



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

Office of the
General Secretary

lutheranworld.org

To: LWF Member churches

Geneva, 29 April 2020

Re: Church in times of Coronavirus. A Pastoral letter

Respected church leaders, dear sisters and brothers,

Christ is Risen!

We write this new letter as we continue listening to the LWF member churches and hear about their witness in times of COVID-19. Again, we offer perspectives and encouragement, based on what we hear, and hoping to support both the local ministry of churches, as well as our global witness as a Communion of churches.

Give reason of the hope that is in you (1. Peter 3:15)

We are strengthened in faith after celebrating Christ's resurrection from the dead. The tomb is empty, Christ is alive!

In times when many live with fear and anxiety, our message remains the same: Christ is Risen! Trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit, who creates and renews the church, we are called to continue offering a witness of hope.

We are immensely grateful when we see how LWF member churches have mobilized, finding ways to continue praying and worshipping together, serving their neighbors, and advocating for justice and peace, even if physically distant. There are stories from member churches all over the world that inspire and encourage with their examples of steadfastness in the gospel.

We encourage you to continue sharing in your places the deep hope that is in all of us. Christ is Risen indeed!

Support measures to contain the virus

We want to express our deep gratitude to LWF member churches worldwide, which are supporting the measures imposed by local authorities, despite the impact these have had for the life and witness of churches.

Physical distancing, avoiding crowds, staying at home and regular hand washing are among the most effective measures to contain the spread of the virus.

We continue calling on LWF member churches, their leaders, pastors and members to follow directions, measures and restrictions as they are instituted by authorities at a national, federal or local level.

Stand with those suffering

The virus has exposed a rampant, pervasive inequality and injustice in the world, within societies and communities.

We hear painful stories about hunger among individuals and in communities. Many local economies rely on people being out in the streets or in the markets daily to earn a living. Because of lockdowns, people are not able to bring the daily bread to their homes.

We call upon LWF member churches to remain open to the other and tend to the pain and the suffering of those most vulnerable. Jesus taught us to see his face in those turning to us with need of food, water, clothes and shelter. (Mt. 25:37-41)

Churches have a pivotal role as first responders. The LWF has set up a COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund to support churches in their pastoral and diaconal response to the pandemic ([Link](#)). We invite LWF member churches and related agencies to support this fund as an expression of LWF's global solidarity and its calling to stand together and serve the neighbor.

The LWF continues to serve, on behalf of the global communion, around 2.5 million refugees, internally displaced people and their host communities through the LWF World Service. These populations are among the most vulnerable. Please pray and support the more than 9,000 staff working under extreme conditions on our behalf.

Blessed are the peacemakers (Mt 5:9)

We are disturbed to hear of increased violence. There are shocking stories of xenophobic attacks on foreigners, students, workers, migrants, and refugees. We are particularly saddened to see hostilities against Africans in China, and against foreigners and minorities in many places in the world. We are concerned about repression using what often appears to be excessive force. There are examples of neighbors turning against neighbors when rumors go around that someone has been infected. Nurses and medical doctors have faced hostilities in their communities out of fear that they may be infected.

Fear is a driver of violence. Stress and anxiety additionally exacerbate the potential of human beings to turn violent.

We call upon LWF member churches to swiftly identify and boldly confront xenophobia. Please always remember: where negative profiling or even hate speech is tolerated, violence follows. Therefore, don't allow negative profiling and hate speech to grow, but confront it.

Let the churches' message always be one of peace.

Reject and confront violence against women

We want to bring to your attention the situation of women living in abusive relationships. We are grateful for church leaders bringing this particular concern to the LWF Communion Office. There is an alarming increase of femicide in the world. Cases of gender-based violence have increased by up to 30% according to some available statistics.

The LWF has a longstanding commitment to reject violence against women, naming it what it is: a sin (Churches say NO to violence against women – [Link](#)).

We call upon LWF member churches to continue to raise awareness on violence against women. By naming it, we will start to overcome it.

In many countries, there are helplines where women suffering from violence can call to seek protection and assistance. Please find these numbers and make them available to your congregations and through your women's networks.

Continue educating, providing resources and information.

God's mission continues

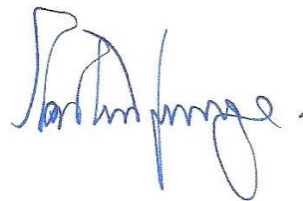
We don't fully know what the future holds in these challenging times. Yet, we know who holds it. Let us therefore remain steadfast in our calling. God's mission is ongoing. Hence our witness shall continue.

In this spirit, we encourage you to continue your witness, proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, serving your neighbors, and advocating for justice so that it rolls down like a river (Amos 5:24).

Yours in Christ



Archbishop Dr Musa Pantil Filibus
LWF President



Rev. Dr Martin Junge
LWF General Secretary