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PRIORITY AREA 1

Identity

STRENGTHEN LUTHERAN IDENTITY AS A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES IN MISSION

Since its 1990 Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, the LWF has understood itself as a communion of churches. Incorporating this core identity of the Federation as a strategic priority calls for ongoing reflection and sharing among the member churches. The dialogue and discernment inherent in this identity enable the LWF to gain clarity on what this communion is called to *be* and *do*.

SELF-CRITICAL THEOLOGICAL IDENTITY

The gospel at the heart of the faith the church confesses is not static but living and dynamic, anchored in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. What this means needs to be discovered in relation to each time and place, by entering deeply into the lives and realities of people in their contexts to hear the gospel's continual promise.

Questions of Lutheran identity cut across the diverse LWF communion of churches. This discernment of confessional identity always takes place in a given context with its own challenges and questions. But it is also developed in relationships. Thus, the challenges of ecumenical dialogue, for example, prompt Lutherans toward freshly appreciative and more self-critical understandings of their tradition.

UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTICE OF MISSION

The church's fundamental task is to participate in God's mission to all creation. After the 2003 Winnipeg Assembly, the LWF has continued to support its member churches to realize this obligation in several processes that include joint reflection, consultations and development of relevant resources, mainly through

the work of the Department for Mission and Development (DMD) and Theology and Studies (DTS). The document *Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment – an LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Mission*, published in 2004, serves as a tool for member churches to understand and reaffirm their mission. It incorporates a strong emphasis on the paradigm of accompaniment (based on the story of Emmaus, Luke 24) to underline a holistic understanding of mission that includes proclamation, diakonia and advocacy. The publication's translation into other languages beyond the official four LWF languages and the production of complementary resource materials help to promote reflection on this core subject.

DIAKONIA BELONGS TO THE CORE OF THE CHURCH

In church tradition, the word diakonia describes the church's specific work toward the world. As a core component of the gospel, a defining character of the church and thus of the LWF, diakonia is not an option but an essential part of discipleship. Through its activities in the fields of development cooperation, humanitarian relief and advocacy, the LWF continually seeks to live out its diaconal calling.

Since the 1980s, a process of rediscovering the concept of diakonia has been emerging within the ecumenical movement. Churches in the global South had pointed to the potential of this concept to express concern for a more holistic approach to church-based development work. In the Federation, this reflection has increased since the Winnipeg Assembly. In order to bring together the key elements of the theological understanding of diakonia, DMD coordinated a consultative process with member churches, aimed at creating a common platform for the Lutheran communion in its understanding and practice of diakonia. The results have been compiled in the *LWF Handbook on Diakonia*, published in 2009, to serve as a theological education resource and training manual for diaconal workers. A complementary publication, *Serving the Whole Person: The Practice and Understanding of Diakonia within the Lutheran Communion* (LWF Documentation 54/2009) brings together a variety of regional perspectives on this topic.

As a result of this process, LWF member churches have continued to affirm diakonia as central to what it means to be church. However, some questions have been raised for further work. These include: What

Diakonia in context: a young widow with her newborn baby in a church-supported clinic in Thailand. © Kirsi Elo



2003 (FROM END JULY)

31.07–02.08.03 ▪

Chaired by Bishop Mark S. Hanson, the LWF Council at its first meeting elects a treasurer and vice-presidents for program committees and approves CHF13.7 million 2004 Geneva coordination budget.

30.09–01.10.03

[OIAHR] ▪ The Interfaith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA) calls on religious leaders to send regional peace teams to conflict areas in Southern Africa.

01–06.10.03 [OEA]

▪ The Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission holds a preparatory meeting in Crete, Greece.

October [DTS:

Christian-Muslim study] ▪ A three-year DTS study program on the role of religion in conflict is launched at a meeting in Denmark.

16–19.10.03 [DTS:

Spiritualism study] ▪ A meeting of Lutheran churches in 15 European countries held in Svätý Jur, Slovak Republic, says Lutheran churches should build bridges with neo-spiritualistic movements.

20–25.10.03

[OIAHR] ▪ A delegation of African religious leaders led by IFAPA convenor Dr Ishmael Noko transmits its vi-

sion for a new Liberia to faith-based and civil society groups.



Elderly women registering for aid in 2003 at an IDP camp near Monrovia, Liberia. © LWF/C. Pitchford

30.10–02.11.03 ▪

Meeting in Järvenpää, Finland, LWF and International Lutheran Council representatives agree to encourage cooperation among their member churches.

18–21.11.03 [DMD]

▪ A DMD consultation for member churches from the Latin American & Caribbean region held in Resistencia, Argentina, discusses the understanding of development and diaconal work in the region.

23–28.11.03 [DMD: Youth/YICAS] ▪

Participants in a three-year youth leadership program assess and conclude the “International Youth Program – Transformation through Participation” at a meeting on Batam Island, Indonesia.



IYP-Transformation through Participation participants at a final meeting on Batam Island, Indonesia. © LWF/T. Valeriano

is the relationship between congregations’ spontaneous diaconal action and the interventions of organized diakonia? How does our understanding of holistic ministry affect diaconal action? How can capacities for diaconal work be developed? This reflection must continue.



Rev. Erlini Tola [right] and Maritza Castañeta [left] were the first women pastors to be ordained in the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church. © Mission 21/H. Bichsel

COHERENCE BUT NOT UNIFORMITY

The LWF member churches base their communion on the shared adherence to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet, this faith conviction often expresses itself in diverse forms that are influenced by a variety of factors such as history and context. For churches that understand themselves as a communion, it is crucial that conversations take place on how the diversity of practice can best be integrated. The following are some examples of this dialogue:

Women’s Ordination – The LWF believes in the equality of women and men and supports the role of women in church life, including their calling to ministry. While the ordination of women continues to be an issue ecumenically and within the Lutheran communion, the LWF encourages local congregations to engage in discussion so their members can better understand the theological reasons for ordaining women. They are also invited to learn from one another about the blessings ordained women offer churches within and beyond the Lutheran communion.

A 2008 consultation titled “The Ongoing Reformation of the Church: The Witness of Ordained Women Today,” invited churches to see the ordination of women “not primarily as a societal or women’s issue but as a matter that goes to the heart of what it means to be the church.”

Episcopal Ministry – Lutheran churches have a variety of ways of expressing the ministry of oversight (episcopé). Some—a growing number—have bishops; others do not and find good reasons to retain their practices. In 2007, the LWF Council affirmed the statement “Episcopal Ministry within the Apostolicity of the Church.” This statement emerged from a consultation process which aimed to describe common ground shared by the Lutherans on oversight and in particular on the episcopal ministry, and to contribute to a deepening of shared perspectives. The statement sought to invite strengthened mutual understanding within the communion and to contribute to Lutheran ecumenical engagement.

Marriage, Family and Sexuality – The diversity of the Lutheran communion and the different areas in which it is engaged may easily

Priority Area 1: Identity

cause misunderstandings. The LWF Secretariat has promoted meetings with the member churches to develop understanding and better ways to address conflicts.

It was important to encourage dialogue and foster understanding on an issue that arose on “Justice and Healing in Families” at the Winnipeg Assembly. The Assembly debated the changing realities in relation to family, gender and sexuality in today’s world and called on member churches to “encourage and support one another in:

- study and respectful dialogue on issues of marriage, family and human sexuality, in a manner appropriate to the needs of each member church;
- advocacy for the human rights and dignity of all persons regardless of gender or sexual orientation.”

In 2004, the Council appointed a Task Force on Marriage, Family and Sexuality representing the seven geographical regions of the communion “to reflect biblically, historically and ethically on the practices and attitudes identified, and give specific attention to whether, and how different hermeneutical approaches to Scripture, and different ethical attitudes, practices and policies, which affect the unity of the church, may be dealt with.”

Member churches forwarded their own studies, reflections and documentation to the LWF on this subject. The task force developed “Proposed Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue on Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality.” At its 2007 meeting in Lund, Sweden, the Council adopted these guidelines and commended them to the member churches for study over a five-year period that would also allow for interregional and international consultations.

OPENING SPACES FOR MUTUAL EXCHANGE

Belonging together in a communion of churches is understood as a gift and a task that the churches seek to express continuously through mutual sharing and accompaniment. It includes listening to each other and learning together, so that the shared concerns are heard and addressed. This is particularly important for theological discourse, which must take into account experiences and insights from various regions and diverse spiritual, cultural, social and political backgrounds.

Accompaniment becomes particularly important when there are conflicts within the communion, or within member churches. It has become increasingly clear that the multilateral nature of the LWF adds value to the task of accompaniment, providing a wider framework for existing bilateral relationships.

The LWF continues to play a pivotal role in providing opportunities for regional coordination, mediation, networking and the sharing of resources. It is through these encounters that churches experience the gift of the communion’s diversity and potential to transform members. Some examples are:

Regional Expressions of Communion

One of the results of the post-Curitiba focus on communion was the establishment of church leadership consultations, offering space where churches can discern the implications of being in communion at a regional level. In two of the regions, churches established their own coordination structures—the Lutheran Council in Asia (LUCAS) and the Lutheran Council in Africa—to enhance communication and interaction. Churches

01–04.12.03 [DMD: HIV & AIDS] • At a DMD Asian church leadership consultation on HIV & AIDS held on Batam Island, Indonesia, LWF member churches in Asia commit to providing pastoral care, mission and diakonia.



An Indonesian official speaking at the Asian church leadership consultation in Indonesia. © LWF/L. Woodruff

2004

During the year

[DMD] • A Latin American regionally coordinated, DMD-supported advocacy program begins research and public discussion with civil society organizations about what constitutes illegitimate debt.

16–21.01.04

[OIAHR] • LWF participants in the 4th World Social Forum (WSF) in Mumbai, India conduct seminars on interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace in Africa.

26–31.01.04 •

President Hanson, leads an ELCA delegation on a visit to the Ecumenical

Patriarchate of Constantinople in Istanbul, Turkey.

21-23.02.04 ▪

The LWF Executive Committee meets in Geneva.

03-07.03.04

[OIAHR] ▪ The LWF and CEC hold a joint human rights training workshop in Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

22-26.03.04 [DWS]

▪ Sixty representatives from 10 DWS country programs in East, North and West Africa attend a regional consultation in Mombasa, Kenya, on “The Rights of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons.”

27-29.03.04

[OIAHR] ▪ A sub-regional (Horn of Africa, East and Central Africa) IFAPA conference in Nairobi, Kenya, discusses local interfaith activities for peace.



Ivorian refugees receive an LWF program loan for income-generating activities. © LWF/DWS Guinea

30.03-02.04.04

[DMD] ▪ At a leadership conference of LWF member churches in Latin America in São Leopoldo, Brazil, churches review the LWF Tenth Assembly and establish priorities for their work.

in Latin America opted for networking through the Church Leadership Conference, which organized an external evaluation of their regional process as a communion of churches. In North America, the region has been working to promote the global communion concept by enhancing connectivity among the member churches there. Important work has been done to make the work of the LWF better known in the region.

Roundtables

The LWF continues to assume leadership in organizing and implementing roundtables aimed at facilitating better cooperation and coordination of mission activities between its member churches and their partners abroad. These forums remain an important process in strengthening emerging churches, particularly in Africa and Asia. They also deal with questions related to the common understanding and coordination of international diakonia by member churches.

The Mekong Mission Forum and the roundtables with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mozambique, and the Salvadoran Lutheran Church are examples of instrumental processes in overcoming crises or conflicts in member churches.

Sharing and Learning from Different Contexts

The LWF member churches in Africa are dealing with the challenge that poverty poses for their participation in God’s mission. In 2006, LWF churches in Asia utilized the concept of diapraxis—a dialogical

Continued on page 15

DEPARTMENT FOR MISSION AND DEVELOPMENT

The role of DMD is to accompany the member churches in their endeavor to foster and strengthen the understanding of the Lutheran communion as both a gift and a task. The department’s activities are thus focused on encouraging the LWF member churches to support one another mutually, share resources and practice mission in a holistic way in their respective contexts. Through its programs and projects, DMD assists churches to become agents for transformation, empowerment and reconciliation in both church and society.

Global Programs

Violence against women, women’s ordination, and the effects of economic globalization and HIV and AIDS, as well as gender-related water issues have been central themes in the work of the **Women in Church and Society (WICAS)** desk since the 2003 LWF Tenth Assembly. During the reporting period, WICAS noted both progress and resistance to



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia spearheads efforts to obtain a monthly basic income grant (BIG) for all Namibians. Residents of Omitara register for BIG in 2008. © Claudia Haarmann

change, with women emphasizing that gender issues need to mobilize the whole church rather than just women’s departments.

LWF Youth work over the past six years has mainly focused on training young church members for leadership and enhancing their communication skills. Having worked alongside professionals as part of their training, young communicators announced in a multimedia display at the 2007 Council meeting

Capacity-building workshops on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) in...

1. Jos, Nigeria, 23-28.9.03 for Anglophone LUCWA (Lutheran Communion in Central and Western Africa) member churches
2. Garoua, Cameroon, 1-4.10.03 for Francophone LUCWA member churches
3. Mahaballipuram, India, 13-16.11.04 for member churches in India
4. Lae, Papua New Guinea (PNG), 25-27.8.04 for LWF member churches in PNG
5. Kimbeimbe, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 4-8.4.05 for dioceses
6. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 6-10.5.05 for church staff of the Lutheran churches in Swaziland, Malawi and Zimbabwe
7. Johannesburg, South Africa, 5-9.9.05 for staff of ELCSA dioceses and a special two-day workshop with the bishops
8. Bratislava, Svaty Jür, Slovak Republic, 19-22.9.05 for member churches in Central and Eastern Europe with an emphasis on the need to develop diaconal ministries
9. Chennai, India, 24-26.10.05 for the member churches in India with an emphasis on financial reporting and auditing
10. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 9-13.10.06 for church units and central offices of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
11. Antsirabe, Madagascar, 26-28.3.07 for synod and central office senior staff of the Malagasy Lutheran Church
12. Lushoto, Tanzania, 2-5.5.07 for selected synod and central office senior staff of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania
13. Liberia, 11.07.07 for staff of the churches in Sierra Leone and Liberia
14. Pematang Siantar, Indonesia 5-8.3.08 for member churches in Indonesia, with a special emphasis on strengthening the LWF National Committee
15. India, 14-16.8.08 Preparatory workshop for the Comprehensive Capacity Development program with representatives of the member churches in India
16. Bangladesh, 19-22.8.08 for the member churches in Bangladesh with special emphasis on enhancing cooperation between the two churches and RDRS, the LWF-DWS Associate Program
17. Colombia, 18-21.9.08 for the member church and specifically designed to prepare a participatory approach for a strategic planning process
18. Totota, Liberia, 30.3-3.4.09 to prepare a large cross-section of church leadership for a participatory strategic planning process

that “We are ready for the next step.” Different forums have helped to raise awareness about the important role of youth in critical issues such as HIV and AIDS, climate change, and ecumenical engagement.

The **HIV and AIDS** Campaign and Action Plan have emphasized capacity-building and supported church projects focusing on theological education, prevention, home-based care, and awareness-raising. Translated into more than ten languages, the handbook titled *Grace, Care and Justice* encourages churches toward a more active and effective response to the global AIDS pandemic. Advocacy at the international level continues in collaboration with the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA). Other forums such as the bi-annual International AIDS Conference offer opportunities for learning and networking.

Regional Programs

DMD area desks in Geneva and offices in the regions respond to concerns and priorities identified by member churches and give regional expression to LWF’s work.

In Africa, the bi-annual Church Leadership Consultations have discussed leadership styles and teamwork, transparency and accountability. The **Africa** desk has facilitated mutual exchange forums between South-South churches and

North-South partners. The region has identified poverty as inseparable from the mission of the church. The 2006 *Arusha Action Plan* calls for an ecumenical campaign against poverty, and entrusts the new Lutheran Council in Africa with responsibility for establishing a LWF Task Force on Poverty.

In a context marked by natural calamities, religious pluralism, labor migration, landless communities and women pushed into commercial sex and rising HIV prevalence, the **Asia Desk** continued to support churches’ efforts to serve marginalized and suffering people. Following the December 2004 tsunami, several regional church leadership consultations such as the 2006 DMD/DTS seminar on Christian-Muslim collaboration focused on diakonia. The creation of the Lutheran Council in Asia (LUCAS) was the natural outcome of ever-expanding communion relations in the region.

Over the past six years, the **Latin America** and **Caribbean** desk facilitated a program on illegitimate foreign debt coordinated from the Latin American region. Through the program, the region’s churches worked with governments and civil society to advocate debt cancellation at regional and global levels, including referral to the International Court of Justice for advice. The process included specific research and support for the work of an Ecuadorian

April [DTS: Spiritualism study]

- A DTS Studies series booklet in Spanish focuses on spiritualism as a challenge to the churches in Latin America.

20-25.04.04 [DMD: HIV & AIDS] ▪

A consultation in Odessa, Ukraine, by DMD HIV and AIDS desk shares information about church and NGO response to HIV and AIDS in Europe.



Sergei Fyodorov, chairperson of the “Life Plus” Center at the Odessa consultation. © LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch

26-27.04.04 [DWS]

- The DWS Annual Forum is held in Montreux, Switzerland.

17-22.05.04 [DWS]

- A DWS Asia regional consultation held in Albury, Australia, provides tools and methodologies for ensuring quality and effectiveness in DWS work.

24.05.04 ▪ Dr Noko meets with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in Chicago, USA, to discuss the UN role in Iraq’s transition from military to civilian leadership.

June [DTS: Spiritualism study]

▪ A DTS Studies Series booklet focuses on spiritualism as a challenge to the churches in Europe.

June [OIAHR] ▪ An IFAPA sub-regional conference for West Africa takes place in Ho, Ghana.



Dr Noko with Ghanaian Paramount Chief Togbe Afede XIV at the West African IFAPA Summit. © LWF/P. Prove

04-07.06.04 [DMD]

▪ “What does it mean to be a communion of churches?” Asian Lutheran churches ask at a church leadership conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

02-11.07.04 ▪ Dr Noko pays a pastoral visit to LWF member churches in Papua New Guinea.

04-14.07.04 [DTS: Christian-Muslim study]

A DTS study team completes its second case study on Christian-Muslim relations in Denmark, Indonesia and Nigeria.



LWF Christian-Muslim study team with employees of a Jakarta-based group for Islam and women's rights. © LWF/I. Wulffhorst

10-16.07.04 [OEA]

▪ The fourth phase of the Lutheran-Roman

audit commission on external debt. The annual Church Leadership Conference (COL) deliberated critical issues on communion building and the sustainability of church mission. COL has developed an evaluation tool to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Lutheran communion-building process for this region.

In the ferment of post-communism, the advance of the European Union and mounting secularism, the annual Church Leadership Consultation focused on Europe's changing context and implications of the East-West identity split on church relations, immigration and hospitality, and new forms of poverty and economic marginalization. The **Europe desk** has facilitated meetings that explore church-state relations in societies in transformation, and helped to identify new space for church social contributions and diaconal ministries.

The past six-year period has witnessed increasing interdependence among North American Lutherans and greater understanding of accountability within the worldwide communion.

Organized by the **North American regional office**, church leadership consultations have reflected on human sexuality as well as sexual exploitation, and on how difficult related issues might be addressed in the communion. An annual course in Geneva helped to deepen the understanding of the global Lutheran communion and challenged seminary students to apply their learnings to ministry in North America.

Projects

LWF member churches practice their holistic ministries through various projects on education, evangelism, health services, access to safe water, soil conservation, advocacy for land rights, empowerment of women and youth, pastoral counseling and many more. DMD provides means and mechanisms that help the churches match their vision with the available resources within the Lutheran communion and related agencies. It also conducts capacity-building workshops to enable communities to develop their own skills.

Continued from page 13

relationship of practical cooperation between different faith communities in addressing common challenges—as an entry point to interreligious contexts, basing their program on concrete experiences after the tsunami. The Latin American churches have come together to learn more about the sustainability of churches, as churches in Eastern Europe endeavored to determine their public role and relationship with the state.

The LWF has been consistently facilitating opportunities for mutual exchange and learning on theological questions among church leadership and theologians. Their participation in various consultations and seminars offers member churches insights on relations with people of other faiths, social issues, worship and congregational life and climate change. Special attention has been given to an inclusive approach so that churches are represented in such meetings by an equitable number of women, men and youth from across the seven LWF regions.

An emerging challenge for the communion is the need to put contextually developed theologies into mutual conversation, so that trans-contextual theological dialogue can take place.

POWER AND AUTHORITY WITHIN AND BETWEEN CHURCHES

The multilateral nature of the Lutheran communion makes it well-positioned to promote dialogue and understanding on issues of power and authority. The LWF is committed to address questions concerning the exercise of power and authority within and between member churches by promoting more accountable and less hierarchical or paternalistic structures. Various approaches to deal with these questions have been initiated,



Lutheran spirituality in Central America: Rev. Carlos Duarte from Uruguay prays with a local congregation in Asquelapa, Nicaragua – an example of inclusiveness. © LWF/Gilberto Quesada

Priority Area 1: Identity

which are important for the sustainability of churches and the communion, and for public witness.

A first step was the analysis of biblical and theological understanding of leadership and power in the church, whose insights were published in 2007 in the document, *Leadership and Power in the Ministry of the Church*. The publication offers a foundation for ongoing dialogue. It seeks to encourage reflection and discussion in the churches on how leadership and power are exercised in light of central biblical and theological understandings.

Regional meetings brought together men and women, lay and ordained church leaders to explore in theological conversations the different entry points that gender offers to the question of how power and authority are exercised in churches.

The issue of power and authority also applies to the Geneva Secretariat. In 2005 the LWF Executive Committee adopted the *LWF Staff Code of Conduct Regarding Abuse of Power and Sexual Exploitation*. The code of conduct outlines the ethical commitments and concrete obligations of all LWF staff, including the Department for World Service (DWS) field staff, and has become an integral part of the organizational culture. A peer review organized by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) revealed that although the LWF document is well formulated, it requires some important improvements with respect to complaint mechanisms.

CAPACITY BUILDING TO EMPOWER THE WHOLE PERSON

When the Apostle Paul contemplates the freedom that derives from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he discovers that distinctions between human beings are rendered irrelevant: “For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith” (Gal 3:26). Thus, he can say: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

One can argue that Paul’s assertion applies also to the LWF. However, many of the distinctions he refers to remain powerful realities for the Federation’s identity. Since Winnipeg, the LWF has continued to address such divisions, especially in the area of gender and youth, with regard to indigenous people, and people living with HIV and AIDS, among others.



Symbols of gender and power at a September 2006 LWF/WICAS consultation in São Leopoldo, Brazil. © LWF/P. Singh

Women and Gender Analysis: The LWF increasingly uses the concept of gender to describe relations between women and men. Gender is less a biological factor but more a construct of a given society or culture, assigning certain role expectations to women and men. In many cases, these are unfavorable or oppressive against women. However, the gender concept makes it possible also to recognize the unequal treatment of marginalized men.

Gender and power are cross-cutting themes that can address various disparities and injustices. They are significant for discussion about women’s leadership and participation levels in the church.

The 1984 Seventh Assembly in Budapest called for gender equality and balance in the LWF, including among staff. Gender mainstreaming has thus become an important tool in LWF’s work, and is emphasized through faith-based reflection about the practice of ministry, leadership and power in the church. One of the practical steps to help transform the understanding of leadership,

Catholic Commission on Unity, meeting in Baltimore, USA, focuses on the “Apostolicity of the Church.”



Members of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission meeting in Baltimore. © LWF

August [OCS] ▪ A new communication tool, **LWI special issues**, marks the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the LWF and the Roman Catholic Church.

01-08.09.04 ▪ The 2004 LWF Council meeting in Geneva re-elects Dr Noko as general secretary, admits three churches to full LWF membership, appoints a task group on family, marriage and sexuality and names members of Anglican-Lutheran and Lutheran-Reformed commissions.



LWF president Hanson congratulating Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko on his re-election as general secretary. © LWF/D. Zimmermann

11-17.09.04 ▪ President Hanson visits LWF member churches in Central America and participates in an interreli-

gious prayer for peace commemorating the September 11th 2001 attacks in the USA.

15–19.09.04 [DTS: Spiritualism study]

▪ A DTS seminar in Sabah, Malaysia, on “Dialogue with Indigenous Peoples in Asia on Spirits and Healing” suggests that mainstream churches give little space to alternative forms of spirituality.



Dr Monica J. Melanchthon from India with Dr Wilfred John from Malaysia at the DTS seminar in Malaysia. © LWI/I. Benesch

27–29.09.04 ▪ Dr Noko delivers a keynote address to the Second Australian Conference on Lutheran Education in Adelaide, Australia.



Nigerian theologian Rev. John Kenan at the Africa study seminar on “Ancestors and Healing in African Spirituality”. © LWI/I. Wulfhorst

27–30.09.04 [DTS: Spiritualism study]

▪ Christianity in Africa is exercised on the surface while deeper convictions remain rooted

OFFICE FOR PLANNING

The LWF Office for Planning ensures that the Federation’s common purpose as a communion of churches is reflected in the Geneva secretariat work. The office works collaboratively with the departments and offices in ensuring program and project strategies are coherent with the overall LWF aims and goals.

A feature of the 2004-2009 period was a strategic planning process, in which extensive consultation involved Geneva and field staff, guided by a Council-appointed sub-committee. The Council at its March 2007 Council meeting adopted the 2007-2011 Strategic Plan, which became a basic tool for planning and implementing the secretariat’s work.

The secretariat operational plans’ framework was based on four priority areas aimed at strengthening Lutheran identity as a communion of churches in mission; deepening ecumenical commitments and fostering interfaith relations; and bearing witness in church and society to God’s healing, recon-



The annual Week of Meetings for Geneva and field office staff provided input to the 2004-2009 strategic planning process. © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

ciliation and justice. The fourth cross-cutting priority seeks to enhance communication, mutual accountability and sharing.

The Planning office organizes Council meetings and contributes to the Assembly planning process. It is also responsible for the LWF Archives.

Continued from page 16

for example, is the requirement for a fair representation of women, men and youth in all LWF meetings.

While the LWF upholds these commitments and practices, professional competence and experience are not the only criteria when it comes to hiring new staff, for example. The consideration for regional and age representation makes it very difficult to achieve the gender balance goal.

In the meantime, it is necessary to work toward community and participative understanding of gender balance, equality and gender justice. Partnership between men and women is necessary in this effort, and remains a matter for church commitment and testimony.

Youth: Young people are very active in most LWF member churches but their voices often remain unheard and unrecognized in decision making. After an evaluation of earlier efforts, LWF youth work puts emphasis on the participation of young people in decision making.

One way this is done is by actively strengthening youth leadership. At the Pre-Council Youth Workshops, young Council members join the stewards to discuss important issues for the meeting. Topics addressed since the last Assembly include youth unemployment, peace in the Middle East, human sexuality and climate change.

Online consultations have become an innovative way to include young people in discussions inside the LWF.

In order to advance the leadership of young people in the member churches, the LWF implemented “ENGAGE: LWF Global Training for Young Leaders.” This ambitious three-phase program drew 46 young people from across the communion who were trained in basic



Left: Agnes Katsabola (Malawi) and Tsion Alemayehu (Ethiopia) at an ENGAGE training session in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2008. © LWF/F. Chan

project management, with each developing a small-scale assignment for their contexts.

The LWF Youth Internship Program continues to offer Geneva-based internship and ecumenical exposure each year for several young people. Upon return to their home churches, they are given tasks that match the developed capacities.

Other capacity development resources: The LWF pursues several other initiatives to support an inclusive communion and capacity development, for instance:

Human Resource Development – DMD continues to accompany the churches in developing their human resources capacities through diversified programs. International scholarships were awarded to 816 candidates between 2004 and 2008, in order to enhance church leadership skills and staff competencies. Participation of people with disabilities has been promoted through designated training funds. Sponsorship for short-term studies, research and professional exchange programs provide resource sharing opportunities, while language training helps break barriers and empower individual and group participation in regional and international gatherings. Since 2008, the DMD “Leadership Capacity/Competency Building Program” supports academic and practice-oriented training in leadership, management, capacity and competence building.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Living out communion implies being in conversation. Since Winnipeg, Internet development has enabled the LWF to improve existing forms of communication and explore new ones. Communication has been decentralized, allowing both the member churches and the DWS field offices to play a leading role in making relevant information available to the Lutheran constituency and to the broader public.

Nearly all regions have established a presence on the Internet, as demonstrated in the following examples.

Asia Lutheran News: Evolving from a long-standing magazine, Asia Lutheran News (ALN) is now a bi-monthly newsletter together with an inter-active and self-updating Web site. ALN’s online forums offer opportunities for discussion on a variety of topics, particularly with respect to the region’s Christian and Lutheran identity.

Africa Lutheran Communication and Information Network: Since its establishment in 2005, the Africa Lutheran Communication and Information Network (ALCINET) has increased the communication capacity of the region’s member churches, enabling them to share more information among themselves and with the wider Lutheran communion. The ALCINET Web site promotes LWF awareness in the region and provides space for churches to share stories about their ministries, particularly their response to HIV and AIDS. The Web site is complemented by radio and print media. However, communicators in this region have also raised concern about the need to pay attention to the increasingly popular communication model in the mobile phone.

in African Traditional Religion, says a DTS regional seminar held in Johannesburg, South Africa.

04–06.10.04 [DMD]

▪ A DMD roundtable discussion brings partners of the Honduran Christian Lutheran Church together to accompany the church in a process of institutional strengthening.

04–07.10.04 [DMD]

▪ Church leaders and directors of church development organizations gather in Masoka, Tanzania, to identify priorities and challenges for the churches’ social ministries in Africa.

05.10.04 [OIAHR] •

LWF leads a Bhutanese refugee delegation to the UNHCR Executive Committee meeting.

06–07.10.04

[OIAHR] ▪ An IFAPA delegation of religious leaders visits Ituri, DRC.

06–15.10.04 [OEA]

▪ The Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission, meeting in Durau, Romania, finds that the three elements of death with Christ, resurrection with Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit are included in each other’s rites.

08–10.10.04 [DMD]

▪ A *mutirão* (cooperative process) with the Salvadoran Lutheran Church responds to the church’s call for

support to its process of institutional development.

26-28.10.04 [DTS]

▪ Women representatives from LUCCWA testify to blatant gender inequality and discrimination at a seminar on “Ethical Challenges Affecting African Women” organized by DTS in Abuja, Nigeria.



Participants in the LUCCWA women's meeting in Abuja, Nigeria. © LUCCWA

30.10.04 ▪ The LWF general secretary and the president of the Vatican Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity attend an ecumenical service in Johannesburg, South Africa, marking the fifth anniversary of the JDDJ.

29.11-02.12.04

[OIAHR] ▪ LWF co-sponsors a Dalit Solidarity Network international consultation on caste-based discrimination in Kathmandu, Nepal.

2005

During the year

[OIAHR] ▪ LWF commences a pilot project on “UN Human Rights Treaty Body Monitoring and Reporting” which later evolves into the “Human

STEWARDSHIP, SUSTAINABILITY AND RESOURCE SHARING

Churches are not human property, but God's gift for the sake of mission. Therefore, every church is called to promote good stewardship, sustainability and the sharing of resources.

Out of recognition for the mutuality of LWF member church relationships, the reflection and practice of stewardship, sustainability and the sharing of resources acquires a broader context. This is particularly true in the face of profound political, economic and social divides. For churches that understand themselves as part of a communion, these disparities become a challenge, and the notion of their diverse giftedness, a tremendous opportunity.

Sustainability

The interconnection of different programmatic approaches within the LWF is a positive development but it does not intentionally promote mutual learning globally. Church sustainability is one such common issue, from which each member church can gain from the others' experiences.

The sustainability program initiated by the LWF member churches in Latin America has produced important definitions on financial aspects, governance, communication and resource development. As the LWF continues to support reflection on this shared concern, consistency has been maintained in the intersection of theological reflection and churches' self-understanding on organizational development.

LWF's ongoing missiological and ecclesiological reflection provides a foundation for tackling the question of sustainability. The LWF mission

Continued on page 20

DEPARTMENT FOR THEOLOGY AND STUDIES

DTS carries out studies that result in publications intended to deepen Lutheran theological self-understandings and practices in ways that are inclusive, contextual and ecumenical.

Since the last Assembly, *Thinking It Over*, a popular, widely distributed e-mail pamphlet series reflects theologically on timely, urgent matters as they arise.

Study programs on “Economic Globalization” and “The Authority of the Bible in the Life of the Church” have been concluded, each resulting in books that bring distinctive Lutheran theological perspectives to these timely topics (*Communion, Responsibility, Accountability and Witnessing to God's Faithfulness*).

The study program, “Spiritualism as a Global Challenge to the Church,” reflected on indigenous spiritualities and spiritualistic movements, now compiled in three publications and a concluding resource for ongoing discussion in churches: *Spirits, Ancestors and Healing: A Global Challenge to the Church*. Also



South African theologian Dr Pulenge Lenka-Bula makes a point at a first DTS *Theology in the Life of the Church* study seminar in Arusha, Tanzania in 2006. © LWF/K. Bloomquist

concluded was a series of insightful case studies on Christian-Muslim relations, presented in the publication, *Bridges Instead of Walls. Christian-Muslim Interaction in Denmark, Indonesia and Nigeria*.

Since 2005, DTS' overall work has occurred especially in relation to the “Theology in the Life of the Church” (TLC) study pro-

Priority Area 1: Identity

gram, a broadly participatory process evoking theological reflection and critique on urgent challenges facing Lutheran churches around the world. The topics explored include poverty and injustice, fundamentalism, domination of empire, interfaith realities, Pentecostalism, and churches' struggles to survive in minority settings. Discussions have taken place through a special Web site, and a series of seminars and publications. Six seminars were convened in Tanzania, Sweden, Germany, the USA, Hong Kong (China) and South Africa. The first gathering was in conjunction with DMD "Poverty and the Mission of the Church in Africa" consultation (see *So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth*). Presentations from the other seminars were published in the TLC's first four books.

The March 2009 concluding global consultation in the TLC program, held in Augsburg, Germany, was the largest and

most diverse gathering of theologians in the history of the LWF, with extensive Web coverage. Select articles from this historic event are being published in the final two books in this series. Insights from the five-year program are significant in proposing how theological work needs to be nurtured and pursued in a renewed LWF.

Since 2007, DTS has taken the lead in pursuing theological-ethical aspects of climate change through a grassroots survey, a theological consultation, and a climate change encounter in India. A resource for reflection and discussion has been published under the title, *God, Creation and Climate Change: Some Spiritual and Ethical Perspectives*.

In 2009, a consultation of Islamic and Christian theologians on the theme of "freedom and responsibility" took place, as well as an advocacy-related consultation on "churches holding governments accountable."

Continued from page 19

document and other publications such as *Being the Church in the Midst of Empire: Trinitarian Reflections (2008)* or "*So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth—Poverty and the Mission of the Church in Africa (2007)*" offer theological input that triggers important missiological reflection.

The LWF's role in facilitating project support for a broad range of ministries of the member churches has changed over the years. DMD was able until seven years ago to provide support to a broad range of activities, but it is now more difficult to match the priorities in the member churches with those of specialized organizations for development cooperation. While the priorities of the latter have emerged in dialogue processes organized by these agencies, it is not evident that the member churches have prioritized similar themes.

Resource Sharing

Through DMD the LWF has deepened its programmatic approach to the member churches' organizational development. A recently launched program on Comprehensive Capacity Development brings LWF Human Resources Development closer to other capacity development initiatives. DMD's role in capacity development, highlighted further in this report (*See Priority 3 page 37*), is a key strategy to ensure continued support to relevant member church programs. The emphasis is on long-term processes of organizational development in which the churches themselves assume a leading role.

Globally there is a shift toward non-governmental organizations as partners in development cooperation, with the result that many churches find themselves abandoned by their former partners. It is expected that the newly formed church emergency and development network (Action by Churches Together) ACT Alliance will address this concern in the ecumenical arena, as DMD also challenges its historical partners to continue to work with the churches. At the same time, the LWF must keep specialized organizations aware of the unique gifts of churches and build commitment within the communion to continue to invest in strengthening churches'

Rights Accountability Program".

26-31.01.05

[OIAHR] • A 60-person LWF delegation participates in the 5th WSF in Porto Alegre, Brazil, as part of a global ecumenical coalition.



The ecumenical coalition participating in a march in Porto Alegre on the opening day of the 2005 WSF. © WCC & LWF/Paulino Menezes

16-25.01.05 • An LWF pastoral team visits regions severely affected by the 2004 tsunami to assess needs and evaluate the churches' capacity to respond.



Massive tsunami destruction in Indonesia. © LWF/N. Pradhan

February [OCS] • At a media workshop in Nouakchott, journalists from Africa, Europe and North America discuss the role of media in peace promotion and interfaith issues with Mauritanian colleagues.

10-17.02.05 [DMD] • President Hanson and general secretary Noko lead LWF delegation to LUCCWA countries; in Nigeria, discussion fo-

cuses on HIV and AIDS, and in Sierra Leone and Liberia, on reconciliation, peace-building and reconstruction.

19-21.02.05 ▪

The LWF Executive Committee meets in Geneva.

March [DTS:

Christian-Muslim study] ▪ The DTS study team on “Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Conflict and Peace” holds a case study meeting in northern Nigeria.

14-18.03.05 [DWS]

▪ A DWS Southern Africa regional consultation on “Prophetic diakonia: challenges and opportunities for LWF/DWS” is held in Lusaka, Zambia.

29.03-02.04.05

[OIAHR] ▪ An IFAPA landmine survivors’ exchange visit to Kampala, Uganda, calls for a concerted effort to reduce risks and enhance rehabilitation for victims.

31.03-02.04.05

[DMD] ▪ A DMD consultation in Chicago, USA, for North America reflects on human sexuality.



Group of North American church leaders with Dr Noko at the LWF regional consultation. © LWF

roles. Churches on the other hand, must continue to base their programs on their unique strengths, using local volunteers and resources.

Stewardship

The management of relationships and resources play a crucial role in the identity, mission and activities of the Lutheran communion. Since the last Assembly, the Federation’s income varied slightly over the first five-year period, declining from USD 102 million to USD 91.4 million between 2004 and 2006, and rising again over the next two years to USD 102.9 million by 2008. (See *Office for Finance and Administration unit report on page 61*). Maintaining this level of commitment from churches’ contribution in membership fees and designated funds, funding from related agencies, governments and specialized UN agencies requires regular communication about the organization’s work. It is a mutual relation, paying great attention to the effective use of existing funds and to ensuring the highest quality of work and accountability.

Member churches’ and individual donations and pledges to the LWF Foundation – Endowment Fund have been growing gradually since the fund was set up in 1999 with the primary purpose to supplement financial support for the Federation’s work. The target is CHF 20 million by 2017, and a long-term goal of CHF 50 million. Despite the unfavorable capital markets in the past few years, the fund had total funds amounting to CHF 9.7 million by the end of 2008.

There are other encouraging results such as the DWS resource mobilization program through which country program staff are now more actively exploring funding possibilities. Between 2006 and 2008 funding from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) doubled. However, broadening the funding base remains a priority.

The diverse contextual realities of the Lutheran communion are also reflected in the Federation’s finances. The shrinking membership in the Northern churches, which comprise the major donors to the organization’s work, coupled with very volatile global financial markets, will probably result in less support from the Lutheran constituency in the future. In addition, the increasing competition for fewer financial resources in a global recession also challenges the LWF not only to secure more resources but to use existing ones more effectively. It is therefore crucial to plan the size and work of the Geneva secretariat in a sustainable way.

Like other DMD regional church leadership consultations, a 2008 global consultation on diakonia held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia offered opportunities for sharing and learning from different contexts. © LWF/T. Miller



Nurturing Mutual Relationships

Belonging to a communion of churches is more than merely being members of an organization. The LWF offers its member churches unity in their diversity, and common witness working jointly with partner organizations. There is a shared objective of deepening life together in communion, irrespective of the cultural, religious and economic diversities.

Whether it is through delegation visits to churches after the tsunami in Indonesia, joining in anniversary celebrations in Ethiopia or Sweden, or taking part in installation of bishops or pastors' ordinations in Canada or the United Kingdom, the communion is challenged to share and learn by looking beyond itself, acting together, not only for those within, but also for those outside the churches.

When LWF member churches in Europe gathered for workshops from 2006 to 2009, delegates not only addressed church-state relations in the post-communist era, they also affirmed the value of prayer and support from churches around the world.

At the 2007 sub-regional workshop for churches in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Serbia and the Slovak Republic, participants expressed the "need to analyze

what it meant for our humanity to live under totalitarian conditions. Fear reigned then and we still carry it along with us in all relationships, personal and public." The challenge of healing and reconciliation is a major concern.

In the post-communist era, new legal grounds have been established for religious freedom with churches as equal actors among others in civil society. For churches in the European Union countries, it is a unique moment in history to see a secular state established based on corporate law binding the state to guarantee religious rights and freedom to its inhabitants.

In the final message from the 2009 meeting in Budapest, Hungary, church representatives from all parts of Europe stressed the added benefit of being part of a global communion that is also present locally. "We need to learn from and reach out to immigrants from other parts of Europe and beyond, to hear their voices, perspectives and the yearnings they bring," they said.

Many concerns still remain: "While churches may not always be able to arrive at clear answers, the very process of struggling together with the questions can be a helpful contribution in society," they agreed, affirming the added benefit of belonging together through prayers and mutual relationships.

Meeting in Budapest, Hungary in June 2009 – "Twenty years after the system change – church and state in societies in transformation" – European member churches shared their experiences and views on this theme. © Zsuzsanna Bolla/www.lutheran.hu

