



May 2017 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ –

I invite your prayers for the 12th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation taking place May 10-16, 2017 in Windhoek, Namibia. The ELCIC will be represented by four delegates: National Bishop Susan Johnson, Rev. Katherine Altenburg, Dan LeBlanc and myself. In addition, I have been nominated by the North American region to serve as a council member of the LWF. Including travel time to Namibia I will be away May 7-19.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a global communion of 145 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 74 million Christians in 98 countries. Once every six years, delegates from the member churches gather to convene an Assembly, and set the vision and priorities of the communion. As well as determining the direction of the LWF, we examine issues facing our churches, and worship together in a celebration of communion and cultural diversity. As the LWF's supreme authority, the Assembly is responsible for safeguarding the Constitution, electing its next set of leaders, acting on reports, speaking out on issues concerning the life and witness of member churches, and setting the overall direction for the ensuing period.

The theme of this Assembly is, *Liberated by God's Grace*, with sub-themes focusing on issues pertinent to our time: that salvation is not a gift that can be bought, and that exploitation of people and environmental degradation are critical issues of our time that demand our attention.

Each LWF Assembly is unique. It is shaped by the historical juncture in which it takes place, its venue, and the people who help shape its character, define its purposes and determine its outcomes. The Assembly is excited to meet in Namibia, a country that is deeply rooted in the Lutheran tradition.

The year 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. This Assembly is the venue for its global commemoration.

The choice of Namibia as the venue for the Twelfth Assembly has great significance for the LWF. The story of the relationship between the LWF and the Lutheran churches in Namibia is closely intertwined with the national struggle and victory against apartheid so that justice, freedom and dignity could be achieved for all Namibians. To anchor the Assembly in Namibia is

to epitomize and celebrate this accompaniment made possible by the grace of God. It is also significant that the global commemoration of the Reformation is taking place in Namibia during the Assembly. With Lutherans comprising half the population, Namibia exemplifies the way in which the Lutheran faith has been embraced and has effectively taken root in other lands outside of Europe.

Hopes for the Twelfth Assembly are summed up in four key words: joyful, transformative, forward-looking, outward-looking.

- Joyful - we celebrate diversity and the sense of belonging to one global communion;
- Transformative - we will develop clear insights and a powerful narrative of what it means to work together towards a just, peaceful and reconciled world;
- Forward-looking - we will embrace the future with courage and hope and in this process upholding the generation that embodies this future;
- Outward-looking - we will strengthen ecumenical involvement and engagement in the world through compassionate diaconal concern and unwavering passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ

In total, around 800 participants – including nearly 400 delegates – will gather in Namibia. The Assembly will be hosted by the three Lutheran member churches: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia-German Evangelical Lutheran Church. These churches are joined and work together through a common platform, the United Church Council of the Namibian Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

I encourage you to follow the Assembly online:

Website <http://lwfassembly.org>

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/lwfassembly/>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/lwfassembly>

Twitter <https://twitter.com/lwfassembly>

Youtube <http://bit.ly/LWFAsemblyYoutube>

Assembly hashtag #LWFAsembly

And please join me in prayer:

Draw your church together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving in Christ's mission to the world, and together witnessing to your love wherever you will send us; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship – the mission of the church*, pg. 75)

In Christ Jesus –

Shalom,

+Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

*The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13*