

Women on the Move



WOMEN IN
CHURCH AND
SOCIETY
THE LUTHERAN
WORLD FEDERATION



Women on the Move



Vision & Mission of the LWF



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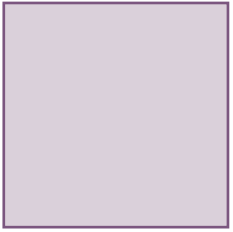
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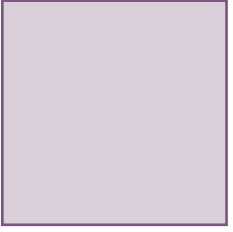
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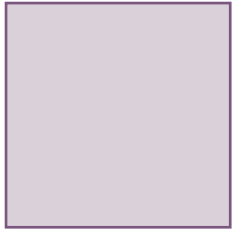
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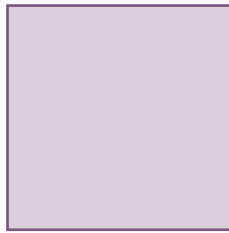
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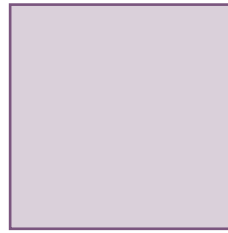
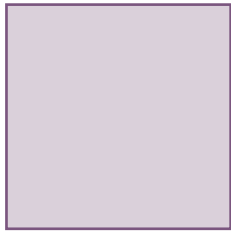


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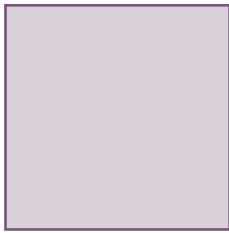
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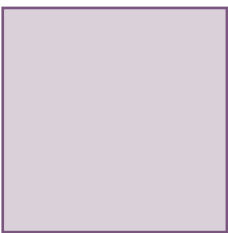
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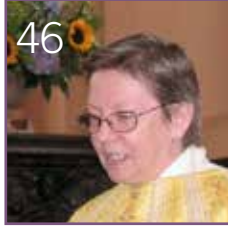
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To Start with... Foreword by the General Secretary

In my sermon at the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation with the Roman Catholic Church in Lund, Sweden, in 2016, I quoted the Latin American writer Eduardo Galeano: “History is a prophet who looks back: because of what was, and against what was, it announces what will be.”

That same sentence came to my mind, as I held this, *Women on the Move*, publication in my hands. This book also looks back on the journey undertaken by the LWF as a whole, but more particularly by women in the LWF on their journey towards full inclusion and participation in the life of the church and of society.

This retrospective is extremely important. By writing down the different stages and milestones, they are named, registered, and they are also secured for posterity. In this way, others who were not part of the early stages of the journey initiated decades ago will be able to appreciate the steps taken so far, and the overall direction of these journeys of inclusion and participation. Looking back at history, they will get a better sense of their present situation and what informs it.

This publication is in essence prophetic as it announces what is still to come. It does not merely recount past events and milestones but records history for the sake of the yet unwritten pages, which we can already see with the eyes of faith in Christ .

Jesus Christ came so that all who believe in him may find life in abundance, therefore inclusion and participation, as well as gender justice have their roots deep in faith itself. Jesus offered words and actions that time and again told the story of justice, of compassion and inclusion, the fully restored dignity of every human being. He never ceased to challenge power structures, he was a non-conformist for God’s sake, because he incarnated God’s redeeming mission in the world.

This publication draws on the constitutive biblical narratives, and on our faith in the Triune God. Because of what was, and also sometimes against what was, *Women on the Move* announces what will come as we pray for God’s Kingdom to come.

I commend this publication to you, not just as a “women’s publication.” Rather, it is a publication for both men and women who have been touched by faith, kissed awake by hope and transformed by love.

Rev. Dr Martin Junge, General Secretary, The Lutheran World Federation.



Women's Empowerment and Gender Justice: The Lutheran World Federation's Programmatic Agenda in Women in Church and Society (WICAS)

The Lutheran World Federation has a long-standing commitment and strategy to ensure the empowerment of women, both in occupying leadership positions in member churches, and in the wider life of the communion.

In the strategy, the LWF identified gender justice as a crosscutting priority. This is a decision that concerns every part of the LWF. For a priority to be crosscutting means that every process, structure, plan, program and project is to be accountable to gender justice. Gender justice is no longer confined or limited as a question separate from the whole, but becomes part of the work of every unit, project, or program. Implementing gender justice as a crosscutting priority implies methodological shifts in planning for the whole organization. It also entails an intentional structural realignment in which gender analysis becomes a key element in decision making. This crosscutting communion focus has been an ongoing effort in the programmatic work led by the Office for Women in Church and Society (WICAS).

How the work is done: networks and platforms

WICAS' regional networks are the main platforms for discussing and implementing strategic issues and embedding them contextually. These processes are facilitated by regional coordinators, who are the officially designated contact people in the member churches, and are responsible for developing and coordinating work plans enhancing women's leadership, and gender justice practices in the regions. The regional women's network has worked with a set of defined common priorities which are contextualized in each region: women in leadership; full participation of women in decision making; women theologians' network and reflections; gender justice policy implementation; women's stories and experiences in the ongoing Reformation; and advocacy and women's citizenship.

WICAS has worked intentionally to organize and integrate the theological reflections of women theologians into gender justice commitments and strategies throughout the communion. Women theologians have a mission to address the intersections of culture, religion, and the faith-based perspectives that influence perceptions, mold behaviors, and are used to exclude women. It remains crucial to continue to formulate theological discourse in such a way as to resist exclusion. This prophetic discourse needs to articulate gender-based struggles for dignity and justice, and promote life in its fullness for *all* human beings.



The participation of women in the ordained ministry and leadership: women on the move in ongoing reformation

In 2015 the Lutheran World Federation undertook an analysis of the participation of women in ordained ministry and leadership in LWF member churches.¹ A survey was sent to the leadership and the women's network of each member church, asking questions on the following topics: the status and practices related to the participation of women in the ordained ministry; when the decision to ordain women was taken, and how the first ordained women are remembered; how quota policies are used to achieve gender balance in leadership; and in churches not yet ordaining women, the main reasons for that.

Of the 145 member churches that received the survey, 83 replied, giving a 57 percent return. Of the 145 member churches, 26 do not yet ordain women. Regionally, these 26 churches are distributed as follows: in Africa, 9 out of 31; in Asia, 13 out of 54; in Eastern Europe, 4 out of 16.

This means that in the LWF, 82 percent of the member churches ordain or accept women into the ordained ministry in principle. Some churches in this category have not yet started to ordain, but they have women studying theology, or are preparing women for the ordained ministry.

The Lutheran World Federation affirms the commitment to embrace inclusiveness as a core value. LWF assemblies and council meetings, which are the main decision-making bodies, officially and transparently decided that the gift of women in the ordained ministry is a distinctive value to be pursued in the global communion. Since the Seventh Assembly in 1984, in Budapest, the following five LWF assemblies have each clearly affirmed women in the ordained ministry.

Processes and policy

In 2010, the Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart approved two resolutions: one on gender justice, and a further standing resolution on inclusivity. This Assembly also took the decision to develop a gender justice policy, with the request that the LWF Communion Office develop such a document. This Assembly drew a clear line from the LWF's decades-long journey of engagement for justice between men and women, to a next step, which was the development of a gender justice policy. Over the course of time, for example, the communion has learned that ensuring the presence of women, securing a quota for women, does not yet guarantee women's participation.

A Gender Advisory Group was constituted and given the task of designing a process to promote and facilitate guidelines for a gender justice policy in the Lutheran Communion.

The members of the Gender Advisory Group were:

- Ranjitha Borgoary (United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India)
- Mary Streufert (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)
- Thomas Schollas (Evangelical Lutheran Church in North Germany)
- Colleen Cunningham (Council member, Moravian Church in South Africa)
- Fabian Wilches (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Colombia)
- Colette Bouka-Coula, staff from the Department of World Service, advisor on development and humanitarian work
- Fulata Moyo, Program Executive of the Just Community of Women and Men, World Council of Churches, ecumenical advisor

The adoption of a gender justice policy by the governing bodies (Council 2013) with the recommendation of contextualized plans of action made clear the aim to be proactive, to move beyond mere good intentions, and actually develop practical measures of gender justice in the communion. The policy is biblically and theologically grounded, and includes deepening the understanding of Lutheran identity related to gender justice. The *Gender Justice Policy* sets out the history of landmark decisions taken in the LWF, and the commitments made in its programmatic work to address violence

against women or to affirm institutional mechanisms to advance and support women in leadership. The *Gender Justice Policy* is a practical tool to address structural challenges, ensure the implementation of the quota system, and move mechanisms forward that lead to full participation. The *Gender Justice Policy* seeks to advance the actual practice of gender justice across all spheres of the communion, it provides a framework for regional implementation, and a clear action plan to develop contextualized processes and guidelines.

Challenges and opportunities

It is a long process to use the methodology of gender analysis, to scrutinize and deconstruct inequalities in faith-based and theological contexts. The revival of patriarchal values in many parts of the world in the last two decades, makes for a challenging context to work on gender justice and feminist theology. Such a revival tends to link notions of traditional values and religion, as opposed to gender equality, and women's human rights.

It is important to carry forward women's ecumenical and interfaith reflections, as well as the interaction between feminist and gender justice perspectives as part of the commitment to address growing fundamentalism and the instrumentalization of religion in politics, and vice versa. These convictions will continue to inspire, and be integrated into, the future agenda of the Lutheran communion. We are at a key juncture in time, for clearly setting out a critical feminist approach to religion and faith. The LWF women's networks are an excellent platform to bring together women, men, theologians, lay persons, ordained ministers, and activists, to elaborate both the practical and theological parameters of this critical discourse. The work on women's empowerment and gender justice requires hard work but is also an opportunity for the LWF communion.

Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt, Executive Secretary,
Women in Church and Society,
The Lutheran World Federation.

¹ <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-participation-women-ordained-ministry-and-leadership-lwf-member-churches>





Susannah B. Telewoda

Susan Telewoda of the Lutheran Church in Liberia was a delegate at the 1984 LWF Assembly in Budapest, Hungary. She thought of herself simply as a faithful churchgoer who believed in being actively involved in her local church. To her surprise, at the Assembly, she was elected as one of the five vice-presidents of the Lutheran World Federation, the first from Africa. As she says in her own words, “I don’t think personally that it had anything to do with me. I didn’t know anyone [at the Assembly] and I had never seen most of those people before. I was a newcomer. It was just by the grace of God that it all happened.”

Despite her initial reservations, she graciously accepted the position, and served from 1984 to 1990, at the onset of the Liberian Civil War. Looking back over those years, she believes that God truly positioned her for that role at the right time. Having decided to quit her formal employment in 1984 to care for an ailing parent, a few months later the late Bishop Roland J. Payne asked her to serve as a delegate for her church. She felt that she could not refuse.

Her term of service coincided with major events globally and across the African continent. She feels that she had overwhelming support compared to women from other regions of the world. “From my local church [in Liberia], women had the freedom to do what they were capable of doing, so I didn’t come from a history of those kinds of [gender] barriers. Whatever I was asked to do, I had no problem in fulfilling the task within the parameters with which our church had afforded me and other women in our church.” She also highlights the LWF’s diligence in actively engaging women in leadership roles during those years.

Reflecting on the greatest achievement during her tenure, she recalls the successful efforts made to reconcile the global and regional Lutheran churches of the apartheid region of Southern Africa. She knows that there is still more work to be done and strongly asserts that women can and should be an active part of the church’s work and transformation of society. “Often women shy away from what has to be done. Women should try to do whatever they have been asked to do, because there is already a bias not to allow women to be in diverse positions, and [the lack of women in these key roles] would reinforce the stereotype that women cannot fulfill these various tasks,” she cautions. Telewoda is now retired but continues to work primarily in the area of education. She runs a vocational training school for youth living with Down’s syndrome, to provide them with life and survival skills in Liberia.

Nyamah E. Dunbar





Ana Villanueva

Ana Villanueva was born in Argentina. She is member of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Geneva. She served as a member of the WICAS Advisory Committee from 1986 to 1988, and as an LWF staff member from 1989 to 2000. She has served as Executive Assistant to the LWF General Secretary since 2014.

In 1989, Villanueva left Buenos Aires, where she had been working as a school teacher and had been very active both in her local church and ecumenically. She joined the LWF Office for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) as the conference assistant for the women's pre-assembly in Mexico City in 1989, prior to the Eighth Assembly of the LWF in 1990. What was initially a fifteen-month assignment turned into a long-term commitment to WICAS.

The pre-assembly in Mexico City, with the theme "Open our Eyes," marked a turning point in her professional career, as she moved from being involved with her local church to the "open waters" of the global participation of women in church and society.

This was not her first encounter with the LWF. From 1986 to 1988, she served as a member of the Advisory Committee to WICAS, which allowed her to play an active role in Latin America. In Dr Musimbi Kanyoro's words "these seven women [the Advisory Committee] have struggled with issues and with people, with the ultimate goal of helping to create an inclusive church and society."

Villanueva had intended to return to Argentina after the 1990 Curitiba Assembly in order to resume the work that remains close to her heart, namely teaching. However, each attempt to return "home" was postponed as a new chapter unfolded in her engagement with WICAS. In 2000, she left the LWF and joined the World YWCA, where she continued working with Dr Kanyoro, then General Secretary of the World YWCA. Before starting in her new position in LWF in 2014, she wrote:

"God has incredible plans for our lives, and if we are willing to listen and dare to risk following God's call, we might find ourselves in the most unexpected circumstances, meeting the most extraordinary people. Stories, faces, joys and sorrows, challenging perspectives on life, personal friendships and women from Africa, Asia, Latin and North America and Europe have enriched my life up to a point I would have never imagined. During all these years, I was called every day to rediscover that we are not born women, but become women, as we allow ourselves to be sensitive and assertive, smooth and firm, solitary and visionary, as we give ourselves and still keep a high sense of self-esteem and as we work seeking recognition for all, regardless of age and race, gender, social, economic or physical condition."

LWF Archives

Women on the Move: Women Walking Together in Solidarity

1947 to 1992: The Continuing Journey

Women on the Move – this motto is not just about women’s agency as primary movers of important processes of change. Its deeper spiritual meaning connects to the movement of the life-giving Word and breath of God. Moved by the Holy Spirit, women discern what makes for life, justice and peace on their journey towards a just and sustainable world that reflects the values and hopes of God’s reign to come. This is a transformative journey, nourished and energized by God’s gift of grace, which opens up new horizons.

This book tells the story of the journey of women, and their participation in the life and work of the Lutheran world communion through the Office for Women in Church and Society (WICAS). It concentrates on the work of the Office in the last twenty-five years. The first twenty years of WICAS, and the beginning of the work for a community of women and men in authentic partnership in the Lutheran World Federation was well documented and assessed in the 1992 publication, *The Continuing Journey: Women’s Participation in the Lutheran World Federation (CJ)*.

The LWF has come a long way since its founding Assembly in 1947 in Lund. Only four or perhaps five women were among the 178 delegates (2.8 percent) with twenty further women as visitors. But step by step, the situation began to shift, starting with the document, *Women of the Church – the Living Word Gives Woman Her Place in Church and Society*, which brought the following recommendation to the 1949 LWF Executive Committee in preparation for the 1952 Hanover Assembly:

We wish to say with all possible emphasis that we are not interested in securing rights for ourselves. Something much more vital is at stake: the proper place, the God-intended place of women in the fellowship of the Christian church (CJ 14).

Three women were appointed to serve on the Commission on Stewardship and Congregational Life, a very small step, but an opportunity to begin discussions on women’s pre-assemblies, and other means to strengthen women’s participation. There were only eighteen women as delegates at the 1957 Assembly in Minneapolis, but many more came as visitors. A side event, the Women’s Leadership Luncheon, had 1,300 participants, in comparison to 50-100 at similar side events. The modest call to consider the appointment of women to all commissions was the only decision by the Assembly concerning women, but a threshold by the women themselves showing up in such great numbers.

The First International Conference for Lutheran Women was organized in 1963 in Germany as a pre-assembly conference for the 1963 Helsinki Assembly. About fifty women from twenty-two countries met. Most of them were delegates to the Helsinki Assembly, so this time the women were well prepared. They found the support of the Assembly for their call for the formation of a Continuation Committee on Women’s Work and a staff position in Geneva, although important aspects such as the question of the budget were left open. But women moved on and reached a decisive turning point at the 1969 pre-assembly conference in Sweden in preparation for the 1970 Evian Assembly. The conference advocated for the stronger role of women in the decision making of the LWF, and a staff position for Continuing Education for Women as part of the Commission on Studies and Consultative Service. The Evian Assembly established the Women’s



Desk of the LWF in the Department of Studies, which was filled two years later (1972) by Eva Zabolai-Csekme as executive secretary.

During the following years, the number of Lutheran churches ordaining women increased significantly. A report on *women in the church* stated:

[T]he Church needs to understand that effective proclamation of the message is possible on the basis of the new community in Christ, a community which transcends the barriers between rich and poor, male and female, young and old, people of different races and nations.

The struggle of women to be recognized by the church and to be totally integrated into the Christian community has to be taken seriously not only as human rights issue, but also as struggle for creating a basis for effective proclamation (CJ 37).

The Women's Desk organized ten leadership training workshops between 1974 and 1977, the year of the Dar es Salaam Assembly. An Advisory Committee on Women was formed as a think tank in 1975. An international consultation for women was organized in 1976 in Colombo as a forum for women from the LWF member churches. Although women were represented at the Assembly with only twenty-two percent of the delegates, the number of women in commissions and the Executive Committee increased. Women distributed hundreds of buttons stating, "The New Community Includes Women." Women were no longer silent. The Commission on World Service established a twenty-five percent quota for women. The Assembly also called for the formation of the Office of Women in Church and Society. In 1978, regional consultants were appointed to strengthen links with churches and grass roots in Africa and Asia. WICAS replaced the Women's Desk, with Eva von Hertzberg as executive secretary from 1980 onwards. The priority was to get women involved in opening church structures to women's participation. New and challenging theological arguments had to be developed.

The work was consolidated and expanded in the regions. Cooperation, both with the WCC and in terms of communication, was strengthened. The main emphasis remained women's participation in the churches. At the 1984 Budapest Assembly, women demonstrated for greater participation and visibility. The Assembly spoke of the sin of sexism, "which denies and restricts the participation of women in church and society." It "must be recognized and overcome" (CJ 54). It called for at least forty percent women's participation in assemblies.

WICAS continued to cooperate with the WCC and non-governmental organizations advocating for women's rights and participation in United Nations' programs and agencies. Musimbi Kanyoro started as WICAS executive secretary in 1988. She underlined the value of community and leadership that is based on shared power. The main objectives of the Fifth International Consultation for Women that was held in 1989, in Mexico, reflected her emphasis on Scripture and worship, women's role in addressing issues on the agenda of the world (i.e., poverty, the debt crisis, militarism, violence, the integrity of creation) and strategic steps to strengthen women's participation in the church. Increasingly women made their voices heard, and took greater responsibility in church structures and leadership.





The 1990 Curitiba Assembly met the quota objective, with forty-three percent of women delegates and fifty percent of women as speakers in the assembly program. Forty-one and a half percent of the members of the new Council and Executive Committee elected at Curitiba were women.



The Assembly marked a turning point for the LWF. The Assembly unambiguously affirmed the shift from the LWF as “a free association of Lutheran churches” to the LWF as “a communion of churches which confess the Triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God, and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship.”¹



Guided by the theme “I have Heard the Cry of my People,” the Assembly turned intentionally to the context of the world where the gospel message takes shape as a call to justice and peace. Both these characteristics of the Assembly initiated a major restructuring of the LWF Secretariat. WICAS moved from the Department of Studies to the Department of Mission and Development (DMD).

2. Clear Plan of Action: 1992 to 1997

The Assembly’s commitments formed and informed the direction for programs and actions:

We commit ourselves and our member churches to intensify our efforts to be a sign of an inclusive communion in the world.

To that end we will work out a clear plan of action in every member church which fully expresses the equality of men and women within the life of the church and enables the churches to benefit from the potential which women are able to give to all areas of church life.

We will undertake, through consultation and cooperation of all member churches and in a climate of mutual respect, practical efforts to open the way for women to enter the ordained ministry of all member churches and initiate and participate in programmes of the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women (Assembly Message – quoted from *A Clear Plan of Action*).

The introduction to the *Clear Plan of Action (CPA)* states:

[T]he point of reference for the LWF’s women’s programme will shift from that of percentages of women as delegates on committees or in leadership positions – although this must continue where it has not yet been achieved – to an examination of the long term commitment of the churches in addressing the actual issues affecting women in the life of the church and society (*CPA* 1f).



The plan presents strategies and methodologies to address six main concerns that were identified in a consultative process:

- Leadership development
- Justice for women
- Women’s involvement in social, cultural, economic and political realities of the world
- Action against violation of women’s rights
- Theological studies
- Encouraging member churches to include women’s perspectives in thinking and teaching.

The report, *The Unfolding Vision: An Evaluative Report the LWF/DMD Desk for Women in Church and Society 1988–1997*, covers the period when Musimbi Kanyoro was executive secretary. During the implementation of the *Clear Plan of Action*, the issue of violence against women, the need for gender analysis, and a gender approach that includes men in the search for new masculinities, became more and more important. Both have to be addressed if the negative impact of patriarchal culture that blocks any change in favor of women's rights and participation in church and society is to be named and overcome.

This shift reflects the lessons learned by participating in advocacy with the United Nations' processes around the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt, in September 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, with the Beijing Declaration. The focus on women and development was replaced by a more comprehensive approach to women's empowerment and women's rights, with the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

The Unfolding Vision includes as Appendix 4 (59 ff.) a discussion paper by Musimbi Kanyoro on the question, "Does the LWF need a Gender Desk or a Women's Desk?" This document remains a fervent plea for gender analysis, gender education, a gender perspective on leadership styles and forms of work, and a gender balanced employment policy. It also called for the creation of a position for a theologian with a background in feminist theology, and for member churches to examine the cultural norms, customs, and theologies that undermine the participation of women. Musimbi Kanyoro advocated for a shift from WICAS to GICAS or GOLD – a Gender Orientation and Liaison Desk.

No to Violence Against Women: 1998 to 2008

Men and women: gender and the theology of the churches. The 1998 Hong Kong Assembly introduced a gender approach in recognition of the diverse understandings of gender roles in different societies, cultures, and religions. More and more Lutheran churches relented in resistance to the ordination of women. Women in the eucharistic ministry was another theme that was addressed by the Assembly in response to changing realities. An insistence on eucharistic communion without distinction of race, ethnicity, or gender was a strong expression of equality in gender relationships, the sharing of power, and justice.

Priscilla Singh followed Musimbi Kanyoro as WICAS executive secretary in 1998. She had previously served as WICAS Asia coordinator, and supported the struggle of Dalit women in India, who were exposed to extreme forms of caste-based and male violence. Women in the member churches of the different regions of the world were invited to reflect on the issue of violence against women, develop action plans to overcome it, and contribute texts to a publication on the issue.

The publication *Churches Say "No" to Violence against Women. Action Plan for the Churches* was the fruit of collaborative work between 1999 and 2001. It begins with a chapter on violence against women as a matter of faith and sin. It presents an analysis of different forms of personal violence and explores options to transform the realities of church and society, concerning structural violence, cultural violence, the effects of economic globalization and modernization, and the practices of the church. *Churches Say "No" to Violence against Women* is one of the most widely translated publications of the LWF, a success based on the relevance of the issue for so many women and men around the world, and on the consultative approach it proposed. As a result, more than thirty projects of LWF member churches worked with the proposed plan of action.

The 2003 Winnipeg Assembly criticized patriarchal justifications for the refusal to ordain women, or for barring women from full participation in decision making. The delegates committed themselves to promote the full inclusion of women and youth in all aspects of the life and work of the churches and society, and to dialogue on areas of disagreement, such as the understanding and practice of the ministry of men and women both ordained and lay (*For the Healing of the World*, LWF Official Report, 51–52).

WICAS convened the first Conference of Women bishops, presidents, and leaders in ministry in 2005. It recommended holding regular meetings of women in church leadership, and advocated for the ordination of women in all LWF member churches, and the full implementation of the Budapest decision on the quota for women's participation. In addition, WICAS continued leadership training at regional and national levels, introduced a gender component in all LWF development projects, and offered gender training and reflections on gender and power. Violence against women will not end without changing gender roles that are expressions of patriarchal cultures. The document "*It will not be so among you!*" *A Faith Reflection on Gender and Power* presented results of the WICAS project on gender and power. It was published after Priscilla Singh's departure in 2008.

4. Gender Justice Policy: 2009 to 2013

By this time, it was clear that progress in women's empowerment and participation required a strong focus on gender justice. With this goal, a promising way forward was a human rights-based approach to gender justice, on the theological basis that all human beings are created in the image of God, alongside the introduction of gender policies. Receiving the document "*It will not be so among you!*" *A Faith Reflection on Gender and Power* in 2009, the LWF Council encouraged member churches to contribute to a follow-up process that would lead to a gender justice policy for the LWF and its member churches.

This task was taken up and implemented in a consultative and educational process by Elaine Neuenfeldt, who succeeded Priscilla Singh as WICAS executive secretary in 2008. The 2010 LWF Assembly in Stuttgart approved a resolution on principles of inclusivity and gender balance, reaffirming and further specifying the forty percent quota for women and men in a resolution on gender justice:

We call on the Assembly to urge member churches to re-commit to genuine, practical and effective implementation of LWF policies and decisions regarding the full participation of women in the life of the church – and the LWF communion – as well as society.

We call on member churches to set appropriate legislation and regulatory policies that enable and ensure women in leadership positions – ordained and lay – and the opportunities to pursue theological education. We ask that churches who do not ordain women prayerfully consider the effect that inaction and refusal on this matter has on those who are precluded from exercising their God-given calling because they are women. The pain of exclusion and the loss of God-given gifts are experienced by the whole church.

We call on member churches and the LWF Secretariat to include gender analyses, as biblical and theological tools, in all aspects of the life of member churches in the communion, including diaconal and advocacy work.

We ask for a clear action plan for the development of contextualized gender policies that may be implemented on all levels in the member churches and be mandatory for the LWF secretariat. We call on the Council to develop and approve such a guiding process.

We call for the support of women leaders, lay and ordained, particularly women bishops and presidents, as vital members of the communion.

We call for the LWF and its member churches to make a clear stand against domestic violence, acknowledging every person's right to feel safe and respectfully treated, also when in their own homes.

We ask the Council to have the issue of gender justice as a standing item on its agenda (*GJP*, 6 f.).

The following years were used to develop a well thought out and sophisticated Gender Justice Policy for the LWF (*GJP*), which was adopted by the LWF Council in 2013, in Geneva. The document was published in 2013, and sets out its biblical foundation and rationale, the principles of the LWF *GJP*, the methodology used, a glossary and further resources.

5. Women on the Move

Women on the Move – from Wittenberg to Windhoek (WMWW) celebrated and affirmed the leadership of women towards the 2017 LWF Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia. A global working group was formed through the WICAS regional coordination network to plan, strategize, monitor and lead actions and initiatives to enhance women’s leadership across the communion at global and regional levels. The process moves forward in four main areas:



- Empowerment of women in leadership and decision making: processes and actions at regional and global levels to empower and support women taking up leadership positions;
- Implementation and contextualization of the *GJP* to ensure the appropriate implementation of the *GJP* at all levels/expressions of the communion. This includes trainings and the translation of the *GJP* into various languages;
- Women doing theology: Enhance the visibility of the women theologians’ network and its outcomes;
- Her-Stories – telling women’s stories and experiences in the ongoing Reformation: Establish working groups and processes in the regions, to ensure that “her stories” are collected and published. WICAS has developed a methodology with guiding questions and guidelines in order to facilitate the articulation of Her-Stories at the regional and global levels.²

Women on the Move postcards is a creative initiative to provide visibility to women reformers that was started by the women’s network of WICAS in Western Europe, and is being translated and used across the communion.

WICAS continues to work toward strengthening and affirming women in leadership and decision making. The goal is to ensure that women are empowered and supported to take up leadership positions. WICAS is also committed to building a global Lutheran Women Theologians’ Network. It develops processes that open doors, and designs itineraries enhancing women doing theology in different church spaces, as well as in theological institutions, and the public sphere. Advocacy for women’s human rights remains a core issue for WICAS. Standing up for gender justice is essential to what we are as a communion of churches. Be it from the pulpit, in our decision-making bodies, or in the gender balance of programs, for the LWF being vocal and proactive in ensuring the respect of women’s human rights is indivisible from the biblical understanding of the meaning justice.

WICAS’ efforts specifically focus on:

- The role of faith communities in ending harmful practices for women and girls, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation;
- The collaboration with the United Nations and civil society organizations to overcome gender discrimination and gender-based violence;
- The empowerment of women through the knowledge of their rights and supporting women’s networks to interact with governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders, using UN mechanisms;
- Deepening the reflection of our member churches and other faith communities to avoid the misuse of religion as a justification for the abuse of power over women and girls and to justify gender imbalances.

Women on the Move – from Wittenberg to Windhoek (WMWW) gave visibility at the Assembly to the journey of women in the communion of the LWF member churches as it continues today.

Barbara Robra, CAM Communication Arts Media, Evangelical Church in Germany.



¹ Constitution of The Lutheran World Federation adopted by the LWF Eighth Assembly, Curitiba, Brazil, 1990, *LWF Report 28/29*, December 1990, 141.

² The document can be download at: www.wicas.lutheranworld.org/content/women-move-wittenberg-windhoek-toolkit-141

Eva Zabolai-Csekme

Eva Zabolai-Csekme was born in Hungary on 9 February 1943. She is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary. From 1972 to 1980, Zabolai-Csekme served as the first Secretary for Women in Church and Society in the Lutheran World Federation.

At the time of her appointment in January 1972, Zabolai-Csekme was reading sociology at Berkeley, California (USA). Her particular areas of interest were feminist studies and liberation theology, and her colleague and successor, Eva von Hertzberg, described her as “a pastor with a special gift for worship and a truly good person who had the ability to analyze and summarize.” In the unpublished document, “The Work of the LWF Women’s Desk,” Zabolai-Csekme was described as a “young, emancipated and fighting person.”

At the time, the feminist approach to theology was completely new for the LWF and its constituency, as was the challenge to include women in the life and work of the Federation. As the first Secretary for Women in Church and Society, controversially located in the Department of Studies, Zabolai-Csekme was responsible for two programs: “Continuing Education for Women” and “Church Structures and Worship.” Despite the numerous gifts she brought to the LWF, those early ground-breaking days were all but easy. Nonetheless, in spite of serious obstacles and the many struggles faced by women during this period in the history of the LWF, women’s work was systematically developed and the number of Lutheran churches ordaining women increased in the 1970s.

In the first years of Zabolai-Csekme’s term, she established contacts, assessed the needs in the member churches, and shaped the Office of Women in Church and Society (WICAS). In her book, *Eva, wo bist du?*, Zabolai-Csekme summarizes the first period as follows: “New social realities demand new answers. Women of Western countries now have to identify with those sisters who are victims of oppression, exploitation and injustice. The witness of the church is credible only if it is congruent in word and deed.”

One of the ways in which WICAS was to be “congruent in word and deed” was through a series of leadership training events. The first leadership training workshop, held in Ethiopia in 1973, was followed by ten similar seminars in different parts of the world (1974—1977). In every case, their content was determined by the respective local church. The need to develop “adequate female” leadership in the member became the top priority of the Women’s Desk. In the first issue of the Women’s Desk’s newsletter in October 1974, Eva Zabolai-Csekme remarked, “One of the most obvious obstacles to finding satisfactory solutions is the lack of adequate leadership among women on all levels [...]. Therefore we regard the development of adequate female leadership as the number one task of the LWF Women’s Desk.”

LWF Archives





Eva von Hertzberg

Eva von Hertzberg was born on 21 August 1932. She is a member of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Württemberg. From 1981-1987, von Hertzberg served as Secretary for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) in the Lutheran World Federation's Department of Studies, which she had joined in 1974 as a research assistant.

Von Hertzberg was born in Marangu, Tanzania. After her father's death, the family lived in Latvia and Poland before moving to Germany as refugees in 1945. She was trained as a church worker and from 1961 to 1973 served as secretary for ecumenical relations, international youth work and voluntary social services with the German YWCA. In 1974, she graduated in social pedagogy, specializing in adult education. During her graduate work in the USA, she concentrated on feminist theology and the theology of the laity.

One of von Hertzberg's first responsibilities in the LWF was to launch of the newsletter "WOMAN," which responded to the need for communication and information among women in Lutheran churches around the world. The newsletter introduced a new approach to reading the Bible and its most influential column was the regular Bible study or theological reflection entitled, "Through Women's Eyes." Of equal importance were articles on issues such as equal rights and opportunities for women around the world. The circulation of the newsletter quickly grew and it became an important tool for the emancipation of women in Lutheran churches worldwide.

During von Hertzberg's term as Secretary for Women in Church and Society, the importance of research was increasingly recognized. Why had it taken so long to develop full partnership? What were the obstacles faced by women in the LWF and its member churches? In light of these and other questions the LWF Department of Studies sponsored a study project in Germany entitled "Women as innovative groups." This and several other research projects were carried out by the LWF in the areas of women and education; worship; liturgy; theology; ordination; human rights; development; and communication.

A watershed moment in the life of the Federation was the decision taken in 1984 at the Seventh Assembly. During one of the plenary sessions, women delegates and staff staged a "Go in." Singing "It is love that makes the world go round," they stepped up to the podium and read a declaration in which they demanded greater participation and visibility. As a result, for the first time in the history of the LWF, two women, Dorothy Marple and Bodil Solling, were asked to chair sessions. Due to the women's successful lobbying, the Assembly decided to introduce a quota system: a plan was to be developed whereby forty percent of the delegates to the Eighth Assembly would be women and by the Ninth Assembly the quota would be increased to fifty percent. The resolution also called for at least forty percent representation of women on the Executive Committee and on all other advisory/governing committees of the Federation. These developments were largely the result of the growing consciousness and political awareness of women in the LWF structures, and have had a significant impact on the member churches.



Parmata Abasu Ishaya

Parmata Abasu Ishaya was born 12 January 1948 in Nigeria. She is a member of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, and served as the LWF vice-president for Africa from 1997 to 2003.

When I was nominated by my church to serve as an advisor to the LWF at the Assembly in Curitiba in 1990, little did I know that I would rise to the position of council member and vice-president. I hold a BSc in botany and a postgraduate diploma in education. I had served as principal of a government girls' school in Gerei, Nigeria, principal of a Women's Teachers' College in Numan, assistant director of technical and vocational education and deputy director at the Ministry of Education's headquarters, in Yola, Nigeria.

With my husband, I accepted a call to move to Sierra Leone, where we became the first missionaries in the newly founded Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone. During this period, I served as an advisor to the LWF Committee for World Service. My years of service were an eye opener because I came face to face with the many humanitarian problems facing people around the world. My outlook was broadened as we reviewed many LWF programs and projects around the world. I had the opportunity to visit some of the projects in Ethiopia, India, and Mauritania and am grateful for having had the opportunity to serve on the Committee World Service, an assignment that inspired me with zeal and dedication.

In 1997, at the Ninth Assembly of the LWF, I was appointed to the LWF Council and later elected as vice-president for the Africa region. I was also nominated in 1997 to serve on the Executive Committee of ACT International.

The most memorable occasion for me during my tenure was participating in the historic signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), in Augsburg, Germany, in 1999. I was asked to read 1 Corinthians 3:12-16, the text chosen for that occasion. I read the verses from the Hausa Bible.

In 2002 I chaired the meeting of Lutheran church leaders in Nairobi, Kenya, and joined a delegation to visit Yasser Arafat and the president of Israel to discuss the position of Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. I was also invited to attend a seminar on women's empowerment in church and society, organized by WICAS in Garoua, Cameroon.

After the Tenth LWF Assembly, I continued with my work in government and rose to be permanent secretary, retiring in 2008. I continue with voluntary services in my church, working with the Women's Fellowship (Zumunta Mata). At the centenary celebration of my church in 2013, I received an award, along with others, for voluntary service to the church. Currently, I am running a school for three to sixteen-year-old internally displaced children.



Huang Shuhui (Sophia Tung)

Huang Shuhui (Sophia Tung) was born in Taiwan in 1944. She is a member of the Taiwan Lutheran Church. From 1977 to 1984, Tung served as a member of the LWF Commission on Studies and was elected as the first woman LWF vice-president for Asia at the Eighth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation. Tung is a well-known lay leader in the Taiwan Lutheran Church and a respected figure in the LWF.

Tung was greatly influenced by her parents, for whom education was very important. She attended a church-sponsored kindergarten and was baptized at the age of fifteen at the East Gate Presbyterian Church, Jiayi.

After completing her BA in 1966, Tung worked for the Christian Hildesheim Mission to the Blind for six years and there met her future husband, Dong Shangyong, president of Taiwan Lutheran Church. Because of him, Tung converted to Lutheranism. Tung served alongside her husband at Truth Lutheran Church, Taibei, until her husband's retirement in 1992. During her tenure at Truth, she pursued part-time theological education at China Evangelical Seminary (CES). She completed her M.Div. degree in 1990 and, for the next eight years, worked as a pastoral counselor with Wendell Friest, an American missionary. At Truth, she assumed numerous responsibilities as a volunteer, as a youth group advisor, Sunday school teacher, women's group leader, and visitation team member. With the help of the LWF, she organized workshops and leadership training courses for Lutheran church women in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. After her husband's retirement from Truth in 1992, Tungs became the superintendent of Hui-Ming Home for Blind Children in Central Taiwan. She retired in 2009.

In 1970, Tung represented Taiwanese Lutherans as a youth delegate at the Fifth LWF Assembly in Evian, France, where she was appointed to the Policy and Reference Committee. In 1977, at the Sixth Assembly, Tung was appointed to the LWF Commission on Studies (CS). At the Seventh Assembly, the women's issue was hotly debated and Tung was reappointed to the CS, which was responsible for studying women's issues. In 1970, at the Eight Assembly, Tung was appointed to the LWF Executive Committee prior to being elected as one of the LWF's six vice-presidents, making her the first Chinese woman to occupy such a position. Tung declined to stand for election as LWF president at the Ninth Assembly in Hong Kong. Today she lives in Taiwan, serves a local congregation as a volunteer, and occasionally travels to the USA to visit her daughter.

Young Women's Leadership Training

The year was 1994; I was 37 years old. I thought of myself as a young woman with my whole life in front of me, although I was a mother of three children and had been a pastor for almost eleven years. A person from the bishop's office drew my attention to an advert from the LWF where they wanted to support a woman under forty to attend a young women's leadership training program. I applied and was accepted.

A few years earlier, the LWF had already decided on the gender quota of forty percent women and forty percent men. Some of the member churches claimed they didn't have any qualified women, so the LWF said, "Let's qualify them."

The LWF invited fifty young women from Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and Latin America to come to Bossey, Switzerland, for one week. All the desks of the LWF were involved: the regional desks, World Service, Departments for Mission and Development, Theology and Communication, the Youth Desk and of course, last but not least, the Women's Desk. Together with others it was Musimbi Kanyoro, the head of WICAS, who pulled all the threads together. When I came to Bossey, I was told that I would share a room with a young woman from Kenya, Margaret Obaga, but that she would arrive late after a long trip. I was already in bed, when she came into the room, exhausted after the trip. She sat on her bed and said to me very calmly, "Let's pray!" This was the beginning of a deep friendship that has lasted for almost twenty-three years.

The days ahead were very busy. We were well-informed about the structure of the LWF, what the organization did with churches all over the world, and how it supported majority as well as minority churches. We attended all kinds of self-esteem training, and were asked to write an action plan for our lives. The next year, 1995, the women from each continent met in their own context. The European group met in Berlin. It was shortly after the fall of the wall, so that was very interesting for all of us. The overall program included different exposure visits for each of us. Mine was participation in a human rights conference of the African churches in Moshi, Tanzania, in January 1996. It certainly was a visit that made a big difference to my life. I was also able to visit my dear friend Margaret Obaga and her family in Nairobi, Kenya.

The program ended in the summer of 1996 when all the young women met again in Bossey. We had to tell each other a lot about our experiences following the program, and how it had impacted our lives. We were stronger and most certainly more qualified to serve our churches. Like I said before, I was already a pastor in the church when I attended the program, but it made me so much stronger, daring to say the things I wanted to say, and to do things that would be good for our church.

I believe that faith in God and faith in myself have brought me to the place where I am now, a bishop in North Iceland. I believe God called me to take part in this program, and called me to do everything I have done in the church. I also believe that God has called all the other women who took part in this program. I was particularly pleased to meet some of them again at the Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia, in May 2017.

Solveig Lára Gudmundsdottir, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland



Voices from Africa

Women participating in theology can be traced back to the time of Jesus. Men and women together learned about, and witnessed to the saving works of Jesus Christ. Women such as Mary Magdalene, Joana, Mary (James's mother), and many other unnamed women who were called "Mother women" (Lk 24:10), were disciples of Jesus Christ. These women spent much of their time in informal theological education with Jesus. Women were even in the upper room (Acts 1:13-14). At the end, the commission to witness to the deeds of Jesus Christ was also given to women (Acts 1:8-14). It is Jesus who called women to theological education and service in the church, according to the gifts given to each one of them.

Women doing theology in the Lutheran communion on the African continent is rooted in the story of Jesus. I offer here an overview of the contextual theological issues arising on our continent, and the opportunities and challenges women encounter in the process of doing theology. Given the Reformation anniversary, this reflection includes some setbacks that women have encountered, as well as signs of hope, such as women being called to work towards gender equality in the church. The church's "participatory health," is a vital part of the future of the African continent.

Whether or not women should and can participate in the ministry of the church is a question of church tradition. For instance, the Lutheran church tradition, embedded in German patriarchal culture, forbade women from serving in the ministry.¹ Furthermore, since many African traditions are patriarchal, the tradition of the reformers found African culture to be a fertile soil in which to plant forbidding women from doing theology. This intersection of patriarchal cultures made matters worse for women's participation in the ministry on the continent. Thank God for the reformation legacy, *ecclesia semper reformanda*.² In Africa today, men and women in the Lutheran communion continue to reform the church on the way to full and equal participation, through gender mainstreaming and empowerment processes,³ a reform movement that started decades ago.

The decision to allow women to study theology in the Lutheran communion in Africa was made in the late sixties, and followed different processes in the various churches. For example, in 1969, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, through its Executive Committee, passed a decision to send women to study theology. In 1969, the decision became reality when Rev. Alice Kabugumila began her theological studies at Makumira, Arusha, Tanzania. Thereafter, other churches followed: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia, which ordained its first women theologians as pastors in 1975, the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Liberia, and many more. The first churches to decide to offer women theological education, inspired other churches. Today, there are almost 500 women pastors and theologians in the Lutheran communion on the continent. These women theologians and pastors lead our parishes and institutions, as well as the church worldwide. In our institutions, we have women parish pastors, coordinators of different departments, general secretaries of dioceses, and district pastors. At the academic level, we have women vice-chancellors, deans, vice-deans, university lecturers in different disciplines and chaplains. Worldwide in the Lutheran communion, we have Dr Musimbi Kanyoro,





former head of WICAS, and now president and CEO of the Global Fund for Women, the Rev. Dr. Elieshi Ayo Mungure, now the LWF Area Secretary for Africa, and missionaries such as the Rev. Sarah Urassa (Germany), the Rev. Overa Sahlberg (Sweden) and the Rev. Vicky Magawa (Canada).

Clearly, doing theology presents women in the Lutheran communion with different opportunities; the greatest of which is formal education. Women with academic qualifications have been offered a variety of scholarships to study theology, or other disciplines. In doing theology, women have participated in leadership and decision-making bodies. Furthermore, those with higher education qualifications have helped the church to look hermeneutically at the Bible and the tradition of the church. One of the crucial insights shared with church authorities is that all traditions are culturally constructed and are not divine, especially those that oppress, violate, or subordinate women. The gift is that, therefore, theological tradition can be reconstructed, giving space for women to share their gifts and talents in the *oikos* of God.

Despite all the life-giving work in our communion, some theological issues have emerged with regard to women and their participation in the church, due to social realities and these require deep analysis and careful consideration. There are many, but I will mention only three.

Contextual theology

Women in Africa need theology to deal with social realities. Contextual Lutheran theology should serve to redefine the reformers' doctrines, which are steeped in sixteenth-century patriarchal culture, so that all human beings created in the image of God participate in the church.

Gender theology

Women in Africa need gender-equitable theology to be taught within families, so that all children learn from an early age that they are equal before God, and can participate in the community as full members, without gender discrimination. Gender-equitable theology needs to be taught at theological institutions, and preached in our congregations. Addressing matters of culture and tradition theologically should not harm or subordinate women.

Reconciliation theology

There are many past wounds that need healing. Reconciliation theology is necessary for the past, but it is also crucial for the present. We need reconciliation theology to help repair and bring justice to those damaged spiritually or physically as a result of either gender-based or structural violence.

Women are theologians and already contribute to all areas of theological reflection. At the same time, women doing theology face challenges, such as a lack of confidence. Despite all the tools and training for liberation that exist, some still lack confidence feel inferior when it comes to applying for leadership positions such as bishops, general secretaries, and the like. Leadership can also disturb patriarchal hierarchy. On the side of the institutions, positions of leadership are still given as a test to see if a woman can manage to lead. Family matters present another challenge. At many points in life, women need to make bold decision: to marry, have children or not, divorce, remain single, or be single mothers. Their choices may risk them being written off in the job. Some women at home, or at work are expected not to question injustice and demand their rights, but instead to be silent, to proceed with education, or continue to be good caretakers of the family.



Although family is a blessing, it can also be a challenge to others' perceptions of women theologians, especially when a spouse does not recognize a woman theologian's efforts of achieving full participation in the church. Prejudices, envy, and male superiority can also block women from taking further steps in development and participation in the church.

At the same time, women have hope. Thus far, many women doing theology on the continent have proved that if they decide to, they can do theology in the best way possible. This gives hope for the life of the church, because women's participation is increasingly being recognized and respected. Furthermore, women thoroughly rely on the tradition of *ecclesia semper reformanda*. It is accepted that the Lutheran communion in Africa is in major need of reforming itself for renewal and transformation (2015 Marangu statements). As both church members and leaders continue to provide new insights for the development and life of the church, we hope that more and more women will continue to participate fully in the life of the church.

Lastly, women doing theology on the continent hope that the *LWF Gender Justice Policy*, which is in the process of being translated, will be implemented by men, women, youth, and family groups and circulated in the Lutheran communion in Africa. The *Gender Justice Policy* reminds the church globally that women are created in the image of God, and have been given the responsibility to take care of all creation in the life and work of the church. Hence, women should not be sold, discriminated against nor oppressed but, rather, should participate fully in the life and ministry of the church, for a just Lutheran communion and a just society.

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¹ For example, in *LW 41*, "The Council and the Church," Luther refers to 1 Tim 3:2, Titus 1:6, and 1 Cor 14:34 to argue that women are not competent for the pastoral ministry and thus should not aspire to such service.

² The Church in continuous reformation and transformation.

³ These are processes that seek to generate sensitivity and consciousness of gender among all church members, and to ensure that in all programs, decisions and activities of the Lutheran communion in Africa, gender justice is sought.



Voices from Asia

I asked a group of Asian Lutheran women attending a gender workshop in August 2014, what they did with any questions they had when they read the Bible. Their response was, “we swallow them!” For an Asian woman the act of analyzing and critiquing religion, or articulating an interpretation or theology that is wholly feminine in its language, symbol, and metaphor is akin to, I think, the unheard scream of Kunti in the Mahabaratha as she gave birth to a son out of wedlock. The same sense of fear, of suppression, of guilt, and betrayal accompany her creative effort. Because of this fear of being condemned by society, Kunti suppressed that scream of labor pain, which is otherwise welcomed and celebrated at the time of childbirth. Instead, she brings the child into the world silently, stealthily. Similarly the Asian Lutheran woman student or theologian, seems to hide the frank expression of her anguish with religion, Scripture, and tradition for fear that it would not be welcomed by the church. Women in church and seminary structures in Asia are still the outsiders and excluded, leading a precarious existence on the boundaries of both theological institutions and the church.



If theologizing is the act of critically reflecting, evaluating, reconstructing, and appropriating the scriptural and confessional heritage that we received, with the help of the best knowledge available to us from all sources, including individual and communal, faith, culture, and creation, then women in Asia have been doing this for a long time. Women have been using the best knowledge available to them to critically assess and adopt the faith tradition that they have received. This theological reflection by women in Asia is not something to be found primarily in books. It occurs, rather, in the daily, urgent, sometimes desperate, exploration, reassessment, and recreation of meaning, which women are continually making in their lives. In this sense, feminist theology is the collective and individual pool of women’s experience, which is continually growing and changing as we act it out in our lives and interpret it for each other, and ourselves in our conversation. Theology by women is therefore a movement of feminism in the church, albeit a not so obvious movement. Most women are not even aware that they are in their day-to-day lives making decisions, and acting in ways that might be considered feminist, a term and identification that is still burdensome for many women.



This theology by Asian women may therefore not sound sophisticated or comprehensive. In fact, many do not see themselves as “theologians.” Their articulations in the form of Bible studies, sermons, prayers, lessons, reflections on theological topics and matters of faith, have definitely contributed to the life of the church. Their theology has been critical for the life, health, and mission of the church

because it connects women and women's lives to the life of the church. So, Asian women have made some progress. We can no longer be taken for granted. While we may breathe deeply and look to the past with satisfaction, the journey is far from over. Our goals are still maddeningly far away, and often lost from view. At least now we are stronger travelers than when we were when we set out. Always stoic, our guide now is an increased sense of freedom, a refreshed spirituality, a much richer sense of self and responsibility. The Asian woman theologian and interpreter recognizes the Bible as an important source of faith requiring exploration; she is aware that Bible study expands the religious dimensions of life with implications for one's own life, and for involvement in family, society, and church, it is a prerequisite for social and ecclesial transformation. Recent decades have therefore seen an increasing number of women entering formal theological training, or attending theological workshops that are feminist or womanist in their orientation and objectives. We are beginning to write and reflect, albeit modestly, stimulating further critical evaluation and appropriation of the Christian faith using feminist and womanist methods and tools (this depends on where one is studying of course!). We are encouraged by some women and a few men committed to the rights of women. We derive our confidence from the belief that God accompanies us in our struggle for life with dignity. We have put to good use insights from both the secular women's movement and Western feminist scholarship, by beginning to analyze gender discrimination and injustice within the church, and by articulating the need for womanist or feminist approaches and perspectives that challenge church patriarchy and sexism, and its interpretations of tradition. Yet this effort by a few of us within the Asian Lutheran church is more often the exception than the rule.

Survival struggles of women within the church for recognition and representation, leadership, and ordination have often absorbed all our energy. For feminist theologizing to become a transforming force both in the Lutheran church and in society, we will need to strive harder: first, to create a critical mass of women with theological training that is also feminist in its orientation; and second, to locate our theology clearly at the center of all structures of oppression and exploitation. We are concerned about all oppressed peoples and the earth, and need to discern the interconnectedness of these structures of power, in terms of religion, caste, class, ethnicity language, and gender. In the task and act of feminist theologizing, we need also to take into serious consideration: growing secularism; caste and ethnic identity; violence; the multifaith context of Asia; and the political processes and dynamics of people's movements.

I think we need to ask, what is "Asian" about our theology? Asia is huge and a complex matrix because of the differences between our countries, our cultures, religions,





languages, social hierarchies, and political economies. If we view our region solely through the lens of patriarchy it certainly helps us to see the similarities between us as Asian women. But the emerging picture is often superficial, indistinct, and blurry. If, however, we were to use the lens of culture, religion, and politics (both secular and ecclesial), and their contemporary ferment, the picture might become more focused and nuanced as details emerge, both expected and unexpected. The similarities that exist between Lutheran women of Asia do not disappear when we adopt this approach, but they become balanced in some parts of the picture, and overwhelmed by the differences in others. I am not sure that as women we have fully grasped or engaged this difference between and within the Asian Lutheran churches.

The challenge is also to ask ourselves, what is Asian about our theological articulations? How do we make our theology distinctly Asian? What place do we give to our own cultural and religious traditions? How can we use the richness of both our Christian-Lutheran tradition and our Asian traditions in interpretation of the biblical texts and in our theologizing? How can we best address the complexities of the Bible, the Lutheran tradition and the Asian context without privileging any one in particular? In answering these questions, we might be able to discern the contribution we as Asian women can make to Lutheran theology as a whole.

While feminist theologizing is committed to participating in the struggles of women for liberation, we Asian Lutheran women theologians still need to identify its grounding concepts and the norms upon which our theology is based. What might these norms be? Life? Justice? Love? Community? Dignity? Freedom? Solidarity? Transformation? Resistance? Perhaps all of these. Having identified these norms, we need to ground or situate them within our Lutheran tradition. This requires familiarity with Luther's work, women's contributions to the Reformation, the history of the Lutheran churches in Asia, and the stories of our foremothers within this history. I confess that there is a general ignorance in this regard and thus our theologizing does not stand out as being distinctively "Lutheran." This is a major and urgent task.

Women's theology is a critical instrument to analyze and transform the church, its theology and society. There is no better time than now to acknowledge this as we celebrate, uplift, and critically evaluate the radical and transformative traditions of the Reformation that empowered both men and women of that time.

Rev. Dr Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon, Coordinator of Studies, Old Testament, Centre for Theology & Ministry, Pilgrim Theological College, Australia.

Prasanna Kumari

Prasanna Kumari was born on 4 January 1950 in Kanakondur, Andhra Pradesh, India. She died on 16 March 2006. She was a member of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) and became a widely known theologian, church leader, activist and prophetic advocate for human rights, particularly women's rights.

Kumari received a bachelor of theology degree from the Hindustan Bible Institute Chennai, in 1975, a BDiv degree in 1978, and an MTh in 1982 from the United Theological College, Bangalore. From 1978 to 1979 she was a social worker in the Kalrayam Hills project and later joined her spouse in his ministry as pastor in Kolar Gold Fields, Karnataka. In 1982, Kumari joined the staff of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) as secretary to the Women's Desk (1982-1992). While holding this position, she also taught New Testament and Women's Studies at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College (GLTC) from 1985 to 1992. In 1997, she was conferred a DD h.c. by the Academy of Ecumenical Indian Theology and Church Administration in Chennai. From 1999 to 2005, she pursued doctoral studies in systematic theology at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, writing her dissertation, "Dalit women's experiences: a theological imperative for constructing Indian feminist theology." Despite having been diagnosed with cancer, she managed to write the major part of her thesis and LSTC awarded her a PhD posthumously. Kumari was one of the first two Indian Lutheran women to be ordained in 1991.

She was Associate Executive Secretary of the UELCI from 1989 to 1992, and from 1992 to 1999 she served as the first woman executive secretary of the UELCI. She served as regional coordinator of the LWF's Committee on Women in Church and Society (1984-1989) and was a member of the Lutheran-Orthodox dialogue (1986-1992). She chaired (1991-1997) the Advisory Committee for Theological Education in Asia. In 1998, she was part of a fact-finding team to assess the atrocities committed against Christians in the Dang District of Gujarat. In 1999, at the first Asian Lutheran International Conference, Kumari was one of the ten people elected to serve on the first ALIC steering committee. From 1990 to 1997, Kumari chaired the Program Committee for Theology and Studies, and from 1997 to 2000 she continued to serve on the same committee as a member. In 1997, she was elected LWF vice-president for the Asia region (1997-2003). From 2000 to 2003, she chaired the LWF Standing Committee for World Service. In her capacity as LWF vice-president, Kumari was one of three LWF women representatives who signed the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in 1999.

Kumari has several publications to her credit, the best known of which is *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation*, which she coedited. Kumari's pioneering efforts resulted in the introduction of women's studies as a core subject for theological education at GLTC. This paved the way for other theological institutions in India to do the same, and was instrumental in developing the first master's program in women's studies. She was a role model for many women in the church and championed the cause of women and the poor in India. She was equally at home connecting with the marginalized in India, as with the powerful in church and politics. At the time of her death, Kumari served as vice-president of the NCCI and head of the department of women's studies at GLTC.

LWF Archives





Voices from Europe

The Reformation, especially the concept of the priesthood of all the baptized, summons women to read and interpret the Bible, shape church structures that reflect gender justice and promote justice in church and society.

To speak of justification and the priesthood of all the baptized and about the four *soli* (*sola gratia, sola scriptura, sola fide, solus Christus*) implies that freedom of the gospel that is spoken about in Galatians 5:1. Freedom is one of the main ideas underpinning the reformation and justice is intrinsically part of freedom. Only together do freedom and justice show the core of the gospel. We are free from being captured in ourselves, liberated from an individual or collective prison. Dorothee Sölle wrote that we in the Western world are collectively captured in our prisons of individualism and the “religion of consumerism.” We are part of the global problem that demands a perpetually growing habit of owning more and more. This not only harms us, our communion, but also the whole of creation. This is the reason we need to hear and explain with new words what, especially for women, it means to be liberated from the individual or collective prison.



In this context freedom includes, for example, being liberated to myself, reconciled with the fragments and boundaries of my life, liberated to nonconformity, strengthened to promote gender justice, and justice in all its forms, including struggling for equal pay, and for structures that give women the chance to share their gifts. Many women in Germany work in low-paid sectors, especially in parts of the healthcare sector. This work is not highly valued by our society and not paid appropriately. In Germany, poverty in older age has a female face. Working and preaching to overcome these unjust structures is still necessary and important.



Freedom also means being free from oppressive traditions, bonds or relationships. Last, but not least, it means being liberated from the religiously legitimized subordination of women. The subordination of women has been proclaimed and cemented, for example, by models of marriage, in which Bible passages from Colossians and Ephesians (Col 3:18-4:1; Eph 5:22-6:9) are quoted, rather than more equitable passages such as in Galatians 3:27ff. We still have to struggle to overcome this internalized and religiously legitimized subordination by rereading the Bible, and by requesting ordination and equal leadership of women in all churches, universities and enterprises.

The crucial point of gender justice and women’s equality in the ministry, is the knowledge of freedom through justification and the priesthood of all the baptized. The priesthood of all believers implies the freedom to evangelize and share the gospel independently. Continuing the discipline of reading Holy Scripture means we become part of a long line of fruitful biblical interpretations, which today present contextual, liberative and feminist features. It is a hopeful sign that over the last ten years many churches in Germany have celebrated the jubilees of the first women’s ordination, as have the regional and Germany-wide Association of Protestant Female Theologians. During the reformation decade, exhibitions, books, articles, speeches and, last but not least, the wonderful website www.frauen-und-reformation.de uncovered what women are contributing to the ongoing reformation.

Rev. Ulrike Hansen, Mission EineWelt, Representative for Women & Oikoumene, ELCB, Regional Coordinator WICAS Western Europe.

Dr Cornelia Schlarb, Association of Protestant Female Theologians in Germany, Georg-August-University in Goettingen.

Voices from the Nordic Churches

As I write this in early 2017, I think most important thing is to explore the hermeneutical spaces of the individual, the church and society, and also the relations between the three. What space do I as an ordained female priest have to interpret the central dogmas of the church so that new interpretations find room in the Church of Sweden, as well as in the global ecumenical movement?

The Danish priest and theologian Johannes Möllehave points to the specific responsibility of the ordained clergy to allow space for people's experiences of God, thereby allowing and respecting God's call as a vital part of the established church's proclamation. A contribution that both revitalizes and reassures the life of the church. This understanding involves an important form of inclusion.

My own understanding is that there is a progressive relationship between preserving and renewing in the church's life, between tradition and change. The two movements are complementary opposites and have been the foundation of the church's development for 2,000 years. The traditional role of the church as a force for spirituality and education sets up a firm foundation for much needed renewal in a rapidly changing society. The church can be a firm and established place, but a firm and established place does not have to be an immovable or inactive place.

Two insights from the Lutheran tradition describe this. First, the church is constantly developing (*ecclesia semper reformanda est*) and second, if we want to preserve something, we have to renew it. The Christian message is mainly the same as before, but some of our words and metaphors are no longer relevant. Therefore, we must dare to renew some of our procedures and the language we use to describe the content of faith. This can open up new encounters, as well as continue tradition where the church makes the gospel visible through its diaconal work, and sometimes also through its prophetic voice in society. All of this is also largely true of the Church of Sweden's international work, which is shaped by global ecumenical expressions of, and language for faith, proclamation, and diaconal praxis.

How do I, then, as a priest embody the order of the church and realize my vocation with Christ as my role model? A fundamental aspect of vocation is that it leads us towards the future, for vocation is linked to the Kingdom of God, which is already among us and yet still to come. To live my vocation and to live according to the vows of ordination is to be continually open to God's call, to develop interpretations and models, and to do this together with those who do not resonate with the traditional metaphors for God, as well as together with those who, given the weight of tradition, are not accustomed to perceive the new metaphors for God that are being revealed to us.

For a number of years, I have worked with the Church of Sweden's international work, which has a strong commitment to support people in their fight for rights to justice, health, education, peace and life. It has a broad and diverse content, set within an inclusive understanding of international mission and diakonia. Contacts with sister churches around the globe, where men and women have tried to merge tradition with renewal, working with inclusivity and participation where they have experienced racism, poverty, sexism and oppression, show us we are in good company when it comes to our current reflections.





At the same time, I live in a local reality where the question is, how do we in today's Sweden communicate with participants in worship who are not familiar with the formulations and concepts that I as a priest and theologian take for granted? In congregations and services, especially with children and youth, we dialogue with secularized Swedes who are not familiar with, or educated in the tradition and language of Christianity and the church. My ambition is to use words and examples that can act as bridges. My experience is that this bridge building can lead to a conversation, and a new mutual interest in the tradition and language of Christianity and the church.



In the Church of Sweden there is a strong tradition of hermeneutics and textual interpretation. We read and interpret the Bible, other religious documents, and also literature and poetry. Texts that we read take their points of departure in other people's experience of life and communion. We all have experiences from life and from within the LWF communion, as we interpret faith, we are able to gain a better understanding of our mission. There is an intuition that the human being is a story, a narrative in need of both text and experience in order for new chapters to be written. The choice of perspective is decisive in this hermeneutical work and process.



Another important question to explore is, how do I live my vows of ordination and the mission of the church, including not only the responsibility to reproduce the language of tradition, but also to frame it contextually in a living proclamation here and now, in order to underpin action?



I experience that the language of theology takes a patriarchal focus for granted, the patriarchal structure legitimizes language and concepts as natural, history-less and with universal claims. It is useful to apply a conscious methodology visualizing who, when and where a theological interpretation is produced. For example, a contextually-conscious theology, which for half a century has been characterized by thoughts from, for example, feminist theology, ecotheology and liberation theology, emphasizes praxis, taking sides and immanent life. Contextual theologies often assume and reflect the Trinity as the metaphor for fellowship and communion. Interpreting God as communion implies that the main task for humanity is not primarily to understand the Trinity but rather to live it.



A contextual consciousness implies recognition that theology is dependent on time, space and the situation in which interpretations, understandings and descriptions of God, human beings, church and society are being constructed. However, a contextual consciousness also allows the church to relate the local to the global. Consequently, it speaks of and addresses a diversity of interpretations. Contextuality, the locality of hermeneutics, can be thought of in relation to John 1:14a, "The Word became flesh and lived among us."



Part of contextual consciousness is about taking sides, meaning that the point of departure is a specific perspective when trying to listen to God's voice from the perspective of the voiceless. God's call can be praxis-oriented and a narrative, the demand for action is what designates the contextual consciousness. This means that methods utilized by theology are expected to lead to transformation, creating yet another important tension between preservation and renewal.

During the years I worked on HIV and gender equality in Southern Africa, I came into contact with a number of impressive feminist theologians from the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. Theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye from Ghana, has been very influential for The Circle, she raises the problem of the

patriarchal naming of God and argues that what is essential is that women's religious experience can be expressed beyond patriarchal language. In the same way, Musa Dube, professor in New Testament Exegesis in Botswana, questions how we as theologians can oppose those things which contribute to gender inequality. How do culture and religion contribute to constructing and maintaining inequality between men and women? What is our responsibility as theologians? She also states that we as theologians and Christians more than ever have a responsibility to realize and become part of what gender is and how it can be transformed to foster empowerment.

Together with colleagues in the Lutheran church we used the World Council of Churches' prayer book, *Africa Praying: A Handbook on HIV and AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*, in the pastoral work on HIV. Here we found prayers and liturgies for specific occasions and groups of people living on the margins. For example, with single parents: "Father and Mother God. We thank you as a single parent, especially as single mothers. We thank you, for you are the father and mother of our families. We thank you, for the stone that was rejected has become the cornerstone." In the liturgy focusing on young women and girls we prayed: "The girl child is made of your image and likeness. Her body is your temple of your Holy Spirit. Help us to remember and to act [on] the rights of a girl child. Amen." The prayers helped us as pastors to articulate and address situations that it had not been possible to name or attend to. Patriarchal norms contributed to inequality, gender-based violence, and the serious HIV situation that we faced in Southern Africa.

I close with words from Emilia Fogelklou, Sweden's first woman theologian (M.Div.) whose discernment provided guidance in understanding interpretation. She challenged herself directly in her memoirs, *Minnesbilder och Årenden*: "There are more paths to God than you in your pride and vanity believed. Such a common and simple relationship: that we all are different should be the foundation for all our conversations. I now know that everyone's dream is the fulfilled life, which we in reality live! The truth is within us all. There is a universe that you now know nothing of!"

Rev. Dr Gunilla Hallonsten, Director of Policy, Church of Sweden.

PRAYER

O God of life and justice
the day and the night whisper your name
and sparrows proclaim your glory.

We give you thanks for all women who
struggle for life and human dignity
for themselves and for their community.

We remember with gratefulness our mothers,
whose labor brought us to and sustained us in
this world.

We remember their strengths and their
weaknesses,
the ways they taught us to be human.

We cry with them and with all women when
they experience
that their humanity is violated and their self-
respect in danger.

We cry to you, God of justice for women, that
you will continue
your work—to liberate and set free.

We give you thanks for all women who use
their talents
and insights, their passion and compassion
in the struggle for
justice, for peace and for the integrity of
creation.

We pray—wake up your church to the realities
of your presence in life and history as the
source of wisdom, the rock of justice and the
power of love.

Let us give thanks for all signs of a new
humanity,
a different heaven and earth.

O God of life and justice
the night and the day whisper your name
and the sparrows proclaim your glory
so make us by grace
the flames of peace
and the winds of justice
in the world.
Amen.

Rev. Anna Karin Hammar, pastor in the Church of
Sweden and former director for the World Council of
Churches' Sub-Unit for Women.



Maria Jepsen

For centuries, many women have longed for and fought for gender equality in the church. I was fortunate that, at the end of the 1960s, I was able to study theology and to take up a teaching curacy and then become a pastor. Together with my husband I was ordained in 1972. On my ordination certificate you can still find the celibacy clause for women, which had only been abandoned by the previous synod. Still, the administration of my regional church was reluctant to give women pastors the same rights as their male colleagues. A women pastor, whose husband was also a pastor, was expected to become her husband's unpaid "helper."

As a result, during my time as a pastor, deacon and bishop, I focused on the equality of women and men in the church and society. The ecumenical decade of "Churches in Solidarity with Women" (1988-1999) was very helpful during my time as a pastor and a member of the board for ecumenism of my regional church. My male colleagues did not show any interest in this topic. I advocated for feminist theology and on behalf of women who did not belong to the mainstream, such as lesbians, prostitutes, migrants, homeless women, sexually assaulted and abused girls and women, and also for staff members - both volunteers and employed. In other words, for all those, who did not belong to the inner circle of church and society.



The introduction of a quota system was essential because good relations require equal conditions between men and women. This is important in terms of numbers (at least forty percent) but also in terms of age and social and cultural backgrounds. The church must not act as church for and by men, nor as the church of the clergy, nor as the church of officialdom. This should be promoted by all women, and also by ordained women pastors. Sometimes I am frightened when old patterns return to our church as we can see in pastoral dress code that is much more focused on black and white than on colors, and on clerical correctness rather than on individuality.



Biblical stories have always touched and inspired me, from Miriam, the prophetess, who went with the women through the Red Sea, without weapons and campaign slogans but with a kettle, drums and songs, up to Junia, who was highly valued by Paul. The fact that these women later on just appeared



as family members of a male apostle and were disempowered is no longer a surprise to us. This is the way in which HISstory and church history were and still are written. In the collective memory Miriam is remembered as the sister of Moses and not as Miriam, the prophetess. Junia, the apostle and wife of Andronicus, was transformed to Junias and became a male apostle. This encouraged me to read the biblical texts in the original, to learn more about what was originally said in the texts, without the changes made later by male interpreters. When we read the original texts we learn about many female qualities of God. God is not just the Master, the Almighty, the Judge, and the Father. God also gives birth, is described as a mother, as taking care for others, as the one who is comforting and loving. God is sensitive and gentle. Many women from the Bible, known and unknown, testify to this God.

There is a lot that encourages and enlightens us in the Bible and in our daily lives. I always enjoyed serving as a bishop and two quotations in particular encouraged me at the time. The first is my confirmation motto, Psalm 119:105, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” The second are lyrics from Matthias Claudius, a poet from my region: “God, let your salvation look to us, trust in nothing ephemeral, not vanity; Let us be remembered, and be merciful and merry before thee on earth as children.” Children, brothers and sisters in Christ, all together, this is what church means for me.

History is mostly written from the perspective of the vanquishers and of men. But it does not have to be like this. It is no longer acceptable to exclude women’s experiences of faith. Luther reminded us that only Holy Scripture, *sola scriptura*, should guide our faith. The strength of Bible verses, the clarity of declrtions, the imagery and vitality, have all inspired me. Also the dark and confusing passages form an important part of it, they teach me to accept my own limitations and to be curious if there can be an unexpected solution. My interest in Jewish theology, regular encounters and dialogue with sisters and brothers from worldwide ecumenism, as well as interreligious dialogue have strengthened and enriched my Lutheran faith. An important part of that was the exchange within the Lutheran World Federation, especially with the women in the LWF and the women bishops.

Church institutions and church officials, hiding behind dogmatic expressions and concepts, should not make decisions for us women and men. My conscience continues to be challenged. I experienced many times how difficult this can be. It was not always easy as a theologian, or during my eighteen years of being bishop. There were a lot of disappointments and evil wrongdoings. That was bitter. But at all times I was able to find comfort for my thoughts and feelings in the Psalms, showing me we can trust. God has given us staying power, a long breath and God has poured the Holy Spirit abundantly into us, women and men. Trusting in that I have tried to live as a pastor, as a deacon, as a bishop and as Maria Jepsen, and thanks to God there were others who encouraged me as I also have encouraged others to carry on.

Maria Jepsen was born on 19 January 1945 in Bad Segeberg. She was the bishop of Hamburg in the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church. On 4 April 1992 the synod of the Hamburg Ambit elected her bishop, the first Lutheran woman to be a bishop worldwide. Jepsen was reelected in 2002 for a second ten-year period.

Jantine Auguste Haumersen

On 17 November 1929, Jantine Auguste Haumersen became the first woman pastor to be ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Women had struggled for women's ordination for several years. In 1922, Laurence Caroline Dufour (1902–1988), then a student of theology in Leiden, addressed the Lutheran Synod in a letter, putting forward the question of whether women might be formally ordained as pastors and serve parishes in the Lutheran church. The question was discussed by the synod in 1922 and it was found that there was nothing in the regulations to prevent the ordination of women. There was some resistance to this decision and although this was rejected by the synod in 1926, in 1927 the synod decided that married women could not serve as parish pastors. The first married woman to become a pastor in the Lutheran Church was L. J. Houtman-Visser, 1975-1984.



Born on 4 March 1881, Jantine Auguste Haumersen studied to become a schoolteacher and first worked in this profession (teaching catechism) from 1905 to 1923. In 1917 she took up the study of theology in Leiden and became student minister of the Reformed (“Hervormd”) parish in Koedijk. She later enrolled in the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary in Amsterdam and got a call in 1929 to serve the Lutheran parish in Woerden-Bodegraven (until 1934) and Kampen (until 1948). In the latter parish, a commemoration stone in her honor was placed in the church on the occasion of her 12 ½ years as a pastor.

Haumersen belonged to the “free-thinking” (vrijzinnige) tradition of those days, and was a very active member of the “Circle of Women Pastors in the Netherlands” (founded in 1923). In 1941 she also became member of the synod of the Lutheran church. She served several periods as chairperson and secretary of the Lutheran pastors’ organization.

She published and lectured frequently on the subject of women’s ordination.

On the occasion of her ordination in 1929, the ordaining pastor, J.L.F. de Meijere, referred to Paul in his sermon, as an illustration that “in Christ there is no man nor woman...”, and that there should, therefore, be definitely no restriction in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in that regard. Haumersen herself preached on Micah 4:12, a text she often took up on special occasions.

When Haumersen resigned from active ministry at the age of 67, her sermon was on 1 Corinthians 3:13, cumulating in the sequence: “All we did wrongly or did not do at all, we cannot change or make right. Therefore we should be mild in our judging of others. Let that be our way of approaching God: in humbleness.” After her retirement, she spent another twenty years in the house “Mooiland” in Doorwerth, where she died on the 3 December 1967, a first Sunday of Advent, and was buried following a simple ceremony.

Rev. Dr Andreas H. Wöhle, Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

This summary is based on material collected by Th. A. Fafie in the publication, *Honderd jaar vrouwen op de kansel – 1911–2011* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011), 111–19.

Mariam Majaman

My name is Mariam Majaman. I was born on 25 July 1958 in Rondonon Village, Sabah, Malaysia. I belong to the Rungus ethnic group. I got married on 16 July 1979 and have six children, three of whom have already died. During my early childhood, I used to go with my father to the services he took as a pastor in our village. There I learn to pray and read the Bible, as I grew older I led Sunday school and the youth service. I actively got involved in church activities during my secondary school years. As there was no girls' hostel during those years, we stayed with a Christian Chinese family. I was lucky to have stayed with a Chinese family as it enabled me to learn the Chinese culture and way of life as well as the language. Malaysia is a multicultural and multilingual country and knowing the language and culture of another race is extremely useful for my ministry.



I began as a full time worker in the Protestant Church in Sabah (PCS) in 1979 and retired in 2013. But my local church, the PCS Rondonon Timbangbatu, elected me as their pastor incharge. I have been serving the Lord in this local church since 2013.

After completing secondary school, I was chosen by our church to study theology at Trinity Theological College Singapore in 1976. Unfortunately, without prior notice, I was called back to serve in my church as a warden of the first newly built PCS Girls' Hostel which accommodated 150 girls. It was during my study at Trinity College that I joined a Christian Women's Group of the wife of one of our professors. In this group the women learnt to cook and to read the Word of God together. When I went back home, I established a kind of group with the women in our church. On 16 March 1982, the PCS women's group was officially born. I was one of the PCS Executive Committee members in the 1980s. During this time, PCS chose me to be ordained as a pastor. But it took me ten years to decide whether to accept it or not. Why? Because it is work which requires discipline, self-sacrifice and endurance. After much thought and prayer I accepted it, as we have priestesses in our ancestors' pagan beliefs and it should not be unusual for my people to accept a woman as a priest. I believe God has chosen me for this type of work and by God's grace I have kept myself pure and holy to our Lord and Saviour. Praise the Lord.

As a former Bible school teacher, secretary and treasurer, founder of the PCS women's group and its former chairperson, Bible translator, mother, wife and grandmother, gardener and now pastor-in-charge, I have encountered many ups and downs and dark days in my life. It was the lack of knowledge, unstable economy, workload, busy schedule during nursing years, sudden accidental death of our two grown-up sons, and the loss of an unborn child that triggered my health condition. Now my health has improved, but I acknowledge the extent to which a woman pastor is more scrutinized and more tested than a male pastor.

I was and I am still am being tested. But sisters and friends, what made me faithful to my call as a woman pastor? The guidance and the love of God through God's Holy Spirit, who daily renews my mind and heart to be like Christ. Regular prayer and Bible readings, listening to spiritual sermons and songs, attending church and family gatherings, are sources of spiritual growth in my life. Hence, many people and women are already empowered through my life. It is not my work but it is God's mighty work. God be praised!



Voices from Latin America

The celebration of 500 years of Reformation allowed time to reflect on the challenges and opportunities women face today in the field of theology. We have come a long way since 1517. From those first runaway nuns and women who played an active role in the Reformation movement to women theologians, pastors, deaconesses, catechists and missionaries, we have faced many challenges and received many blessings.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a big region. From Mexico to Chile's southernmost town, women have been active in many ways. All Lutheran churches in the region ordain women, and there are many women with graduate degrees, even though most of them are not in teaching positions.



Despite women's many accomplishments, not everything is easy. There are still many challenges ahead of us. The first and most difficult is to deal with our own insecurities. We were taught so many times not to trust our feelings, knowledge, and experiences; we were taught to doubt our capacity to deal with different situations. After all those "lessons," taught again and again, we ended up believing they are true. As women theologians, most of us preach grace but live in guilt and shame. The worst part is that we do not learn to recognize these feelings and to deal with them, until it is too late and they have destroyed our dreams and our energy.



It is not like we wake up one day, we tell ourselves: "Oh, I think I am not good enough!" No, no. It is not like that. As women in the church, we have learned from an early age that we need to be perfect as the Lord was perfect. We learn that as the daughters of Eve, we need to work hard, to obey and to keep a low profile. When we go out into the world and dare to enter theological studies, ministry and leadership positions, we need to work twice as hard to have our gifts recognized.



The saddest part of all is that today, 500 years after the Reformation, and with over fifty years of women in theological studies in the region, it is still possible to do and teach theology as if there were no women theologians in the world. Feminist theology and women's theology still have an inferior status in our patriarchal world. However, theology done by women crosses many barriers and reaches people's lives, especially the lives of women themselves. Among the issues raised by women theologians are the valuing of women's experiences, gender studies and gender-based violence, feminist hermeneutics of liberation, sexuality and diversity. Women may not be the only ones who have reflected on such topics, but they have often brought them to the table of theological discourse and into the ministries of the churches.

As Lutheran women, we recognize ourselves as “daughters of Katharina in Latin America.” Katharina von Bora had to leave many things behind to follow her belief in salvation by grace. She had to open and close many doors. It was not easy for her, as it is not for us today, but we resist and continue. We work together for change. We celebrate and dance in sisterhood.



In 2013, women connected to the WICAS’s work in the region came together to share memories, stories, challenges, and blessings, and also to plan the work ahead. I was fortunate to be one of them. Together we created the “Latin American Women and Gender Justice Network.” It was a collaborative effort, celebrated with tears, blessed with love, joy and sisterhood. Since then we experience how good it is to work with one another, to learn together how to share leadership, to trust our knowledge and wisdom, to trust in ourselves and in our sisters. As theologians, women in leadership positions and young women we feel that we are on the move, and we are doing it together. Personally, my life has been enriched by the women in the Network in more ways than words can say. The women have become my sisters. There are still many challenges ahead, but now we are stronger and we go together.



Rev. Dr Marcia Blasi, Coordinator of the Gender and Religion Program at Faculdades EST, Brazil.



We need to reaffirm gender justice so that it can be integrated into the church, and not be regarded as an issue that only concerns women. It is part of the churches’ prophetic call in society.

Elizabeth Arciniégas Sánchez, WICAS regional coordinator, Latin America and Caribbean, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia.





Susan C. Johnson

Bishop Johnson describes how when she was a child the church did not ordain women. She would play church with her siblings. Her brother would be the pastor and she would “boss him around from the sidelines.”

Johnson went on to pursue her other passion, music. After graduating from high school, she was accepted at the University of British Columbia to study music education. A year later, in 1976, the church voted to ordain women but Johnson was fully engaged in her studies, graduating in 1981.

It was not until 1986 that she started to explore the call to ministry again. That year she attended a worship conference in Vancouver. Friends commented to Johnson how they felt she might have missed her calling. These comments became more persistent in her thoughts. It was near the end of that year that Johnson prayed to God and said, “if this is what you want, I’ll do it.”

Johnson first attended Vancouver School of Theology and then Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. At seminary she studied alongside students from Anglican, Presbyterian and other denominations. This sparked her passion for ecumenism, which she carries forward today.



In June 2007, delegates to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) National Convention elected Johnson to serve as the fourth National Bishop of the ELCIC. She was the youngest elected bishop and also the first female National Bishop of the ELCIC. Prior to being elected National Bishop, Johnson was Assistant to the Bishop in the Eastern Synod of the ELCIC. There she participated in a variety of program initiatives and represented the bishop at congregations across the region. She credits her time in the synod with helping to foster her growth and gifts in ministry. During this time, Johnson served a term as vice-president of the ELCIC.



Johnson is active in the international Lutheran community. She is currently the vice-president for North America in the Lutheran World Federation and has served on the LWF Council since 1998. She was privileged to be a member of the delegation to meet Pope Francis at the Vatican in October 2013 and to participate in the common prayer service in Lund, 2016. When this was written, she was looking forward to attending the LWF Assembly in Namibia in May 2017, her third assembly.

Throughout her work and ministry, Johnson has remained committed to ecumenism, including full communion with the Anglican Church of Canada, and justice issues, including reconciliation with the Indigenous Peoples. She is passionate about engaging the church in a call to spiritual discipleship.

LWF Archives



Marit Johnson

My name is Marit Johnson, and I'm 23 years-old. Lutheranism has been a part of my life since birth. I'm a PK, a preacher's kid, a term I've never much liked, but have had to live with. With my dad being a pastor, I've been Lutheran before I even left the womb. I come from a small town in North Dakota, only about 1,400 people. My high school graduation class had thirty students. My confirmation class had eight. I was the only girl. Confirmation classes were every Wednesday afternoon with the 8th graders right after school and the 9th graders following. The boys were always happy for confirmation. In the fall, it got them out of football practice, and in the winter, it got them out of basketball. But Lent was different. In Lent, we didn't have confirmation class. Each of us had to ask a member from the congregation to be our confirmation mentor. We would meet with our mentor after each service, each pair finding some corner in the church to discuss the sermon. How did it relate to confirmation? Church teachings? What it meant to be Lutheran?

Most of my confirmation classmates seemed to choose their mentor so easily a junior high school teacher, a former Sunday school teacher, a trusted coach. I was at a loss. Who could I choose? This was an important decision. I'd have to talk to this person about intimate religious thoughts and ideas for a minimum of thirty minutes, not an easy thing for a young introvert to do. My parents had a suggestion. "How about Carol?" Not many fourteen yearolds would ask an 80-year-old widow to be her mentor, but I did. Twice. For both my 8th grade and 9th grade confirmation years. I think I shocked Carol by asking her to be my mentor, but it's one of the best decisions I ever made.

Our little hideaway was the nursery in the back of the church. Sitting side-by-side in two rocking chairs, we talked about each service. My Dad always sent notes with prompts and questions to the mentors before the service for a starting point. Carol and I made it through each list and beyond. My fear of having nothing to say seemed silly. Our sessions spanned an hour if not more. She and I were always the last ones to leave. Each Wednesday I helped my Dad turn off the last few lights as Carol put on her coat and said goodbye.

Every Wednesday was filled with faith, poetry, quotes, and wisdom on life. I learned so much from Carol then, and I continue to learn from her now. Her kindness and her faith know no bounds. One of my favorite quotes Carol gave me comes from W.H. Auden's poem, *As I Walked Out One Evening*. It goes like this, "You shall love your crooked neighbor with your crooked heart." Isn't that exactly what Jesus calls us to do? To love our neighbor with our whole heart? In this broken world, I know that I find fault with my neighbor for many things. Each day I remind myself "You shall love your crooked neighbor with your crooked heart" because I sin each day, too.

Carol recites almost all of her quotes entirely from memory. At my confirmation party when Carol handed me my gift she laughed as she told me, "I wanted to pair this with a Bible verse, but all I could come up with is 'Vanity of vanities all is vanity.'" She gave me a pair of earrings. I still wear them often. Maybe, someday, I'll be as cool as Carol.

Johnson graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota in 2016. She is a Lutheran Volunteer Corps member for 2016–2017, serving in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Voices from North America

From my perspective as a Lutheran theologian and from my experience of serving in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a central concern is that Christian teaching and cultural ideals prescribe rules and dominant images of the ways women and girls should be. Many Christians say these rules and images are what God wants. Many Christians believe that men and women are so completely different that we are opposites, that there are few shared human qualities between genders. Such Christian teaching also holds that God wants women to be subordinate to men, which leads to the idea that God wants women not to be ordained. Some Christians even say women should submit to the violence their husbands use against them. I call this way of setting out human relationships a hierarchical gender binary.

Yet, the Christian teaching that women and men are opposites and that women are subordinate to men is deeply embedded in North American culture. One only has to look at the entertainment industries, national politics, statistics on gender-based violence, plastic surgery to see the deeply engrained misogyny and cultural values about women. Entertainment and advertising tell us that women are young and very skinny with large breasts and look perfect. Women in national politics in the USA hold only few percent of congressional seats. Almost one in three women experiences intimate partner violence, and about every fifth woman and girl in the United States is raped. Lastly, the number of women who have plastic surgery in order to conform their bodies to an unrealistic standard has grown exponentially over the last fifteen years. From my perspective, Christian teaching and cultural ideas about gender are interwoven.

Sometimes Lutheran theology contributes to these problems, but we Lutherans also have something distinctive to contribute to globally contextualized gender justice. In the 500th anniversary year of the Reformation, it was good to look again at justification by grace through faith, by which, Martin Luther said, the Church stands or falls. In short, justification is the teaching that God redeems broken humanity, indeed, all of creation, through the life, death and resurrection of the incarnate Jesus Christ. We humans do not ourselves create redemption, but we do respond to it by loving others. In society, this responsive love takes the form of justice, justice for the neighbor. This includes gender justice.

In other words, gender justice flows from justification. Lutheran efforts to foster gender justice take many forms. There are, however, four crucial ways in which a fresh look at justification disrupts the Christian teachings that God creates humans to be opposites meant to live in a hierarchy of headship and subordination and the cultural ideas that reflect this harmful theology.

A first value of justification is that it is theocentric; God is at the center. This means not only that we rely on God and not our own works, but also that we should have no idols. Some Christians argue that humans sin if they go against hierarchical gender binaries. The doctrine of justification reminds us that we do not earn redemption by acting in particular gender roles. Doing so is like trying to live by gender righteousness, a kind of works righteousness. Likewise, the ways church and society support male supremacy are completely undone by justification because God alone is supreme. We are not to act as if some particular group of humans were supreme.

A second value of justification is freedom, about which much has been said in the Reformation anniversary. Luther wrote about freedom from bondage to whatever stands in the way of the gospel, but this freedom was not simply about spiritual freedom; Luther thought justification concerned the whole person. Freedom in Christ is about God's future, and about how we live now. This means that when Christian and social ideas oppress people and even result in death, we turn to freedom in Christ to be un-bound by these "rules." We resist in order to be who we are. We are freed in Christ from following rules that stipulate how people of different genders "should" be.

A third value of justification is collective human brokenness. Luther helps us to understand our human condition through the idea of God's alien righteousness, a reminder that we each and all receive from God equally. Before God, we are all imperfect, yet God's love covers us. We receive God's righteousness, we do not create it. Remembering that this is how we are with God can affect how we

see ourselves and others. When we stand before each other in the knowledge and experience that it is God who gives righteousness, we may be able to hear what others need. We may be more concerned with seeing each other in all our variety and less concerned with following gender-based rules.

A fourth value of justification is vocation, the call to serve “the need and advantage of the neighbor,” as Luther writes (*LW* 31:302). But the call to serve the neighbor is not only about individuals. Service to the neighbor is also to spouses, families, within the church and in society at large. When we truly listen to the need of the neighbor, what we hear may surprise us. In fact, we may become increasingly aware of God’s call to contend in partnership against the sin of a hierarchical gender binary.

Mine is only one voice among many strong Lutheran women’s voices within the Lutheran World Federation. In North America, member churches have long affirmed God’s call to women in the ordained ministry. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada elected the first Lutheran woman as presiding bishop in North America, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) did the same recently. Through its social teaching and policy, the ELCA seeks to transform the social and religious ideas that result in gender-based harm in many forms. Yet the theological conversation within the North American member communions and within the LWF is never ending. Lutheran Women in Theological and Religious Studies, a network of Lutheran women scholars in North America, has been active in both national and global theological efforts for nearly three decades. It has grown from a handful of women to a network of over 200 that now includes seminary presidents, full professors, department chairs, and bishops. I hope that the global efforts to support and connect women doing theology in the LWF will invigorate the church and world in the ongoing reformation of the next 500 years.

Dr Mary Streufert, Director, Justice for Women, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.



At an LWF pre-assembly meeting in 2009, one of our discussion groups said this: “Men and women are the whole representation of God. The recognition of men and women as leaders in the church displays the fullness of what God created humanity to be.” It is also important to say that the question of gender roles in the church is not simply a “women’s issue,” any more than food justice or poverty eradication is simply an issue for the poor and hungry.

Bishop em. Jana Jeruma-Grinberga, Chaplain, St Saviour’s Anglican Church, Riga.



It should be self-evident that the church as a community of believers should be disturbed by human trafficking and the appalling ways in which this affects the rights of individuals. The violation of a human being constitutes a violation of God’s temple. When a person is oppressed, the human family is diminished. When contemplating human trafficking and its effects, we quickly realize that change is crucial. This includes changing certain attitudes, still prevalent in many societies and churches, such as associating men with human characteristics defined as superior and dominant, and women with those defined as inferior and passive. Patriarchal domination contradicts the liberating message of God’s grace that has come to us in Jesus Christ.

Ebise Dibisa Ayana, Lecturer in Theology, Mekane Yesus Seminary of the EECMY, Ethiopia.

Quote from *Human Beings – Not for Sale*, at, https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/human_beings_1.pdf.

MUJERES EN ORACIÓN

Como una hija habla en confianza a su madre, me dirijo a tí en oración, mi Dios!

Tú me hiciste bella, capaz de amar y de ser creativa, capaz de acoger en mis brazos a quien llora o se encuentra enferma y de caminar de la mano de quien trabaja por la justicia y por la paz entre las personas.

Como en la mañana del Domingo de Resurrección siento la vida pulsar dentro de mí! Mi cuerpo se mueve por tu gracia, desde al amanecer al atardecer, al son de las vivas voces de los niños y las niñas y de los ruidos cotidianos que me rodean. En tí encuentro fuerzas para el trabajo diario y libertad para el descanso. En el diálogo con otras mujeres busco la superación de las violencias. Junto a la comunidad cristiana experimento comunión que renueva la fe y permite anticipar, en esperanza, el Reino de Dios. Bendito seas!

*Permíteme amar a las personas con generosidad, a tu semejanza. Remuéveme de mí comodidad e impúlsame a acciones transformadoras. Fortaléceme para estar al servicio de la construcción de una cultura de igualdad entre mujeres y hombres. Guarda aquellas y aquellos que confiaste a mis cuidados. Concédeme sabiduría ante las adversidades. Ampárame en mis fragilidades. Envuélveme con tu amor y concédeme la bendición de sentirme amada por las personas que me son próximas!
Amén.*

Rev. Sheila dos Santos Dreher,
Red de mujeres y Justicia de Género de América latina y el Caribe de las Iglesias de la Federación Luterana Mundial



Today Mary Magdalene becomes an icon for those seeking the full inclusion of women in leadership. We honor Mary's truth when all women in our church are respected for their ministries, with the altar guild, the Sunday school, the funeral lunches, the service to those in need. We honor Mary's truth when all positions throughout the church are equally available to those who are ordained, women and men alike.

Linda Post Bushkofsky, Executive Director, Women of the ELCA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

<http://www.womenoftheelca.org/blog/marys-truth>

ENVÍO Y BENDICIÓN

*Envío y bendición
Que la bendición de Dios Madre,
creadora de todo cuanto existe,
de Jesucristo, su Hijo, que camina
con nosotros y nosotras,
y del Espíritu Santo, soplo
transformador y lleno de vida, sea
con esta comunidad, con cada una
de nuestras familias donde estén,
y con todo el pueblo de Dios.
Ahora y siempre, Amén.*

Rev. Angela del Consuelo Trejo Haager, profesor at Seminario Luterano Augsburg and at Comunidad Teológica de México, Mexican Lutheran Church Red de mujeres y Justicia de Género de América latina y el Caribe de las Iglesias de la Federación Luterana Mundial



An essential element of the reflection of friendship from a gender justice perspective is to see the impact of it between women. What characterizes a community that is based on friendship? How do churches implement the concept of friendship, taking into account the idea that the basis for friendship in the community is friendship with God? The community should be inclusive and ready to support all people in need, not only those called friends or neighbors. Friendship should be based on justice and the community should be the space where women and men, filled with God's grace, are equal. The churches and religions are challenged to create space for solving conflicts in a spirit of friendship.

Agnieszka Tarnogorska, Eastern Europe, WICAS regional coordinator, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland.





Gender Justice Policy

Salaam and grace to you from the Holy City of Jerusalem.

First of all, I would like to say that as President of the Lutheran World Federation, I am very happy for the work that WICAS has done to develop consciousness and awareness of the need for gender justice. I can remember how we were once very focused on “gender equality,” and then these leaders challenged us to see that gender justice is something very different. Of course, this fits very well with our commitments in other areas: as a church, we are committed to seeking justice for all people, in all places. I am proud of the way WICAS has worked tirelessly to further the cause of gender justice, not only in Geneva, but in our member churches throughout the world.



In our pursuit of gender justice, we have had to challenge tradition, culture and sometimes overt sexism. But, despite these challenges, I am very much encouraged to see that churches in various parts of the world are taking the issue very seriously. Many important changes have occurred as a result of dialogue and learning about gender justice.

It was a great step forward when the LWF adopted its *Gender Justice Policy*, which is based on sound Lutheran theology. We have stated that gender justice flows directly from our understanding that we are saved by grace. Each one of us was created equally in the image of God and each one of us has been saved equally through the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. As I travel to many parts of the world and speak on gender justice, it is helpful that this policy has been translated into many languages, so that others can have these important conversations in their own contexts.



In my own church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, we have taken the issue of gender justice very seriously. One important step in our context was the creation of a new church constitution, the first and only one in the Middle East to support gender justice in issues of marriage, separation, divorce, inheritance and adoption. When we adopted this landmark document, many asked me how it would be accepted in our culture. I am happy to say that it has been well received in both Christian and non-Christian circles in our society. This shows that when the church is bold enough to follow the path of justice, others will follow.



I think that it is worth noting that recent studies show that eighty-two percent of the LWF member churches now ordain women to the ministry of Word and sacrament. The other eighteen percent are discussing it. I believe this is a direct result of the good work of WICAS and its witness.

Of course, gender justice is not just about women’s ordination. However, when we see a church making this step, we know that the theology of justice and equality for all people is being implemented there. For this reason, I see women’s ordination as an integral part of our Lutheran identity. When we say that we are “liberated by God’s grace,” we mean that all, men and women, are liberated. All are freed from sin, and all are freed to serve. For this reason, we will not give up the pursuit of gender justice, racial justice, or economic justice, in spite of any challenges we may face. This is our Christian call, and this is our Lutheran mission.

May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Rev. Dr. Munib Younan, former president of The Lutheran World Federation, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

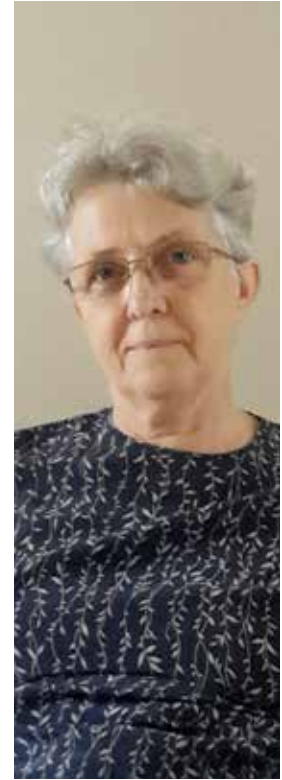
Edna Moga Ramminger

On 13 November 1982, I was ordained to the pastoral ministry and became the first ordained woman in our church. I was not the first woman to study theology; before me, others had already studied at the Faculty of Theology of São Leopoldo. They had completed their studies but had not gone into the ministry. When I began my theological studies in 1973, there were four women studying theology and three more began with me. Of these eight, three went on to pastoral ministry.

I was not the first woman to minister in the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB); Pastor Rita Marta Panke was the first. She took her first pastorate in 1977 and I in 1978. However, I was the first to be ordained. My ordination marked the beginning of the ordination of women in the IECLB. The small community of Colorado D'Oeste, Rondônia, had no idea that it was taking part in this historic event, nor did the coordinator of the New Areas of Colonization, Pastor Arteno Spellmeier, who was entrusted by the presidency of the church to celebrate my ordination. Otto, my husband, and I were ordained in the same service and worked together wherever possible. At the time there was no clearly defined policy in the IECLB regarding women in ministry. It was not known what the reaction of the communities would be and what problems could arise. Of course, there were opponents too. But, women began to study theology, even if far fewer than men, and to serve as pastors. They gained recognition and opened space for more women. Today there are many women serving in various ministries.

Despite a timid beginning, the participation of women in the ordained ministry has increased. If barriers are overturned, preconceptions are overcome, difficulties are faced and women are trained and accepted to serve in the ordained ministry, this is only possible by the grace of God. It is not only the desire of women, but it is God who wants women to respond to their vocation and to prepare themselves to serve in the ordained ministry. This is the true reason for our gratitude in today's service. God calls men and women to participate in God's mission in the ordained ministry in the IECLB. It is true that it is not the community that "creates" the vocation in someone. God is the one who calls. The Holy Spirit of God brings forth the vocation in the community, but the community must provide a favorable environment for this.

Excerpts from a sermon by the Rev. Edna Moga Ramminger, celebrating thirty years of the ordination of women in the IECLB.





Launching the LWF Gender Justice Policy

Why does the LWF need a gender justice policy? During recent months I have often heard this question, sometimes it is addressed to me in a spirit of affirming amazement, sometimes in a spirit of bewildered concern. Why have we been working on a gender justice policy, what drives this effort?

In my response I have underlined that this is first and foremost a matter of faithfulness to our baptismal vocation, which opens new horizons and possibilities for the ways in which we are called to live in this world. It is this immense gift of freedom that results from God's message and action in salvation, which gives us the space and the inspiration to look into relationships between men and women, and how they are shaped and constructed. It is God's agenda of restored relationships, it is God's agenda of life in fullness for all, and it is God's agenda of justice, peace, and reconciliation, as expressed in Jesus Christ that nurtures both our vision and commitment to work on a gender justice policy. God has transformed our lives to such an extent that we arrived at the point of recognizing the need for a gender justice policy. This is then the reason why the Eleventh Assembly took the decision to do so, and requested us in the Communion Office to develop this document.

In doing so, the Assembly also wanted to be coherent with the decades-long journey of engagement for justice between men and women, which required the development of a gender justice policy as a next step. In 1984, the Seventh Assembly took the decision to implement a quota system in the governing bodies of the communion, according to which we need to observe at least forty percent participation of both men and women in our governing bodies. After several years of implementation we have come to realize that to ensure a quota for women does not yet mean that we ensure their participation. The gender justice policy wants to address this other dimension, so that the quota actually leads to participation. That is why we needed a gender justice policy.

Where is this going to lead us? Well, I believe into further journeying, into charting new ground in uncharted lands, and into local and regional discussions, where churches are invited to read, discern, contextualize, challenge and be challenged. The *Gender Justice Policy* is no more nor less than that: it is a tool to assist churches, and the entire communion, as they look for signposts to help them to express with greater joy and stronger commitment what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for them, and for the relationships between people and within the human family, through his death and resurrection, .

Rev. Dr Martin Junge, General Secretary of The Lutheran World Federation. Text extracted from his speech at the launching of the *Gender Justice Policy*.

Ecumenical Journey of Gender Justice: Lessons from the LWF Gender Justice Policy

While questions of equal and just presence, participation and relationships between women and men existed throughout the labor pains of birthing the World Council of Churches, there have been several halts on the pilgrimage that served as markers of progress. Being able to be involved on behalf of the WCC's Women in Church and Society program in the LWF's Gender Advisory Group process towards the gender justice policy has been one such inspiration in the ongoing process started in the 1940s. The WCC's first women's preassembly in Baarn in 1948 was the result of a survey inquiring about the role of women in the church. It was conducted by church women who were empowered by the ideals of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), as well as by several women-initiated missiological movements, including the World Day of Prayer. These were the beginnings of the program on cooperation of men and women in 1953 which, at the second assembly in 1954, was weaned into the sub-unit on Women in Church and Society. From the watershed consultation on "Sexism in the 70s" in Berlin (1974), to the WCC assembly decision in 1975, which led to the Faith and Order study on the Community of Women and Men in the Church (1979-1981), through the ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), the search for visible unity in terms of a just community of women and men has continued. In all this pilgrimage search, the WCC has worked closely with Christian World Communions and ecumenical partners, especially with the LWF's Office for Women in Church and Society.

Observing and participating in the LWF Gender Advisory Group towards the gender justice process in an advisory capacity enriched the WCC's own similar process which started in 2014, after the *Gender Justice Policy* had been adopted by the LWF Council. There were two main influences: first, the structure of the LWF's terms of reference for the Gender Advisory Group influenced that of the WCC although history, process and focus had to be contextualised to the WCC's wider diversity of theology, participation and understanding of the gender relationships, especially as shaped by the Community of Women and Men in the Church study. Second, in the composition of the Gender Advisory Group membership it was important to include members of the WCC's governing bodies, especially the Central Committee, and it was good to have the LWF's Women in Church and Society's staff person in an advisory capacity. Because of the rich experience of the LWF gender justice policy process, the WCC did not need to reinvent the wheel. Even though the demands of our work restrained close participation in each other's processes, the deliberate decision to embrace sisterhood meant that we could always compare notes on our common and respective journeys. Both the terms of reference and strategic membership of the Gender Advisory Group have contributed to the miraculous progress of the WCC's gender advisory group process, especially the adoption of our group's 2015 report. We now have a Central Committee mandate towards a gender justice policy.

For the WCC it will take another big miracle to give birth to a gender justice policy which our governing bodies will feel able to adopt. The diversity of the ecumenical family and its conception of visible unity through theology, participation and gender relations becomes a thorny challenge to the implementation of ecumenical policies, especially gender justice ones. For example, an analysis of existing ecclesiological theologies reveals an embeddedness of patriarchal connotations of what the church is, a household with a male head. This conception, strengthened by widely existing patriarchal cultures, reinforces the need for gender justice policies while making their implementation as difficult as chewing sand, particularly given consensus decision making mechanisms. Two strategies are helpful to turn such challenges into opportunities. First, the involvement of female and male members from the governing bodies who are themselves gender justice advocates, can help put gender justice as a regular item on governing bodies' agendas. Second, the possibility of regular gender awareness training for of staff and members of governing bodies, conscientizes them to adopt these concerns as part of their own normality for every process and intervention. When such training also includes existing international gender justice instruments like CEDAW, UNSCR1325, UPR and SDG5, it enriches the search for gender justice as coterminous with the defense of women's human rights.

Such ecumenical journeying together is a blessing to be embraced and needs to find greater expression in the WCC's programmatic life, for together our pilgrimage of justice and peace will have gender justice and peace with no sexual gender based violence at the heart of its agenda.

Dr. Fulata Mbanjo Moyo, Program Executive, A Just Community of Women and Men, World Council of Churches.

Musimbi Kanyoro

Musimbi Kanyoro was born in Kenya on 30 November 1953. She is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. From 1988 to 1998 Kanyoro served as LWF Secretary for Women in Church and Society. In her first editorial column in the WICAS magazine WOMEN (No. 30, summer 1988), Kanyoro introduced herself:

I come from Nairobi. I was educated in both Kenya and the USA. My interest and involvement in women's issues really began in the US but it was at the end of the UN decade for Women when we as Kenyan women were preparing to host the end of the Decade Forum and Conference that I really became involved in a deep analysis of women's issues and in women's leadership. It was also the events of the Decade that helped me to contextualize my theology. Without a doubt, my interest in women's issues must be linked to the Bible. Therefore I put a lot of emphasis on the study of Scripture and the place of prayer in our lives.

Kanyoro received her bachelor's degree from the University of Nairobi, Kenya, a PhD in linguistics from the University of Texas, Austin, USA, and a PhD in feminist theology from San Francisco Theological Seminary, USA. She was a visiting scholar for Hebrew and the Old Testament at Harvard Divinity School and has received three honorary doctorates and several recognition awards, including a leadership award from the Kenyan government. She was nominated as one of the 1000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize, and most recently was named one of the twenty-one women leaders of the twenty-first century by Women's E-News.

During her tenure as Secretary for Women and Church in Society, Kanyoro developed and implemented the LWF Seven-Year Plan of Action for Women (1990—1997); she facilitated the active involvement of LWF member churches in the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988—1998), which encouraged churches to talk about gender justice, domestic and sexual violence against women, rape, discrimination and other forms of injustice against women and girls; and led the LWF delegation to the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China (1995). She facilitated an international consultation on women as a follow-up to the conference in order to develop a forward-looking strategy for the LWF's agenda for 2000 and beyond. She also led the three-year LWF Young Women's Leadership Training, which prepared young Lutheran women to develop skills and assume leadership roles. Several of them since then are recognized leaders in church and society.

Kanyoro is a prolific writer, having authored and edited eleven books and hundreds of articles. When she left the LWF at the beginning of 1998, she became the first woman from the global South in 150 years to serve as General Secretary of the World YWCA. Currently Musimbi resides in San Francisco, where she is the president and CEO of the Global Fund for Women. She continues to advocate for women's rights in all spheres of life.

LWF Archives



Priscilla Singh

Priscilla Singh served as executive secretary for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) from 1998 to 2008.

Prior to her appointment she worked as the Asia regional coordinator for WICAS. In this capacity she advocated for the rights of Dalit women.

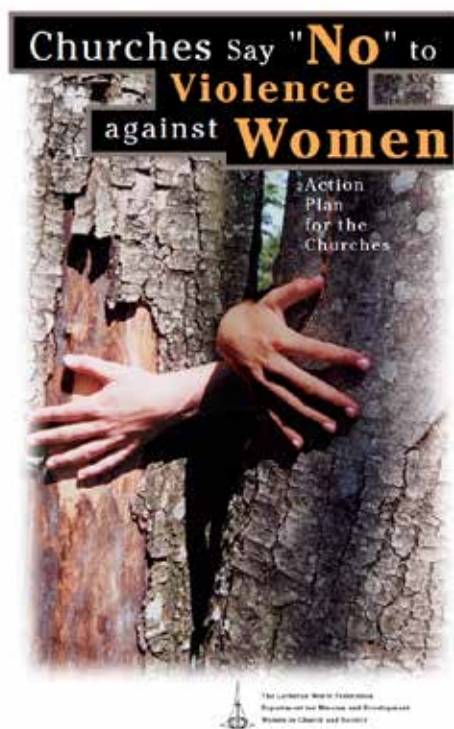
During her term in office, WICAS focused on the issue of violence against women and challenged the churches to treat this issue as an issue of faith and to emphatically say “No” to violence against women. The WICAS publication, *Churches say “No” to Violence against Women* was widely translated and distributed. As a result, over thirty projects aimed at reducing violence were run by member churches around the world.

The office also focused on gender training, gender and power, including the publication “*It will not be so among you!*” *A Faith Reflection on Gender and Power*. Singh continued to facilitate leadership training both at the regional and national levels and intentionally included a gender component in all LWF development projects.

In June 2005, WICAS convened the first Conference of Women Bishops and Presidents and Leaders with the Ministry which recommended that:

- Regular meetings of women bishops, presidents and leaders be held;
- Women, including bishops, be represented in inter-confessional dialogues at the 40 percent LWF goal for inclusion;
- All LWF member churches will ordain women, and that in full communion relationships, women bishops be recognized;
- Our colleagues join us in publicly speaking out against violence towards women.

LWF Archives



Marthe Ramiaramanana Ravilao



Marthe Ramiaramanana Ravilao was the first woman medical doctor in Madagascar. She was well educated, a devout Lutheran, and loved to serve her country and the church. She promoted charity work and the empowerment of her fellow Malagasy. She was the leader of a women's association, president of the North Synod and vice-president of the Women's National Board committee. She was passionate about caring for one's neighbor.

In 1957, the Malagasy Lutheran church sent four people to attend the Lutheran World Federation's Third Assembly in Minneapolis; Ramiaramanana Ravilao was one of them.

On her return, she reported to the Malagasy Lutheran Church General Assembly in Manakara. She wrote a letter requesting that the General Assembly form a department that would (formally) unite the women's associations. She worked hard with her colleagues to make this vision a reality. Christine Razanalisoa assisted her in the process of gaining national status for the Malagasy Lutheran Church's Women's Department.

In 1964, they founded the women's department, Antenimieran' ny Fikambanam-Behivavy Loterana (AFBL). The Malagasy Lutheran Church encouraged each synod to have women join the AFBL as representatives. In 1969, Ramiaramanana Ravilao was elected president of the AFBL. The AFBL supported the Lutheran Theological Seminary with 60.000 Fmg a year.

After the first triennial women's gathering in 1974, she decided to give up her position as president for health reasons.

Her vision was:

- Preaching and making Christ known as Savior;
- Empowering women to be Jesus' disciples;
- Uniting women's hearts in the church in order to have one common vision;
- Creating a network of Christian women (not only Lutheran women);
- Preparing women to study theology.

Mananato Toromare, vice-general secretary of the Malagasy Lutheran Church.



Woman Not a Stranger

Woman, you are not a stranger
 In a world of women
 Being declared a sovereign of the soil
 Wisdom was sealed as your instrument
 For redemption to lead the world
 The producer of new Breath
 to the mother earth
 Constructor of fibred relationships
 Harmonizing unforeseen destruction and death
 So as to keep relationships
 away from hardship
 Thus you smile, smile, smile
 As you watch her walk down the aisle
 Woman, you aren't a stranger
 Your eyes can no longer be sighted and ignored
 As you read and observe over pains inflicting
 through anger. Enough is enough!
 You can no longer keep and watch
 The scary social ills of rape,
 prostitution and trafficking
 Conquering our mountain hills Your tears sweat
 and blood lubricate the endured pain
 with blessed showers of slithering rain
 Woman, you aren't a stranger
 You show your strength
 through hardships and burdens
 Laying down your life
 to save the nations in danger
 You always have solutions as life hardens
 Creator of Life
 echoing the gospel of respect and love
 A survivor and protector, the provider for all
 Women, you aren't a stranger
 You are defined by your beauty
 throughout the universe
 The shaper of the new dawn,
 and a golden lifestyle
 The aid you do is depicted
 from your sweet song of love
 Despite those
 who always mistreat you with anger
 Your strength
 always shines through the universe

 Woman! Shine, Shine, Shine,
 for you aren't a stranger!

This poem was written by Rev. Phinah Olga Kgosana,
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. She is a
 member of the LUCSA's Female Theologians' Forum.
 LWI 12/2009, 11.



Under No Circumstances

Reflecting on our experience as members of the Gender Advisory Group was nostalgic and brought brought back many beautiful memories: the inclusive process, the group molding into a unit, overcoming being strangers to be a united family, shared frustrations when we could not find the proper terminology, or simply the “right” word which could connect or augment a statement, late nights and caffeine dependency, to name but a few!

Despite the seriousness our work as a group entailed, many hilarious moments come to mind. One in particular illustrates this paradox of seriousness and hilarity. At one meeting, we literally sat with the text for the better part of a morning without movement because certain members felt that the language was not sensitive enough to protect our respective contexts. Suddenly a member (with the straightest of faces) remarked, “I think you’ve got mail!” Upon checking our inboxes, we saw he had sent us a very quirky, very idiotic e-mail, lamenting “our lot,” which immediately diffused the tension, and we could proceed.

Our journey is best thought of as a movement to which each and every one contributed, as co-conspirators, never forgetting our diverse contexts, and under no circumstances forgetting our constituents, the women, men and children in our member churches suffering from gender injustices.

The LWF *Gender Justice Policy* is a powerful tool, a rich gift to the communion and member churches, an opportunity to influence and transform not only the church, but also society in a very constructive way.

My prayers are that the Gender Justice Policy will be valued and implemented within all our member churches, offering opportunities for the church to connect to society in a real and tangible way, breaking cycles of violence, oppression and subjugation, thus building rich, transformed communities offering the Good News of hope, peace and love.

Colleen Cunningham, Lutheran Communion of Southern Africa (LUCSA), Women in Church and Society coordinator, LWF Council.

Set Up Road Markers

“Set up road markers for yourself, make yourself guideposts; consider well the highway, the road by which you went” (Jer 31:21)

I began the journey of serving as a member of the Gender Advisory Group of The Lutheran World Federation in 2010. It was a great opportunity to represent the West South Asia Lutheran Communion (WeSALUC) on the Group, where I met friends with varied experiences of gender issues in their own contexts. The process was filled with learning, sharing experiences, discussions, and drafting of the LWF *Gender Justice Policy*. Through all this, we kept in mind all our member churches in their different contexts and traditions.

The discussions during the Asian Church Leaders' Conference in 2013 in Bangkok were informative and provided awareness about what the *Gender Justice Policy* is and why it is important for the churches and church-related organizations of the LWF Asian Lutheran Communion.

After the publication of the LWF *Gender Justice Policy*, it was introduced to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India's (UELCI) member churches in various programs organized by the UELCI desk for Women in Church and Society. Step by step the discussion started among the UELCI member churches through the programs of the Women's Desk. This process has encouraged the executive secretary and executive staff to discuss, and then draft a Gender Policy for the UELCI Secretariat.

With the help and encouragement of the Church of Sweden and the LWF, the UELCI drafted its Gender Policy, which was approved by the Executive Committee.

The church leaders of UELCI felt that the Gender Justice Policy would be more accessible and better understood if it were translated into the regional languages. Therefore, with the help of the LWF, WICAS and WeSALUC, the Gender Justice Policy was translated into three Indian regional languages: Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi.

The translated version of the LWF *Gender Justice Policy* provides a set of guidelines for member churches to address gender inequality in the church. It is also a helpful tool for our member churches who UELCI involved in the drafting process of a gender policy for the local church context while also encouraging dialogue on the issues.

Ranjita Christie Borgoary, WICAS regional coordinator Asia, Secretary, WICAS/UELCI.





Being Inspired Together

First of all, I would like to say thank you because it has been great to be part of this journey and of the LWF global movement on gender justice.

It was a wonderful experience to work with you writing the *Gender Justice Policy*, and to have the time to reflect and share experiences from our different contexts while remaining united by the passion for Christ, for justice, and by the desire to see church and society transformed by the power of the Spirit that inspires us. We did rely on the Spirit, just as Elaine reminded us when during one of our meetings, she invited us to breathe together, to “conspirer,” to be inspired together and bring wisdom and experience to build the *Gender Justice Policy*.

I had a great time and learned a lot from each one of you. I hope I will see you again to celebrate this ongoing journey. Meanwhile I bless you all and thank you again.

For me to be part of the LWF Gender Advisory Group was a great experience that reaffirmed the importance of continually reflecting on gender justice, both in the church and in society. The experience with the Gender Advisory Group has inspired me to write my MA research paper in theology on women’s empowerment as a way to prevent HIV and AIDS. The experience with the Gender Advisory Group also inspired my work as a human rights lawyer in Colombia. During the last four years, I have been working to represent women victims of sexual violence in the armed conflict in national and international scenarios, such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the mechanisms of the United Nations. Thanks to the experience with the Gender Advisory Group, I reinforced my commitment to gender justice in the church and society.

Fabián Wilches García, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia.





Communion in Christ

Serving on the LWF Gender Advisory Group was a truly human experience. We five regional representatives took steps together. We learned, we listened to each other, we sat and stood and walked and prayed together. We studied and wrote. We struggled. We held each other's pain. We made mistakes. We changed. We had courage because of Christ.

This is, indeed, communion in Christ. Although the journey of the Gender Advisory Group only initially involved a small number of us, it was for all of us together in the whole Lutheran World Federation. Many hands ultimately shaped this work. I pray that the *Gender Justice Policy* continues to be one means to serve justice, the form of love written large in the church and in the world.

It was a great honor to be among you, Colleen, Fabian, Ranjitha and Thomas. You changed me. As we in the whole communion journey with the meaning and implications of this document, may we each be changed through God's grace in Christ for each other. What a beautiful experience it has been to journey with so many companions!

Dr Mary Streufert, Director, Justice for Women, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.





What Did I Learn During My Participation in the LWF Gender Advisory Group?

I start with the result of our work. The *Gender Justice Policy* is the basis for a pedagogical journey within and among the member churches. The common journey of the Gender Advisory Group started three years before it was launched, and I can say that I learned a lot during the time of our work. We were different but one in Christ, and we shared one, common aim, gender justice. From the beginning, I felt a high level of respect between us.

One new experience for me was to be part of a minority. I was the only European member and one of two men in the working group in which women were in the majority. Integrating a critical male perspective into the document was a challenge. There were some topics that we discussed intensively, exploring our realities that were so different. I remember how carefully we had to deal with sexual violence. In Germany, there was a public discussion about men as victims of sexual violence while, at the same time, sexual violence against women in India and South Africa was increasing. I am thankful that it was possible to bring the different experiences together and to find a respectful way to work on a text for the whole communion. I learned a lot from Ranjita (India) and Colleen (South Africa) during those years.

The work in the Gender Advisory Group was also a chance to deal with the fundamentals of Lutheran theology and its potential to legitimate gender justice as we understand it today. My own theological thinking is essentially based on the biblical texts and studies in feminist theology. Working on the texts for a gender justice policy from a Lutheran perspective became more important for me. Mary (USA) showed me how to transform Lutheran theology from a feminist perspective, so that it strengthens the liberation of women and men.

One last important experience is that I have revisited another point of view concerning the possibilities and the limits of a global statement concerning gender justice now. The ethical discussions about LGBTQI had to be put aside in order to increase the chance that the *Gender Justice Policy* would be accepted by the majority of the member churches. From this perspective, the work on the text became a lesson in realistic politics. Even if some people may criticize the result, I am proud that we have such a policy for the LWF.

My feelings of being part of a bigger community are deeper now. I know that there are sisters and brothers around the world who share the desire for gender justice. That strengthens me to carry on in my work for gender justice.

Widening the Understanding of Gender Roles

Taking the Asian context into consideration, how do you envision the actual implementation of the LWF Gender Justice Policy?

Rev. Au Sze Ngui (Malaysia): Asian society is evolving. Migration towards the cities and the increasing freedom and participation of women in the workforce has led to a widening in the understanding of gender roles. In such a scenario, the transformative dimension of the gospel, which offers a provision for gender justice, can enhance the possibilities for implementation.

The gospel paves the way for entering into a reflection on gender justice and that is what we have been doing throughout this meeting. The successful implementation of the policy will happen when the transformation brought about by understanding the gospel has taken place.

What are the possible challenges to this transformation process in terms of gender justice in the Asian context?

The understanding of justice is contextual. It can mean different things to each society. However, for us Lutherans, it is because we believe in a just God who has created women and men equally that we can share the core values reflected in the *Gender Justice Policy*.

It is important to emphasize this theological grounding so as to avoid any misconception of gender justice as being a Western perspective. Tradition plays a central role in Asian societies and finding a way to highlight gender justice in a context where ancient practices are still highly valued may be a challenge. This is particularly visible in rural settings where we still have very strict gender roles that can prevent women and girls from benefitting from equal opportunities, and where they often suffer discrimination and abuse that is tolerated and reproduced in families and the institutional system. The LWF has made a significant contribution to confronting these situations and has empowered women. It is still a challenging context.

Interview with Rev. Au Sze Ngui, Malaysia, WICAS ASIA Network Meeting.





Finland

The first Nordic translation of the LWF *Gender Justice Policy (GJP)* will help make it part of the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF), Helsinki Bishop Irja Askola predicted. The Finnish translation of the global document, which was launched in Helsinki, underscores the inclusive principles of the LWF policy adopted in 2013, she added. “Growing towards an inclusive community, one needs to communicate with the language that is known by the members of that community. Not everyone in Finland understands English. Sometimes the global document, which you read in your own mother tongue, invites you differently,” she noted. “Well, this speaks to us and about us,” she emphasized. Askola noted that many of the principles embodied in the LWF policy are already known to the ELCF. However, she added that having it in Finnish will raise new questions around inclusiveness. “Do we invite into our processes only those whom we know as ‘safe causes’ or do we take a risk? In other words, is there a possibility of learning from those who we do not know yet or whose questions might disturb us? Do we dare to ask?” she concluded.



<https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/growing-towards-inclusive-community-finnish-church>

Palestine

The Lutheran World Federation’s *Gender Justice Policy* has been translated into Arabic. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, hosted a workshop that incorporated the launching of the Arabic version. The policy defines theological processes and practices that help to promote just relations between men and women, and enhance women’s contribution to both church and society. Participants recommended further training to raise awareness about the rights of women and girls, the implications for families in marriages of couples from different faiths, and strategies to include men in discussions on gender justice.



<https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/open-dialogue-and-training-holy-land-gender-justice-seminar>

Ethiopia

A four-day workshop with African participants in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia marked the beginning of the *Gender Justice Policy (GJP)* implementation process. The *Gender Justice Policy*, approved by the LWF Council in 2013, is a tool to enhance the communion's journey towards inclusiveness and to promote equality and balanced power relations between women and men. Now, the process has moved on, evolving from policy to practice.

The group shaped practical recommendations for implementing gender justice in programmatic work. It was agreed that the *Gender Justice Policy* needs to be used, studied, translated and made relevant for the different global contexts. For effective management of human and financial resources, there is a need for continuous collaboration and engagement between all departments in the church, the group said.

The participants in the workshop also recommended that intentional efforts by the church leadership are required fully to integrate women in the ordained ministry and at all levels of decision making of the church. Participants called on the church leadership to ensure that there are appropriate structures and staff trained for this purpose.

As the church is an important moral institution in African countries, the participants affirmed that it is an important advocate for gender justice. They recommended involving the church leadership in order to achieve to effectively develop structures that incorporate gender as a crosscutting priority.

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/implementing-gender-justice-policy-africa>



Latin America and the Caribbean

Gender justice policies intersect with dimensions such as gender, race, class, disabilities, religion and human sexuality, contributing in this way to address common concerns in many Latin American societies, including ways to overcome violence against women.

In the LAC region (Latin America and the Caribbean), the Women and Gender Justice Network Program has taken the lead in ensuring that the church leaders become familiar with the contents of the *Gender Justice Policy* and to allocate a space to discuss gender justice challenges and opportunities during the annual leadership conference. Some leaders and churches have consciously taken on discussions about gender justice, and gender-based violence as followup actions.

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/lutheran-churches-latin-america-and-caribbean-form-women-and-gender-justice-network>

Implementation of the Gender Justice Policy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe



For a long time, the issue of inclusivity was a thorn in the flesh of the Lutheran World Federation and was discussed at length in several forums of the communion, such as in councils and assemblies. In 2010, the Eleventh LWF Assembly broke through the wall of resistance and made the issue of gender justice a priority. In June 2013, the LWF Council approved and adopted the LWF *Gender Justice Policy*. On 10 December 2013, many gathered in Geneva to witness its official launch. I was one of those witnesses. What this means is that the *Gender Justice Policy* belongs to everyone and is open to regional expressions, sub-regions and member churches throughout the communion for adopt and implementation.



At that time, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe was working to establish a gender justice desk. The ELCZ therefore received the LWF *Gender Justice Policy* and made it the guiding tool to implement its gender justice program. After the first three-year phase of evaluation it was determined on the basis of field findings that the ELCZ should have a local gender justice policy for the Zimbabwean context supported by the global one.



In responding to this call, church leaders and the implementers prepared the local ELCZ *Gender Justice Policy* document which was approved by the church council and officially launched on 30 June 2015 by Presiding Bishop Dr S. M. Dube. The ELCZ *Gender Justice Policy* is a product of the LWF *GJP*, yet some aspects draw on different sources, including the country's gender policy. Both the LWF and the ELCZ policies are officially adopted and equally recognized by the church, the board of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, other civic organizations, as well as by the government of Zimbabwe through its





Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development. Since both documents are imperative for Zimbabweans, they are being translated into the two main local languages, Shona and Ndabele. This makes the documents easily understandable and user-friendly for the rural and urban contexts.

There is considerable mutuality and a connection between the LWF and ELCZ policies. Thus, both serve the same purpose of making our churches and communities more aware of the need for gender justice in all regions of the Lutheran communion. In our efforts to implement the two gender justice policies, the church connects with the LWF *Gender Justice Policy* and helps to ensure that both are fully implemented in all structures of the church, cascading to the congregational level.

In this regard policy implementers design the accountability mechanisms to ensure compliance to the policy expectations, guidelines and commitments made at the LWF communion level. In addition, other efforts to implement the gender justice policies include commitments that all structures, including council and board meetings, adopt and ensure the use of inclusive language in all meetings, sermons and in all documents. Likewise, pastors are urged to facilitate Bible studies on gender equality and to include these messages in their sermons. Lastly, the gender justice policy documents supports the principle that all people, regardless of their gender, have equal access to educational opportunities. Gender justice should not be looked at as a woman’s issue, but rather as an important matter for the church as a whole. In this regard, it is important that the church interrogates patriarchal tendencies and their negative impact on the dignity of women and girls even within the church.

Rev. Elitha Moyo, ELCZ Gender Justice Project Coordinator, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe.





La justice de genre comme une question herméneutique et exégétique

La question du genre a fait l'objet depuis des années – et cela continue – de discussions et débats houleux au sein des Églises. Elle a fait couler beaucoup d'encre et de salive.

Nous voulons aborder la question sous l'angle herméneutique et exégétique. En d'autres termes la question de la justice de genre est relèue aussi de « comment nous lisons et interprétons les Écritures Saintes » ? Comment l'homme et la femme se comprennent-ils et comprennent leurs relations à la lumière des Saintes Ecritures ?

La question de la justice de genre

Comme Jésus qui demandait aux disciples d'Emmaüs : « De quoi discutez-vous en marchant ? » (Luc 24,17), nous nous posons aussi cette question ?

C'est quoi la justice de genre ? Il n'est pas question des femmes seulement mais des hommes et des femmes. Le document *Politique de la FLM relative à la justice du genre* répond en disant :

La *Justice de genre* implique la protection et la promotion de la dignité des femmes et des hommes qui, toutes et tous créés à l'image de Dieu, sont des intendantes et intendants coresponsables de la création. La justice de genre s'exprime par l'égalité et des relations de pouvoir équilibrées entre femmes et hommes, et l'élimination des systèmes institutionnels, culturels et interpersonnels de privilèges et d'oppression qui soutiennent la discrimination.¹

Parler de la justice de genre, c'est donc se demander comment :

- protéger, et promouvoir la dignité de l'être humain ;
- protéger, et promouvoir l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes et ;
- éliminer tout système de discrimination au sein de l'Église...

Comme « églises », nous pensons que cette tâche s'enracine dans les Saintes Écritures, source de notre foi et notre pratique selon les principes cardinaux des réformateurs : *sola fide, sola gracia, sola scriptura*.

« Toute Écriture est inspirée de Dieu et utile pour enseigner la vérité, réfuter l'erreur, corriger les fautes et former à une juste manière de vivre, afin que l'homme de Dieu soit parfaitement préparé et équipé pour faire toute action bonne » 2 Tim 3,16-17.

Le texte ci-dessus pose la question de l'autorité de l'Écriture Sainte. Nous confessons que la Bible est la source de la foi, de la doctrine et de la vie de l'Église. En d'autres termes notre profession de foi, ce que nous croyons, ce que nous vivons, nos relations hommes-femmes sont tirées de la Bible qui est notre seule autorité.

Les multiples façons de lire aujourd'hui la Bible et les nombreuses méthodes d'interprétation utilisées de nos jours ont apporté un enrichissement certain en permettant de découvrir une plus grande plénitude du message des Saintes Écritures. Mais souvent aussi le lecteur de la Bible est dérouté par le foisonnement des grilles de lectures appliquées à l'Écriture Sainte, dont il ne saisit plus clairement l'autorité unique et normative en matière de foi.

Les Églises chrétiennes sont unanimes pour affirmer l'autorité de l'Écriture Sainte. C'est par la Bible et son témoignage que Dieu parle à son peuple. Cette unanimité est réjouissante, elle est le lien unissant tous les chrétiens. Pourtant elle est insuffisante, car on ne saurait se contenter d'une simple référence formelle à l'Écriture Sainte. La tâche bien plus difficile est d'interpréter l'Écriture sainte et de définir la manière dont elle a autorité au sein de nos Églises.



Il existe en effet différentes manières d'aborder l'Écriture Sainte et de lui donner autorité. Sans en être toujours conscient, chacun de nous lit et reçoit à sa façon le message scripturaire. Ainsi, par exemple, certains passages des évangiles ou des épîtres, certains psaumes semblent avoir, dans la vie de nos chrétiens et des Églises, plus d'importance que d'autres. Cette simple constatation nous indique que, dans le cadre de l'affirmation générale de l'autorité de l'Écriture, nous faisons un certain choix qui nous amène à donner à tel passage plus d'autorité qu'à un autre.

Cette problématique n'est certes pas nouvelle. Toute l'histoire des Églises nous permet de découvrir la manière dont on donnait autorité à l'Écriture et dont on l'interprétait. Ce problème remonte à l'histoire biblique elle-même. Tout en affirmant comme eux l'autorité de l'Écriture, Jésus s'opposait aux pharisiens et aux sadducéens sur la manière d'interpréter et de donner autorité aux passages des Écritures. Cette même question suscitait des tensions au sein de la jeune communauté chrétienne elle-même, provoquait des discussions entre les apôtres et opposait la première communauté chrétienne à la communauté juive (Math. 5, 2. Cor. 3, 4-6, Actes 15).

Jésus-Christ, clé de lecture de l'Écriture Sainte

La Bible est une collection de livres d'époques et d'auteurs divers qui, animés par l'Esprit, rendent témoignage à la révélation de Dieu au sein du peuple d'Israël et plus spécialement à la personne de Jésus-Christ, Seigneur et Sauveur, en qui toutes les promesses de Dieu sont réalisées. Nous découvrons dans l'Écriture Sainte le mouvement de l'histoire du salut depuis les origines jusqu'à la mort et la résurrection de Jésus-Christ, salut et accomplissement pour toute l'humanité.

Ayant au 16^e siècle redécouvert l'importance de l'Écriture pour la vie de l'Église, Luther s'est efforcé d'en définir l'autorité. Il n'y avait pour lui qu'une seule manière de donner autorité au texte biblique : Jésus-Christ, parole faite chair et son action salvatrice pour les hommes, sa croix et sa résurrection. Un texte d'Écriture veut être lu à la lumière de Jésus-Christ. Ainsi Luther découvrit la clé de lecture de l'Écriture affirmée par les apôtres et Jésus lui-même. Paul déjà donnait autorité aux textes scripturaires à la lumière de Jésus-Christ. Jésus lui-même se comprenait comme celui qui est « venu accomplir la loi et les prophètes » (Mat. 5/17, Luc 24/25-27).

Luther avait pour cette raison parlé du « centre de l'Écriture » : Jésus-Christ. Lui seul donne autorité à l'Écriture. Ni la lettre, ni le lecteur, ni aucune autre donnée ne sauront prétendre lui conférer autorité. L'Écriture annonce Christ, porte Christ et mène vers Christ.

Cette clé de lecture nous est donnée par l'Écriture elle-même. Elle n'est pas le fruit d'un choix ou d'une réflexion humaine. C'est l'Esprit Saint qui nous permet de découvrir le sens dernier d'un texte biblique, qui fait de l'Écriture une parole de salut, qui éveille en l'homme la foi et le mène à Jésus-Christ. L'Écriture est donc autorité, et elle a autorité dans la mesure où et parce qu'elle permet à l'action salvatrice de Dieu, à l'Évangile d'être perçue et de devenir événement.

Cette compréhension dynamique de l'autorité de l'Écriture Sainte, cette nécessité de lui permettre de devenir parole d'Évangile et de salut, a toujours été affirmée par les Églises nées de la Réforme. La mission de l'Église est d'annoncer cet Évangile de Jésus-Christ. Celle de l'exégète est de tout mettre en œuvre pour que cette Parole soit perçue et reçue, pour que tous les hommes aient part au salut et à la grâce de Dieu. Dieu veut que sa parole advienne dans les contextes historiques, géographiques, culturels et humains les plus divers.

Une simple répétition d'un texte scripturaire sans explication, interprétation ni actualisation n'est pas suffisante. Dieu a décidé de se servir de nous, les hommes et les femmes. Il nous demande d'œuvrer par nos réflexions, notre interprétation du texte biblique et du contexte actuel, notre foi en Son action et notre engagement chrétien, pour que l'Écriture Sainte puisse devenir parole d'Évangile et puissance de vie pour nous-mêmes et tous nos contemporains. Cette tâche est exigeante, elle n'est jamais achevée, elle est la tâche première de l'Église qui veut être fidèle à Jésus-Christ.

Rev. Dr Samuel Dawai, Directeur, Institut de Théologie, Cameroun, Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon.

¹ *Politique de la FLM relative à la justice de genre*, Fédération luthérienne mondiale – Une communion d'Églises, Département de théologie et témoignage public, Programme des femmes dans l'Église et la Société, Route de Ferney 150 Case postale 2100 1211 Genève 2, Suisse, 39

Working with Men and Boys to Address and Prevent Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Introduction

Levels of gender-based violence remain very high in our country, and this is concerning. This matter requires urgent attention by the whole of society if we want to turn the tide against gender-based violence. For too long the burden of dealing with this societal scourge has rested on the shoulders of women. It is important for progressive men to partner with the women's sector in the fight to end gender-based violence in our communities. There are many government agencies responsible for ensuring that gender-based violence is addressed, for example the police, the justice system, correctional services, the departments for Education, Health and Social Development. Furthermore, gender-based violence includes violence against children, and violence against the LGBTI community. However, community organizations, the private sector, faith-based organizations, universities and all sectors in society also have an important role to play in preventing and addressing gender-based violence. Gender-based violence, like HIV, requires a multi-sectoral response to address prevention, care, support for survivors and victims, and the rehabilitation of perpetrators. It is a challenge requiring that all of us get involved.

Men perpetrating violence against women

In 2009 the South African Medical Research Council (MRC) study in a representative sample in the Eastern Cape (EC) and KwaZulu Natal (KZN) reported that:

- 44 per-cent of men self-reported perpetrating domestic violence versus 14 per-cent in the previous year;
- 28 per-cent of men self-reported having raped someone versus 5 per-cent in the previous year;
- Almost one-third of women reported that they did not want to have their first sexual encounter and that they were coerced into sex;
- There are high levels of violence against lesbian and bisexual women, especially in Black communities.

The cost of gender-based violence in South Africa

A study by KPMG¹ a few years ago indicated huge costs related to gender-based violence cases. The study indicated estimated costs of between R28bn to R42bn representing 0.9 per-cent to 1.35 per-cent of the GDP in 2012/2013. This figure, argued KPMG, excludes pain and suffering, lost tax revenues, hiring and training replacement staff, cost of private health care, and the cost of volunteers' time. There is a grave need for a new approach to this challenge, which must prioritize prevention. It requires targeted programs for men and boys on harmful gender norms and education on the value of gender equitable relations. I am of the strong opinion that with such an approach states would need to invest far less than the estimated figures from KPMG, thus making more resources available for other compelling social investment initiatives.

Why is it important to engage men and boys?

Men are often the missing part in gender discourse. Harmful notions of masculinity undermine women's, men's, and children's health. Changing male gender norms will benefit others (as well as men themselves). Men have their own gendered vulnerabilities and specific health needs. Fostering positive views, relationships and behavior among men from an early age is important and can contribute immensely to the positive transformation of society. Today's public health challenges require that men be part of the solution in dealing with issues such as sexually-transmitted infections and HIV, gender-based violence, and sexual and reproductive health. There are international commitments by governments and agreements on the need to engage men. More importantly, it is crucial to engage men because we know it works. The evidence base is growing.

Principles for work with men and boys

It is important that we promote the involvement of men cautiously and sensitively. Any such enterprise must promote women's and girls' rights. The endeavor must be accountable to, and form alliances with women's rights organizations. It is vital that the engagement with men be from a positive and enabling perspective, while also taking into account diversity among men, including sexual diversity. The whole

approach must be anchored in a human rights framework and must consider gender as a relational perspective. The interventions must also address structural determinants on gender relations. Finally, the work must be based on existing UN mandates.

Understanding gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is a scourge prevalent in many families, communities, societies, and cultures across the globe. Gender-based violence affects mostly women and girls but also men and boys, even if to a lesser extent. Those affected either experience violence directly and have to deal with the consequences of some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime. Research indicates that children who grow up exposed to violence at home tend to be violent themselves in later life. The boys become abusive to their partners since this is what they saw their fathers doing to their mothers. Violence in this instance is normalized. Girls later tend to tolerate abusive partners, assuming that this is what society expects of them since they experienced situations in which their mothers were abused.

Investing in gender-based violence interventions will help reduce HIV transmission in young women and girls

Gender-based violence negatively affects a large proportion of women, girls, and young women. Investing in progressive gender-based violence interventions contributes to reducing the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV. It is considered an important public health, human rights, and legal concern; sexual violence in particular has serious consequences and is life-threatening for women and children. There is a need for governments and the private sector to invest strategically in programs against gender-based violence. Key in this instance is the need to invest heavily in prevention programs. Prevention is certainly better than cure.

The role of the church

The church has a critical role to play in preventing gender-based violence. Both the perpetrators and the survivors of gender-based violence often belong to a church. It is important that the church consistently speaks out against gender-based violence and its effects. Men are key in this. The majority of leaders in our churches currently are men. Many people in churches and in society listen to the voice of the church. So there is a lot that the church can do to make a difference in this regard. Here are just a few examples: Sunday school and confirmation class curricula can include lesson plans on the subject; sermon outlines can be developed to be used in worship services; and training can be facilitated with dedicated teams that can provide psycho-social support to victims/supporters of gender-based violence to create safe spaces in worship centers. Additionally, theological training centers can include the subject in the training of future clergy.

The words of our Lord are instructive in this instance, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10). Jesus’ assertion is fundamental. He has indeed come so that we may have life in fullness. This affirmation includes women and girls. Exposure to gender-based violence jeopardizes this. It is for this reason that as a church we need to do all in our power to end gender-based violence.

Rev. Bafana Khumalo, co-founder and Senior Strategic Advisor at Sonke Gender Justice and Chairperson of the MenEngage Africa (MEA) alliance.

¹ *Too costly to ignore – the economic impact of gender-based violence in South Africa*, KPMG Human and Social Services (2015), at www.kpmg.co.za (KPMG is a global network of professional firms providing Audit, Tax and Advisory services.)





Committed to Women's Human Rights Advocacy

"The biblical call to uphold justice is at the very heart of the communion's self-understanding." This opening sentence of the LWF *Gender Justice Policy*, adopted by the LWF Council in 2013, provides the basis for the involvement of the LWF Office for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) in women's human rights advocacy.

The LWF acknowledges the key role of faith communities in safeguarding the dignity of all women and men. Therefore, WICAS seeks to raise awareness of gender justice imbalances among the LWF member churches. It provides direct support, including the empowerment of women, by familiarizing them with their rights and the interaction with governmental, non-governmental, ecumenical and interreligious stakeholders.

In order for local initiatives to be effective and make an impact at the global level, getting to know the different mechanisms within the United Nations system is crucial. The LWF's presence in Geneva and New York, and its consultative status with the UN greatly facilitates WICAS' advocacy efforts. The following are the most relevant areas in which WICAS has been active over the past two decades:

Faith and women's human rights

Over twenty years after the historical Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, which gave birth to the Beijing Platform for Action, the promotion of women's human rights, continues to meet fierce resistance by numerous states and conservative faith groups. The Beijing Platform for Action made comprehensive commitments in twelve critical areas of concern and remains a powerful source of guidance for the LWF, its member churches and partners.

After Beijing 1995, WICAS convened the LWF International Consultation on Women. Participants from the member churches, funding partners and Communion Office staff identified issues in need of attention. The report of the consultation, *We are Witnesses*,¹ concluded that three of the six areas requiring urgent programmatic action related to women's human rights, namely: education and leadership training; economic justice; and safe spaces for women and children in church and society.

Further to the active participation in the Beijing Platform, the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988–1998, framed WICAS's efforts to develop a process by which to face the painful issue of violence against women. As a result, the 1992 WICAS publication *Churches Say "No" to Violence Against Women* names violence against women as a sin and identifies resources and methodologies for ways to prevent, address and heal communities. Violence against women is not only understood as a social and human rights concern, but also as an issue of faith.

The need to bring men and women together to work toward building healed, and healing 'shalom' communities makes the issue of violence against women not only a life issue but one of faith.²

Over the past two decades, WICAS has actively participated in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the body that prepared and follows up on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Every year, WICAS supports one or two women from its regional networks to take part in the CSW's deliberations



and to bring to New York their experience in a specific area, in line with the priority theme and emerging issues defined every year by the CSW.

Women's rights and the impact of religious beliefs on women's lives, which we analyzed during the training, came true right in front of my eyes. In order to help you need first to understand!³

Women from several member churches and LWF Country Programs have followed the CSW's deliberations under the leadership of the Lutheran Office for World Community in New York, which facilitates side events, the participation in panels and the contact with diplomatic missions. In this way, the women representing the LWF have a opportunity to collaborate with key stakeholders in their countries and regions.

Building capacity

2013 marked a milestone for WICAS in terms of advocacy. Two of the LWF member churches (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia) participated with other local NGOs in their respective countries in the preparation of shadow reports for the CEDAW Committee.⁴

The drafting of these reports⁵ entailed the deep involvement of the member churches and it became clear that it was necessary to build capacity among LWF member churches to replicate such efforts. With this in mind, WICAS launched the annual Women Human Rights Advocacy Training for Faith-Based Organizations, held in Geneva parallel to one of the CEDAW sessions, so that the participants can attend one of the reviews and interact with the CEDAW Committee during the training.⁶

Since 2015, the training is held annually in collaboration with colleagues from the Office for International Affairs and Human Rights, the Department for World Service, and a group of ecumenical partners.⁷ The participants are trained in the effective use of UN mechanisms such as CEDAW, with the aim of strengthening their efforts in the area of gender justice, particularly with regard to the implementation of local advocacy actions.

An assessment was carried out by WICAS eight months after the 2015 training. Several participants shared the concrete ways in which the training enabled them to strengthen their commitment. In the DRC, Rev. Solange Yumba Wa Nkulu, a woman pastor leading the women's network in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo, has developed a process whereby since 2013 over 2,700 women have been acquainted with their rights as citizens. She stated, "Being a woman pastor, I feel close to women and I see myself in a position to listen to women and to advocate for their rights. Making them aware of their rights is an essential part of protecting them."

Child marriage: a common challenge

Within the framework of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign to Overcome Gender-Based Violence in 2015, the LWF and a coalition of FBOs, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund, have developed resources to advocate for an end to child and forced marriage, with a special focus on the role that Christian and Muslim communities can play. The coalition has mobilized its constituencies worldwide through the website www.genderjustice-interfaith.net. Moreover, debates, workshops and podcasts (video project) awareness-raising actions have taken place in Zimbabwe and Indonesia during the sixteen-day campaign in 2015 and 2016.

In order to encourage religious leaders to speak out against gender-based violence, the LWF joined the NO XCUSE Campaign, launched by the World YWCA, in which women and girls share their experience of violence and the excuses given for the aggressions and abuse they were subjected to.

The LWF invited members of its leadership and governing bodies to be part of the campaign by recording short videos,⁸ with the aim of refuting any religious basis for justifying sexual and gender-based violence. This campaign to raise awareness of the issue also included recording the voices of women and girls who have survived violent experiences, such as human trafficking, child marriage or domestic violence.

We recognize that religious beliefs and practices can become obstacles, but also resources for addressing gender based violence. Some who abuse, justify or legitimize their behavior by citing deliberate distortions of religious teachings, and women who have been victims/survivors or faced discrimination in some cases, have internalized a sense of guilt, self-blame or acceptance as a result of misinterpretation of religious texts and traditions.⁹

Another example of the collaboration among FBOs, is the We Will Speak Out (WWSO) coalition. The focus of WWSO is the commitment to prevent sexual violence by encouraging faith communities to speak out against sexual violence, and to ensure that the churches are safe spaces.

This global coalition of Christian-based NGOs, churches and organizations gathers resources to deal with sexual violence from a faith perspective, collects testimonies and engages in advocacy efforts through their website www.wewillsspeakout.org.

Other joint actions led by WICAS include side events and oral statements at the Human Rights Council, denouncing gender-based violence and the use of religious teachings to justify such.

Maria Cristina Rendón, Program Officer, WICAS, The Lutheran World Federation.

¹ Dorothy Marple & Musimbi Kanyoro, *We are Witnesses*, LWF Documentation 39 (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 1995), 26.

² Priscilla Singh, *Churches say "No" to Violence against Women | Action Plan for the Churches* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2002), 9

³ Feedback from one of the participants at the training who works protecting women migrants' rights.

⁴ Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

⁵ Democratic Republic of Congo's report, available at http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/COD/INT_CEDAW_NGO_COD_13753_F.pdf (French); Colombia's report, available at http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/COL/INT_CEDAW_NGO_COL_15142_S.pdf (Spanish).

⁶ More information about the training at <https://wicas.lutheranworld.org/content/advocacy-training-141>

⁷ Finn Church Aid, Mission 21, The World Young Women's Christian Association, The World Council of Churches and Church of Sweden.

⁸ The videos are accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2-8BkDxwJ-TROLxE4R9pQUPWxQrFbXz4>

⁹ Islamic Relief, the Lutheran World Federation, The World Council of Churches, World YWCA, Soka Gakkai International. Joint oral statement to the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva, 16 June 2015.



This work was a real experience, to get to know women from other churches, to learn about the reality of the churches in the South Cone, to realize how much work was needed for women to be organized in order to obtain spaces, both in the church and in society. It was a great experience to feel the love and companionship of Lutheran women in the region, who came from all paths of life but who stood as equals before God. LWF/WICAS encouraged and accompanied us in the proposed working plans; this gave me a great personal insight into the churches on our continent with their own stories, the struggle for women's ordination and access to leadership, which is incompatible with the fact that women form the majority of the membership in the Lutheran churches.

I learnt that to be united makes us stronger and we felt it that way. Churches live in different social and political contexts and they must support each other, while denouncing what is wrong, and not be removed from the needs of their people. I continue seeing the challenge of dealing with issues related to gender justice; there are thousands of femicides in Latin America every year, abuse in the work place, in the family and in the church. I also see the need for the church to value its leaders, to be inclusive and respectful of gender issues but overall to understand that we all are church, and not only those in leadership exercising power.

María Soledad Puebla, South Cone Regional Coordinator, LWF/WICAS, 1992–1997.

Colette Bouka Coula

I attended primary and secondary school and university in Cameroon, followed by further university studies in France. I obtained my PhD in 1985, after which I returned home where I was involved in voluntary work, mainly in my local parish. For several years, I served as a church elder in my local parish, was engaged in the church women's fellowship, took part in evaluations of church projects and served as a translator for visitors to the parish. From 1990 to 1991, I taught French, English and religious knowledge at the high school of my church.

My first encounter with the LWF was in 1989, when I was hired as a junior translator during the All Africa Pre-Assembly in Yaoundé. I was appointed to the LWF Council by the LWF Assembly in 1990 and served on in the DMD Program Committee for one year. It was quite an experience to sit, for the first time, on such an important governance body, trying to understand and to learn, while also doing my best to contribute. Following the 1990 restructuring of the LWF Geneva office, regional desks were created and new staff positions opened up. My church encouraged me to apply for a post in the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) and I was recruited as Assistant Africa Secretary in 1991. Since then, I have served in various capacities, both in Geneva and in Africa, ten years with DMD, five of which were spent in Geneva and five based in Nairobi working with the member churches in the region. One highlight was accompanying the churches as they started to build their sub-regional communions. Another turning point in my life came in early 2001 when I applied for the position of LWF representative in the Department for World Service (DWS). I served in this position in Ethiopia (February 2001 to September 2004) and in Mauritania (September 2004 to February 2008). Caring for the dignity of those we serve has been the fundamental driving force throughout those years. In February 2008, I returned to Geneva as Program Officer in the Department for World Service, supervising a few LWF country programs in Africa.

My life has been very much shaped by my parents. Having a deep sense of family and respect for others, they gave all their children, girls and boys alike, an education and allowed us to grow and reach out according to our individual capacities.

Dr Colette Bouka Coula, was born on 10 September 1951 in Cameroon. She is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon.





Aida Haddad

Aida Haddad was born on 4 January 1939 in Nazareth. She is a member the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and was elected vice-president of the Lutheran World Federation at the LWF Executive Committee meeting in Viborg, Denmark, in 1987. She filled the vacancy created when Bishop Johannes Hanselmann was elected LWF president. She was elected during a special evening session in the second ballot, with 15 to 12 votes for Dr Werner Leich of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thuringia in the German Democratic Republic. With the death of the late LWF President, Zoltan Kaldy of Hungary, Bishop Gyula Nagy took up Kaldy's seat on the Executive Committee, leaving a vacancy among the officers.

In an interview with journalists after her election, Haddad said that she had not expected to be elected vice-president before coming to the Executive Committee meeting, but had been talked into running by the women, youth, and male lay members of the committee. "My region, the Middle East, has also not been represented in the Officers," Haddad said. Furthermore, "the LWF lists projects there under its Asia Desk. But we in the Middle East are neither Asian nor African." She said that as vice-president she felt that the most important issues for the LWF were "the peace issue in my country, in South Africa, in Latin America and elsewhere, the re-evangelization of churches and the partnership of men and women in the church."

At the time, Haddad, head librarian at Birzeit University in the West Bank, lived in Jerusalem with her husband, the Rt Rev. Daoud Haddad, retired bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan, which counted 1,650 members. Commenting on the Palestinian resolution adopted by the LWF Executive Committee in 1987, Aida Haddad called the action "a step forward." She said, "It not only benefits Lutherans in the Middle East but all the Christian minorities." She urged Christians visiting the Holy Land to visit Arab Christians.

While Haddad was not a member of any political party, she was active in working with women's groups and for the rights of Palestinians. She said that the Palestinian issue is "not a religious problem but basically a national, political problem that needs to be solved in a just way."

Liturgia para el día internacional de la mujer

Material necesario: Una mesa frente al altar. Traer sobras (restos) de alimentos que se tiene en la casa. Cualquier alimento del cual ya se consumió una parte (galletas, queque, kuchen, pan, frutas, dulces...) Estas sobras (restos) de los alimentos serán llevadas por las personas y serán puestas en la mesa que está frente al altar de forma "desordenada".

- LITURGIA DE ENTRADA:

- PRELUDIO:

- BIENVENIDA Y SALUDO INICIAL:

"No sé... Si la vida es corta o demasiado larga para nosotros/as, pero sé que nada de lo que vivimos tiene sentido, sino tocamos el corazón de las personas.

Muchas veces basta ser: Regazo que acoge, brazo que envuelve, palabra que consuela, silencio que respeta, alegría que contagia, lágrima que cae, mirada que acaricia, deseo que sacia, amor que motiva.

Y eso no es cosa de otro mundo, es lo que da sentido a la vida. Es lo que hace que ella no sea ni corta ni demasiado larga sino que sea intensa, verdadera, pura..Mientras dure..."

- Con estas palabras de la escritora Cora Coralina, saludamos a cada uno/a de ustedes. Estamos aquí para celebrar la vida. Vida que se renueva a cada día. Vida que se llena de sentido cuando tocamos el corazón de las personas, ofrendando un brazo, una palabra de cariño, un abrazo. Así lo hizo Ruth al permanecer con Noemí. Su cariño, su amistad y fe marcaron la diferencia no solo para la vida de Noemí, sino para la vida del pueblo de Israel.

Hoy queremos contar esta historia. Recordar este momento decisivo en la vida de estas dos mujeres. Momento que se perpetúa siempre que recordamos la historia de mujeres que marcaron y marcarán nuestras vidas y la vida de nuestras comunidades, de nuestra iglesia y ciudad, por su osadía, coraje y sabiduría.

- INVOCACIÓN: Nos reunimos en el nombre de Dios, que nos creó y nos concedió el don de la vida; que vino a nosotros/as en Jesucristo y nos mostró el Reino de justicia e igualdad; y que permanece entre nosotros a través del Espíritu Santo, sabiduría divina, que nos acompaña, orienta y fortalece. Amén.

- CANTO:

- CONFESIÓN DE PECADOS:

-L: El pecado nos separa del amor de Dios y nos impide vivir en comunión. La confesión sincera puede restaurar la comunión y fortalecer la vida de fe. Presentémonos con confianza en presencia de Dios y confesemos nuestros pecados.

-Dios de bondad y misericordia, a ti nos dirigimos para hablarte de aquello que pesa en nuestros corazones y que nos impide sentir tu amor y tu presencia. Perdón, Dios, por las acciones de cobardía y violencia contra niñas, niños y mujeres. Perdón por las puertas cerradas, por las pocas oportunidades, por la falta de confianza en la capacidad de las mujeres. Perdón por la omisión, por los brazos cruzados, cuando deberían estar abiertos/extendidos en ofrenda de cariño, consuelo y abrazo. Perdón por la falta de tiempo para escuchar. Perdón por las palabras de juicio y condenación, y por la poca disposición para ayudar/apoyar. Danos fuerzas para construir un mundo nuevo, libre de exclusión, marginalización, violencia y opresión de todo tipo. Por tu gran amor, muéstranos tu justicia, tu misericordia y tu gracia.

C: Amén.



- ANUNCIO DE LA GRACIA: Dios responde a nuestro clamor diciendo: “Yo he hecho desaparecer tus faltas y tus pecados, como desaparecen las nubes. Vuélvete a mí, pues yo te he libertado”. (Isaías 44:22)

- C: Gracias te damos, oh Dios, por tu mirada compasiva y tu abrazo de misericordia. Amén

- KYRIE ELEISON:

-L: Al orar, expresamos nuestro deseo de transformar situaciones que causan dolor y sufrimiento, y nos comprometemos con la transformación de éstas. Nos colocamos frente a Dios, clamando a favor de quien grita por misericordia. Clamamos por las mujeres silenciadas, violentadas y maltratadas en nuestras iglesias y en la sociedad. Clamemos por las mujeres despreciadas, que como Ruth y Noemí, luchan por sus derechos. Clamemos por las mujeres cuya participación en la construcción de una nueva realidad es anulada. Pues todavía creemos que solamente acciones heroicas y grandes teorías contribuyen para la sobrevivencia y evolución de la especie. Clamemos a Dios, cantando:

- CANTO

- ORACIÓN: Dios de amor, oramos a ti, pidiendo que bendigas a todas las mujeres y hombres que luchan diariamente. Llévanos de tu mano para seguir adelante, para no desvanecer ante las adversidades y seguir firmes en la fe. Que tu palabra nos oriente, nos motive, nos consuele y nos fortalezca. Abre, Dios de amor, nuestros corazones para que tu palabra encuentre tierra fértil y produzca frutos. Por Cristo, tu Hijo y nuestro Salvador.

- C: Amén.

- LITURGIA DE LA PALABRA:

- L: Escuchemos la lectura de Ruth 1:6-18

- CANTO

- LECTURA DEL EVANGELIO: Marcos 14: 3-9

-L: Palabra del Señor

-C: Te alabamos Señor

- PRÉDICA: Ruth 1:6-18

- DINÁMICA DE LAS SOBRAS DE LOS ALIMENTOS: (Después de la lectura del texto, dos o más personas arreglan la mesa para que ésta quede bien bonita. Al final , la persona que dirige la liturgia dice:)

-L: Los alimentos dispuestos en esta mesa fueron traídos por varias personas de nuestra comunidad. Son restos de comida: pan, frutas, galletas...no significa que esta comida no sirve para alimentarse. Decimos que son sobras/restos porque son alimentos que todavía sirven para consumirlos. Pregunto: ¿Qué podemos hacer con las sobras/restos de los alimentos? ¿Para qué sirven? ¿Cuántas personas pueden ser alimentadas con estas sobras? Otra pregunta: ¿Qué tienen que ver estos restos de alimentos con la historia de las mujeres del texto que acabamos de escuchar? ¿Cómo estas sobras/restos pueden relacionarse con la historia de las mujeres en nuestras comunidades?

-(A partir de este impulso inicial, sugerimos que cada quien construya el mensaje con los recursos para la prédica que están al final del texto)

- CONFESIÓN DE FE: Credo de la mujer

- CANTO: Mientras se canta se recogen las ofrendas.

- ORACIÓN GENERAL DE LA IGLESIA:

-L: Dios de amor, la historia de Ruth nos habla sobre dos mujeres separadas por las barreras étnicas, barreras levantadas por nosotros/as, seres humanos, pero unidas por el amor.

Es por eso que pedimos que tu misericordia nos acompañe, así como ocurrió con ellas. Permanece, oh Dios de bondad con nosotros y nosotras hoy y siempre, haciendo realidad tus promesas para con todos aquellos y aquellas que se ponen en tus manos.





Ayúdanos a mirar la vida como Ruth lo hizo. Una mujer que a pesar de las adversidades, siguió con su camino que tu habías trazado, refugiándose en tí y en tu verdad.

Dios, ayúdanos a tomar las mejores decisiones para estar en los lugares en que somos necesarias y necesarios, permítenos recibir tu bendición, haciendo siempre el bien, aún en tiempos difíciles.

Danos coraje y sabiduría para enfrentarnos a las crisis y para amar a los demás sin barreras, amparados y amparadas en tu Palabra. Por Jesucristo, nuestro Salvador.

C.: Amén.

• CANTO:

• LITURGIA DE LA PALABRA:

• PREPARACIÓN DE LA MESA: (Los elementos de la Santa Cena y las ofrendas son llevados al Altar).

-L.: Los elementos de la Cena, las ofrendas recogidas, son ahora, llevados a la mesa, y aquí, al lado, tenemos los restos traídos por nosotras, que simbolizan y representan la participación comprometida de las mujeres en la edificación de comunidades y la propagación de la fe luterana. De esta manera, traemos para la mesa de la Cena todas las formas de desvalorización, exclusión e invisibilización sufridas por las mujeres a lo largo de los siglos y las entregamos a Dios, que transforma lo que es injusto, restableciendo el derecho. Cantemos:

• CANTO:

• ORACIÓN DE LAS OFRENDAS:

- L.: Dios de ternura: Te damos gracias por esta mesa y por todo lo que aquí vamos a recibir. Tú nos acoges así como somos, así como estamos. Traemos nuestros dolores, nuestras angustias, nuestro grito silenciado, nuestro cuerpo enfermo, nuestra culpa reprimida. Y te pedimos: recíbenos y sánanos, consuélanos y alivia nuestro dolor, libéranos de la culpa y del miedo. Por eso, juntos y juntas decimos: ayúdanos, libéranos y sánanos. Amén.

• CANTO:

• ORACIÓN EUCARÍSTICA:

L.: Unámonos a la oración de la mesa de la Cena del Señor:

-Te damos gracias, oh Dios, por tu compasión hacia las personas marginadas. Acompañaste a Ruth, y a través de ella, protegiste a Noemí y defendiste el derecho de las viudas. Y así, diste a conocer a Israel aquella que vendría a integrar la descendencia de tu Hijo, Jesucristo, que vino para solidarizarse con las personas marginadas, rechazadas e invisibilizadas de nuestra sociedad.

-Gracias damos a Jesús, tu Hijo, que se mostró sensible a toda persona que sufre. Gracias damos a Jesús, por su presencia solidaria entre nosotros y nosotras en esta mesa. El conoce profundamente a cada una y cada uno de nosotros y nosotras. Conoce la historia de quién sufre marginalización. El mismo experimentó el sufrimiento. Por eso, estamos aquí, oh Dios, para recibir fuerza, consuelo y nueva vida del propio Jesús. Fue Él mismo quien ordenó que nos reuniéramos entorno a la mesa, en su memoria.

La noche en que fue entregado, nuestro Señor Jesús tomó pan y dio gracias: lo partió y lo dio a sus discípulos, diciendo:

Tomen y coman; esto es mi cuerpo, dado por ustedes. Hagan esto en memoria mía.

De igual manera, después de haber cenado, tomó la copa, dio gracias y la dio a beber a todos, diciendo:

Esta copa es el nuevo pacto en mi sangre, derramada por ustedes y por todo el mundo para el perdón del pecado. Hagan esto en memoria mía.

- Oh Dios, hoy conmemoramos el día internacional de la mujer. Por eso, te pedimos: recuerda a todas las mujeres que motivadas por la fe en Ti, edificaron comunidades, colocando sus dones al servicio de Tu Reino.

- Reúnenos con ellas en la fiesta de Tu Reino, donde la participación de todas las personas será valorizada y dónde habrá paz, comprensión, igualdad, respeto, dignidad. La esperanza por tu Reino ilumina nuestra historia de modo que nosotros y nosotras nos comprometemos aquí y ahora con una convivencia con más generosidad, cariño, valorización e inclusión.

- Te pedimos: Envíanos tu Espíritu Santo y haz que seamos un solo cuerpo, una comunidad que se interesa y se compromete unas con otras, unos con otros, oremos tomadas de las manos diciendo la oración que el Señor nos enseñó:

C.: Padre nuestro que estás en los cielos, santificado sea tu nombre; venga a nosotros tu reino; hágase tu voluntad, así en la tierra como en el cielo; el pan nuestro de cada día, dánoslo hoy; y perdónanos nuestras deudas así como nosotros perdonamos a nuestros deudores; y no nos dejes caer en tentación, mas líbranos del mal. Porque tuyo es el reino, el poder y la gloria, por los siglos de los siglos. Amén

• **FRACCIÓN:**

- L.: El cáliz por el cual damos gracias es la sangre de Cristo;

- El pan que partimos es el cuerpo de Cristo.

• **COMUNIÓN:**

L.: Vengan, pues todo está preparado...Es Cristo quien nos invita.

• **DISTRIBUCIÓN:**

C.: Canta: Oh Jesús cordero, que quitas el pecado y el dolor, ten piedad....

• **DESPUES DE LA COMUNIÓN:**

C.: Canta: Gracias, Señor, gracias Señor, por tu bondad, su poder y su amor. Gracias.

• **AVISOS COMUNITARIOS:**

• **LITURGIA DE LA DESPEDIDA:**

• **BENDICIÓN:**

• **ENVIO:**

-L.: Vayamos ahora y sirvamos a Dios sin miedo, sin culpas y sin violencia.

-C.: Demos gracias a Dios.

RECURSOS PARA LA PREDICA:

• Sobre el texto de Ruth: La Pastora Sisi Blind comenta lo siguiente sobre el libro de Ruth: "Existen polémicas en cuanto a la formación, el objetivo y el lugar del libro de Ruth. Optamos por una versión que pone el libro en la formación posexilico. Concordamos también en que es una novela muy bien elaborada, que simboliza la polémica situación del pueblo en aquella época. La sobrevivencia de aquel pueblo no se da porque existan amparos de la legalidad y de la estructura religiosa y estatal. La sobrevivencia se da a través de la memoria histórica de la comunidad tribal, de la perseverancia, de la fe y de la opción por la búsqueda no conformada por la continuidad de la vida. El libro de Ruth nos cuenta la trayectoria de un pueblo que no se deja abatir/desanimar. Cuando ya no queda más esperanza, es de las migajas, del resto/ de las sobras que se recomienza la caminata".

• Algunos puntos que llaman la atención del libro:

-1. La historia del pueblo es contada a partir de la historia de dos mujeres, ambas viudas y pobres.

-2. Todo el drama se desarrolla en torno de la búsqueda por derechos: a la protección (ambas eran viudas), a la sobrevivencia (ley del levirato-Dt 25.5-6; Ruth 4.3-8), a la hospitalidad (Ruth era extranjera)

-3. Ruth, el personaje principal, va detrás de las "sobras": sobras de espigas, sobra de solidaridad. Y transforma esta "sobra" en algo nuevo, en una nueva realidad.

-4. La participación de mujeres en la historia siempre fue considerada un apéndice y puesta a parte. "Cosa de mujer", "cosa de cocina". Entretanto, las





mujeres no se resignan con este “lugar” y “papel” a ellas designados. Usando los medios que les eran dados, transformaron su propia realidad y la realidad de todo un pueblo.

-5. También en la historia de nuestro país, ciudad y comunidad ha existido la participación de las mujeres. Sin embargo, esta participación ha sido puesta en segundo lugar y opacada por el relato “oficial” de la historia.

-6. Las mujeres siempre participaron de la construcción y edificación de nuestras comunidades, se involucraron en las colectas de los recursos para la construcción de templos, casa pastoral, ministrando el culto infantil y el curso de confirmación, cocinando para fiestas, y otras tareas... Pero esta participación no quedó y no queda registrada en la historia de nuestras comunidades. Son como “sobras”-restos.

-7. Nuestro desafío es a la luz de los 500 años de la Reforma protestante sacar el velo y revelar la participación de las mujeres en la historia: sus acciones, aportes y hacer teológico.

Un ejemplo concreto:

La Pastora Gloria Rojas de Chile, relata lo siguiente:

“Luego del terremoto del 27 de Febrero del año 2010, se conformó el Comité Intereclesiástico de Emergencia (9 personas Ecuménicas), el cual decidió salir el día 3 de Marzo en una caravana hacia el Sur del país, para acompañar a los miembros y pastores de nuestras Iglesias. Solo podíamos llevar algunos víveres para nosotros y para compartir donde llegábamos. Antes de partir, el pastor Oscar Sanhueza (de la Iglesia Luterana en Concepción) - en una dramática comunicación- me pidió que les llevara pan, alimento que ya en esos días no podía conseguirse aunque se tuviese dinero. Lamentablemente tampoco era mucho lo que nosotros habíamos podido conseguir, aun así partimos. En uno de los altos en el viaje y con la tristeza en el corazón de ver tanta destrucción, hermanos y hermanas de la Iglesia Metodista en Parral nos recibieron con cariño y una miembro de la Comunidad compartió un rico pan amasado que había preparado recién ese día. Ante este regalo, me permití preguntarle si me podría conseguir algunos pancitos para llevar a Concepción, ella me respondió que no podía hacerlo porque era muy poco lo que tenía. Con esa respuesta me quede. A la mañana siguiente concertamos salir a las 6 de la mañana de la Iglesia, unos minutos antes de la partida, llego la Sra. Rosa corriendo con un saco de pan, producto del compartir de muchos de los miembros de la iglesia que habían donado algo de harina y que ella había preparado para las y los hermanos de Concepción. Nunca olvidaremos este hermoso gesto de solidaridad, desprendimiento y entrega en favor de personas que estaban sufriendo “más que ellos”. Gracias al Señor que mueve nuestros corazones y nos lleva a compartir, acompañar y celebrar la vida en medio de las dificultades. En el corazón de Ruth y Noemí están fuertemente expresados los valores del amor, solidaridad, ocurrencia y el compartir las posibilidades, tal como lo vivenciado en la situación relatada”.

Red de mujeres y Justicia de Género de América latina y el Caribe de las Iglesias de la Federación Luterana Mundial

Gloria Rojas Vargas



Gloria Rojas Vargas was born in Chile on 24 February 1953. She is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile.

Rojas was the first woman to head the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) and served as LWF vice-president for Latin America and the Caribbean region from 2010 to 2017.



Rojas holds a bachelor's degree in theology from the Instituto Superior Evangelico de Estudios Teologicos (ISEDET) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and obtained a Doctorate in Ministry (D. Min) at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Rojas was ordained in 1985 and has served as a pastor in various congregations in Chile. She is married to Adolfo Covarrublas and has three children.

In 1986 she was elected to the IELCH Synod Council for the first time. In 1996, the Synod Council of the IELCH appointed Rojas to succeed Rev. Dr Martin Junge, who was appointed Area Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Department for Mission and Development (DMD). Rojas is the second woman leader among the fourteen LWF member churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. From 2000 to 2011 she served as president of the IELCH, and in 2014 was appointed chaplain of the Chilean Presidential Palace "La Moneda."

LWF Archives





The cheapest Thing!

"The price of this is very cheap!
It is a faultless and spotless one!
So fresh and attractive to keep!"
Shouted the advertising one.

The burning blazing sun above,
The hot dusty sand beneath
Within the empty cramping stomach
My heart melted to watch this sight.

The viewers all gathered around
As the advertiser raised the voice
The sales woman's eyes widened
With the expectation of a high price!

"The money she needs so urgently
is the fare for her to cross the sea
to forget the present suffering indeed"
Now, the price is almost free!"

No viewer turned out to be a buyer
Heard I, no bidding or bargaining
No movement nor even a whisper,
But, the silence that was straining.

The desperate depressed "sales mother"
The tired, unpaid advertiser
The "unwrapped" pearl that she held
Made me wonder whether I was in "trance."

Deep in the forest of "Jeyapuram"
The widowed refugee woman
Had hardened her heart to sell
The "gift of God," her child!

Though my purse the price contained
Though I had a womb that's barren
Though I had a heart with compassion
To own the child I was reluctant!

Should my passion rob her sole companion?
Should I rob the identity of her tiny infant?
Should I undervalue the price of the innocent?
I left with heavy heart, and with confusion!

The witness of this incident, who wrote this poem,
is Thaya Thiagarajah, Sri Lanka.
Women Magazine, October 2002 (alt).

Ligia Consuelo Preciado Naranjo

Ligia Consuelo Preciado Naranjo was born in the 1970s in Colombia. Those who know her describe her as reserved, patient, resilient, and ready to listen to others. When she was fourteen her mother died of a heart attack. This event, together with her father's mistreatment and abandonment of her, strongly marked her in her youth. She remained absorbed in her own world and lost her purpose in life.

It was in this state of mind that she met Jairo, her husband-to-be, in Paz de Ariporo, in central eastern Colombia. He encouraged her to join the Lutheran church, a gradual journey that reached a turning point when she strongly identified with a particular hymn. She described how she "started seeing everything from a different perspective when I felt relieved of my sufferings, since someone had sacrificed his life for me."

After marrying Jairo, she reconciled with her father, although it took her time to forgive him and to let go of the anger in her heart. The couple had the opportunity to study theology in Brazil and the LWF gave Preciado Naranjo a scholarship to train with deaconesses. This encouraged her to progress with her studies and to become the first woman pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia.

In a context where women were involved with the church in the area of missionary work rather than in the ordained ministry, the journey to become a pastor was not free from obstacles. Her ordination was approved in 1993, her bachelor in theology was completed in 1996, but her actual ordination took place only in January 1998.

On their return to Colombia, the couple served in Ibagué and Bogotá where Preciado Naranjo served as a pastor in the congregations of San Mateo and Vida Nueva. She appreciates "the strong commitment the people involved in the life of the church have" and is currently serving in the congregations Lluvia de Gracia and San Juan in Bogotá.

She cherishes working with youth and empowering women, "so that they have more tools to replicate Christ's message." She combines these endeavors with counseling, which is one of her gifts. She can spend hours listening and encouraging people with words that she often forgets, "as these come from God in the moment that they are needed," but remain in the hearts of those who have been supported and lifted up by her. It is no coincidence that she was named Consuelo (which means consolation in Spanish). Her name reveals who she is and what she offers to others.

LWF Archives





continuing





the journey



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