

# Ecumenical NEWS

## WEEKLY DIGEST

Department of Ecumenical Relations (PCUSA)  
Member of Churches Uniting in Christ (CUiC)

**June 30, 2006**

### **Index**

- 1. US Anglicans Elect First Female Leader**
- 2. Meeting Between Pope And Russian Patriarch 'Not Yet' On Agenda**
- 3. Leora Landmesser Dies At 57; Led NCC Administration And Finance**
- 4. Ecumenical Partners Say Relationships Remain Strong After Jefferts Schori's Election**
- 5. Archbishop Of Canterbury Welcomes 26th Presiding Bishop**
- 6. Announcement Of The Chief Secretary Of The Holy And Sacred Synod Re: The Denouncement By Pope Benedict XVI Of Rome**
- 7. New Faith And Order Standing Commission Elects Officers, Plans Work For Next Period**
- 8. Israeli Settler Attacks Ecumenical Accompanier In Hebron**

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### **1. US Anglicans Elect First Female Leader**

By Cheryl Heckler

ENI-06-0482

Oxford, Ohio, 19 June (ENI)--The US Episcopal (Anglican) Church has elected Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori as its first female leader, a move seen as creating further strain in a denomination already divided over the consecration of an openly gay bishop.

"I will bend over backward to build relationships with people who disagree with me," 52-year-old Jefferts Schori told reporters after her election on 18 June as presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, the US branch of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The election came at the US denomination's general convention in Columbus, Ohio, which is debating how to respond to demands from other Anglican churches around the world that it repent for the consecration of openly gay V. Gene Robinson as bishop of New Hampshire.

Jefferts Schori, the Episcopal bishop of Nevada, endorsed Robinson's election in 2003. She is the first woman to hold the top post in any of the world's Anglican churches. "The election speaks for itself," said Bishop Robert Duncan, moderator of the Anglican Communion Network, a group that says the denomination has abandoned biblical teaching by consecrating Robinson. "For the Anglican Communion worldwide, this election reveals the continuing insensitivity and disregard of the Episcopal Church for the present dynamics of our global fellowship."

Only two other Anglican churches - those in New Zealand and Canada - have appointed women bishops, although another 11 of the Anglican Communion's 38 provinces have accepted the principle.

Still, Jefferts Schori's election won praise from Integrity USA, which promotes the cause of lesbians and gays in the Episcopal Church. "The historic election of Katharine Jefferts Schori is something for us and the whole church to celebrate," said Integrity president Susan Russell. "We look forward to continuing the process of working closely with the presiding bishop toward the full inclusion of the gay and lesbian faithful in the Body of Christ."

Episcopal bishops elected Jefferts Schori on the fifth ballot. She collected 95 votes with 93 others split between the other six candidates, all men.

The election came 30 years after the 2.3-million-member Episcopal Church approved the ordination of women to the priesthood. "The decision today is the fruit of the witness and ministry of women bishops, priests, and deacons in the life of our church," said presiding bishop Frank Griswold, who will retire in November.

The presiding bishop represents the US denomination in meetings with other Anglican leaders and with leaders of other religious groups. But the presiding bishop's powers are limited because of a strong tradition of diocesan autonomy.

Jefferts Schori was consecrated bishop of Nevada in February 2001. A licensed pilot, she has logged more than 500 flight-hours. She holds degrees in biology and oceanography and taught religious studies at Oregon State University before her 1994 ordination.

She will be installed to her nine-year term on 4 November at a ceremony in Washington National Cathedral.

## **2. Meeting Between Pope And Russian Patriarch 'Not Yet' On Agenda**

By Bernadette Sauvaget

ENI-06-0490

Paris, 20 June (ENI)--There are no plans for a meeting between Pope Benedict XVI and Moscow Patriarch Alexei II but neither church leader has ruled out such an encounter, a top Russian Orthodox church official has said.

"Such a meeting is not yet on the agenda," said Metropolitan Kirill, head of the external relations department of the Moscow Patriarchate, at a 16 June media conference in Paris. "The two churches have a realistic evaluation of the situation. But, as far as I know, neither Patriarch Alexei II nor Pope Benedict XVI exclude the possibility of such a meeting."

Orthodox-Roman Catholic relations have long been tense in Russia over Orthodox allegations that since the end of communism, Catholics have been engaging in "proselytism", or seeking to convert traditionally Orthodox believers. But Metropolitan Kirill said he was pleased with the climate that now exists between Moscow and the Vatican. "We have recently taken some very positive and significant steps," he asserted. He referred to the "positive role" played by Benedict XVI, noting he had met the pontiff immediately after his enthronement in 2005, as well as on 18 March this year.

"He stressed that relationships to Orthodoxy would be one of the priorities of his pontificate," Metropolitan Kirill underlined, saying he was pleased with the way in which theological dialogue with the Catholic Church was continuing.

The Russian church leader appeared more reserved about relationships with Protestant churches, referring to difficulties created by the ordination of women, which is accepted by many Protestant churches, and the issue of homosexuality. "The ecumenical movement is in crisis," Kirill stated. "This is because 100 years after its birth, the ecumenical movement has still not achieved its goals."

Still, the Russian Orthodox Church intended to remain within the World Council of Churches, which groups mainly Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox denominations, even if "some say that it is necessary to leave", he insisted. "One should not shrink from challenges and difficulties; it is necessary to face them." He explained.

Kirill's visit to Paris coincided with the publication in French of his book, "The Gospel and Freedom".

### **3. Leora Landmesser Dies At 57; Led NCC Administration And Finance**

New York, June 19, 2006 -- Leora E. Landmesser, 57, who for three years guided National Council of Churches administration and finance with an eye to detail and a dedication to ministry, died today after a long battle with cancer.

Landmesser had not been in her New York office for weeks but she was a palpable presence at NCC staff meetings, using a speaker to comment on reports and financing, and she communicated with colleagues via e-mail.

"Leora had been very candid about her illness, which gave all of us the freedom to ask her how we could help her and pray for her openly," said NCC General Secretary, the Rev. Dr. Bob Edgar. "She was deeply committed to peace, to the relief of the poor and to the health of the environment, and she was determined to keep the Council financially healthy so it could make an impact in those areas."

When colleagues failed to collect receipts or keep a clear record of expenditures, Landmesser's abrupt admonitions could be unnerving. At the same time, her compassion for people in need could bring tears to her eyes. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the U.S. Gulf Coast in 2005, she was among the first on the Council staff to propose ways to house people who had lost their homes.

Landmesser was president of Leland International, LLC, a global financial consulting firm that she founded in 1998, when she was elected the NCC's Associate General Secretary for Administration and Finance in September 2003.

Immediately after her election she was diagnosed with a lethal form of cancer. "I went to Bob Edgar and told him, you don't have to go through with this if you don't want to," Landmesser recalled. But Edgar asked her to take the job to which she had been elected. Leora E. Landmesser was a seasoned financial officer with experience in a wide range of organizations, including the United Methodist Church, United Nations, Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

She was senior investment officer of The United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, serving in that post from 1993 to 1998. From 1987 to 1993 she held several positions in the foundation community, the most recent of which were comptroller and director of administration for the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and comptroller and director of administration for the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Earlier she was a member of the World Division staff of The United Methodist Church's General Board of Global Ministries. During more than 16 years with the board, she rose to become the World Division's assistant treasurer.

Landmesser was a member of Grace United Methodist Church, Wyckoff, N.J., where she served on the finance, stewardship and mission committees. Among other volunteer activities, she was a trustee of The Interchurch Center in New York City.

"She was such a vivid presence among us, so powerful in personality and intellect and faith," Edgar said. We mourn her passing and pray for her family -- and for ourselves -- who will miss her."

Messages to the family may be sent to her sister, Jeanette Staats, in care of the National Council of Churches USA, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115.

#### **4. Ecumenical Partners Say Relationships Remain Strong After Jefferts Schori's Election**

By Matthew Davies

[ENS] Dialogue between the Episcopal Church and other Christian denominations, both in the United States and beyond, should not be impacted negatively because of the election of a woman – Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori -- as the 26th Presiding Bishop, according to ecumenists attending General Convention.

Roman Catholic Bishop Edward Clark of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles said the impact was made 30 years ago when the Episcopal Church chose to ordain women as bishops. "With a woman bishop now becoming Presiding Bishop, I don't see that adding any complications to our relationship," he said.

The Roman Catholics are the oldest ecumenical partners of the Anglican Communion. The Episcopal Church participates in the international Anglican-Roman Catholic International Consultation (ARCIC), sponsored by the Anglican Communion Office, as well as the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue in the United States (ARC-USA).

"I think it is going to be a challenge for [Jefferts Schori] within the Anglican Communion, and I wish her well in that," he added. "But she seems to have some very good talents for working with people, and that will stand her in very good stead."

The Rev. Lowell Almen, secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), relayed Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson's delight in hearing news of the election.

"We expect the decision will be highly regarded by member churches of the Lutheran World Federation," Almen said. "Many already ordain women as pastors. A few do not, although the encouragement continues for those churches to receive the gifts of women in ordained ministry."

Almen, who is at Convention for the third time, said the full communion relationship between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church, expressed in the document "Called to Common Mission," has opened the way for some very significant cooperation, ministry and outreach.

We continue to rejoice in the ELCA for the adoption of that document and the relationship that continues to grow between the two churches," he said.

Bishop Joris Vercammen, Old Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht, described the election as a "minor" decision. "The major decision was made 30 years ago in accepting female bishops," he said. "If you have someone among the bishops who has the capacity to be

the Presiding Bishop, and it's a woman, you have to elect that person. You elected your best bishop, and I don't have any critical commentary on that."

Signed in 1931 and celebrating its 75th anniversary, the Bonn agreement between the Old Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion is one of the earliest ecumenical agreements.

"It expresses that the churches respect one another and accept one another as churches," said Veracammen, praising the initiative some years ago when the Episcopal Church appointed a permanent representative, Bishop W. Michie Klusmeyer of West Virginia, to sit in conference with the Old Catholic bishops.

Veracammen was the first non-Episcopalian to preside at a General Convention Eucharist June 19 during a service that celebrated the anniversary of the Bonn Agreement. Acknowledging that the election may complicate some ecumenical relationships and dialogues, Veracammen said it is important for people respect the integrity of the decision.

"No one was interested in making this a historic decision or a historic step," he said. "No one was interested in shocking fellow Christians or other churches. On the basis of that integrity, I think [ecumenical dialogue] will develop in the right way."

-- For the Episcopal News Service.

## **5. Archbishop Of Canterbury Welcomes 26th Presiding Bishop**

[ACNS] The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams issued a statement June 19 on the election of Katharine Jefferts Schori, Bishop of Nevada, as the next Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Jefferts Schori was elected June 18 to succeed current Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold.

The full text of Williams' statement is as below.

"I send my greetings to Bishop Katharine and she has my prayers and good wishes as she takes up a deeply demanding position at a critical time. She will bring many intellectual and pastoral gifts to her new work, and I am pleased to see the strength of her commitment to mission and to the Millennium Development Goals.

Her election will undoubtedly have an impact on the collegial life of the Anglican Primates; and it also brings into focus some continuing issues in several of our ecumenical dialogues.

We are continuing to pray for the General Convention of the Episcopal Church as it confronts a series of exceptionally difficult choices."

## **6. Patriarchate Of Constantinople: Announcement Of The Chief Secretary Of The Holy And Sacred Synod Regarding The Denouncement By Pope Benedict XVI Of Rome Of The Title "Patriarch Of The West"**

It is hereby announced that during its last meeting the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate discussed the importance and the consequences for the relations between the Roman-Catholic and the Orthodox Churches of the recent decision of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI of Rome, to remove from his titles that are mentioned in the Pontifical Yearbook (Annuario) of 2006 the title "Patriarch of the West", and to retain titles such as "Vicar of Christ", "Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church", etc.

Concerning this decision, as well as the comments and explanation on this matter given by the President of the Pontifical Council for the Unity of the Christians, Cardinal Walter Kasper, the Ecumenical Patriarchate would like to make the following observations:

1. The removal of the title "Patriarch of the West" from the Pontifical Yearbook of this year, as well as the retention of the above mentioned titles, have a particular importance for the relations between the Orthodox and the Roman-Catholic Churches, especially now in view of the reopening of the official Theological Dialogue between the two Churches, given that this Theological Dialogue will also deal with the issue of Primacy in the Church.

2. Out of all the titles that are used by the Pope, the only one that goes back to the period of the Undivided Church of the first millennium, and which has been accepted in the conscience of the Orthodox Church is the title of "Patriarch of the West". In the beginning this was related to the institution of the "Pentarchy", but, it became widely accepted in the East even after the Schism of 1054 AD. A proof of this is the fact that throughout the centuries the Ecumenical Patriarchate has avoided the founding of bishoprics in the West with titles that had been already used by bishops of the Church of Rome. Further proof is the protest of the Ecumenical Patriarchate any time the Church of Rome, especially after the 4th Crusade, including our own times, would found bishoprics within the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Patriarchates with titles that were being already carried by Orthodox Bishops. The consciousness of the geographical limits of each ecclesiastical jurisdiction has never ceased to be a basic component of Orthodox ecclesiology.

3. The fact of course that the "Pentarchy", which was based on the geographical structure of the known "oecumene" during the time of the Byzantine period, has weakened ecclesiastically through the creation of other Patriarchates and Autocephalous Churches within the Orthodox Church after the fall of the Byzantine Empire, is an undeniable historical reality. However, there was never a time that the Orthodox Church did not make a distinction between the so-called "ancient" Patriarchates that go back to the institution of the "Pentarchy" and the Patriarchates that have been added later on. Among the "ancient" Patriarchates, the first place belongs to the Patriarchate of the West, under the bishop of Rome, even though its communion with the Orthodox Churches has been

interrupted after the Schism of 1054 AD. This fact remains always very important for the approach by the Orthodox of the primacy issue of the bishop of Rome in case of the restoration of full communion between the two Churches.

4. It is also an undeniable reality that in the recent past the term "West" has acquired a cultural context, and has expanded to areas unknown during the times of the ancient Church, such as the American continent, Oceania etc. It would, however, be unthinkable for the Orthodox ecclesiology to denounce the geographical principle and to replace it with a "cultural" one in the structure of the Church. The unity of the Church cannot be conceived as a sum of culturally distinct Churches, but as a unity of local, namely geographically determined, Churches. The removal of the title "Patriarch of the West" must not lead to the absorption of the clearly distinct geographical ecclesiastical "jurisdictions" by a "universal" Church, consisting of Churches, which are distinguished on the basis of either "culture" or "confession" or "rite". Even in today's historical circumstances, the one Church must, from an ecclesiological point of view, be considered as a unity of full local Churches.

5. At this point it is of extreme importance to the Orthodox Church that Pope Benedict, while having rejected the title "Patriarch of the West", retained the titles "Vicar of Christ" and "Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church". These titles create serious difficulties to the Orthodox, given the fact that they are perceived as implying a universal jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome over the entire Church, which is something the Orthodox have never accepted. By retaining these titles and discarding the "Patriarch of the West" the term and concept of "sister Churches" between the Roman-Catholic and Orthodox Church becomes hard to use. This concept which was first introduced by Patriarch Ioannis of Constantinople, the Kamatiros, as a response to the positions of Pope Innocent III, in the 13th century, has been repeated and promoted in our times by Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, both of blessed memory.

6. In view of the reopening of the official theological dialogue between the Roman-Catholic and Orthodox Churches and the discussion of the issue of primacy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate expresses its wish and prayer that no further difficulties may be added in the discussion of such a thorny problem, as that of the primacy of the bishop of Rome. In this connection we find it appropriate to recall the view of Professor Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, published some years ago, that "Rome cannot demand from the East regarding the primacy issue more than what has been expressed and applied during the first millennium". If such a principle is accompanied by an ecclesiology of "koinonia -communion" through placing every aspect of primacy within the context of the synodical structure of the Church, this would greatly facilitate the effort to solve a very serious issue for the unity of the Church of Christ.

At the Phanar, 8 June 2006, from the Chief Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod

## **7. New Faith And Order Standing Commission Elects Officers, Plans Work For Next Period**

At its first meeting, the WCC's newly appointed Standing Commission on Faith and Order named six officers to oversee its work until the next WCC Assembly in 2013. Following an address by WCC general secretary Samuel Kobia, the Standing Commission also outlined major areas of study for the period.

The 30-member Standing Commission oversees Faith and Order studies and activities, which aim to help overcome theological, cultural and social sources of division among the churches.

The list of Faith and Order officers, to be presented to the WCC Central Committee in September 2006 for appointment, is headed by Bishop Vasilios of Trinitus (Karayiannis), (Orthodox, Cyprus), who was named moderator of the Commission. The ecumenical officer of the Church of Cyprus, and a member of the WCC's executive committee, Bishop Karyiannis has served on the Standing Commission since the WCC's Harare Assembly in 1998.

Five vice-moderators were named to help guide the Commission's work during this period: Rev. Frans Bouwen (Roman Catholic Church, Jerusalem), Bishop John Hind ([Anglican] Church of England, United Kingdom), Mrs. Sarah Kaulule (United Church of Zambia, Zambia), Rev. Dr Hermen Shastri (Methodist Church of Malaysia, Malaysia), and Dr. Valburga Schmiedt Streck (Evangelical Lutheran Church, Brazil).

In an immediate response to the elections, Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate), currently a vice-president of the WCC and former staff member and officer of Faith and Order, noted that "this composition of the top officers of the Commission reflects a good balance among confessions, genders and the diverse regions of the world".

In a related development, the Commission considered a slate of 90 additional persons to be presented to WCC central committee in September, 2006 for appointment to the Faith and Order Plenary Commission. Sometimes called "the most broadly representative, church-based theological reflection group in the world", the Plenary Commission serves as an official resource and sounding board for Faith and Order's work.

Major areas of study identified for the next period include ecclesiology, baptism and worship, ethical decision-making and questions of authority. The Commission also called for continued work with the united and uniting churches and Christian World Communions, and for co-operation with reflection on Christian self-understanding in a religiously pluralist world.

Also foreseen are major celebrations of two important milestones: the 25th anniversary in 2007 of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, one of the most famous and influential of all ecumenical texts; and the 100th anniversary in 2008 of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, one of the most widely-observed annual ecumenical events.

In its planning the Standing Commission was mindful of the WCC's new, more integrated and interactive working style. Links to other WCC programs are foreseen especially in relation to the mission of the church, and in suggesting theological resources for wider WCC work on faith, science and technology and a proposed global platform for theological reflection and analysis.

More information on the work of Faith and Order is available on the WCC website at: [wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/index-e.html](http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/index-e.html)

## **8. Israeli Settler Attacks Ecumenical Accompanier In Hebron**

A member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) was attacked by a woman settler in the Tel Rumeida district of Hebron on Friday, 23 June.

Whilst in the area of the Cordoba school, where Christian volunteers accompany children to school, Duduzile Masango, a South African ecumenical accompanier was attacked by an elderly settler woman, who pulled a towel tightly around her head.

It is not known if the woman intended to suffocate her, but the accompanier had difficulty breathing. Stones were also thrown at Masango and four other internationals who were with her. The incident left her shaken, although she did not need to receive medical treatment.

Although a soldier was standing next to the group of volunteers, he did not act to stop the attack. After the incident, members of the international solidarity movement who had witnessed the incident filed a complaint with the police. However, Masango was told by the police that they did not believe her testimony.

Rifat Kassis, EAPPI international program coordinator, stated: "This is just one in a long line of incidents targeting internationals in Hebron. The WCC continues to advocate that all settlers in Hebron be withdrawn and settler-occupied properties be returned to their Palestinian owners. A letter was sent to the Israeli ambassador in Switzerland in April, following similar incidents. It requested appropriate actions by the Israeli authorities and law enforcement agencies to stop this behavior toward Palestinians and internationals. The WCC has so far received no response."

On 1 April, a Swiss lawyer, was stoned by a young Israeli settler in the same Hebron district, and on 20 April still in Tel Rumeida, a German social worker and a Norwegian sociologist were attacked by some 15 young settlers. The Swiss lawyer needed seven stitches for a head wound as a result.

In both cases, the Christian volunteers were escorting Palestinian pupils of the Cordoba Girls School to protect them from harassment by settlers. The WCC presented a formal protest to the Israeli ambassador in Switzerland over these two incidents on 25 April.

A team of four ecumenical accompaniers escort Palestinian pupils of the Cordoba School to protect them from harassment by Israeli settlers. The school is situated opposite the Beit Hadassah settlement. Its pupils and teachers are frequent targets of stone throwing, kicking and spitting by the settlers.

Coordinated by the WCC, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) began in 2002, and has deployed nearly 300 accompaniers from 14 countries. Its purpose is to support Palestinians and Israelis working for peace by monitoring and reporting violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, offering protection by accompanying local communities in daily activities, and by advocating with churches for a peaceful end to the occupation.