

# ASIA LUTHERAN NEWS

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## Changes!

Dear Member Churches and readers

Are you aware that several changes had taken place since the start of year 2006? First the LWF Regional Office for Asia (ROAS) has moved from Thailand to Singapore. It is now situated at the headquarters of the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS). Read more about it from 'Information Sharing' on page 4.

### Asia Lutheran News (ALN)

As promised, the ALN had come up with a new look with several new features for the Asia Lutheran News from the first issue of the year. We hope the changes will create more space and widen the scope for the sharing of news and viewpoints from member churches and readers from Asia and beyond.

### New Upgraded Website - [www.asia-lutheran.org](http://www.asia-lutheran.org)

We are also pleased to announce that the newly upgraded Asia Lutheran website had been launched since mid-February. Many of you had received the announcement electronically and logged in to update yourself with the latest news and information from Asia and the region.

The new website has many new features and is fully interactive, database driven and community based with decentralized updating. All registered members of the website can now directly post news and comments, participate in discussion forum, submitting of news etc. It is no longer just a site that provide information but warmly invites all registered members to respond and contribute directly in and through the website. Different committees and groups are also able to discuss and share files, photos and information among themselves!

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At the junction between Lutheran & Duke's road is the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, also LCS headquarters where ROAS is situated

## Website FEATURES

### On left column of web page

- Discussion Forum - members can participate in existing discussion topics or initial other relevant new topics for discussion
- Web Links - web links of member churches, seminaries, Lutheran resources, communication networks, ecumenical links are posted here for your easy access and information
- News Archives - a link to news and information you had missed
- Downloads/File Sharing - past issues of ALN and files/documents/power-point from Asia programs posted here for quick download and use in your church and communities
- Photos - Share photographs of events with the communion through this link. Just follow the easy steps posted on 'Discussion Forum' under Website-Help Forum

### On right column of web page

- The latest issue of the ALN - place the cursor on the newsletter and download with a double clicks
- Direct link to the LWF website by clicking on the blue panel of The Lutheran World Federation
- Advertising Banner (seen here as Glad Sounds Christian Bookstores) - member churches/related institutions may write to request this space to advertise your products/resources. Banner will rotate randomly.
- Last Forum Posts/Forum Statistics - Check out the latest post on 'Discussion Forum' and find out who have been taking part in the discussion topics.

## PLEASE Register!

We would like to recommend strongly ALL readers to register into the web-site to gain access to the full features and privileges of participating in the communion. The registration procedure has been made easy by just typing in your name and password and you are on!

The official web master of the new Asia Lutheran Website is the Rev Timo Reuhkala. To help us develop a web-site that tailors better to your needs, we encourage you to mail all feedback and comments to the webmaster at [timo@reuhkala.com](mailto:timo@reuhkala.com)

The site is now fully functional and we invite the Lutheran communion and all interested readers to enhance the Asian communion by maximizing the use of it for the sharing and exchanging of information.

Sally

# LWF LATEST MEMBERSHIP

Continent	All Lutherans	LWF Membership	Other Churches
Africa	15,038,072	14,981,175	56,897
Asia	7,416,992	7,280,313	136,679
Europe	38,035,928	37,995,074	40,854
Latin America & the Caribbean	1,111,947	835,460	276,487
North America	8,154,631	5,122,026	3,032,605
<b>Total</b>	<b>69,757,570</b>	<b>66,214,048</b>	<b>3,543,522</b>

A compilation of statistical data in 2005 from the 140 LWF member churches, ten congregations and one recognized council in 78 countries, puts total LWF membership at 66,214,048, up by 0.43 percent. The number of Lutherans worldwide rose by 229,753 to 69.76 million (69,757,570) compared to 69.53 million in 2004.

### Asia: Small Increase Overall, Significant Growth in Taiwan

The number of Lutherans in Asia increased by 25,890 during the one-year period under review.

Taiwan Lutheran Church recorded a 46.5 percent increase, the highest percentage increase in the region, with a new total of 12,029 compared to 8,220 in 2004. The Bangladesh

Lutheran Church gained 1,000 new members pushing the total membership to 4,000. An increase of 12.8 percent, pushed membership in the Pakpak Dairi Christian Protestant Church (Indonesia) to 34,384 members. The Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore had 7,644 members, up by 10.8 percent.

In India, membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

Chotanagpur and Assam rose by 5.2 percent to 400,000, whereas the Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church, with 80,000 members registered a decrease of 5.9 percent.

### Over 15 Million Lutherans in Africa

In Africa, 904,500 new members pushed the total membership in Lutheran churches there to 15,038,072, up by 6.4 percent compared to 2004. The LWF member churches on the continent

percent, when the Protestant Church in the Netherlands joined the LWF.

### Minimal Changes in Latin America, More Lutherans in Argentina, Nicaragua

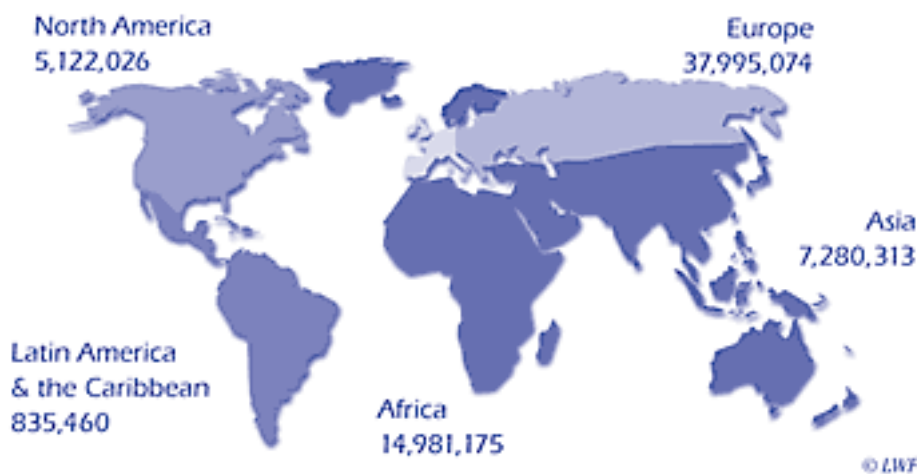
A slight decline in membership among the Latin American and Caribbean region Lutheran churches pushed the figures there down by 4,966 to a new total of 1,111,947 members. The 835,460 total recorded for LWF member churches is 6,636 lower than in the previous year.

### Overall Decrease in North America

Lutheran membership in North American churches decreased by 1.16 percent, down to a total of 8,154,631 compared to 8,250,658 recorded for the period ending 2004. In 2005, the region had 5,122,026 Lutherans belonging to LWF member churches compared to 5,182,002 in 2004.

The LWF membership statistics are based on information received from the LWF member churches, recognized congregations and council, as well as from other Lutheran churches, organizations, mission bodies and congregations. The figures recorded for the year ending 2004 were used for churches that did not indicate any changes by the end of January 2006.

## LWF 2005 Membership Figures



registered 902,153 additional members, and a new total of 14,981,175.

### Europe: Figures Drop by over Half-a-Million

In 2005, membership in Lutheran churches in Europe dropped by nearly 600,000 to 38,035,928. Membership in LWF member churches in the region fell by 599,479 to a total of 37,995,074 members. In 2004, there was a sharp increase of 2.6 million, representing 7.3

**The statistics in detail will be printed in Lutheran World Information (LWI) No. 01/2006. A one-page summary of the 2005 LWF Statistics is posted in PDF format on the LWF web-site under: [www.lutheranworld.org/LWF\\_Documents/LWF-Statistics-01-2005.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF-Statistics-01-2005.pdf). Full details can be found under: [www.lutheranworld.org/LWF\\_Documents/LWF-Statistics-2005.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/LWF-Statistics-2005.pdf)**

## Asia: 47 Member Churches in 16 Countries

<b>Australia (1) – 75,000</b>	
Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) .....	75,000
<b>Bangladesh (2) – 12,884</b>	
Bangladesh Lutheran Church (BLC) .....	4,000
Bangladesh Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church (BNELC) .....	8,884
<b>Hong Kong (4) – 39,234</b>	
Hong Kong and Macau Lutheran Church (HKMLC) .....	2,470
The Chinese Rhenish Church Hong Kong Synod (CRCHK) .....	14,000
The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (ELCHK) .....	14,264
Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong (TTMHK) .....	8,500
<b>India (10) – 992,568</b>	
Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC) .....	80,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh (ELCMP) .....	15,825
Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Himalayan States (ELCITHS) .....	24,750
Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chotanagpur and Assam (GELC) .....	400,000
India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC) .....	56,493
Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) .....	133,000
Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church (NELC) .....	80,000
South Andhra Lutheran Church (SALC) .....	45,500
The Arcot Lutheran Church (ALC) .....	37,000
The Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (TELC) .....	120,000
<b>Indonesia (12) – 4,309,317</b>	
Batak Christian Community Church (GPKB) .....	20,000
Christian Communion of Indonesia Church in Nias (AMIN) .....	18,561
Christian Protestant Angkola Church (GKPA) .....	27,986
Christian Protestant Church in Indonesia (GKPI) .....	255,601
Indonesian Christian Lutheran Church (GKLI) .....	16,895
Pakpak Dairi Christian Protestant Church (GKPPD) .....	34,384
Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP) .....	3,000,000
Protestant Christian Church in Mentawai (GKPM) .....	38,907
Simalungun Protestant Christian Church (GKPS) .....	198,479
The Indonesian Christian Church (HKI) .....	350,000
The Protestant Christian Church (BNKP) .....	338,504
The United Protestant Church (GPP) .....	10,000
<b>Japan (3) – 27,649</b>	
Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) .....	22,027
Japan Lutheran Church (JLC) .....	2,880
Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC) .....	2,742
<b>Jordan (1) – 3,000</b>	
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan & the Holy Land (ELCJHL) .....	3,000
<b>Korea (1) - 4698</b>	
Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) .....	4,698
<b>Malaysia (4) – 91,516</b>	
Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM) .....	48,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia (ELCM) .....	3,000
Lutheran Church in Malaysia & Singapore (LCMS) .....	7,644
The Protestant Church in Sabah (PCS) .....	32,872
<b>Myanmar (1) – 1,860</b>	
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Myanmar (Lutheran Bethlehem Church) .....	1,860
<b>Papua New Guinea (2) – 954,188</b>	
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG) .....	815,000
Gutnius Lutheran Church – Papua New Guinea (GLCPNG) .....	139,188
<b>Philippines (1) – 27,000</b>	
Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP) .....	27,000
<b>Singapore (1) – 4,056</b>	
Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS) .....	4,056
<b>Sri Lanka (1) – 1,200</b>	
Lanka Lutheran Church (LLC) .....	1,200
<b>Taiwan (2) – 13,643</b>	
Taiwan Lutheran Church (TLC) .....	12,029
The Lutheran Church of Taiwan (ROC) .....	1,614
<b>Thailand (1) – 2,500</b>	
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT) .....	2,500

## Sudden Demise of Rev Dr Prasanna Kumari Samuel

The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) and Gurukul Lutheran Theological College had announced and expressed deep sadness on March 16, on the sudden demise of the Rev Dr Prasanna Kumari Samuel who was vice-president of the Lutheran World Federation Asia region from 1997-2003.

At the time of her death, she was also vice-president of the National Council of Churches in India, head of the department for Women's Studies at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College & Research Institute.

Prior to her election as an LWF vice-president, Kumari served on the LWF Council as chairperson of the Program Committee for Theology and Studies from 1990-1997 and later as the chairperson of the newly created LWF



*The late Dr. Kumari - a great leader and a strong advocate for equality among women and men*

Standing Committee for World Service.

She was regional coordinator of the then LWF Committee on Women in Church and Society (WICAS) from 1984-1989, and a member of the Lutheran Orthodox Dialogue group from 1986 until 1992.

In his tribute to Kumari's tremendous contribution to the life of the church globally and nationally, LWF General Secretary, Rev Dr Ishmael Noko, said in a statement that she will be remembered "in the Lutheran communion as a strong advocate for equality among women and men." He recalled her fearless justice, her compassion toward the poor and vulnerable, and her devotion to helping women find their equal place in church and society.

Kumari also served as executive secretary of UELCI for two three-year terms from 1992 and as the organization's secretary for women from 1982-92. She had also been the chairperson of the Advisory Committee for Theological Education in Asia (ACTEAS) since 2003.

Rev Dr Prasanna Kumari is survived by her husband, Rev Dr Samuel W Meshack, a dean of the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, their two daughters and a grandchild.

**Full statement of LWF General Secretary, Dr. Ishmael Noko at [www.asia-lutheran.org](http://www.asia-lutheran.org) - Ed**

## CONDOLENCES

*Special greetings on this Lenten Season! We received the sad news of the passing of our dear sister Prasanna. She was a strong advocator for the women and a strong Asian leader who always spoke her mind without fear or favour. She was a great sister and a wonderful colleague and I know we will dearly miss her. On behalf of our LWF Council Member, Mrs. Nakei Siloi, and myself and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea, we extend to you and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India our sincere condolences. Our special condolences and heart felt sympathy and our prayers go out to our dear brother Dr Samuel Meschack and his children on the passing of their beloved wife and mother. May the God of love and peace and hope grant them the real peace and surround them with his unending love and empower them to look with great hope to the life of the resurrection when all will be made perfect in the coming of our Lord.*

*In love and unity with all,*  
**Bishop Dr Wesley Kigasung, Evangelical Lutheran Church Papua New Guinea  
LWF Council Advisor**

*Greetings from Bangladesh Lutheran Church (BLC)! We had special prayer for the family of the late Rev Dr Prasanna Kumari after finishing our Annual Synod Conference.*

*We, the leaders and members of BLC, deeply mourn the death of former LWF vice-president of Asia Rev Dr Prasanna Kumari and are praying to God for her heavenly peace. Our prayers and sympathy to her family, friends and well-wishers.*

**Rev Arobindu Bormon, Moderator, Bangladesh Lutheran Church (BLC)**

*I am so sad that Dr Prasanna has left us. I know that she has gone to a better place in the peaceful embrace of our Lord. I spent a moment of silence in her memory and respects of the legacy she left us.*

*My prayer and sympathy go to her husband and children, I am sure they will bring their grieves to the sanctity of the Lord's gracious consolation.*

**Ria Sidabutar (Ms), Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP)  
ACTEAS' Secretary (Advisory Committee for Theological Education in Asia)**

**The LWF held a memorial service in memory of the late Rev Dr Prasanna Kumari on  
March 29 at 12:15 hours at the chapel of the Ecumenical Center, Geneva - Ed**

## **The BIG Move - LWF Regional Office for Asia (ROAS) moves to Singapore**

As of March 1, the LWF Regional Office for Asia (ROAS) has moved to Singapore after having stationed in Bangkok, Thailand, for almost six years. During its meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in July 2005, ACCREA (Advisory Committee for Coordination of Regional Expression in Asia) had discussed and accepted the plans about the relocation of the regional office to Singapore including the contract renewal of Ms Sally Lim Kee.

Ms Sally Lim Kee has helped in coordinating and facilitating churches' regional activities and events and maintaining close cooperation and information sharing among member churches including ecumenical organizations. As a Regional Coordinator, she has done her responsibility in line with the terms of reference for the Department for Mission and Development (DMD).

DMD Director Dr Kjell Nordstokke has granted permission to the relocation of ROAS to Singapore and LWF General Secretary Dr Ishmael Noko has endorsed the extension of Ms Sally Lim Kee's contract, for July 2006 - June 2008. The relocation of the Regional Office to Singapore is related to her husband, Rev Terry Kee's calling to return from mission field to serve his home church, the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS).

It has always been the idea that ROAS should be located in the country of the appointed Regional Coordinator. We thank the Bishop, Rev John Tan, and the Executive Committee members of the Lutheran Church in Singapore who have welcomed and supported the shifting of the LWF Regional Office to Singapore and provided office space on the LCS premises.

### **New Postal Address and Contact**

The new mailing address is 28-30 Duke's Road, Singapore 268912, telephone number: +65-6464-6337, fax: +65-6464-6323, email: slk@lutheranworld.org

On behalf of the LWF/DMD/Asia Desk in Geneva, I would like to express

our deep appreciation to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand (ELCT) for providing facilities for the Regional Office in the ELCT Headquarters in Bangkok and extending assistance to the Regional Coordinator during the past six years.

**Rev Dr Ginda P Harahap**  
Asia Secretary, DMD-Lutheran World Federation

## **LWF Denounces Publication of Controversial Cartoons**

General Secretary Noko Says Freedom of Expression Must be Exercised Responsibly

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has called for increased commitment to the pursuit of justice and reconciliation with people of other faiths, following controversy and protests in several parts of the world surrounding the publication of cartoons of Prophet Mohammed, first published in a Danish newspaper last September.

The cartoons have since been reprinted in several European newspapers.

Denouncing both the publication of the cartoons and the ensuing violent reactions, LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko says the crisis around this issue should not be falsely presented as a conflict between secular rights and religious values.

In a statement released, Noko affirms that the caricatures at the heart of this controversy are "genuinely and deeply offensive to Muslim sentiments and religious values," and that Muslims around the world are "entitled to protest loudly and vigorously" at the provocation and insult to their religion.

He however notes that while freedom of expression is a universal legal right, it must be exercised wisely and responsibly according to ethical principles. The wholesale violence in which some of the protesters have engaged cannot be condoned, either politically or religiously, Noko says.

Such violence, he argues, does not implicate all Muslims anymore than the actions of an "insensitive few" in Denmark implicate the entire Danish nation.

The LWF general secretary joins Palestinian Lutheran Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan in condemning the "defamation of all religious symbols, prophets and holy writings because it only provokes offense and builds walls of hatred."

In a February 9 statement on the cartoon crisis, Younan, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) also denounces all violent acts that threaten others as "intolerable and unacceptable."

Noko, referring to the ELCJHL statement, urges other people to emulate Palestinian Christians and Muslims, who "have learned to live as neighbors, displaying respect for each others' beliefs and traditions - not due to legal obligation, but out of respect and care for the neighbor."

LWI

**Full text of the LWF statement  
at [www.lutheranworld.org](http://www.lutheranworld.org)**

## **LWF Welcomes WCC Invitation to Plan Common Assembly**

One Celebration of the Search for Unity and Common Witness of Christian Churches

The top leadership of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has welcomed a renewed invitation by the World Council of Churches (WCC) to consider planning a common Assembly together, within the next decade.

The issue of coordinated assemblies under the WCC has been on the agenda of LWF governing bodies for several years. LWF President, Bishop Mark S. Hanson and LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko affirm the federation's role as an ecumenical instrument in the search for Christian unity.

WCC General Secretary, Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia renewed the proposal that the next WCC assembly should provide a common platform for the wider ecumenical movement at the WCC 9th Assembly, taking place 14-23 February, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. "If we are ready to take such a significant, concrete step we could

envisage together, instead of the many different global assemblies and general conferences organized by the various world communions and other bodies, just one celebration of the search for unity and common witness of Christian churches," he said. Kobia proposed that the WCC 9th Assembly give the

mandate to accelerate the dialogue with the LWF and World Alliance of Reformed Churches to explore possibilities of holding the next assemblies as a combined event. "And we should also invite any other world Christian body to join us in this dialogue," he added.

LWI

## LUCIA

### Workshop & Assembly, March 7-9, 2006

At the Lutheran Communications in Asia (LUCIA) Workshop and Assembly held in Bangkok Thailand, 7th-10th March 2006 Lutherans from Asia involved in Media spent their time listened and learned how they can share the Good News of Jesus Christ better through digital media.

Rev Timo Reuhkala, webmaster for LWF Asia from Finland led a most interesting and informative workshop in the computer lab at Dhurakijpundit University, sharing the latest on the new LWF Asia website. He demonstrated the advantages of an interactive website and how it can be used by the Asian communion to share news and information with each other and with those searching on the web.



Rev Timo Reuhkala, webmaster of Asia Lutheran Communion and trainer of LUCIA workshop



Keeping up-to-date with the latest information technologies (IT)

All participants expressed their appreciation for Timo's excellent and helpful advice and the resources he had provided. They were all eager to improve the way they use the internet when they return home.

Mr Ken Peterson Lutheran Hour Ministry (LHM) Latin America & Caribbean Area Counsellor from Panama led a worthwhile and productive workshop session on digital photography at TK Palace Hotel, Laksi. He demonstrated how digital cameras can be used effectively to take high quality photos for use in media ministry. Then everyone was told to put what they had learned into practice and had their assignment reviewed before the class.

Everyone agreed that Ken's presentation and review had

already helped them improve their photo taking skills and their appreciation of what makes a good picture. They were reminded that "a good picture is worth a thousand words" and with his wise guidance and encouragement participants had now learned to enjoy taking photos.

#### LUCIA plans for 2006 - 2009.

Thirteen members and four visitors attended the 2006 LUCIA Assembly held during the LUCIA Workshop. Reports were received from members involving in media ministry in India, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Australia. Ms Sally Lim and Rev Jukka Latva-Hakuni reported on their work as representatives from the LWF. Mrs Gunya Na Thalung reported on the work of Lutheran Hour Ministries in Asia and



© LWF-Asia

Kenneth Peterson on digital photography: "Fill the frame ..."

indicated that plans were in hand to reopen a media office in Indonesia.

All members and visitors expressed the need for LUCIA to continue as an important agency to help churches in Asia to make more effective use of media to proclaim the Gospel. They expressed their thanks for the learning opportunities, support and fellowship that LUCIA

provided through its 2006 workshop in Bangkok.

A Coordinating Committee was elected to plan and implement activities for the next three years. They will include a workshop in Bangkok in September 2007 and a combined workshop and assembly in 2009. In future non-member

representatives will be invited to participate in activities which could benefit them and their local churches. Churches will be notified well in advance so that they can nominate people and seek funds to cover the cost of sending a representative.

**Rev Richard J Mau,**  
LUCIA Chairperson



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Connected through communication Workshop

**PowerPoint presentations on LUCIA website training <http://asia-lutheran.org> Click on 'downloads' and select LUCIA folder and click on the title of the PowerPoint to open the files - Ed**

## **Lutherans Elected into WCC Central Committee**

### **Indonesian Lutheran is WCC President for Asia**



© Paulino Menezes/WCC

Rev Dr Soritua Nababan, Protestant Christian Batak Church HKBP (Indonesia)

On 22 February, the WCC Assembly delegates appointed eight presidents for each of the world regions and for the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches. Rev Dr Soritua Nababan, Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP), Indonesia, was elected president for the Asia region. From 1987 until 1998, Nababan was bishop of the 3 million-member HKBP, the largest Lutheran church in Asia, and an LWF member church since 1952. From 1970 until 1977, and 1984-1990, he served as LWF vice-president, and was a member of the LWF Executive Committee, 1990-1997.

### **Brazilian Lutheran is Moderator of WCC**

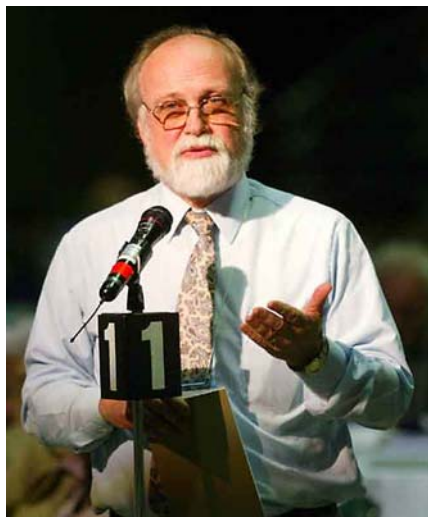
The president of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB), Rev. Dr Walter Altmann (62), is the new moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee.

The 150-member Central Committee serves as the WCC's main decision-making body between assemblies held every seven years.

Altmann has been IECLB president since December 2002 and elected to the LWF Council at the July 2003 LWF Tenth Assembly in Winnipeg, Canada. As chairperson of the Program Committee for Mission and Development, he is also a member of the LWF Executive Committee.

The 712,000-member IECLB is the largest Lutheran church in Latin America. It joined the LWF in 1952.

In a congratulatory letter to Altmann, LWF General Secretary Rev Dr Ishmael Noko said the IECLB president was "one of the most qualified persons to be elected to this position."



© LWF/D. Zimmermann

Rev Dr Walter Altmann, WCC new moderator

Noko noted that the recent WCC Assembly, held 14-23 February in Porto Alegre, had demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that the future of the ecumenical movement in the 21st century would depend on radical modalities of imagination and cooperation. He said he was convinced this would be possible under Altmann's leadership of the Central Committee. The general secretary emphasized the LWF's understanding of ecumenical commitment as "an obligation and not an option," and affirmed the anticipated cooperation with the WCC in the search for Christian unity.

Other representatives of Lutheran churches appointed to the WCC Central Committee include Bishop

Dr Rolf Koppe, Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) Bishop for Foreign Relations; Ms Sanchita Kisku of Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church (NELC) and Inger Aasa-Marklund from the Church of Sweden.

There are a total of 20 representatives from LWF member churches in the new WCC Central Committee. They are drawn from two churches each in Africa, Asia, Latin America and North America; and 12 churches in Europe.

### **Theological Debate on Spirits, Ancestors and Healing**

LWF Study Program on Spiritualism as a Global Challenge for Churches An international consultation in Berlin, Germany, marked the final phase of a four-year study program of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) on "Spiritualism as a Global Challenge for Churches." The study process is aimed at helping Lutheran churches around the world understand indigenous spiritualities and spiritualistic movements in their respective contexts.

Participants in the 12-18 January 2006 meeting discussed, among other issues, how churches should respond, for example, to congregation members who, in the face of difficult life situations, seek healing and consolation in

traditional indigenous as well as spiritualistic rituals. A key question was whether Lutheran churches should allow the worship of ancestors. The group also analyzed the possible implications of such movements for Lutheran identity, dialogue and mission.

The publication to be produced in May this year will be a reference for Lutheran churches around the world in discussions on this subject, at theological seminaries and congregations, and also as a guide and source of advice when dealing with such concerns. Each chapter contains proposals on how to deal appropriately with the challenges of spiritualism and worship of ancestors.

Three study documents were published as a result of the regional seminars - "Spiritualism: A Challenge to the Churches in Europe," "Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in Africa and Asia: A Challenge to the Church," and "Espiritualismo/Espritisimo: Desafios para Igreja na América Latina." They can be ordered at: The Lutheran World Federation, Department for Theology and Studies, 150 Route de Ferney, P. O. Box 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland; Tel. +41-22-791-6111, Fax: +41-22-791-6630, E-mail: Liesch@lutheranworld.org

LWI

## CONSTRUCTIVE TITBITS

The pessimist complains about the wind  
The optimist expects it to change  
The leader adjusts the sails.

**John C. Maxwell – Developing the Leader within You**

A big tree was once a small seed; a nine-storey building started with a basket of earth;  
a journey of a thousand miles began with the first step.

Do not overstate when you are complimenting or criticizing someone.

Do what is right and not what is approved by society.

How can you get the tiger cubs without entering the tiger's den?

Things that are too long break easily, things that are too white stain easily; songs that are too pretentious have few listeners; reputations that are too good often fall short of reality.

**Chinese Maxims – Golden Sayings of Chinese Thinkers**

If you borrow something more than twice, buy one for yourself.

Remember the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

Life's heaviest burden is to have nothing to carry.

A really good golfer is one who goes to church on Sunday first.

Blessed is the person who can hear his alarm clock on Sunday as well as on Monday.

**Life's Little Instruction Book**

## More than 9,000 quilts distributed

RDRS (Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service, LWF Department for World Service program in Bangladesh) had distributed more than 9,000 quilts, 600 blankets and 375 baby clothes to about 10,000 poor people affected by the year-end cold wave in Panchgarh, Thakurgoan, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Kurigram Districts in northwest Bangladesh.

Selection of recipients and distribution was done by RDRS through Deputy Commissioners



*Distributing warm clothings*

(heads of local government in the Districts), partner NGOs and member organisations of ACT International Forum.

RDRS is grateful to its donor-partners for their generous donation to assist poor people of northwest Bangladesh.

RDRS

## Married couple share work as regional bishop in Bavaria

Bielefeld, Germany (ENI). The Bavarian Lutheran church has for the first time appointed a married couple to share the post of a regional bishop, despite fears that this might harm relations with the Roman Catholic Church. Elisabeth Hann von Weyhern, aged 43, and Stefan Ark Nitsche, 50, have been installed to the post of regional bishop for Nuremberg, one of six districts within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria.

## Commission Proposes Ending Norway's State-Church System

A majority of members on a government-appointed multi-party commission with representatives of different denominations and religions has recommended abolishing the current state-church system in Norway.

The year 2013 is seen as the earliest date for a change in the [Lutheran] Church of Norway's relations to the state, as any major changes would require a revision of the country's constitution.

Between 2,000 and 3,000 church and public bodies, institutions, organizations and parties are expected to have stated their view on the matter by the end of this year. A government report to the "Storting" (parliament) is expected in late 2008.

The Church of Norway, a state church since the 1537 Lutheran reformation in Denmark-Norway, has over 3.9 million members, representing 85 per cent of the country's population. It has been a Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member church since 1947.

The other LWF member church in the Nordic country, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway with nearly 22,000 members, held LWF associate membership since 1997, and changed to full membership in 2005.

## Church of Norway may split over homosexuality

Oslo (ENI). The head of the (Lutheran) Church of Norway's doctrinal commission, Professor Torleiv Austad, has warned that the denomination may split over the issue of homosexuality. The commission was divided when it drew up a report in January as to whether people living in same-sex relationships should hold consecrated office. This led to suggestions that the church might choose to have two equally official views on the matter, something rejected by Austad.

### Your Say

*In recent years, issues relating to homosexuality has also become hot topics in many of our churches in Asia. We invite church leaders, theologians, pastors and members of the Asia Communion to give your comments and theological input in this area through our website discussion forum at [asia-lutheran.org](http://asia-lutheran.org). All are encourage to register into the website and participate in the discussion - Ed*

# THE LWF EVENT

Date	Unit	Venue	Event
<b>JANUARY</b>			
12-18	DTS	Berlin, Germany	International Consultation on Spiritualism as a Global Challenge to the Church
13-19	OEA	Moshi, Tanzania	Anglican-Lutheran International Commission
<b>FEBRUARY</b>			
01-06	DTS	Warsaw, Poland	Global Meeting: The Authority of the Bible in the Life of the Church
06-10	DMD	Nairobi, Kenya	Africa Regional HIV/AIDS Workshop on Skills & Capacity Enhancement
16-17	DWS	Uppsala, Sweden	DWS Strategic Planning Consultation with Nordic Agencies
<b>MARCH</b>			
02-03	DWS	Stuttgart, Germany	DWS Strategic Planning Consultation with Related Agencies
09-11	OGS	Geneva, Switzerland	Executive Committee
13-17	DWS	Kigali, Rwanda	North, East and West Africa Regional Consultation
23-24	OFA	Geneva, Switzerland	Endowment Fund Board
<b>APRIL</b>			
07-08	LFIR	Strasbourg, France	Board Meeting: Lutheran Foundation for Interconfessional Research (LFIR)
17-25	OCS/DMD	Phnom Penh, Cambodia	Asia Regional Meeting: LWF Youth Leadership Training in Communication Program
17-22	DMD	Phnom Penh	WICAS Asia Regional Consultation: "Stirring the Waters" Annual Forum
24-25	DWS	Montreux, Switzerland	Latin America & Caribbean Regional Meeting: LWF Youth Leadership Training in Communication Program
24-27	OCS/DMD	San Jose, Costa Rica	Latin America Leadership Conference
24-28	DMD	San Jose, Costa Rica	Capacity Building Workshop
24/04-06/05	DMD	La Paz, Bolivia	Standing Committee for World Service
26-27	DWS	Montreux, Switzerland	
<b>MAY</b>			
05	OFA	Geneva, Switzerland	Pension Fund Board
09-12	DMD	Bangkok, Thailand	Third Consultation: Mekong Mission Partners
15-20	DMD	Johannesburg, South Africa	Pastoral and Leadership Seminars for Lutheran Communion in Southern LUCSA
22-26	DWS	Tuzla, Bosnia	DWS Regional Consultation
30/5-01/06	DMD	Montroux, Switzerland	Project Committee Meeting
<b>JUNE</b>			
05-09	OEA	Strasbourg, France	Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission
06-12	DMD	Nairobi, Kenya	Nairobi+4: Follow-up of LWF HIV/AIDS Campaign
06-13	OCS/DMD	Nairobi, Kenya	Africa Regional Meeting: LWF Youth Leadership Training in Communication Program
07-13	OCS/OIAHR	Nairobi, Kenya	Interfaith Media Seminar
13-19	DMD	Vienna, Austria	International Roundtable for Youth Leaders
23-27	DMD	Sao Leopoldo, Brazil	Latin America Regional Meeting on Gender and Power
27-30	DMD	Medan, Indonesia	Asia Regional "Seminar on Dialogue in Life"
<b>JULY</b>			
01-07	OEA	Netherland (to be determined)	Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission
03-07	DMD	Undetermined	Regional Core Group Meeting: "Sustainability in the Communion"
20-24	DMD	Bangkok, Thailand	Regional HIV/AIDS Coordinators' Meeting

*DMD-Department for Mission & Development  
DWS-Department for World Service*

*DTS-Department for Theology and Studies  
OCS-Office Communication Services*

# CALENDAR 2006

Date	Unit	Venue	Event
<b>AUGUST</b> 20-26	OCS/DMD	Chicago, USA	North America Regional meeting: LWF Youth Leadership Training in Communication Program
28/08-02/09	DMD	Chennai, India	Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Theological Education in Asia (ACTEAS) Meeting of the Advisory Committee for Coordination of Regional Expression in Asia (ACCREA)
<b>SEPTEMBER</b> 02-03	DMD	Arusha, Tanzania	Women and Youth Strategic Meeting: Churches Say "NO" to Violence Against Women
04-09	DMD	Arusha, Tanzania	Consultation on Poverty and the Mission of the Church in Africa
18-23	DMD	St Petersburg, Russia	Sub-regional Capacity Building Workshop
23-27	DMD	Tegucigalpa, Honduras	Roundtable Meetings
25-28	DMD	Nairobi, Kenya	Pastoral and Leadership Seminars for Lutheran Communion in Central and Eastern Africa - LUCCEA
Undetermined	DMD	Europe (to be determined)	Europe Regional Follow-up Consultation on LWF HIV/AIDS Campaign
<b>OCTOBER</b> 09-10	DMD	Slovak Republic or Czech Republic (to be determined)	European Sub-regional Consultation: Analysis of Church-State Relationships in Transition
16-20	DMD	Undetermined	Regional Diakonia Network Meeting: Micro credits as a Tool for Development
<b>NOVEMBER</b> 01-04	DMD	Undetermined	Pastoral and Leadership Seminars for Lutheran Communion in Western Africa - LUCWA
02-09	OEA	Bratislava, Slovak	Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission Republic
13-17	DMD	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Capacity Building Workshop
17-18	DMD	Tallinn, Estonia	Regional Meeting: LWF Member Churches in the Baltic States and Russia
20-24	DWS	India (to be determined)	Standing Committee for World Service
22-23 or 25-26	DWS	Bangladesh (to be determined)	RDRS (Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service) - 10th Partners Consultation
23-25	DMD	Greifswald, Germany	Preparatory Group: 2007 European Church Leadership Consultation
<b>DECEMBER</b> 04-12 (to be confirmed) Undetermined	OCS/DWS	San Salvador, El Salvador	DWS Latin America and Caribbean Regional Communication Training Workshop
	OEA	Geneva, Switzerland (to be confirmed)	LWF-ILC Meeting
<b>UNDETERMINED</b> Undetermined	OGS/OIAHR OGS/OIAHR	Nairobi, Kenya Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Interfaith Youth Consultation "Africa's Image Today" IFAPA (Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa) Commission for Africa
	OIAHR OCS/DMD	Karasjok, Norway Undetermined	Consultation on Indigenous Issues European Regional Meeting: LWF Youth Leadership Training in Communication Program

OEA-Office for Ecumenical Affairs  
OGS-Office of the General Secretary

OFA-Office for Finance and Administration  
OIAHR-Office for International Affairs & Human Rights

## Happiest Nation!

London: Would you believe it! Bangladesh is the happiest nation in the world! The United States, on the other hand, is a sad story: it ranks only 46th in the World Happiness Survey.

That's way behind India, the fifth happiest place in the world, and others including Ghana and Latvia, Croatia and Estonia. Research led by London School of Economics professors into the link between personal spending

power and the perceived quality of life has conclusively proved that money can buy everything but happiness.

The study revealed that people in Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world, derive far more happiness from their small incomes than, for example, the British (32nd on the list) do from their relatively large bank balances. <http://nriol.com/report>

## The Great Baby Shortage

Not just the developed nations! Even developing ones are getting the baby blues. According to The Strait Times (Singapore) special report on March 18, across Latin America, Asia and the Caribbean, many developing countries are reproducing way below the total fertility rate (TFR) of 2.1, the level at which a population replaces itself.

Even China, the world's most populous nation with 1.3 billion people, is having second thoughts about its one-child policy, which has - too successfully - pushed its TFR down from a peak of 5.6 in the 1950s to a stagnant 1.2 for the past 20 years.

India with 1.1 billion people, has seen its TFR down from 6 in the 1960s to 2.8 last year.

What are the long-term consequences of this? Rapid ageing populations, even depopulation!

### Low Fertility League (Asia)

Very Low (TFR below 1.5)		Moderately Low (TFR 1.5 to 2.0)	
Hong Kong	0.94	Taiwan	1.57
Macau	1.00	Thailand	1.63
China	1.20		
South Korea	1.22		
Singapore	1.24		

The Straits Times, CIA FACT BOOK, 2005 ESTIMATES

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