



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

Office of the  
General Secretary

[lutheranworld.org](http://lutheranworld.org)

Geneva, 1 July 2016

Dear participants of the International Interconfessional Meeting of Male and Female Religious, dear sisters and brothers in Christ!

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

It gives me great joy to send you on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation warm greetings at the beginning of your meeting.

Since its very foundation in the year 1947, the Lutheran World Federation has been committed to the ecumenical cause, keeping in mind the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ "...that they may all be one" (John 17:21).

As we have been preparing the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, we have pledged to approach the anniversary with a spirit of ecumenical accountability. We want to make sure that the gifts of ecumenical encounter and the results of ecumenical dialogue are intentionally brought into the anniversary activities and programs. Rather than revisiting old topics and disputes, some of them already overcome through theological research and dialogue, we want to turn towards the future that God holds prepared. Rather than sticking to conflict, we want to open ourselves up to communion, rooted in Christ and offered to the church as a gift.

We are blessed by the strong support of our ecumenical partners, who have been committed to support our pledge of ecumenical accountability. We still harvest the fruits of reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites after the Lutheran apology in 2010. We rejoice over the fact that Lutherans and Catholics will jointly commemorate the anniversary of the Reformation in the city of Lund, later this year. We ask for your fervent prayers so that our declared intention to leave conflict behind and turn towards communion as God's gift may find tangible expression in the daily life of our communions.

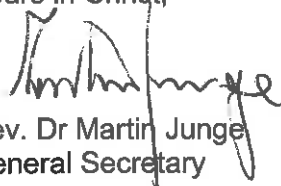
We are grateful for the recent decision of the Anglican Consultative Council to affirm the substance of the joint declaration of doctrine of justification and the collection of Anglican-Lutheran reflections on the LWF themes for the Reformation Anniversary. Our brothers and sisters from the World Communion of Reformed Churches are currently engaged in a process to adhere to the Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification, signed between Lutherans and Catholics in 1999.

We are very grateful for religious communities and societies who have been living out the ecumenical vocation in their everyday life and have offered this space of prayer, meditation and encounter to others. As you gather for the 36<sup>th</sup> time for the International

Interconfessional Meeting of Male and Female Religious, you continue to live out this vocation.

In our increasingly fragmented world where religious groups can easily fall prey to tendencies of withdrawal and isolated identity search, the theme of your meeting, "Blessed are the merciful", reminds us of the centrality of grace in our Christian faith. Having received God's grace, we are able to be gracious ourselves. In a world so often characterized by lack of mercy, God invites the church to proclaim and express God's mercy. Showing mercy towards the others, we are to witness God's mercy in our world. May your meeting be blessed and bear many fruits.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Junge', written over a vertical line that serves as a separator between the signature and the typed name below.

Rev. Dr Martin Junge  
General Secretary