

# Lutheran World Information

1501

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LWF member church representatives and staff at the first meeting of the LWF study group on Lutheran engagement in public space, in Stuttgart, Germany. Photo: Dr Thilo Fitzner

## Global Study Process on Lutheran Engagement in Public Space Kicks Off

### Seeking Active Presence That Helps Overcome Polarization Locally and Globally

**STUTTGART, Germany/GENEVA (LWI)** – Theologians from all regions of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) will meet in Stuttgart, Germany, to kick off a two-year study process to develop a statement on Lutheran engagement in the public space within plural societies.

The group of seven theologians, each representing one of the seven LWF regions and different generations, will share perspectives from contexts in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin and North America, and hear about related LWF processes. The Protestant Academy Bad Boll [Evangelische Akademie Bad

Boll] is hosting the 29-31 January meeting organized by the LWF Department for Theology and Public Witness.

The study group members will reflect from a Lutheran perspective on how the public sphere is shaped by the presence or absence of religious life, and on principles that should guide relationships between faith communities and state or government. They will also look at how different communities of faith relate to one another in plural contexts and how their contributions help to overcome conflicts.



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

A Communion  
of Churches

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## News in Brief

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### LWF Condemns Disregard for Human Lives in Paris Killings

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has condemned the odious disregard for human life in the brutal killings of journalists at the French magazine Charlie Hebdo and police officers, saying claims for any religious justification for these attacks must be rejected in clear terms.

In a letter today to the LWF member churches in France, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge conveyed his heartfelt solidarity with the churches and offered condolences to the families and communities affected and the people of France in all their diversity.

“The sickening brutality of the killings with their odious disregard for human life is intolerable, not justifiable under any circumstances, and is to be rejected in the firmest possible terms,” Junge said of the 7 January attack in Paris, in which 10 journalists and two police officers were killed. His letter was addressed to Presidents Rev. Laurent Schlumberger of United

Protestant Church of France, Mr Christian Albecker of the Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine, and Rev. Dr Jean A. Ravalitera of the Malagasy Protestant Church in France.

“Do not be overcome by these attacks,” Junge wrote. He assured the French churches of the Lutheran communion’s prayers for strength and hope, and urged them to continue to be steadfast in their witness. He encouraged them to see this as a time “to be strengthened in [the church’s] commitment to be a vital and active actor” advocating for values that are deeply rooted in faith in order to continue holding together the diverse people that make up the country’s population.

He emphasized the need to resist the very intention behind these attacks—fragmentation, division, blanket stigmatization and the condoning of violence—and urged the churches to intensify cohesion, togetherness and solidarity.

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While many of the LWF member churches are engaged in national and regional dialogues and other initiatives in public life, this study process will articulate a Lutheran perspective in view of ecumenical and international debates on the public role of religion. The group, appointed by the LWF Meeting of Officers in 2014 and chaired by Church of Sweden Archbishop Dr Antje Jackelén, will develop a draft statement to be presented to the LWF Council in 2016.

Reflecting on the forthcoming meeting, Jackelén said it was important for the LWF to be engaged in this theological study process especially in view of its global vision of proclaiming

the gospel and “working together for a just peaceful and reconciled world.”

There are many local and global dimensions of proclamation and service which call for sensitivity to both ecumenical and interfaith issues, Jackelén noted. Citing the Swedish context, she said, “We have to figure out and practice to be faithful and vibrant as a Lutheran church at the crossroads of a growing secularization and increasing visibility of religion, as well as new and changing demands on our diaconal work.”

Jackelén expects the study process to articulate important theological insights that help Lutheran churches to have a deeper understanding about their contribution to God’s mission in the present times of “polarizations, fundamentalisms of various kinds and violent

ideologies.” The mission, she added, “is the same everywhere, and yet it looks different with regard to the contexts we are working in and the decisions different parts of the church have made.”

LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge emphasized the study group’s task of articulating insights from Lutheran theology on the genuine role of religion in the public sphere, especially in view of the current “heated debates” on this subject. In some places, “religious life is pushed to withdraw from public space, in other places extreme eruptions of violence with reference to religion trigger destructive dynamics,” he said.

“It is important to distinguish the religious and the political sphere in society as two different realms,” Junge added.

## Public Space Should Be a Just Place for All, Lutheran Theologians Agree

### LWF Study Group Outlines Framework for Two-Year Process

**STUTT GART, Germany/GENEVA (LWI)** – The group leading The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in understanding why and how and its member churches are engaged in the public space has outlined common goals envisaged for the study process.

The seven-person team of theologians representing all the LWF regions and staff from the Department for Theology and Public Witness (DTPW) held their first meeting at the Protestant Academy Bad Boll in Germany, 29-31 January. They affirmed that the public space needs to offer a just place for equal participation of all citizens. It is part of the Christian baptismal vocation to constructively contribute to and help create space that allows people to negotiate and engage in transformative actions that build justice and peace in society.

The theologians noted, however, that there are dynamics that distort public space, like manipulation, fragmentation or domination. Christians

and churches need to challenge and counter such practices.

In order to discern more clearly the role of churches and Christians in the public space, the study group discussed Lutheran dialectic distinctions such as the spiritual and worldly realm, being saints and sinners and the relationship between faith and

reason. They also looked at Lutheran understanding of freedom and responsibility.

“How might we be a more prophetic Lutheran/Christian witness amidst the cacophony of religious voices in our public square? How might we, as Lutherans, contribute in partnership with others to building healthy societ-



Church of Sweden Archbishop Dr Antje Jackelén. Photo: Dr Thilo Fitzner

ies where all of God's children, and the fullness of creation, might flourish?" reflected group member Dr Kathryn M. Lohre, executive for ecumenical and interreligious relations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

For study group member Rev. Dr Eva Harasta, study secretary on theology and interreligious relations from the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria, religious pluralism is an important factor in defining the scope of active engagement in public space. "Coming to terms with the multi-religious situation is fundamental and inter-contextuality is relevant for developing a hermeneutics of Lutheran engagement in the public sphere," she said.

"The different members of the study group come to this process with different perspectives, but they all share the concern that we need to articulate more clearly our active contribution to public space as a just place for all," observed Rev. Dr Simone Sinn, LWF study secretary for Public Theology and Interreligious Relations.

Sinn noted that the social-political contexts in the different LWF regions are critical in ensuring that the study process resonates with today's realities. "Those who are situated on the margins and those who are silenced challenge and question any easy understanding of public space, and push us to come to a deeper, even more en-

gaged understanding of public space. The study group has just started an important process of reflection and action for the Lutheran communion as a whole," she emphasized.

The study group is chaired by Church of Sweden Archbishop Dr Antje Jackelén. The outcome of its first meeting will be shared with the respective LWF regional church leadership conferences. Its second meeting will take place in the context of the October 2015 LWF theological conference on the Reformation in Windhoek, Namibia, to gather insights from other stakeholders. A first draft report will be presented to the LWF Council in 2016.

## A Reformation Anniversary Platform for LWF Member Churches

### "Connect, Contribute, Participate"

**GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches worldwide now have the possibility to "connect, contribute and participate" in the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation through the newly launched LWF web site for the 2017 anniversary.

The web site, launched today, marks the start of the 2015-2017 timeline that the LWF has dedicated to commemorating the Reformation anniversary.

"This platform will certainly serve as inspiration for churches thinking about their own plans and programs, and as a tool to connect with the LWF member churches across the globe in view of their own plans," said LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge.

In a letter to the LWF member churches, the general secretary encourages the churches to use the platform to engage in Reformation anniversary events worldwide by:

- Identifying youth to join the Global Young Reformers Network, which is up and running and will meet in **Wittenberg, Germany in August 2015**.



Photo: Szilard Szabo

- Using booklets that are being prepared for the Reformation anniversary to engage locally in theological conversations with bilateral partners.
- Utilizing the report ***From Conflict to Communion – Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*** to engage in ecumenical conversations locally.
- Offering **stories of grassroots women**—lay or ordained, theologians or community leaders—who have made a difference in local churches.
- Ensuring that every LWF member church would have planted its own tree in **the Luther Garden in Wittenberg** by 2017.

- Participating in the World Exhibition in Wittenberg in 2017 to express that the Reformation has become a 'world citizen'.

The web site highlights the fact that the Reformation has become a global citi-

zen and has taken root in many different contexts. With this platform, the LWF offers possibilities that are good entry points for Lutheran churches worldwide to "connect, contribute and participate" in the 2017 celebrations outlined on the new web site, Junge concluded.

Churches can send their 2017 plans, resource materials, projects and calendars to **Rev. Anne Burghardt**, LWF secretary for ecumenical relations.

## 'Epoch-Making Turning Point' from Conflict to Communion

### LWF and the Vatican Announce Common Liturgical Material for 2017

**ROME, Italy/Geneva (LWI)** – Rev. Martin Junge, General Secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) says relations between the Lutheran and Catholic churches have reached an epoch-making turning-point.

Speaking during a panel discussion, held 18 December, in the Lutheran church in Rome, Junge emphasized that the relationship between Lutherans and Catholics was being transformed "from conflict to communion." Precisely in a world "in which religion and faith are regularly portrayed and perceived as trouble makers," he said it was a phenomenal testimony that the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches continued to move "towards a profound communion that frees us to serve God and the world."

Alongside Junge on the panel were, the president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) Kurt Cardinal Koch, the Catholic representative of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany Bishop Karl-Hinrich Manzke, and the chairperson of the Ecumenism Commission of the German Episcopal Conference Bishop Gerhard Feige.

Junge and Koch took the opportunity to announce plans for a common liturgical guide in connection with the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, of which publication is scheduled for 2015. Looking towards 2017, the Lutheran - Roman Catholic material is intended to enable churches all over the world to review the 500 years of Reformation. The guide will follow

on from the dialogue document *From Conflict to Communion* published by both partners in 2013, and transpose it into liturgical acts. The material will reflect the structure of this document with its triple form of penitence for the wounds mutually inflicted; joy at the insights and dimensions of the Reformation; and hope for unity.

The panel also discussed the question of what exactly was to be commemorated in 2017. "Not church division, nor the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a church and certainly not any heroic actions," Feige was clear about that. "But what then? Placing Christ in the middle of the celebrations around 2017 and in this way celebrating a festival of Christ would build a bridge for both partners." In his experience, this had worked well in 2012 at the Pilgrimage of the Holy Robe in Trier. However, the concept still needed to be filled with more tangible content, the Catholic bishop admitted.

The panelists agreed on the question of a joint act of repentance between Lutherans and Catholics. "I think it would be a fine thing if such a symbolic act could take place between Catholics and Lutherans," said Koch. However, it would not be about unilateral mistakes or demands for penitence. "The Catholic side is not telling the Lutherans that they should repent," underscored Feige. Both sides shared a burden of guilt, Koch and Feige agreed.

Junge affirmed the usefulness of repentance with reference to the ex-



(Left to right) Bishop Dr Karl-Hinrich Manzke, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge, Kurt Cardinal Koch and Bishop Dr Gerhard Feige at the presentation of the results of the internet project "2017 – Together on the Way" in Rome. Photo: LWF-GNC/F. Hübner

perience of the LWF in dialogue with the Mennonite World Conference. “We were not getting anywhere because there were memories that were still too vivid.” The act of repentance during the LWF Assembly in 2010 in Stuttgart had cleared these obstacles out of the way. The idea also received support from Manzke as Lutheran representative for relations with the Roman Catholic Church in Germany.

Despite all the need for penitence, he also urged those present not to forget the positive experiences and common ground, and that “our churches have the same mission: to bear clear witness in word and deed.”

The panel took place in the closing phase of the German internet project “2017 gemeinsam unterwegs (2017 – Together on the Way). In the ecumenical project the LWF German

National Committee (GNC/LWF) and the Johann Adam Möhler Ecumenical Institute had jointly presented the dialogue document *From Conflict to Communion* in an interactive online forum. Just before the panel, Manzke and Feige presented the findings of the project to the PCPCU president and LWF general secretary, who received them on behalf of their respective World Christian Communions.

## Joy in a Joint First Communion for Lutherans and Catholics in Peru

### Lima Pastor and Priest Describe a Journey of ‘Grassroots Ecumenism’

**LIMA, Peru/GENEVA (LWI)** – On 7 December 2014, Catholic priest Father Marco Agüero Vidal and Peruvian Lutheran Evangelical Church (ILEP) pastor Rev. Pedro Bullón celebrated jointly the First Communion for Catholic and Lutheran confirmands in the neighborhood of Pamplona Alta, in San Juan de Miraflores, Lima, Peru. In this interview with *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*, the two church leaders highlight landmarks in their journey towards “living a grassroots ecumenism.”

**In your own words, explain the main highlights and message of the First Communion for Catholic and Lu-**

**theran confirmands at San Juan de Miraflores last December?**

We worked together with material provided by the Catholic parish for the First Communion because of their versatility and approach to the Peruvian reality and its various scenarios (family, neighborhood, individual situations, etc.). This was the beginning of the first steps of a mutual recognition by both parties, with plans for a more official recognition in the near future. The feelings of joy and satisfaction expressed by family members in the same celebration strengthened the relationship of a wider circle of neighbors: we became friends and friends of Jesus.

**When did your collaboration as neighboring Catholic and Lutheran congregations begin and what are some of the activities that you carry out together?**

We initiated our collaboration during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January 2012. We wanted to do something that was beyond praying together and celebrate a joint Eucharist in every Catholic and Lutheran community. In the same week we visited each other. It was an unforgettable experience because the people on both sides wanted us to have more of such meetings. That encouraged us to cross the threshold of living together as an inter-confessional community toward a more liberating experience of the grace of God. The activities that we have carried out together in the community of Pamplona Alta include:

- Joint study of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* [JDDJ – signed by the LWF and Vatican in 1999] with the aim of spreading and editing a popular version of the document.
- Promoting and supporting the formation of a Joint Commission (Peruvian Episcopal Conference and ILEP) to receive the document *From Conflict to Communion* –



Lutheran pastor Rev. Pedro Bullón (left) and Catholic priest Fr. Marco Agüero Vidal (right) preside at the joint First Communion in Pamplona Alta, Lima, December 2014. Photo: LWF/Sean Hawkey

*Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* [published by the Lutheran – Roman Catholic Commission on Unity in 2013] in view of 2017.

- Strengthening at church-to-church level joint meetings to know each other in relation to some relevant document on both sides, such as the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* [2013] (The Joy of the Gospel) by Pope Francis.
- Ecumenical celebration of the Feast of Pentecost at the Parish of Saint Francis of Assisi.
- Sharing catechetical materials for the First Communion.
- Joint celebration of the first Lutheran-Catholic First Communion in Pamplona Alta on 7 December 2014.
- Collaboration in sensitizing and mobilizing the local people on preventive action against tuberculosis at the Manuel Barreto Health Center

- Participation in the urban forestry program [tree planting] led by the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima under Mayor Susana Villarán, which benefits the community of Pamplona Alta.

***What specific significance did the global Lutheran-Catholic dialogue process have on your local initiatives?***

The main impact for us is a new approach in breaking down barriers and prejudices that may block our fellowship. We can envision living a grassroots ecumenism. The justification document [JDDJ] has served our two churches and communities, and we are disseminating it even outside Pamplona Alta. It provides a secure platform for both churches to work ecumenically for the unity of the Church universal.

***How does the recent document From Conflict to Communion relate to your ongoing collaboration, and what is the main message that Lutherans and Catholics in Peru want to share?***

The document *From Conflict to Communion* was received with great

joy by both parties here, as it expressed a wish to see our churches in a new relationship through dialogue rather than the imposition of unilateral triumphalism. This can serve to provide a common witness of faith and strengthen democratic dialogue spaces in the deeply fragmented social situation in Peru.

***Looking forward to the 2017 Reformation anniversary, what can other Lutheran and Catholic churches learn from the ecumenical journey on which you have embarked?***

As we move towards the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, we see the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity as an opportunity to celebrate not only in January [18-25 January] but also in the period until Pentecost especially here in the Southern Hemisphere. It helps us to reflect seriously on Jesus' prayer "that all may be one" and to discern together how far we have taken this prayer seriously in our communities. Preparing for 2017 opens up opportunities for collaborative processes to strengthen more authentic and joint processes of dialogue and peace building in society.

## Global Lutheran Bodies Commit to Regular Discussions

### LWF and ILC Continue Dialogue in Annual Meeting

**GENEVA (LWI)** – There are "rich fruits to be enjoyed" through direct interaction and regular meetings between The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the International Lutheran Council (ILC), representatives of the two global organizations said following their recent discussions in Geneva.

In a communiqué from the 14 January meeting hosted by the LWF, the participants agreed that the regularity of their meetings has made it possible to have deeper discussions on theological issues and engage in more open dialogue. The two Lutheran bodies have been in ongoing discussions since 2006 and

have met four times since 2011, honoring a 2005 memorandum of understanding.

"The regularity of the meetings has provided a space where deeper discussions on theological matters and more open exchange on detected difficulties in the relationships on local and regional levels have become possible," the LWF and the ILC representatives said.

At the Geneva meeting, the two bodies were represented by four participants each including the co-chairpersons, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge and ILC Chairman Bishop Hans-Joerg Voigt.

The ILC was established in 1958 as an association of those identifying themselves as confessional Lutheran church bodies that support one another and study theological issues together. Founded in 1947, the LWF communion currently has 144 member churches worldwide.

During their meeting, participants reviewed cases where conflict has arisen between the two Lutheran bodies and agreed to engage in deeper discussion on their respective approaches to issues such as the theology of mission, unity of the church and mutual engagement.



LWF and ILC representatives at the January 2015 meeting in Geneva. Photo: LWF/S. Gallay

While the LWF and the ILC are at different stages in planning for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, the ILC expressed

appreciation for the document *From Conflict to Communion – Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*. The LWF representatives welcomed the ILC's proposal to engage in a deeper study of the document.

The ILC also indicated it was considering a new approach to study the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, signed by the LWF and the Vatican in 1999.

The next meeting of LWF and ILC representatives will be held 25-26 February 2016, hosted by the ILC.

**Read the ILC-LWF joint communiqué:**  
[http://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/150114-ILC-LWF\\_Communique\\_2015.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/150114-ILC-LWF_Communique_2015.pdf)

## Nigerian Lutheran Archbishop Seeks Critical Global Solidarity in Fight against Boko Haram

### Nemuel Babba Reflects on Restoring Trust and Citizens' Right to Protection

**NUMAN, Nigeria/GENEVA (LWI)** – In this interview with *Lutheran World Information* (LWI), Nigerian Lutheran Archbishop Dr Nemuel A. Babba urges a “stronger global Christian voice against the Boko Haram violence” and “solidarity to help restore trust and relationships” between Christians and Muslims in the country. LCCN's congregations are located mainly in Northern Nigeria.

#### **How are communities and churches in northeastern Nigeria directly affected by the increasing violence by Boko Haram?**

Firstly, as the leader of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN), my heart goes out to the tens of thousands of families—Christians, Muslims and other faiths—in the northeast, who have lost loved ones in the continuing spate of violent attacks on villages by the Boko Haram group. The senseless killings in early January and the razing down of homes, churches, mosques,

schools and businesses in the town of Baga in Borno state, showed yet again, the callous nature of Boko Haram and the helpless situation for citizens of Nigeria who cannot defend themselves.

The LCCN like many other Christian and Muslim communities in the states of Borno, Yobe and here in Adamawa, has suffered huge losses since Boko Haram began its armed attacks in 2009 with the aim of creating an Islamic state in this part of the country. LCCN's Arewa and Shall-Holma dioceses are the most severely affected; the bishops had to move out of the diocesan headquarters two months ago. Like thousands of other displaced people, we don't know when they can go back. Many Lutheran churches and institutions including the Gombi and Arewa cathedrals have been burned down or pillaged. Around 50,000 of our members in Arewa and Shall-Holma had no organized Lutheran worship for the Christmas and New Year seasons because of the violence.

#### **How are churches and Christian communities responding towards those affected?**

Simply put, there are tens of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the affected states. At the LCCN headquarters' in Numan, we are hosting around 5,000 IDPs, and many more in families. I am encouraged to see that many of our church members and other Christians, as well as Muslims, have opened their homes to fellow Nigerians fleeing violence. Our goal is not to establish IDP camps, but to work with the local government to support those in need now, and help them to eventually go back home. We continue to mobilize the local community in gathering food, water, clothes and the response is overwhelming. The government and Muslim organizations are helping a lot too—providing mattresses, beddings and so on.

#### **Are you using any ecumenical or interfaith approaches to advocate for those affected?**



Yes and No. Yes, because we acknowledge as faith communities that the displaced need our assistance and we have all responded extremely well to this task. As Christians we have also made the government aware that we see Christians as being specifically targeted by Boko Haram. This is not to deny that Muslims are being attacked and killed, but Christians suffer the highest casualties.

Why do I say No? Simply because there is no dialogue with our Muslim brothers and sisters about the intention and impact of Boko Haram. The presence of this militant group has eroded trust between Christians and Muslims here, to the extent that we cannot have open and sincere conversations about this common enemy.

We are going through painful situations at both family and national levels. An example is the situation in many families consisting of Christians and Muslims. Recently one of four Christian brothers welcomed to his home their sister, who is Muslim, as she and her family had fled attacks. But within days, he asked her to seek alternative refuge because he could not cope with her open criticism and disregard for Christians. Yet her children remained with their Christian uncle and cousins. How then, do we heal and restore such relationships in which a 'brother's keeper' has literally turned into the brother's tormentor because of extreme religious ideals? We no longer trust some of our Muslim brothers and sisters, as we don't know if they are saying the truth about wanting to get rid of Boko Haram. Similar dynamics can be found in government, political parties and armed forces. The enemy is fellow Nigerians, and it is extremely difficult to fight this enemy, and restore trust in this multi-faith, multi-ethnic nation and its families.

***How can the global Lutheran and Christian communions express their solidarity?***

It needs to be stated that Nigerian Christians are angry, as we are the

most affected by the Boko Haram atrocities. We do not hear loudly enough the strong voice of fellow Christians around the world speaking out against this terrorism that is directed at those of us living in the northeast. Being bold about our solidarity is something Christians all over the world need to learn. We feel that enough is not being done to sustain the urgency to stop Boko Haram's terrorism.

This is also not the time for the usual approach to interfaith dialogue in Nigeria, in spite of its positive contribution to social cohesion in the country. We must move a notch higher from presenting conference papers about co-existence, with everybody trying to defend their religion. We have to critically look again and talk sincerely about the way Christians and Muslims relate to each other, and table these hard truths and horrendous facts. We need solidarity from the global Christian community to do this.

***What intervention can the international political community provide?***

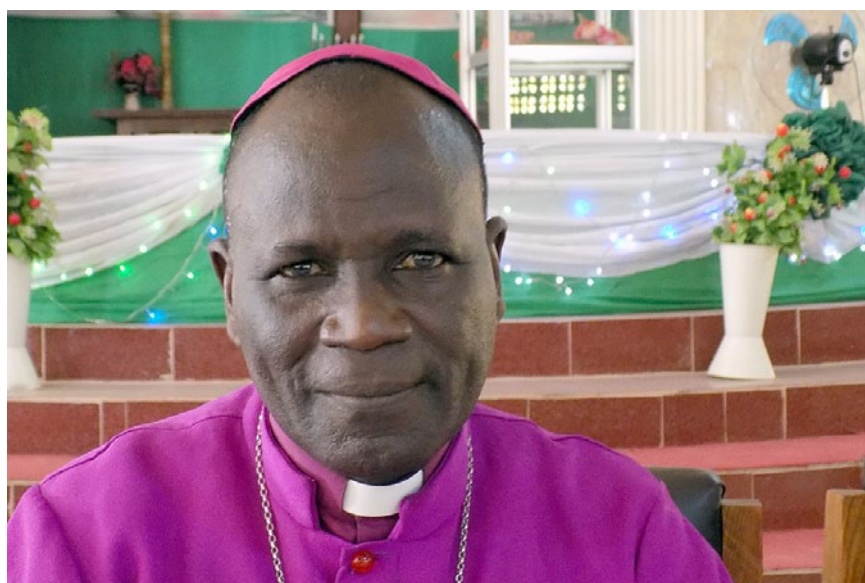
We as Nigerian Christians acknowledge the many voices out there highlighting the evils committed by Boko Haram. But we also know the history of past civil wars in this country: politicians who were rejected by voters decided to make the country ungovernable through armed insurgency. As

Christians, we promote peace, but we cannot also simply stand by and watch as our people are being wiped out in senseless killings. We are citizens of this country and we cannot continue running helter-skelter because of Boko Haram. We have the right to defend ourselves and when pushed to the worst, the alternative to peace can only be disastrous for a country of more than 170 million people.

Despite its shortcomings, the Nigerian government is trying its best to stop the violence but it needs encouragement and the genuine support of the international community. Because we desire peace, especially as the country goes into elections in February, we urge again the support of the international community.

We especially ask the LWF and the entire Lutheran communion to continue praying for us.

*(Archbishop Dr Nemuel A. Babba heads the LCCN with more than 2.2 million members in its nine dioceses mainly in Northern Nigeria. It is one two LWF member churches in Nigeria, and it joined the Lutheran communion in 1961.)*



LCCN Archbishop Dr Nemuel A. Babba. Photo LCCN/Felix Samari

# Lutheran Leader Ekong Affirms Church Role in Consolidating Nigeria's Democratic Processes

## Increased Insurgency Obscures Progress in Other sectors

**UYO, Nigeria/GENEVA (LWI)** – During a visit to The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) early this year, Lutheran Church of Nigeria (LCN) Archbishop Christian Ekong spoke to *Lutheran World Information* (LWI) about the church's role as Nigeria prepares for general elections on 14 February 2015.

### **What are your major concerns as Nigeria prepares for elections this February?**

This will be the fifth democratic general election since 1999, which marked the end of long periods of military rule. Over the successive periods, there have been huge improvements on civic education, the electorate exercising their right to vote, and the actual voting. The last election [2011] was generally acclaimed as free, fair and credible. Regrettably, election violence occurred in parts of the country and lives were lost.

Inevitably, there are strong opposition candidates this time round against the incumbent ruling party and the President, and that is good in our growing democratic process. It is true insurgency [Boko Haram] in the north has increased, but let's not forget the significant achievements in other vital development sectors. By early 2014, over 60 percent of the population of over 170 million people had access to clean drinking water compared to about 57 percent in 2011. Internet access has improved from 30 percent to around 55 percent coverage, and this is growing; sanitation has improved too.

National security matters a lot, but we also know the opposition has often used this sector to distract the country's governance. After this election, we predict that the insurgencies will reduce or even come to an end.

### **What role is your church, other churches and faith communities play-**



Lutheran Church of Nigeria Archbishop Christian Ekong. Photo: LWF/S. Gally

### **ing to encourage citizens' participation in the election process?**

Despite all the dialogues for peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians, political class and the ordinary people, sometimes we seem to be getting nowhere but that does not mean that we are not making progress.

Last December [2014] the mainline churches of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), including the Lutheran churches, conducted a joint civic education workshop on observing the forthcoming elections. We achieved our goal of creating awareness about participation in the election processes by all eligible citizens including Christians. We have established a framework that the thousands of church leaders, men, women, youth and theologians we mobilized now use in the congregations and communities. There is growing enlightenment in the population about the need for violent-free elections; and that the ballot should never be bought [exchanged for money] but is the voter's power to choose the next government. These messages are being greatly appreciated.

Apart from that we continue as a church to pray for peaceful elections in

the country. We also create opportunities to visit our political leaders, and remind them of their obligation as elected leaders to be accountable and transparent.

As a person of faith, I see a better future for Nigeria because of our concerted effort to strengthen the country's democratic basis.

### **How does the Lutheran church contribute to cultivating a culture of leadership renewal, accountability and good governance in both church and society?**

Good governance is an issue of attitude. If you don't have the right attitude, if you don't uphold moral values, you cannot do well in leadership. We try to talk to our people including our leaders and tell them that wherever you go as a Nigerian, you are suspected to be a corrupt person. We say this stereotype must be broken as it is not true of so many Nigerians. We remind our leaders that political leadership is about serving the nation and its people: it is not about accumulating individual wealth.

In collaboration with civil society organizations, we organize leadership workshops to discuss the values of honesty, accountability, transparency, human justice,

peaceful co-existence and contentment. We want our leaders to understand that we cannot reclaim what has been lost expect through the right values. This is especially important as our immense oil and other resources do not translate into equitable distribution of national wealth.

### ***How can the Lutheran church nurture social cohesion in a multi-ethnic, multi-faith Nigeria?***

LCN is greatly involved in youth empowerment because we see the need to really affect this age group positively for the future of the church. Poverty reduction remains a major challenge in Nigeria; therefore creating education and work opportunities for young people becomes critically important. We are also supporting women's empowerment through several invest-

ment and income-generating initiatives. Overall, education is one of our major empowerment tool and I am delighted to see that the growth of LCN primary, secondary and seminary education has enabled us to start plans to establish a Lutheran university. We look at all these as our contributions to support Nigeria to come of out of its unstable base.

The Lutheran churches in Nigeria are also involved together with our global and local partners in the initiative to eradicate malaria which is a killer disease [over 200,000 deaths per year according to the Ministry of Health]. We facilitate free medical clinics, education on malaria and distribution of mosquito nets, as well as some aspects of HIV and AIDS awareness.

LCN was the first faith-based organization to break the silence as far as

climate change is concerned in Nigeria and we are advancing in our advocacy in this area, and gaining more partners on board.

We see every public worship as an opportunity for the Lutherans to pray for Nigeria, for the country's faith and political leadership and for global peace, because no nation thrives in violence, insurgency and insecurity.

We count on the prayers of the global Lutheran communion as we enter elections.

*The LCN has been a member church of the LWF since 1973. It has around 150,000 members in 14 dioceses located mainly in Southern Nigeria. Archbishop Christian Ekong also serves as president of the Lutheran Communion in Central and Western Africa (LUCCWA), a regional body of the LWF.*

## **Bishop Kameeta Appointed to Namibian Presidential Council**

### **Deep Faith Convictions in Advocacy for Justice**

**WINDHOEK, Namibia/GENEVA (LWI)** – Bishop emeritus Dr Zephania Kameeta of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) has been appointed as a member of the presidential council of Namibian President-elect Hage Geingob.

The 2 February nomination of Kameeta, who also serves on the Council of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), comes after years of ELCRN-led efforts to eradicate poverty in Namibia. When a government-appointed commission called for a universal grant in Namibia in 2002, the ELCRN helped form the Basic

Income Grant (BIG) coalition which now includes other civil society organizations advocating for social service support as part of national policy.

The coalition pioneered the BIG initiative in 2006 with a two-year pilot project for 900 people in the impoverished community of Otjivero-Omitara, 100 kilometers from the capital Windhoek. The identified families received a monthly income of 100 Namibian dollars per head to reduce poverty and inequality and foster economic development.

The coalition's reports about the project's impact indicated that the initiative cut malnutrition rates from 42 percent to 10 percent, while school attendance improved and children attended class with cleaner and better uniforms. The goal is to get the Namibian government to take on such a program nationally.

While the BIG program has its critics who claim that some recipients spent the money on alcohol, Kameeta was



Bishop emeritus Dr Zephania Kameeta. Photo: LWF/C. Kästner

quick to defend it, stating, “I know there are people who do not want to let go of the past and try to justify their vested interests by all means. These are not new people, nor is their rhetoric new.”

Namibia is a mineral-rich country of 2.1 million people but marked by high economic inequalities. An estimated 75 percent of its population lives below the poverty line and two-thirds rely on subsistence agriculture.

In a recent interview with *Lutheran World Information* (LWI), Kameeta reflected on the poverty he sees all around him, saying, “I don’t know how the people are living. You can see the situation in the faces of the people, the hopelessness. People have literally nothing.”

While the churches of Namibia have a responsibility to help those in poverty, they too are poor, he said. “They depend on poor people to do what they should be doing [to help alleviate poverty in society],” Kameeta added.

The ELCRN and the other two Lutheran churches in Namibia, will together

host the Twelfth Assembly of the LWF in Windhoek in 2017, the year also marking the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. The LWF’s longstanding collaboration with the Namibian churches goes back to the country’s liberation struggle, and in later years through the Department for Mission and Development. During the drought that hit the country in 2012/2013, the Department for World Service supported the Lutheran churches in a cash transfer program for 4,500 people severely affected by the crisis.

Congratulating the LWF Council member for his appointment to the presidential council, LWF General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge said “Kameeta’s public presence, his calling for justice and reminding us of the dignity of all persons has a long trajectory and is well respected. It has always been carried by deep faith convictions.”

Junge continued: “Based on these same convictions, he now follows a new call to serve the Namibian people. This is indeed a wonderful embodiment of

what vocation means in our own theological tradition. The LWF congratulates Bishop Kameeta wholeheartedly and prays for strength and wisdom as he prepares for his new responsibilities.”

Kameeta was born on 7 August 1945 at Otjimbingwe, educated at the Rhenish Mission School at Karibib and ordained a pastor in 1972. He was elected as moderator of the Wuppertal (Germany)-based United Evangelical Mission in 2000 and consecrated as ELCRN bishop in 2002. He was LWF Vice-President for the Africa region from 2003 to 2010.

Before Namibia’s independence Kameeta was arrested and imprisoned by the South African government. After the country’s independence in 1990, he was elected to the Constituent Assembly and the first and second Parliament of the Republic of Namibia, serving as deputy speaker of the National Assembly. He has been serving as chairperson of Namibia’s Social Security Commission.

## Younan Encourages Baltic Churches to Nurture Interdependence of Lutheran Communion

### “Carrying the Cross Together”

**TALLINN, Estonia/GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan concluded his first official visit to the Baltic churches with emphasis on the interdependence of all churches that make up the global LWF communion.

Highlights from his 26 January – 4 February visit to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia included the consecration of Archbishop Urmas Viilma of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC), who has succeeded retiring Archbishop Andres Põder.

The LWF area secretary for Europe Rev. Dr Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato accompanied the president during the visit to the three countries.

The LWF president told the new EELC archbishop his consecration

provides an opportunity for Lutherans worldwide to reflect on the importance of communion for Christian churches. “As a communion of churches, we are interdependent,” Younan said. Societies throughout the world, including Estonia, are changing rapidly therefore it is deeply important for churches to offer leadership, not only in their own interests, but for the whole of society, Younan said.

“The interdependence of our global communion and the broad web of ecumenical (and even interreligious) relationships we enjoy can be a source of great encouragement and strength,” Younan emphasized. Invited church leaders at the consecration included LWF regional Vice-Presidents Hungarian Bishop Dr Tamás Fabiny and

Church of Norway Presiding Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien.

The LWF president also met with church and political leaders, preached and held discussions with diaconal workers at Lutheran social service agencies.

### Lithuania: A Prophetic Church

Together with Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania, Younan visited diaconal projects, including an orphanage, run by congregations in Sakiai and Jurbarka in the western part of the country. “It is important that the church is present at the grassroots of people’s lives, and serves their real needs. We are called to be a prophetic church, to



LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan and other church leaders during the consecration of Estonian Lutheran Archbishop Urmas Viirma (kneeling) at St Mary's Cathedral in Tallinn. Photo: Erik Peinar

be a church that sees the reality and acts," he said, during discussions with staff serving the community, which is plagued by high unemployment.

Younan also met President Dalia Grybauskaitė of Lithuania, and both leaders discussed peace building and humanitarian work around the world, the role of religious leaders in peace-keeping and ecumenism in Lithuania.

His message during a service at the Vilnius Lutheran Church emphasized trust and faith in God during times of tribulation such as human rights violations.

"You have been half a century under oppression in Lithuania; churches were destroyed or used by others. But you kept faith in God the savior. You kept Lithuania on pilgrimage with the Lord," the LWF president said, referring to church persecution in the former communist rule in the region.

### Latvia: Carrying the Cross Together in Mission

In meetings with Archbishop Janis Vanags and other leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL)

in Riga, Younan noted that "diakonia is not to be separated from mission. It is part of what we call holistic mission. Love in practice is feeding the hungry."

During a dialogue with pastors, Younan responded to a question about the LWF's greatest joy over the past few years by declaring: "In my travels, I find deep roots of faithfulness to the mission of God in every church. There are many joys in the communion, I am proud to be serving it."

In a meeting with the association of women theologians in the ELCL, Younan referred to the LWF Gender Justice Policy. He emphasized the document was adopted [in 2013] for the whole LWF communion and its member churches, and it serves as an invitation to discern together on issues such as women's ordination.

The LWF president concluded his visit to Latvia with a Sunday worship sermon at Riga's St John's Church on 1 February. He referred to the ongoing task of articulating the confessional identity of Lutheran churches, which is a collaborative endeavor in the context of the LWF communion. "We are carrying the cross together. We are in mission and diakonia together. Although we may have differences, together we are faithful for the gospel," Younan emphasized.

## Jerusalem: Successful LWF Vocational Training Graduates

### "A Decision I Will Never Regret"

**JERUSALEM/GENEVA, 10 February 2015 (LWI)**

– Since 1949, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Jerusalem program has offered a vocational training program for Palestinian youth. The program provides training in automobile repair, carpentry, catering, craftwork, metalwork, plumbing and central heating, secretarial work, and telecommunications.

LWF General Secretary Rev Martin Junge visited the Center in December 2014. "It gave me hope to look into the eyes of the young people," he recalls.

"While I recognized in some of them the pain of violence, loss and conflict, I saw in all of them a determination, a real thirst for a life in dignity: earning their own salaries, finding a place in society, contributing to build the social and political fabric of their society".

"That's why they are learning in the VTC, even when traveling long distances, or sometimes spending hours at checkpoints: education is the key and these youth want to use it," Junge adds.

Many young people have since learned essential job skills and even opened small enterprises. By doing so, they have in turn impacted their communities. Meet some of them in the following stories.

### Job skills and market navigation

On a hillside just six kilometers north-east of the city of Hebron lies the village of Ash-Shuyukh. Home to approximate-



*Yousef has opened a metal workshop in Ash-Shuyukh and provides employment to his brother. Photo: LWF Jerusalem/ T. Montgomery*

ly 9,000 Palestinians, Ash-Shuyukh is known for its rich agricultural resources. From the top of the hill, one can see for kilometers over the rolling fields of grape vines and olive trees.

Jasim, 26, graduated from the LWF Vocational Training Center in Beit Hanina in 2006. After graduation, he was eager to work on his own and have independence. He opened his own workshop in 2007, with the encouragement of the Vocational Training Program (VTP). In the seven years he has owned his business in Ash-Shuyukh, he has become the village expert in aluminum, serving the surrounding area with his knowledge and skills.

In 2013, Jasim opened a joint workshop with his brother, Ahmad, a 2011 graduate of the VTP. Ahmad, a carpenter by trade, is one of 23 graduates from the VTP who received assistance from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) through the Church of Sweden. This project to assist graduates included conducting a feasibility study for the businesses proposed by the graduates and then providing a course in project management for the graduates. Through the project, the VTP purchased equipment for the graduates with a rent-to-buy agreement.

The VTP provided both Jasim and Ahmad with an education that not only taught them the skills in their respec-

tive fields, but also how to navigate the market. Their education empowered them to leap into an unpredictable market and an economy impacted by years of occupation. The lessons they learned from the VTP, both inside and outside the classroom, remain with them. Someday, they hope to give back to the VTP by participating in the apprenticeship program, an opportunity that allows students to learn from people with experience in their fields.

### Providing employment

On the outskirts of Ash-Shuyukh, just down the road from Jasim and Ahmad's workshop, 25-year-old Yousef has started his own metal workshop. After nearly eight years navigating the labor market, Yousef, a 2006 graduate of the VTC in Beit Hanina, decided to open his business in Ash-Shuyukh. Yousef says that although he earned a good salary moving from job to job, he is much happier with his newfound independence. He is also able to provide employment and income for his brother, who, after four years at a university in Yemen, could not find a job when he returned home. With the education of the VTP, Yousef and his brothers are able to create their own schedule while providing quality craftwork for their community.

Jihad, a graduate of the VTC in Beit Hanina in 2007, opened his own carpentry workshop in 2014. Prior to becoming an entrepreneur, he worked with large Israeli furniture stores near Issawiye for nearly six years. When he enrolled at the VTC, he initially wanted to study central heating. With enrollment full in this program, he decided to pursue carpentry. When he first began his business, he sold mostly to large furniture stores. Through word of mouth, though, he has been able to find individual clients who are interested in his work, one of them being a former classmate at the VTC in Beit Hanina.

### A life-changing decision

Located just off the bustling town square of Ash-Shuyukh, 26-year-old Qusai has started his own **auto-mechanic garage**. After graduation from the VTC in Beit Hanina in 2007, he worked in many different garages near his home village of Ash-Shuyukh. In 2009, he decided to open his own garage. His beginnings were simple, located in a small building on the outskirts of Ash-Shuyukh, but he eventually moved into a larger space that allowed him to add a car wash in addition to his garage.

Qusai's father, a principal of a local school in Ash-Shuyukh, has been a proponent of the VTP, encouraging the many youth of the community to consider vocational education, especially if their interests do not include a university degree. Qusai says that some considered the decision to pursue vocational training over a degree in higher education to be disgraceful for the son of a school principal. However, because of the support of his father, he, as well as the community, sees the benefits of vocational education. It is a decision he will never regret, Qusai says.

Yasmin could say the same about her decision to enroll in the Secretary Training Programme in Ramallah. After her father's death, she knew she needed to help her family. She could not afford to

attend university both due to the long period of time it takes to complete a degree and the financial obligation; therefore, the VTP was an excellent option.

During the program, she learned practical skills, including computer and electronic training. In addition, Yasmin states that she gained self-confidence and developed a stronger

sense of herself. After completing the VTP Vocational Secretary course in August of 2013, Yasmin was hired to work at United Motor Trade, where she had also done her apprenticeship. She describes her class as a tight-knit group of women who are now working in a variety of different secretary jobs throughout the West Bank.

The establishment of the Vocational Secretary program and the creation of three-month internships have provided opportunities for young Palestinian women in the West Bank, who may not otherwise have the opportunity, to receive training and to find employment after graduating.

## UNHCR Voices Appreciation for Partnership with LWF

### “You go where others don’t”

**GENEVA (LWI)** – UNHCR’s partnership with the LWF is “extremely valuable” said UNHCR Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa George Okoth-Obbo and Director of the Division of External Relations Daniel Endres speaking to the Lutheran World Federation Committee for World Service meeting in January in Geneva.

“For 58 years we have been standing side by side,” Mr Okoth-Obbo said. During the meeting reference was made to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Strategic Partnership between UNHCR and LWF signed 3 October 2014 which re-confirmed this close cooperation. The LWF is the fourth largest implementing partner of the UN Refugee Agency. “You go where others don’t go,” Okoth-Obbo added, “You are right there with us.”

In discussion with CWS members on 22 January at the UNHCR, Mr Okoth-Obbo talked about the refugee situation worldwide with a special focus on Africa, where LWF is working in 11 countries, partnering with UNHCR in seven of them. Two of them, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, have been classified as most severe, large-scale humanitarian crises (Level 3-emergencies) by the UN. “A larger proportion of the displacements in Africa today are internally displaced persons (IDPs),” Mr Okoth-Obbo said, citing the example of South Sudan which has seen more



UNHCR and LWF response to South Sudanese refugees in Maban refugee camp. Photo: Mats Wallerstedt

displacement in the past year than in the previous three decades of civil war.

### Nigeria the Next Emergency

As the refugee situation worldwide grows more challenging, the UNHCR representatives emphasized the advantages of working with a globally rooted faith-based organization. “We are structured to work with states, you work with communities,” Mr Okoth-Obbo said, stressing especially the need for development and education projects and a “theme based” approach like the LWF focus on protection, poverty and vulnerable communities.

“We have never seen a situation like today,” UNHCR Director for External Relations Daniel Endres said. While one third

of the UNHCR capacity is engaged in the emergencies in Iraq and Syria, protracted” refugee situations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia still require sustained support and attention.

“We don’t see an end to the crises,” he said. Both Directors especially warned about the situation in Nigeria and the recent terrorist activities there. “If the horrifying proportion of the terrorist threat continues unabated, we will witness the next serious displacement emergency,” Mr Endres said.

### Rights-Based Approach

Mr Endres especially emphasized the need for a rights-based approach in working with refugees and other

persons of concern. As governments are increasingly challenged to manage refugee integration, he also stressed the need for advocating and working with host communities.

Cooperation with a faith-based organization is an “added value” he

said, as in many communities faith groups have a natural authority. In that context, UNHCR is also very interested in the development of the partnership between the LWF and Islamic Relief Worldwide, who signed a Memorandum of Understanding in

August 2014. “Faith-based organizations are motivated by their faith and can and do play important—often essential—roles in reaching out to communities and vulnerable people,” Mr Endres said. “We see that, we feel that and we appreciate that.”

## A Powerful Witness

### Dr Gunnar Stålsett’s Ministry Lauded on 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday

**GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) general secretary Rev. Martin Junge has paid tribute to predecessor Dr Gunnar Stålsett on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday for leading the LWF to live out its call to witness in society.

Stålsett, the bishop emeritus of Oslo who turned 80 on 10 February, was lauded by Junge for helping to shape global Lutheranism during his tenure as the LWF’s sixth general secretary from 1985 to 1994.

“A most remarkable aspect of your ministry is how you have looked for opportunities to witness at the intersection of church and society,” Junge said in a 10 February letter to Stålsett.

“By bringing these two dimensions so meaningfully together you have given powerful witness to the centrality of ‘incarnation’ in Lutheran theology.”

Stålsett helped the LWF engage in Europe at the end of the Cold War, in southern Africa as Namibia and South Africa unshackled themselves from harsh regimes, and in Central America as Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua moved towards peace.

Junge highlighted how Stålsett’s work with the LWF illustrated how vital it is that Lutherans relate to people of other faiths, showing that religion



*Bishop em. Dr Gunnar Stålsett (right), during his term as LWF General Secretary. Photo: LWF Archives*

should be a force for peace rather than division.

It was during Stålsett’s term as general secretary that the LWF began to understand itself as a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition, Junge said.

“You strongly affirmed the principle that to be Lutheran is to be ecumenical, helping to lay the groundwork that led to the 1999 breakthrough ‘Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification’ with the Roman Catholic Church,” Junge added.

The theologian and politician, who served as bishop of Oslo from 1998 to 2005, is credited by the current LWF general secretary with helping heal a divided world through church and secular efforts.

“You have given strong testimony that it is at the heart of issues of justice, peace and reconciliation in our struggling and wounded world that the newness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ speaks and is received for the sake of transformation,” Junge concluded.



# LWF Consolidates Emergency Operation in Iraq

## Interview with Roland Schlott, LWF Humanitarian Coordinator

**GENEVA (LWI)** – At its first meeting in 2015, the Lutheran World Federation Committee for World Service approved the opening of an emergency operation in Iraq. The LWF has been assisting the refugee crisis in Iraqi Kurdistan since August 2014. Together with and through local implementing partners, LWF has supported people displaced from Mosul, Sinjar and the Nineveh plain with shelter, non-food items and psycho-social support. With the decision of the Committee, LWF will now be working with their own registration in Iraq.

In an interview with the Lutheran World Information (LWI), LWF Humanitarian Coordinator Roland Schlott talks about the challenges in setting up the operation and dealing with one of the largest refugee crises worldwide.

### **Why did the LWF decide to respond in Iraq?**

The LWF is committed to serving the most poor and vulnerable with special regard for refugees and internally displaced persons. We decided to respond because of the dramatic humanitarian needs and the high count of internally displaced persons (IDP) in Northern Iraq.

In July 2014, the militant IS invaded Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, which

has about 4 million inhabitants. The militia inflicted atrocities on ethnic and religious minorities, including the Christian population. In August 2014, the situation in Iraq was declared one of the most severe emergency ("Level 3-emergency") by the UN. The Emergency Response Strategy of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) recommends the presence of LWF in all emergencies of that magnitude. We also had a request for help from the Christian Aid Program in Northern Iraq (CAPNI), a local organization which has worked in the region for many years and is also a longstanding partner of the LWF member church in Bavaria. That member church requested our assistance as well.

### **How did the LWF set up the operation?**

Following immediate deployment of a former LWF staff member who had worked in Iraq in previous years, we identified a number of options for LWF's engagement. We have three so-called emergency hubs on different continents, from where experienced staff can be sent to places where support is needed. The LWF Humanitarian Coordinator deployed two relief workers from the LWF Emergency Response Hub in Kathmandu,

Nepal and a Project Manager from the LWF Jordan Program. They have been on site in Northern Iraq continuously between mid-August and End of December 2014 and assisted the 450,000 displaced people who have taken shelter in Dohuk governorate.

In the beginning, LWF worked as support to CAPNI and the Jiyan foundation/ Kirkuk Center for Torture Victims who were already established in the area. However, it soon became evident that in order to meet the large needs of the people, a greater response capacity was needed. As more donations came in, we also needed additional structures for organizing procurement and distribution quickly and effectively. Therefore the LWF since early January 2015 worked towards obtaining its own registration and operational set-up.

### **How did the LWF assist?**

In the beginning, we assisted people who were internally displaced especially with food baskets and items such as blankets, mattresses, kitchen utensils and hygiene kits. We distributed winter clothing to families and gave wheelchairs to displaced people with disabilities. We also set up bore holes and helped with shelter improvements. Many people do not live in camps but in host communities, in unfinished buildings or houses which are in very poor condition. We provided plastic sheets, wooden frames, hammers and nails to insulate the buildings against the cold wind.

We also did rehabilitation work in public schools, where refugees had been living during the summer break. In addition we provide counseling and community-based psycho-social support together with the Kirkuk Center for Torture Victims and the Jiyan foundation. Until now we have spent about 1 million USD for the response in Iraq, supported by many members of the ACT Alliance.



Distribution of winter clothing to refugees in Khanki camp, Dohuk. Photo: Sandra Cox

### **What were the biggest challenges?**

The biggest challenge was the overwhelming needs. There is an enormous number of displaced people, and many of them could not bring any of their belongings because even their suitcases were taken from them when they left. Due to the large number of people in need, there are also many humanitarian actors on the ground. We need to coordinate very carefully to avoid lack of coverage or duplications. We found the local coordination done by the mayor's offices in the host municipalities most reliable. The high proportion of displaced people living in a scattered pattern among the host population settlements is challenging even to UN mechanisms.

### **How did you meet those challenges?**

The LWF has successfully issued an appeal for funding. The appeal will

be extended to cover the year 2015 and to raise the support needed. To improve coordination, LWF is regularly meeting with working groups of different organizations. We also consult with local authorities, and our staff members are gathering further information through conducting their own assessments. This way we try to identify gaps and mitigate the challenges.

### **How do you see the situation in Iraq developing?**

The situation in the city of Mosul, the Nineveh plain and Sinjal is still volatile. Many of the displaced people come from these areas. We do not expect that they will be able to return anytime soon.

The authorities of Iraqi Kurdistan pursue a military solution to dominate the IS forces with their own Peshmerga soldiers. There is also the potential of a

conflict if a referendum on secession of Kurdistan from the rest of Iraq will go forward as proposed.

Many people were not attacked directly, but left for fear of being attacked. This happened for example in the town of Alqosh near Dohuk, from which most of the displaced people in Dohuk originate. Some of them returned after the Kurdish Peshmerga army had recaptured the area, but they are only a small percentage of the people who fled to Dohuk.

The border areas between Iraq and the autonomous region of Kurdistan seem to be safe. With the support of the international community people might be able to settle here. The LWF will therefore continue assisting the displaced people and their host community in Dohuk governorate and in locations of return in the Alqosh area.

## **Winter Storm Causes Destruction in Za'atari Refugee Camp**

### **Refugees in Camps and Host Communities Most Vulnerable to Extreme Weather**

**AMMAN, Jordan/GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has offered its compound in Za'atari refugee camp to shelter Syrian refugees whose tents have collapsed under snowstorm

“Huda”. The blizzard hit the Middle East on 7 January. “Jordan is partially covered by snow and the ones suffering most are probably the refugees in the camps and host communities” Josef

Pfattner, LWF Interim Team Leader in Jordan, says.

“LWF was able to provide winterization items to 10,000 individuals over the last few weeks”, Pfattner says. In December and in the beginning of January 2,000 families living in host communities each received a gas heater, a gas bottle, two carpets, two blankets and gas refills. “The support was crucial and came in just at the right time” Pfattner says. “We plan to distribute these items to another 415 families but had to postpone due to the weather. We plan to continue in ten days”.

Pfattner visited Za'atari camp the day after the storm where LWF implements a number of projects in a location known as the “Peace Oasis”. “It is also very difficult for the refugees in the camps to cope” he says. “Several tents were blown away and numerous others



*A street leader with his children in front of a half collapsed tent which is used as a Mosque. Photo: LWF/ J. Pfattner*

collapsed over night because of the snow. During the following day, the snow melted. Many places are now flooded”.

## Barefoot in the Cold

In Za'atari refugee camp, home to almost 85,000 people displaced by the war in Syria, 15,000 people still live in tents. “The Jordanian authorities, UNHCR and some international NGOs are coordinating the relief efforts by opening additional provisional shelter units for families and by handing out most essential food and non-food items. We from the LWF have offered four of our caravans in the Peace Oasis to be used for temporary

shelter” Pfattner adds. The containers are normally used to conduct workshops.

“To me it is almost a miracle how children are coping and to still see a smile in their faces”, Pfattner says. Photos show Syrian children building a snow castle beside their collapsed tent. Many of them wear summer shoes in the muddy cold. “There are still thousands of children who do not have winter shoes in the camp” Ms Wejdan Jarrah, Psycho-social Coordinator for LWF in Jordan says. In conversation however refugees did not mention that fact at all. They only asked to be given caravans instead of tents so they would not have to be afraid of their home collapsing again, Pfattner tells.

“Huda” has brought life in Jordan to a standstill. Public offices are closed, people have stocked up on supplies leaving fuel stations and shelves in the super markets empty. Refugees living in host communities are most vulnerable to these shortages, as they live in old buildings and depend on gas heaters for cooking and warmth. “A gas bottle used to cost 8 Jordanian Dinar, now it's 15 JD”, Ms Jarrah says. “No refugee could pay that price. Food prices have risen as well, and there is hardly anything to buy in the shops. Because of the snow there are no deliveries. The situation is very difficult”.

# Commemoration of Haiti Earthquake in LWF Model Village

“We are better prepared now”

**PETIONVILLE, Haiti/ GENEVA (LWI)** – “Li mouri, li mouri...” (He is dead, he is dead). Fabiola is crying in deep grief when she is relaying her story. She is one of 16 habitants from the Model Village that have gathered at the office of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Pétionville in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince, to commemorate the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 7.0 Earthquake, which struck the capital of Haiti at 4.53 pm on Tuesday, 12 January 2010. The participants in this meeting are all very engaged and like Fabiola, they all had relatives who lost their lives.

Each story differs from the other but they have one thing in common. In a miraculous way their lives were spared. They have also been able to continue their lives and turn their trauma into something positive and constructive. There are not only tears this morning when testimonies are shared. Laughter and joy demonstrate that they are not considering themselves as surviving victims. They have been able to rebuild their lives in a new context.

The Model Resettlement Village is situated in Gressier, just west of



*Tiny survivors of the 2010 Haitian earthquake gather outside the Model Resettlement Village in Gressier. Photo: LWF Haiti*

Port-au-Prince, in the area where the earthquake struck hardest. After the disaster in 2010, The LWF together with partners has designed and implemented projects to reduce the disaster risks the communities face. Projects included rebuilding the environment, reducing soil erosion and prevention of flooding through reforestation. The LWF has partnered with the Haitian government, local authorities and civil society.

The Model Resettlement Village consists of 150 new houses. Families whose habitats were destroyed have found a new life here. “The village was built following the principle of ‘Building back Better’”, says Perolof Lundkvist, LWF Representative of the country program in Haiti. “There are now decent houses which are earthquake and cyclone resistant”. The houses have small, beautiful gardens

and solar-powered street lights which make the village clearly visible from the surrounding area.

However, “Building back Better” not only concerns the hardware such as outward construction of houses and village infrastructure. The “software”, the building of a sustainable community, has been of great concern to LWF and its supporting partners. “A self-governed community built on the principles of human rights, democracy

and environment friendly principles has been at the core of the efforts right from the beginning” Lundkvist says. “Much has been done and the development is encouraging but there is still a need for support in this process”.

The commemorating meeting closes with the question: How can we prepare for the future? Everyone in Haiti recognizes that there is a high probability for disasters to happen in this country again among other be-

cause the country is situated directly in a hurricane corridor. The suggestions made by the participants demonstrate that they are living with this reality each day. Perhaps the most encouraging statement comes from the person who is saying: “No matter what happens, we are better prepared now!”

*(Contribution by LWF Haiti/ Perolof Lundkvist)*

## Education for South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma Camp

### “Fostering the Peace in Society”

**KAKUMA, Kenya/GENEVA (LWI)** – Simon Puot Poth believes in education’s ability to bring people together.

“It fosters the peace in society, because it enables people to discuss any differences they have among themselves. If there were no education we would not be in the position to share ideas with each other.”

Peace is very important to Poth. South Sudan, his home country, desperately needs it. Poth is headmaster at Hope Primary School in Kenya’s Kakuma refugee camp. Many of his students come from war-torn South Sudan, and he is a refugee himself, forced to leave his home shortly after the brutal conflict began in December 2013. His three brothers were killed and their homes and properties burned. He has lost contact with his parents and remaining relatives.

“There is nothing I can do. I hope God can protect them wherever they are,” he says.

### Teaching Despite Challenges

Poth is doing everything he can to help, despite the hardships he faces and the difficult circumstances in Kakuma—overcrowding and no permanent water sources being two of many: “I want to help my brothers and sisters better their lives through education.”



*Simon Puot Poth is educating youth displaced by war in South Sudan. Photo: Paul Plett/CLWR*

His leadership is needed. Over 4,500 students were registered at Lutheran World Federation (LWF) emergency schools in May 2014, a number that is expected to double in 2015. His students need school supplies, textbooks and desks where they can do their lessons comfortably, and they need stable classrooms, not tents that flood in the rainy season or blow away in desert winds. Many of the teachers at Poth’s school have previous experience, but not all of them. Poth would like them to have more learning opportunities to develop their skills.

### Hope for Peace

Poth appreciates the support they’ve received and hopes it will continue. In Fall, a shipment of kits and quilts from Canadian Lutheran World Relief arrived in Kakuma camp. Many of the kits contained school supplies. “I knew Canada had been standing behind South Sudan for a very, very long time” he says.

Poth is asking people to encourage South Sudan’s “warring parties at least to bring peace back to South Sudan, so that people can sleep in peace as they used to be before.”

*(By Heather Pryse, Jennifer Clark and Paul Plett, CLWR)*

# Final exams for primary students in Ajuong Thok

## LWF Program Provides Education to Children in Conflict

**AJOUNG THOK, South Sudan/GENEVA (LWI)** – By now they should know if they have studied hard enough: From 30 January to 2 February 2015, 202 students sat their primary level examination in Ajuong Thok refugee camp. Before, the students had been attending Napata and Merowe Primary schools in Ajuong Thok, where a total of 2,574 students were enrolled by the end of 2014.

“This will be the first group of learners to sit for primary level examination in Ajuong Thok,” says Annet Kiura, the Education Coordinator of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The high number of candidates is a result of the political crisis in December 2013, which resulted in the South Sudan National examinations being postponed, Ms Kiura explains. The examinations are managed by Unity State though LWF facilitated the transportation and execution of the process. After successful completion, the grade 8 students will be able to proceed to secondary level education.

LWF is the Implementing Partner for Education and Child Protection in Ajuong Thok refugee camp and has provided these services since

March, 2013. LWF aims to improve education, protection, resilience and psycho social well-being of children in the camp through 3 primary schools, one secondary school, child friendly spaces and community based protection systems within the refugee camp.

### A Safe Learning Environment

Another group of students has yet to sit their examination: The 1,145 teenage students enrolled in the Accelerated Learning Program, which started only in 2014. The Accelerated Learning Program funded by the ECHO Children of Peace grant is an education solution tailored for over-age learners whose school attendance was interrupted by conflict. There are many youth in the South Sudanese refugee camps which did not even have basic primary education when they had to leave their homes. When trying to make up for the lost time in a refugee camp, their level of knowledge forces them to attend primary school and share a classroom with six-year olds, who have a very different learning behavior. Many of them drop out of school entirely.

The ALP run by the LWF was designed for those students. They cover the curriculum for two primary years in one year’s time. In spring 2014, altogether 5,400 students from various refugee camps and host communities were enrolled in the program.

LWF is also running 6 Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) to protect more than 1,700 refugee children in Ajuong Thok. These children attend the CFS from Monday to Friday under the close watch of facilitators who ensure that the children are protected as they come to play. During the morning hours, children aged 3-6 years attend the CFS while in the afternoon, children aged 7 – 17 years of age attend after school hours.

### New Plan for Increased Conflict Needed

Activities engaged in at the CFS vary and include singing, reading, drawing, recreational activities like hula loops, building blocks, football, netball, dominos and designing mats. The children are provided with an informal education and they learn to interact and exercise their right to play. Child friendly spaces provide a safe environment for all children at risk including Unaccompanied and separated children.

According to UN statistics, about 19,000 refugees are now living in Ajuong Thok, with 105 more arriving every day. Half of the refugees are children, increasing the pressure on the few educational facilities and child friendly spaces available.

The war in South Kordofan, Sudan has resumed with more intensity. Aerial bombings have destroyed basic facilities including schools and hospitals in South Kordofan, Sudan. “The result is an increased influx of refugees to Yida settlement and Ajuong Thok Refugee Camp in South Sudan,” says



Primary school students sit their final examination at Napata school in Ajuong Thok refugee camp, South Sudan. Photo: LWF South Sudan

Anne Mwaura, the LWF Team Leader in Ajuong Thok.

The border disputes with the Northern neighbor South Sudan separated from in 2011 is but one challenge LWF staff face is providing education to refugee children. The situation is

further aggravated by on-going conflict between the different factions within South Sudan and the delayed peace agreement expected from the current Addis Ababa talks. "At the close of 2014, the program planning figures for 2015 were far less than the current

population of children in the refugee camps", says LWF team leader Anne Mwaura. "We now need to develop a plan and mobilize resources to address the emerging needs of the high population in Ajuong Thok," adds the team leader.

## Children's Education Supported in Myanmar

### Second phase for EU project in Rakhine State Launched

**SITTWE, Myanmar/GENEVA (LWI)** – On 4 February 2015, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Myanmar program launched a new educational assistance project in Rakhine State with support of European Union (EU) funding. .

"Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State" is the continuation of a project funded by Europe Aid through the Children of Peace Initiative, which was created after the EU received the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize. The follow-up project officially started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2015 and will end on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2017.

The project means to improve the quality of teaching and learning and increase the children's safety and well-being.

It includes the rehabilitation of classrooms, latrines and other facilities in formal schools as well as access to

a safe learning environment to children in camps for internally displaced people (IDP).

### Right to Education for all

With a budget of approximately 2 Million Euros, the project will cover at least 12 formal schools and 19 camps/host villages in the four Rakhine townships of Sittwe, Pauktaw, Mrauk U and Ann. 7,056 students in formal schools and 8,198 IDP children from the age of 3 to 17 years will benefit directly.

"LWF often starts its work with local communities in times of emergency, but we are committed to long-term sustainable development," said David H. Mueller, Regional Representative of LWF Myanmar and South East Asia. "That is why we are starting this 3-year Education Project in Rakhine. We work very closely with the partner

communities and through the existing Government Structures"

Working with both formal schools for Buddhist Rakhine and education activities for Muslim IDP populations will also ensure equality in an area affected by poverty where seemingly unequal support can easily cause tensions among communities. "This project respects the right to education for all children," Mueller said.

### "Ensure holistic approach"

Mueller further emphasized the close collaboration with the State Education Department and the respective Township Education Offices. "We recognize that the Government is the primary duty bearer to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the people. In Rakhine we coordinate our work with government and non-government organizations to ensure a holistic approach that recognizes the respective roles, responsibilities and capacities of all stakeholders".

"To accomplish this goal, and the contributing objectives of the Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State Project, we need the support of all of you here," Mueller said at the official opening of the program, adding that LWF Myanmar was "proud to be funded by the European Union and guided by the State Education Department".

Mueller stated that the involvement of the local authorities in assessment, planning and implementation of the project and the handing over of the



Community-school teacher training for the Children of Peace project in Sittwe.  
Photo: LWF Myanmar

school and the water, health and sanitation facilities to School Management Committees will ensure the sustainability of the program.

### Need for more implementing capacity

The Chief Minister of Rakhine State Mr U Maung Maung Ohn emphasized the improvement for the education of children in Rakhine State and stressed

the need for reliable implementing partners. “I would like to highlight LWF and the EU joint program work with children in non-conflict areas of Rakhine State,” he said, inviting other organizations for similar partnerships.

“Opportunities for promoting this in 2015 do exist and the alignment of all NGO-provided education with the Government system is one way of facilitating greater involvement and promoting transition. However, this

requires not only more funding but also more implementing capacity, from NGOs as well as the Government, as current partners are reaching their limit,” the minister added.

LWF has been active in Myanmar since 2008, assisting vulnerable communities in Rakhine state with emergency response, water sanitation and hygiene, food and livelihood security and workshops about human rights and disaster risk reduction.

## LWF South Sudan Staff Arrives Safely in Juba

### Call for protection of the humanitarian space

**JUBA, South Sudan/GENEVA (LWI)** – LWF staff who were detained in Jiech while traveling on a UN flight in South Sudan have been released and arrived safely in the South Sudanese capital of Juba.

On 3 February, 2 LWF national staff and 2 LWF international staff travelled from Mabiok to Juba in their professional capacity. They were using a United Nations Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) helicopter. When the helicopter landed in Jiech, three passengers including the two national LWF staff were withheld after which the helicopter continued to Bor. In Bor the remaining passengers were detained while the UN was asked to resolve the issue of the passengers remaining in Jiech.

On 5 February, the UN was able to negotiate the release of the staff withheld in Jiech and ensure that they were transported to the capital of Juba. The staff detained in Bor were allowed to proceed to Juba one day later as well.

“We are grateful that our colleagues are safe and back in Juba,” says Emile Mpanya, LWF World Service country representative in South Sudan. “This incident, however, is an expression of the shrinking humanitarian space, which we view with great regret. Both our in-



*The returning LWF staff were welcomed by a crowd at Juba airport. Photo: LWF/ E. Mpanya*

ternational and national colleagues are humanitarian workers deeply committed to serving people in South Sudan. It is worrisome that a humanitarian flight is directly targeted as we have seen in these last days. The LWF has been present in South Sudan providing humanitarian aid and development assistance for over three decades. We are committed to keep serving people in South Sudan but we need to ensure that this can be done without putting our colleagues at risk.”

LWF supports people displaced by the ongoing conflicts in South Su-

dan. In working with local authorities, communities and organizations, LWF provides humanitarian assistance to disaster-affected populations through primary and secondary education, child protection, psychosocial support, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH), non-food items (NFI) and assistance in rebuilding livelihoods.

LWF serves all people irrespective of ethnicity, gender, religion, race, or political conviction.

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# Refugees in Cameroon Assisted through LWF/ UNHCR Partnership

## Sanitation, Livelihoods and Peace workshops

**DOUALA, Cameroon / GENEVA (LWI)** – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) will partner with the UN refugee agency UNHCR to assist refugees in Cameroon. After conducting an assessment in 2014, LWF developed a concept note for refugee assistance and was accepted as a partner by UNHCR in Cameroon for 2015.

The refugees in Cameroon originate from the Central African Republic (CAR), where conflicts between Seleka and Anti-Balaka militia caused unrest and displacement. The United Nations witnessed a great influx of refugees in early 2014, when the situation in CAR deteriorated. Previously Cameroon already was home to a great number of refugees who arrived from CAR in 2006. The last year saw a great number of new arrivals due to civil unrest in CAR and Nigeria.

The refugees from CAR who sought asylum in Cameroon settled mainly in the villages in the East and Adamawa



*LWF team leader in Cameroon helping women and children prepare food. Photo: LWF Cameroon*

regions. Many of them joined relatives and friends who had come to these villages as refugees in 2006.

According to UNHCR estimates the Adamawa region is currently hosting 63,795 Central African refugees, with another 151,290 in additional refugee

in the East region. The majority of the refugees are women and children.

LWF has now started to implement activities in water and sanitation and creating sustainable livelihoods. It is also planned to conduct workshops for peace and reconciliation.

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