

Lutheran numbers up in Africa, down in Europe: Called an African Renaissance

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The numbers of Lutherans in Africa has grown by 9 per cent over two years, but Lutheran church membership in Europe and North America has declined in the same period, according to statistics released last month by the Geneva-based Lutheran World Federation.

“The politicians call it ‘Africa Renaissance.’ We in the church see it as a reawakening of the African spirit which was crushed by slavery and colonialism,” noted Bishop Zephania Kameeta of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia, who is the LWF vice president for the Africa region.

In all, Lutheran church membership worldwide expanded by 570,000, or 0.9 per cent, to nearly 66 million in 2003 from the count in 2001, when the LWF registered 65,387,677 Lutherans.

The highest regional growth (9.3 per cent) was recorded among churches in Africa, where an additional 1,115,141 Lutherans were registered, pushing the number of Lutherans on the continent to 13,068,209 by the end of 2003. The biggest percentage increases were in Rwanda and Malawi. In North America, Lutheran churches lost 84,179 members over the same period. *-Ecumenical News International*