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## Lutheran World Information

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## Update

GENEVA, Feb. 27 (lwi)--The human rights office of the Guatemala City Catholic archdiocese reported in December that 1067 serious human rights violations were committed in Guatemala in 1991. The report noted that "constant threats against journalists results in self-censorship and under-reporting of the human rights violations that occur on a daily basis."

... The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has 520 missionary staff, including family members, working in 190 'missionary units' throughout the world.

... A joint pastoral visit to Burundi by the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches Jan. 14-19 reported a new willingness to resolve the East African nation's ethnic problems.

... An Ethiopian peace conference organized by the country's Orthodox Church Jan. 17-19 called for the speedy, peaceful resolution of the East African nation's ethnic and religious conflicts. The conference was attended by over 300 Lutheran, Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim leaders and representatives.

... The Pacific Conference of Churches has sent a letter to the heads of European churches and church organizations addressing the issue of the Pacific region being used for the dumping of toxic waste and staging of nuclear tests.

... The total number of languages into which at least one book of the Bible has been translated is 1,978, the United Bible Societies reported Jan. 31. Estimates say there are between 3,000 and 6,000 languages in the world.

... On looking through the file held on him by the former East German secret service (the Stasi), Thuringian pastor Jürgen Hauskeller counted more than 50 informers who reported on his activities to the Stasi.

... The findings of an ecumenical delegation which visited Peru in October 1991 were presented by the World Council of Churches (WCC) "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" Unit to the 48th session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission which is meeting here Jan. 27-March 6. The delegation reported cases of serious human rights violations in Peru.

... Rev. John G. David is currently Acting President of the Arcot Lutheran Church in India.

... On the instructions of prime minister Rabbie Namaliu, Papua New Guinean authorities are refusing to issue staff of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria with entry visas, the German Protestant news service EPD reported Jan. 29. The decision is seen as a reaction to a study commissioned by the Bavarian Protestant mission society which was critical of the Ok-Tedi mine in Papua New Guinea.

... The Lutherhalle museum in Wittenberg, Germany is preparing a special exhibition, titled "The Reformer with the Hammer," to commemorate the 475th anniversary of Martin Luther's historic nailing of 95 theses criticizing the Roman Catholic papacy to the door of the town's castle church.

... The secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Maurice Strong, met with the general secretary of the World Council of Churches and the president of the Lutheran World Federation during a Jan. 14 visit to the Ecumenical Center in Geneva.



**ETHIOPIA'S RELIEF CONSORTIUM PLANS FOR BLEAK YEAR**

By Melissa Olson.

(Olson, formerly of the Lutheran World Federation Information Bureau, is communications assistant with the Ethiopian church aid consortium, the Joint Relief Partnership.)

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, Feb. 27 (lwi)--The church-sponsored relief operation known as the Joint Relief Partnership (JRP) has put forward a plan of operation for 1992 to its donors. The JRP--which comprises the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and Catholic Relief Services (CRS)--aims to help more than 2.7 million people in the coming year.

Some observers have found it difficult to believe that the number of persons in need is still growing. Sadly, many had the notion that Ethiopia's former president, Mengistu Haile Mariam, and the civil war were the only causes of hunger and famine in Ethiopia. Unfortunately, peace has brought its own set of problems. The Ethiopian government's Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner recently noted that in 1992 "more than six million people will not have sufficient food supplies."

Relief coordinators of EECMY and LWF say they have learned lessons from the severe famine that hit Ethiopia in 1984-85. They warned against delaying action "until there is an emergency situation and people are dying." Already, they claim, people in some areas are walking up to 20 kilometers a day to collect grass because there is nothing else to eat.

The JRP plan of operation says the partnership's aim is "to see that sufficient quantities of food are provided as efficiently as possible to those in need." The relief consortium says it needs more than 325,000 metric tons of grain, 26,000 metric tons of supplementary food, and 23,000 metric tons of cooking oil to carry out its program this year.

In 1991 the JRP delivered 150,000 metric tons of relief goods to Northern Wollo and Tigray by its Southern Line Operation--a series of truck convoys along a carefully designated 1,000-kilometer route that took food aid across civil war battle lines. That operation, which was started in March 1990, was halted in December 1991 as the whole of Ethiopia is now under one government. The JRP partners have reverted to their previous style of operation, which means each agency is responsible for specific areas. The EECMY/LWF is responsible for supplying aid to Wollo, Shewa, Wollega, Illubabor, North and South Omo, and Borena. The Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat is responsible for Tigray, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church will supply aid to Gondar and Gojam, and CRS will be operational in Tigray and Hararghe.

Some problems still hamper food deliveries. The situation is still tense in some parts of Ethiopia because of fighting between the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front and ethnic groups. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Ethiopia have lost trucks, cargo and even drivers to bandits on the road. Hararghe, for instance, has been virtually cut off from food aid for several months. The deteriorating security situation has resulted in thousands of people having to flee their homes.

Even in Addis Ababa, the city is bulging with an enormous number of displaced people. Even here, one NGO representative claimed recently, people are dying from lack of food and from diseases aggravated by hunger. Hunger does not seem to

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recognize a new regime in the seats of government. In the region of Kefalo in Ogaden, near the border with Somalia, it is reported that 1,700 people have died since October, with the current starvation death rate at between three and five victims a day.

For those who believed the demise of Mengistu's government would solve all Ethiopia's problems, the truth has been an ugly reality. Some agencies are concerned that 1992 will see a drop in pledges of food aid for the very reason that the civil war is now over. Some programs that were scheduled to begin early February have had to be delayed because of lack of food.

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#### THURINGIA BISHOP ADMITS 'TIMID CONDUCT' TOWARD COMMUNISTS

EISENACH, Germany, Feb. 27 (lwi)--Bishop Werner Leich of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thuringia has admitted he was "far too timid and considerate" during talks with communist officials of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). This was the case when "injustice should have been plainly and harshly labeled as such," Leich wrote in a Jan. 14 open letter to all pastors and employees of his church. Leich retired early this month.

Leich stressed that he did not wish to defend himself against the claim that he had held on too long to a "double strategy" in his relationship with the GDR's communist government. The conduct of the church was always guided by the determination to prevent an atomic war between east and west, he stated. This had a stabilizing effect on the GDR, he claimed. The bishop said he always assumed "that we would have to come to terms with a divided Germany in a position of danger on the dividing line between the two great power blocs."

Leich described his attempts to sort out unofficial activities within the church by the GDR's state security service (the Stasi) as "characterized by a lack of experience in dealing with secret service affairs." Six to eight pastors have so far indicated their involvement with the Stasi, and three pastors have submitted an application to resign.

The bishop said he had "not been able to avoid" talks with Stasi agents. He wrote accounts of all such conversations and shared them with the church council, he said. Leich added that between 1978 and 1986 he had 16 meetings at the Ministry of State Security headquarters in Berlin. He made it a rule not to hold any private conversations with security agents and never to enter into any commitments of secrecy in his dealings with the Stasi, he said.

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#### CANADIAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS CHALLENGE GOVERNMENT

VANCOUVER, Canada, Feb. 27 (rns)--Religious leaders in Canada are raising strong objections to a proposed new constitution that has the support of the nation's Conservative government. The latest statement to emerge on the document, under revision for more than a decade, was issued recently by the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). Church leaders engaged in the debate said they want a constitution that recognizes Quebec's distinctiveness as a culture, that grants self-governance to natives, and that addresses the needs of society's "marginalized" citizens.

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The council, which represents 5 million Canadian churchgoers in 17 denominations, said the Conservative proposal falls short on all three counts. The statement echoes concerns expressed recently by other church groups, including the United Church of Canada, the nation's largest Protestant body; the Catholic bishops of Ontario; and leaders of British Columbia's Catholic, United, Anglican and Lutheran churches.

In its statement, the CCC said Canada should recognize "the right in international law to self-determination for distinct peoples." The council also criticized government proposals for emphasizing the rights of individuals over society, including property rights, and for sanctioning economic competitiveness. The council said fair distribution of wealth should take precedence over individual rights as a way of securing the common good of all Canadians.

The statement by the United Church, submitted to the special joint committee of parliament on a renewed Canada, recommended that "Canada's aboriginal peoples fully participate in a constitutional process that recognizes their inherent right to self-government" and that Quebec be recognized as "a distinct society."

Many of the major points made in each of the religious groups' statements were raised last fall by the Toronto-based Ad Hoc Interfaith Working Group on Canada's future, headed by former Anglican primate Ted Scott. That group includes representatives of the Council of Churches and lay representatives from various other religious traditions, including Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism. (Douglas Todd)

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#### RELIGIOUS TENSION REPORTED GROWING IN TANZANIA

DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania, Feb. 27 (lwi)--Religious tensions between Christians and Muslims are growing in Tanzania, according to a recent report from the All Africa Press Service (APS). The agency quotes Tanzanian Christian sources who say that, unless the trend is stopped, serious religious strife will flare up soon.

In Tanzanian mosques and at public meetings, Muslim fundamentalists have been openly challenging Christianity and refuting the Bible verse by verse, APS reported. Muslim "prophets" have emerged, including Kassim Mohammed, who claims an angel has directed him to spread Islam and wage a jihad (holy war) against Christianity.

Tanzanian Home Affairs minister Augustine Mrema has banned such preaching, which he says creates animosity. But some extremists have claimed to have the backing of Tanzanian President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, himself a devout Muslim. The president, however, has shown no open support for the fundamentalists. Mwinyi and other Muslims in top government positions--including President Salim Amour of Zanzibar and his chief minister Omar Ali Juma--have repeatedly urged Tanzanians "to bury their petty religious differences."

These exhortations have not helped, and some Christians are asking why the government has not addressed the issue directly, APS stated. Last December papal envoy Agostino Marchetto appealed to Mwinyi to encourage religious harmony in Tanzania. Marchetto also held talks with the leaders of the Tanzania Council for the Promotion of Koran Reading on maintaining religious understanding.

Matern Lumbanga, of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, says the government will not prosecute fundamentalists. "We have to avoid the Nigerian experience where the Muslims and Christians are killing each other like beasts. The best the government can do is to plead with the people," Lumbanga said.

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**SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCHES CALL FOR 'LIFE ENHANCING ECONOMY'**

BROEDERSTROOM, South Africa, Feb. 27 (lwi)--With the full lifting of economic sanctions against South Africa imminent, representatives from the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference and other church organizations met to discuss the development of ethically based codes for future investment and corporate conduct, Southern Africa Church News (SACN) reported Feb. 14.

The churches' concern is based, according to SACN, on the fact that most Christians in South Africa are members of the country's impoverished majority. Will the emerging "new" South Africa address the massive problems of unemployment, homelessness, landlessness, illiteracy and malnutrition that are the legacy of apartheid? "Economics has to do with life, with the development of people, but it can also lead to the opposite, to exploitation," said Fr. Smangalis Mkhathshwa, general secretary of the South African Institute for Contextual Theology.

The churches declared that economic systems are not an end in themselves, nor are they "autonomous spheres with natural laws" of their own. Instead, in a consultation statement, the churches said that "economic activity has to be judged on the basis of the extent to which it provides for all people, particularly for the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed." Churches see the establishment of an interim government as the key to the lifting of economic sanctions, and the meeting urged "faith communities" to work with labor, civic and liberation organizations to develop a code of corporate conduct with provisions for monitoring.

"Foreign investments must be regarded with caution," said the statement, "as they tend to draw wealth out of the country." SACC leader Frank Chikane warned against large loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, saying that economic conditions prescribed by such loans could "take democratic freedoms of choice away from the people."

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**DIVISION AND HOPE MARK CHRISTIAN UNITY WEEK IN VATICAN**

ROME, Feb. 27 (cns/lwi)--When Italian Baptist and Lutheran leaders boycotted the Jan. 25 papal Mass for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, it was yet another illustration of ecumenical tensions concerning the Vatican. The dean of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy, Hans Gerch Philippi, and the president of the Italian Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches did not attend the Mass because "a (Catholic) communion service which excludes ecumenical guests is not the right way to seek the unity of Christians," according to Philippi.

"On the road that lies before us, there are still many obstacles; that is why our prayer must be steadier, more convincing, more fervent," Pope John Paul II said Jan. 25 during the Mass at Rome's Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls. The pope called ecumenism "a pastoral priority for the church today."

On several occasions during the Jan. 18-25 unity week, Pope John Paul and top Vatican ecumenists addressed current tensions in Roman Catholic relations with other Christians while pledging to continue theological dialogue and practical cooperation. The most tense relations have been with the Orthodox churches in central and eastern Europe, particularly in Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. But unity week events included the announcement of several meetings designed to address the problems, the Catholic News Service noted:

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--Croatian Catholic and Serbian Orthodox bishops and consultors issued a statement Jan. 23 after a meeting in Switzerland to discuss the fighting between Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia and the newly independent Croatia. The leaders said there is not a religious war under way and pledged to resolve problems peacefully;

--Representatives of the Vatican and the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church have agreed to meet to discuss ongoing tensions related to the re-establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and the erection of Catholic jurisdictions in the largely Orthodox territories of Russia, Siberia and Kazakhstan;

--Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I of Constantinople, spiritual leader of the Orthodox, will host a meeting of patriarchs in March to discuss Orthodox relations with Roman Catholics and other churches.

--Anglican Archbishop George Carey of Canterbury will meet Pope John Paul for the first time as head of the worldwide Anglican Communion. The meeting probably will take place in May.

"The ecumenical panorama shows us that the road toward unity continues in various dialogues," the pope said at his Jan. 22 general audience. But "we have also encountered difficulties and misunderstandings," he said, pointing to disagreements that led several Orthodox churches to boycott the special bishops' synod on Europe.

Bishop Pierre Duprey, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, said Jan. 22 that dialogue with the Orthodox had not been broken off, as some newspapers reported, and "like it or not, the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church are sister churches in almost total communion. Brothers and sisters can have disagreements on certain topics, there can be difficulties to overcome, but all of this does not change the profound essence of this deep brotherhood in Christ," he said.

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#### **AFRICAN ANGLICANS AND LUTHERANS MEET IN HARARE**

By Eugene Brand.

(Brand is Lutheran World Federation Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs.)

HARARE, Zimbabwe, Feb. 27 (lwi)--Anglican and Lutheran church leaders and theologians from eastern and southern Africa met here Feb. 3-7 at a consultation on ecclesiology. The 29 participants came from Botswana, Kenya, Madagascar, Namibia, Tanzania, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The consultation was part of the work of the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission (ALIC) and was sponsored jointly by the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). It was the first time in recent history that such a group came together to discuss theological issues involved in relations between the two communions.

Common worship and prayer marked the week-long program. Anglican Bishop Hatendi (Harare) presided at the opening Eucharist at the cathedral; Lutheran Bishop Kolowa (Tanzania) preached. Newly elected Lutheran Bishop Siphuma (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe) presided at the closing Eucharist, assisted by his deputy, the Rev. Dr. Ambrose Moyo; and Anglican Bishop Mwaigoga (Southwest Tanganyika) preached. Each day of the consultation began with a joint Anglican-Lutheran service of Morning Prayer followed by group Bible study; each day closed with Evening Prayer.

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In response to repeated reports of close relations between Anglicans and Lutherans in much of eastern and southern Africa, ALIC proposed two consultations where church leaders and theologians could reflect on relations and discuss issues that still pose problems. The plan was endorsed by African Lutheran leaders at the LWF Assembly in February 1990 and by their Anglican counterparts later that year at the ACC. A planning meeting for the Harare consultation was held a year ago in Windhoek, Namibia.

Lutheran Bishop Sebastian Kolowa, who is also co-chair of ALIC, and Anglican Archdeacon N. S. Hamupembe (Namibia) who is a veteran participant in Anglican-Lutheran discussions shared the chair during the sessions in Harare. Bishop David Tustin (Grimsby, England), Anglican co-chair of ALIC, was there as an observer. Staff work was the responsibility of Dr. Donald Anderson (ACC) and Dr. Eugene Brand (LWF). Arrangements for the consultation were made by Mr. Yohannes Irenna, Coordinating Secretary for the (Lutheran) Theological Education Program in Africa.

In an initial exchange of experiences and perceptions, consultation participants identified four discussion topics that formed the major agenda for the meeting-- (1) Christ's mission in the power of the Spirit, (2) God's people in Africa, (3) the shape and task of the church and (4) spirituality, which was described as "Christian discipleship through worship and through our lives as a living sacrifice." These topics were worked on in national groupings as well as in plenary sessions. An important subtheme of the second topic was the relationship of women and men "in the communion of the Church, for mission, for ministry, for mutual care and nurture."

To keep the African discussion firmly rooted in the context of broader Anglican-Lutheran relations, Professor Michael Root of the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, France, was asked to present an overview of current Anglican-Lutheran conversations elsewhere. Root related this to the "Niagara Report on Episcopate" (1987), the result of an ALIC international consultation. The global framework for the African discussion was also provided by resolutions from the 1988 (Anglican) Lambeth Conference and the 1990 LWF Assembly. Both resolutions urge the churches to engage in conversations that may lead to greater unity between Anglicans and Lutherans.

Other Lutheran participants were Bishop P. J. Robinson (Botswana), Bishop K. Dumeni and Bishop H. Frederik (Namibia), Bishop O. Mdegella, Dr. L. Kalugila, the Rev. G. Kimirei, Ms. A. Mghwira and Ms. J. Mwarabu (Tanzania), Bishop M. Buthelezi, Bishop N. Rohwer and Präses D. R. Lilje (Southern Africa), Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro (LWF staff), and the Rev. F. Gambiza (observer from Zimbabwe).

As they worked toward a consultation report, participants reminded themselves repeatedly of factors that tend to shape the context in which African churches minister--"poverty, racism, sexism, the worldwide crisis of AIDS." But they wished to address these problems in more than a sociopolitical manner. "There is a spiritual poverty which goes with material poverty," said one of the bishops, "and we need to deal with both." Another participant noted the need to "hold in tandem" the theology of the church and patterns of being the church. "We should deal with our overwhelming African problems with a certain degree of modesty," admonished one bishop. "We should be prepared to learn from the past."

From the discussion of the issues that prevent fuller communion between Anglicans and Lutherans, it was clear that more detail from official documents is required. "We can only proceed on a solid basis," said one participant, "when we know what our documents say. Let us strengthen what we agree upon and then identify those issues which require more work. Official documents probably need amendment to allow the whole people of God to minister."

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In its report to the ACC and LWF the consultation recommended closer study of the "Niagara Report" and especially of its practical steps toward closer communion. "We became more aware of the differing relationships between our two communions," the Harare report states, "due to the earlier mission principle, the practice of comity, consequent tribal or regional churches and the absence of real exposure to one another. We urge our respective churches to do everything in their power to rediscover one another in the one communion of the Church."

Discussion of equal sharing in the ministry of the whole church drew forth a confession: "We call our churches to repentance and to ensure that women's contributions are properly appropriated. For the issue is not first and foremost the ordination of women, but rather the understanding of the church as communion which allows for the development and participation of all. It demands that we recognize the abilities of women exercised in partnership with men--that is that we develop and utilize the gifts of all members and allow for mutual unfolding of talents in community."

A high measure of present unity is affirmed by the report: "We affirmed the 'una sancta' (the one holy catholic and apostolic Church), the basic ecclesiology of communion rooted in the triune God and with one another, the Church as the body of Christ making present Christ in the world, and the Church as the people of God. We urge our churches to leave no stone unturned to translate these theological affirmations into concrete realities, e.g. the worship that mediates the mystery of God, diaconal responsibilities that mediate Christ to the world, sharing of charismata in the one body, mediating God's reconciling power which brings forth conviction, confession and forgiveness."

Church structures and leadership were also highlighted. This "ecclesiology demands a search for authentic African ecclesial structures that not only foster the Church's mission, but also make for properly constituted authority for pastoral leadership, coordination, and oversight, coupled with mutual responsibility, accountability and transparency at all levels. We urge our churches to continue the study of issues relating to use and abuse of power and authority in the Church, and the duration of the tenure of office of bishops. The development of an authentic African ecclesiology, however, must be done in the context of the universal Church."

The report concludes with a mutual commitment that is spelled out in several practical steps: "We endeavor to work to eradicate 'all our differences (that) serve as the focal point for mutual fears and suspicions, prejudices and distorted perceptions' (Niagara Report) ... Our consultation has demonstrated that the search for unity is a process which is not without pain and struggle. We rejoice, however, that there are several and varied signs of cooperation between our two communions. But we urge deepening of the cooperation, particularly through reflection on the significance of the points of cooperation."

Members of the consultation spoke of ways in which some of the recommendations could be addressed in the coming months, even before their report can be received officially by ACC and LWF. Plans are being developed for a second consultation in 1993 which will also involve members of ALIC and which will endeavor to broaden and deepen the insights of Harare.

Saying their farewells, it was not uncommon to hear phrases from participants such as "historic first" or "significant foundation for solid future work." It was clear that a new network of relationships between Anglicans and Lutherans had been established in eastern and southern Africa. These relationships, it is hoped, will spread and grow among the Anglican and Lutheran communions, bringing them closer together.



**INITIALLY SURPRISED, C E C WELCOMES EUROPEAN PROTESTANT ASSEMBLY**

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GENEVA, Feb. 27 (lwi)--An assembly of European Protestant churches was welcomed by the general secretary of the Council of European Churches (CEC), Jean Fischer, as a chance for the council's Protestant member churches to speak with a more united voice. Often what passes for Protestantism is a variety of voices, Fischer said at a Feb. 19 press conference, held after a joint meeting of the CEC Presidium and Advisory Committee (CEC) here Feb. 15-19.

The Protestant assembly, titled "Christian Responsibility for Europe," will take place in Budapest, Hungary, March 24-30. The call for such an assembly was made last August by 70 Protestant church leaders meeting in Basel, Switzerland. Some 200 representatives of Protestant churches in Europe are expected to attend the Budapest gathering which organizers bill as part of the preparations for the forthcoming CEC General Assembly to be held in September in Prague, Czechoslovakia. In a Jan. 14 statement the organizers said the Budapest meeting is to enable "an exchange of ideas" to take place between Protestant churches in Europe. The ultimate aim of the Protestant assembly is "to strengthen the common Christian witness in Europe."

The decision to call for a European Protestant Assembly caught everyone attending the Basel meeting by surprise, CEC vice-moderator Dean John Arnold said. Participants considered holding over the Protestant gathering until after the CEC assembly, but there was a strong feeling among participants that in view of the critical situation in central and eastern Europe, a Protestant assembly should be held sooner rather than later, he said. Arnold took part in the Basel meeting as an observer.

Concern that the Protestant assembly would openly compete with the CEC's most important regular decision-making meeting required the organizers of the Budapest meeting to clearly state their understanding of the relationship between the two assemblies, Arnold said. It is therefore gratifying that the Budapest assembly is intended as preparing the way to the Prague assembly and not as an alternative, he added.

Arnold stressed that the CEC constituency is wider than Protestantism. The 109-member church body also includes the region's Orthodox churches and maintains good relationships with the Council of European (Roman Catholic) Bishops' Conferences. Four to six CEC representatives will attend the Budapest assembly as observers.

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**FINANCIAL WORRIES MAY DELAY EUROPEAN CHURCHES ASSEMBLY**

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GENEVA, Feb. 27 (lwi)--A likely shortfall in funds may lead to the delay of the next General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), due to take place Sept. 1-11 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Dean John Arnold, CEC vice-moderator, spoke of the assembly's historic significance, being the first to take place in post-Cold War Europe. The assembly promises to be "very different" compared to its nine predecessors, with organizers aiming for a "people of God" event rather than a delegate conference, Arnold told the press here Feb. 19. While the overall number of participants will be larger than at previous assemblies, numbers of delegates will be kept to a minimum. It will also be the first CEC assembly to be held in eastern Europe, which will make for a new atmosphere, Arnold said.

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However, at a joint meeting held here this month--the last before the assembly takes place--the CEC Presidium and Advisory Committee set a March 31 deadline for the assembly's final go-ahead. If by then funds raised prove insufficient to cover assembly costs, the CEC general secretary and finance secretary are authorized, after a vote of the presidium, to postpone the event. Present estimates point to a projected shortfall in the assembly budget of 300,000 Swiss francs (US\$ 210,000). Assembly organizers noted that most of the delegates from countries in central and eastern Europe, as well as minority churches in southern Europe, have asked for financial help with travel and accommodation costs.

The European church body's financial worries also extend to its routine work. Last year the CEC overspent by 61,000 Swiss francs (US\$ 43,000)--the first deficit for the last five years--despite increased contributions from many member churches. A key cause for this was the view held by many churches in western Europe that with the ending of the region's political divide, financial aid is no longer needed in central and eastern Europe. However, the fear of an economic divide between the rich West and a poor East has been realized in the last 12 months, Arnold confirmed. He described the economic disparity in Europe as the greatest problem facing the region's churches. The collapse of state and church economies have made it impossible for member churches to contribute to the financing of the CEC's work. A special fund set up to support the participation of financially weaker churches in the work of CEC raised less than half of the 220,000 Swiss francs (US\$ 155,000) originally requested.

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#### E L C A CONSIDERS THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION OPTIONS

SCHILLER PARK, Ill., Feb. 27 (elca)--The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is considering options for the future of its theological education system. "We need more theological education, not less. We need more sites for theological education, not fewer," said members of the ELCA Task Force on the Study of Theological Education. However, "We would not equate theological education with seminary education, nor would we limit theological education to seminary-based education."

When the ELCA was formed in 1987 it inherited a total of eight seminaries from its predecessor church bodies. One question facing the task force is whether or not the church needs or can afford that many seminaries. The task force is looking at the areas in which it may make recommendations when it issues reports in 1993 and 1995. These areas include required continuing education, residency, pre-seminary preparation, seminary entrance exams and theological education by extension.

At its meeting here Feb. 9-11, the eight-member task force agreed on several points of philosophy and formulated questions about areas it will be pursuing. The task force is using the word "imperatives" to describe the areas it felt are important for the church to address. "The goal of our imperatives is the life-long learning and witness of the baptized," the task force concurred. "This goal and these imperatives suggest an array of programs including, but not limited to, M.Div. education." The master of divinity (M.Div.) is the minimum degree required of new ELCA clergy.

The task force prepared several options it could recommend for education programs leading to a master of divinity degree. ELCA seminaries now require two years of classroom instruction and one year of internship in an ELCA congregation, followed by another year of classroom instruction. The task force agreed to study requiring three years of continuing education immediately after graduation. Another idea it

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will consider is to require three years of classroom instruction, followed by three years of residency with a congregation.

One aspect of pre-seminary preparation the task force wanted to study is the notion that seminaries administer entrance exams. Too often such exams are used to exclude certain candidates, rather than to assess the educational needs of the students, the Rev. Gordon J. Straw, ELCA director for Native American ministries, told the task force. The task force agreed also to study theological education by extension as a way of providing "education beyond the seminary in various places throughout the church, where students come together with a mentor and with a particular course of study."

The task force will draft reports to the ELCA's churchwide assemblies in 1993 and 1995. One report proposing "a coherent system of theological education" will be offered in 1993. Another report on the "deployment of theological educational resources to meet the mission of the church" will be introduced in 1993 and revised for consideration in 1995.

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#### **JUDGE DISMISSES PENSION SUIT AGAINST E L C A**

MINNEAPOLIS, Feb. 27 (elca)--A lawsuit against the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and its Board of Pensions has been dismissed by a district court judge in Hennepin county (Minn.). In the Feb. 11 court order, Judge Ann D. Montgomery granted the motion of both the board and the ELCA for summary judgment.

The suit was filed last July by three pension plan participants and one congregation who charged that the board violated its fiduciary responsibilities by following ELCA mandates on social issues. The suit asked the court to separate the Board of Pensions from the ELCA, award damages from the ELCA to the separately incorporated Board of Pensions and amend the pension plan to allow participants to withdraw amounts contributed for them.

"This represents to us strong affirmation our church's Board of Pensions is providing a fiscally and legally sound and effective pension program for pastors and other church workers," said John G. Kapanke, president of the ELCA's Board of Pensions. "We will continue to serve conscientiously for the sake of retired persons receiving pension benefits as well as active pastors and church workers for whom contributions are being made to the pension plan," he said.

Montgomery ruled that the plaintiffs did not have the "standing" or legal right to challenge the pension plan or its investment policies and that they did not have standing to challenge the ELCA's adoption of terms governing the pension plan. She noted that the Board of Pensions manages and operates pension and other benefit plans of the ELCA "within the design and policy adopted by the Churchwide Assembly." The 21-member pension board of trustees is elected by the assembly and carries out fiduciary responsibilities in overseeing the plans.

The ELCA and its predecessor church bodies have consistently opposed the system of apartheid in South Africa. The ELCA constituting convention in 1987 asked that the church "work tirelessly to see that none of our ELCA pension funds will be invested in companies doing business in South Africa." The suit claimed that the resolution allegedly required the board to abandon the "prudent person rule" on pension funds and that the investment policies were detrimental to plan participants.

The ELCA pension plan gives participants the option of having their accounts placed in funds that avoid investment in South Africa and that are for social purposes.

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## U S LUTHERAN TASK FORCE DEFINES MINISTRY IN 'BUILDING BLOCKS'

CHICAGO, Feb. 27 (elca)--The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) Task Force on the Study of Ministry began constructing "building blocks" for its report to the church's 1993 assembly. The "building blocks" are brief statements on key issues for the task force. These include definitions of "call," "ordination" and "diaconal ministry" and a process for incorporating into the ELCA those involved in authorized ministries of predecessor church bodies.

At its meeting here Jan. 23-25 the task force prepared definitions for call and ordination. It provided for continuation of authorized lay ministries of the predecessor churches in the ELCA and appointed an editorial committee to draft approved wording as to how these ministries will be incorporated into the ELCA. At its next meeting in June the 17-member task force will consider several remaining building blocks such as diaconal ministry, the role of bishops, paid and volunteer ministries and licensed pastors. It will also discuss the form of its final report as well as the criteria it will use to evaluate its final recommendations.

The American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) formed the ELCA in 1987. All had different ways of organizing their ministries. The task force was authorized to recommend forms of ordained and lay ministries to be officially recognized and certified by the ELCA. Each previous church body called and ordained pastors. However, the ALC also had commissioned church staff and deaconesses. The AELC had deacons, deaconesses and commissioned teachers. The LCA had deaconesses and lay professional leaders. The ELCA is calling them all "associates in ministry" and new lay church workers are being certified as associates in ministry.

The task force is recommending that those in authorized ministries of predecessor churches "be rostered permanently in the ELCA in the recognized status of ministry of their previous church body for as long as they are in good standing in accord with the standards and procedures of this church." Those certified as associates in ministry by the ELCA will continue to be rostered as such.

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## YOUTH MOVEMENTS HALT COOPERATION WITH LUTHERAN MOVEMENT IN DENMARK

COPENHAGEN, Denmark, Feb. 27 (lwi)--A split became final last November between two ecumenical youth organizations and a Lutheran church movement in Denmark. The executive committee of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations (YMCA/YWCA) announced Nov. 22 that it was halting national cooperation with the Inner Mission department of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark (ELCD). However, the committee asked member groups to continue local cooperation where possible.

Disagreements over the theological profile of Danish schools jointly supported by the YMCA/YWCA and the Inner Mission have been rankling for the past few years. At a school meeting in 1990, a committee member of the Inner Mission accused the two youth organizations of promoting false doctrines. Relations between the YMCA/YWCA and the Inner Mission deteriorated sharply in the two months leading up to the split. The ELCD Inner Mission promotes a theologically fundamentalist outlook, the Church of Denmark news service noted. The Danish YMCA and YWCA are historically rooted in the Inner Mission and until 1978 each had mutual representation in the executive committee of the other.

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**SALVADORAN TEENAGER GAINS U S ASYLUM STATUS WITH LUTHERAN AID**

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NEW YORK, Feb. 27 (lwi)--The death or disappearance of her immediate family during El Salvador's long civil war, coupled with fears for her own safety, led 18-year-old Cruz del Carmen Sorto to flee her home country in February 1991. After reaching the US in July, the young woman was apprehended by the Immigration and Refugee Service and held in a Texas detention center for nearly six months.

The legal staff of Proyecto Libertad in the border town of Harlingen, Texas, was successful in gaining political asylum for Cruz del Carmen late in December. Proyecto Libertad is an affiliate of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), as is the refugee program of Lutheran Social Services in Washington, DC, which will resettle Cruz del Carmen with a Salvadoran family in a Maryland suburb.

LIRS underwrote the Salvadoran teenager's travel costs between Texas and Maryland. "She's very lucky," says Anna Belia Cortez, a paralegal with Proyecto Libertad who helped handle the case. "She's one of the few Central Americans to win asylum. Almost everyone used to be denied. It's better now but not significantly."

In El Salvador, Cruz del Carmen's fatherless family refused to collaborate with Salvadoran guerrillas and lived in constant fear of them. In 1990 her 15-year-old brother was kidnaped with no trace of his whereabouts. Early last year her mother and a sister were machine-gunned to death. Since September 1990, LIRS has been part of a US working group to look at the human and financial cost of the policy of holding unaccompanied refugee minors in detention centers. LIRS has pushed for releasing the young people to licensed foster care programs while their immigration status is determined.

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**GHANA CHURCH LEADER URGES MORE CHRISTIAN ACTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

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By G.B.K. Owusu

(Owusu is editor of the Ghana Christian newspaper "The Christian Messenger.")

ACCRA, Ghana, Feb. 27 (lwi)--The General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) has urged Christians to speak out against abuse of human rights and openly support the recognition of political rights. The Rev. David Dartey said Christians must have the courage to point out the shortcomings of government and make positive suggestions for improvement. Dartey was speaking at a symposium on "Religion and Politics: Grassroots Participation" at the University of Ghana, Legon, in January. He asked the church to maintain a non-partisan stance in all aspects of national life in order to play its role effectively in Ghana's political aspirations.

Dartey mentioned strict observance of justice, fair play, respect for one another and equality as essential to democratic political pluralism. He asked the church to realize the need to educate people on both their rights and their responsibilities as citizens. "Above all, the church must aim at bringing peace, love, tolerance, unity and reconciliation among people of opposing views and aspirations," he said. He dismissed the view that the church should steer clear of politics. People must not forget that the changing structure of society, in which the church is at the forefront, is fundamentally a matter of politics, he said.

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**L W F SPONSORS SILK PRODUCTION AMONG BANGLADESH UNEMPLOYED**

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(A report by the staff of the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service in Bangladesh.)

DHAKA, Bangladesh, Feb. 27 (lwi)--With a large population and a narrow resource base, Bangladesh has a massive unemployment problem. Each year a million more people swell the ever-increasing labor force, but half of them remain unemployed. At this rate it is estimated that, by the end of the century, Bangladesh will have 20 million people without work.

More than 85 percent of the population live in rural areas and depend for their livelihood on the informal sector--such as farm labor during a short period of sowing and harvesting--with no job security. Lack of regular employment, low income and poverty are the greatest problems faced by the poorest of the poor. Increased income for these people is essential. Even more important is the creation of more opportunities for full-time employment.

With a long history of generating agricultural and non-agricultural employment, the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS)--the Lutheran World Federation Department for World Service field program in Bangladesh--stresses the creation of more jobs for more people doing useful work. One such area is sericulture--planting mulberry trees, rearing silkworms and reeling silk-yarn to produce silk fabrics--which is very suitable to a third of the households helped by RDRS, who own less than one-twentieth of an acre of land.

Bangladesh has a history of silk production that goes back centuries. The traditional silk producing areas were geographically limited, however, to a small region surrounding Rajshahi in the western part of the country. The Bangladesh Sericulture Board as well as some non-governmental organizations like RDRS are actively trying to introduce sericulture to other parts of Bangladesh. The present annual production of raw silk is in the range of 30 to 40 metric tons. With numerous promotional programs, it is expected that production will increase significantly and lead to much more employment for the poor.

RDRS initiated a sericulture program as early as 1977, and that led to the establishment of the Thakurgaon Silk Factory where processing facilities were centralized to provide a ready market for cocoons produced by poor people trained by RDRS. Experience later showed, however, that centralized processing facilities did not resolve all the problems of the growers and rearers.

Producing silk involves a wide range of activities. Mulberry trees can be grown around the homestead or along roadsides. Rearing silkworms is the most labor intensive part of silk production, involving careful feeding, cleaning and caring for the silkworms. After a month, the worms spin their cocoons which contain the silk filament. The silk filament is recovered from the cocoons by immersing them in hot water and unwinding (or 'reeling') several filaments at a time to form silk yarn. Further processing of the yarn includes dyeing, weaving and other operations that result in the finished product.

Silk fabric is a luxury item with very little market potential in the rural areas of Bangladesh. There is, however, a good market in the larger cities and an even larger potential in export markets. The market for silk has maintained a steady rate of growth in spite of competition from synthetic fabrics. It appears that this growth will continue for the foreseeable future.

By using leaves from mulberry trees planted on roadsides and by rearing silkworms in local households, it is possible to create employment for people who have very

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little land. Since it is home-based, sericulture is an ideal activity for women, with the assistance of children and male family members when available.

Mulberry trees in roadside plantations are pruned to produce a trunk height of about two meters with a space of two meters between trees. A single row of trees on each side of the road gives 1,000 trees per kilometer. If each household uses 100 trees, one kilometer of roadside mulberry planting would supply the leaf production requirements of 10 households.

At present leaves are harvested four times a year to coincide with the four rearing cycles that are normally possible per annum. RDRS is experimenting with ways of increasing the number of cycles per year. Regardless of the number of times leaves are harvested, the total annual yield of the trees remains more or less constant.

In 1990 RDRS took a new initiative to expand the planting of mulberry trees, to develop the capabilities of households to produce cocoons and silk yarn, and to innovate more productive rearing methods. RDRS-organized groups planted 172,000 mulberry seedlings on homesteads, roadsides and fields in 1990 and some 219,000 in 1991. In early 1990 there were only 97 silkworm rearers in the area where RDRS operates, but as a result of the new initiative the number has now reached 500.

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#### AUSTRALIAN COURT BANS WOMEN'S ORDINATION SERVICE

NEW YORK, Feb. 27 (rns)--Advocates of ordaining women to the priesthood in the Anglican Church in Australia (ACA) were set back Jan. 31 when a civil court banned an ordination ceremony planned for Feb. 2. The decision by an appeal court upheld an injunction against the ordination and overturned an earlier decision by the New South Wales Supreme Court. The injunction had been sought by a lay member of the church and two priests who oppose ordination of women.

Bishop Owen Dowling of Canberra had planned to ordain 11 women in a Feb. 2 ceremony in the city of Goulburn. The opinion by the civil court was the latest in a series of legal decisions, including earlier rulings by tribunals of the ACA. Last year, the church's highest court ruled that ordaining women would contradict the commands of Jesus Christ. Church officials favoring ordination of women predicted that the most recent court decision would not end the dispute but would, instead, lead to more legal wrangling.

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#### FINNS CONDUCT OUTREACH EFFORTS TO FORMER SOVIET UNION

ST. LOUIS, Feb. 27 (lwi)--Estonian Lutherans are being invited to a Bible camp in one of several outreach programs of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland (CLCF) to the peoples of the former Soviet Union, with the assistance of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Other outreach efforts include translating Luther's catechism into Russian, distributing Russian-language children's Bibles and setting up mission work among the Weps, a Finnish tribe settled 400 kilometers east of St. Petersburg. The Weps were last served by a pastor in 1937 and, according to CLCF president Markku Särelä, they considered gifts of new Bibles to be "a very rare treasure." The Finnish church is prioritizing assistance in the rebuilding of damaged churches in Gatchina, 50 kilometers south of St. Petersburg. Thirty-four churches were destroyed or heavily damaged in the area during communist rule. The Finnish church plans to distribute Finnish- and Russian-language Bibles in the Gatchina area and provide food, clothing, medicine and other basic necessities.

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