



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

Office of the
General Secretary

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GREETINGS FROM THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES

Novi Sad, Serbia, 31 May – 6 June 2018

Honourable President, Board members, participants at the General Assembly,
Respected General Secretary,
Sisters and brothers in Christ,

It is with joy and thanksgiving that I bring the greetings from the Lutheran World Federation – a communion of churches, to this General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches, gathered in Novi Sad, Serbia.

We rejoice with you as you gather to pray, discern, discuss and look forward into what God is calling the church to be in the European context.

The theme of your General Assembly “*You shall be my witnesses*” connects directly to the season of Pentecost. The biblical story of Pentecost reminds us, that whenever the community of those following the Lord gathers, even if with fear and unresolved questions, God finds a way to meet them, to empower and liberate them, to send them out into the public to live out the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ by words and deed. We pray and trust that the General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches will end on that note.

In fact, the theme of your General Assembly also reminds us of the fundamental calling of the church, which is to take part in God’s mission to the world, as expressed and brought to us in Jesus Christ.

Indeed, how churches will do this *together*, focusing in what they have in common in Christ while relating to their differences, will in itself become an illustration of both the beauty and the power of our shared faith in the Triune God. I want to encourage us to think of unity as a prophetic witness that churches can offer in today’s world, which is so much marked and drawn into a dynamic of fragmentation, conflict and withdrawal. There

is another world in God's mind, one that came into our world in Christ Jesus – and that is the one we are called to be witnesses of.

It is because of these treasures of our common faith in the Triune God, that we believe these times, challenging as they are in so many respects, are good times for the church to be the church. The numerous changes, which in so many ways affect also the churches in Europe, cannot and should not take away the joy of the gospel, and the calling to be witnesses of Christ in this world. No one can take away that joy from the church!

The Lutheran World Federation gives thanks for good contacts and cooperation with the Conference of European Churches and looks forward to discern together how to continue working jointly as an expression of the one ecumenical movement.

We pray for your General Assembly, asking for God's presence, guidance and blessings. We trust in God's Spirit visiting your gathering and empowering you all to continue witnessing to the Triune God

In Christ,

Rev. Dr Martin Junge
General Secretary
The Lutheran World Federation