



# Hold fast to what is good New Year Message from the LWF General Secretary

*Test everything;  
hold fast to what is good;  
abstain from every form of evil.  
– 1 Thessalonians 5:21*

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

The Bible verse we have as our watchword for 2025 calls us to be discerning: to test everything, hold onto the good, abstain from evil. These words of the apostle Paul follow his reminder not to quench the Spirit and not to despise prophecies (1 Thess 5:19-20).

Today, in our daily lives, we are surrounded by many “spirits” and prophecies—both religious and secular. Some of these remind us of the importance of respecting human dignity, starting with what unites us rather than what divides us as a human family. Others exploit our anxieties, sowing fear and demonizing certain groups, which can lead to their dehumanization, sometimes alongside apocalyptic rhetoric. There are also those who urge us to follow various paths



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

to self-realization, promising that we can become our own saviors—if only we try hard enough.

This year's watchword is a call to cultivate a critical and prayerful mind. As followers of Christ, we are not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2). Through this, we are called to transform the world around us.

Prof. Dr Tomáš Halík, who was the keynote speaker at the Thirteenth Assembly of the LWF, once remarked that revolutionaries and fundamentalists share a common trait: both seek to bring heaven to earth immediately, in most cases with devastating consequences for people.

Yet, transformation takes time and requires persistence and patience. We are called to an ongoing transformation of our own minds, hearts, and attitudes. This should influence the communities we belong to so they become communities of hope, which in turn, can transform the world.

A community of hope sees a sibling in every human being. It takes seriously what Scripture teaches about encountering Jesus Christ in every person in need (Mt 25:31-40). It speaks out against injustice, so that righteousness may roll down like an ever-flowing stream (Am 5:24). It supports the gifts of all its members regardless of ethnicity or gender (Gal 3:28). And, it takes seriously the task to nurture God's creation (Gen 2:15).

Jesus said that "every good tree bears good fruit" (Mt 7:17), reminding us that we can recognize what is good by the results, the actions, and the way in which relationships are shaped. When beliefs and actions lead to or strengthen "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal 5:22-23), we know we are on the right path.

May God's Holy Spirit guide us as we prayerfully test what is good and discern what we need to abstain from in the coming year.

A blessed 2025 to all!

Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt  
LWF General Secretary



The Lutheran World Federation  
Chemin du Pavillon 2  
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex  
Switzerland

[www.lutheranworld.org](http://www.lutheranworld.org)  
[info@lutheranworld.org](mailto:info@lutheranworld.org)



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

*LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt visiting the Eastleigh Lutheran Parish of the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church, in Nairobi.*

*Photo: LWF/ Natalia Jidovanu*