

“The Church: Called to a Ministry of Reconciliation”

**Address to the LWF Council
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**“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit”
(Phil 4:23)**

- (1) The location for this meeting of the LWF Council may be as significant as the content of our conversations and decisions. We have come to Bethlehem to listen, to witness, to challenge and to pray for a lasting and just peace. Far more important than any reflections I might share will be the faithful and powerful testimony of Bishop Munib Younan and our sisters and brothers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.
- (2) May we be renewed in God’s call to a ministry of reconciliation as we gather so near the place of God’s incarnation, Christ’s life, death and resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, and as we experience the reality of occupation, separation and violence. May we in faith receive reconciliation as God’s gift in Christ Jesus. May we courageously recommit ourselves and the Lutheran World Federation to the ministry of reconciliation.
- (3) Please permit me a brief reflection on the President’s address. Someone recently asked me, ‘What is the purpose of the LWF President’s address to the Council?’ I must admit the question gave me pause. My address is not a report on the work of the LWF the past year. That is the responsibility of the General Secretary. It is not the basis of extensive conversation at our council meeting. Our agenda is already full. Perhaps this address will raise questions and share reflections that can become part of our conversations in the Communion in the coming year. My questions invite your wisdom and encourage us to ask what Lutherans are catechetically formed to ask, “What does this mean?” These reflections and questions are centered on the possible meaning of a ministry of reconciliation in our context.
- (4) Shortly after I was called to serve as presiding bishop, a pastor described what she understood to be at least part of my task. She said, “I believe you are to call this church to the walls we erect to divide us from one another and help us turn those walls into tables of conversations and reconciliation.” It is an image not only for me, but also for our work together as the LWF Council. It is an image for the mission of the whole church. That calling is the result of Christ breaking down the dividing walls, reconciling us into one body through the cross, and putting hostility to death. (Ephesians 2). At the font and the table through God’s word of promise, God reconciles the whole creation to God’s self and gives us the ministry of reconciliation,

RECONCILIATION AND PROCLAMATION:

What Gospel do we proclaim?

- (5) The scriptures speak of reconciliation as both God's gift and our task. Paul's testimony to the Corinthians resounds with conviction. Because Christ died and was raised, all believers have died to themselves so that now they live for others. The 5th chapter of II Corinthians concludes with the declaration of God's mission and ours: "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us."
- (6) The good news of God's reconciling love in Christ Jesus means forgiveness and transformation. Paul declares to the Romans we are no longer enemies. Enmity and alienation give way to friendship and reconciliation. (5: 6-11) The letter to the Colossians describes the peace brought about by the death and resurrection of Christ as a cosmic harmony which overcomes every ethnic and social boundary and barrier.
- (7) We must ask ourselves and others, is this the Gospel we are proclaiming or some other gospel? As I travel on your behalf, I hear the frustration and conflict created when evangelists preach a prosperity gospel that promises financial gain and success to those who follow these leaders. In the United States, where a consumer driven culture values a privatized spirituality and demands a "feel good" religion, there is great pressure on pastors and congregations to get their "market share" of members by offering some gospel other than the radical good news of God's reconciliation and forgiveness by God's grace through faith for Jesus' sake.
- (8) In an article on Lutheran identity, Gerhard Forde asked, "What shall we be? Let us be radicals: not conservatives or liberals, fundagelicals or charismatic (or whatever other brand of something 'less than Gospel' entices), but radicals: radical preachers and practitioners of the Gospel by justification by faith without deeds of the law. A radical Lutheranism would be one that regains the courage and the nerve to preach the Gospel unconditionally. Simply let the bird of the Spirit fly! There is too much timidity, too much worry that the gospel is going to harm someone, too much tendency to buffer the message to bring it under control. It is essential to see that everything hangs in the balance here. Faith comes by hearing. Will the old persist? . . . It depends on whether someone has the courage to announce to us, 'You have died and your life is hid with Christ in God! Awake you who sleep, and arise from the dead!'" (p.15).
- (9) Dr. Mark W. Thomsen in *Christ Crucified: A 21st Century Missiology of the Cross*, challenges Forde not on the content of the gospel but on its implication for the mission of the church and our engagement in the world. He writes, "Only when the power of the creative, life-transforming, persistent, preserving and vulnerable love embodied in Jesus, becomes normative for the Christian community's proclamation and praxis will the church begin to be a transforming agent within the human community and a dialogical partner with the full human family. Only then will the Jesus movement authentically proclaim the life-transforming power of Christ as the crucified truth."

- (10) Richard Austin, a farmer, environmentalist and Presbyterian pastor, suggested to an ELCA synod assembly that at least since the Industrial Revolution there have been two prevailing heresies in response to rapid change and a seemingly out of control world. One is fundamentalism which he argues freezes the faith, turning our commitment to God's grace and mercy in Christ into a holy crusade. Fundamentalism often confuses self-righteousness with the righteousness of God. The other heresy he termed "accommodationism" (or liberalism) believing that everything will always work out, trusting God has a plan and this is it, so we accommodate ourselves to the dominant values and structures of the society believing they are of God.
- (11) In the face of the attractiveness and power of these heresies, how do we as a Communion affirm and admonish one another in our proclamation of the gospel of God's reconciling love and mercy? Are we clear that the ministry of reconciliation to which we are called begins in, and flows from the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and sacrament?

RECONCILIATION AND CONFESSION

Dare we speak to the truth of our alienation, deception and limitations?

- (12) Desmond Tutu states in *No Future Without Forgiveness*, "Forgiving, and being reconciled, are not about pretending that things are other than they are . . . True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the degradation, the truth." By courageous example Archbishop Tutu calls the body of Christ to be truth tellers in an age of massive self-deception.
- (13) In my travels to Central America and West Africa this year, I have witnessed members of the Lutheran World Federation engaging in just such truth telling for the sake of reconciliation. Central American Lutherans spoke the truth regarding who benefits or not from the Peace Accords in El Salvador and from free trade agreements. Liberian and Sierra Leonean Lutherans described the painful truth of the horrific cost of extended civil war. The truth about violence and exploitations became the context for broad interfaith initiatives seeking human rights, justice, and lasting peace. Are they not signs of reconciliation?
- (14) In the United States, we are not shown the caskets of returning military personnel from Iraq nor are we given casualty counts for the Iraqi people. I believe this in part, is so that we will not know the truth of the consequences of war. Deception also marked the reasons given for going to war.
- (15) The Rev. John Thomas, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, (U.S.A) describes what he sees as massive self-deception in the United States. "We deceive ourselves about the certain dangers of global warming and convince ourselves that the Kyoto Accords may be safely ignored. We deceive ourselves about the finite supplies of fossil fuel and the dangers to the environment of oil wells and coal plants. We convince ourselves that our problems will be solved by turning petroleum conglomerates loose on the Arctic wilderness, or that the Enrons of this world truly have the public interest at heart. We deceive ourselves about the enduring and systemic impact of racism on our society, and convince ourselves that it is morally just to walk away from the Durban Conference. We deceive

ourselves about our complicity with the culture of violence through state sanctioned executions and convince ourselves that the death penalty makes us safe and offers loved ones relief. We deceive ourselves about poverty and convince ourselves that the poor have created their own oppression. It is not simply denial or the refusal or inability to see the truth. It is instead the construction of alternative truths seemingly so plausible that we accept them at face value, and thus not only allow others to deceive us, but in fact deceive ourselves.

- (16) A ministry of reconciliation will need prophets and truth sellers. Prophets who in the midst of massive self-deception long for truth.” For God’s mission of reconciliation, Thomas contends, “we will need leaders schooled in the theological disciplines lest the truth that is proclaimed be merely a warmed over political agenda or social ideology with a pious veneer.”
- (17) It is such prophetic voices that we will hear in the context of this Council meeting and that echo throughout the LWF. They are crucial to a ministry of reconciliation so that we might resist the deceiving and distorting voices that shout from beyond the church and whisper within it.
- (18) In the liturgy we confess the truth of our human condition – “We are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against God in thought, word and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved God with our whole heart, we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.” The promise of God’s reconciling deed in Christ Jesus in the 5th chapter of 2 Corinthians follows Paul’s description in the 4th chapter that “we have this treasure in clay jars so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.”
- (19) If that admission of our human condition is not clear enough, Paul continues – “we are afflicted...perplexed....persecuted...struck down but not crushed, not driven to despair, not destroyed, always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.” In other words, a ministry of reconciliation neither minimizes the reality of our human situation nor the cruciform nature of our calling.
- (20) A ministry of reconciliation that confesses our alienation and exploitation, that exposes deception and acknowledges human limitations will be a ministry that knows lament. Ethicist Emilie Townes contends that communal lament is the assembly crying out in distress to the God in whom it trusts. Deep and sincere communal lament, she argues, names problems, seeks justice and hope for God’s deliverance. Lament forms us as a people as we give name and words to suffering.
- (21) In the midst of our Council agenda and our time in this Holy Land, I hope for occasions for our hearing and sharing in the lament of the people. May the cries for peace and justice provoke confession, repentance and become a prelude to reconciliation.

RECONCILIATION AND DELIBERATION

How does being reconciled in Christ lead us to see and act differently?

- (22) A new sculpture was dedicated this year at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. The

sculptor entitled the work “Living Hope of the Resurrection.” He said, “I cannot see the resurrection but I see the whole world differently in light of the resurrection.”

- (23) Is that not what the Apostle Paul declared to the Corinthians? “From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view, even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new.” (II Cor. 5: 16-17).
- (24) Christ crucified and risen gives us new eyes to see. What does that mean for the ministry of reconciliation to which we are called? Cynthia Moe-Lobeda in *Public Church for the Life of the World* asks, “How is the church to ‘see’ evermore clearly? How are we, as part of everyday faith life, to nurture critical vision? What enables morally responsible seeing, especially seeing the power arrangements that determine who has the necessities for life with dignity and the terms of humankind’s relationship to the planet?”
- (25) She goes on to remind us that a theology of the cross tenders a clue. In Bonhoeffer’s words, seeing “from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled – in short, from the perspective of those who suffer is an experience of incomparable worth.” This means the LWF must continue to create channels for hearing those who are on the underside of power and privilege whether within the Lutheran communion or from without.
- (26) A ministry of reconciliation calls us as a Communion to give public leadership in moral discernment. Moe-Lobeda asks a provocative and critically important question—“amidst the complexity and moral ambiguity of life, how do we discern what God is doing in any given situation and how might we most faithfully give social form to God’s work? In both interpersonal and international venues how do we to discern what God is doing, in order to align ourselves with it?”
- (27) She reminds us that Lutheran theology offers invaluable clues. “It assures us that human beings cannot know with certainty what God is doing in the world, yet, paradoxically and in the face of uncertainty, we are to act in accord with God’s mission and activity or as we understand it through faithful discernment. We disbelieve any claim to absolute knowledge of God’s ways or will as well as any claim that God’s people are therefore excused from seeking to live in congruence with it.”
- (28) Paul’s words to the Romans and the Corinthians are clear that the reconciling work and ways of God are revealed most fully in Jesus Christ and that this One is known most deeply in brokenness and suffering. Therefore a ministry of reconciliation will glimpse what God is doing to the extent that where people and creation suffer most we will be present in solidarity and compassion.
- (29) Moe-Lobeda continues, “The heart of discernment is to hold ‘what is’ and ‘what could be’ in light of the life-giving, life-saving, life-sustaining mystery of God’s ongoing work toward the redemption and flourishing of creation. We are to hold our earthly realities in one breath with the power and presence of God in order to craft ways of living that proclaim God as seen in Jesus Christ. Where the vision of life’s realities is obscured by illusions, a task of

discernment is to see differently, so that we might live differently. Where dominant forces distort historical realities by describing them falsely, Christian discernment must re-see and then re- describe the world”

- (30) Is that not one of the ongoing commitments and tasks of the LWF? When we leave this Council meeting, I trust that we will have begun to re-describe the reality of suffering here. With clearer vision we will speak of the complexity of issues and the imperative for an independent, viable Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace with a secure Israeli state.
- (31) Dr. Austin, to whom I referred earlier regarding his description of the heresies of fundamentalism and “accomodationalism” (liberalism), suggests there is a third way to live as people of faith in a complex, rapidly changing and often fearful world. He describes it as the way of moral *imagination* (not moral relativism). Moral imagination occurs when we gather as believers in prayer and worship around the means of God’s grace. Moral imagination involves being immersed in the deepest insights of our faith, rooted in the wisdom and promises of God incarnate in Jesus the Christ, recorded in scripture, proclaimed in the Gospel.
- (32) “For such a task,” argues John Thomas, “we will need poets, people equipped to use language and symbol, liturgy and song, ritual and sacrament, silence and dance to help us imagine a world that is more than a market place, to claim a life that is profoundly connected and communal, to see the world and one another as a mystery to behold rather than objects to be consumed. Poets and liturgists are today’s evangelists who enable us to see the improvisational God revealed in Jesus Christ and lure us into the company of those no longer satisfied with consuming or living as competitive strangers to one another.”
- (33) The witness of such evangelists is key to the church’s ministry of reconciliation. We are blessed with the wisdom, faith, and passion of many evangelists in the Council and throughout the LWF.

RECONCILIATION AND THE WHOLE CREATION

- (34) What is the expanse of God’s reconciling mercy and the ministry of reconciliation to which we are called? What does reconciliation mean for each child of God and for the households in which we live? What does it mean for our home congregations? For our church bodies? For the Communion of the Lutheran World Federation? For the Church catholic? For our relationships with persons of other religions and those of no faith? For the earth and the cosmos?
- (35) Those questions merit thoughtful conversation and more reflection than the scope of this address permits. Nevertheless, by their very innumeration we begin to sense the breadth and depth of God’s reconciling love and mercy and the ministry of reconciliation to which we are called.
- (36) It is tempting not to dwell on what a ministry of reconciliation might mean for the LWF. Such a conversation calls us to honest assessment of where Communion members are experiencing alienation and domination. A ministry of reconciliation begins in Word and

Sacrament and leads to a critical analysis of power within the Communion. Does it also call us to continued conversation regarding our commitment to the ordination of women and to women in positions of leadership? A ministry of reconciliation in the LWF is reflected in relationships of accompaniment not domination. Accompaniment means we are engaged in God's mission for the life of the world, walking and working side by side. In a relationship of accompaniment we engage in mutual affirmation and admonition. What does a ministry of reconciliation mean for the economic disparities that exist within the communion? What does it mean for self sufficiency and interdependency? What does it mean for how decisions taken by member churches affect the whole communion?

- (37) What does a ministry of reconciliation mean for the LWF's ecumenical vision and commitment? How do we accept unity and diversity in the body of Christ as God's gifts and our task to protect, deepen and expand? How can we first be a people in whom Christ's mission is fulfilled and then a people through whom Christ's mission is fulfilled for others?
- (38) Professor Barbara Rossing in an essay "(Re) claiming Oikoumenē? Empire, Ecumenism, and The Discipleship of Equals" offers an important reminder, a helpful image for ecumenism and I believe, for the ministry of reconciliation.
- (39) She writes, "While in contemporary ecumenical discussions it can seem attractive to attempt to redefine *oikoumenē* in a positive sense, we need to recall that in earliest Christian literature *oikoumenē* was primarily a term of empire, rarely used in a liberating context. . . .The challenge for ecumenism today must be to repudiate the imperial trajectory of the word, including the church's own imperial legacy."
- (40) Dr. Rossing asks provocative questions—"Who decides which differences in the *oikoumenē* should be diagnosed as 'sadly divided churches' rather than as legitimate and wonderful diversities of voices? Are the criteria for disunity and unity to be defined by those at the center or those at the margin?" She issues a challenge—"Any attempt to reclaim or redefine the word *oikoumenē* for the agenda of ecumenism must begin by repudiating the imperial trajectory of the word, including the church's own imperial legacy."
- (41) She concludes by offering an image of ecclesial diversity and community (and I would argue for a ministry of reconciliation) that is drawn from nature: the image of a braided stream. "A braided stream is a river of many branches, crisscrossing, weaving together, and then dividing again—often found in glacial or mountain settings—making a pattern of ever-shifting water channels. From a distance a braided stream can look like beautiful strands of French-braided hair, with the sun sparkling off each strand. Unlike a tributary-stream model, where multiple branches feed into a single main channel, a braided stream divides as often as it joins together, flowing in a very wide channel."
- (42) "If we apply the braided-stream image to ecclesial life, we can envision a model of unity that does not seek to funnel everyone into one monolithic channel, but instead cherishes the diverse ecclesial strands that crisscross and divide, braiding together across a wide spectrum. In a braided-stream model of *ekklēsia*, many diverse theological strands and perspectives will sparkle together as part of God's wide, pluriform, multivocal, flowing stream. Whatever our ecclesial images, whether *koinōnia* or biodiversity, or the braided stream, it is models of diversity—rather than imperial models of *oikoumenē*—that must shape our ecumenical

vision.”

- (43) From Rossing’s challenging critique and helpful images we move to other questions and suggestions regarding the ministry of reconciliation within the church catholic.
- (44) How will we as the LWF respond to Pope Benedict XVI’s commitment to Christian unity? Can we build upon the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) together so that that it remains a living letter? Can we develop catechetical resources using the JDDJ? Can the principle of the differentiated consensus as reflected into JDDJ provide a framework for a possible statement on the Eucharist? How do we as LWF member churches continue to express our commitment to Eucharistic hospitality and sharing with the Roman Catholic Church without minimizing the theological issues that remain? Will 2017 and the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation provide an opportunity for shared reflection with the Roman Catholics on our contributions and commitment to the unity of Christ’s church and to the work for justice and peace in all the earth?
- (45) Dr. Duane Larson, president at Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, in an editorial submitted for Dialog magazine, suggests that the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican and Lutheran communions and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople convene a global, ecumenical council on the Christian interpretation of scripture. He contends that the document Dei verbum, on the character and authority of Holy Scripture, is a truly ecumenical document. He writes, “It (Dei verbum from Vatican II) states clearly how the Christian reading of the Bible is led by the Holy Spirit of the Living Christ in the living community of the people of God. It summarizes the hermeneutical principles necessary for faithful interpretation, lifting up the need to attend to historical context, the tradition that is within scripture as well as the tradition that surrounds scripture. And, not inconsequently, Dei verbum thereby rejects literalistic fundamentalism.” President Larson goes on to argue that Christianity is in the midst of a global identity crisis that stems from our not having ecumenically addressed questions about the interpretation and authority of scripture. “Today,” he says, “the crisis is almost entirely due to the dominance of a fundamentalist-millennialist-apocalypticist reading of scripture.”
- (46) I believe his suggestion for a global ecumenical council should be discussed in the context of this meeting.
- (47) There certainly are many other questions regarding the focus of a ministry of reconciliation within the church catholic. As I travel the Southern Hemisphere member churches, I hear of the often divisive rather than unifying work of many Pentecostal and fundamentalist churches. When Christian churches fail to recognize the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in Lutheran churches as well as their own and dismiss a Lutheran understanding of baptism, it is difficult to trust Paul’s call to a ministry of reconciliation as a shared task.
- (48) Yet there are hopeful signs. They include a convergence of conservative evangelicals, and Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, and Protestants around our shared commitment to ending hunger and hunger related diseases, reducing poverty and caring for the environment. The United Nations adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) needs to be undergirded with adequate funding. The pre-G8 gathering in Great Britain co-convened by

Archbishop Rowan Williams and Rev. Jim Wallis was one sign of a growing ecumenical commitment to the MDG. Such emerging consensus should not diminish our critical assessment of the impact of economic globalization. We need to develop and encourage just responses and shared principles for the healing of creation, the elimination of poverty and the cessation of violence.

- (49) This reconciling work calls for Christians to collaborate with persons of other faiths and religions and those who profess no faith. Doesn't a ministry of reconciliation call the church to a particular social location? We are called to stand in profound solidarity and compassion where people and creation suffer most. I do not believe Jesus' statement that the poor we will always have with us is meant to be an acceptance of poverty. Rather it is a description of where Jesus' followers will be amongst those who live in poverty. There we will proclaim the good news, engage in acts of mercy and strive for justice.
- (50) I believe that for Paul writing to the Corinthians and Romans and that for Luther, the scope of God's reconciling work is the forgiveness and reconciliation of humanity in Christ a new creation. Yet, in the 21st century reconciliation must include more than just humans if we are to survive on this planet with the rest of Gods creation. Moe-Lobeda asks, "If God dwells in 'all created things', then in what sense does or might God's presence or power there nurture human agency to participate in God's work in the world? Luther's insistence that God . . . with his power is present in every single creature hints at a dimension of moral-spiritual power for living into our calling, a dimension little probed in modern theological discourse." A ministry of reconciliation must include the church's contribution to what Thomas Berry calls the 'great work' before humankind in our day: moving the human species into a sustainable relationship with our planetary home.
- (51) These reflections on our shared ministry of reconciliations have inadequately addressed the anti-imperial, the anti-hegemonic dimensions of reconciliation. Harry O. Moses in "*A sly Civility: Colossians and Empire*" offers a very provocative anti-imperial reading of the theme of reconciliation in Colossians. He argues that Colossians implicitly challenges an imperial ideology centered in military domination and the honoring of ruling elites, "The paradox of Colossians" he writes, "is that an imperial looking victory is signaled by defeat. It is from the cross—a symbol of Roman pacification of enemies—in the body of Jesus' death, that a new imperium issues forth (1:20; 2:15). Reconciliation comes through the death of the ruler, not the ruled, and in the ethical life of love for and care of others (3:12-14) who share the rule of Christ (3:1, 1:18; 2:10, 15) and his riches (1: 27; 2:2-3) not through the dominion of one over the vanquished who owes him honor. This is an imperial pax by other means. That it is from Jesus crucifixion and resurrection that a universal peace and renewal comes presumes that the old Auguston order is no real peace (its pax deum is an illusion) and that the violence in which it rests offers no genuine reconciliation." How might his helpful, critical reading of Colossians inform the ministry of reconciliation to which we are called today in a context that has increasing signs, symbols, and language of an empire?

RECONCILIATION: CROSS & RESURRECTION BEAR HOPE

- (52) Given the tensions within the church, the violence and division within and between nations and the destruction of the environment, how do we maintain hope? Certainly by remembering

as Paul does in the 6th Chapter of II Corinthians that we do not lose heart because the church's ministry of reconciliation is led by the spirit of the Living Christ. We do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ. The ministry of reconciliation is about a new creation—the whole cosmos is renewed and reconciled in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ.

- (53) “The cross of Christ attests that the only power which can truly heal is drawn instructively there, to suffering and brokenness, and there is most fully known. God’s works are hidden in the form of their opposites. God is present in—rather than absent from—agony. However, when we cry out over the tortured brokenness of life for so many or in the midst of our own suffering, we need more than a God who is present and revealed. We hunger for a God who is with us on behalf of us, intimately intertwined with us, embracing and suffering with us. This is the yet deeper truth of the cross. God is not only present and known in brokenness, God is also present there for us, participating in our own very being bringing healing and life in times and ways that we cannot fully comprehend. This is a fundamental faith claim for people of the cross.”(Moe-Lobeda).
- (54) A ministry of reconciliation centered in the cross and resurrection of Christ will be marked by evangelical resistance, evangelical perseverance and evangelical patience as we await and bear witness to God’s reign of justice, mercy and peace.
- (55) The ministry of reconciliation begins and is renewed as the assembly gathers in Christ around the means of grace on behalf of the whole creation. Therefore we are so bold as to claim there is joy and celebration in the ministry of reconciliation. May we as the LWF Council experience that joy as we renew our commitment to a ministry of reconciliation for Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth.
- (56) On behalf of the Council, I extend our deepest gratitude to Dr. Noko and the staff of the LWF. You each serve the LWF with vision, wisdom and courage. To the members of the Council and all who serve as advisors, my thanks for your exceptional leadership in your contexts and with the LWF.
- (57) “Therefore, since we re surrounded by so great a cloud of witness, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1-3)