

Greetings to LWF Council

June 14, 2013

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Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

Greetings in Jesus' name from the Anglican Communion. It is my privilege to represent the Secretary General, Canon Kenneth Kearon, at this meeting, and he has asked me to convey his regrets that he was not able to be with you.

I address you as sisters and brothers, and indeed you are, but I also think of Lutherans as Anglicans' closest cousins in the ecumenical movement.

We are shaped by similar history;

we affirm the same creeds and seek to express them in sound contemporary theology;

we affirm the centrality of the Word of God Incarnate, spoken, received and shared;

we can celebrate together the sacraments of God's grace;

we both affirm, as our Anglican-Lutheran dialogue's 2012 agreed statement 'To Love and Serve the Lord' said, that diakonia and koinonia are inextricably linked as essential marks of the Church;

we are both learning how to live well as post-colonial global communities;

and we face the same challenges of living as disciples in today's world.

One of the focus points of this meeting is a product of your ecumenical dialogue called 'From Conflict to Communion' and it seems to me that this title reflects a perpetual movement of the churches. We are always being called to greater communion with our triune God, out of the conflict of our individual and our corporate sin. We are always being called to greater communion with one another, out of our isolation and self-serving. We are always, in this world, living in conflict between the values of our societies and the values of the realm of God – and it is in this crucible of conflict that we are given grace to grow in the knowledge and love of God and discern how we can be better disciples together.

During Easter we were hearing the Book of Acts, and how the early church, as it grew and expanded, learned to deal creatively with conflict. The conflict that arose over the place of the Gentiles is portrayed as life-giving, essential for the mission of God to the whole world. As both our Communion face conflicts over how best to interpret and live the Gospel in our times, we can be comforted that as in the time of Acts, the Holy Spirit continues to be with us to guide us. It seems to me that churches in council have a particular need to listen for the still small voice of God's calm, taking the time to be present to one another in

humility and love, and to remember that those who differ from us may have the most valuable gifts for us.

Anglicans are looking forward to walking with you toward the remembrance of 1517, a date significant for all the churches of Christ, particularly in reminding us of the constant need for renewal, and of the need for reconciliation when our zeal for the Gospel may take us too far from one another.

So, the prayers of your close cousins, your Anglican sisters and brothers, are with you through these days. May you be blessed and shaped by the love of God the Holy Trinity, the God of our hope and our communion.