



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

Office of the  
General Secretary

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

To:

LWF member churches

Geneva, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021

**Re.: Farewell letter**

Respected church leaders, dear sisters and brothers,

Greetings to you from the LWF Communion Office.

This is the last letter I write to you as the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation before stepping down from the office on October 31.

As I close this very special chapter of my life, I want to express my deep gratitude for the privilege and honour to serve the LWF as its General Secretary. It has been an immensely rich time, and I have been blessed in so many respects, not least by the privilege to be exposed to the life of Lutheran churches all over the world.

As I have done so, I have seen the burning fire of faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13:13) as gifts of God shaping the witness of our member churches, and becoming tangible evidence of how God is truly alive, active and present in our time.

I cherish unforgettable memories from visits to member churches and continue to give thanks for each of them and for how they contribute in their own ways to witness to the good news of God's liberating grace in Christ. That is indeed our message, one that has not lost any of its power: it is never because of who we are and what we do, but because of who *God* is and what *God* does that we receive the gift of justification (Romans 3:21-26). Let this continue to be the foundation of our confessional identity and unity.

It has been a privilege to serve LWF member churches as they continue to live into their calling of communion relations. There is no charted path for us to express this calling. For that reason, the journey is unknown, at times even arduous. But we will continue as we have done until now: deepening our shared vocation by taking one step after the other, making sure that we talk to each other, hold fast to each other, always watching that we proceed jointly, always safeguarding that we don't lose anybody as we journey. Because for God, "one" is the biggest number (Matthew 18:10-14).

Rooted in faith, we shall remain focused on the world out there, the people and communities we are meant to engage as we participate in God's mission. With such focus, the LWF connects to the deepest meaning of its calling: to become part of God's transforming presence in the world of today.

This is why we care so much about the gospel of Jesus Christ being proclaimed and about serving our suffering neighbour. This is why our work for justice, peace and reconciliation locally and globally matters so much. This is why unity in the body of Christ is an ongoing task for us, and why we further dialogues and cooperation ecumenically, and engage with people of other faith. This is why we are unwavering in our commitment to include women and youth.

In all of this, we take up the call to follow the one who came to bring life, and to bring it abundantly (John 10:10).

As of November 1, you will receive letters from our new General Secretary, Rev. Anne Burghardt. I am deeply grateful for her availability prior to stepping into her position. We have used that time to work together, always focusing on the LWF, its mission and its witness today and for the years to come.

I ask you to pray for her and to support her as she takes up the role into which she was called by the communion. Already now, I want to ask you to block your calendars on November 17 at 14:00 (CET), which will be the date of her installation as the General Secretary of the LWF. You will receive more information about the service in due time.

“If the LWF didn’t exist today, it needed to be founded tomorrow...” Many times, I spoke like this during these eleven years serving as General Secretary, because I am truly passionate about the LWF’s calling, its vision, ethos and witness in this world.

Fortunately, there is no need to found the LWF: our visionary forefathers and foremothers did so almost 75 years ago, thanks be to God. We are the heirs and caretakers of that vision and calling. What is entrusted to us today is the task to steward the gift of the LWF as a communion, furthering its life and witness by adding our gifts and resources, our imagination, and our hope as we continue supporting each other in God’s mission and offering a joint witness of God’s liberating grace.

Thank you very much for your trust, support, for your prayers, for dialogues and discussions. For encounters, for showing me your churches, your people and your countries, for inviting me to worship with you.

I ask for your generous forgiveness where I fell short of your expectations and where my mistakes stood in the way of God’s purpose for us.

Farewell sisters and brothers. I will keep praying for the LWF, for its member churches and for all its leaders, ordained and lay, men and women, elderly and young who jointly give shape to what God has done and continues to do among us.

God bless you,



Rev. Dr. Martin Junge  
General Secretary, LWF