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FEDERATION

Office of the
General Secretary

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STATEMENT OF THE LWF PRESIDENT AND THE LWF GENERAL SECRETARY

ON THE DEATH OF FORMER SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT NELSON MANDELA

The Lutheran World Federation gives thanks to God for the life and witness of Nelson Mandela. We join with his family, the people of South Africa, and people all across the world in prayer and mourning, but also in celebration of the character and accomplishments of this great man.

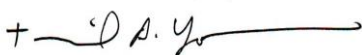
Nelson Mandela was one of the most inspiring persons of our time. He stood for principle, he fought for justice, he made for peace. Convinced of the equal humanity and dignity of all people, he devoted his life to building a new South Africa—a country in which all are equal under the law, a country in which racial discrimination and apartheid have no place, a country in which, in the words of Martin Luther King, people are judged by the content of their character, not by the color of their skin.

Mandela bore the consequences of the fight against apartheid. In his case, 27 years' imprisonment, isolation from family, friends, and comrades. Throughout this time he remained resolute. He never wavered in his confidence in the justice of the struggle and in its final victory.

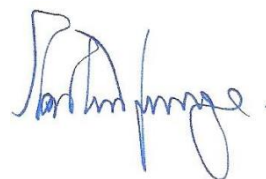
When finally the pressures mounted so high that the apartheid regime knew that it could no longer persist in its ways, Mandela was there as an honest, principled, and effective negotiating partner. He taught the white South Africans—indeed, all South Africans—that all have a place in the new South Africa. All would be treated with dignity, all would be protected by the constitution, all would be full citizens. And for himself, although he was in a position of great power, he understood that he was not above the law either. At the end of his term as president, he voluntarily stepped down and allowed the democratic system to confer power on others.

Mandela also understood that in order for there to be lasting peace, there had to be reconciliation. And in order for there to be reconciliation, there had to be truth. There was no room, on the one side, for vengeance; neither, on the other side, for erasing the past and pretending that nothing wrong had happened. In the Latin American phrase, he understood that a people without memory is a people without a future. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whatever its imperfections, proved to be a healthy and cleansing instrument that has allowed for confession and forgiveness and for South Africa to move forward.

Thanks be to God for Nelson Mandela!



Rev. Dr. Munib A. Younan
President, The Lutheran World Federation
Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in
Jordan and the Holy Land



Rev. Martin Junge
General Secretary
The Lutheran World
Federation

Geneva
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