



WOMEN IN
CHURCH AND
SOCIETY
THE LUTHERAN
WORLD FEDERATION

From the LWF Institutional Memory

Women on the Move – Her Story:



Name: Eva von Hertzberg
Country of origin: Germany
Date of Birth: Marangu, Tanzania, 21.8.1932
Church: Lutheran Church, Germany
Period of Mandate: 1981—1987

Short biography: From 1981—1987, Eva von Hertzberg served as Secretary for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) in the Lutheran World Federation's Department of Studies. She succeeded Eva Zabolai-Csekme, the first woman to hold this newly created position. Von Hertzberg joined the Federation in 1974 as a research assistant in the Studies Department, working with the Women's Desk for almost five years and for shorter periods with the Office of International Scholarship and Exchange and the Director's Office.

Von Hertzberg was born in Marangu, Tanzania, where her father was a farmer. After his death, the family lived in Latvia and Poland before moving to Germany as refugees in 1945. She was trained as a church worker and from 1961 to 1973 served with the German YWCA as secretary for ecumenical relations, international youth work and voluntary social services. Subsequently, von Hertzberg graduated in social pedagogy, specializing in adult education, and during the course of her graduate work in the USA concentrated on feminist theology and theology of the laity.

When joining WICAS as research assistant one of Von Hertzberg's first responsibilities was the launching of the newsletter "WOMAN," which responded to the need for information among women in the Lutheran churches around the world. It became a vehicle for the LWF Women's Desk by which to introduce a new approach of reading the Bible. The most influential column was the regular Bible study or theological reflection entitled, "through women's eyes." Equally important were articles on issues promoted during United Nations Decade for Women, such as equal rights and opportunities for women around the world. With an initial print run of 300 copies the newsletter quickly grew to several thousand copies per issue and became an important tool for the emancipation of women in the Lutheran churches worldwide.

During von Hertzberg's term as Secretary for Women and Society the importance of research was increasingly becoming recognized. Why was it that it had taken so long to develop full partnership? What were the obstacles faced by women in the LWF and its member churches? In light of these and other questions the LWF Department of Studies sponsored a study project in Germany entitled "Women as innovative groups." This and several other research projects were carried out by the LWF in the areas of women and education, women and worship, liturgy, theology and ordination, human rights, development and communication.

A watershed moment in the life of the Federation was the decision taken in 1984 at the Seventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation. During one of the plenary sessions, women delegates and staff staged a "Go in." Singing "It's love that makes the world go round," they stepped up to the podium and read a declaration in which they demanded greater participation and visibility. Following this demonstration, and for the first time in the history of the LWF, two women, Dorothy Marple and Bodil Solling, were asked to chair sessions. Furthermore, due to the successful lobbying of the women, the Assembly decided to introduce a quota system: a plan was to be developed whereby 40 percent of the delegates to the Eighth Assembly would be women and by the Ninth Assembly the quota would be increased to 50 percent. The resolution also called for at least 40 percent representation of women on the Executive Committee and on all other advisory/governing committees of the Federation. These developments were to a large extent the result of the growing consciousness and political awareness of women in the LWF structures, which in the long run had an impact on the member churches.