

Lutheran World  
Information

**LWI**

Liturgical  
Includes  
Material



# Women's Daily Bread



2009

**12**

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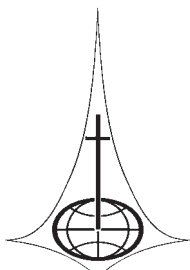
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During the October 2009 LWF Women's Pre-Assembly at Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland, the participants filled bowls with gifts symbolizing what may be shared in the Lutheran communion and beyond. © LWF/T. Rakoto

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Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko © LWF/H. Putsman Penet

Each year, governmental, non-governmental, civil society and church organizations around the world set aside one day to recognize women's achievements and the challenges that hamper equitable gender progress.

The 2010 International Women's Day celebrations around 8 March provide an opportunity to critically reflect on the suggested theme, "Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all." What does this slogan invoke for churches and partner organizations of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF)? As we journey together toward the Eleventh Assembly next July in Stuttgart, Germany, how does the Assembly theme "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread" link with the life-sustaining issues that women and men bring to the LWF table?

The prayer for "our daily bread" is a petition for inclusive bodily and spiritual sustenance for all—not for some, as sadly reflected in today's reality. It also challenges the LWF's understanding of leadership from the biblical concept of vocation and priesthood of all believers. Bread for "only some" undermines our witness to the gospel and our ability to participate in God's mission.

This special edition of *Lutheran World Information* (LWI) helps us to look back at some milestones and focus on critical challenges ahead.

Less than three percent of the delegates at the 1947 LWF founding Assembly in Lund, Sweden, were women. Subsequent discussions about women's leadership and the understanding of ministry at regional, national and local levels have seen women's participation at the LWF's highest decision-making body increase slowly but significantly. Today, women are ordained as pastors in more than 75 percent of the 140 LWF member churches globally; they lead as bishops, presidents and in other positions; half of the delegates to the Stuttgart Assembly will be women. Emphasis must be made—this is not only a "women's issue"—it is about understanding the being of the church and its public witness.

However, we are still far from the universal goal of equal rights and opportunities that ensure progress for all. Efforts must continue to hold the LWF and its related institutions accountable for securing women's presence and participation in decision-making spaces.

The stories in this *LWI* edition are grouped around our core identity—a "spiritual and sacramental," "confessional," "witnessing" and "serving" communion. The LWF is part of a spiritual and sacramental communion, where bread is understood to feed the body and soul, where Christ remains

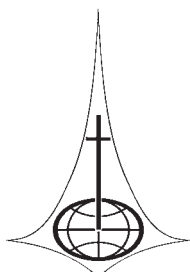
in the community. As a confessional communion, we bring to the ecumenical dialogue table our conviction that women and men need to be heard as we seek Christian unity.

A witnessing and serving communion too, as we work alongside those in need, providing concrete assistance: solar light for communities in Mauritania; micro-credit to women in Bolivia; education on female genital mutilation in Tanzania; and advocacy against women's trafficking in Europe.

The liturgy in this publication offers creative ways to celebrate the mutual sharing and nurturing that characterize our relationships throughout the communion.

I invite you to use all these insights to constantly challenge the practices, traditions and structures that impede women's full participation at the table—in church and society. We must not lose the momentum until daily bread is secured for all.

Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko  
General Secretary  
The Lutheran World Federation



## OUR DAILY BREAD Voices from the Regions

*Women throughout the Lutheran communion pray for daily bread in distinct voices. Yet there is unity in their petitions to God. Bread and justice are inseparable. They cry out for: food for their families; places at tables of decision-making in church and society; justice for the poor; schools for children; freedom for trafficked women and girls; understanding of the sacredness of food. Listen to the voices of women in our global family and you hear the Lord's Prayer anew.*

### Argentina: A Plea to Listen to the Poor

In Argentina, 33 percent of the population of around 40 million people lives below the poverty line, and in the north of the country, 61 percent are impoverished. The church here demands justice and equal access to food so that people do not have to rummage through rubbish dumps or

become "clients" of politicians, who are "seeking votes" in exchange for a bag of food.

In Latin America the petition for food is also a plea for a place at the table, where the poor can be heard, listened to and understood. "Give us today our daily bread" is to have

faith and hope that God will see us and listen to us in order to feed us physically and spiritually.

*Ms Graciela Gonzalez from the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in (Argentina) is the WICAS coordinator for the Southern Cone of the LWF Latin America and Caribbean region.*

### Poland: Prayer for Women's Ordination

No one is excluded in the prayer for daily bread. Everyone should get what they truly need so that they can feel secure and look with hope to the future. I also understand it as a task for each of us to take responsibility in society by working for equality, justice and peace.

In many cases, churches are also responsible for maintaining unfair structures and treatment by failing to fulfill the requests which we put in our daily prayers to God.

I wish women could be ordained in the church in Poland. I wish that

we might then listen to one another and find solutions together so that at the end of the day no one would go to bed hungry in our society.

*Ms Ewa Sliwka is director of the consistory of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland.*

### USA: A Young Adoptee and "Daily Bread"

I was adopted from South Korea at the age of six months. As a teen, I was blessed to meet my biological father—a rare occurrence for Korean adoptees. He told me that I am the youngest of five girls. In many Asian cultures, it is a preference to have a male child.

Since I was a girl and my biological father, a rice farmer, could not

provide the daily food, other nourishments, and education opportunities, I was given up for adoption.

Growing up in the United States, I have never wanted for daily bread and have been blessed with education, a wonderful family, and incredible opportunity. I have graduated from college and I am working for justice

for women. My experience of the injustice of simply being born a girl has encouraged me to work to ensure women in all places have daily bread.

*Ms Mikka McCracken is an intern with the Justice for Women Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Chicago, Illinois.*



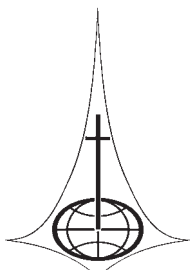
*Ms Graciela Gonzalez*  
© Private



*Ms Ewa Sliwka*  
© LWF/E. Neuenfeldt



*Ms Mikka McCracken*  
© LWF/T. Rakoto



## Tanzania: Concern for Poor Households

As a woman, wife and mother, I understand the prayer as a petition to God for sufficient food for both the body and the spirit for my household.

As director for women's work in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

Tanzania (ELCT) my concern is for women in poor households, where access to food is limited for financial reasons.

As a church member I believe in abundant life—not just surviv-

al—for church members, and that means sufficient food for both body and spirit.

*Ms Rachel B. Ramadhani is the ELCT women's desk director in Arusha, Tanzania.*

## Great Britain: Restoring the Intrinsic Value of Food Is a Major Challenge

As a church leader in the "West," living in a country that is overflowing with cheap food, the challenge is to restore the intrinsic value of food in people's lives. Because food is inexpensive, readily available and mostly grown and processed by others, it

no longer has the sacredness or value that it had for previous generations.

This makes us remote from our brothers and sisters in other parts of God's world, and reduces our sense of awe at God's creative grace. We need

to regain our sense of the "dailiness" of bread, and of God's grace.

*Upon her consecration in January 2009, Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga, became the first woman head of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain.*

## South Africa: Nutritious Meals Are Critical for Sustaining Families

Bread has the power to connect people the world over. Within the marginalized countries food is the source of sustenance, of life. Bread is also important as a physical or spiritual symbol to the Christian community.

The provision of food is culturally acceptable and balanced meals

are critical. These nutritious meals should be easily accessible and affordable so that women are able to sustain their families. Spiritually bread is seen as a sustaining and life-giving-presence, according to Matthew 4.

As an African woman, I understand that women are producers, keepers of traditional knowledge and

preservers of bio-diversity. Women prepare and maintain sustainable, healthy food. For food security, bread is a must.

*Ms Colleen E. Cunningham, a member of the Moravian Church in South Africa, is the WICAS coordinator for the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA).*

## Taiwan: A Petition to Share Knowledge and Power

The petition is not only about food. It also has to do with sharing knowledge and power.

Many women are not given the opportunity to serve in high positions to demonstrate the capabilities they have.

Men can lead because in patriarchal cultures they are oriented to

become leaders since they are given the opportunity to acquire needed experi-

ence. But women, even when they are more qualified than men, are disqualified due to lack of experience.

*LWF Council member Rev. Selma Chen was among the first women to be ordained in the Lutheran Church of Taiwan, Republic of China in 2004. She is a pastor of the Shiquan Lutheran Church in the southern city of Kaohsiung.*



*Rev. Selma Chen © LWF/E. Neuenfeldt*



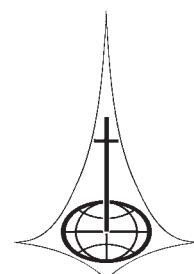
*Ms Rachel B. Ramadhani  
© LWF/E. Neuenfeldt*



*Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga  
© LWF/E. Neuenfeldt*



*Ms Colleen E. Cunningham  
© LWF/T. Rakoto*



## Sweden: How Does Daily Bread Get on the Table?

We have to raise the question of who has the responsibility of getting daily bread for the family.

How did the daily bread get on the table? How is it produced, distributed and bought?

I understand the issue of sex work and trafficking to be connected to “daily bread” because many women are forced to offer their bodies to give life to their families. On the other hand, bread in a wider

sense is not only about surviving, it is about life.

*Rev. Bella Aune is an ordained pastor of Church of Sweden. She serves in the Bredaryd parish in Vaxjo Diocese, southern Sweden.*

## Canada: Creating Opportunities for Women

As a bread baker, I love trying new recipes, from *pita* to *injera*, dark rye bread to baguette, *chapati* to *pupusas*. I like to bring the world into my kitchen. My experience of living in different places around the world, particularly with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) country programs, has given me opportunities to sit beside women preparing their “daily bread”.

Through the help of LWF programs, women as far removed from each other as Mauritania and Cambodia have learned to plan for the year ahead, deciding to raise chickens, to

plant banana trees or to sow vegetable seeds. They have also learned to work for access to land, water wells, schools for their children, and health clinics for the whole village.

And so “daily bread” includes for me, as it does for these women, everything needed for this life. As Luther said, life involves food and clothing, home and property, work and income, a devoted family, an orderly community, good government, favorable weather, peace and health, a good name, true friends and neighbors. I have these things at hand. For my

friends in the remote villages of Mauritania and Cambodia, so little of it is readily accessible. I pray that I may at the very least assist with some of their daily needs as a true neighbor.

*Ms Margaret F. Sadler, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, attended the October 2009 LWF Women’s Pre-Assembly as a lay delegate.*

*Ms Elizabeth Lobulu, ELCT communication coordinator and LWI African region editor, conducted the “Voices from the Regions” interviews at the October 2009 Women’s Pre-Assembly.*



*Rev. Bella Aune © LWF/T. Rakoto*



*Ms Margaret F. Sadler © LWF/T. Rakoto*



*Ms Elizabeth Lobulu © LWF/H. Putsman Penet*

## Message from the Women’s Pre-Assembly

Lutheran women from around the world gathered in Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland, 27-31 October 2009, in preparation for the LWF Eleventh Assembly, identified human trafficking, women in leadership, and the right to land and food as crucial issues for the Lutheran communion.

The LWF Women’s Pre-Assembly (WPA) joined the LWF Council in rejecting the commodification of human beings for the exploitation of their labor, sexual services, forced marriage, armed conflict or organ harvesting. *(See related poem on page 11.)*

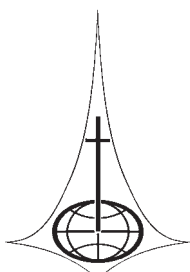
In their message to the Lutheran communion, the WPA participants called for the creation of resources to help churches reflect on and speak out against the realities of human trafficking in their contexts. The women also encouraged churches throughout the communion to insist that their governments make food security a priority, particularly as it affects women and children.

“We lament that while women worldwide remain the major producers of food, they are often the last to receive what they have produced. Food justice demands just production, distribution and consumption,” the Pre-Assembly stated.

The WPA also encouraged churches to establish appropriate rules to enable women to take up positions of leadership, concluding: “We believe that women bring an essential perspective to all types of ministry – lay and ordained – in an increasingly fractured and fractious world.”

The message from the Women’s Pre-Assembly is available on the LWF Web site at:

[www.lwf-assembly.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Assembly\\_Docs\\_PDF/Womens\\_Pre-Assembly\\_Message.pdf](http://www.lwf-assembly.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Assembly_Docs_PDF/Womens_Pre-Assembly_Message.pdf)



*Women are coming to the table of participation within the Lutheran communion. The Lutheran tradition offers unique understanding of the priesthood of all believers through baptism. Lutheran theology and biblical insights open the door to women's leadership. Still, there are challenges. Some fear the idea of women leaders. Therefore there are calls for better use of gender analysis to, not just create more space at the table, but to reshape it to intentionally accommodate the voices of women, and deepen commitment to justice and inclusion.*

### Historical Overview of Women's Participation in the LWF

In Lutheranism the understanding of leadership in the church is linked to the rediscovery in the Reformation of the biblical concept of the "priesthood of all believers". While theological insights of the Reformation may have broken the back of mediaeval clericalism, they did not alter all church practices.

Priesthood—according to Martin Luther—is founded in baptism and belief. Before God all are equal: "There is no gradation between a believing peasant woman and a bishop in terms of their sanctity or closeness to God. Both of them are priests," Luther wrote.

With that understanding of baptismal priesthood at its origins, it was only a matter of time before questions would be raised concerning women's leadership in the Lutheran communion.

The LWF has a track record regarding women's ordination and participation. Women are ordained as pastors in 103 of the 140 LWF member churches. In 1992 German pastor Maria Jepsen became the first Lutheran woman bishop in the world. Today, Lutheran women serve their churches as bishops, presidents and other positions of leadership in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America.

#### Milestones

The LWF has also come a long way with respect to women's participation in its governing bodies. It is estimated that five of the 178 delegates who gathered at the 1947 LWF founding Assembly in Lund, Sweden, were women. In 1984 the Seventh Assembly resolved that 40 percent



*Upon her 1992 installation as head of the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church (Germany), Bishop Maria Jepsen became the first Lutheran woman bishop in the world. © Andreas Laible*

of delegates to the Eighth LWF Assembly should be women, with a goal of 50 percent for the Ninth and subsequent assemblies. The Office for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) was created in 1972.

These decisions were the result of countless discussions around the world about the leadership of women in the church and the understanding

of ministry. The Lutheran concept of the "priesthood of all believers" played a key role in these debates. .

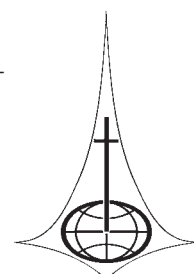
Former LWF Deputy General Secretary Ms Christine Grumm suggested women have to reshape the table "to accommodate our presence." She saw a round table community where leaders "listen to the shared wisdom of those in and outside of the institution."

As the Lutheran concept of "priesthood of all believers" broke the back of mediaeval clericalism, the Lutheran communion must create a round table at which women and men with different ministries have seats.

*Rev. Karin Achtelstetter is director and editor-in-chief of the LWF Office for Communication Services. She is an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, Germany.*



*Rev. Karin Achtelstetter © LWF/J. Latva Hakuni*



## Gender Mainstreaming Will Enhance Vision of Justice and Inclusiveness



Participants in the January 1975 Geneva meeting of the LWF Advisory Committee on Church Structures and Women in the Church included, left to right: Rev. Eva Zabolai-Csekme, LWF secretary for Church Structures and Women's Work; Oberkirchenrätin Gudrun Diestel, Hanover, Federal Republic of Germany; and Ms Sarah Kamalangombe, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. © LWF

Equal participation and leadership of women and youth has long been on the agenda of the LWF. Assembly commitments made in Budapest (Hungary) in 1984 and in Curitiba (Brazil) in 1990 have been reaffirmed in subsequent meetings. These pledges are grounded in biblical and theological convictions and in a Lutheran understanding of the mission of the church. Yet, challenges remain regarding the ways in which the Lutheran communion embraces and implements these decisions locally.

The LWF needs to develop a better understanding of gender as an analytical tool so that member churches can achieve the communion's vision of justice and inclusiveness. It is a major challenge for churches to adopt gender-based practices. Often, churches are content if there is women's participation. Yet, even when there are women leaders, there is still a "stained glass ceiling" facing women seeking higher offices. There is fear and insecurity concerning women's leadership and feminist approaches to theology and practice. A gender-based approach would provide opportunities to voice these fears and to

come to a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of women and men in church and society.

### Analytical Tool

Gender mainstreaming uses gender as an analytical tool and as a cross-cutting theme in discussions and work. It assesses the implications for women and men of any legislation, policy or program. It makes the concerns and experiences of women and men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally. Gender mainstreaming seeks gender justice in personal relationships, practices and structures of an organization.

Rigid social and cultural models discriminate against women by assigning them roles that limit access to power, social

status, labor, land and resources. Therefore, there is a connection between sharing bread and sharing power. The way we share food defines our social relations. We become allies with those whom we share the table and with whom we eat the food. If women are not an integral part of the meal—whole and comfortable at the table—the table is not inclusive.

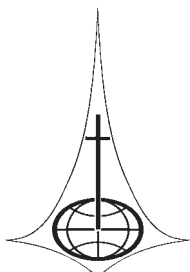
These are practical implications of being an inclusive communion in which women and men work and worship together. Praying, "Give us today our daily bread" in women's voices enhances gender justice and inclusiveness. The women, who offer vision and

accountability as church leaders, are a public testimony of our evangelical responsibility.

*Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt is secretary for WICAS at the LWF Department for Mission and Development. She is an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil.*



Rev. Dr Elaine Neuenfeldt  
© LWF/D.-M. Grötzsch





## Widowhood: Retelling Ruth's Story in the Context of Human Trafficking

For many women, especially those in the South, widowhood marks not just the death of a spouse but also degeneration into desperation. The realities of unjust global economic systems, which deprive the majority while unjustly rewarding the privileged few, have helped paint this desperation in contrasting colors. Women often find themselves among the most desperate in this large category.



Dr Fulata Mbanjo-Moyo  
© LWF/T. Rakoto

Among the Ngoni-Tumbuka people in Malawi, when a widow sitting next to the coffin containing her spouse's remains, narrates her mourning story, *Muyeni wane!* (My beloved!), with heaving and trembling, she can envision the utter despair that this departure entails for her, her children and other dependants.

The book of Ruth in the Hebrew Testament articulates this state of hopelessness in ways that should help today's Christian reader address some important questions. How do we transform social systems that have unjustly subjected widows to such desperation that they are forced to sell their bodies for food? Why should some women consider being trafficked to another land to gain food sovereignty?

### To Secure Survival

Ruth, a Moabite, married Mahlon, probably a privileged Hebrew migrant, who offered possibilities of a better life. When he died, she decided to stay with her mother-in-law and go to a foreign land. Naomi and Ruth were two dispossessed widows who had to glean for food. Because they had no sons, they had no means of reclaiming their land.

They had each other but without a man, even this solidarity was not enough to secure their survival.

Naomi, not unlike powerful traffickers today, had to use the young, beautiful and exotic Ruth, commoditizing the latter's body in a subtle way. Ruth uncovers Boaz's feet and lies down (Ruth 3:7). While this action implies the selling of sex, the young widow hoped for a more legally-binding end that would ensure repossession of land for her mother-in-law. While Boaz was old enough to be

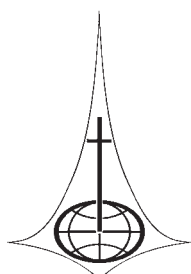
Naomi's husband, it was her daughter-in-law who might produce a male heir and win back the land.

Do we have women like Ruth and Naomi in our communities? What are their stories? How can we effectively journey with them? How can we prophetically challenge socio-economic systems that keep on making widows vulnerable? As a community of women and men, how can we ensure that we have kind-hearted and non-abusive men like Boaz who will work for gender and socio-economic justice for all?

Malawian Reformed theologian Dr Fulata Mbanjo-Moyo is program executive for Women in Church and Society for the World Council of Churches.



Ruth and Naomi in the field of Boaz, by Jan Van Scorel, Dutch Northern Renaissance painter, 1495-1562. © Jan Van Scorel



## A SPIRITUAL AND SACRAMENTAL COMMUNION

*There is deep injustice in the stark choices a woman is forced to make in her church life. Will she vacate the pulpit from which she preaches her first sermon in her home church? Should she lie about the natural functions of her body and risk harm to others? Women are created in the image of God. Jesus met with women labeled unclean. Yet patriarchal injustice persists. Women yearn for theological change alongside systemic justice and daily bread.*

### The Time Has Come for Female Lutheran Pastors in Cameroon

Grace Adjan Ngah still remembers her embarrassment the first time she stood up to preach in her congregation in Cameroon 11 years ago.

From a strong Christian family, she felt a call to ministry when her church was deeply divided on the ordination of women.

“Many people were against women’s ministry in the church,” she told *Lutheran World Information (LWI)*. “I can’t forget the embarrassment I faced when I was asked to preach in a congregation. Someone stood up and shouted at me publicly, asking me to come down from the pulpit.

“I was filled with disgrace, but not discouraged. I was convinced that the time of God for women’s ordination in my church would come.”



*Ms. Grace Adjan Ngah © EELC/Simon Djobdi*

After study and encouragement from the Lutheran World Federation, in June 2009, the 26<sup>th</sup> General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church

of Cameroon (EELC) decided to ordain women.

“We will soon start to ordain women who are theologically trained. To be sure, this will take some time because we need to prepare our people in order for this to happen in a good manner,” remarked then EELC president Rev. Dr. Thomas Nyiwe, now bishop of the church.

Ngah wept when the church made its historic decision to ordain women. “I was happy because this had been our fight and battle for many years.”

She believes the church will unite on the issue. “We will work together because we have the same concern: preaching the gospel to the world.”

*LWI correspondent Simon Djobdi interviewed Grace A. Ngah for this feature story.*

### The Church Must Challenge Theological Systems of Patriarchy

As women, many of us hunger, praying, “Give us our daily bread.” Food scarcity has a gendered face. Women and girls are disproportionately hungry. This fact is deeply rooted in the systemic sexism of male privilege based in patriarchy. We are also hungry for justice.

We are hungry for shifts in our social systems and in our theology that would give us the bread of justice. We are called to challenge unjust systems that cause all manner of hunger, physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional.

Challenging the patriarchy—in which we all participate—means asking critical questions about our cultural habits. After a professional football player was arrested for abusing dogs in the United States, one commentator noted the relative public silence when professional athletes kill, rape, and abuse women.

Asking why women and girls are hungry for food and hungry for justice and answering theologically is the church’s responsibility. Two central themes ground Lutheran work to address social and theological systems of patriarchy: justification by grace through faith and our theology of the cross.

First, we are justified. The promise God gives to us through Jesus

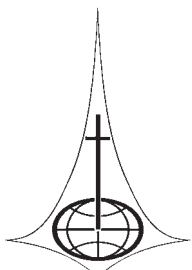


*Dr. Mary J. Streufert © Private*

Christ is that the entire cosmos has been and is being saved. As theologian Lois Malcolm notes, the concomitant judgment that accompanies this promise is a judgment against “any human attempt at self-deification that would negate or refuse the very gift-like character of the promise.”

Second, our theology of the cross means calling a thing what it is. Theologian Deanna Thompson writes, “A feminist theologian of the cross understands that the critique of any and all glory theology always contains a critique of injustices that extend beyond ecclesial walls into social structures.” Service to neighbor, she argues, is tied to social transformation because of the theology of the cross.

*Dr. Mary J. Streufert is director for justice at the Women in Church and Society unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.*



## “Take and Eat:” Women at the Eucharist Table

A young couple approached the church to baptize their new-born daughter. The immediate response was refusal, until the mother was “churched.” Uncomfortable with such a ritual, the couple lied that it had been done elsewhere, and the child was baptized.

While most churches claim that they have no policy on the issue of menstruation, hence no objection to women receiving communion while menstruating, related taboos persist and are among the most inviolate in many churches. These deeply rooted practices are part of the systems that keep women low in social status and out of positions of authority in the church.

The menstruation taboos contribute to a spiritual conflict among women—between what they have been told is divine power and their

female fertility. They make a choice between excluding themselves from sacred space or risking supposed harm to themselves or those around them. These women experience a cognitive dissonance between the exclusionary practices of the church and what they know to be right and true. They know that they are created in the image of God, body, soul and mind. They are also aware of biblical texts including the many narratives

on Jesus’ encounters with women considered “unclean.”

Without transforming the attitudes of both men and women on female sexuality and the natural bodily functions of women, a truly effective women’s movement will not be created in the church; a life in communion will not be possible. And, the Eucharist therefore, becomes a ritual symbolizing the structural evil of sexism, rather than a sacrament of unity—the sign of the presence of Christ amid the gathered community.

Until such a transformation there will be little acts of concealment and resistance, on the part of women.

*Rev. Dr Monica J. Melanchthon teaches Old Testament studies at the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute in Chennai, India. She is an ordained pastor of the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church.*



*Rev. Dr Monica J. Melanchthon © Private*

### Woman Not a Stranger

Woman, you are not a stranger  
In the world of women  
Being declared a sovereign of the soil  
Wisdom was sealed as your instrument  
For redemption to lead the world

The producer of new breath to the mother earth  
Constructor of fibred relationships  
Harmonizing unforeseen destruction and death  
So as to keep relationships away from hardship  
Thus you smile, smile, smile  
As you watch her walk down the aisle



*This child, secured to a trolley, is the son of a street woman in Windhoek, Namibia. This “is the face of human trafficking in Africa,” Ms Colleen E. Cunningham told participants at the October 2009 LWF Women’s Pre-Assembly. The woman was trafficked from the Democratic Republic of Congo, first to South Africa and then to Namibia. © Colleen E. Cunningham*

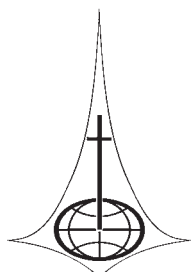
Woman, you aren’t a stranger  
Your eyes can no longer be sighted and ignored  
As you read and observe over pains inflicting through anger  
Enough is enough! You can no longer keep and watch  
The scary social ills of rape, prostitution and trafficking  
Conquering our mountain hills  
Your tears sweat and blood lubricate the endured pain  
With blessed showers of slithering rain

Woman, you aren’t a stranger  
You show your strength through hardships and burdens  
Laying down your life to save the nation in danger  
You always have solutions as life hardens  
Creator of life echoing the gospel of respect and love  
A survivor and protector, the provider for all

Woman, you aren’t a stranger  
You are defined by your beauty throughout the universe  
The shaper of the new dawn, and a golden lifestyle  
The aid you do is depicted from your sweet song of love  
Despite those who always mistreat you with anger  
Your strength always shines through the universe

Woman! Shine, Shine, Shine, for you are not a Stranger!

*This poem was compiled by Rev. Phinah Olga Kgosana, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. She is a member of the LUCSA Female Theologians’ Forum.*



## A CONFSSIONAL COMMUNION

*Women's participation in theological dialogues with other Christians has long been a priority for the LWF. Women have ensured that the focus of these important conversations has been on the concrete challenges of church and society today. Ordained Lutheran women have presided at Eucharist and been accepted and valued by colleagues. Women and men who have been involved in these dialogues insist that it continue, and be increased, to offer a glimpse of a truly welcoming table.*

### A Welcoming Table for Women and Men

When the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) sits down at a table of dialogue, we hope that the other participants at this theological feast see us for who we are: a global communion with common insights into the gospel yet diverse expressions of Christian life.

The LWF is also a communion in which theological leadership is exercised by women and men. The expecta-



*Dr Kathryn Johnson  
© LWF/H. Putsman Penet*

tion that our dialogue commissions would include women from different world regions embodies this commitment. This means that women's leadership need not always be on the table, though it is ever present as the commission prays, works and eats together.

While there are many factors that shape ecumenical dialogues, the participation of women helps to ensure

that the concrete challenges of faithful life in our churches are discussed. Dialogue commissions become communities of shared hope and reconciliation. In the eschatological banquet, we will see one another as motivated in praise by the love of God and one another.

They will come from east and west, north and south to feast at that table—women and men. Until then, we are grateful for glimpses of a welcoming table.

*As Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs, Dr Kathryn Johnson serves as co-secretary to the dialogue commissions in which the LWF is involved.*

### “Problems” Should Not Be Hidden from Dialogue Partners

I have been involved in formal ecumenical dialogue since my ordination as a deacon in the Anglican Church of Canada in the mid 1970s. It was the time when women were first being ordained in the Anglican and Lutheran churches, and the topic was ‘hot’.

My mentor in theological college was Dr Eugene Fairweather, who had been an ecumenical observer at the Second Vatican Council. He was a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) and of the Faith and Order Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC)—the preeminent ecumenist in Canada, along with Dr Jean-Marie Tillard.

Fairweather had opposed the ordination of women but changed his mind dramatically. His support made a critical difference for the Anglican Church



*Rev. Alyson Barnett-Cowan © ACC*

of Canada. To ‘put his money where his mouth was’ he invited me to be part of the Anglican Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada. I served on that group from 1977 to 1979, and then staffed it from 1991 to 2009. I credit him for my career as an ecumenist, and for following the principle that “problems” should not be hidden from our partners.

In spite of our differences over many matters, friendships among the

dialogue partners have become deep and personal.

Since 1991 I have also had a serious commitment to the relationship between Anglicans and Lutherans, working toward full communion between us. Here the ordination of women doesn't arise as an issue between us; women from both teams preside at the Eucharist and have been prominent in leadership. It is a pleasure to serve with Dr Kathryn Johnson at the helm as my counterpart for the Lutheran World Federation. Along with Nancy Irving of the Society of Friends (Quakers), we are the only women in comparable positions among the Christian World Communions.

*Rev. Alyson Barnett-Cowan is a member of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission. She is director for Unity, Faith and Order at the Anglican Communion Office in London, United Kingdom.*

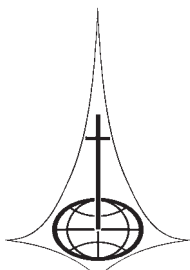
### Coming to a Deeper Understanding of Personhood

When I was a child, my parents encouraged me to do whatever it was I understood God was calling me to do. There were no limits placed on me because I was a girl. I heard and loved the

gospel and in time knew that I wanted to proclaim the good news myself.

But I also saw that this longing was going to cause problems. In college I found myself caught in a Lutheran

– Roman Catholic crossfire on the subject of women in ministry. Once a Lutheran said to me, “You're the only reason I still believe in the ordination of women.” But I couldn't theologi-



cally accept *ad hominem* arguments, even positive ones in my favor!

Amid this Western ecumenical mess, I found answers in the thinking of an Orthodox theologian, Elisabeth Behr-Sigel. While she knew and appreciated feminist critiques, she did not accept them as normative. Instead she found in Scripture, the church fathers and the Orthodox tradition aspects of the vision of the full humanity assumed by Christ. If women could not represent Christ to the church, how could Christ



Rev. Dr. Sarah Hinlicky Wilson © Private

represent women before his Father? But he could and he did. Behr-Sigel led me past essentialist views of

men and women to a deeper view of personhood. Men and women are persons because God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are persons too.

It turns out that my formation as a minister and theologian also has been preparation for dialogue with the Orthodox churches.

*Rev. Dr. Sarah Hinlicky Wilson is a consultant to the Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission. She is assistant research professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France.*

### Challenging Yet Rewarding Experience

More than ten years on, I can say that being involved in the bilateral Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity has been a challenging yet rewarding experience. Still, it has been much different from the flexible diversity that characterized my previous multilateral work with the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

When I first came on the commission, the discourse and culture was marked by a style of communication that reflected ecclesial and/or academic hierarchical structures. The tone might have been congenial but a woman's



Dr. Turid Karlsen Seim © Ola Sæther

voice was not easily heard nor included in the referential patterns.

A change toward a more inclusive design takes time and requires perseverance as well as ingenuity. It is also a matter of reaching a critical mass. Without assuming that women are of one mind, the increasing number of able women involved in this and other dialogues gives me good reason for hope. In this particular case there is, however, a structural limit that cannot be altered unilaterally. Thus the ordination of women has since 1994 not been subject to dialogue.

However, the fact that during the commission meetings, with all members present, an ordained woman presides at a Lutheran Eucharist bears witness to the Lutheran conviction that the ordination of women is right and non-negotiable. Accordingly, in the introduction to its last document, *The Apostolicity of the Church* (2006), the Lutheran members of the commission unanimously emphasized "that when the text speaks of 'ministry' they have in mind men as well as women as office bearers," thus charging the document with inclusiveness.

*Dr. Turid Karlsen Seim served on the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity (1995-2006). She is director of the Norwegian Institute in Rome, Italy.*

### Our Differences Are Not Church-Dividing

As a Reformed minister and theologian, I have had the privilege of serving the church in a variety of ecumenical endeavors and have seen significant steps forward. I say this after many years of involvement in ecumenical relations with the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

I am currently co-chairperson of the Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission. The commission's mandate is to monitor and advise upon Lutheran and Reformed relations around the world, with a view to our moving toward more visible unity. It meets in different regions to learn about these relations through discussions with

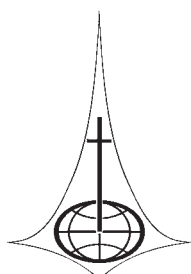
church leaders and visitation in local churches. We bring greetings, good will, fresh ideas and encouragement for the churches' work for unity.

Many different models are emerging:



Rev. Dr. Anna Case-Winters © McCormick

- In France, Reformed and Lutheran churches have formed one synod.
- In Buenos Aires, Argentina, Protestants attending the same seminary take only one or two denomination-specific courses.
- In Germany, there are many United churches and commitment to develop union churches.
- In Namibia, most church justice and charity work is done together.
- In the United States, we enjoy pulpit and table fellowship and orderly exchange of ministers.



The commission is also engaged in substantial theological exploration and is preparing a final report that will illustrate points of convergence and diversion; present a variety of models

for unity from around the world; and articulate the biblical and theological foundations for a conversion to unity.

Our differences are not church-dividing.

*Rev. Dr Anna Case-Winters serves as co-chairperson of the Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission. She is a theology professor at McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, USA.*

## Call for Discernment about Women's Role in Ecumenical Dialogues

After two years of involvement in the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission, I appeal to churches to keep women involved in these important ecumenical dialogues.

Dealing with the condemnation of Anabaptists as articulated by the Augsburg Confession in the context of the two different faith communities was a challenge. Despite the fact that there were only two women on the commission, I was astonished by the recognition of each member. We were encouraged to participate actively. We listened to all presenters and discussions were welcome, particularly on baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Augsburg Confession and Anabaptist persecutions by Lutherans. I finally realized that we are equally gifted by the Holy Spirit and belong to the household of the Lord, whom we all serve. This new understanding brought me closer to



*Ms Hellen Biseko Bradburn © MWC*

my Lutheran brothers and sisters in Christ.

On a daily basis, both men and women led prayers, prepared from Bible readings. As a woman I experienced a sense of acceptance, value, responsibility and belonging in the vine yard of the Lord.

In addition, I was impressed by the presentations on the historical and theological issues raised by the confessional writings. Both Lutheran and Mennonite members of the study

commission understood the purpose of the dialogue to be in the context of Scripture, and therefore discussion progressed peacefully. At all stages, as women we experienced a sense of value and responsibility with our colleagues on the study commission. There was unity between the men and women participating in the dialogue.

Hence, I wish to call upon the churches to have both a spiritual concern for and discernment about the involvement of women in ecumenical dialogues whenever opportunities arise. Together we serve the Lord and we have a variety of gifts to bring to the church of God.

*Ms Hellen Biseko Bradburn served on the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission (2005-2008). She is a former consultant on women's development for the Mennonite Church of Tanzania.*

## Increased Women's Participation Will Benefit Ecumenical Efforts

The inclusion of women theologians—lay and ordained—in ecumenical dialogues has been a priority for the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for many years. It was a well established practice before my time as a staff person in the Federation, between 1997 and 2006. And it was in no way controversial within the LWF Council, which appointed the dialogue commission members. Most of our partners in the bilateral dialogues, such as the Adventists, Anglicans, Mennonites, Reformed and Roman Catholics, took for granted that women theologians would be part of their delegations.

Unfortunately, women were always a minority in the dialogues. We were never quite able to reach the level of at least 40 percent women representation

that the Council had indicated as appropriate. Our churches have not until recent years trained as many women academic theologians as men. There were fewer women than men to choose between.

Still, the participation of women theologians was an important factor in the dialogues in which the LWF was involved. Ordained Lutheran women presided at alternating confessional worship services whenever possible. Women's participation in the dialogues seemed entirely natural. I am very grateful for having had the experience of working with so many women

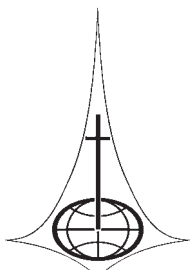


*Rev. Sven Oppegaard © LWF/H. Putsman Penet*

theologians. I much appreciated their sharp insights and personal and academic integrity.

I feel confident that since women will likely fill larger and larger proportions of ecumenical dialogues in the years to come, this will benefit those highly important ecumenical efforts.

*As Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs at the LWF (1997-2006), Rev. Sven Oppegaard served as co-secretary to the dialogue commissions in which the LWF is involved. He is deputy general secretary of the Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, Church of Norway.*



## A WITNESSING COMMUNION

*A tsunami wave hits India. There is need for energy in Mauritania. Poverty marks the lives of marginalized Bolivian women. Female genital mutilation is practiced in Tanzania. When natural and systemic disasters strike, women are hit hardest, and women lead in working for change. LWF-supported programs and projects throughout the world recognize this and collaborate with women, bringing hope in the shape of new homes for tsunami victims; solar energy for communities; micro-credit for women entrepreneurs; and education to counter female genital mutilation.*

### A Home and Pride at Last

Chandra Palanisamy, a 52-year-old fisherwoman, eked out a decent life in the Dalit settlement of Kayalpattu village in India's southeastern district of Cuddalore. A widow, she raised her children on her own.

The village is just four kilometers from the sea. When the December 2004 killer tsunami struck India, the waves decimated the community's entire livelihood. Chandra lost her house and all her belongings.

But thanks to the work of the LWF Department for World Service (DWS) in India, "There is a roof over my head and I feel safe," says Palanisamy, visibly proud of her new home.

In Adinaryapuram, another Dalit community village in Cuddalore, Jayamani Venugopal, a 35-year-old widow, struggled to raise her daughter on her own, suffering from persecution because she was a woman, a widow and a Dalit.

Refused land to build a house because she rejected her father-in-law's sexual advances, she built a tiny hut



Mr Thangavelu Prabu  
© LWF/DWS/LWSI

of coconut palm leaves located on low-lying land, without toilet and sanitation facilities. It was flooded annually and most of her income went to into paying for reconstruction loans.

Through the DWS associate program – Lutheran World Service India (LWSI) post-

tsunami intervention in the district, Venugopal and her daughter live in a low-cost multi-hazard resistant house with a sanitary toilet. Community members intervened and ensured the widow got a small plot of land.

Venugopal and Palanisamy are making a new life for themselves and their families after the devastating tsunami, thanks to LWSI's efforts.

*This feature article is edited from a report by Mr Thangavelu Prabu for LWSI.*



Ms Chandra Palanisamy and her children enjoy a quiet family moment at their new home in Kayalpattu village, Cuddalore, India. © LWF/DWS India

### Women Solar Engineers Bring Light to Mauritanian Villages

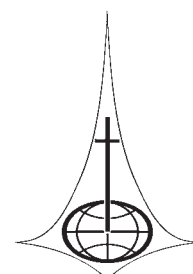
Four women from three desert villages in the Trarza region, southwestern Mauritania have helped to bring a new way of life to their communities after training as solar engineers.

Today, women in remote villages can cook on improved stoves by solar

lamp light; children are able to do homework in the evenings; lighting bills are more affordable; and women hold night meetings in good light.

Through a project supported by the LWF/DWS Mauritania country program, the women were sent

to the Barefoot College in Tilonia, India, for a six-month training in 2008. They included Fatimetou Aleyoute from Mufth-El-Kheir; Salka Meissara from PK 48 El-Jesira; and Aichietou Mkhailig and Bowba Brahim from El Garva. All of them





Women solar engineers Salka Meissara (left) and Bowba Brabim (right) set up a solar panel in southwestern Mauritania. © LWF/DWS Mauritania

came from poor communities and were illiterate; and none of them had travelled abroad before.

Yet within weeks of returning to Mauritania they had managed to set up a solar electricity system for the three small villages of about 50 households each.

They did not work alone. Each of the communities had elected a local

committee, agreed on a monthly amount to be paid to maintain the system, opened a bank account and built a small workshop for the engineer.

In return community members received one 37 watt solar panel, one 12 volt battery, one charger, two nine watt lamps and one solar lantern.

Meissara sums up the various advantages of the solar project. “We

now have day and night lighting that enables us to manage time effectively in view of home work for school-going children; and the community’s chores in the evening and at night. The accessibility to mobile telephone chargers facilitates not only contacts by telephone but consequently also reduces the amount of money and time that would be spent on road transportation.”

Many other villages have expressed interest in this pilot project.

*Ms Houleye Tall, DWS Mauritania program coordinator provided this report.*



Ms Houleye Tall  
© LWF/DWS Mauritania/Paula Laajalhti

## Bolivian Micro Credit Program Benefits Entire Family

In August 1995 the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church launched a farm credit program called Crédito Agropecuario to benefit the rural population around the Lake Titicaca area.

The following year we extended our activities to the cities of El Alto and La Paz, renaming the program “Programa de Crédito.”

Our goal is to provide loans for the neediest people in these areas, who do not have access to legally established banks so that they can purchase raw materials for small enterprises in order to improve their homes.

An assessment of the program established that the majority of the clients were migrant women from the rural provinces, setting up businesses such as used clothes’ shops, food and grocery stands, artisan workshops and dress making businesses. By the

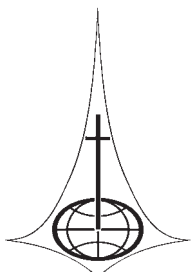


Members of a women’s group supported by the Bolivian Lutheran church discuss common issues at a meeting. They cultivate vegetables in greenhouses, providing food for the family and for marketing. © LWF/J. Schep

end of 2006, this category comprised 60 percent of the total loans.

The loans we provide are important because of their significant contribu-

tion to family income and well-being, and this transcends to the women’s participation in decision making in the family. Our clients include widows and







Rev. Luis Cristóbal Alejo Fernández  
© ALC/Nilton Giese

women who have been abandoned by their husbands or whose husbands are ill, and are therefore playing the role of mother and father to their children.

Most of the clients operate from working class neighborhoods as informal traders. The individual loans go to small investments in seasonal activities such as Christmas, New Year carnival, the beginning of the school year, civic celebrations, Mother's Day, capital increase and trips to international fairs such as the one in Desaguadero, located on the border between Bolivia and Peru.

The loans range from USD 50 to a maximum of USD 350 with a personal guarantee. Potential beneficiaries are expected not to be with any other financial institution. Photocopies of personal identification papers, drawing of residential location and local sales point, as well as photocopies of utility bills are also required.

Our resources consist of funds deposited by individuals, which earn interest at a contractual rate.

*Rev. Luis Cristóbal Alejo Fernández is president of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church.*

## Efforts to End Cruel Initiation Rite in Tanzania

Female genital mutilation (FGM) continues to torture years after the ancient practice—involving the removal of a part, or all, pulling, or stitching, of the female outside genitalia—has been performed.

A 17-year-old first-time mother from northern Tanzania talks about difficulties caused by the brutal female cut she was subjected to five years earlier.

“I went back to the hospital a week after delivery because I could not hold urine. The doctors had tried to help me, yet in vain. I had two surgeries. The doctors told me that it is because of the effects of female genital mutilation I had when I was 12 years old.”

There are many side effects: too much bleeding, which can lead to death; unhealed scars that turn into wounds that make giving birth or sexual intercourse difficult; and potential ruptures of the urethra or anus, especially at child birth. FGM also inflicts long-lasting medical, social and psychological effects.

Most African societies have been carrying out FGM for generations. In Tanzania, it is widespread in the northern and central regions, and is performed on girls at puberty together with initiation rites to mark their cultural identity and prepare them for adulthood.

Today, the Tanzanian government and church condemn FGM, with



Community-based activities involving women and girls can serve as awareness raising forums for education about FGM. © LWF/DWS Tanzania/J. Stephens

both carrying out awareness-raising programs about the practice at institutional and community level. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) in collaboration with professionals such as theologians, law-

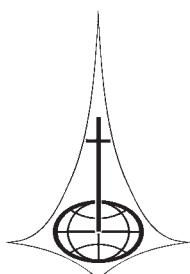
yers, health care providers and social workers provides a variety of seminars and educational materials about the effects of the practice, its relationship with HIV and AIDS, family and community life and theology.

In the northern zones of Arusha, Kilimanjaro and Manyara, where there is a high FGM prevalence, the ELCT women's desks incorporate relevant lessons in the church lectionary to be used in congregations throughout the month of August every year.

*Rev. Dr. Elieshi Mungure is an ELCT ordained pastor, currently teaching theology at the Makumira University College of Tumaini University in Tanzania.*



Rev. Dr. Elieshi Mungure  
© LWF/Fredrick Nzwili



**A SERVING COMMUNION**

*Woman, you are not a stranger. And yet often in Latin America or in Europe, you are treated as an outcast—even when you are in your own country. You are forced into sex work after promises made to you are broken. Thankfully, sometimes when you reach out, the church is there to help. Yet its efforts are not sustained and there is still so much more to be done before we can truly say: woman, you are not a stranger.*

**Colombia: Refugees in Their Own Country**

Aida Luz, a mother of four children, is one of the 3 million Colombians who have been forced to flee their homes in the South American country due to the conflict that has raged there for more than 40 years.

“As an internally displaced person, I am treated like a second-class citizen. Some employers won’t hire me just for being displaced, while others pay me much less for my work. For us it is even harder to make ends meet,” she says.

Thanks to a project managed by the LWF/DWS Colombia country program, internal refugees such as Luz can improve their agricultural endeavors and support their families.

The project in the central municipalities of Sylvania and Soacha supports 52 women, all of whom have farming experience. However, they require assistance to buy tools and gain new knowledge on how to cultivate crops organically on small



*Mr Henrik Halvardsson  
© Church of Sweden/Magnus Aronson*



*Aida Luz looks out over Soacha from the hills of Alto de Cazuca.  
© LWF/DWS Colombia/Henrik Halvardsson*

pieces of land in an urban setting. This will offer them an improved diet and have a positive impact on their families’ health.

It will also provide the women with much needed extra income as they will be able to sell their tomatoes, potatoes, onions and other produce. By strengthening the women’s association, the participants will also play a positive role in their local communities.

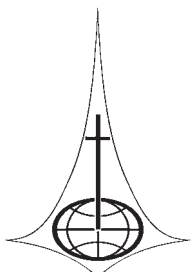
*Mr Henrik Halvardsson is DWS Colombia’s information officer.*

**Germany: An Incredible Odyssey with a Happy Ending before Christmas**

Hope, a 22 year-old Nigerian who had been promised paradise, was instead forced into the hell of sex work in Germany. While she was compelled to serve the sexual wishes of countless men, others pocketed the profits.

The police located her only months later. Instead of helping, they wanted to detain her on the grounds that she was an illegal resident. Terrified, she went underground, managed to survive, eventually fell in love and got pregnant. In her distress she turned

to a local immigration department but when the officials came across her arrest warrant, Hope landed in prison. She bore her child under inhumane conditions, her feet fettered during the 10 hours of labor. She named her son Blessed, but she



could not keep him. He was placed with a foster family.

Hope lost all hope. Why could she not look after him? She yearned for the day when she could be released so that she could take care of her son. She finally packed her bag to leave but first had to give evidence in court against her traffickers. Frightened that the latter would go after her, she did not tell the full truth. The judge accused her of lying and sentenced her to a further stint in prison. Hope was completely confused. She had never done anything wrong and had been at the mercy of traffickers of human beings. She went back to jail and remained separated from her son.

It took six months for a determined lawyer to succeed in securing Hope's release. Then things happened quickly. She took a room near the foster family and spent every day with her child. Next, the battle against bureaucracy started. The authorities were uncertain about what to do with this case. Hope went as far as obtaining documents from Nigeria at great expense, and the child's German father also tried his best, before Blessed was finally recognized as a German national.

What happened in mid-December was like a miracle. The immigration department granted Hope a residence permit, enabling her to stay in Germany and even receive support. Shortly before Christmas she received permission to move into her own apartment. The odyssey had ended.



Ms Doris Köhncke © Private

Together with little Blessed, now more than one-year-old, she could finally start to live a normal life.

Ms Doris Köhncke is director of FIZ, an information and advisory center in Stuttgart that has been counseling and accompanying victims of trafficking and

forced sex work for almost 25 years. The women come from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, looking for a better life in Germany. Many are forced into sex work, sold to pimps, locked up, beaten, raped and humiliated. FIZ, which is supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, assists the women and girls in making a new beginning in German society, or in returning to their home countries.



Two participants in an African dress fashion show aimed at affirming women's dignity and self-esteem. © FIZ

## Europe: Churches Oppose Trafficking in Women

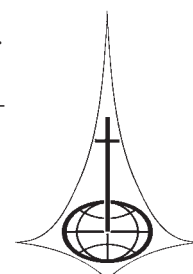
Trafficking in women is not a new phenomenon in Europe.

It attracted attention in the 1970s, when women, mostly from Southeast Asia or Latin America, were brought to Western Europe by force or lured by false promises. Upon arrival, they

were exploited sexually and as cheap labor.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the resulting socio-political consequences, the problem became ever more visible. In the early 1990s, a growing number of women from

the eastern and southeastern European states found themselves lured into the hands of human traffickers who were often friends or relatives. They were enticed by the prospects of employment but ended up in slave-like conditions, forced into sex work



or exploited as domestic servants or farm laborers.

The churches took up the issue in the mid-1990s. Toward the latter part of the decade, they had started developing a more comprehensive approach theologically, sociologically and politically.

In Germany, this was demonstrated by the Evangelical Church of Westphalia in the context of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, or the working group on sex work and human trafficking of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) social service agency, Diakonisches Werk.

The Italian Protestant churches mobilized congregations and migrant

services against trafficking with their "ruth" project. The Romanian association for inter-church cooperation, AIDRom, started working for the prevention of trafficking and the reintegration of the women. In the Czech Republic, the Roman Catholic charity Caritas took the lead in victim care and prevention.

## Networking for Advocacy

From 1999 the churches began integrating their advocacy structures on this issue. The Conference of European Churches (CEC) organized an international consultation in Driebergen, Netherlands, which described trafficking in women as



*Dr Torsten Moritz © Private*

a challenge to the region's churches. CEC held seminars on the topic until 2003, seeking to raise awareness in the churches throughout the different regions in the continent.

Since 2003 the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) has conducted networking projects aimed at sharing expertise and creating a structure through which churches can cooperate on advocacy for victims' rights. The CCME also strives to influence policy on human trafficking at the European Union and the Council of Europe.

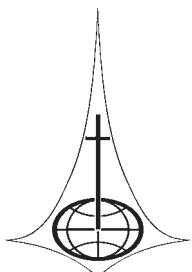
Much remains to be done with respect to the rights of victims—at both national and the European level: political actors and international organizations' programs rarely take up the legitimate interests those concerned to make their own decisions about their future, let alone provide compensation for them.

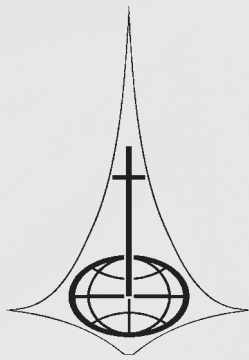
Unfortunately, church response often is not long-term. There are very few cases in which the immediate "shocked" reaction to the trafficking of women leads to sustainable, effective structures to combat it. Churches often want to impose various kinds of bans. While it is important to prohibit the activity and prosecute the offenders, it is equally critical to develop a commitment that seeks comprehensive moral responses, in collaboration with the individuals concerned, taking into account the complex realities of their lives and the causes of such trafficking.

*Dr Torsten Moritz is executive secretary of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe.*



*"Elena, a reflection on trafficking in women," commissioned by the Dutch Foundation of the Religious against Trafficking in Women (SRTV). © Mieke Borgdorff*





## Liturgical Material for International Women's Day

# Our Daily Bread

8 March 2010

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This liturgy is offered as an invitation to churches to celebrate International Women's Day. It can be adapted to the respective contexts.

The United Nations theme for the March 2010 International Women's Day (IWD) is: Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all.

Justice is the criteria for equality. How does this theme challenge us theologically? Today, women do not have equality of rights or opportunities because of the injustice in the world. How do we ensure equality for women in their daily lives so that we can create a just society?

Women are hungry for both bread and justice. The IWD provides an opportunity to celebrate and share good practices. Women's resistance is a sign of hope against the violation of their bodies, the destruction of nature, climate change, poverty, the lack of access to land, seeds and food. Sharing experiences of both pain and empowerment is crucial in overcoming adversity and moving toward gender justice. This is a moment for sharing healing and nurturing experiences in women's daily lives.

[The worship place is adorned with colorful cloths, candles, flowers and fruits. For the symbolic act of sharing empty pots, mugs, cups or bowls, participants are invited to bring a typical one from the respective regions. Different models and sizes can be provided beforehand, with each individual choosing one to share with someone else.]



## Call to Worship

We are gathered in the name of the  
Nurturing God.  
We are called to share our gifts of life, and  
the symbols  
from our different contexts and diverse  
expressions of spirituality.  
**God, our Sustainer, feed our bodies  
with strength and hope.**

These symbols serve to remind us of the presence of our relational God, who takes care of creation.

Let us now reflect on these symbols, as we bring forward various experiences, instruments and tools used by women. These women care for our people, nurture our children and preserve life in our communities, creating healing, hope and wellness, even in the midst of despair.

**God of Wisdom, we thank you for the  
breath of life in us.**

*Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show  
no compassion for the child of her womb? Even  
these may forget, yet I will never forget you.  
See I have inscribed you on the palms of my  
hands, your walls are continuously before me.  
Isaiah 49: 15-16*

**God of Healing, embrace and recon-  
cile us to strengthen our communion  
in your presence.**

**Prayer:** Let us pray acknowledging the nurturing God through nursing mothers:  
We thank you, creating and nurturing God, for sharing the secrets of creating and nurturing with nursing women. As an expectant mother co-exists with her unborn

child, You carry and commune with them in ways that only **You** can. You assure the mother of the certainty of life within her, and the baby of the mystery of life and love.

We want to thank you also for your provision to nursing mothers. We particularly thank you for providing *gaat* (porridge), prepared from barley flour.

**Prayer to acknowledge the nurturing God through nursing mothers:** We are grateful for the action of nurturing when women can take; ½ kg barley flour, ½ liter water per 100 g flour, and butter or margarine, pepper, salt, and yoghurt, to make a meal for three people.

For 10 minutes, they put the water in a pan and add a little salt. They add the barley flour gradually to the cold water and stir it energetically to avoid lumps. Stirring all the while, they leave the mixture to cook over medium heat until it becomes solid. They remove it from the stove and put it in a deep plate. Using a spoon, they make a big hole in the middle of the *gaat* to fill with warm butter (or margarine) pepper, and salt. They mix them together well and put some of the yogurt around the *gaat* and eat it while it is still hot.

As they do all this, they thank you, God, for sharing such birthing secrets with women.

And thank you also for creating barley and other produce that come from your bounty.

Yet, here we are, often so busy creating theologies and embracing spirituality that tends to overemphasize God's power as if it were devoid of love and vulnerability.

(*Gaat* recipe, see LWF cookbook – *Food for Life: Recipes and Stories on the Right to Food*, p.64)

**Response:** Kyrie Eleison (Ukraine tune).

## Call to Repentance

We acknowledge our inability to embrace the nurturing face of God, and we repent. Our daily actions allow the dominant and powerful to flourish, even as God cares for and nourishes the needy. This practice of upholding the powerful over the vulnerable often leads us to become abusive, violent and destructive, either by acting or by failing to act.

Our pride and incapacity to feel for others makes us too full of ourselves, while at the same time, we are like empty bowls.

**Response:** Kyrie Eleison (Ukraine tune).

We are invited to offer some examples of our emptiness.

## Thanksgiving for God's Forgiving Mercy

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*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*

*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,*

*The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.*

*The LORD is merciful and gracious; slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

*He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.*

*He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.*

*For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.*

*As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.*

*For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.*

Psalm 103: 1-3, 6, 8-14.

## Assurance of God's Mercy and Healing

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Together we commit ourselves to embrace your loving and nurturing qualities as the standard for our relationship with each other as part of your creation. We will embrace diversity as your divine gift to enrich our perspectives and renewal as we journey together toward transformative and restorative justice. Yet, there are still some whose diversity is used as a justification for their marginalization and exploitation. Therefore, rooted in love, we will allow the Holy Spirit to stir us to restlessness until we seek justice together in all its forms. Go with us, loving, nurturing and just God, we pray.

The healing of our community should include physical healing, as part of our assurance of God's mercy.

Learn from how the Meru people in Kenya use the *njahi* (black beans) for the restoration of health for our brothers and sisters who are HIV positive.

The women take a cup full of *njahi*, two medium size onions, three medium size tomatoes, garlic, and a dash of salt (to taste).

With loving care, the beans are washed and put to boil, until tender. Salt is added. The onions are peeled and garlic is crushed, and both are fried, adding in the tomatoes. The cooked *njahi* is added to simmer, until the stew is thick and appetizing. The beans can be served with steamed brown rice or *ugali* (maize meal cake).

We visualize the face of our God in the actions of these nurturing women.

## Scripture readings

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Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: 2 Kings 4: 1-7    New Testament: Matthew 15: 21-28

## Reflection on the Word

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### Intercession Prayers

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#### The Feast of Life

*By Elsa Tamez, Mexico/Costa Rica*

*(Alternately in two groups)*

**Come on; let us celebrate the supper of the Lord**

Let us make a huge loaf of bread

**And let us bring abundant wine**

Like at the wedding at Cana

**Let the women not forget the salt,**

Let the men bring along the yeast.

**Let many guests come,**

The lame, the blind, the cripples, the poor.

**Come quickly,**

Let us follow the recipe of the Lord

**All of us, let us knead the dough together**

With our hands

**Let us see with joy how the bread grows**

Because today

**We celebrate**

The meeting of the Lord.

*(All)* Today we renew our commitment to the Kingdom. Nobody will stay hungry.

**Symbolic act to:** Strengthen equal and just relationships between women and men, encouraging continuing work in groups and/or communities, in partnership.

We bring our empty bowls, vessels, cups and we share these with someone else, sharing words which will fill ears, hands, arms—the whole body—with good wishes, wisdom, courage and motivation. Speak words of encouragement, vision and hope for justice. This will be a symbolic act for our commitment to work for justice and for the right of all to food and land.

**Leader:** We thank you, God, the Source of never ending love and creativity. Fill us with your love and unite us.

*Those who don't eat alone are never hungry*

*Those who share will receive*  
(Haiti saying in LWF cookbook – *Food for Life: Recipes and Stories on the Right to Food*, p. 32)

**Bakerwoman God**

*By Rev. Dr Alla Bozard Campbell*  
(*The Episcopal Church, USA*)

Bakerwoman God, I am your living bread.

Strong, brown, Bakerwoman God,  
I am your low, soft and being-shaped loaf.

I am your rising bread,  
Well-kneaded by some divine and knotty pair of knuckles,

By your warm earth-hands.

I am bread well-kneaded.

Put me in fire, Bakerwoman God,

Put me in your own bright fire.

I am warm, warm as you.

From fire, I am white and gold,  
Soft and hard, brown and round.

I am so warm from fire

Break me, Bakerwoman God.

I am broken under your caring Word.

Drop me in your special juice in pieces.

Drop me in blood.

Drunken me in the great red flood

Self-giving chalice, swallow me.

My skin shines in the divine wine.

My face is cup-covered and I drown.

I fall up in a red pool in a gold world

Where your warm sunskin hand is there to catch and hold me.

Bakerwoman God, remake me.

## Hymn

The Lord's Prayer, each in his or her own language.

**Leader:** Blessing and Sending

We embrace each other in love, reaching out to each other with our hands; left hand with palm up, in an open hand, which receives from the neighbor, and right hand with palm down, expressing our ability to give to the other. As we hold each other's hands, we connect ourselves in the web of creation; we celebrate diversity, which brings out the beauty of God, enhanced much more through diversity than through uniformity.

Let us sing and dance!

May all of you come!

Arranged in a file

May you come and dance!

Arranged in a file

May you come without feeling shame!

Well dressed, having adjusted your *tarachi*,

Having arranged your ornaments,

May you sing and dance!

Grasping one another by the hands

May you dance!

Grasping one another by the hands

May you dance!

Like the swallow which is moving his body to and fro,

Like the hawk, which is making his circles in the air,

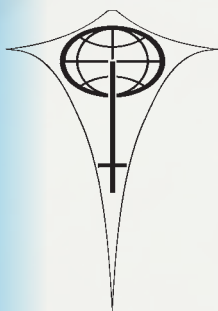
May you sing and dance!

*(From the Head-Hunters of Western Amazonas)*

## Closing Hymn

[At the end of the service, all are invited to enjoy cocktail, refreshments, coffee, tea or a fruit punch, according to the practice in various contexts.]

A group of women from the Geneva-based church organizations—Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, World Council of Churches and the LWF—jointly prepared this liturgy.



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