



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

Office of the
General Secretary

lutheranworld.org

To: LWF Member churches

Geneva, 11 March 2020

Dear sisters and brothers,

Every day we receive new information about the spread of COVID-19, the coronavirus. Restrictive measures are being imposed in many countries to contain the spread and avoid overburdening health systems.

In the watchword (Moravian tradition) for Tuesday 10 March we read:

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:7).

We want to encourage the LWF member churches, their leaders and their members to take this Bible verse to heart during these challenging times.

This is a time to continue trusting in God's compassionate presence among humankind. We take courage in the knowledge that God never abandons us, even if it means going through the experience of the cross. We see the cross of Christ as the sign of our strength and hope.

The call for self-discipline, stated in the Bible verse above, is paired with the call to love our neighbor. Love and self-discipline belong together, even more these days. By holding back from unnecessary contact, we are able to show our love and concern for those who are most vulnerable. We call upon you to uphold self-discipline as a gift of God.

Under special circumstances, this may even require to revisit practices for gatherings and worship. We are grateful for the lead that Asian LWF member churches offered in this respect (<https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/churches-asia-advise-prudence-covid19-outbreak>) and encourage you to the necessary steps, always for the purpose of containing the virus and protecting those vulnerable.

We continue advising to follow instructions from the public health structures of your countries. Much false information is circulating. Halt the spread of misinformation by relying on official sources, including the World Health Organization (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>)

We invite member churches around the world to pray for each other, particularly for those countries and churches located at the epicenter of the spread of the virus. There is

hardship, when normal, daily relations can't be expressed as usual. Workers and business owners worry about their future. People of all ages worry about their health.

As we relate to this new challenge, we also call upon you to remember those exposed to other health challenges on a daily basis: to Dengue fever, Malaria, HIV & AIDS which continues to be a devastating reality, and other life-threatening illnesses.

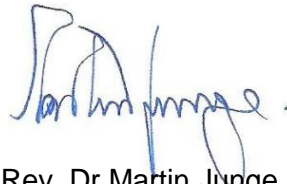
It is our prayer that the Coronavirus does not make us indifferent to these realities. Rather, understanding anew the vulnerability of human life, may this be a moment to recommit to prayer for and loving service of the neighbor (Luke 10: 25-37).

We humbly share these thoughts of encouragement with you, while committing our ongoing prayers for you.

Yours in Christ,



Archbishop Dr Musa Pantil Filibus
LWF President



Rev. Dr Martin Junge
LWF General Secretary