



LWF ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY
STUDY MATERIALS

Day Four

Having Enough



The Lutheran World Federation
– A Communion of Churches



The LWF Eleventh Assembly study material takes into account the regional focus of the meeting's worship life. Each of the six brochures includes a contribution from an LWF region on "Questions worth pondering" (p. 7); a hymn (p. 8), a feature story (p. 10) related to the assembly theme "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread," and information about some of the region's staple foods (p. 16).

This brochure is dedicated to the Africa region.

Parallel edition in French, German and Spanish

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– Quatrième jour : Avoir en suffisance

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Editing, translation, revision, cover design, layout and photo research

LWF/OCS and Michel Hourst, Terry
MacArthur and OCS intern Tsiry
Rakoto.

Texts

Bible Studies, Devotion and Village
Groups (pp. 3-6, 9 & 11-15): Erwin Buck
(Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada).
Questions (p. 7): Africa Region member of
the Assembly Planning Committee Angelene
Swart (Moravian Church in South Africa).
Feature (p. 10): Simon Djobdi (Evangelical
Lutheran Church of Cameroon).
Staple food information (p. 16): Miriam
Reidy Prost.

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Françoise Sotgui Bel Merabet
(fsb@lutheranworld.org)

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Bible Study Four: Having Enough

Give us today our daily bread (Mt 6:11)

The meaning of the word

The words “daily” and “today” in the Lord’s Prayer should be clearly distinguished. “Today” refers to a period of time, while the word “daily” signifies something that is “appropriate,” “fitting,” or “sufficient” for a time or purpose. In exploring the implications of this word, we turn to several biblical passages which speak about what is *sufficient*, what is enough for human needs.

The widow and the prophet (1 Kings 17:1-16)

Hospitality at a time of starvation

An extra mouth to feed was the last thing this woman needed. As if she did not have enough trouble keeping herself and her son alive. Since the death of her husband she was evidently the sole provider for them both. Her

food containers were empty. She had come to terms with the fact that she and her son would soon die of starvation. She now gets ready to cook her last meal, using up the last bit of the essential ingredients: flour and oil.

Then, along comes this disheveled stranger. There is a power imbalance between them from the very beginning. He takes command. “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand” (17:11), he demands. And when she affirms with an oath that she has no bread in the house and only a handful of flour and a little oil left for her last meal with her son, he insists: “first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me” (17:13). Unbidden, he has made himself the guest in her home. And he tells her what to do—for him! He challenges her to share the little that is insufficient even for her own survival. And she complies!

The rules of hospitality in every culture are very complex. Western visitors invited to an at-home dinner in certain eastern cultures

may be quite surprised to find that their hosts are not eating with them. It is the custom. More accurately: it is the law of hospitality that must not be violated. “No, no, we will not eat with you! You are our guests.” The visitors look somewhat perplexed. Are these the rules of hospitality that were in place in Phoenicia at this time, as well?

Well, even according to the rules of hospitality in his own society, the Israelite visitor (he later turns out to be a prophet) behaves strangely. He presumes to tell the host what to do and he demands to be served first. Common politeness requires that in the home of their host, guests eat what is placed before them. But the woman disregards the surly behavior of the uninvited guest. She conducts herself as the model host. She does not insult the guest, although he has been less than polite towards her. She does as he has requested. She shares her last bit of food. True, the uninvited guest had assured her that “the Lord the God of Israel” says “the jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth,” (17:14) but what is that to her, a woman of Phoenicia, the land of Jezebel? Would the God of Israel really care about her?

The hiding prophet

Elijah of Tishbe in Gilead (in Israel, east of the Jordan River) had gotten himself into bitter conflict with Ahab, king of Israel and his wife Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre in Phoenicia. They were after his life. He was in hiding, first in Israel, at the Wadi Cherith where he was fed by ravens (17:1-7), and then, after the brook had dried up, in Zarephath in Phoenicia (17:8-24).

This “prophet” is on the run. The king’s agents are out looking for him. After escaping from his homeland, he is now on foreign soil. There is some wry humor in this story. The prophet of God is seeking a hiding place (!), so God sends him to an inconspicuous person: a widow gathering sticks for fuel. There must be hundreds, if not thousands of such women in that region and nobody ever notices them; they might as well be invisible: a perfect place to hide! The prophet is in need of long-term room and board, so God sends him to a widow who is cooking her last meal and is preparing to die! The prophet had to leave his former accommodation, because there was no longer any water in the brook Cherith (17:5-7), so God sends him to a place where there is water (17:11)—but no food!

Yet, Elijah brought a threefold blessing. First, when the woman’s son became sick and was near death, Elijah’s prayers on her and her son’s behalf were instrumental in restoring her son to life and vigor.

Secondly, Elijah conveyed to the woman the promise that God would see to it that there would always be some sustenance available, at least something to survive on. When she relied on that promise and went about her daily frugal meal preparation, she discovered that that was indeed so (17:24). By the time another meal needed to be prepared, there was always “something” with which to prepare it.

But doubtlessly the most important of the prophet’s blessings was the encouragement “do not be afraid” (17:13). It is the same encouragement that Jesus so frequently addressed to people who were in dire circumstances and who clearly were very much afraid and needed to hear those soothing words of comfort.

How much is enough?

What was “enough” for the widow, her son and her guest? Clearly, none of them lived a life of abundance. They had all learned to make do with the bare minimum. All three were used to living “on the edge,” as it were. Elijah must have assured the widow frequently that frugal fare was enough for him. In his previous place of hiding, he had eaten the carrion and scraps of bread some ravens used to leave behind. No doubt the three in the house often reminded one another that at the time of the Exodus (Ex 16:1-15) the people of Israel survived for forty years in the desert on a daily fare of manna and quail—and felt that they had been sustained and had enough.

Somehow, in the home of the widow, there was always just enough. No surplus, no luxury, no overconsumption, not even any waste, but life went on in community with her son and with the prophet who would soon confront the king and demand justice.

The generous employer (Matthew 20:1-16)

Situation critical

Imagine the season of the grape harvest in the south-eastern Mediterranean basin. It is hot (20:12). The constant wind blowing in from the desert wilts everything that has leaves, and brings discomfort to every creature that cannot find a shady place in which to escape the direct rays from the glaring

sun. The early afternoon is most difficult to endure. Anyone who can, takes a long siesta at that time of day.

The grapes are at their peak. They need to be picked before they dry up on the vine or begin to rot. Grapes deteriorate even more quickly after picking. They need to be processed immediately; otherwise they will spoil over night and become useless both for winemaking and for drying as raisins. The situation is critical. The success of the entire grape harvest hangs in the balance.

Workers are in high demand. Even part-time help is eagerly welcomed. Every vineyard owner is out looking for people who are able to pick and carry grapes: women and men, youth and older people, seasonal immigrants—no questions asked, except, why couldn't I find you sooner?

We follow one employer who is eagerly scouting for harvest help. He goes out to the public square before sunrise. As the workers gather there, he makes them his offer: the usual daily wage (20:2). The owner is desperate. Again and again, all day long he keeps on going to the market place in search of hired help; not only at mid-morning (20:3), at high noon and in mid-afternoon (20:5), but even barely one hour before sunset (20:6), in the cool of the early evening. No time to haggle about wages, just "go, quickly, I will pay you well, trust me!" So they do.

Payday

This employer follows the ancient provisions (cf. Lev. 19:13) according to which laborers must receive their pay before leaving for home in the evening (cf. 20:8). This regulation demonstrates how sensitive and caring the Mosaic Law was in regard to the well-being of hired help. Day laborers are poor people. They cannot afford the luxury of budgeting for longer periods of time. Monthly or bi-weekly payment vouchers would cause immense hardship for them. These workers needed the cash now. Without it they will not be able to purchase food on the way home to feed their families. If the wage earner takes home less than a full day's pay, the family would have to go to bed hungry that night.

As the sun sets, the workers gather around the manager whose job includes keeping track of each laborer's time and performance and then doling out the money accordingly.

But now something extraordinary happens. As the workers stretch out their open hands, the manager places into each palm the same

amount: the usual daily wage. It was impossible for them all not to see what was happening. They immediately start to compare their day's take. "How much did you make today?" All had received the same pay! Incredible!

The employer, by instructing the manager to give to each laborer a full day's pay, had ensured that the family of each worker could enjoy a full meal and have a good night's sleep afterwards. What this vineyard owner had done was totally different from what was happening all across the country that night, and it would surely be talked about in many places. This employer had broken the rules of the marketplace. According to the economics practiced by this employer, the size of the paycheck was determined not by the amount of work performed for it, but by the needs of the people who depend on it. This is a truly remarkable departure from normal practice. Just wait until the business establishment hears about this! They will argue that such a practice is unsustainable and will bring quick ruin to the national economy. Who is the person who came up with such an idea? they will ask. Anyone who advocates such a "law of the market" can expect to get crucified. But wouldn't such a "law"—with the stroke of a pen—eliminate all hunger in the world? Imagine a world in which every worker is paid (or otherwise provided with) the normal daily wage, an amount necessary to sustain a decent standard of living!

Will such a "law" ever see the light of day? Well, the answer to that question depends on the answer to another question: will people ever stop thinking that they should receive more than the others did (see 20:10)?

The workers who had toiled all day would obviously be satisfied with the amount that they had received. It was precisely what they had contracted for. It was entirely just. Those workers would have gone home happy, had they not seen what some others were getting. What had appeared sufficient to them at first, began to look unjust to them when they compared their earnings with those of others.

Maybe this is really a question of justice. To those who had joined the workers in the vineyard later in the day, the employer had given the assurance that they would receive what was "just" (NRSV 20:4 translates "right"). So, was it "just" for those latecomers to receive the same amount as the others did?

It all depends on how we define justice. According to Paul (Rom 4:4), there are at least two kinds of justice (righteousness): there is the



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justice according to which reward is calculated as something *due*, and then there is the justice according to which a reward is given as a *gift*. The employer in our parable had dared to introduce the concept of justice as a *gift* (as a God-given right!) into the market place.

First and last

The parable ends with the summary comment: “So the last will be first, and the first will be last” (20:16). But how are these words to be understood?

The parable reaches its high point at the end of verse 8, when the employer instructs the manager to give to every worker “their pay,” which turns out to be not what each one has earned, but “the usual daily wage” (20:9). It is not that one gets paid more money and another less. They all get the same amounts. The chief complaint of the early comers in the parable is not that the latecomers were paid first, but that they were paid the same amount. The early comers feel cheated. “You have made them equal to us!” (20:12) *Equality* is what they object to. They do not want to be equal with the others; they want to be treated “fairly”—whatever that may mean.

So, how should one interpret these words? Think of what happens when a group of people

join hands and dance in a circle. The circle goes round and round in happy abandon. The people sing and laugh, they jump for joy, and have fun together. Who is first and who is last in this dance? The group forms a closed circle in which nobody is first and nobody is last. They are all the same. In a circle there is no such thing as a first person and a last person.

This parable is introduced with the words “the Kingdom of heaven is like.” This story is an illustration of life with God. It is a life where justice prevails. But not the kind of justice that rewards those who have and withholds from those who have not. It is the kind of justice that provides for everyone according to their needs. Is that what is meant by having enough?

This parable leaves the reader with several unanswered (and possibly unanswerable) questions. That may well be intentional. It has been said that the Bible is not a book of answers to people’s questions; it questions the answers people take for granted.

The Lord’s Prayer is a humble prayer. It does not ask for special privileges or rewards. It asks that all people may have enough, that all people may have what is needed for a decent life.

From the Africa region

Questions worth pondering

In many parts of the world starvation is an ever growing crisis.

Discuss the reasons and the consequences of the insufficient daily bread versus the over sufficiency enjoyed by a few.

Cheap labor is dehumanizing and unjust.

How can the church be advocates of fair labor practices to ensure the availability of daily bread?

How can the church be instrumental in assisting that the “jar of meal” and the “jug of oil” will be available on a daily basis to the most vulnerable and marginalized in our societies?

What do you think is the impact of not having sufficient daily bread on the spiritual life of the poor and of vulnerable people?

Discuss how the church can deal with this matter in a pastoral and diaconal manner.

Discuss “the poor always have enough to share.”



From Madagascar

Hymn

JESO LOHARANON' AINA Jesus Christ, Our River of Life

Valborg Andersen 1851-1935
Miadanadana

G. Wennerberg 1871-1901

Je - so Lo - ha - ra - no - n'ai - na, Je - so Ma - so - a - ndro - nay!
1. Je - sus Christ, our riv - er of life — Je - sus Christ, our sun and light,
2. Je - sus Christ, the bread of life, — Feed our souls, our hearts our minds.

'Zao ny fo - nay mi - ta - rai - na, Mba ve - lo - my i - za - hay!
Hear our hearts, Lord, how they be - seech you, Give us, please, e - ter - nal life!
You the Ho - ly One are the true path Guide us, teach us, lead the way.

O, sa - vao ny za - von - ta - ny Ao a - mpa - nde - ha - na - nay
Grac - ious - ly, the morn - ing mist clears as we jour - ney on our way..
Bless - ed Al - pha and O - me - ga Lord, our sav - ior, Lamb of God,

Di - a I - a - nao - i - ha - ny No ho Ma - so - a - ndro - nay.
On - ly you, Lord, give us light — You a - lone, our sun, our life.
Ho - ly Word which dwells a - mong us, Je - sus Christ, our hope and life.

English: LWF Office for Communication Services

This hymn is by Valborg Andersen (1851-1935), a missionary from Norway who taught at the "Antsahamanitra pigeasy" (Antsahamanitra Girls' School), established in 1872 by Johanna Borchgrevink.



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Devotion

Less is more (Lk 12:16-20)

“You have ample goods laid up for many years,” he said to himself, “Relax, eat, drink, be merry”

What does one do with new-found wealth? She thinks she may live long, and does not want to be a burden to anyone in her old age. He decides to place his assets into securities to outlast him. One could say that she plans *wisely*. He wants to remain independent. Who doesn't?

But this is a crisis! In a world of limited goods and an exploding population, amidst a pandemic of starvation a man locks up grain to keep it safe from others. Has he no social conscience? Is it all about his own welfare?

It is a travesty that in a world where millions of people are starving to death, a windfall profit should be used to pad one person's couch.

Then I recall what Nathan said to David: “You are the man!” 2 Sam 12:7

Prayer

O God, have mercy on us when we are preoccupied with possessions. Give us a vision of the better life that can be ours. Show us the joy of living with less so that others may have more – and all may be nourished.

Amen

“One's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions”

Lk 12:15

Feature

Lutherans in Cameroon reach out to victims of leprosy

Roulvoudji David is 42 years old and comes from Chad. For a long time, before entering the leprosarium in Foubarka, he tried to rely on traditional remedies and endured the mockery of friends and relatives. He is cured, now, but he is unable to find a wife. “I spent much time and money trying to find a wife, but the families lie to me and deny me their daughters.”

He has received no news from his family since he arrived in the village of Foubarka, located in northwestern Cameroon, but he has no desire to return home: “God has given me a new family. Here, I have found brothers and sisters who have experiences similar to mine.” Foubarka, 80 km from the city of Ngaoundéré, is not an ordinary village. It is a leprosarium operated by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (ELCC). It can accommodate up to 40 leper victims from Cameroon, Central African Republic and Chad.



A market where yams cultivated by lepers are sold, showing how they are contributing to community food security. © EELC/ Djobdi Simon

The quest for daily bread

Foubarka means “village blessed,” a name given to it by lepers to underscore the benevolent action of the church. Djimbradiyom Emmanuel explains: “Before, in my village, I was treated like a dog. I hid in the bush during the day and came back after dark to look for food in dustbins.”

By caring for lepers, the ELCC is combating social injustice; it would like all God’s children

to have enough to eat. It provides free lodging and food to 20 Christians and two Moslems.

Garbon Jeanne, who has been living here for 29 years and has five children, was cast out by her husband. For her, what the ELCC is doing is “gospel in action. It is Jesus Christ come to dry our tears and give us renewed hope.” But she is concerned about declining donations. “We no longer have enough to eat. I pray to God to give us our daily bread.”

To combat poverty is to combat leprosy

It is steadily more difficult for the ELCC to help lepers, for it no longer receives subsidies from its partners. A situation which has deadly consequences for those who are ill. Djobdi Samuel, head of the leprosarium, confirms: “Since 2007 I have buried ten of my friends. We lack medicine and food.”

The church is helping the leprosarium to become self-sufficient, in particular by purchasing agricultural land to enable lepers to feed themselves and sell surplus produce.

By frequently assisting the nurse, Roulvoudji David eventually acquired a certain medical knowledge. He helps care for patients and takes part in agricultural tasks.

Many lepers are too ill to work in the fields and remain poor. Roulvoudji David sums it up thus: “To combat poverty is to combat leprosy.”

The diaconal work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon

In some form or other, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon has always practiced diakonia. In 1925, it came to the aid of slaves during the tribal wars. Today, it comes to the aid of the sick, orphans and widows. Its Community Development Service helps farmers to achieve food self-sufficiency. It provides education for street children in reintegration centers where they receive literacy training and sewing and cooking lessons.

The theme of the day

Sufficiency

In our worship and Bible study today, we addressed the question of how much (bread) is enough. In our day of widespread starvation on the one hand, and extreme wealth on the other, how does one determine what is responsible use of the resources God has placed at our fingertips? To help us in this endeavor, we examined the story of the woman from Zarephath and the prophet from Gilead who lived at the very edge of human existence, as well as the story about the employer with a social conscience. In the devotion we also sketched the story of a person who suddenly struck it rich. What was sufficient in each case? What was unacceptable?

In the Village Groups we now address some present-day concerns that raise questions of sufficiency and excess.

Village Group 1:

Good soil – Clean water

Care of creation and economic development

Getting our bearings

➤ Please take a few minutes to talk about your experience so far this morning. What stands out for you as something to pursue further?

Can we have both?

By care of creation we mean the effort to maintain a healthy earth and provide a suitable habitat for earth's rich variety of species. Economic development, by contrast, tends to endanger the continued existence and well-being of many creatures. These two objectives, care of creation and economic development thus appear to be opposites. Does it have to be so?

➤ Please give examples of development that damages creation. Why is such "development" being pushed ahead with vigor? For whose benefit is it being promoted? Can you find an example of economic development in your region that is environmentally sensitive?

Care of creation

Life on our planet is carefully balanced. Disturbing that balance in one place of the world may have repercussions halfway across the globe when migrating birds return to their seasonal home. Humans, animals and even plants may be adversely affected.

The first mission that God assigned to humanity was to care for the environment. To serve God is to care for all of God's creation—humans, animals, rocks and vegetation, in their complex interrelationships. Humanity's future depends on the health of the environment. The care of creation is nonnegotiable.

➤ Please talk about this: What adjustments have you recently made to ensure that you will pay greater attention to the care of the environment in your daily life?

Economic development

We must rethink the meaning of development. Our limited environment cannot regenerate itself indefinitely. Development also has limits. It must be sustainable. Maximum growth or profit making cannot be its primary goal. Sustainable development brings happiness by living within one's means.

Rural development

Good farming soil is in limited supply. To dig it up to make room for construction and parking space is regrettable. Larger land holdings and the use of heavier machinery dependent on fossil fuel is counterproductive. To thrive, agriculture needs more people to pursue mixed farming as a self-sustaining style of family life.

➤ Please consider: What incentives would persuade people to take up the vocation of farming again?

Urban development

What is called development in a city often produces urban sprawl, convoluted traffic patterns and pollution. Are large cities conducive to healthy living? Cities can be more user-friendly by remaining moderate in size and providing village-like settings where neighbors know each others' names and where schools are within

walking distance. Public transportation can be so available and cost-effective that it would be foolish to drive and park within city limits. Physical and spiritual renewal of crime-ridden neighborhoods may be the most sustainable of all developments.

➤ Consider: Why are so many moving from small towns into cities? Why do immigrants prefer to flock to large cities rather than settle in small towns?

Spiritual development

Central to every renewal is the renewal of mind and heart through worship, meditation, and peacemaking—a subject that strikes a responsive chord among many young people. Here the church has a prime opportunity to call people to a more responsible and joyful exercise of their God-given privileges and to adopt a simpler lifestyle.

Signs of hope

There are signs of significant change. To “think green” is already a prominent slogan, backed by a commitment to “reduce, reuse and recycle.” Significant progress is evident in many places in the improvement of the quality of soil, water, and air. All these trends indicate that our children may yet experience a cleaner and greener world. This may be the beginning of a corporate change of mind and heart, a sign of repentance.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Rom 12:2

Village Group 2: Sowing

Genetically modified seed

Getting our bearings

➤ Please take a few minutes to talk about your experience so far this

morning. What stands out in your mind as something you would like to pursue further?

What is happening?

The subject of genetically modified organisms (GMO) is much debated. In some countries, such as the United States and Canada, genetically engineered (GE) crops are widely planted. Other countries (such as New Zealand and Switzerland) have either banned or declared a moratorium on commercial growing of GM plants.

➤ Please talk about this: What is your country’s policy regarding GM research, the growing of GM crops, and the selling and consumption of GM food?

What is GM?

The discovery of DNA made possible the modification of an organism’s genetic make-up.

Genetic engineering involves the insertion of foreign genetic material into the genetic makeup of an organism. That foreign material may be derived from the same species (*cisgenic* modification) or from different species (*transgenic* modification). Probably the best known application of the technology involves the genetic modification of food crops.

➤ Please talk about this: Do people in your part of the world have access to educational resources to be informed about how genetic engineering differs from the natural transfer of genes that takes place in plant and animal fertilization, in the grafting and cloning of trees, or in the development of newer varieties of fruits and vegetables?

Some benefits of the technology

GM technology has produced new varieties of plants that are able to resist drought, flooding, and frost, plant diseases and insect infestation. As such, they will reduce costs for pesticides, insecticides, irrigation and soil cultivation. Some are engineered to produce higher yields and make more efficient use of soil nutrients. Others

yield produce that is more nutritious and keeps longer. New and beneficial varieties of food plants can be created in this way. Some of these organisms produce insulin, hormones and omega 3 fatty acids—all beneficial for human health. Human genetic engineering can treat genetic diseases.

➤ Please discuss: What may be some additional benefits of GE? Could it become one of the ways to solve the world’s hunger crisis?

Some threats posed by this technology

Whether by design or accident, GE can introduce unwanted properties into formerly benign species. For example: GM soybeans, having been engineered by the introduction of genes taken from nuts, have been found to have allergenic properties similar to those of nuts. Certain disease-causing organisms may, as a result of genetic engineering, acquire immunity against the medicine that is currently used to control it (e.g. penicillin resistance).

The effect of genetic modification on the environment is impossible to predict. By natural or accidental cross-fertilization, unwanted GM properties can be spread far and wide. The result might be irreversible.

Farmers’ increasing preference for GM seeds will lead to the loss of many varieties whose genes will be forever lost to cultivation and research.

GM stock is patented by the research company (e.g. Monsanto, Bayer), which then is in a position to control the seed market. Farmers would no longer be able to use their own seed from year to year. This will make independent and/or biological agriculture still more difficult.

Human engineering can also affect changes in human beings that will be passed on through future generations. Is it ethically defensible to alter the future of living beings (including humans) so dramatically?

➤ What other dangers can you foresee? Is science trying to play God?

What are the options?

- Please discuss: Are the risks worth the gain? Are there possible ways to manage the risks of the technology? Or should we rather use our resources to promote and perfect the sustainable and controllable form of agriculture that has proven itself for so many centuries? Can we do both? Would you argue that genetic modification falls well within the divine mandate to tend the garden (cf. Gen 1:28-30)?

Village Group 3: Growth – Harvest

The rights of the child

Getting our bearings

- Please take a few minutes to talk about your experience so far this morning. What stands out in your mind as something you would like to pursue further?

Children have rights

Children have all the basic rights others enjoy. In addition, they need special protection as they continue to develop and grow. Jesus gave a surprisingly sharp warning to those who would harm children (Mt 18:6) but welcomed the little ones tenderly.

“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is of such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” (Mt 19:14)

- Talk about this, please: Why did society think that children were there to be exploited? What does it mean to you to think of children as having rights? How does that awareness affect the way in which you relate to children?

What are the rights of children?

The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) identifies (in 54 articles) the basic human rights of

children. Children have the right to survival, to develop to the fullest, to be protected from harmful influences and abuse, and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The primary obligation of decision makers is: what is in “the best interest of the child.” All children everywhere are understood to have these rights. Governments have committed themselves to be accountable to the international community for their treatment of children.

- Please tell your stories: What is the situation in your part of the world? How safe are the children there?

Violations of children’s rights

Violence affects children in many different settings, including the home, the school and various institutions. In all settings they may encounter abuse, bullying and discrimination.

Many children are tortured, sentenced to death, killed or maimed in armed conflicts, forced to live on the street, required to do hazardous work, orphaned (often due to HIV and AIDS), or abandoned by their parents. Many become victims of trafficking for adoption, for use as child laborers, for recruitment as child soldiers or for sexual exploitation. Often children are treated as though they were workhorses or worse: pests that must be exterminated (and in some countries homeless children ARE shot at night like street dogs).

Girls and women in addition suffer gender-specific abuses, including rape—often as domestic workers.

- Please talk about this: Who in your community defends the rights of children? Are there provisions for children to find help in emergencies? Who advocates on children’s behalf? How does the church help?

Protection of children’s rights

Safeguarding the rights of children and protecting children from harm can be quite a challenge these days. Children need adults for security, but in today’s world parents must often caution their children to be wary.

Children have the right to privacy and to have friends, but how do care-

givers make sure that the persons with whom their children communicate (on the cell phone or the Internet) are a good influence?

Everyone can be a champion of children’s rights and join with others to form support groups. Everyone can become an advocate, calling neighbors and government to responsible commitment to the welfare of children.

- Please talk about the above questions and concerns.

Hope for the future

The awareness that children have rights has led to many significant advances in their survival, health, education and protection from exploitation, abuse and violence. But there is danger that some ground may be lost due to increasing worldwide poverty, hunger, conflict, HIV and AIDS.

Our future depends on healthy and well-adjusted children. Children need opportunities to realize their potential. Children are treasures temporarily entrusted to us by a loving God.

- What can you suggest as means of celebrating the life of children? What can serve to affirm the child as an appreciated, valued, respected and fully human being?

Village Group 4: Processing what is harvested

Consumerism

Getting our bearings

- Please take a few minutes to talk about your experience so far this morning. What stands out in your mind as something you would like to pursue further?

Living with consumerism

Consumerism is a habit of buying more than is needed, with little concern about the purchased item’s quality, durability or impact on the environ-

ment. The consumer seeks happiness by amassing ever more possessions and by consuming goods. Making and spending money becomes the chief goal. Consumerism results in a shift in values away from spirituality and social concerns toward materialism, competition and individualism.

- Is consumerism rare or widespread in your country? How can you tell?
- What kind of hunger is it that makes people think that eating more, drinking more and buying more will relieve the emptiness they feel inside? What can satisfy that sort of hunger?

The threat of consumerism

Consumerism is most often associated with the western world, although poor nations, too, have their share of very wealthy consumers. Like a pandemic it can infest everyone, including those who really cannot afford what they buy. Consumers buy on credit and so run the risk of financial ruin.

Overconsumption

The consumerism lifestyle is not sustainable even though for the time being, huge economic inequalities make it possible. For example, trade agreements enable wealthy nations to import fruits and meat cheaply from countries that convert rain forests to agricultural land and pay low wages to their laborers. World Bank Development Indicators (2005 figures) report that the top 20 percent of the world's population account for 76.6 percent of total consumption. If all nations were to aspire to that standard, the earth's ecology would collapse.

- Please discuss: What are some effects of overconsumption on the environment and on poverty?

Made to break

In a consumer society, the goal of manufacturers is to bring customers back frequently to buy more. This can be accomplished by manufacturing products so that they will not last long,

or by ensuring that when they break, repairing them will be impossible or excessively expensive.

Waste

The use-and-throw-away society has an overabundance of “stuff” that must be stored or cast away. It creates mountains of often toxic garbage and ever more landfills to hold it. Some countries export garbage to countries willing to store it for a fee. This spreads pollution to places that did not produce it.

- Please discuss: Is the consumer a passive victim of consumerism, or an active participant in promoting consumerism?

Live simply!

All purchasing has moral as well as economic implications. The *responsible* shopper will buy only what is needed, and purchase goods that are organic, recycled, reused, locally produced, built to last, health-promoting and enhancing community and family life. Instead of giving gifts to friends and relatives directly, how about agreeing with them to make a donation in their name to an organization that will provide agricultural supplies or domestic animals to a poor family?

- Talk about this, please: What does the “simple life” look like in your part of the world, and how does it compare with the “simple life” elsewhere? What is a necessity and what is a luxury?

Signs of hope

The alternative lifestyle is beginning to become an attractive option for many in countries plagued by consumerism. Some markets offer an array of “green” products and ethical investment opportunities. People who choose “simple living” usually discover that by cutting back on excessive consumption they can enjoy a life that is not less rewarding, but more so—a life in which they can take time to relax, to cultivate family and community ties, and to deepen their spiritual life.

- How can the church encourage a return to greater simplicity in daily living?

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?” Isa 55:2a

Village Group 5: **Breaking the bread – Sharing solidarity**

Ecumenical relations

Getting our bearings

- Please take a few minutes to talk about your experience so far this morning. What stands out for you as something to pursue further?

Lutherans in ecumenical relationships

Lutherans yearn for unity of the Church. In the sixteenth century, Luther set out to reform the Church, not to divide it, and the enduring hope for visible unity has spurred many Lutherans to participate energetically in the ecumenical movement. Especially in times of fragmentation such as ours, the world needs a common witness to the gospel.

The LWF's ecumenical work has concentrated on bilateral theological dialogues. In 2010, there are ongoing dialogues with four partners: Anglican, Orthodox, Reformed, and Roman Catholic. At this Assembly, we will pay particular attention to results of the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission, which worked from 2005-9.

Lutherans and Anabaptists: revisiting a painful history of violence

Among the diverse reform movements in the sixteenth century were many groups which believed that Luther and others had not gone far enough in restoring right beliefs and

practices. Some called for a voluntary church composed of those baptized only when they could confess Christian faith for themselves. Their opponents called them “Anabaptists” (literally, “re-baptizers”) but—as with “Lutheran”—the groups then made the name their own. Since the late sixteenth century, most of these Anabaptists have been known as “Mennonites,” after an important Dutch leader Menno Simons. Today the “Mennonite World Conference, A Community of Anabaptist-related Churches” is the LWF dialogue partner.

This relationship poses distinctive challenges for Lutherans. While Lutheran writings, including the Augsburg Confession itself, have a number of sharp condemnations against Anabaptists, Mennonites do not have a comparable inheritance of formally condemning Lutherans. Even more serious, disagreements on issues of teaching and practice sometimes supported Lutheran endorsement of harsh persecution of Anabaptists, including their execution. While Lutherans have tended to de-emphasize or even forget this history, it is not surprising that Mennonites have preserved and honored these stories of faithful witness under persecution. These memories continue to lie between our two church families. Addressing this history could open

the way to expanded cooperation in mission, a new tone for dialogue on remaining areas of difference, and healing for a painful division among parts of the Body of Christ.

Seeking a path of reconciliation

Building on several local dialogues, the Commission’s work has led to new perspectives on the time in which both Lutheran and Anabaptist movements were emerging. Simply telling the history of the sixteenth century together, in a common narrative, is an act which itself offers a measure of reconciliation.

It is a complicated history, as many of you know from reading the Commission’s report. Lutherans were not the only persecutors; Anabaptists were executed also by Catholic and Reformed rulers. And not all Lutherans supported execution. But many did; both Luther himself and Philip Melanchthon offered theological support.

Lutherans today need to look at this history with clear eyes and honest hearts. At this Assembly it is possible to say—in language of resolutions and language of prayer—that the persecution was wrong. Simply wrong. And we contemporary Lutherans deeply regret this aspect of our history, which has continued to contribute to separation from our Anabaptist sisters and

brothers for five hundred years. Now, as we continue to honor the ways in which the Augsburg Confession and other Reformation-era writings shape our discipleship, we can also clearly distance ourselves from this aspect of our heritage.

At its Assembly in July 2009, leaders of the Mennonite World Conference expressed their desire to “walk with” Lutheran churches as we address the violent legacies on our side of the history shared with them. The next steps are ours to take.

- Please discuss: Have you had other experiences in which one generation felt called to repent for wrongs done by its forebears? What factors contributed to that perception of solidarity in responsibility? Do those situations help to illuminate this one? Are there important differences also?
- What would contribute to further reconciliation with churches of the Mennonite family? How could fuller reconciliation be lived out locally? If you know Mennonite communities, think about the gifts which each side can offer in ecumenical relationship.



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A staple food **Millet**

“The growing millet does not fear the sun.”
(Acholi* proverb)

Millet, sorghum and cassava (or manioc) are important staples in Africa. Mainly grown by small-holder farmers in environments with limited water and no fertilizers, they are seen as “poor people’s crops.”

Pearl millet was domesticated in what is now the heart of the Sahara Desert over 4,000 years ago and spread to East Africa about 2,000 years ago. Although mainly starchy, it is a “high-energy” cereal that contains at least nine percent protein, and has none of sorghum’s digestibility problems.

Both millet and sorghum may be boiled, ground (for porridges) and popped (for snacks). Their flour is used to bake unfermented flat-breads. Sorghum can be malted like barley for beer, and millet steam-cooked for couscous.

Cassava/manioc was brought from South America to Africa by Portuguese explorers. The third-largest source of carbohydrates for human food in the world, it is a major staple in Central and West Africa. Cultivated for its starchy tuberous root, it does well in poor soils with low rainfall and can be harvested as required, which allows it to act as a famine reserve.

The soft-boiled root can replace boiled potatoes or made into purées, dumplings, soups and stews, or deep-fried after boiling or steaming. Tapioca and fufou are made from the cassava root flour.

Sorghum was eaten in Egypt more than 4,000 years ago. The world’s fifth major crop, it matures quickly and thrives on very arid sites; it has the highest yield of food energy per human or mechanical energy expended. While predominantly starchy, sorghum’s protein content compares to that of wheat and maize, but sorghum is harder to process into an edible form.

* *The Acholi people inhabit northern Uganda and southern Sudan.*