



## Women on the move – Her Story:



- Name:** Marthe Ahmadou
- Country of origin:** Cameroon
- Date of birth:** 1948
- Church:** Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (ELCC)
- Period of mandate:** Delegate at the 1984 LWF Budapest Assembly, elected Council member in 1992 until the 1997 LWF Hong Kong Assembly, within the Program Committee for Communication, after having served since 1989 in World Service.
- Short biography:** Born in Ngaoundéré, Cameroon around 1948, I have attended primary and secondary school at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon. In 1966, I was a teacher at the Protestant primary school. I then entered at Sawtu Linjiila in 1966 as producer and translator of religious programmes in foulfoudé

made in Ngaoundéré and sent to the Radio Voice of the Gospel in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In 1973, my husband and I were sent to Ethiopia, my husband for the news in fouldoué and as I did not had a real job, I worked as a copy editor in the French office. After the Ethiopian Revolution, in 1977 and the nationalisation of Radio Voice of the Gospel, we went back to Cameroon where I became a secretary to the Protestant college from 1984 to 1990. In 1984, I was appointed national President of Women for Christ (FPC). Femmes pour Christ/Women for Christ is the movement of the women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon, created in 1975. This year is its 40 anniversary celebrations and counts in her midst over 20,000 women. Well organised and well structured from top to grass root level, it is the survival engine of the ELCC. This movement has known a considerable take off thanks to the support of the leaders of the ELCC, which gave the movement the proper place it deserves.

The year 1984 has been an historical year for the women of the LWF member churches who participated at the LWF Assembly in Budapest, Hungary. During this Assembly all the women delegates have indeed climbed up to the podium in order to show their dissatisfaction regarding the insignificant number of women represented at the LWF Assembly. Their demonstration was taken seriously several years after with the establishment of the women quota at the LWF Council, at the LWF Assembly and at the LWF Headquarters.



*Women demonstration at the 1984 LWF Assembly, Marthe Ahmadou under the mike.*

In 1989, I was appointed a member of the World Service Commission, during one year. Then I was nominated member of the LWF Council when Mrs Bouka Coula then Council member was called to serve at the LWF headquarters as French-speaking executive at the Africa desk in 1992. I served at the LWF Council Program Committee for Communication. I attended my first Council meeting in this capacity in Madras, India in 1992 and my last Council meeting at Hong Kong in 1997, also attending then the LWF Assembly. In 1990, the ELCC asked me to work full time with the women organization. There was much cooperation with the LWF, especially with the WICAS office, through workshops, conferences, training, council, etc...I have acquired many experiences, thanks to the LWF. Visits and travels in many countries, exchanges with persons of different faiths have enriched my personal and professional life. The LWF has accompanied Women for Christ by providing us with financial resources for training seminars, as well as for scholarships for our first women theologians. Having taking my retirement in 2009, the leadership of Women for Christ is in the hands of Rev. Maïna

Jeannette who is preparing her doctorate at the Protestant University of Yaoundé. This bears witness not only of the evolution of the women movement within the ELCC but also of its leaders.

It is God who calls and God who equips therefore it is important to seek support in God. To be called to serve the Lord requires humbleness, the gift of oneself and the commitment. Called by the Lord to work with women and having not received any specific formation to fulfill this duty, it is through daily experiences, through seminars, training, conferences that I was able to account for my responsibility. One year spent at the Theological Faculty in Montpellier in 1981 and another one spent at the Lutheran Bible Institute of Seattle in the United States in 1982 have allowed me to improve my theological and biblical knowledge. The women forum held in 1995 in Kenya, the Beijing Conference in 1995 and the one in New York in 2000 have also allowed to meet sisters from the whole world and exchange with them on various themes regarding women. The WCC program Decade in Solidarity with Women 1988-1998 have also led to share many experiences with other churches through formation and seminars.

To be a leader means many sacrifices as the leader is the engine, the locomotive, the guide. To be a leader means to have a vision for these women, with a precise goal and objectives to achieve. And this has helped me to do my tasks better and to evaluate my work within a given period. To be a leader means first to be able to stand on the same level as these women in order to lead them towards a sincere collaboration. It means to share their joy, their worries, their problems. To be a leader, it means to know how to listen, to see, to dialogue, to communicate, to encourage, to take the right decisions and to appreciate. To be a leader requires patience, the desire to always learn, read, discover useful things to share with its members and to encourage to be more active. It means also to search to improve its performances and to climb always higher.

During almost 20 years, I together with the women from my church have realized many projects, construction of temporary houses, initiation to common fields, tree planting for the protection of the environment, awareness building for fund raising, leadership training, on gender and development, more than 200 groups have been formed for the project saving – credit, creation of gics, the fight against HIV/AIDS, the fight against violence against women, the theological and biblical formation for women, exchange travel at the national and international level in order to strengthen our relations with other churches, etc...today women are pastors and have been ordained in the ELCC, a centre of fight against the violence has been built in Touboro, as well as two training centres for girls. Since 2000, the ELCC has decided during its synod in 1999 to give to the women the responsibility of Sunday worship once a year. The last Sunday of the month of May has thus been chosen by the women, they lead the liturgy and preach. We give thanks to God for all these accomplishments. To be a leader bring a lot of joy, however one need to be fully aware of contexts, rythms, situations, etc...

By siding with the ELCC women, in the towns and in the villages, by meeting our African, Europeans and Americans partners, I have learnt a lot and I thank God for this. I am very grateful to my church to have entrusted me and chosen to be in this leadership position during so many years and I know that they never regretted it. Many thanks to the leaders of the ELCC, to President Darman Paul, President Songsaré Amsé Pierre, President Barya Philémon and Bishop Nyiwé Thomas, without forgetting those in the sister church in Cameroon President Goyeck Daba of the Church of the Lutheran Brethern in Cameroon, Archbishop David Windibiziri of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria and within LUWCA as well as many others. These men have encouraged me and accompanied me during my ministry with the women of the ELCC.

I am also grateful towards all the women with whom I have worked during these many years, all the regional leaders, the districts and in the congregations. It must be acknowledged that during our multiple trips, we have met much enthusiasm among the women and many commitments for the work of the Lord, their desire to share, their gifts bear witness that they all love the Lord. Today, I am missing all this warmth.

I am however grateful to the Lord for having allowed me to carry this responsibility until the end of my career in 2009. I am also very grateful to the NMS, ELCA, LEAF, ELCIC for their unconditional support. I must express my homages towards certain personalities which stroke me during these years such as Dr Musimbi Kanyoro, WICAS executive secretary in Geneva, Dr Bouka Coula who has worked very much for different LWF departments, Mrs Eneme Grâce, responsible for the women's office at the FEMEC our model, the women KRKK in Norway for their commitment by the FPC and the women in South Dakota.

Finally, I would like to thank the LWF leaders for having thought of the former leaders in the member churches, I greet all my friends with whom I journeyed together during the LWF Council meeting. Yes life is made of the present, of the past with the look of hope towards the future. We, who have been fighting, defending the cause of the women in the past, in our churches, hope that the women who have taken this train will continue to improve the condition of the women at all levels, because the fight continues even if a big step has been accomplished. I wish a good wind, good luck and much success and may God accompany you. Read Joshua 1: 1-10.