



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

Office of the  
General Secretary

[lutheranworld.org](http://lutheranworld.org)

## 2015 NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE LWF GENERAL SECRETARY

Dear sisters, dear brothers in Christ,

I greet you with the watchword for the year 2015:

*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (Romans 15:7)*

Indeed a surprising word! Written to a community fragmented by divisions and disputes, Paul reminds the believers of this early community that it is the acceptance of the other that brings praise to God.

I believe this strong statement continues to be important today: in a world characterized by communication breakdowns, by withdrawal and fragmentation the prophetic witness of Christian communions – local and global – will be seen in their capability to accept, welcome and embrace the other. It is this acceptance of the other that reveals both the centeredness and rootedness in Christ. And it is hence this ability to accept and embrace the other that gives glory to the Triune God.

A rich year 2014 lies behind us. We can only be grateful for God's guidance and inspiration as we journeyed together as a communion of churches, living and working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world:

- Substantiating the importance of the "sola scriptura" for Lutheran churches, we continued working together on the cross-cultural process of biblical hermeneutics. As a communion that reads the Bible and does so jointly, we are thus preparing our journey towards the LWF Assembly in 2017.
- A strong conceptual framework and appealing programs have been shared with you as we embark on the last stretch of our journey towards the Reformation Anniversary in 2017. We reiterate our invitation: connect, participate and contribute!
- Together with you and on your behalf, in 2014 we were able to serve an average of over 2 million refugees and internally displaced persons from places such as Northern Iraq, Central African Republic, Colombia and Syria. Never before in LWF's history have we reached out to so many people.

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- In August the LWF signed a cooperation agreement with Islamic Relief Worldwide, in order to work together on specific projects supporting refugees. This agreement is not just an issue of being more effective in our service. It is also about conveying in powerful ways that religions and people of different faiths can work together for the sake of the suffering neighbor, and have a lot to contribute in this respect. Religions should never become the source of conflict, but the source of hope for people suffering under conflicts.
  - LWF Youth has developed astonishing dynamism in the LWF communion. It is youth that leads the LWF's engagement on the issue of climate change, thereby reminding us that climate change is an issue of intergenerational justice.
  - LWF member churches supported financially the programs and work of the LWF Communion Office like never before: by the end of 2013, 81% of the churches had paid their fair membership fee, contributing in total EUR 2.52 million to LWF's budget. I want to express my deep gratitude for your strong support!

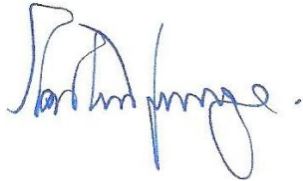
There are amazing opportunities to witness together as a communion of churches that are ahead of us. I want to ask for your ongoing participation and support:

- In April, four booklets will be presented to the public, one on the theme of the Reformation anniversary (Liberated by God's grace) and three booklets on each of the three sub-themes of the anniversary (Salvation is not for sale; Human beings are not for sale; Creation is not for sale). These booklets are meant to contribute towards local and regional conversations with a perspective to inform the global conversation at the Assembly in 2017.
- In May the African LWF member churches will gather to celebrate 60 years of their first regional gathering. "From Marangu to Wittenberg" is their slogan, thereby re-connecting their coming together with the origins of Reformation in the city of Wittenberg in 1517. The Asian, Latin American and Caribbean regions will also have their regional meetings: to learn together, support each other and grow in bonds of communion relationships.
- Operations in Jordan, Northern Iraq and Central African Republic to protect refugees will be expanded further, so that more people can be served more comprehensively by the LWF.
- From 22 August to 4 September, 175 global young Reformers, stewards and ecumenical youth, will meet in the city of Wittenberg to initiate their specific projects in view of the 500<sup>th</sup> Reformation anniversary. A very active conversation is already taking place on the LWF social media networks and websites. Read and listen to some of the reflections by the youth, and you will already get a feeling about the wealth that youth will be offering to the Assembly in 2017.
- In October, a global theological consultation under the theme "Reformation in Global Perspectives. Interactions between Theology, Politics and Economics" will be organized in Namibia. The consultation will provide an excellent opportunity to harvest from the results of the ongoing LWF study processes, programs and projects, and to offer a forum for global discernment on the impact of Reformation.

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As we prepare for all these programs and events, and the many others that are not mentioned here, we count on your ongoing eagerness to remain connected and continue working together. “A church on its own is a church at risk”—the longer I serve as General Secretary, the more I become convinced about the truth in this phrase. Too deep are the wisdom and the meaning of the Gospel of salvation as to be comprehended by a single church and on its own; and too fearful are we human beings when we realize the challenging newness that God brought to the world in Jesus Christ. Churches need each other for mutual support, mutual encouragement, mutual admonition and mutual challenge. Churches need each other to let God’s message of justice, peace and reconciliation shine more forcefully. For all this stands the LWF, the communion of which you are a part.

I wish you a blessed year 2015, and pray that God’s guidance and inspiration will sustain your life and ministry.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Martin Junge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Rev. Martin Junge  
LWF General Secretary