

# Lutheran growth is in Asia, Africa: Steady decline in the West

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Lutheran church membership soared in Africa and Asia between 2005 and 2006 but continued its steady decline in the West, according to the Lutheran World Federation, whose total constituency rose .71 percent to just under 66.7 million.

The Geneva-based LWF, which released the data on March 6, reported on Lutherans in 78 countries. Asia saw the largest growth, adding 900,000 Lutherans, bringing the total there to 8.2 million. European nations experienced the deepest drop in membership—a decline of more than 566,000 to 37.4 million.

Membership in North American churches fell by 115,293, a drop of about 1.4 percent, to just over 5 million. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the LWF's second-largest church with 4.85 million members, lost about 80,000 members.

The Church of Sweden, the world's largest Lutheran church with about 6.9 million members, saw its membership decrease by 99,000. Africa's Lutheran churches grew by 221,000 members and now total 15.2 million. *-Religion News Service*