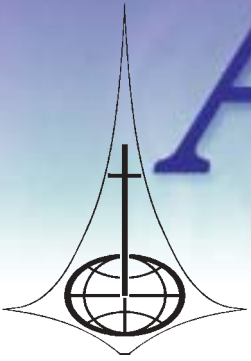


# "For the Healing of the World" Assembly UPDATE



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Issue 1 — March 2002

## The Lutheran World Federation Tenth Assembly

In sixteen-months time, over 430 delegates from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches will gather in Winnipeg, Canada, for the LWF Tenth Assembly, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC).

Assemblies, considered milestones for, and manifestations of the whole Federation, take place normally every six years. They hold highest authority over LWF policy and activity.

A theme is chosen for each Assembly. 'For the Healing of the World' is the theme for the 21-31 July 2003 Assembly.

As well as delegates, an Assembly includes a wide range of other participants—representatives of associate member churches, observers from LWF national committees and related agencies, official visitors, ex-officio participants, advisors, guests, LWF and local staff including co-

opted persons, interpreters and translators, stewards and accredited press.

Every Assembly elects a President and a 48-member Council to lead the Federation through its annual meetings. The Assembly is also responsible for the LWF Constitution, gives general direction to the work of the Federation and acts on the reports of the President, General Secretary, and Treasurer. ■

## Why Does the Lutheran Communion of Churches Gather in Assembly?

Message from  
Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

You may ask, "Why do we need to bring people from around the world to meet together in an Assembly?" Reasons are prescribed in the LWF Constitution, such as electing officers and Council members and acting on reports. Business conducted at the LWF Tenth Assembly will be important in determining future leadership and directions for the Federation's work. But beyond these requisite constitutional matters lie some deeply theological and missiological reasons.

The church (*ecclesia*)—as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit—is by nature an 'assembly.' The LWF Assembly enables churches to worship, witness, confer and speak together on matters common to the whole church, and to express their unity as part of the one, universal, new community in Christ.

Since 1990, we as the LWF understand ourselves as being more than a loosely affiliated federation of churches. We are a *communion* of Lutheran churches

Continued on page 2

## Logo

The Assembly logo invites curiosity and comment. It shows a broken landscape—white cracks in earth or mountains—set against a cross on the left and an olive branch with three large leaves on the right. The Assembly theme, 'For the Healing of the World,' cradles it. The cross implies movement. One of the leaves is leaning over the earth while the others are reaching toward the sky as a sign of creation and healing.



The logo was designed by two artists from the Canadian prairie city of Regina, Saskatchewan. Erik Norbraten is an art director and graphic artist. Richard Nostbakken

is a teacher and works as an independent artist. Both ELCIC members, their artwork for national church events is well known.

For information on use of the logo, please contact:

The Lutheran World Federation  
Office for Communication Services  
P.O. Box 2100  
CH-1211 Geneva 2  
Switzerland  
E-mail: [info@lutheranworld.org](mailto:info@lutheranworld.org),  
Fax: +41/22-791 66 30 ■



## Churches Gather in Assembly

(continued from page 1)



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united through Word and Sacrament. This holds us together in a more profound sense than any constitutional requirements. “Communion with God and communion with one another are...made possible by God’s self-communication as it comes to expression in the human acts of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments.”<sup>1</sup> Whenever and wherever we gather in local congregations to hear the Word and celebrate the Sacraments we are reminded that we do so as part of the communion of saints worldwide.

This wider communion must become for us more than an abstract, faceless reality. We must be able to touch, hear, taste and experience this reality firsthand. In self-giving love, God became incarnate in a human being. Similarly, the communion we share with one another must become incarnate, in very human, face-to-face kinds of communication and interactions that enrich, test out and deepen what it truly means to be a communion.

Today, through computer and other information technology, we

are increasingly connected through networking, but all fall short of the importance of gathering together at the same time, in the same place, as living beings. Present with one another, we realize who our sisters and brothers in Christ actually are, and our generalizations are challenged. In living and working with one another over several days, we recognize our significantly different situations and perceptions, as well as what we share in common. Through God’s grace, we are able in solidarity to share our pains and joys, our burdens and gifts, and in that process begin to understand what Luther was describing when he explained what occurs through the Sacrament of the Altar:

...through the interchange of Christ’s blessings and our misfortunes, we become one loaf, one bread, one body, one drink, and have all things in common.... In this way we are changed into one another and are made into a community by love.<sup>2</sup>

Here we receive the promise, a foretaste of God’s communion with the whole of creation in the coming reign of God. This coming together in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, has important ongoing consequences for our life together as churches throughout the world.

“God’s self-giving which constitutes communion with God in faith, seeks expression in the pattern of mutual self-giving love...in forms of mutual sharing in both its spiritual and material aspects.”<sup>3</sup>

This Triune God also sends us out for the sake of God’s mission in the world. Attending to what that mission means ‘for the healing of the world’ is a central reason why the LWF member churches will assemble in Winnipeg, Canada. As we do so, we are held together by the power of God’s Spirit, such that we are able to speak honestly about the challenges facing us and our churches, and to discern, debate and decide how these will be addressed through our ongoing work as a communion: How will we bear faithful witness in word and deed ‘for the healing of the world?’ How will we address the tensions and problems we face within our churches and societies? How can this Lutheran communion of churches, as part of the wider church, further God’s all-encompassing mission in and for the sake of the world?

I look forward to seeing, and being with, those of you who will assemble in Winnipeg. ■



Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko  
General Secretary

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Christoph Schwöbel. “The Quest for Communion. Reasons, Reflections and Recommendations” in *The Church as Communion*, ed. Heinrich Holze, LWF Documentation 42, LWF Publications, Geneva 1997, p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> “The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ,” *Luther’s Works* Vol. 35, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Schwöbel, p. 279.

### Previous Assemblies:

1947	Lund, Sweden	<i>The Lutheran Church in the World Today</i>
1952	Hanover, Germany	<i>The Living Word in a Responsible Church</i>
1957	Minneapolis, USA	<i>Christ Frees and Unites</i>
1963	Helsinki, Finland	<i>Christ Today</i>
1970	Evian, France	<i>Sent into the World</i>
1977	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	<i>In Christ—A New Community</i>
1984	Budapest, Hungary	<i>In Christ—Hope for the World</i>
1990	Curitiba, Brazil	<i>I Have Heard the Cry of My People</i>
1997	Hong Kong, China	<i>In Christ—Called to Witness</i> ■

The LWF Council decided that additional purposes of the Tenth Assembly are to

- explore ways to be God’s instruments for healing, justice and reconciliation in the midst of brokenness in church and society
- deepen the understanding and experience of the Lutheran communion by addressing differences and disparities, and by sharing gifts

- commit to closer and deeper cooperation within the ecumenical movement and to life in communion as given in Christ
- discern the challenges posed to the Lutheran churches in today’s multicultural and multi-faith contexts, and
- address spiritual, social and environmental challenges provoked especially by economic globalization. ■

# Theme

The theme was chosen by the LWF Executive Committee from suggestions made by the LWF member churches in 2000. It is inspired, among other biblical texts, by the apocalyptic vision in Revelation 22:2 of the river and tree of life: "...and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

Compared to most former Assembly themes, this one explicitly points to the **world** and various contexts in which we live. The truth that faith confesses must come alive, be understood, confessed and lived out in ways that genuinely speak and respond to the world's needs. According to Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall, confession takes place when we view the world through Christian belief and "are thrust into an active engagement with that which threatens the life of our world."

We cannot ignore a world that is festering with poverty, divisions, despair, sickness, violence, injustice—and situations of many kinds desperately in need of healing. HIV/AIDS and other diseases are stripping many persons and entire communities of life and hope. Those left even further behind by the forces of economic globalization become more ravaged and devastated, while others reach dizzying heights of affluence. Old and new rivalries break out, confounding the illusion that old wounds have actually been healed. Sin and its effects continue to be manifest in ever-new ways.

When we assemble together as a communion, it will not be primarily to lament the state of the world. We gather because of our conviction and proclamation that the God we know in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit *is* 'for the healing of the world.' This is the distinct witness we as Christians bring to this widely shared concern for healing. We will be exploring the implications of this for our lives, our congregations, our societies,

**and** especially for us as a communion of Lutheran churches.

Healing is a pervasive theme in Scripture, and especially in the ministry of Jesus. A number of the Bible studies will be from Luke's Gospel. Here Jesus is conceived, baptized, and sent forth in ministry through the power of the Holy Spirit. He is seen as a Spirit-filled prophet who healed people of illnesses associated with unclean spirits. Jesus healed by restoring wholeness or integrity to people.

Although 'healing' in the Christian tradition is closely related to salvation, forgiveness, reconciliation and liberation, it is a topic that makes some in our churches uncomfortable. Cross-cultural perspectives on healing will need to be considered. Health is understood according to what is valued within a given cultural system. It includes more than physical health. The focus is not on the disease itself or on curing, but on how the personal and social meaning of the experience of sickness, injury or disability is transformed. To be healed is more than a personal experience. It involves the wider social, economic and political order of relationships.

Social power is reordered through healing, which is why it often is threatening to the established order. Jesus reached out to touch others, or was himself touched, across taboo boundaries of impurity. He drove out demons whose possession made individuals powerless to act. He is depicted as being like a folk healer, one who took people's needs for healing at face value. He entered individual lives and experiences of suffering, bringing concrete liberation.

This theme suggests the need to give greater attention to the role of the Spirit, in a triune understanding of who God is and how God relates to the world. Through God's Spirit we participate in the divine paths,



*El Salvador: Reconstruction program after hurricane Mitch.*

© LWF/WVS G. MANGE

present in human history and throughout creation. We enter into communion with the crucified and risen Christ, in whom God's Spirit has been made visible and tangible. Through that same Spirit, we enter into deeper communion with one another. For Luther, this was grounded especially in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, which we will celebrate daily at the Assembly.

To 'receive the Holy Spirit' is to see what God is doing in and through the brokenness of our lives and world to bring healing and new life to human beings and the rest of creation. The Spirit empowers us to act differently in relation to one another. Polarity and hostility that can contribute to violence are overcome in favor of a community of solidarity, responsibility and love. Finitude and vulnerability are accepted rather than what we seek to overcome. Love reaches out and draws others in, creating diverse networks of relatedness such as we can expect to experience at the Assembly. ■

As the theme continues to be developed for the Assembly Study Book, you are invited to reflect on, discuss and send responses to the following questions, or other feedback, to Rev. Dr. Karen Bloomquist, Assembly Content Coordinator, [kbl@lutheranworld.org](mailto:kbl@lutheranworld.org):

- What are the particular yearnings or cries for healing in your context?
- How is this reflected in or being responded to in your church?
- What are the 'diseases, illnesses and wounds' from which the world suffers, and within it, the Lutheran communion?
- Which theological themes should be developed especially at this Assembly?

*Please send us your responses by 15 May 2002.* ■

# Village Groups at the Assembly



© LWF/H. WÄLTER

Russian Federation:  
Congregation in Kant

Village Groups will be a central feature of the Assembly. They are the settings where Bible study discussions will occur, and where important implications of the Assembly theme will be pursued. More will be written on each of the topics in the Assembly Study Book. Work in the Village Groups will develop the substance of the Assembly Message and commitments. Assembly participants will be asked to indicate their Village Group choices when they register.

## God's Healing Gift Of **Justification**

With the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, renewed ecumenical attention is being given to the doctrine of justification. What is the relationship between justification, healing and 'new creation'? In which ways is salvation as forgiveness of sin, liberation from bondage, and spiritual healing especially needed today? How does this speak to people's deepest

spiritual yearnings? What difference do factors such as context and gender make? How can congregations proclaim and live this out more fully?

## God's Healing Gift Of **Communion**

The communion we share as Lutherans is a gift of God for the sake of the world. The healing power of prayer and the Eucharist transforms us into a communion of love. Yet within this communion of churches, there still are differences and wounds, related to significant historical struggles and political changes (e.g., the end of communism or apartheid), generational and theological differences (e.g., who can be ordained), ethnic or cultural identities, and disparity in size and financial resources. Where are forgiveness, healing and reconciliation especially needed in this communion? How can communication support and build up the communion for the sake of the world?

## Healing Divisions within the **One Church**

God's Spirit is actively healing the church. Although considerable progress has been made in ecumenical relations in recent years, the healing of old divisions must continue. How do we draw upon the meaning and power of the sacraments for Christian unity? New questions have arisen about the profile, identity and role of Lutherans in these ecumenical relations. New challenges also arise from Christians with whom we have not been in dialogue. How is the LWF involved and how might it be in new ecumenical pursuits? What are the difficult matters that must be addressed? Toward what ends?

## The **Mission** of the Church in Multi-faith Contexts

The mission of the church points to and participates in the coming of God's reign. How can every Christian and every congregation be empowered to participate faithfully and effectively in this mission? Rec-



© LWF/M. EGU

Brazil: In the 'favelas' around Recife

onciliation among people is a key aspect of this mission, especially in multi-faith contexts. How can this kind of healing occur through such means as dialogue and living and working together? How does this

challenge and transform some past mission assumptions and practices? How should this be reflected in the revised mission document and in other LWF work?

### Removing **Barriers** that Exclude

In our churches and societies, barriers of discrimination continue to exclude people with physical or mental disabilities. Those affected by HIV/AIDS face additional kinds of discrimination. How does Christ's transforming power break down these barriers, as well as those based on race, ethnicity, caste, age or gender? What should we be doing to remove them? Where should human rights efforts focus? The historical wounds of exclusion tend to be deep and festering. How can ruptured relationships with those who have been excluded be healed?

### The Church's Ministry of **Healing**

The healing of persons has long been considered part of the church's pastoral and diaconal calling. For Lutherans, the ministry of healing is grounded in the Word, Sacraments and prayer. Some churches have focused on healing through prayer and exorcism, whereas others view these practices with suspicion. What have been the experiences in our churches, and what can we learn from each other? What is the difference between healing and curing? How are we as churches addressing the healing challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, especially in impoverished situations? How can healing occur so that those affected by this and other traumas can live with dignity in community with others?

### Justice and Healing in **Families**

God intends human beings to find meaning and healing through intimate relationships or 'families,' which take many forms throughout the world. Families are also places of brokenness, alienation and pain, where justice, healing and support are desperately needed. How do we

minister to people in these situations? Changing understandings of gender and sexuality affect women and men. How does our faith speak to these realities? Given the significant cultural and generational differences in how we understand family life and live out our sexuality, how can we talk about and learn to live with these differences as part of the one household of God?

### Overcoming **Violence**

Violence in families, as well as in political conflicts, continues to inflict deep wounds especially on women, children and youth. Conflict within and between countries devastates land and people. How is the God we know in Jesus Christ healing violence in our world today? How do we respond theologically to horrendous acts of violence? How can memories be healed and cycles of violence overcome? How can the member churches advocate with others, particularly through the 'Decade to Overcome Violence,' for the sake of justice, peace and reconciliation?

### Transforming **Economic Globalization**

The powers of economic globalization reign over our world today as a theological challenge. Although some results are positive, injustice also mounts, communities are fragmented, and the earth is further exploited. How can we as a Lutheran

You are invited to respond to the following questions via E-mail, fax or by post:

- What does the logo suggest to you in the context of your country, local community and church?
- What does it say about the Assembly theme in relation to your context?
- Which insights and questions does it evoke?

communion of churches challenge and hold these powers more accountable to the vulnerable through decisions and actions that can be taken? What diverse strategies are needed? Through the LWF study process, which commitments and steps will we take together with other ecumenical and civil society partners? How are individuals, congregations and the member churches involved?

### Healing **Creation**

Human beings have spoiled or destroyed much of God's creation. How can creation be restored and our relationships with the rest of nature healed? How is this related to sacramental understandings? What can other traditions teach us? What are the power and the responsibility of human creativity in relation to the rest of nature, including through the use of technology? How far should efforts go to heal or improve human life? At what risk? What is at stake theologically? ■



Mauritania:  
Dune-fixation and  
reafforestation

## Pre-Assembly Consultations

An LWF tradition, Pre-Assembly Consultations assist member churches in preparing delegates for full and active participation in the Assembly. They provide an opportunity for church leaders—men, women and youth—in the LWF geographical regions to assemble and discuss current situations in light of the Assembly theme and issues.

There will be five regional Pre-Assembly Consultations: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America; a Women's consultation, and a global Youth consultation. Meetings for women, and for youth, will also take place during the consultations.

Participants will receive detailed information on the Rules

of Procedure, issues, logistics, practical matters, worship and communication. They will discuss narrative texts assigned to each region in view of preparing the region's Bible study presentation at the Assembly.

The consultations will draw up a slate of Council member nomina-

tions according to established numbers for each region, and a determined rotation procedure.

Each region will discuss crucial issues related to its situation, future witness and work. ■

<b>Women</b>	14–17 November 2002	Montreux, Switzerland
<b>North America</b>	23–26 January 2003	Denver, USA
<b>Europe</b>	23–26 February 2003	Vienna, Austria
<b>Asia</b>	02–06 March 2003	Medan, Indonesia
<b>Africa</b>	23–26 March 2003	Nairobi, Kenya
<b>Latin America &amp; Caribbean</b>	06–09 April 2003	San Salvador, El Salvador
<b>Youth</b>	12–18 July 2003	<i>to be announced later</i>

## Youth



*Stewards at the LWF Council Meeting in Turku, Finland, 14–21 June 2000*

The profile of youth has changed dramatically in the life of the LWF since 1947. At the first Assembly in Lund, Sweden, a 'Commission of Youth Activities' was created because young people were an object of concern. In 2002, youth are active participants within the work and leadership of the Federation. They comprise 20 percent of del-

egates to each Assembly and 20 percent of members in the LWF Council, the highest decision-making body of the Federation between Assemblies. One young Council member, Dr. Mary Janssen van Raay, is vice-chairperson of the Tenth Assembly Planning Committee.

This history of growing youth participation reflects important

events and decisions along the way. The 1970 youth pre-Assembly gathering, 'World Encounter of Lutheran Youth—WELY,' was attended by forty-nine young people. Seven served on the Steering Committee of the LWF Fifth Assembly, which met soon after in Evian, France.

The 1984 LWF Seventh Assembly in Budapest, Hungary, decided that delegate participation in future Assemblies would have regional and gender balance and would include at least 20 percent youth. The 1990 LWF Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil, elected seven youth, 20 percent, as full Council members.

### As Assembly Delegates

The commitment that 20 percent of Assembly delegates from each LWF geographical region be youth remains essential. For each Assembly, on a rotating basis, all churches are urged to adhere and nominate youth delegates to ensure the commitment is upheld. ■

# Women's Participation in the LWF

Decisions made at the Seventh Assembly in 1984 still challenge us today. A milestone resolution affirmed the theological basis for the full participation of women in the life of the church and society. With 32 percent of delegates being women, their presence in Budapest was much greater than at the founding Assembly, where there were only five women among 178 delegates.

The Seventh Assembly resolved that 40 percent of delegates to the Eighth Assembly should be women, with a goal of 50 percent for the Ninth and subsequent Assemblies. With

women's participation at 43 percent in the Eighth Assembly and 49 percent in the Ninth Assembly, women continue to analyze whether their increased presence makes a difference.

When the Council, meeting in 2001, approved the study document, 'Churches say "NO" to Violence Against Women,' people in other world communions asked how the Federation was able to achieve such a commitment on a global basis. The answer is simple. Women make up 50 percent of the LWF's decision-making bodies—the Assembly and Council—and with

them comes the necessary expertise and experience to act decisively reflecting an accountability far beyond mere participation.

To attain this, much courage and perseverance was needed. Preparing for the Tenth Assembly provides yet another opportunity to live out the commitment to women's full participation. Accordingly, each church has been requested to ensure that its list of delegates includes a designated number of women to ensure that 50 percent of delegates from each LWF region are women. ■

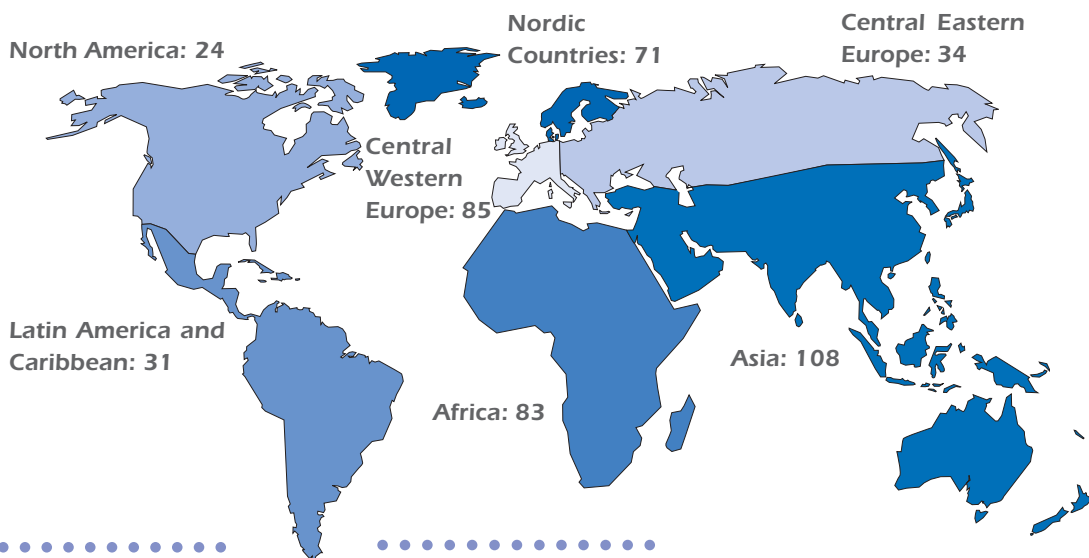


LWF Council Meeting, Turku, Finland, 14–21 June 2000: Ms Julia Ilonga, Namibia, and Dr Sarada Devi Karnatakam, India

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## Who Are the Delegates?

The key for allocating delegates to the Tenth Assembly provides for at least two delegates for each member church. There will be 436 delegates from the 133 member churches with the provision that 50 percent will be women and 20 percent will be youth (under the age of 30 years). ■



## Preparations

In preparing an Assembly, the Federation's General Secretary ensures that LWF constitutional mandates and Council decisions relating to an Assembly are implemented. The Council has appointed an Assembly Planning Committee with representatives from the member churches to make recommendations and review plans. Rev. Susan Nagle of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America serves as committee chairperson.

Assembly Coordinators have responsibility for preparations in

particular areas such as content, worship, communication, logistics, finance, pre-Assembly consultations and the pre- and post-Assembly visitation program. The Deputy General Secretary is responsible for coordinating Council-related matters.

An Assembly Office has been established to work within the LWF Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland, to ensure overall coordination. In the Assembly Office, Rev. Arthur Lechnitz serves as Assembly Coordinator

with Ms Margit Eggert as Administrative Assistant.

An Assembly Local Committee, appointed and supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the host church, is facilitating the preparations. The committee chairperson is Ms Rhonda Lorch, ELCIC Office Manager.

### Assembly Office

Tel.: +41/22-791 63 71 and 63 72

Fax: +41/22-791 66 30

[assembly@lutheranworld.org](mailto:assembly@lutheranworld.org) ■

Published by:  
The Lutheran World Federation  
Office for Communication Services  
PO Box 2100  
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland  
Tel. +41/22-791 61 11  
Fax +41/22-791 66 30  
assembly@lutheranworld.org

[www.lwf-assembly.org](http://www.lwf-assembly.org)

Revised edition

## Host Church

# The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Although the ELCIC was formed in 1986, the history of Lutherans in present-day Canada goes back almost 400 years. The first Lutheran worship service in North America took place in 1619 near Churchill in northern Manitoba. It was led by a Danish pastor, Rasmus Jensen, who accompanied an ill-fated expedition searching for a northwest passage from Europe to the Far East. Early German Lutheran settlement in the eastern province of Nova Scotia began over 250 years ago.

To find pastors and serve communities, relationships developed among various Lutheran synods and councils in North America. Many of the institutional links for Canadian



Children from local Anglican and Lutheran congregations

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congregations of the American Lutheran Church formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada (ELCC). In 1986, the ELCC joined with the Canada Section of the Lutheran Church in America to form the ELCIC.

There are approximately 189,000 baptized ELCIC members gathered in 627 congregations. Rev. Raymond Schultz serves as National Bishop. There are five ELCIC synods ranging in membership from 15,000 to 73,000 members. A bishop serves each of these. The ELCIC national offices are located in Winnipeg.

Lutherans were north-south into the United States of America rather than across Canada. In 1967 and 1968, the Canadian

ELCIC Web site: [www.elcic.ca](http://www.elcic.ca)

ELCIC Worship Web site:  
[www.worship.ca](http://www.worship.ca)



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## Winnipeg—An Historic Meeting Place

'The Forks' in downtown Winnipeg has been an important meeting place for more than 6,000 years. The city's name, which in the Cree language means 'muddy waters,' flows from that history. The Forks is where the waters of the Red River and Assiniboine River come together—churning up muddy water—as part of a vast continental network of waterways that has encouraged transportation, trade and settlement.

railway pioneers and tens of thousands of immigrants who flowed through the Forks onto the prairies, joined them. Today, The Forks is a dynamic setting in downtown Winnipeg where people gather for celebrations, recreation and to meet one another. This is where a Sunday ecumenical celebration will take place during the Assembly.

Winnipeg, with a population of about 685,000, is the capital city of the province of Manitoba. The Canadian population stands at 31 million. You will hear more about our host city in future Assembly Updates.

Web site:

[www.tourism.winnipeg.mb.ca](http://www.tourism.winnipeg.mb.ca)

Click on the smiling face to receive a warm welcome and introduction to the city.



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Above: The Forks, Winnipeg

Right: Liturgical dance