb attack in Oslo and killings at Utøya Island.

"We are filled with sorrow. We are mourning in a way never experienced before. But in the midst of hopelessness, crying and tears, we've seen and still see hope, faith and love standing up against evil, hate and destruction," [Lutheran] Church of Norway Presiding Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien said, when she preached at the Ecumenical Center chapel on 17 August during a Morning Prayer of Remembrance and Peace.

Reflecting on the Bible reading (1 Cor 13), she emphasized the message that love abides, saying that in the days following the tragic events, people reached out in a new way to comfort each other and the neighbor. She spoke of the experience of "love that makes, not least, the young people stand up for values and the opposite of the brutal killings."

Byfuglien, vice president of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for the Nordic region, led a delegation of 12 Church of Norway bishops, and three general secretaries on the visit that included meetings with leadership and staff from the LWF, ACT Alliance and World Council of Churches.

Others who shared their impressions included Bishop Laila Riksaasen Dahl, Tunsberg diocese. She noted that most of the funerals for the 77 victims had taken place by last week – a large majority of them conducted by the Church of Norway. The church's role is to continue accompanying the bereaved, survivors and other affected persons, especially the youth.

The task of the church "is to give faith for the future, belief in victory of good over evil, because God is



Delegation of Church of Norway bishops visiting the LWF Secretariat © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

stronger than evil," said Dahl. "We must work for an even more inclusive society with open debate," she added.

New Language

Bishop Erling Pettersen, Stavanger diocese, narrating what he learned from a 17-year old survivor, said the church had received the gift of a new language of "fellowship, friendship, kindness, unity and love." He pointed out that not once "did we hear the language of hate or revenge."

General Secretary Berit Hagen Agøy, Council of Ecumenical Affairs, spoke about the implications for relations between Christians and Muslims in Norway, who have been working together since 1993. Many people at first assumed the attacks were acts of Muslim terrorism, she said. Yet despite the harassment and even death threats experienced by Muslims then, it was Muslim leaders "who stood up and said that the act of the terrorist has nothing to do with Christianity. They taught us not to generalize but to regard everyone as an individual," she said.

Agøy pointed out that some of the meetings to coordinate support to

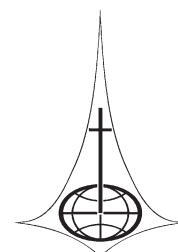
those affected were held in mosques. The tragedy was "shared grief across religious borders," she added.

LWF Gratitude and Prayers

The reconciliation theme was continued in meetings with LWF leadership and other staff. In his welcome, Deputy General Secretary Rev. Dr Chandran Paul Martin reiterated LWF's continued prayers with the people, church and other faith communities in Norway. He emphasized the need to deal with ideologies that inspire rightwing actions. Citing his own country India, he expressed disappointment that Hindu right wing ideas are cited in the manifesto of Anders Behring Breivik, who has admitted to the killings in Norway.

Martin thanked the Norwegian church for its continued support to LWF's work at the secretariat and in country and regional programs.

Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, LWF study secretary for Lutheran Theology and Practice at the Department for Theology and Studies, explained the self understanding of the LWF as a Lutheran body that works in a global



context both ecumenically and with people of other faiths. He pointed out that the experience of being together in communion from different Lutheran traditions can serve as an important bridge in dealing with difficult issues including ethical ones.

LWF assistant general secretary for Ecumenical Affairs Dr Kathryn Johnson, reflected on the topic “fully the church and not the whole church,” when she explained LWF’s ecumenical engagement in international bilateral and multilateral dialogues, and the implications for the grassroots – at congregational levels.

On solidarity after the 22 July events, Johnson said, “you were fully the church responding to the needs of that moment, but you would have been at the same time incomplete without the prayers and support of the whole church.” Ecumenical

dialogue work is also about seeking reconciliation, healing and celebration, she added.

Diakonia and Holistic Mission

Rev. Dr Eva Sibylle Vogel-Mfato, area secretary for Europe at the Department for Mission and Development, noted that the church’s role in the recent events in Norway emphasized what holistic mission is about – that proclamation and diakonia (serving) are not separate but integral.

“We are all coming to grips with what it means to be church in a globalized world and changing society,” said Vogel-Mfato. She expressed her hope that in this shocking situation, something new would grow “that gives us the courage to address from our faith perspectives some of the

current issues of growing multicultural neighborhoods and of becoming open and inclusive societies.”

Explaining LWF’s response to the drought and refugee crisis in the Horn of Africa, Rev. Eberhard Hitzler, Department for World Service (DWS) director, highlighted the diaconal engagement of LWF staff from different faith traditions working at the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, and in many of the 30 countries where World Service is operational.

“Today, there is a growing fear between cultures; we need to focus on reconciliation by reaching out and experiencing the other,” noted Hitzler. He underlined DWS collaboration with LWF member churches in order to respond together in a professional and compassionate way.

18 August 2011

Ecumenical Study Project Presented at World Methodist Conference Meeting

Biblical Scholars Find Wide Agreement on Message of Justification

DURBAN, South Africa/GENEVA (LWI) – The fulfillment of a promise made at the signing of the historic Lutheran-Roman Catholic ecumenical agreement 12 years ago was celebrated

by representatives of four Christian traditions at a global conference in South Africa.

When The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Pontifical

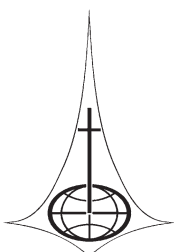
Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) in 1999, they committed themselves to “continued and deepened study of the biblical foundations of the doctrine of justification.” At the 4-8 August World Methodist Conference in Durban, Rev. Dr Theodor Dieter, representing the LWF, presented to the World Methodist Council (WMC) General Secretary Rev. Dr George H. Freeman a report titled *The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification*.

The report is the result of a collaborative study process begun in 2008 by a task force of Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed and Roman Catholic biblical scholars and systematic theologians appointed by the LWF, WMC, World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the PCPCU.

“What we have experienced was not only an exchange of ideas but an



Prof. Theodor Dieter (right), director of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, presents to WMC General Secretary Rev. Dr George H. Freeman, a copy of the report on “The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification” in Durban, South Africa. © World Methodist Council/Ken Howle



exchange of gifts,” said Prof. Dieter, director of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France. He noted that the significance of the promise for deepened study had grown since both Methodist and Reformed participants also were involved in the project.

Inclusion of Reformed members was an obvious expansion, since they had participated in theological debates about justification from the beginning. Methodists were included because they affirmed the JDDJ at the 2006 WMC Conference in Seoul, South Korea.

As Dieter said of the Methodists’ role, “It demonstrates that what began as an agreement between two partners earlier in conflict with each other can be expanded to other partners who had not been part of the initial dispute – and then these new partners can find their own significant contributions to the future relations among the churches.”

Dieter explained that in order to respond to criticisms made of the biblical sections of the JDDJ, the task force was composed of both Old

and New Testament scholars from the four church families, as well as systematic theologians. The group was asked to look at themes related to justification in the entire Bible, not only in the New Testament; in the entire New Testament, not only in the Pauline letters, and at contemporary research on Paul, he added.

Dr Walter Klaiber, former bishop of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Germany, who chaired the group, said that the scholars hoped the study document “will help to deepen our common understanding of the biblical message of justification and thereby to foster our joint efforts to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the people of our time.”

The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification includes chapters on the relations between theological teachings and biblical interpretations – both historical and contemporary. It seeks to take full account of the diversity of Scripture and yet also to find unifying perspectives. It explains that the theology of justification offers “the deepest insight into the human condition

before God” and can provide a basis for ecumenically significant theology of mission and of *koinonia* (church communion).

In the report’s foreword, Klaiber says he expects the study document to stimulate further discussion, “both through the consensus it presents but also through the remnants of some tensions it does not seek to conceal.”

The publication is also meant for a wider audience beyond biblical scholars and theologians, as jointly underlined in its introduction by the LWF and WCRC General Secretaries Rev. Martin Junge and Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, WMC’s Freeman and PCPCU Secretary Bishop Dr Brian Farrell. The task force has “provided here a text which is accessible to many attentive readers who care about Christian confession of God’s grace and about the unity of the Church,” they state.

Information on copies of *The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine of Justification*

22 August 2011

Regional Lutheran Leaders Call for Measures to Mitigate Recurring Drought

Ethiopian Church President Says Scope of Impact Has Increased

NAIROBI, Kenya /GENEVA (LWI) – The chairperson of a sub-regional Lutheran body called on churches in the Horn of Africa to seek together long-term solutions to the recurrent drought there that is causing serious food shortages, affecting more than 12 million people.

“We need to put in place long-term solutions to the problem and also approach our own governments to scale up their intervention... so that our people are able to eat and have shelter,” Rev. Dr Wakseyoum Idosa, president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* following an executive committee meeting of the Lutheran Communion in Central and Eastern Africa (LUCCEA).

Relief agencies have heightened their response there due to the current drought crisis, being described as the worst in the region in the last 60 years. Southern Somalia, where the United Nations declared famine in July, is the epicenter, with nearly 2.9 million people facing malnutrition, and an estimated 400,000 children at the risk of starvation.

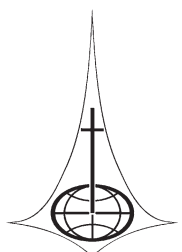
Drought’s Impact Widening

More than 3.2 million people in Kenya and 4.8 million in Ethiopia are hit by the famine and drought. Many more are also affected in Djibouti, northern Tanzania, Uganda and South Sudan.

Most attention has been focused on northern Kenya and the Dadaab refugee complex, Somalia and south-eastern Ethiopia, but Idosa noted the drought’s scope had widened, affecting other pastoralist areas such as Kajiado in southern Kenya and Turkana in the northwest.

“We have the same problem in the southern parts of Ethiopia where refugees [Somali] are coming in,” noted the EECMY leader.

“For me, seeing children and women who are malnourished lining up to get something to eat and drink at the camp was really horrible,” remarked Idosa, recalling an early August visit to LWF-managed refugee camps in the Dadaab complex, as a member of a delegation led by The





EECMY President Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idosa chairs the August 2011 LUCCEA executive committee meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. On his right is Rev. Victor Mwanangela of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo, diocese of Kivu-Manyema. © LWF/Fredrick Nzwili

Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge.

“When we talked to the newly arriving refugees, they told us how they walked for 21 or 24 days in search of something to eat. The women were carrying five or three children. That is something which is very horrible,” said Idosa, who is also chairperson of LUCCEA, and a member of the LWF Council.

LUCCEA is one of the three LWF sub-regional bodies in Africa. It brings together eight Lutheran churches, including non-LWF members in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda and Tanzania.

Aid Appeals Launched

Through the global church emergency and development body ACT Alliance, of which the LWF is a founding member, an appeal was launched on 12 August for USD 14.1 million targeting nearly 61,000 households in Kenya, which is facing four years of successive drought. More than USD 4.2 million has been received or pledged for the appeal, which covers the period August 2011 – July 2012. The alliance members are working to provide affected households with relief food, drought resistant crop varieties, water and other life-supporting services including restocking of herds for pastoralists.

A USD 9.5 million appeal for Ethiopia will support those in need including approximately 120,000 refugees from Somalia, who have crossed the border to Ethiopia. The refugees are reportedly living in overcrowded and under-resourced refugee camps in the Dollo Ado area in the southeast.

The EECMY and the LWF Department for World Service country program are among the ACT implementing members in Ethiopia.

For Somalia, a USD 10.2 million appeal seeks to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to newly displaced persons in Mogadishu and Lower Shabelle, those affected by drought in the Gedo region, refugees in the Dadaab camps in Kenya and host communities in both countries.

Lifestyle Links

At the LUCCEA meeting, Rev. Dr. Endor Modeste Rakoto, president of the Malagasy Lutheran Church, argued that human activities and lifestyles had led to climate change which is causing the drought.

“We are using things that are changing global temperatures making the rain seasons shorter, dry seasons longer and draining our water. This is something people have to look into,” Rakoto told *LWI*.

“God makes things good for human beings, but human beings are

trying to destroy each other and make progress at the expense of the lives of others. I think that is what is causing the climatic change,” he said.

Churches Act

At the same time, LUCCEA committee members committed to encourage their churches to speak more strongly about climate change and come up with ways of reducing drought within the region.

“We are committed to working with organizations assisting in the affected areas. We are also committed to look into long-term ways and plan how to reduce hunger and drought in this region,” the committee members said at the meeting’s conclusion.

Some of the LUCCEA members are already promoting measures against drought such as rain water harvesting and tree planting, and encouraging irrigation-fed agriculture.

Meanwhile, representatives from LWF member churches in Africa attending a 7-13 August consultation in Nairobi on human resources development and capacity building raised USD 350 as a contribution to the local churches and communities in Kenya.

“They encouraged those people who could fast to skip a meal so that the money will be put in a contribution for the communities affected by the drought,” said Rev. Dr. Elieshi Mungure, LWF area secretary for Africa.

(By Nairobi-based LWI correspondent Fredrick Nzwili)

Support the LWF response:

[www.lutheranworld.org/
lwf/index.php/
donate-somali-refugee-crisis.html](http://www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/donate-somali-refugee-crisis.html)

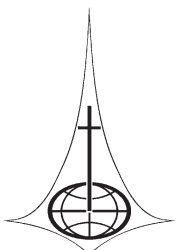
Read more:

[www.lutheranworld.org/
lwf/index.php/tag/
somali-refugee-crisis](http://www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/tag/somali-refugee-crisis)

Further updates available at:

[http://lwfworldservice.
wordpress.com](http://lwfworldservice.wordpress.com)

25 August 2011



LWF Urges UN Human Rights Presence in Honduras

Alarming Violence Could Spread and Affect Other Countries

GENEVA (LWI) – Increasing violence and lawlessness in Honduras could soon spiral out of control, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) warned and called for the establishment of an Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights there “without delay.”

In a letter to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms Navanethem Pillay on 24 August, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge urged the High Commissioner “to take note of the alarming violence in Honduras that can easily become much worse and even affect other countries in the region.”

Citing examples, the general secretary pointed to the increasing violence recently, especially over land issues. On 15 August, the bodies of three women and two men were found in the northeastern region of Bajo Aguán, near a ranch peasants tried to take over after the landowner had withdrawn his offer to sell 4,000 hectares to landless farmers. On 21 August, the vice-president of the Unified Movement of Campesinos of the Aguán (MUCA) was murdered along with his wife in their home in Concepción.

Over the last two years, 35 peasants and security guards employed by the large landowners have been killed.

Impunity

“Currently, killings and other human rights abuses are being carried out with impunity. There are no satisfactory investigations. There are no independent international observers. The press are in fear of their lives; 12 journalists have been killed since the 2009 coup,” Junge noted.

He said it was particularly worrying that there was evidence of Colombian paramilitary collaboration

with landowners in Honduras. “The tension is growing ... and the fear of many civil society observers is for the situation to escalate into an internal armed conflict,” the LWF stated.

The LWF letter acknowledged that the facts at the root of the Bajo Aguán situation are “highly disputed,” with Honduran President Porfirio Lobos calling the peasants “drug traffickers that want to take control of land,” and the former President Manuel Zelaya alleging that paramilitaries have been contracted to assassinate peasant leaders in the area.



A child from a Unified Movement of Campesinos of the Aguán cooperative, whose land has been in dispute with palm oil companies since the 1990s. In 2010, 23 people, including two children, were killed during forced displacements. © LWF/DWS Central America/E. García

Churches Directly Affected

The LWF member church in the country, the Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras (ICLH), is also directly affected, and has urged sister churches around the world to pray for an end to the wave of violence that continues to plague the Central American country.

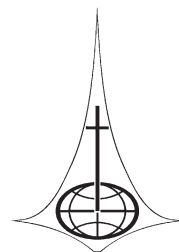
Hondurans suffer a “high level of violence and lawlessness,” as illustrated last Christmas when the

Lutheran congregation in the La Colonia La Unión community of San Pedro Sula was unable to celebrate Christmas services because of killings on the street where the church is located, Junge wrote.

The general secretary underlines that international scrutiny brought by the presence of the Office of the High Commissioner would help deter the violence, strengthen those in Honduras who are working for justice and draw attention to the plight of those being forced off disputed land.

In addition to ICLH’s work, the LWF Department for World Service regional program in Central America works with marginalized and vulnerable community members in Honduras in the area of leadership development, training for citizen participation and participation in community networks.

25 August 2011



LWF Address to ELCA Assembly Underlines Transforming Power of Service

General Secretary Junge Thanks ELCA for Contributions to Global Lutheran Communion

ORLANDO, Florida, USA/GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge has praised Lutherans in the United States for their contribution to the global church, noting the collaboration helps make the church whole.

tina Jackson-Skelton, the church’s Executive Director of Mission Advancement, who is LWF Chairperson of the Finance Committee.

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly, which represents members in 65 Synods and 10,000 congregations,

(UNHCR) camp at Dadaab, the largest in the world with a population of more than 400,000.

“There I saw how churches are responding to drought and hunger in their communities, thus expressing their holistic understanding of mission. Because Jesus did not make a dichotomy between body and soul, the church in mission is called to engage with human beings in precisely this attitude,” Junge said.

Commenting on the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran movement, Junge told the Assembly that the 2017 commemoration would be ecumenically accountable and self-critical.

“If we want to be true to the spirit of Lutheran Reformation, we can’t just remain ‘churches of the Reformation’ with our eyes on the past. Rather, together with others, we are ‘churches in an ongoing process of reform,’ therefore confidently looking into the future,” he said.

“To discern our next steps, we need the wisdom, engagement and support of the ELCA, and of all our member churches,” Junge emphasized. “Lutheran Reformation *has* a long history; but it *is* not history,” he added.

During the ELCA Assembly, delegates agreed to launch the ELCA Malaria Campaign, which promises to raise USD 15 million over four years and join African Lutheran churches in working towards a malaria-free future in 11 countries on the continent.

The Churchwide Assembly also adopted a social statement on genetics, “Genetics, Faith and Responsibility,” one of the first of its kind in North America. It agreed to a series of resolutions from an ELCA task group charged with recommending options for the future of the church that focus on its identity and its call to mission in a changing environment.

30 August 2011



LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge addresses delegates to the 2011 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. © ELCA

Addressing 1,000 delegates to the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) on 17 August at Orlando, Florida, Junge reminded the 4.5 million-member church it was in turn supported by the prayers of Lutherans worldwide.

“None of our communities alone can be all that the Church of Jesus Christ is meant to be. We are incomplete without unity with one another,” Junge said.

“We would not have the LWF without the leadership of American Lutherans. That was true at the beginning, in 1947, and it has remained an important aspect of who we are today,” the LWF general secretary added.

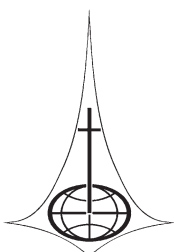
Junge said that the ELCA had generously shared its resources and leaders with the LWF, including Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson, the past LWF President, and Ms Chris-

is the church’s largest legislative authority. It met 15-19 August under the theme, “Freed in Christ to Serve.”

Commenting on the theme, Junge suggested that serving others meant being exposed to their pain. To enrich this service, Lutherans should collaborate ecumenically, across faith lines, and with civil society.

“If we act only on our own, we must ask if we are open enough to all the ways God is active in the world. It is our experience that diaconal work draws upon our best ecumenical advances and interfaith bridge-building, and this also strengthens ecumenical dialogues,” Junge said.

The LWF general secretary reflected on the theme “Freed in Christ to Serve” in the light of his recent visit to Kenya, where the LWF is responsible for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



“LWF Together” Helps Transform Reality for Brazilian Group

Continued from p. 1

youth in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea and participants from Church of Sweden.

“This group had a thirst to learn from every meeting,” said the Sapiroanga group leader, Raquel Kleber. “Besides the ‘LWF together’ Guidebook, each of us brought topics, news and information which enriched our meetings and made our encounters dynamic and interactive,” she noted.

Learning from City of Bikes

Two of the young people made presentations about Sweden and Papua New Guinea, providing information on the geography, economy, population and the Lutheran church. Then participants wrote to their counterparts in the other countries, asking about environmental policies and other issues.

Now that the program has ended they hope to produce a video outlining what has been discussed in the group and illustrating the environmental actions taken in the Sapiroanga.

“It’s amazing and comforting to get to know youth groups from different countries that share the same faith and go through similar challenges,” Kleber



The changing face of agriculture in southern Brazil: tending crops grown without pesticides. © CAPA

commented. “I believe this project is inspired by the word of God and that God is transforming our realities through this experience.”

Kleber believes that the church on its own cannot change society, but that it can have an impact if it works through education programs and government advocacy alongside other ecumenical institutions and civil society.

One topic the youth looked at was transportation. Sapiroanga, a city of 75,000 inhabitants, has 40,000 bicycles, and therefore has been held

up as an example of sustainable transportation and been dubbed the “City of Bikes.” Because of this the youth group was interested in finding out more about Minneapolis, the United States city described in the ‘LWF together’ materials as bike-friendly.

They found, for example, that their own bike system was not as organized as the one in Minneapolis. In Sapiroanga there are few bike trails or lanes; cyclists must ride alongside cars, which can be dangerous. Most people ride bikes because they can’t afford cars, and public transportation is poor.

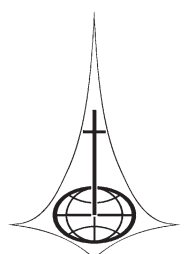
Kleber said that both Sapiroanga and Minneapolis offer good examples of how to get around in a sustainable way. However, while Minneapolis citizens have the choice to ride their bikes, many of Sapiroanga’s citizens don’t, she noted.

“Sustainability does mean making eco-friendly choices. But going green also calls for a fairer, more sociable and inclusive economic system that provides better conditions and equal opportunities so that people are free to choose to live sustainably,” Kleber concluded.



Bikes vie with cars for space on the road in Sapiroanga, Brazil. © Raquel Kleber

More information about LWF together at www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/tag/lwf-together



Reading the Bible Together to Strengthen Communion

LWF Launches Consultation Series as Part of 2017 Reformation Journey

GENEVA (LWI) – Lutheran theologians and leaders from around the world have launched a series of biblical consultations to promote common insights and further the unity of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as it approaches the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in 2017.

Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, LWF Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) study secretary for Lutheran Theology and Practice. DTS is organizing the consultation.

“We think that legitimate interpretation of Scriptures is that which happens in communities of

The LWF had long held biblical consultations to strengthen mutual understanding for a united witness in the world, but Johnson stated this aim was now more urgent.

“It is hoped that such an undertaking will not only strengthen the internal unity of the communion, but also sharpen a shared witness to the world through a relevant approach to the Bible that takes seriously its historical context, our Lutheran heritage and our various contexts as readers,” she remarked.

The LWF Strategy 2012-17 urges a strengthening of the communion based on its commitment to the Scriptures.

Mtata said that the LWF sought to deepen the LWF’s identity as a communion of churches, building unity through study, cooperation, discussion and common witness.

Participants come from various disciplines, including biblical, practical, ethical, systematic and feminist theology. Johnson remarked that the Gospel of John provided opportunities to address a wide range of theological issues, tradition, and relationships between churches in different contexts.

News from the Nairobi consultation is available on the LWF Web site:

www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/tag/DTSNairobi2011

Read more about the contemporary Lutheran hermeneutics consultation series: www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/themes/bible-and-2017

5 September 2011



Participants at the 2009 DTS global meeting “Theology in the Life of Lutheran Churches,” a forerunner of the newly launched consultation series on Lutheran understandings of the Bible © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsck

Thirty-five participants gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, 9-14 September for the first event on “Word of God in the Scriptures as Shared Space: Towards a Contemporary Hermeneutic for the Lutheran Communion.” The initial consultation focuses on the Gospel of John.

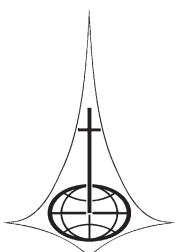
The events are aimed at reviving focus on the Bible as a book for the church and shaper of many world cultures, making it central to the 2017 celebrations. The consultation will produce resources for academia and congregations that reflect biblical understandings across the Lutheran communion.

“Exposing our reading before the loving scrutiny of others brings Christians closer together,” said

accountability,” Mtata commented. “By sharing the tools used in reading the Bible, benefiting from different reading contexts, such exchanges move everyone from their secure interpretative position to a new one.”

Dr Kathryn Johnson, DTS interim director, noted that the centrality of the Word of God had always been a cornerstone of the LWF communion.

“For Lutherans, this Word of God is encountered as new and alive every time it is preached and shared in the sacraments. Nevertheless, since Lutheran communities are scattered across the globe and exposed to diverse reading contexts, their interpretations of the Bible tend to be diverse,” Johnson said.



FEATURE: A Life Free from Violence – The Safe Haven in Dadaab

LWF-Run Program Helps Women Rebuild Their Lives

DADAAB, Kenya/GENEVA (LWI) – Mahadu Biriye beams at this writer from across the desk, her headscarf artfully tied around her head. Warm and friendly, she talks about the program she runs for women in the refugee camps in and around Dadaab.

Biriye is the matron of the women’s refuge or “Safe Haven” in Dadaab. She has a background in counseling and offers empathy and understanding to the women who find their way to the Safe Haven at Hagadera camp in Dadaab, northeastern Kenya.

The Haven can accommodate up to 120 people—women and children fleeing desperate situations—and at one time there were as many as 100 people there. “Mostly, they encounter problems with their male relatives,” says Biriye.

A group of about 20 rectangular buildings with blue roofs sits within a fenced compound on the outskirts of Ifo, the largest of five refugee camps in Dadaab, where The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) manages the complex for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Almost devoid of trees, the haven might seem desolate when you first arrive, but Biriye’s welcome and the happiness of the families who live there is evidence that the program



A Somali woman at the Dadaab camp disassembles her house and packs her belongings to move into an extension of the world’s largest refugee settlement. © Paul Jeffrey

is fulfilling its purpose. To the three families who currently live there, it is a welcome sanctuary.

The Safe Haven is run by the LWF, and women and children are referred there by any of the many humanitarian organizations working in Dadaab, including other implementing members of the global network of church bodies, ACT Alliance.

Although women and their families are only supposed to stay at the center for a maximum of three months, some of the families have been there for

up to three years. Sometimes, the problems that force women to seek out the Safe Haven are resolved and they can resume their lives in the community.

Statistics provided by the UNHCR put the total number of refugees in the Dadaab camps at 423,361 by 28 August, with Somalis representing more than 95 percent of the individuals from 12 African countries. Women make up 50.4 percent of this figure.

Rape, Early Marriages

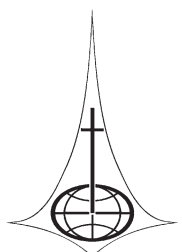
One woman in the center had been subjected to a brutal rape, but had sought refuge in the haven not to escape her attackers, but to escape the stigma that she experienced in the community. While she was in the refuge, her husband found a home in another part of Dadaab and she was planning to move back there with her children.

Girls often come to the safe haven to escape early marriage. Traditionally, in Somali culture, women are promised to their husbands when they are teenagers. Around the age of 15, teenage girls are engaged and their husbands pay a dowry to the girls’ families.

Biriye spoke of cases where Somali men living overseas had come to the



A woman sews handbags as part of a livelihoods program in the safe haven at the Ifo refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya. © Jonathan Ernst/LWR





Children at the entrance of a house at the safe haven in the Dadaab refugee camp. The center can accommodate as many as 100 people. ©Jonathan Ernst/LWR

camps in Kenya to find young Somali women to marry. She said that the price or dowry paid to the family of the bride could be as much as Ksh 50,000 (around USD 530). To a family that has lost everything, the price is enough for them to marry their daughters to people they don't know.

One resident in the Haven had sought refuge from her relatives at the age of 14 because they were pressuring her into an early marriage. She had been at the Safe Haven for almost three years and was in the process of seeking asylum in the United States.

The Safe Haven is not the only program aimed at improving the situation of Somali women in Dadaab. Social workers are employed at many loca-

tions within the camp and they help identify people who have been subjected to violence or abuse. Biriye also said that there had been a campaign to stop early marriage, with some success.

Counseling

A safe place to live is only part of the remedy to violence and abuse. The other part of the solution is finding a way out of the cycle of violence—a durable solution.

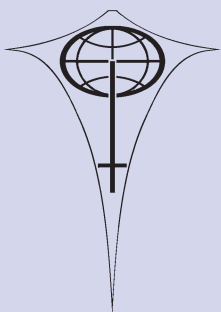
Counseling, literacy classes and an income-generation program are also run in the compound. The bags and bracelets produced by the women in these programs have become something of a fashion statement among workers in Dadaab.

In a shop operated by the UNHCR, the Safe Haven bags sell out almost as soon as they come into stock. Other non-governmental organizations place bulk orders with the women for items such as computer cases.

In a place like Dadaab, the problems that refugees face can often seem overwhelming. This is especially true of women, whose problems do not abate after they leave their home country. Programs like the Safe Haven offer a solution to some of the problems that Somali women experience—a lasting solution and a life free from violence.

(Written for LWI by Melany Markham in Dadaab, Kenya, with additional information from LWI

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