

A vision for peace



Peace” marched, prayed, picketed in silence and demanded meetings with government and rebel leaders. With Leymah at the helm, their non-violent movement helped to successfully end Liberia’s 14-year civil war.

Leymah admits that she never believed her efforts would take her where she is today, including winning the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2011. She was simply trying to secure a future for her six children.

“The one way I see us changing this world is by speaking up,” Leymah says. “It’s time to say to the evils of this world, go back to the shadows, because the good is taking in the light.”

The life-long member of the Lutheran Church in Liberia has been an inspiration to ELCA members since 2004 and a frequent speaker at ELCA events.

Leymah was also a recipient of the ELCA International Leadership Development scholarship that supported her studies in peace building at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 2005.

“Providing opportunities for education and training are key ways in which we accompany our global companions in their efforts to expand their leadership and institutional capacities,” says Tammy Jackson, director of the ELCA churchwide program.

Says Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson, “The ELCA has been blessed by [Leymah’s] prophetic voice.”

It began one evening in 2003 in a candle-lit room in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia.

A young woman named Leymah Gbowee gathered a group of 20 women and invited them to share their stories. They spoke of husbands and sons murdered, sisters and daughters raped, and children dying from hunger—the brutal results of the country’s civil war that began in 1989.

These women had mourned in silence until Leymah urged them to take action in the name of peace. Soon the group of 20 grew to thousands.

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