

ASIA LUTHERAN NEWS

a bi-monthly publication of the LWF regional office for asia, singapore

Resist Violence, Urges LWF General Secretary

2011 New Year Message Cautions of Religion's Role in Fuelling Violence

GENEVA, 4 January 2011 (LWI) - The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev Martin Junge has urged in his 2011 New Year Message that Christians adopt language and actions that foster nonviolence and peace-building.

"I pray that this New Year will find us deeply engaged locally, regionally and globally in all possible efforts to overcome violence, hatred and persecution, and to resist manipulation of religion as a fuel to violence motivated by other interests."

Reflecting on Saint Paul's Letter

to the Romans (12: 21), which says "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good," Rev Junge stated that the Apostle's letter makes it clear that this good can flow from the understanding that justification comes from God's grace alone. He pointed out that recent events in the world "remind us again how urgently needed is this resistance to violence" especially when violence is carried out under the pretext of religion.

"Justification frees human beings from the obsession of fearful self-justification, or of violent self-imposition over and against others. The freedom resulting from justification is a responsible, accountable freedom," the general secretary noted.

Rev Junge called for sensitivity to expressions of violence that are often not captured by the media, but continue to deeply hurt human beings. Referring to violence against women, he recalled the LWF's Eleventh Assembly commitment to overcome this evil by intensifying work on this



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Rev Martin Junge, LWF General Secretary

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issue within the Lutheran communion itself and in society.

He pointed out that at the July 2010 Assembly Lutherans “were able to grasp this liberating power of justification by grace” when they asked God and their Mennonite sisters and brothers for forgiveness for the violence they suffered at the

hands of Lutherans.

“This action strengthened our conviction that religion and violence, faith and oppression do not belong together, but are a contradiction in itself,” Rev Junge said.

The general secretary added that it was encouraging to see the LWF member churches worldwide working

against corruption, injustice and violence, adding that their witness was strengthened when carried out ecumenically and with other faiths.

“As we move into this New Year that God is laying before us, I invite you all to continue focusing on the good as a way of expressing who we are: a communion that lives faith from the perspective of justification and that enjoys the wonderful freedom to accept and serve the neighbour,” Rev Junge concluded.

The full text of the 2011 New Year Message is available on the LWF Web site at:

<http://www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/index.php/2011-lwf-new-year-message.html>

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LWF/DMD New Area Secretary for Asia

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Executive Committee has appointed Rev Dr William S C CHANG, a pastor of the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS), to the position of Area Secretary for Asia in the LWF-DMD for a period of four years.

Dr William Chang, 51, graduated with a Bachelor of Theology from the Singapore Bible College (SBC) in 1986 and in 1995 with a Master of Theology with the Luther Seminary (now Australian Lutheran College), Adelaide, Australia. He obtained his Doctor of Theology in 2005 from the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST). He has served as pastor and in other capacities during his 25 years of ministry with the Lutheran Church in ‘Malaysia’ and Singapore (LCMS & LCS).

Dr Chang is the pioneer and Executive Director of the LCS / Mekong Mission Forum (MMF) initiated ministry in Cambodia – the Lutheran World Mission (LWM). He has also served as church secretary, executive council member in LCMS and LCS, member of the National Council of Churches Singapore (NCCS), LCS’ representative to the Singapore National Committee of Inter-Faith Relation. Dr Chang was board director of an ecumenical hospital and elder care centre in Singapore for several years. He also did adjunct teaching on Lutheranism, Biblical studies (NT) and Systematic Theology in Singapore Bible College (SBC) and Trinity Theological College (TTC).

The new Asia Secretary will take office in Geneva as soon as his work permit is approved by the Swiss authorities. He will be participating in the upcoming meeting of the Lutheran Council in Asia (LUCAS) and the Asia Church Leadership Conference (ACLC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from March 8-9 and 10-13, 2011.



Dr William Chang of the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS)

Interview with LWF outgoing General Secretary, Rev Dr Ishmael Noko

GENEVA, 3 November 2010 (LWI) - In an interview with Lutheran World Information (LWI), Rev Dr Ishmael Noko, who served as general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) from November 1, 1994 to October 31, 2010, outlined significant decisions that have strengthened the self-understanding of the LWF as a communion of churches.

At your installation as LWF General Secretary on 3 Feb 1995, you underlined focus on the plight of children globally and tolerance between the world's faith. How far has the LWF addressed these issues?

Yes, back then there was a great concern globally with regard to children. The international community's attention was directed to other priorities while issues such as child labour and child soldiers were falling through the cracks. Abuse of children and violation of their human rights by adults in most societies was a dark chapter with respect to human decency. On my part it was a call to the Church to address such abuse as a matter of urgency and responsibility.

With regard to interfaith dialogues and co-existence, Christian communities had reached very high levels of recognizing the need for sharing space with people of other religious traditions. It was also self evident that issues concerning children were not only a mandate for Christian communities but for all people and all organized international bodies. The Inter-Faith Action



Rev Dr Ishmael Noko planted an apple tree on the Ecumenical centre's grounds as a sign of hope and symbol of the embodiment of the ecumenical movement.

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for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), which was launched five years after my installation, has become a platform where Christians and other religious communities could jointly address the question of children and children's rights, especially in Africa.

From 'Federation' to 'Communion' – can you elaborate emphasis on the 'communion' self-understanding?

Lutherans have for a long time, struggled with self-understanding namely: who are we within the Church of Jesus Christ. There has been conscious evolution of self understanding accompanied by joint action in the areas of mission, diakonia and theological engagement. Along the way LWF member churches became

more aware of their confessional unity—with implications for altar and pulpit fellowship—that they gradually understood themselves as much more than a federation but a communion of Lutheran churches sharing a common faith and mission. They took common decisions in regular consultations, through pastoral visits and counselling one another.

I'll cite some examples: At the height of the apartheid era, Lutheran churches were faced with an ideology which challenged the integrity of the proclamation of the gospel and the first article of the faith. The ideology of apartheid falsely maintained that human beings were created unequal by God.

There is a growing understanding

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and affirmation in the churches that ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ, and men and women are equally called to this ministry.

Lutherans agreed in the late 1990s to establish an Endowment Fund for the purpose of strengthening their joint work and ecumenical priorities.

In 2007 LWF member churches gathered in Lund, Sweden, adopted a historic statement affirming common understanding on the Episcopal ministry.

(www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/EN/LWF_The_Lund_Statement_2007.pdf)

To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical, you've often emphasized, is this self evident?

I will refer to two ecumenical agreements—the October 1999 signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) with Roman Catholics and the July 2010 LWF Eleventh Assembly “Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution of ‘Anabaptists.’”

These two ecumenical events are cornerstones and landmarks in the ecumenical landscape. Both of them have a defining character. After nearly 500 years of a difficult history of relationships between Lutherans and Roman Catholics, we have, by God’s grace managed to affirm common meaning on the message of the doctrine of justification. Furthermore, in 2006 the Methodist church family appropriated the Joint Declaration, undergirding the fundamental truths that justification is not the property of Lutherans and Roman Catholics only but of the Church universal.

With regard to the relationship with Anabaptists for which the Lutheran communion asked for forgiveness from God and from the Mennonites for Anabaptists’ persecution in the 16th century, it is a water-shed in the area of ecumenical relations. The significance of this action is better understood when one recognizes that we live in a world where seeking forgiveness for one’s actions is per-

ceived as a sign of weakness, instead the trend is to ask for more “clarification.” For me, this Assembly decision remains a very significant, spiritual and ecumenical gesture.

That both the JDDJ and the Eleventh Assembly action were celebrated in the context of ecumenical Church presence signifies that the ecumenical movement is alive and has a future.

A few months after you took office, you proposed a process of consultation between the world’s Lutheran churches on issues related to human sexuality. What prompted your suggestion then?

In my report to the 1995 Council meeting in Windhoek, Namibia, I reminded the LWF that there was need to address growing concern in the member churches about their pastoral and social role regarding matters of human sexuality. It was self-evident for me then that in one way or another, the issue would be a concern for the church globally. But it was not confined to sexuality alone—it was about the whole definition and understanding of family and marriage. In previous years, churches in Africa had approached the LWF seeking guidelines, on how to deal with the issue of polygamy when it came to individual membership and participation in a congregation. Thus, I was very happy when the 2007 Council meeting adopted the “Proposed Guidelines and Processes for Respectful Dialogue on Marriage, Family and Human Sexuality,” to facilitate discussion on this

subject.

Today, the debate on human sexuality is real. While in classical Lutheran understanding ethical issues should not be the basis for church division, this particular issue has precipitated a very difficult context.

When you called for a renewal of the LWF in 2005, what were some of the issues that you hoped a renewed LWF would approach differently?

The general renewal of the LWF was intended to address every aspect of the organization with respect to structures, relationships to ecumenical partners and the reconfiguration of the communion office in Geneva. According to the present amended by-laws, member churches in the regions are invited to spell out as clearly as possible the structures of diakonia that better serve the mission of the church in that particular region. It is important to emphasize that diakonia in context requires recognition that structures are to serve the needs of the church. The “To Whom It May Concern” approach which prescribes a ‘one-size fits-all’ sort of strategy cannot be applicable in today’s contexts. It must be challenged.

You were the first African General Secretary of the LWF, how was this identity reflected in your approach to issues?

I asked myself this very question when I was elected to this position – what would be my specific contribution to the LWF? First and foremost

One of the things I look forward to doing is becoming a Sunday school teacher. As a pastor and lecturer, I have served in many roles including confirmation classes for example, but I never got a chance to teach Sunday School for which I have a great passion

I was a leader of the global LWF but drawn from an African identity. I hoped at the time that I would underline Africa's self understanding and definition of community from the perspective of ubuntu - "you are because I am." It is a universal approach, also undergirded by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's notion of a church for others—that the role of an individual in a community such as the LWF must be defined by relationships to and with others. I brought this approach to practical processes such as situations of conflict in churches; LWF's diaconal work; and in ecumenical dialogues and conversations in which the LWF is involved. Even in matters of detail when negotiating with governments

on matters such as tax exemption, I projected the entirety of the Lutheran communion.

What are your retirement plans?

I leave Geneva to go into "active retirement." Certainly, I will miss those with whom I worked and have come to know as friends and colleagues. But I am also happy that I have completed my mandate at a time when I feel is the right moment to conclude my work. Whatever is not complete will be completed by those who will follow now and in the future. God's work can never be finished by us but by God's-self. On this note I want to thank member the LWF member churches, national committees,

related agencies and individuals with whom I have been in contact during these 28 years and 6 months—16 years of which I served in the capacity of General Secretary.

One of the things I look forward to doing is becoming a Sunday school teacher. As a pastor and lecturer, I have served in many roles including confirmation classes for example, but I never got a chance to teach Sunday School for which I have a great passion. I look forward to sitting down with children and sketching out images that can help them learn about others, including other religions and cultures. A church that looks into the future must invest in raising awareness in its children today.

Pope Benedict XVI Invited to Help Plan 500th Anniversary Commemoration Installation of New LWF General Secretary

VATICAN City, Vatican/GENEVA, 16 December 2010 (LWI) - The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) President Bishop Dr Munib A Younan has invited Pope Benedict XVI to work together with the Lutheran communion in realizing an ecumenically accountable commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

"For us there is joy in the liberating power of the gospel proclaimed afresh by the reformers, and we will celebrate that," said Bishop Younan in a message today, when he led a seven-member delegation in a private audience with the Pope. He underlined the need to recognize both the damaging aspects of the Reformation and ecumenical progress.

"But we cannot achieve this ecumenical accountability on our own, without your help. Thus we invite you to work together with us in preparing this anniversary, so that in 2017 we are closer to sharing in the Bread of Life than we are today."



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LWF President and General Secretary present Pope Benedict XVI with a gift from Bethlehem depicting the Last Supper

Greeting the LWF delegation, Pope Benedict expressed gratitude for "the many significant fruits produced" by decades of bilateral discussions between Lutherans and Roman Catholics, saying it had been possible "slowly and patiently to remove barriers and to foster visible bonds of unity

by means of theological dialogue and practical cooperation, especially at the level of local communities." In the years leading up to the next Reformation anniversary, "Catholics and Lutherans are called to reflect anew on where our journey towards unity has led us and to implore the Lord's

guidance and help for the future,” he said.

The Pope pointed out that the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), whose tenth anniversary was marked in 2009, “has proved a significant step along the difficult path towards re-establishing full unity among Christians and a stimulus to further ecumenical discussion.”

He reiterated his expectation that the close contacts and intensive dialogue which have characterized ecumenical relations between Catholics and Lutherans would continue to bear rich fruit.

Representing every LWF region, the delegation included also the General Secretary Rev Martin Junge and regional vice presidents from Africa, Presiding Bishop Alex G Malasusa (Tanzania); from Central Eastern Europe, Bishop Tamás Fabiny (Hungary); and from the Nordic region, Presiding Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien (Norway); and staff. Also present was Kurt Cardinal Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), and other Vatican staff.

In his statement, Bishop Younan reiterated the LWF’s commitment to “moving closer toward one another around this Table of the Lord, which Luther saw as the *summa evangelii*.” The LWF president pointed out that while it was important to “rejoice in each small step which brings us closer together, we do not want to be content with these steps. We remain strong in hope – both for the full visible unity of Christ’s Church and for

the Eucharistic communion which is so crucial a manifestation of that unity.”

Bishop Younan presented to the Pope a gift from Bethlehem, a carving depicting the Last Supper. Referring to this image, he said, “Each of us can bear witness to the importance of this sacramental meal in nurturing our own Christian lives. Each of us also knows the yearning for the time when we will be able to celebrate this feast together,” said the LWF president.

Bishop Younan noted that the LWF had taken a significant step toward Christian reconciliation at its July 2010 Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, by asking forgiveness from Mennonites for the persecution of Anabaptists in the 16th century. In preparing for this act, he said, the LWF was mindful that this legacy was shared by other traditions, including Roman Catholics, who with other ecumenical guests stood in solemn solidarity when the action was pronounced at the Assembly.

“We believe that we took this action on behalf of the whole body of Christ. We pray that this spirit of repentance, reconciliation and renewal will continue to grow among us.”

Bishop Younan, who is head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, noted that Catholics and Lutherans share a vision for just peace in the Middle East and support a two-state solution with a shared Jerusalem. He thanked the Pope for his moral leadership in exposing the injustices and idolatries of the global financial crisis – also a concern shared by the LWF, notably

in its advocacy against illegitimate debt. On both issues, he urged closer collaboration.

“Our witness will be stronger if we will work together on these problems. Thus we look forward to forging multiple co-operations with our Catholic sisters and brothers at all levels, locally as well as globally,” Bishop Younan said.

The LWF president noted that he and the General Secretary represent the new leadership of the global Lutheran communion. Bishop Younan was elected President at Stuttgart in July, while Rev Junge began his term of office in November.

The audience with the Pope honours the extraordinary journey by the two churches in recent years, and is a sign of hope for their future relations, Bishop Younan said.

Lutherans continue to rejoice, he added, because of the ways the two churches have reached new degrees of theological understanding and agreement, noting in particular the landmark Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

“Within our own lifetimes, the climate of relations between Lutherans and Catholics has warmed dramatically – and this climate change has been for the good! Around the world our churches live in a new ecology of relationship.” Bishop Younan concluded.

The message from Bishop Younan to Pope Benedict XVI is available at: <http://www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Message-from-LWF-President-Bishop-Younan-to-Pope-Benedict-XVI.pdf>

LWF Annual Report 2009

Read about the LWF global work and ministries over the past year in its 2009 annual report:

http://www.lutheranworld.org/lwf/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/LWF-Annual_Report-2009-low.pdf

The colour brochure highlights work by the Geneva secretariat, World Service programs in Angola, Colombia, Liberia, Indonesia and Myanmar, and member churches initiatives.

The report includes focuses on emergency and risk management, capacity development and the LWF Renewal Process. It features an Eleventh Assembly preview and introduction to the proposed Assembly reconciliation action with the Mennonites.

Other contents: Introduction by the LWF General Secretary on a communion in transition; LWF financial overview for 2009. (LWI)

LWF President Calls on Worldwide Communion to be Prophetic

Installation of New LWF General Secretary

GENEVA, 26 November 2010 (LWI) - The worldwide family of Lutherans must work together to serve and heal the broken world, Bishop Dr Munib A Younan, president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) said in a 25 November address in Geneva.

“We are called to work to eradicate poverty, to be prophetic against injustice, to be bridge builders between South and North and East and West, to strengthen our sisters and brothers who suffer or find discrimination because of their faith, and to be responsible for the integrity of creation,” Bishop Younan said.

The head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) was speaking at the installation of LWF’s new general secretary Rev Martin Junge during a Eucharistic service at the Ecumenical Centre chapel.

Elected in October 2009, Rev Junge previously served as LWF area secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Department for Mission and Development (DMD). A former president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile, he assumed his new position on 1 November.

Bishop Younan said the election of Rev Junge, the first Latin American LWF general secretary, marked a significant moment in the life of the worldwide communion.

“When the LWF elects a general secretary and a president from two of the smallest churches in the LWF, that means that in the communion there is no East or West; there is no affluent or less affluent. It means that our communion is healthy because it is ready to elect people to serve the Lord and the people of the church on the basis of their gifts that Christ bestowed on them,” remarked the LWF president, referring to his acceptance speech at the July 2010 Eleventh Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany.

Reflecting on the gospel text from Luke chosen for the occasion, Bishop Younan also spoke of accompaniment, highlighting the essentiality “that this theology of accompaniment pertains not only to those who have the same mind and share the same confession, but also to those who may be different in theology or culture, so that we may come to the realization that we are called to serve together a broken and wounded world.”

“This theology of accompaniment asks us to walk alongside one another with humility, carrying the cross and denying ourselves, bearing one another’s burdens and celebrating together the Eucharist, while finding Christ in the other, whose diversity we joyfully accept for the sake of the advancement of Christ’s kingdom in the world,” Bishop Younan concluded.

At the installation, the President presented the new LWF general secretary with a cross made out of spent bullet casings from Liberia’s civil war. He said the cross was “a sign that we are called to make peace and that healing is possible in our broken, globalized world.”



LWF President, Bishop Munib Younan Calls on worldwide communion to be Prophetic

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Rev Junge installed as General Secretary of the LWF on November 26 at the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva

CONNECTING ASIA

Queensland congregations will support flood victims for the long haul

Across flood-devastated Queensland, Lutheran congregations and schools have rallied to help fellow members, as well as desperate people in their communities, to recover from the immediate impact of the disaster. They are committed also to caring for victims for the long haul.

In late December and January, the worst floods in Australia's history caused record-breaking destruction across Queensland. At their peak they covered 75% of the state, an area the size of Germany and France combined. Apart from causing widespread damage to homes, properties and infrastructure in the state's food-producing belts, the flooding also caused great devastation in some of Queensland's largest cities, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Ipswich. The state's capital and Australia's third-largest city, Brisbane, suffered its worst flooding since the infamous 1974 flood. Across Queensland the cost of

repairing infrastructure and restoring homes and livelihoods is estimated at over US\$30billion.

The Queensland floods have caused loss and heartbreak for hundreds of Lutherans. The worst-affected area was the Lockyer Valley, between Toowoomba and Brisbane, a major producer of Australia's food, primarily vegetables. It is a Lutheran heartland and home of around ten congregations, two schools and an aged-care facility. Thankfully, no church property was damaged.

Lutherans reach out to help

But, while some Lutherans are suffering, many have been quick to rally to the side of anyone needing assistance. Rev Noel Noack, president of the LCA Queensland District, has described as 'miraculous' the outpouring of compassion by church members to victims of the flood disaster. While the losses to members have been great, the compassionate response has been similarly great, he said. 'The Lord has worked with great effect in the hearts of his people. The outpouring of generous and sacrificial action has moved my heart.'

The Queensland president, who was visiting flood-affected congregations as soon as they were accessible, said he was 'overwhelmed' by offers of help of every kind. 'This is the time to be reaching out to neighbours and strangers, demonstrating the love of the Lord.'

The Good News church and school complex at Middle Park, which is ringed by some of the worst-hit Brisbane suburbs, is acting as an

©Noel Noack



LCA Queensland's Church Office

official evacuation centre, providing food, accommodation and counselling for the homeless.

Members of the Good News community have been working feverishly to care for victims. Fifteen families from their own community were badly affected, but the members are caring also for people from the general community.

St Peter's Lutheran College at Indooroopilly is operating as an emergency shelter. The college, set on high ground but close to the Brisbane River and flood-affected suburbs, has Brisbane City Council permission to accommodate up to 40 people in its boarding houses.

Students will be expected to roll up their sleeves, too. Some of the start-of-year camps will be replaced with community service projects. 'Students will be helping to clean up Brisbane', Pastor Bowmer said.

In Toowoomba, a member at Christ Church, Highfields, had been providing food for people at Murphy's Creek for a week before she asked for help. The community there had been decimated by the 'inland tsunami' that crushed Grantham and Withcott also.



A lifetime of memories dumped on the street: Members of Brisbane city's St Andrew's congregation rally to clean up the home of a couple in their 80s

©Julie Nuske



A Lutheran farmer's property in Theodore, central Queensland, totally inundated. The population of Theodore, around 300 people, was airlifted to safety during the height of the flood

The real challenges are still ahead, Pastor Fandrich warns. 'The medium- and long-term recovery will be long, more "boring", unseen and hard to sustain. Who knows what impact these floods will have on the economy, jobs, farmers and miners?'

Lutheran world expresses solidarity

Expressions of solidarity and assurance of prayer have been streaming in from across the Lutheran world, in particular from the LCA's

partner churches.

'In times of disaster it is humbling to experience the love and care of God through his people', said LCA Secretary/Mission Director Rev Neville Otto. 'Such has been the case as Lutherans from around the world pray for and financially support Australia's flood victims.'

The general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Rev Martin Junge, expressed the LWF's 'deep condolences' and solidarity with those who are suffering. 'We offer prayers of support for [those] who are providing care and responding to the cries of their neighbours', Rev Junge said. 'May our faithful God in Jesus Christ accompany you during these difficult days.'

Many of the LCA's partner churches in Southeast Asia, including those in Malaysia, Sabah, Indonesia

and Singapore, have sent messages of condolence and support.

Pastor Otto said, 'Gospel partnering is God's two-way street. We in the LCA are blessed to be in partnership with neighbours like this, who care for us deeply, even in the midst of their own ongoing hardships'

**Linda Macqueen
The Lutheran, LCA**



Trevor Ruthenberg, executive officer of the LCA, joins the recovery effort at a Brisbane home. Water came up almost to the roof of the two-storey home, the 80-year-old owners of which lost almost all their possessions.

Unity in Diversity – Medical and Spiritual First Aid in Cambodia

South Australian school students formed part of a unique team assisting Cambodian villagers with medical – and spiritual – first aid to share the love of Jesus Christ with the people of Kampong Chhnang province, Cambodia, a unique team of 90 people from different parts of Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong came together – for 13 days – in July this year. Among this group were 10 Year-Eleven students and three staff members from Unity College Murray Bridge, South Australia, as well as Western Australian District president Rev Greg Pfeiffer and wife, Janet.

This team's practical work and ministry built on the past medical, dental, optical and ministry teams which had been coordinated in Kampong Chhnang during the past four and a half years by the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS), through the Lutheran World Mission (LWM) Cambodia, under the leadership of Dr William Chang.

The capital of this province is Kampong Chhnang, situated about two hours' drive from Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital. In this province, LWF Cambodia is touching the lives of underprivileged people with the word and acts of love and service.

The genesis of Unity College's visit came when its chaplain Rev Greg Priebenow began discussions with the LCA Board for Mission about how his school could develop a partnership in mission as well as provide students the opportunity to join ongoing Christian service teams within the LCA's overseas mission partnerships.

Following training carried out by Unity staff, the team arrived in Singapore for more training in the practical skills of how to take people's blood pressure and temperatures, test urine samples and share God's love in Jesus (through actions, sto-



South Australian school students reaching out to children in the village of Phum Kruos

rytelling and singing). Along with this, team members were challenged to consider their reasons and goals for such a visit and to reflect on God's purposes for life. These few days spent in Singapore allowed new relationships to form as those comprising this unique and diverse team came together to spend time with team members from LCS.

Further orientation and training continued after the team arrived in Phnom Penh, with a visit to the Genocide Museum (offering a start and graphic reminder of the country's recent tragic history) as well as the offices of the Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service (LWF) Cambodia (now known as Life with Dignity – LWD). The team heard about the significant work done by LWF Cambodia, in conjunction with Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS), through its community-based strategic approach which has helped to "facilitate the empowerment of vulnerable people to claim their universal rights".

Over time, Dr Chang has been meeting with Dr Inn (LWF Cambodia's new director) to develop ways for LWM to support and work collaboratively with LWD Cambodia. As a result of this growing relationship, LWM began working with LWD Cambodia to conduct medical and ministry clinics in villages where LWD has established programmes. This partnership has been built upon excellent aid and development work previously undertaken, adding to it through the support of medical teams (including dental and optical) and the sharing of the Gospel in word and action.

The July team's visit was the first example of this new way of working together in LWD villages, expanding upon the programmes of the LWF (now LWD) which have helped people to see the "who" and "why" of this particular ministry. Along with the practical acts of God's love through aid and development, the groundwork done by LWF/ALWS over many years in Cambodia has paved the way for people to "hear" about the God of love.

Medical clinics operated in various locations including the Lutheran Life Centre (the new Centre for LWM) in the village of Phum Kruos, as well as the Wat Thmei and Te Ney villages. On two days, myopic clinics were conducted with the medical clinics at Te Ney village. While the medical clinics operated, children, parents and villagers also heard the Gospel in a variety of stories, songs and activities prepared and presented by the children's ministry teams. Through this, "seeds" of the Gospel were planted in their lives!

Along with several doctors and a pharmacist from Singapore, team members carried out a wide range of tasks. More than 1000 people received medical assessment, treatment, medicines, or eye assessments. Two hundred people received new glasses, and more than 20 people were referred for eye operations and other surgery.

Before the start of each of these clinics, the local people heard the simple Gospel message which was shared by one of the team members and translated by the Cambodian pastors.

In addition to these tasks, the team participated in the repair of the road into Phum Kruos. Nine people – children, youth and adults – were baptised into God's family in an inspiring worship service at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. Dr William Chang and Pastor Greg officiated in this revelatory worship service.

God has opened the doors in Cambodia for people to see and hear his love in action. As the Lutheran Church of Australia, through the Board for Mission, joins with the Lutheran Church in Singapore and other partners in Lutheran World Mission in Cambodia, so too the Australian Lutheran World Service and Lutheran Education Australia will join with the Board of Mission to find ways of using our unique experiences and gifts to support the physical and spiritual lives of the Cambodian people.

Glenice Hartwich

Project Officer, Board for Mission, Lutheran Church of Australia



South Australian school students reaching out to children in the village of Phum Kruos

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Sad Demise of Rt Rev L G Rao, Bishop Emeritus



In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is to convey to all that the dedicated servant of God, Rt Rev Lawrence G Rao, Bishop Emeritus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhra Pradesh (ELCMP) breathed his last on 20th January, 2011. After completing his clergyman services, he has now been called home by God Almighty.

His burial ceremony took place at 04:00 pm on 20th January, 2011 at Christian Grave Yard at Chhindwara in which Jehovah Nissi will bless him with eternal sleep until the Lord's second coming. Please pray for members of the bereaved family members of the entire ELCMP.

Rt Rev E Panchoo, ELCMP

The late Rt Rev Lawrence G Rao

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Indian Lutheran Church Ordains First Women Pastors

A Step Toward Inclusion, Reconciliation and Equal Opportunity

TITUPATI, India/GENEVA, 20 January 2011 (LWI) - The South Andhra Lutheran Church (SALC) in India ordained its first women pastors on 12 January, marking a new era for ordained ministry in the church whose history dates back to 1865.

"Finally the dream has come true," said SALC Bishop Chandra Sekhar at the ordination service of the four women and two male pastors at St Peter's Lutheran Church in Tirupathi. He noted that historical, cultural and traditional roots of SALC had prevented theologically trained women from "even dreaming of ordination."

A "celebration of liberation, inclusion, reconciliation and equal opportunity," was how Rev Nelavala Gnana Prasuna described her ordination. It was a precious covenant "between me and God's community to work for God in partnership with ordained men." She expressed the conviction that the church would grow as a result of



Nelavala G Prasuna ordained by Bishop Chandra Sekhar, one of SALC's first women pastors

in the church. "With the recognition of women as equal partners in God's vineyard the church has affirmed that it is a family church," said Jeyakumar, a member of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Council. He expressed his desire to see the three Lutheran churches in India that do not ordain

church and for other women in their leadership both in congregational life and society."

The DMD director noted that SALC's decision "to integrate women into the ordained ministry significantly affirms the commitment of the LWF and its member churches to be a sign of an inclusive communion in the world." It embraces the full participation of women in leadership, "enabling women to bring forth their gifts for the missional church and its public witness," he added.

"Women are put to shame all over the world," pointed out Rev Helmut Grimsman representing the Evangelical Lutheran Mission (HELM), Germany. He noted that oppressive structures still existed, leading to women's subordination both in church and society. He urged the newly ordained women to become more active in the church and enrich its spiritual life.

SALC grew out of HELM's missionary work, becoming independent in 1949. The 45,500-member church joined the LWF in 1952.

Women's ordination is one of the key issues for the LWF Women in Church and Society (WICAS) desk. Around 80 percent of the 145 LWF member churches ordain women.

Rev Timothy Melvyn
UELCI Communications Secretary

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women's ordination, and reminded women in ministry of their responsibility "not to divide but to unite, not to exclude but to include, and not to rule but to nurture."

Newly ordained pastor Rev Kasi-mala Sireesha will minister in a parish and head the women and youth empowerment project, while Rev Smitha Das becomes director of the Sunday school ministry. The new SALC pastors included two men, Rev T Sundaram and Rev K Suwarna Raju.

Rev Dr Augustine Jeyakumar, executive secretary of the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (UELCI), said he hoped the ordination would lead to broader reconciliation

women move ahead in their discussions on the issue. The UELCI brings together 12 churches, ten of which belong to the LWF.

Preaching during the occasion, Rev Chandran Paul Martin, LWF deputy general secretary, reminded the new pastors that they had been called into a ministry with many challenges. He reassured them of God's presence and power to change and reform the church.

Martin brought greetings from Rev Dr Musa P Filibus, director of the LWF Department for Mission and Development (DMD), who expressed hope that the historic step by SALC would be a source of "inspiration for the whole

New Church Office Bearers - Arcot Lutheran Church

The Arcot Lutheran Church has elected their new church board on November 6, 2010 at the Resurrection Church, Cuddalore, India. The elected office bearers for the period of 2010 to 2013 are.

| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Bishop | Rt Rev R Davadass Vijiyakumar |
| Secretary | Mr B Jeasudian |
| Treasurer | Rev Dr VVJ Gurunathan |
| Central Manager | Rev V Samuel Kennedy |
| Property Officer | Rev P Nelladoss |

| LWF CONSULTATIONS IN 2011 | | | |
|--|------|----------------------------|---|
| Date | Unit | Place | Title |
| JANUARY | | | |
| 25-26 | OGS | Geneva, Switzerland | Meeting, Advisory Committee to the LWF Transition Process |
| 27-28 | OGS | Geneva, Switzerland | Round Table, LWF Related Agencies and Mission Organizations |
| FEBRUARY | | | |
| 4-8 | OEA | Wittenberg, Germany | Symposium of Biblical Scholars |
| MARCH | | | |
| 8-15 | DMD | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia | Lutheran Council in Asia (LUCAS) Meeting & Asia Church Leadership Consultation (ACLC) |
| APRIL | | | |
| 3-8 | DMD | Johannesburg, South Africa | Africa Church Leadership Consultation |
| 20-24 | DTS | Bad Ball, Germany | Consultation on Church and Diapaxis |
| MAY | | | |
| 2-7 | DWS | Bogota, Colombia | Latin American and Caribbean Regional Consultation |
| 3-4 | IERS | Strasbourg, France | Board Meeting, Strasbourg Institute |
| 5-8 | | | |
| | *MMF | Ho Chi Ming City, Vietnam | Annual Meeting of the Mekong Mission Forum (MMF) |
| 23-27 | DMD | Montreux, Switzerland | LWF Project Committee Meeting |
| <i>* Joint mission venture between LWF member churches & mission agencies in the Mekong region</i> | | | |
| JUNE | | | |
| 5-12 | DWS | Central America | Communication Capacity Building Workshop |
| 8 | OGS | Geneva, Switzerland | Executive Committee Meeting |
| 9 – 10 | OGS | Geneva, Switzerland | Endowment Fund Board meeting |
| 9-14 | OGS | Geneva, Switzerland | LWF Council Meeting |
| UNDETERMINED | | | |
| | DWS | Port-au-Prince, Haiti | Roundtable on Haiti |
| <p>DMD: Department for Mission & Development; DTS: Department for Theology & Studies; DWS: Department for World Service; IERS: Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg (France); OCS: Office for Communication Services; OEA: Office for Ecumenical Affairs; OFA: Office for Finance and Administration; OGS: Office of the General Secretary; OIAHR: Office for International Affairs & Human Rights</p> <p>Note: Please refer to updates on the calendar at www.lutheranworld.org</p> | | | |

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