



May 2019 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Beloved of God –

One of the joys and life-giving gifts for me as a Synod Bishop is our Synod's relationship with The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO).

I have been privileged to journey to Colombia several times facilitating delegation visits for youth, youth and adults, and adults who have sought to begin to experience, embrace and engage the contexts and ministries of IELCO; to build relationships with our siblings in Christ; to explore stronger ties between partner congregations in our Synod and IELCO; and to seek an expanding global understanding of faithful discipleship through the Lutheran Colombian context. I have also been privileged to host on two occasions delegations from Colombia to our Synod.

Our ELCIC global mission accompaniment model is one of walking together in solidarity, side by side, practicing interdependence and mutuality, in service to God's mission. The values of the accompaniment model are interconnected, and include mutuality, inclusivity, sustainability, vulnerability and empowerment. The core purpose of these relationships, this accompaniment, is God's mission.

Relationships and accompaniment are at the heart of our approach to global ministry. We seek to actively listen to our partners and companions, share in their joys and sorrows, and support them in their mission – as they support us in ours.

Recently we have had an opportunity as a Synod to accompany our Global Companion Partner in Colombia in prayer. A car bombing occurred January 17, 2019 in Bogotá, Colombia in an area very familiar for our Synod delegation participants. Upon learning of this violence, I wrote to Bishop Atahualpa Hernandez expressing concern, solidarity and prayer support for Colombia and our Global Companion Partner, IELCO. Bishop Atahualpa sent the following correspondence which I share with his permission:

*"The work of righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever."
Isaiah 32:17*

*To our dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia - IELCO, advocates for the joy of human rights and peace in our country and rejects any act of violence which sows fear and threatens the dignity of people.*

We are united in solidarity and commitment with the families of the victims of the car bomb on January 17 in "La Escuela de Policía General Santander", which left 21 people dead and 68 injured in Bogotá, among whom were young cadets. We also reject the violent actions that have taken place during recent months towards social leaders and human rights defenders, especially in the most forgotten regions of our country.

We call for truth and justice in the face of the serious upsurge of violence, in the regression of the negotiated solution to the armed conflict, and in the proven facts of corruption that permeate the State. Before the militarization of the territory, the restriction of democratic liberties and the escalation of the war, we pray that the negotiations between the national government and the ELN guerrilla will be resumed. We pray for peace, insisting that it is a constitutional right for all and should correspond to everyone. We especially pray for the government to ensure that this peace can become a reality in our country.

*Your Brother in Christ,
Atahualpa Hernandez
Bishop-President of the IELCO*

As we walk together in solidarity, side by side, will you join me in prayer for Colombia and IELCO as sharing in their joys and sorrows, and supporting them in their mission – just as they support us in ours?

O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious and widening, grant peace and reassurance. Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination. Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen (from Time of conflict, crisis and disaster, EvLW p. 76)

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)