

**Lutheran World Federation Council  
June 2016, Wittenberg, Germany  
World Council of Churches Greetings**

*President and Vice-Presidents, General Secretary, Members of Council, representatives of member churches, Sisters and Brothers in Christ,*

It is my honour and privilege once again to be with you and to convey to you the greetings of the World Council of Churches, particularly on behalf of our General Secretary, the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, and our Moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom. Dr Tveit was grateful to have been invited to participate in your pilgrimage earlier this week and to share his reflections specifically related to the sanctity of creation. That pilgrimage event, as part of the extensive Reformation commemoration here in Wittenberg (as elsewhere), offers a gift to the broader ecumenical family, a reminder about the value and need for renewal, always using an attitude of repentance as an opportunity for a change towards the good. It is also a very visible contribution to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace that defines the ecumenical movement at the present time.

The WCC is fortunate in being your neighbour at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, praying and working together in the same space, and as such we are especially pleased to be invited into this aspect of your life as a communion of churches, meeting as the LWF Council. Your presence in Geneva is a great gift for the WCC's work international affairs in particular, and most recently your contribution of expertise and vast experience during urgent meetings related to the refugee crisis positively impacted the effectiveness of ecumenical cooperation with UN organizations.

The theme under which you gather, **"Grounded in God's Love – discerning God's future,"** is an invitation to develop prophetic Christian witness. It is a calling, in the midst of a world where there are far too many places of brokenness and division, to understand and convey the message that it is only in being situated in God's own self, and in acknowledging that the path ahead of us contains a divine vision, that we may be transformed so that we can be agents of transformation ourselves. Being grounded in the love of our triune God is both intuitive and complicated. In baptism we have the assurance of communion with God. Our challenge is always to remember that God's love is poured out in our great diversity, and that to know God's love is to recognize it in one another, through and sometimes in spite of our differences.

You are committed, as the Lutheran World Federation, to defending the integrity of creation, humanity and the message of salvation at the core of the gospels. Your assembly next year, occurring in the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation, reinforces this in its sub-thematic perspectives. The World Council of Churches welcomes opportunities to actively participate in your relational life as a communion, and in this expression of faith lived out in activities and programmes especially moving towards 2017. We share a yearning for unity in the church, in humankind and in creation, characterized by justice and peace, as the WCC affirmed in its Unity Statement at the Busan Assembly. This leads to many places of synergy that we can consistently identify and develop collaboratively. We already see that the sacramental spirituality of your communion and the actions taken to address critical needs around the world have been an inspiration and motivation for the Church beyond your own confession.

To be Lutheran is to be inherently ecumenical. This year, as you acknowledge 50 years of continuous dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, and come together in an astounding way to commemorate the Reformation together in Lund Cathedral on October 31<sup>st</sup>, our whole fellowship of churches will be with you in prayer and thanksgiving for this extraordinary moment. Pope Francis has often emphasized the place of joy and mercy and humility in Christian life, reminding us that these are quintessential qualities of God's love. Our prayer is that this event may be understood also by your theme of this meeting, "**Grounded in God's Love – discerning God's future,**" as Lutherans and Roman Catholics continue in relationship and dialogue.

Once again, with thanksgiving on behalf of the fellowship of churches to be invited into your midst, I am asked to assure you of our prayers. Please know the deep gift the World Council of Churches experiences in the Lutheran World Federation, continually growing into God's hope and calling for your common life together.