



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

Office of the
General Secretary

lutheranworld.org

To the Central Committee of the
World Council of Churches

Geneva, 17 June 2018

Honourable Moderator, Presidents, General Secretary,
Honourable members of the WCC Central Committee,
beloved sisters and brothers in Christ,

It is with joy and thanksgiving that I bring greetings from the Lutheran World Federation, a global communion of 145 member churches, on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the World Council of Churches.

The founding mothers and fathers of the WCC envisioned the World Council of Churches as an instrument whereby the churches search for the unity which Christ wills for his one church. The 8th WCC Assembly in Harare in 1998 expressed this aim in a beautiful way, when it called the churches "to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in the common life of Christ, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe."

Since its beginning, the WCC aimed to hold together two essential aspects of God's mission as they had been expressed so far in the movements *Faith and Order* and *Life and Work*. These two aspects – theological reflection and dialogue on the one hand, and serving one's neighbour on the other – are not to be seen as alternatives but as two sides of how the churches participate in God's holistic mission in the world. When we lose our foundation in theology, which stands in our faith in the Triune God, we soon lose our ability to convey the message of God's grace and reconciliation convincingly. At the same time, if we as churches are not moved by faith to joint action by the needs of our suffering neighbours, that same message of God's grace and reconciliation is put into question.

The Lund principle formulated by the Faith and Order in 1952 expresses this commitment powerfully: churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately.

Only two years ago, in 2016, the Lutheran World Federation went back to that very place, Lund, to draw from that gift of the ecumenical movement when it commemorated the Reformation anniversary jointly with the Catholic Church, and right after went to the city of Malmö, to sign a Declaration of Intent between the Lutheran World Federation - World Service and Caritas Internationalis. Indeed, our dialogues and the unity that God

grants us develops their deepest meaning when they inscribe themselves in God's loving approach to humankind as revealed in Jesus Christ.

In today's world, unity is becoming increasingly threatened by forces of fragmentation, polarization, and conflict. Anxiety and fear are being used to feed suspicion, hatred, and xenophobia. While fear tends to cast out love, our witness to Christ compels us to do the opposite: guided by the verses from 1 John 4:18 we shall hold fast that "there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." We are called to be the witnesses of God's love in the world. We are called to be a sign of hope. God's love draws people together, it unites, reconciles and makes us yearn for justice and peace for all of God's creation.

The Lutheran World Federation gives thanks for the ecumenical movement. We continue to commit ourselves to this movement and pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the pilgrimage of justice and peace. We give thanks for the WCC and pray for its future. The Lutheran World Federation pledges its ongoing support to the WCC and looks forward to continuing close cooperation.

"We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (1st Thessalonians 1: 2-3)

May you have a fruitful continuation of your Central Committee meeting with good discussions and genuine fellowship.



Rev. Dr. Martin Junge

General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation