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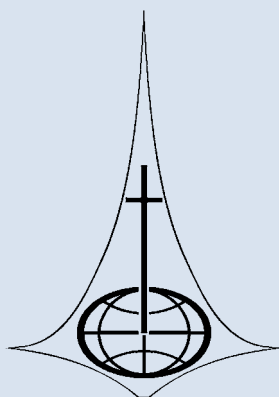
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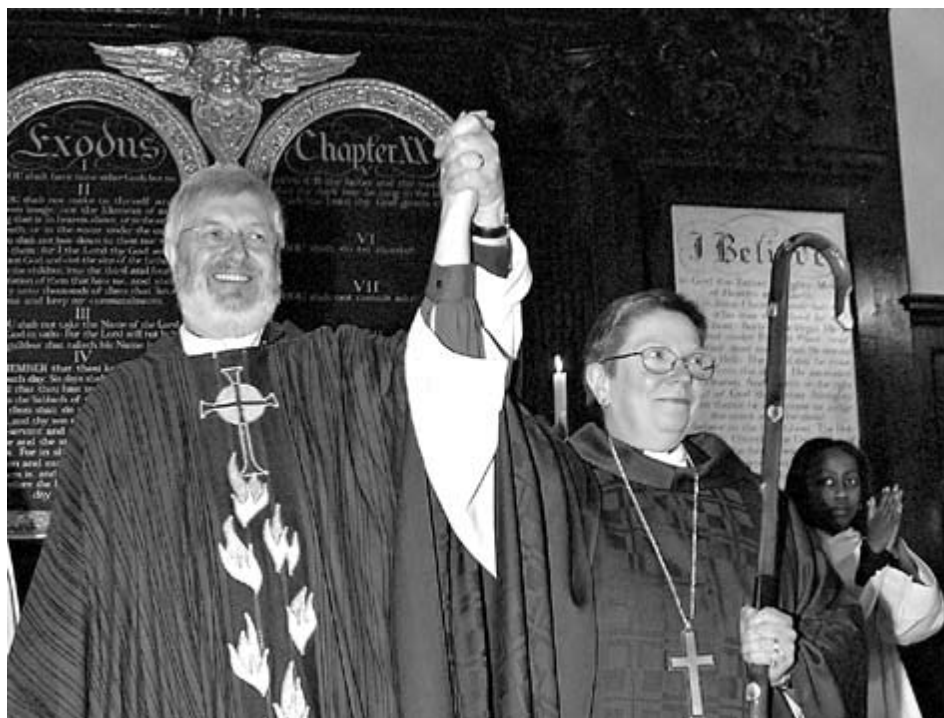
Congratulating President Barack Hussein Obama on his inauguration on 20th January as the 44th President of the United States of America, the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko described the occasion as a landmark of the beginning of the 21st century, and a transformative event for the whole world...

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No roads lead to Shishmaref, a traditional Inupiaq village along the Alaskan coast, where residents live on seals, walrus, fish, birds, caribou and moose that they hunt themselves...



Woman Bishop Jeruma-Grinberga Heads Great Britain Church



Outgoing LCiGB Bishop Walter A. Jagucki (left) and his successor Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga
© KALME/Marco Uschmann

Noko: An Encouraging Sign to Other Churches

LONDON, United Kingdom/GENEVA (LWI)

– At her consecration on 17 January as the new bishop of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain (LCiGB), Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga, the first woman to head the church, said the cultural and language diversities of the LCiGB were important contributions to the sharing of the faith.

“We are diverse in our cultural origins, diverse in our languages and diverse in the ways in which we ‘do’ church,” said Jeruma-Grinberga, addressing the congregation which included Lutheran leaders from different parts of the world, during her consecration at St Anne’s Lutheran Church, London. That shows that the people there are united much more deeply by their shared faith, by a shared delight in the grace of God and by a desire to witness to the gospel in this land, she added.

Jeruma-Grinberga succeeds Bishop Walter A. Jagucki who had led the church since 2000. Jagucki presided at the consecration, assisted by Archbishop Elmars E. Rozitis of the Germany-based Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad and Bishop Jón Baldvinsson of Hólar, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland.

In her sermon based on Job 19:23–27, Bishop Antje Jackelén from the Diocese of Lund, Church of Sweden, spoke about the prophet Job as both a hero of faith and a questioner of faith. “You may argue with God, you may question God, you may call upon God against God in the face of evil and suffering,” as Job had done, she said.

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Malaysian Bishop Rajah Underscores Interreligious Tolerance

At his installation as the head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia (ELCM), **Bishop Dr Solomon Rajah** promised to forge greater inter-religious tolerance and understanding between the different faiths in the country.

"I not only want to serve the church, people and the Lord, I want to foster greater unity among Malaysians," said the new ELCM bishop during his 21 February consecration ceremony at the Zion Cathedral in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Rajah, 53, spoke of plans to initiate various social services activities to help the less fortunate, ensure church credibility in society, and build self-reliance.

Former Church of Sweden Archbishop Dr Karl Gustav Hammar presided the consecration which was attended by hundreds of church members and other guests, including leaders of Malaysia's Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches,



Bishop Dr Solomon Rajah
© ELCM

representatives from India, and senior government officials.

Rajah succeeds Bishop Julius D. Paul, who died in a boating accident in Guatemala last November. Paul was a member of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Council and chairperson of the LWF Standing Committee for World Service.

Ordained in 1986, Rajah joined the pastoral ministry in 1975 as a parish assistant. In addition to serving the church in Malaysia, he worked as a coordinator of youth ministries in India's Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church and Arcot

Lutheran Church.

Rajah is married to Daisy Stella John and they have three children.

The 3,000-member ELCM joined the LWF in 1968.

(A contribution by Asia Lutheran News)

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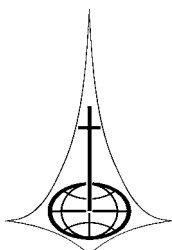
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Woman Bishop Jeruma-Grinberga Heads Great Britain Church

Continued from p. 1

Job, she noted, is “a hero of faith, precisely because he is a questioner of faith and a questioner in faith [...] in the long row of questioners in the Scriptures, who all in their own ways received the blessing and the peace of the living God,” Jackelén explained. “Now, there’s a promise to walk with—as bishops and pastors and lay ministers, as women and men and children of faith,” she concluded.

Greeting the congregation, the general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, commended the LCiGB for electing a woman bishop to lead the church. He expressed his hope that this would encourage other churches who have not introduced the practice of ordaining women. “And I hope that this will also be regarded as a sign that ordination is for all the baptized, who

are called through the church.” He also reminded the ecumenical guests at the consecration service that “for Lutherans, ecumenism is not an option, but an obligation which is frequently stated in the saying: ‘To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical.’”

Other Lutheran leaders participating in the consecration service included Bishop Matti Repo of Tampere, Finland; Presiding Bishop Alex Malasusa, Tanzania; and Rev. Ilona Fritz, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands.

Jeruma-Grinberga was born in London in 1953 to parents who were refugees from Latvia. She was ordained in 1997 in the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Great Britain and served its London parish. She was the senior pastor of St Anne’s Lutheran Church in London until July 2008. She is a director of the



LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko (right) offers Holy Communion to Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga following her consecration. © KALME/Marco Uschmann



Rev. Jana Jeruma-Grinberga is consecrated as bishop of the LCiGB through the laying on of hands at St Anne’s Lutheran Church in London. © KALME/Marco Uschmann

Lutheran Council of Great Britain (LCGB), which represents 10 national Lutheran churches that have congregations or chaplaincies in Britain.

The LCiGB has congregations worshipping in Amharic, Chinese, English, Oromo, Polish, Kiswahili and Tigrinya. It is the only church affiliated with the Council that has its bishop and full church administration in Britain. The other LCGB churches are under the jurisdiction of a bishop or church office in their home country.

The LCiGB has 2,745 members, and joined the LWF in 1988. The LCGB, which represents a combined membership of 130,600, is a recognized Council of the LWF, which it joined in 1989.

(With contributions from the LCGB and the Communication Committee for Lutheran Minority Churches in Europe – KALME)

29 January 2009

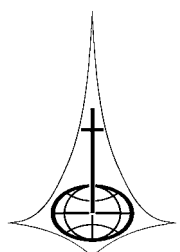
LWF Seeks Further Common Ecumenical Action with Russian Orthodox

General Secretary Noko Congratulates New Patriarch Kirill

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) anticipates a nurturing of ongoing ecumenical

relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, as its newly elected leader His Holiness Patriarch Kirill as-

sumes office on 2 February. In a letter congratulating Kirill on his upcoming consecration as Patriarch, LWF



General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko expresses the LWF's eagerness to continue to work together with the Russian Orthodox Church "toward better mutual understanding and common action to address the needs of our hurting world."

Noko points out that one of the most significant changes in the Christian landscape over the last 20 years had been the public reemergence of strong voices from the churches in countries of the former Soviet Union. He singles out the

reunification that Kirill's predecessor, Patriarch Alexei II, celebrated with the church outside Russia as a new context for fresh possibilities for Christian work on reconciliation.

The general secretary underscores Kirill's standing in the venerable traditions of faithfulness in the Russian Orthodox Church, his extensive knowledge of other branches of the Christian family, and longstanding commitment to ecumenical activity. "You are thus uniquely placed to help the entire

Church of Christ to learn from the witness of the Russian Orthodox Church and to live in growing relationship with it," adds the general secretary.

The Local Church Council of the Russian Orthodox elected 62-year-old Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad on 27 January in Moscow. He succeeds Patriarch Alexei II who had led the church from 1990 until his death on 5 December 2008 at the age of 79.

30 January 2009

LWF World Service and Church of Sweden in New Model of Partnership

Blog to Follow Five Workers in DWS Programs in Africa and Latin America

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) and Church of Sweden (CoS) are collaborating in a new model of partnership involving secondment of qualified young personnel to DWS field programs in different parts of the world.

The two-year initiative kicked off in January 2009 with the secondment of five persons from different CoS parishes to DWS programs in Colombia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia and Sudan. The partnership offers additional professional support toward DWS emergency and development activities on the ground, while at the same time allowing the partner church, its respective parishes and congregations to have closer links to the realities of international diakonia, says Geneva-based DWS program coordinator, Mr Rudelmar Bueno de Faria. "It is expected that people seconded to LWF/DWS country programs can enhance awareness on specific contexts and situations, and on the work CoS is doing in fostering dignity and justice in the world," he adds.

"World Service Direct – 100 Days", a new Web-based initiative of the LWF Office for Communication Services (OCS), will provide an interactive platform for the five seconded staff to share their diacanal experiences and discuss with the larger Lutheran communion issues



Swedish DWS secondees (clockwise from back center) Nils Bernhold (Liberia), Sofia Malmqvist (Kenya and Ethiopia), Henrik Halvardsson (Colombia), Samuel Larsson (Ethiopia) and Eva Palmqvist (Sudan)
© LWF/H. Putsman Penet

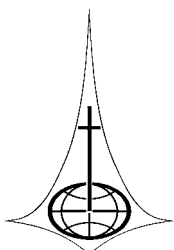
arising from their work. At <http://worldservicedirect.blogspot.com> interested readers can follow and respond to the workers' Twitter and blog posts during 100 days of their respective assignments.

Support, Learning

Eva Palmqvist, 30, one of the five participants, works as a program officer for rights-based approach and peace building in Torit, Southern Sudan, where

the new DWS Sudan office is located. She studied political science in Sweden, with a strong interest in development and human rights, and has previously worked in Kenya and Southern Sudan with a focus on child rights.

"I decided to join World Service since it gives me an opportunity to work with important issues of human rights and peace building in a fascinating region. I am happy to be part of the big network of churches around the world and I hope that we will be





Newly arrived refugees from Somalia register at the Dadaab refugee camp in eastern Kenya.
© LWF/P. Wijmans

able to exchange experiences and support each other,” says Palmqvist, a member of the Helga Trefaldighet parish, Diocese of Uppsala.

She underlines the significant link between CoS and DWS: “As seconded staff from Church of Sweden, I have been sent out by my local church back home in Sweden to work with World Service. Their prayers and support are very important to me. I’m hoping to learn more about the opportunities and challenges in post-conflict Southern Sudan, to learn from people’s experiences and to work together for change and development.”

Re-established as a country program in October 2007, DWS Sudan is a relatively new operation, focused on facilitating the smooth reintegration of those returning to their home areas after several years in neighboring countries as refugees or internally displaced persons. Work with community members includes rehabilitation and reconstruction; building up livelihoods; fostering peace and reconciliation; gender issues; sustaining the environment; response to HIV and AIDS; and community capacity building.

The other CoS seconded staff include Henrik Halvardsson (to DWS Colombia), Nils Bernhold (Liberia), Samuel Larsson (Ethiopia), and Sofia

Malmqvist (assigned to Kenya and Ethiopia).

Communication

The CoS initiative will also help to mobilise more resources to meet the ongoing humanitarian and development work needs in the respective countries, says Mr Bobby Waddell, consultant for resource mobilization at the DWS Geneva offices.

Waddell cites the role of Sofia Malmqvist whose work includes

overseeing Swedish government assistance toward Somali refugees and promoting regular communication with DWS donors through monthly newsletters and visits among other means. “This clear, open and timely communication is essential for managing good relations with our donors,” he adds. He underscores the need to keep the donors engaged, especially given that, with no foreseeable improvement in the situation in Somalia, further funding would need to be negotiated beyond December 2009.

DWS is the relief and development arm of the LWF. It has field programs in 36 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin and Central America, and Europe, and over 5,000 staff.

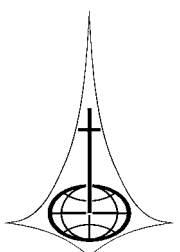
Church of Sweden is the largest LWF member church with over 6.8 million members. Its international work with various partners includes initiatives on economic justice; promoting peace, democracy and human rights; response to climate and environmental issues, to HIV and AIDS; and providing disaster relief.

More information about World Service Direct – 100 Days and the DWS-CoS secondment partnership is available at www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DWS/DWS-Direct100.html

5 February 2009



James (left) and Zachary with an African Palmyra Palm nut they found while playing in Sami village, Ikotos county, Southern Sudan. Their families are among many who are slowly returning to the home areas they fled during the decades-long conflict. © LWF/ALWS/Chey Mattner



Australia: Prayers, Support from the Global Lutheran Communion

Tragic Loss of Lives and Livelihoods in Unprecedented Bushfires

GENEVA (LWI) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) assured the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) of the prayers and accompaniment of the global communion following the tragic loss of lives and livelihoods in

recent bushfires across the southeastern state of Victoria.

In a letter addressed to LCA President Rev. Michael P. Semmler, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko pointed out that the

scale of the fires and the tragic toll of lives had shocked the country as a whole and drawn the sympathy of the world.

More than 180 people are known to have died, and the figures were expected to rise, according to Noko's letter. Reports citing local authorities put the number of those injured by 10 February at around 500, and some 1,000 homes destroyed. "The fact that some of the fires may have been deliberately lit only compounds the tragedy," noted the general secretary.

"The tears of every Australian are our tears also, and your nation's trauma a trauma for the whole international community," wrote Noko. The letter was shared with all LWF member churches, asking their prayers that the LCA "might be strengthened for the ministry of comforting the bereaved and counseling the traumatized, and for the accompaniment of families and communities as they reconstruct homes and lives from the ashes."

Noko commended Australians for their unity in compassion, solidarity and mutual support in the difficult times, and encouraged the LCA to continue to "be a church for others" in the midst of the fire disaster.

The LCA is an associate member church of the LWF, which it joined in 1994.



Belinda Dawson, a member of the Outer Eastern Lutheran Church, Melbourne, found only one possession in the ashes of her rented home, a porcelain angel. © Peter Dawson

11 February 2009

A Closer Look at the Transformation of Lutheran Theology and Practices Today

Theologians to Meet in Augsburg for LWF Global Consultation

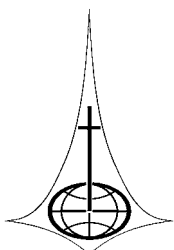
GENEVA (LWI) – How are the different approaches to biblical interpretation, theology and church practices in a global communion such as the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) transforming what is considered "Lutheran" in the 21st century? More than 100 theologians from over 30 countries will deliberate this question during a

consultation titled "Theology in the Life of Lutheran Churches: Transformative Perspectives and Practices Today," to be held from 25 to 31 March 2009 in Augsburg, Germany.

Organized by the LWF Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) in cooperation with the Institute of Protestant Theology of the University of

Augsburg, the gathering offers a forum where theologians "can engage with each other's approaches and contexts in ways that also challenge the very different assumptions and help transform mutual understandings," says DTS director, Rev. Dr Karen Bloomquist.

The Augsburg meeting is the concluding consultation in a series of



seminars and publications of the DTS Theology in the Life of the Church (TLC) study program, started in 2004. The theologians who work in many different settings will present and discuss papers focused on biblical, systematic and practical theological matters. Participants will consider how these different perspectives are reshaping contemporary Lutheran theology.

The participants include Rev. Dr Thomas Nyiwe, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon, who points out: "What happens in local contexts and circumstances of churches has a major impact on how theology is formulated."

Nyiwe, also vice-chairperson of the Theology and Studies Program Committee, recalls the TLC program launch during the 2004 LWF Council meeting: "I stressed the significance of this initiative for our churches, especially in the global South. Since then, the various seminars and publications of this program have helped us to rediscover the close connection that exists between theology and the life and ministry of the church," he adds.

Bloomquist points out the Augsburg consultation builds on what has occurred in the TLC program over the past few years, as well as through DTS study processes over some decades. "Study programs bringing together theologians from various contexts of the Lutheran communion have provided space where their differences become evident. Usually, however, this has stopped short of more in-depth attention across contexts as to how Lutheran theology, hermeneutics and practices



"Local context has a major impact on how theology is formulated": Rev. Dr Thomas Nyiwe, vice-president of the LWF Theology and Studies Program Committee. © LWF/D.-M. Grätzsch

are being transformed by these different perspectives," she notes.

Through six seminars in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America, the TLC program has pursued theological work in relation to the challenges of poverty, interreligious tensions, fundamentalism, empire, religious resurgence and Pentecostalism. Bloomquist cites two seminars in 2008 in Hong Kong (China) and Soweto (South Africa) that brought together theologians in particular from the global South, whose perspectives are reflected in two recently published books—*Identity, Survival, Witness: Reconfiguring Theological Agendas* and *Lutherans Respond to Pentecostalism*.

Plenary speakers on the first full day include Bishop Dr Margot Kässmann, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover (Germany); Prof. Ramathate Dolamo, University of South Africa;

and Argentine theologian Rev. Dr Guillermo Hansen, currently teaching at Luther Seminary (USA). Prof. Paul Rajashekar, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (USA) and Dr Eva Harasta, University of Bamberg (Germany) will give attention to how multifaith realities are changing theological agendas.

On subsequent days speakers will address "Is your Bible my Bible?" and "Creation, redemption and eschatology." "The church's public vocation in society" will also be considered. A final message, recommendations, and further books are anticipated from the LWF event.

The program and more information about the consultation are available at: www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DTS/DTS-TLC_Augsburg.html

23 February 2009

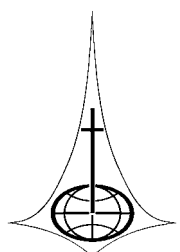
Ecumenical Study Seminar Offers Understanding on Worldwide Ecclesial Communion

Participation of European Students Necessary in Order to Extend Learning Experience

GENEVA (LWI) – An annual ecumenical study seminar coordinated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) continues to enable students of theology to develop a deeper appreciation of what it means to be

a global communion of churches. "Global change must be encouraged by the churches," said Yoseph Gebre Gemta from Ethiopia, one of the 20 participants in the 2009 academic course on the "Ecumenical Church in a Globalized World."

Gemta pointed out that the churches must ultimately assume responsibility for the global communion. The worldwide church must militate against climate change and promote gender equity, he emphasized in an interview with *Lutheran World Informa-*



tion (LWI). One of the three participants from the global South, the Ethiopian joined others from theological seminaries of the Evangelical Church in America (ELCA) in the course, held annually since 2005.



The participants, aged between 20 and 60 years, took part in roundtable discussions with staff from different LWF departments and offices, and the World Council of Churches, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, European Conference of Churches and other organizations based at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva. The 7 to 21 January seminar included presentations related to ecumenical dialogue today and in the future. Current social, ethical, economic and political challenges such as climate change, external foreign debt and globalization were also discussed.

“During the presentations, it became clear to me, that we as a church are also confronted with these questions. The worldwide church has to work together on the solution,” was how Andrew Chavanak from the Lutheran



“The worldwide church must work together on solutions to global challenges”: Andrew Chavanak, USA. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, USA, summarized his two-week experience.

The objective of the study seminar is to focus more intensely on the global communion of all believers, to broker understanding in global and ecumenical contexts and reflect on the implications for ministry.

“The students had two very intense weeks in

which they interacted with many people from different cultures, perspectives and life situations, not only during the seminar sessions but also during their leisure time,” said Rev. Dr Karen Bloomquist, the course coordinator and DTS director. She noted it was crucial to foster ecumenical formation by bringing students into contact with staff in the

Ecumenical Center, as these encounters open windows and doors of awareness that will be important in their future ministries.

Bloomquist said she hoped that in the future students from Europe could participate in the program in order to extend further this common learning experience.

“During the course I was impressed, how seriously the participants take their pastoral vocation and how existential questions regarding a vivid ecumenism are to them,” said LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs Dr Kathryn Johnson. She said she hoped “for the students, who could encounter an overall church with a profound striving for justice during the course, that they can integrate such a church in their pastoral praxis.”

Seminar participants spent a day at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute with students from other church-



For participant Lauren Davis, USA, the seminar served as a learning experience on theological conversation in other parts of the world and interaction with people from different backgrounds and cultures. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

es and cultural contexts. In Geneva, they also visited United Nations offices, the International Museum of the Reformation and the English-language Lutheran congregation.

A day trip to Taizé, France, offered an opportunity to experience ecumenical worship in the company of several hundred persons. In addition, according to the organizers, the course focus on worship provided insights into organizing and leading lively, ecumenical worship.

(This article was written by Claudia Schubert from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanover. She is doing her assistant pastor placement in the LWF Office for Communication Services as part of the study-abroad program of the Evangelical Church in Germany.)

6 March 2009

LWF Youth Pre-Assembly Preparatory Group Defines Goals for Full Participation

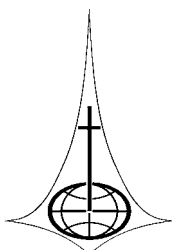
A Unique Opportunity for the Lutheran Youth Movement

GENEVA (LWI) – At the invitation of Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Youth, ten young church representatives from the LWF regions gathered on 19–24 February at the John

Knox Center in Geneva to lay the groundwork for the 2010 LWF Pre-Assembly Youth Conference.

The youth conference will take place 11–17 July 2010 in Dresden,

Germany, just days before the LWF Eleventh Assembly. The Assembly, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, will meet in Stuttgart, Germany, 20–27 July



2010 with the theme “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.”

The preparatory group from LWF member churches in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin and North America explored various options to equip youth delegates for full participation within the Lutheran communion and at the forthcoming assembly.

“Preparation implies training on how to raise a motion or to ask for the floor at a plenary session, but also things like how not to get lost at an assembly,” said Rev. Dr Kjell Nordstokke, director of the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD) which houses the LWF Youth desk. “There is a good chance that constitutional changes will be discussed at the assembly under the topic of LWF’s renewal. This will have implications for the future involvement of youth.”

The international planning group articulated visions and goals for the youth pre-assembly, suggesting it should be a “fun” event that would allow all youth delegates to act as confident participants during the main assembly. “When youth opinions and contributions are valued, they [young adults] are enabled to grow, to become fair and open future leaders. Full youth participation will enrich the work of the LWF,” said Ms Heidrun Tobler, a theology student from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa.



Members of the LWF Youth Pre-Assembly preparatory group take part in a teambuilding exercise during a February planning meeting in Geneva. © LWF Youth

At its 1990 meeting in Curitiba, Brazil, the LWF Assembly decided that at least 20 percent of the delegates to future assemblies should be youth (under 30 years).

“We need to advance from full representation to more participation,” said Mr Raymond Ranker from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

LWF Youth secretary Rev. Roger Schmidt affirmed that the “pre-assembly youth conference has traditionally been both a place of preparation and a unique opportunity of self-definition for the Lutheran youth movement.”

Schmidt pointed out that the youth desk continues to accompany young people in the member churches through the three-year training program “Engage: LWF Global Training for Young Leaders,” which encourages further reflection on the

implications of the Eleventh Assembly theme for the LWF regions.

Over 100 youth delegates and stewards from 54 countries participated in the pre-assembly youth conference near Toronto, Ontario, Canada, just prior to the LWF Tenth Assembly “For the Healing of the World” hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada on 21–31 July 2003 in Winnipeg.

The assembly is the highest decision-making body of the LWF, meeting every six to seven years. At an assembly, delegates from all LWF member churches take major decisions on the organization’s future work and direction.

(Ms Tsiry Rakoto from the Malagasy Lutheran Church, an intern in the LWF Office for Communication Services, wrote this article for LWI.)

24 March 2009

New Swedish Partnership with the LWF Seeks to Strengthen Member Churches’ Capacity

Mr Lars Hofgren from Sweden has joined the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) at the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as coordinator of a comprehensive capacity development program with LWF member churches. The initiative is a joint partnership between the LWF and Church of Sweden (CoS) which has seconded Hofgren to DMD.

The DMD program addresses long and short-term strategic capacity development in the LWF member churches. It promotes cooperation between the respective partners in the North and South, and provides opportunities for mutual learning. The activities will be designed in response to specific needs of selected member churches and would normally require a long-term follow-up process.

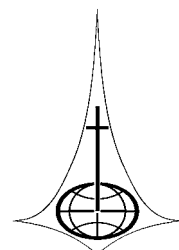


DMD capacity-building consultant Lars Hofgren © LWF/H. Putzman Penet

An economist, Hofgren, 61, has served his home church in different capacities for more than 30 years. Prior to joining DMD, he worked for four years as Secretary for Lutheran Mission Cooperation, based in Arusha, with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). From 1999 to 2004 he was the secretary for Eastern and Western Africa at the CoS Uppsala office. In the 1980s and 1990s he worked as development director of the Swedish Mission Council, an association of local denominations and Christian organisations working to promote justice and reconciliation globally. He served as ELCT treasurer

in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Hofgren is married with three children (two boys, one girl) and four grandchildren (boys).



Barack Obama's Inauguration Is a Landmark Transformative Event Globally

LWF General Secretary Congratulates 44th President of the USA

GENEVA (LWI) – Congratulating President Barack Hussein Obama on his inauguration on 20th January as the 44th President of the United States of America, the general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, described the occasion as a landmark of the beginning of the 21st century, and a transformative event for the whole world.

In a statement released the same day, the general secretary compared Obama's induction into office to that of former South African President Nelson Mandela, who, although mandated for presidency by his people, assumed a global role, becoming "everyone's president."

"Obama's inauguration is, for the USA and for the world, a similarly transformative event," said Noko. It sends the clearest possible message of the American people's willingness "to be challenged and to challenge the politics of racial and other forms of division. It calls for the creation of a true union of all US citizens. It also invites all of us around the world to examine our own contexts and to do the same," he added.

He noted that Obama's election raised a tidal wave of hope around the world after a period in which the USA and much of the rest of the world became estranged from each other, and against the background of an economic and humanitarian crisis. "Today, with

his inauguration, the weight of all those hopes and expectations falls heavily on his shoulders," said Noko.

He joined many other religious leaders in the USA and around the world in praying that the new president would be given the wisdom and strength to bear the burden of so much hope toward the goals of justice and dignity that he had so powerfully articulated at home and globally.

The full text of Dr Noko's statement is on the LWF Web site at:

[www.lutheranworld.org/
LWF_Documents/
LWF_Statement_
Obama_Inauguration.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF_Statement_Obama_Inauguration.pdf)

20 January 2009

New NGO Bill in Ethiopia to Regulate Aid Agencies' Operations

The Ethiopian Parliament endorsed a controversial bill on the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the country. Passed on 6 January 2009, the new bill determines the legal ground for the establishment and operation of civic institutions as well as international and local NGOs.

According to the new law, local NGOs and civic institutions are now required to raise 90 percent of their income from domestic sources, failing which they would be denied citizens' rights, and would thus be considered as international NGOs.

The bill prohibits international NGOs from working in the areas of conflict resolution and peace building, democratization, human rights-related advocacy, gender and disabilities, among others. It also sets tough penalties and authority to investigate and oversee organizations providing assistance to the needy.

Meanwhile, members of the international community are requesting that the government revise the bill. The United Nations humanitarian news service *IRIN* writes that the law was passed despite strong criticism from opposition politicians, international human rights groups and national civil society organizations.

Critics argue that the new regulation, especially on foreign funding to local NGOs, would hurt human rights groups that are critical of the government and could disrupt their operations. The government, however, says aid organizations have been used by political activists working on "other issues" rather than "catastrophes that required assistance," according to a September 2008 statement.

The new law establishes an oversight agency, rules and supervision for the establishment of trusts and endowments,

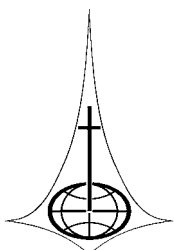


Participants of a community development meeting organized by LWF/DWS Ethiopia on gender issues, agricultural practices and education
© ELCA/Kathy Sime

societies and charitable organizations. Regulations on fundraising, membership and governance are also specified.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is present in Ethiopia through its member church, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) and the Department for World Service (DWS) country program, which have collaborated for more than 30 years. The joint EECMY and DWS Ethiopia program focuses on food security, integrated rural development and disaster preparedness.

(This article is edited from the original by Sofia Malmqvist from Sweden, currently on secondment with DWS Kenya. The program's work includes refugee camp management in eastern Ethiopia.)



Indonesian Theologian Sinaga Joins LWF Studies Department

Indonesian theologian **Rev. Dr Martin Lukito Sinaga** has assumed the position of Study Secretary for Theology and the Church at the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) for an initial two-year term.

Prior to joining the LWF, Sinaga, 40, was dean of studies at the Jakarta Theological Seminary in the Indonesian capital for two years. In 2007, he worked as LWF/DTS Asian region consultant for church and interfaith relations. He taught religion, church and interfaith dialogue at the Jakarta Theological Seminary from 2001 until 2007, prior to which he lectured in religion at the Roman Catholic Driyarkara School of Philosophy in Jakarta. In 1996, he founded the volunteer Society of Inter-Religious Dialogue, (MADIA). He was ordained in 1995 as a pastor of the Simalungun Protestant Christian Church (Gereja Kristen Protestan Simalungun – GKPS), which he had served as a vicar and minister from 1992 to 1995.

In 2001 Sinaga earned his doctorate in theology with the dissertation, “The Post-Colonial Identity of an Ethnic Church



Rev. Dr Martin Sinaga
© LWF/H. Putsman Penet

in Civil Society” from the then Singapore-based South East Asia Graduate School of Theology, now in Manila, Philippines. He graduated with a master’s in theology from the Jakarta Theological Seminary in 1995, where he had obtained his bachelor’s degree. He pursued a course on religious studies at the Mission Academy, University of Hamburg, Germany, 1996 to 1998. He has served on various committees including the theological commission of the Council of Churches in Indonesia and MADIA.

He has written and edited several papers and publications in English and Bahasa Indonesian on the ethnic identity of the church, promoting dialogue and interfaith relations.

Sinaga and his wife Noverita Pakpak have two teenage children.

More information about DTS work is available at:

www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/Dts/DTS-Welcome.html

Lutheran Woman Chaparro to Head Venezuelan Church

The new president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela (Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en Venezuela – IELV) **Rev. Guillermina Chaparro** says her election as the head of the church is an indication of the IELV’s steady growth, especially in the rural areas.

The first woman to head the church, Chaparro was elected and installed on 6 February at the IELV’s 12th general assembly in Caracas, Venezuela. She said her election was the “culmination of a process that has been in gestation within the church.” She succeeds Rev. Akos Puky who has served as church president since 2002.

The Lutheran church is growing steadily in communities in the provinces, “thus it is logical that leaders emerge in these areas to contribute to church leadership,” Chaparro explained in an interview with *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*. “I come from a grassroots community in a poor part of the (western) State of Barinas,” she said.

Prior to her election, she had served as a member of the IELV council, and coordinated the church’s scholarship program and national youth camps. She also helped to establish a Lutheran women’s committee.

Chaparro said one of her priorities is to strengthen the focus of the church council’s work, so that more attention is accorded to meeting the urgent needs of the IELV. She said it is important to support the emerging, indigenous church,



Newly elected IELV president
Rev. Guillermina Chaparro
© IELV

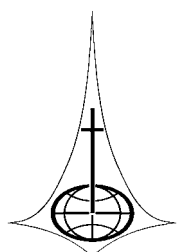
with its different conception of being church and its varying activities and challenges. Such an approach is important “so that not only the capital city of Caracas benefits but also the poor neighborhoods of Venezuela’s other major cities,” she explained. This also includes accompanying the ethnic or migrant communities who laid IELV’s foundation.

On relations with other churches in the Latin American region and globally, she underlined the need to deepen and improve ecumenical relations and communication with the Latin American Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and other partners such as the Protestant Gustav Adolf Werk (GAW), which supports church ministry in minority situations. She said she envisions a church that also speaks out and acts prophetically in the face of the challenges and realities being experienced in Venezuela and Latin American.

Chaparro, a mother of two, pursued her postgraduate studies at the theological college Escola Superior de Teologia (EST) in São Leopoldo, Brazil. She studied sociology at the University of Barinas in western Venezuela.

The IELV has 1,950 members and has been a member church of the LWF since 1986. Venezuela is predominantly Roman Catholic, with Protestants comprising around 2 percent of the national population of 26 million people.

More LWI News at
www.lutheranworld.org/News/Welcome.EN.html



FEATURE: From Isolated Actions to Global Partnership

LWF AIDS Strategy Group Commends Bold Church Initiatives Despite Great Challenges

GENEVA (LWI)—Some of the contexts are strikingly different, the needs and target groups vary, but the objectives are similar. Whether working with traditional birth attendants to end harmful cultural practices in rural Liberia, raising awareness through youth drama groups among India’s tribal communities in Orissa, or preparing weekly nutritious lunches in the Greater Manchester area in Connecticut, USA, it is a partnership that enables churches to increasingly seek to embrace care, grace and justice in their response to the global HIV and AIDS pandemic.

prising church leaders, regional AIDS desk coordinators and representatives of partner churches affirmed the need to continue with the objectives of the global LWF campaign and action plan under the title “Compassion, Conversion, Care—Responding as Churches to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic.” Launched in 2002, the initiative promotes active and courageous AIDS response by the LWF churches. Its focus, participants noted, should be sharpened to reflect the changing contexts.

Kahuthu cited other important steps including prevention by confront-

Development (DMD), commended the member churches and their partners for the long-standing accompaniment—in some regions since the early 1980s—of people affected by HIV.

“We are encouraged that since the launch of the campaign, more churches have taken major steps in their response to the pandemic and its impact,” he said. “HIV and AIDS is an issue of justice, thus churches have to play a unique role. Our strategy in the first place is to empower churches, lifting up the justice and rights issues,” he stressed.

The strategy group’s meetings, organized by DMD’s AIDS Desk, provide a forum to share experiences and exchange views on best practices and challenges, with a view to reviewing and shaping the overall focus of the organization’s AIDS work at the global and regional levels.



AIDS strategy group meeting participants (left to right) Dr Mamy Ranaiwoason, ELCA program assistant, Madagascar; Bishop Zachariah Kahuthu, Kenya; Dr Daniel Salpou, Cameroon; Dr Louis O. Dorvilier, director for international development and disaster response, ELCA Global Mission Unit © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

Prevention, Information Sharing

This year’s meeting agreed on the need to increase support to and collaboration among the member churches in order to enhance prevention; scale up the focus on women, youth, and people living with HIV as important target groups and resource persons; extend theological training on AIDS; enhance coordination between the global and regional AIDS response efforts; increase peer group communication; and improve information sharing especially from leadership level to the grassroots.

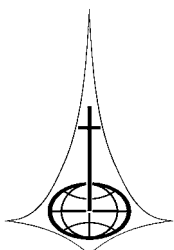
Participants representing churches in Africa, Europe, North America and Latin America and the Caribbean pointed out that stigma and discrimination in churches and communities remain a major impediment to an effective response. Also attending were representatives from the Anglican Communion, Ecumenical

“Most KELC (Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church) parishes have working groups for mothers and orphans. Training groups in the church have resulted in open discussion without discrimination about sensitive issues such as sexuality,” said KELC Bishop Zachariah W. Kahuthu, reporting on the church’s AIDS response initiative at the biannual meeting of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) HIV and AIDS strategy group.

At the 9 to 11 February meeting in Geneva, the ten-person group com-

ing harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and early marriages that increase vulnerability to HIV transmission. Stigma reduction and awareness-raising on living positively with HIV have become permanent features of the church’s ministry with pastors preparing an AIDS-related sermon each month to advocate behavior change and inclusivity of all, he explained.

In his welcoming remarks, Rev. Dr Kjell Nordstokke, director of the LWF Department for Mission and



Advocacy Alliance, the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa – EHAIA, and Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), and staff from other LWF units.

“Bishops are seen as key people in communities, and the church leaders and their pastors have to use that key. One facilitates and supports the other. Church leaders should explicitly say to pastors: ‘I support your efforts,’” remarked one participant.

The pandemic, they argued, while a health issue requiring urgent attention from governments and other service providers, remained for the church a deeply theological matter. “It is not about the virus, it is about the people; and focus should not be maintained on the disease but rather on the discrimination and stigmatization,” remarked Argentine Lutheran pastor Lisandro Orlov, the Latin American region coordinator for LWF AIDS response initiatives.

“The duty of the church is to deal with the subject through theology, not to keep quiet because we feel unsure,” stated Rev. Erik Berggren, Church of Sweden.

LWF Assembly Theme, Resources

The strategy group members said they considered the July 2010 LWF Elevation



Left to right: Jaap Schep, LWF/DMD; Rev. Lisandro Orlov, HIV and AIDS coordinator for Latin American region; Rev. Erik Berggren, Church of Sweden © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, an opportunity to provide greater visibility to the AIDS campaign, especially through the event's theme “Give Us Today Our Daily Bread.”

Appreciation was expressed for the LWF handbook, *Grace, Care and Justice*, a guide on Lutheran theological and pastoral understandings on accompanying persons affected by HIV and AIDS, also incorporating information on medical aspects, prevention, home-based care, gender concerns and advocacy. DMD has facilitated its translation into French and Spanish, and the respective LWF member churches have produced Amharic, Estonian, Georgian,

Malagasy, Oromifa, Russian and Kiswahili language versions, with more translations in progress.

Malagasy medical doctor Mamy Ranaivoson, based in Nairobi, Kenya, as a program assistant for health ministries with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), urged the LWF to ensure “such available resources get down to the people” as the pandemic still threatens millions of lives and livelihoods especially among the poor.

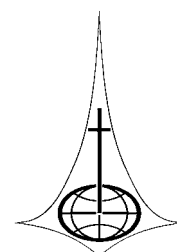
The regional or national needs are quite different, thus requiring contextual approaches for any meaningful response, noted Ms Venah Mzezewa, coordinator of the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) AIDS Action Program incorporating the work of 17 churches. She pointed out that, in 2007, Southern Africa accounted for almost one third or 32 percent of all new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths globally.

DMD AIDS Desk coordinator Rev. Dr Veikko Munyika underscored the churches' efforts, saying, “The global AIDS statistics paint a grim picture of the overwhelming challenges ahead. But we must acknowledge the significant gains that have been made because the church has spoken.”

The LWF supports several AIDS response projects among its member churches whose focus includes theological education, communication,



LUCSA HIV and AIDS coordinator Venah Mzezewa (left) moderates a session. On the right are Claudia Hoffmann-Denarié and Rev. Dr Veikko Munyika, LWF HIV and AIDS desk. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet



prevention, home-based care, and awareness raising about the rights of people living with HIV.

According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), an estimated 33 million people were living with HIV globally in 2007. Sub-Saharan Africa

remains the most heavily affected region, accounting for 67 percent of the global figure, and for 72 percent of the estimated 2 million AIDS-related deaths.

(Ms Tsiry Rakoto from the Malagasy Lutheran Church, currently serving as an LWF intern with the Office for

Communication Services, wrote this article for LWI.)

More information about the LWF AIDS response initiatives is available at: www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/HIV-AIDS/LWF-HIV_AIDS.html

11 March 2009

FEATURE: A Battle for Cultural Survival

Faith Galvanizes Indigenous Village into Action amid Dramatic Climate Change

CHICAGO, Illinois, USA/GENEVA (LWI)

– No roads lead to Shishmaref, a traditional Inupiaq village along the Alaskan coast, where residents live on seals, walrus, fish, birds, caribou and moose that they hunt themselves. Villagers, the Inuit people of Alaska's Arctic Northwest and Bering Straits region, date their culture back thousands of years.

Located on an island about three miles long and a quarter mile wide (4.8 x 0.4 km) and home to some 560 people, Shishmaref is washing out to sea. It is among the three most imperiled Alaskan villages endangered by erosion and flooding due to climate change, according to a report by the United States Government Accountability Office. It could be wiped out in less than ten years, says the United States Army Corps



Climate change is washing the village of Shishmaref out to sea. © Shishmaref Erosion and Relocation Coalition

of Engineers, the federal agency responsible for the development and maintenance of water and related environmental resources.

The village leaders are disclosing to residents that they must choose another relocation site for the town, since they learned that the long-chosen site of Tin Creek on the nearby mainland is plagued by degrading permafrost.

“It’s more or less ice and not anchored enough for a town,” said Darlene Turner, village leader and president of Shishmaref Lutheran Church, a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Alaska Synod.

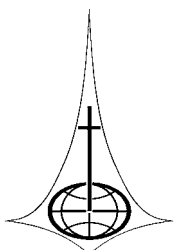
“It’s disappointing,” Turner said. “This puts us back at square one.”

Dramatic Impact

“The impact of climate change is dramatic in Alaska, and the rest of the United States doesn’t understand that,” said Bishop Michael Keys, Alaska Synod.



Longtime Shishmaref Lutheran Church council member Delbert Eningowuk lived off the land and sea until his death in February 2009 at the age of 79. © Kelly Eningowuk





Salmon fishing in the Serpentine River, an area on the mainland which provides food for many Shishmaref residents © Kelly Eningowuk

Shishmaref Lutheran Church dates back to 1930 and is the northernmost ELCA congregation. The congregation's late pastor, Rev. Robert H. Wentzien, had voiced concerns before his death last year about the reduction of water access at the Tin Creek site as well as the long-term impact of any relocation. "I am very concerned, not just about their commerce and industry, but about their entire culture, oral traditions, family traditions and more," he told *ELCA Communication Services*.

The cost of relocating the village to the mainland is estimated at USD 180 million, while moving residents 120 miles (192 kilometers) south to a designated area in Nome is calculated at roughly half that price.

Traditional Values, Customs

For residents, relocation is a battle for survival as a people as well as a village.

The majority oppose moving to cities such as Nome or Anchorage because of the dramatic lifestyle changes, said Stanley Tocktoo, head of the Shishmaref Erosion and Relocation Committee.

"The majority want to stay on the mainland in the area and subsist on the land and sea like we always have," said Tocktoo. "We don't want to be separated. We want to keep intact our traditional values and customs."

The bishop pointed out two other villages in the synod—Wales and Teller—may also face relocation.

"If you just move people to Nome or Anchorage, you're losing cultural diversity," said Keys. "You need to consider the cultural perspective. Is there a value that this cultural diversity exists? Is the indigenous lifestyle—culture, values and language—valuable?" he remarked.

Shishmaref Lutheran Church, the island's only church, provided parcels of land so that many of those

immediately threatened could move to safer ground.

"These are people of deep, deep extraordinary faith and witness," said Keys. "It will allow them to face very, very difficult challenges ahead of them and be a significant part of how they respond."

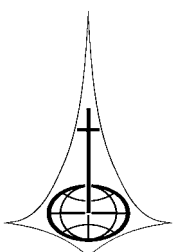
The Alaska synod is one of the 65 synods of the 4.7-million-member ELCA, which joined the LWF in 1986.

(Adapted from the original ELCA Communication Services article.)

More information about the ELCA is available at: www.elca.org

This feature article continues the LWI series focusing on the topic "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread," the theme of the LWF Eleventh Assembly to be held 20–27 July 2010 in Stuttgart, Germany.

13 March 2009



Woman Elected Bishop of the Evangelical Church in Central Germany

Oberkirchenrat Ilse Junkermann of Stuttgart has become the first woman bishop of the Evangelical Church in Central Germany (EKM). In the third round of secret balloting, the church synod in Wittenberg on 21 March elected the 51-year-old theologian by more than the required two-thirds majority.

Junkermann thus becomes the fourth woman bishop in the history of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), after present bishops Maria Jepsen from Hamburg and Margot Kässmann from Hanover, and Bärbel Wartenberg-Potter from Lübeck, who retired last year. The EKM came into existence in January 2009 as the result of the merger between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thuringia and the Evangelical Church of the Province of Saxony. The current bishops, Christoph Kähler (Eisenach) and Axel Noack (Magdeburg), will step down in July. Junkermann officially begins her ten-year term as bishop on 29 August.

Reacting to her election as a native of western Germany to a leadership post in the eastern part of the country, Junkermann said that she had apparently succeeded in “gaining the apprecia-



*Newly elected EKM bishop
Rev. Ilse Junkermann
© EKM/Harald Krieg*

tion of people here.” As bishop, she sees continuing to impact society as one of the most important tasks facing the church, despite migration out of the area and a dwindling birthrate. Another critical issue is the fight against right-wing extremism, a growing nationwide concern.

After completing her theological studies in Tübingen and Göttingen, Junkermann served as dean of pastoral theology and preaching at the pastoral training institute (Pfarrseminar) in Stuttgart-Birkach. She pastored congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg and is current director of its Department of Train-

ing and Personnel. She is divorced and has one son.

Together the churches in Thüringen and Sachsen-Anhalt represent more than 3,300 congregations with a total of over 910,000 members. The former Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thuringia last year had around 431,500 members. It has been a member of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) since 1947.

(Based on an epd – Evangelischer Pressedienst contribution.)

LWF 2003 Assembly Coordinator Dies

The former coordinator of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Tenth Assembly, **Rev. Arthur Lechnitz**, passed away on 3 March at the age of 59 years in Winnipeg, Canada, after a long illness. Lechnitz, whose most recent activity was that of adviser to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), had been entrusted in September 2001 with the task of planning the July 2003 LWF Assembly in Winnipeg from the LWF Secretariat in Geneva.

Lechnitz returned to Winnipeg in the spring of 2004 and acted as interim pastor on a part-time basis for Christ Lutheran Church. In addition, until the time of his death he served as adviser to various LWF departments, and had a significant role in producing the 2005, 2006 and 2007 LWF annual reports. Between February 2005 and April 2008, Lechnitz served as resident advisor to the president and senior management team of the EECMY in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for strategic planning, management and program implementation.

Lechnitz was a native of Ottawa in Ontario, Canada, and a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC).



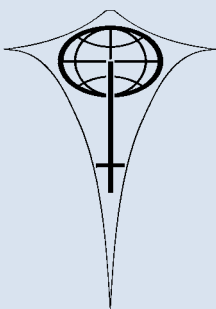
*Rev. Arthur Lechnitz (1949-2009)
© LWF/H. Putsman Penet*

From 1998 to 2001, he was the regional expression officer for the LWF North American office, located at the Chicago headquarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Ordained in 1982, Lechnitz served in parish ministry in Winnipeg and as Lutheran campus pastor at the University of Manitoba and synod facilitator for youth ministries. He was also a member of the national church council and chaired the national youth ministry committee.

Lechnitz graduated with a bachelor of science degree from Carleton University in 1970 and worked as a systems engineer with IBM Canada. He studied theology at St. Paul University, Ottawa, and at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, graduating with a master of divinity degree in 1980. He received a master of sacred theology degree from the University of Winnipeg in 1988 with specialization in marriage and family pastoral counseling.

The funeral service will be held on 4 April in Ottawa.



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