



World Council of Churches

General Secretariat

150 route de Ferney, PO Box 2100
CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Phone: +41 22 791 6111 Fax: +41 22 791 0361
Email: infowcc@wcc-coe.org www.oikoumene.org

Direct phone: +41 22 791 6285
Direct e-mail: Beth.Godfrey@wcc-coe.org

Geneva, 14 June 2024

Greetings to the 2024 LWF Council Meeting

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay
General Secretary

*May 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.*

—Rom 15:13

Dear friends,

It is my special privilege, on behalf of the global fellowship of the World Council of Churches, to greet your President, Bishop Henrik Stubkjaer, your General Secretary, Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt, and you, the assembled representatives of the LWF's member churches, during this inaugural meeting of your new Council, mandated by the 13th Assembly.

Although I would be happy to make the short journey from the Ecumenical Centre to your conference in Chavannes-de-Bogis, my prior commitments and travel to Australia has made it somewhat impossible. However, I am deeply grateful that the WCC Moderator, Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, has willingly agreed to represent the WCC at your meeting.

Christians, and perhaps most especially Lutheran Christians, have meditated deeply and perennially on human fallibility. And we see today, in the many overlapping crises we face around the globe, ample confirmation of our failings, both individual and systemic. Why then should we, as the Apostle Paul and your theme proclaim, "abound in hope"? Where is our hope, and what can we realistically hope for at this point in human history?

May I boldly suggest that it is precisely in doing the faith-inspired work in which the LWF is presently engaged, labouring in and with its member churches and partners like us in the WCC, that we can justifiably claim hope? Hope in the context of wars, conflicts, poverty, a climate catastrophe and persistent injustices and inequalities. Hope in the Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who brings justice and peace to a troubled and broken world.

We in the WCC see your work up close. You are our close partners in so much that we do, and we are ever grateful. We are so closely tied together, in our ecumenical, postwar origins, certainly, but more fundamentally in our faith, our witness, and our service, even now. We are, so to speak, co-conspirators—in the good, theological sense of the term! Till this year, indeed since 1947, we have even shared the same quarters and space, a situation to which we eagerly hope to return when the new Ecumenical Centre is complete. It is important for ecumenical organisations and communions to work together to the glory of God and the good of the world, as God desires.

The complexity and scale of today's challenges around the globe are daunting. Yet we derive hope from faith, from our trust in God's promise of "a new heaven and a new earth." And we take courage from the liberation that faith brings about in us, freeing us to become available in service to all.

We appreciate your intense focus on inter-church dialogue, your support of theological education, humanitarian relief, international advocacy, gender justice and peace-making. In your robust, multi-faceted programmes, grounded in the love we receive from God in Christ, you offer aid, understanding, and solidarity.

We are with you. Indeed, we need the whole ecumenical ecology to meet this moment. Ecumenical and interfaith partnerships are indispensable to authentic and persuasive witness to the God of Life, as Martin Luther himself put it, "against all falsehood from the idols of death." So too, we know, is the continual openness on our part to humbly learning from the victims and marginalised. They teach us how we ourselves can be transformed and thereby effect transformation in the world toward that new heaven and new earth. As the Apostle says, "We are not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21).

So yes, as you take up the council's business for the federation, let us abound in hope, grounded in God's promise and God's ongoing redemptive work in and through and among us. In all your discussions and decisions, prayer and fellowship, may you find an ever widening and deepening understanding, empathy, and readiness to serve all humanity and all creation.

We pray that you will have a Spirit-filled and fruitful meeting as you discern together what God is calling you to do in your continued work within and beyond the Lutheran family, always abounding in the hope we have in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Yours in the love of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Pillay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "P".

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay
General Secretary
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