



# THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES – EINE KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT – UNA COMUNIÓN DE IGLESIAS – UNE COMMUNION D'ÉGLISES

LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

*Office of the General Secretary*

## 2010 New Year Message from the LWF General Secretary



*Shepherds from Bahir Dar, northern Ethiopia*

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*Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.” (Luke 2:9-11)*

While this text is traditionally read during Christmas celebrations, it nonetheless bears a relevant message when we reflect about the beginning of a new year.

As announced by the angels, the birth of Jesus Christ marks the beginning of a new dispensation in the history of the human family. However, the fearful manner in which the shepherds received the announcement is representative of the human condition then and now. It is fear that is shared by the entire community.

Such fear is always generated by oppressive conditions, including lack of trust in the structure of governance, and in those who are elected to public office; it is a sign of subordination and helplessness.

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The birth of Jesus Christ in the town of Bethlehem therefore becomes a basis and source of strength. It points beyond Bethlehem, the home of King David, to a new beginning that heralds transformative hope and expectation for all people.

The very historic fact that shepherds who occupied a low social position in society were the recipients and messengers of such an important announcement marks the beginning of changed relationships.

The shepherds become the chief bearers of the good news at the dawning of a new era. Jesus' ministry of "care giving" is imbedded in the mandate of ordinary shepherds for the sake of the healing of the world.

May the year 2010 be a year during which you experience the concreteness of healing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'I' followed by 'S' and 'N' in a cursive script, all enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval.

Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko  
General Secretary, The Lutheran World Federation

January 2010