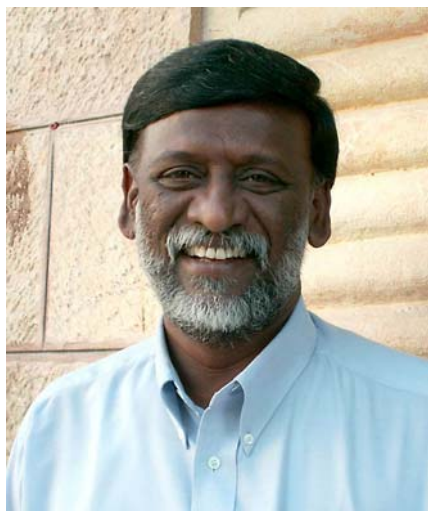




Chandran Paul Martin is LWF Deputy General Secretary!



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Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, due to start on new appointment in early June

Effective early June 2006, Indian theologian and communicator, Rev Chandran Paul Martin, will assume the position of Deputy General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The

LWF Executive Committee appointed Rev Martin at its 9-11 March meeting in Geneva.

As deputy to the LWF general secretary, Rev Martin will assume responsibility also for the LWF Office for Planning and for Council meetings. Other key functions will include coordination of all LWF program planning. His appointment is for an initial period of four years.

Martin, 47, is currently executive secretary of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI). He has been a member of the LWF Council since 2003, serving as vice-chairperson of the Program Committee for Communication Services.

As UELCI chief executive officer since 2002, Rev Martin is responsible for overall coordination, priority setting and strategic planning management for various development-related activities of the 11-member Lutheran church body representing over 3 million Christians. A

Dalit ["untouchables" in India's caste system] himself, Rev Martin has been a strong advocate for the Dalit people's liberation through a national process involving the churches, Dalit communities, governments and civil society movements.

Prior to joining the UELCI as its chief executive officer, Rev Martin had served as communications' secretary for the National Council of Churches in India for five years.

Rev Martin is currently a Ph.D. studies' research scholar in history and archeology with the Acharya Nagarjuna University in Andhra Pradesh, India. He earned a master's degree in theology from the Chennai-based Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute in 1999.

The Rev Chandran Paul Martin and his wife, Mercy Martin, have two children.

LWI

da vinci code

Reactions to The Da Vinci Movie

Threat or opportunity? Catholics debate Da Vinci movie Rome - Ron Howard's film of Dan Brown's blockbuster novel "The Da Vinci Code" opens on 19 May, but while some senior Vatican officials have called on the faithful to boycott the movie, other Roman Catholics say it offers a chance to explain their beliefs. "It's right to boycott the film," Cardinal Luigi Poggi, Librarian emeritus of the Holy Roman Church, was quoted as saying. "But it is Catholics that have to organize. The Church as such should not intervene. That would be giving too much importance to the film." In England, however, a group of Catholics are opposing the calls to boycott the movie, saying the film offers an opportunity to explain the faith.

Manila bans Da Vinci Code, but in adjacent cities, theatres packed Manila - The Manila city council has banned public showings

of the Da Vinci Code movie but theatre-goers have been streaming to neighbouring cities, in other parts of Metro Manila, since the film was first screened on 18 May. The movie "is undoubtedly offensive and contrary to established religious beliefs, which cannot take precedence over the right of the persons involved in the film to freedom of expression", the Manila city council said in a resolution, which took effect on 19 May.

Christian protests result in 'A' rating for Da Vinci Code in India New Delhi - Vociferous Christian protests against the Da Vinci Code movie have resulted in India's federal Censor Board prescribing an "adults only" certificate and for showings to carry a disclaimer it as "a work of fiction". "We are happy that our demands have been enforced exactly as we recommended," Roman Catholic Bishop Anil Couto, auxiliary bishop of Delhi archdiocese, told Ecumenical News International.

Ecumenical News International (ENI)

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JELC Biennial Assembly & Power Mission 21 (PM 21)

The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) held its biennial national assembly on May 3-5, 2006. Elections were held for all major posts within the church administration. President Masatoshi Yamanouchi and Vice President Sumiyuki Watanabe were re-elected to what will be their final term, and Rev Shunichiro Matsuoka was nominated and confirmed for the position of Executive Director.

The main order of business of the assembly was to evaluate the progress of Power Mission 21 (PM 21), the ten year evangelism and church restructuring program adopted by JELC in 2002, as well as make needed by-law and constitutional changes to further strengthen PM 21.

In the 113 years of its existence, JELC has moved through a time of dependency on overseas churches, as well as a time of striving for financial independence. The goal of PM 21 is to move JELC into a new era of true independence through structural



(left to right) Mr. Masahiro Sekiguchi -Treasurer; Rev. Sumiyuki Watanabe -Vice President; Rev. Masatoshi Yamanouchi- President; Rev. Shunichiro Matsuoka - Executive Director

reformation and a renewed emphasis on evangelism. Concretely speaking, this includes an emphasis on youth evangelism as well as fostering the Christian growth of youth, the strengthening of the laity and lay led evangelism, clergy continuing education and a program for clergy review, as well as church/ congregational restructuring to strengthen outreach. The assembly approved by law revisions which were made for the purpose of strengthening the above PM 21 programs. However,

proposed constitutional revisions to change the make-up of the national church council were voted down.

JELC now has four years of progress under PM 21 with six years left to continue the reformation and restructuring of JELC. The administrative arm of JELC has been re-elected and will provide the necessary leadership to continue the renewal and strengthening of JELC for greater outreach and church growth.

Rev David Person, JELC

UELCI Leadership

The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI) Executive Committee which met on 17 March 2006 has elected:

- The Rev Dr Augustine Jeyakumar as the Executive Secretary of UELCI as of mid-May, 2006
- Dr K Rajaratnam as the Executive Secretary of the LWF National Committee (India)
- Mr Stanley Williams appointed as the Director of Division of Social Action

The new officers will begin their term of office in the middle of May 2006



Rev. Dr. Augustine, UELCI's Executive Secretary



Dr. Rajaratnam, Executive Secretary for LWF National Committee for India

This announcement also carries a message from the Rev Chandran Paul Martin, Executive Secretary of UELCI. Please log into www.asia-lutheran.org for the full message - Ed

New Asian Representative to the LWF Endowment Fund Board

May 17, 2006

Dear Bishops/Presidents/Church Leaders,

Greeting to you from Japan. I am Yoko Takemori, a member of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kyoto and also a member of the Advisory Committee for Coordination of Regional Expression in Asia (ACCREA). I was appointed to serve on the Endowment Fund Board of the LWF representing the Asia region after Ms Lai Yoke Kiew of Malaysia ended her term of office in July 2006.

First, I would like to remind you what the Endowment Fund is and how it came into being. Dramatic changes in

the world in recent years resulted in the reduction of contribution and membership fees from the member churches, which forced the LWF to curtail its activities. To counter the critical situation doomed ahead and to secure stable financial resources, the Endowment Fund was started in 1989 with a capital of 50,000 Swiss francs. It was invested in Switzerland, and the first target of making the fund ten million Swiss francs in ten years has been almost met, thanks to extraordinary good returns last year. The fund was able to allocate 700,000 Swiss francs to the LWF for its activities in 2006.

The next target is to make the ten million double to twenty million in ten years. Though it seems a big task, the goal will be met if each believer of total 66 million contributed 1.5 cents a year for ten years. ACTEAS (the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Asia) and ACCREA decided at their

joint meeting held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in July 2005 that a Sunday in November will be designated as LWF Sunday and that the collection of the day will be donated to the Endowment Fund. I have already asked the members of ACTEAS and ACCREA to talk to their bishops / presidents, national committees and others concerned so that we, the churches in Asia, will be able to contribute our fair share. They are to present a rough estimate when we meet again in Singapore in September this year.

I seek your cooperation in the matter. I would appreciate any suggestion/ advice as well. I look forward to hearing good results from the members of ACTEAS and ACCREA from your country in September.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Yoko Takemori
Member of the Endowment Fund Board, LWF

Message for Asian Communion

We are pleased to announce that on April 4 the new web site was launched for the theological work related to the LWF program on Theology in the Life of the Church! Check it out at www.luthersem.edu/lwfdiscuss..

A discussion forum has begun around the question: How do you respond theologically to the looming realities of death and injustice in your context? What is actually being preached in relation to these realities?

We are especially interested in involving Asian Lutherans in this discussion, based on how you experience these challenges in your context. If you have written something that relates to this theme, or a sermon that does so, please send it to us so that we might consider posting it.

The current focus is:



Rev. Dr. Karen Bloomquist, Director for LWF Department Communion for Theology & Studies (DTS)

- "Confessing and living out faith in the triune God" in the face of death and injustice (track 1)
- multi-faith challenges (track 2)
- charismatic and Pentecostal challenges (track 3)

- moral differences that threaten church unity (track 4)

Initial papers posed in relation to this first track include papers by:

- Trinitarian Theology in the Face of Consumerism" (John Hoffmeyer)
- "One Body of Hope in the Face of Death and Injustice (Johanne Stubbe Teglbjaerg)
- "Psalms of Lament as Healing/ Wholeness Resource for Those Living with HIV and AIDS" (Anastasia Boniface-Malle)
- "Hope and Lament in the Face of the Self-Destruction of Life" (Günter Thomas)

More papers will be posted soon ... hopefully also from Asia!

You are encouraged to check this out, sign in as a participant (with user name and password), and join in the discussion!

Karen L. Bloomquist, Department for Theology and Studies (DTS) - kb@lutheranworld.org

Web log on 'Stirring the Waters' launched by youth communicators

The three-year youth communication training program "Toward a Communicating Communion - A Youth Vision" launched April 2005 in Lyon, France continues in 2006 in the context of LWF regional conferences and communication training workshops.

The youth participants in the respective regional consultations have developed Web logs, which provide further information including photos on the (<http://www.lutheranworld.org>) regional consultation itself and the communication training workshop.

Please visit the Web log for the Asia consultation under the "Stirring the Waters"- conference in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 17-25 April, at: <http://www.stirringthewaters.blogspot.com>

There are two Web logs for the Latin American meeting in the context of the Latin American Church Leadership Conference, in San José, Costa Rica, 25-28 April - <http://www.lwf-latinos.blogspot.com> and the official web log for the conference: <http://www.conferencialiderazgo2006.blogspot.com>



Young communicators under training

© LWF Geneva

Third Mekong Mission Partners' Consultation

"Joint Action in Mission in a Complex and Diverse Region" was the reason why the Mekong Mission Forum (MMF) called together the Third Mekong Mission Partner's Consultation held in Bangkok on May 10-11, 2006. The tone was set in the opening

devotion led by Bishop Nicholas Tai of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (ELCHK) based on Isaiah 61 and Luke 4. The consultation was filled with the spirit of communion and fellowship.

Thirty-six (36) participants from 16 countries - Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Norway, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan,

Thailand, the United States of America, and Vietnam - participated in the event. The Consultation also warmly welcomed its local partners from the Mekong region, the Rev Dr Khamphone, Kounthapanya and Rev Saykham, Singitthiphon from the Lao Evangelical Church, Dr Anna May Chain from the Myanmar Institute of Theology, and the Rev Dr Timothy Le and Rev Thieu, Phan Quang from Evangelical Church in Vietnam.



© LWF/SLim

Dr Anna May of Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT)

participants discussed the theme, "Joint Action in Mission in a Complex and Diverse Region", seeking to empower Christians and local churches for mission through concrete programs.

The participants heard the following keynote addresses:

- ✿ Joint Action In Mission in a Complex and Diverse Region by Bishop Philip Lok, Lutheran Church in Malaysia & Singapore
- ✿ Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment-An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice in Mission by Dr Kjell Nordstokke, Director, LWF DMD
- ✿ Gender Issues from a Myanmar Perspective, by Dr. Anna May Chain, Myanmar Institute of Theology
- ✿ LWF DWS Cambodia Program, by Mr David Mueller
- ✿ Mekong Region Overview-Lutheran involvement and developments, by Mr Ernst Harbakk, Moderator, MMF

Great appreciation was expressed for the excellent presentations that provided new insights and deeper understandings of the region. The participants were moved and challenged by what they heard especially the accounts of the sufferings and difficulties of the people in the region and their steadfast faith. Based on the information presented and plenary discussions the Consultation divided into five working groups to focus on the five countries of the Mekong and to define the common mission tasks and joint mission actions.

The working groups presented various proposals for plenary discussion and the following affirmations and recommendations were subsequently adopted by the Consultation.

Affirmations

1. We affirm our gratitude for God's work in the region.
2. We affirm the joint action in mission in the Mekong region.
3. We affirm that to be Lutheran is to be ecumenical. We acknowledge our God given unity and commit ourselves to strengthening our common witness in the region.
4. We commit ourselves to gender inclusivity, the involvement of women



Serving and worshipping together

© LWF/SLim

5. We affirm the importance of work that will empower people at the grassroots level and strengthen the ministry and mission of local churches.
6. We affirm the importance of theological education, leadership development and capacity building for the churches in the Mekong region.
7. We affirm the holistic ministry as rooted in the biblical tradition and the imperative of addressing the social needs in the region.
8. We affirm the joint vision for mission developed by the churches in Thailand, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, to establish congregations in every province and district by 2010.

9. We affirm the role of Asia Theological Education in Myanmar (ATEM) in providing leadership development and theological education, student exchanges and programs like 'Doing Theology Under the Bo Tree'.
10. We commit ourselves to the solidarity established with the Lao Evangelical Church leadership.
11. We affirm the Evangelical Church in Vietnam in its needs for the seminary and library building, Steel House Chapels and student scholarships for theological education.
12. We affirm the role of Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) and encourage partner support of KCC needs for organizational development, theological training, spiritual formation and capacity building for leadership development.



Five discussion groups - Cambodia, Lao, Myanmar, Thailand & Vietnam

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Mekong mission partners from 16 countries

© LWF/S.Lim

- 13. We affirm the MMF partners coordination and encourage further collaboration with LWF/DWS-Cambodia.
- 14. We affirm the work of LWF/DWS-Cambodia and the International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC) with the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) training programs and leadership development.

Recommendations

- 1. Request the MMF to consider planning the next MMF meeting in Myanmar to have more in-depth

- understanding of the country and its issues.
- 2. Given the emphasis of theological education for the Mekong region and previous forum discussions, request that the MMF clarify the role of the core institutions of the MMF.
- 3. Request the MMF to explore the ways to support the proposal of the Evangelical Church in Vietnam's seminary/library construction project.
- 4. Receive reports from country interest groups.

- 5. Request the MMF to encourage joint action and better coordination in Cambodia.
- Request the MMF to explore the best way to strengthen and support the Lao Evangelical Church (LEC) in its capacity building related to church development, spiritual formation, leadership development and social service programs.
- The Consultation was followed by the meeting of the MMF to follow up on the recommendations on the 3rd Mekong Mission Partners' Consultation.

regional news

New Norway Christian group spans all major churches

Oslo - Two church groupings in Norway have agreed to form a council spanning all the major churches including Lutheran, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal denominations. The new grouping is to be formally inaugurated on 1 September, and results from the merger of the Christian Council of Norway and the Norwegian Free Church Council.

ENI

ministers and congregations must not perform same-sex marriage ceremonies, though the denomination says it wants to welcome gay and lesbian people in its churches. "Notwithstanding our pastoral concern for gay and lesbian persons, the UCCSA understands marriage as a union of a man and a woman, as God intended," the executive committee of the denomination, which has members in five southern African countries, stated in a resolution adopted at a meeting in Zimbabwe, held at the end of March and beginning of April.

ENI

marginalised groups have been unveiled in Germany. "A Bible in the German language has to be sensitive about racism and ethnic discrimination because of the Shoah [Holocaust]," says Luise Metzler, who has raised funds for the project in which 52 translators are translating the original Hebrew and Greek using inclusive language. The translation to be published in October aims to tone down violent language while also taking into account the perspectives of feminist and liberation theology.

ENI

Southern African church rejects same-sex marriages

Cape Town - The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa has said that its

German Bible translation using 'inclusive' language sparks debate

Bielefeld, Germany - Plans for a new "Bible in inclusive language" intended to do justice to women, Jews and

Catholics and Pentecostals included in new US church grouping

After nearly five years of discussions and planning, a new grouping of the major Christian traditions in the United States, including Roman Catholics as well as Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations, has been formally

launched. Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT) calls itself "the most inclusive fellowship of Christian churches and traditions" in the United States.

ENI

Nepal's Christians hail change from Hindu monarchy to secular state

New Delhi - Christians in Nepal have joined in widespread rejoicing over the country's dramatic political developments that have marked the transformation into a secular country (from a Hindu country). "The Christian community of Nepal welcomes all the decisions taken by the reinstated parliament including making the nation a secular country through a historical declaration of parliament," said the National Christian Council of Nepal in a statement

ENI

Alarm at human bird flu cluster

The World Health Organization (WHO) says it is extremely worried about a cluster of recent human deaths from the virulent H5N1 strain of bird flu.

Seven people from the same family in northern Sumatra, Indonesia, died from the disease earlier this month. WHO spokesman Peter Cordingley said there was no sign of diseased poultry in the immediate area.

Investigators are looking into the possibility that the virus spread from human to human, Mr Cordingley said. But he emphasised that there was no indication the virus had mutated. Experts are worried that if it does mutate, the H5N1 strain could become more easily transmitted between humans, leading to a worldwide pandemic of the killer disease.

The H5N1 virus has already killed more than 120 people worldwide since 2003. It has also devastated poultry stocks. The majority of deaths have occurred in Asia, but cases in people and birds have also been recorded in Europe and Africa.

Almost all human infections so far are thought to have been caused by direct contact with sick poultry.

BBC News

bird flu – another pandemic?

What is bird flu?

Like humans and other species, birds are susceptible to flu. There are 15 types of bird, or avian, flu. The most contagious strains, which are usually fatal in birds, are H5 and H7. There are nine different types of H5. The nine all take different forms – some are highly pathogenic, while some are pretty harmless. The type currently causing concern is the deadly strain H5N1, which can prove fatal to humans.

How do humans catch bird flu?

Bird flu was thought only to infect birds until the first human cases were seen in Hong Kong in 1997. Humans catch the disease through close contact with live infected birds. Birds excrete the virus in their faeces, which dry and become pulverised, and are then inhaled. Symptoms are similar to other types of flu – fever, malaise, sore throats and coughs. People can also develop conjunctivitis.

Researchers are now concerned because scientists studying a case in Vietnam found the virus can affect all parts of the body, not just the lungs. This could mean that many illnesses, and even deaths, thought to have been caused by something else, may have been due to the bird flu virus.

Is it possible to stop bird flu coming into a country?

Because it is carried by birds, there is no way of preventing its spread. Experts say proper poultry controls, monitoring of the migratory patterns of wild birds should provide early alerts of the arrival of infected flocks – meaning they could be targeted on arrival.

How many people have been affected?

As of 13 February 2006, the World Health Organization (WHO) had confirmed 169 cases of H5N1 in humans in Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, China, Turkey and Iraq, leading to 91 deaths.

How quickly is the disease spreading?

After bird flu claimed its first human victim in May 1997, Hong Kong – the disease was not detected again until February 2003, when a father and son were diagnosed with H5N1, again in Hong Kong. Since then it has spread westwards through Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa. In October 2005 the UK recorded its first case of

H5N1 in a quarantined parrot from South America.

Despite mass culls and other measures to prevent its spread, the H5N1 virus has continued to travel.

In one week in February 2006, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Germany, Austria, France, Slovenia, India, Iran and Egypt confirmed their first cases of H5N1 in wild birds.

But it can't yet be passed from person to person?

For the most part, humans have contracted the virus following very close contact with sick birds. There may have been examples of human-to-human transmission, but so far not in the form which could fuel a pandemic.

Due to a several cases of probable transmission of the virus in Thailand, Vietnam and Hong Kong, UK virology expert Professor John Oxford said these cases indicated the basic virus could be passed between humans, and predicted similar small clusters of cases would be seen again.

What would the consequences of a mass outbreak be?

Once the virus gained the ability to pass easily between humans the results could be catastrophic. Worldwide, experts predict anything between two million and 50 million deaths. However the mortality rate – which presently stands at around 50% of confirmed cases – could decline as it mutates, they say.

Is there a vaccine?

There is not yet a definitive vaccine, but prototypes which offer protection against the H5N1 strain are being produced. Antiviral drugs, such as Tamiflu may help limit symptoms and reduce the chances the disease will spread.

Can I continue to eat chicken?

Yes. Experts say avian flu is not a food-borne virus, so eating chicken is safe. The only people thought to be at risk are those involved in the slaughter and preparation of meat that may be infected.

However, WHO recommends, to be absolutely safe, all meat should be cooked to a temperature of at least

70C. Eggs should also be thoroughly cooked.

What is being done to contain the virus in the countries affected?

Steps have been taken to try to stop the disease spreading among birds. Millions of farmyard birds have been culled, while millions more have been vaccinated and confined indoors.

Areas where the disease has been found have been isolated or protection

zone imposed. Some countries have banned imports of live birds and poultry products.

In January 2006 international donors pledged \$1.9bn (£1bn) in the fight against bird flu, while WHO has devised a rapid-response plan to detect and contain a global flu pandemic.

World Health Organisation (WHO)

truly asia

Kimchi - the focus of intense research

The claim that kimchi has mystical properties that can ward off disease has become the subject of serious research, as South Korean scientists put the national dish under the microscope.

With a government grant of US\$ 500,000, the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute is developing special anti-aging kimchi that will be marketed this year. Other new products include anti-cancer and anti-obesity kimchi.

Kimchi is a matter of great national pride for Koreans and much of the research has been government funded. Understandably, dissenters on the topic of its healing power are circumspect.

"Kimchi is a healthy food but in excessive quantities there are risk factors," said Mr Kim Heon of the Department of Preventive Medicine at Chungbuk National University. He was one of the authors of a paper published in June last year in the Beijing-based World Journal of Gastroenterology titled "Kimchi and Soyabean Pastes are Risk Factors of Gastric Cancer".

"We found that if you were a very, very heavy eater of kimchi, you had a 50% higher risk of getting stomach cancer," Mr. Kim said.

Mr. Park Kun Young, who heads the Kimchi Research Institute, said that traditionally, kimchi contains a great deal of salt, which could combine with red pepper to form a carcinogen. Nowadays, with refrigeration, Mr. Park said, less salt is needed.

The beneficial power of kimchi comes from the lactic acid bacteria that helps in digestion and, according to some researchers, boosts immunity.

In addition, the vegetables are excellent sources of vitamin C and antioxidants, which are believed to protect cells from carcinogens. The high fibre content aids bowel function.

Korean pride swelled when the US magazine Health listed kimchi in its March issue as one of the world's most healthful foods.

Healthful or not, the kimchi industry is booming.

Los Angeles Times

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