

Ecumenical Greeting to the LWF Council Meeting

Wittenberg 17 June, 2016

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Dear members of the Council, dear observers and guests.

The temperature is rising, the excitement is increasing, expectations are shared. Indeed, the preparations for the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation give cause to reflect on our ecclesial histories as well as on the future of our common calling in Christ. This is a good thing, because amidst diversity and distinct developments we are aware that our identity is in Christ. The source of our life is by the love and grace of God. And the Church is ultimately guided and empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

As a guest representing Pentecostal churches I would like to thank the Lutheran World Federation for its ecumenical commitment. Thank you for extending “the right hand of fellowship” to other members of the Body of Christ. Thank you for taking an active role towards common witness and sharing your gifts, your charisms, with fellow Christians in other churches (even with people who cannot profess to a Christian identity).

I can tell you that many of my acquaintances and friends are looking forward to the international dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and classical Pentecostals that will begin this September. We are looking forward because we know that Jesus Christ is the source and fulfillment of our labor towards unity. Our historical developments and ecclesial diversities shall not count as excuses for division, but rather, as an opportunity to offer our experiences and insights to the benefit of each other. For we are facing the same challenges whether we live in the West or in the Global South. We do not live in two different worlds; a Lutheran and a Pentecostal as it were. We may have our respective confessions and communions, but in Christ we are following the same Gospel-calling. The question is, are we attentive to our neighbor's needs and to the groaning of creation that also awaits redemption? By the prayer of Jesus, the witness of the Holy Spirit and because of God's love we are summoned to work together.

So let the temperature rise and the excitement increase. May the commemorations in 2017 bring refreshment and joy. May the many services and events planned lead to a great number of valuable encounters and energize believers to be dedicated and courageous in Christ our Lord.

Thank you again for your commitment to dialogue with Pentecostals and may God bless you in your deliberations during your Council Meeting.