



Messengers of Hope

New Year's greeting from the LWF General Secretary

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Jesus says: "Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away." (John 6:37)

On the threshold of the new year, we halt for a moment in order to cross over the threshold with hope and new encouragement.

The COVID-19 pandemic is still not over, although there are new possibilities to dam, hold off or even defeat the disease. However, a lot still needs to be done to make the vaccines and medication available in all parts of the world. Millions of people have died, and we pray for their dear ones: May God comfort all people who are grieving and all those fighting the pandemic and its consequences. With our sisters and brothers, we also mourn all those, who died of other diseases.

We see new conflicts around the globe, where political issues have turned for the worse within the recent year. Some old and "frozen" conflicts have been fueled. Sometimes it is not easy to say how and why, sometimes this seems quite clear. We pray that God may lead those who instigate conflict to repen-



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tance, dialogue and peace building, and deliver from evil those who are ready to take up arms. As we enter the new year, we pray for an end to violence, injustice and oppression in the new year.

We see the destruction of God's creation. Climate change, catastrophes and desolation of vast areas of formerly intact ecological systems. We know, creation is not for sale, but it seems to be a long way for us human beings to change our attitudes. We ask for forgiveness and the right attitude toward the beautiful world God has created.

We are standing on the threshold of the new year in prayer, bringing all our concerns and sorrows before God, asking to be empowered to be the messengers of hope in today's world, to put our faith into action. In the watchword for 2022, Christ gives us a promise: His door is open for us. We are not cast out, if we come to him. His threshold is not a high one. He will receive us with our prayers, our concerns and our sorrows, he gives us hope and empowers us.

Christ encourages us to boldly cross the threshold of 2022. Carried by his love we enter the new year, knowing that he is with us every day. Freed from fear and desperation we will be able to share the gifts we have received, with others: to be light in and for the world, to serve the neighbor, to spread peace and reconciliation and to stand up for human dignity wherever we are, however the circumstances may be, whatever it takes.

We are to welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed us (Rom 15:7) without casting us out or driving us away. We are called not to be messengers of exclusion, but inclusion; not the ones who contribute to fragmentation but who strive for unity.

On the threshold of 2022, let us pause for a moment in prayer. We feel received with all our needs by Christ's mercy, encouraged by his love. Then we boldly take the first step. May God guide us and bless us in this year!

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Photo: LWF/Johanan Celine P. Valeriano