



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

A Communion  
of Churches

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## “WATER WITHOUT COST”

### New Year's Message

*To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.  
(Book of Revelation 21:6)*

What a beautiful word to guide us through the year ahead. “Water without cost” reminds us of the “not for sale” themes, which guided and inspired The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as it commemorated locally and globally the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reformation. It is a phrase that affirms our basic conviction that God’s liberating grace which we breathe in as a gift, is breathed out as compassionate witness to the transforming presence of God in our broken and wounded world. This is how faith teaches the people of God to breathe. And this is how the church lives in the world: receiving and sharing God’s gifts.

We rejoice in gratitude as we look to the year 2017. God was faithful and good to us: The 500<sup>th</sup> reformation anniversary became an occasion to grasp anew the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our central conviction was affirmed: only God can make us free to receive new life. We found new depth by approaching the Reformation as global, ecumenical and ongoing. We encouraged each other, jointly asserting that because of Christ's message there can't be a better time to be the church than the one we are in—despite the many challenges we face.

Or perhaps it is because of these challenges: The watchword for the year reminds us to stay focused on what is given to us without cost, and to share it with the thirsty in the world. We are called to offer a life-giving witness.

Not a witness that adds to the abrasive drought that threatens human existence and relationships because of greed, selfishness, violence and indifference, but one that brings soothing justice and empowering hope to people looking for a source of individual and collective transformation. Not a witness that amplifies cheap populism or short-sighted identity politics, but one that safeguards the human dignity of all.

At the Assembly in Windhoek, the LWF member churches identified what they considered to be important callings for their witness, locally and jointly as a communion of churches. Gender justice, climate change, church revival, theological education, service to those seeking justice and peace, dialogues – both ecumenical and across religions – were among the issues identified.

The LWF Communion Office is taking up this collective vision, expressed by the LWF member churches, to develop the direction for the coming years. All the member churches are included in that process and asked to contribute to the development of the LWF Strategy. I ask for your committed support.

Furthermore I want to encourage you to take up within your own church the collective vision expressed at the Assembly and seek ways to embrace it locally. The global witness we can offer as a communion of churches needs to be carried by the local witness of its member churches.

The year 2018 is here. It is a good year to be the church. We have our hands filled with gifts to share. Because the one we glorify is the one who gives water to the thirsty, without cost from the spring of the water of life.

Blessed New Year!

*Water poured at the Global Commemoration of the 500 years of Reformation in Windhoek, Namibia.*

*Photo by: LWF/Johanan Celine Valeriano*