

# Christmas 2017

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## A greeting from the World Council of Churches

Also available in **French** , **German**, **Spanish**.

*“Be not afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people. To you is born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11*

The World Council of Churches has as its basis that “we confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.” This refers directly to the words of the Gospel, the good news that we read and hear at every celebration of Christmas. These words of a heavenly messenger are for all the people. The Gospel writer, Luke, continued telling the story of Lord and Saviour, who was “anointed by the Holy Spirit to bring good news to the poor ... to proclaim release of the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” (Luke 4:18-19). He is the one who chose his apostles and “gave them instructions through the Holy Spirit ... to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1: 2, 8).

This year the churches in the world have commemorated 500 years since the Reformation, an event that had an effect on all churches in the world ever since. The best way to commemorate this landmark was to manifest and celebrate that we share the same Gospel, the same good news about our Lord and Saviour. The best way to show that we are serious about this is to continue the sending and the mission by sharing the faith in the one who liberates, heals, and proclaims the time of God’s undeserved grace to come. A year of hope and new beginning is always the message of the Gospel.

In 2018 the World Council of Churches will celebrate our first 70 years in common service and witness to the triune God who creates us, saves us, and sends us to serve and witness. We cannot wait till we have found agreement in everything. Our ecumenical service, our *diakonia*, is needed every day. We are called to be moved by the Spirit, which is the theme of the WCC World Conference on Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania, in March 2018. We are called to liberate, to heal the broken, to raise up the oppressed, to share the salvation from sin that we can receive only in Jesus Christ.

Be not afraid! We are called to offer hope, but not in a superficial way. This is not the time to say that sin is an obsolete word in the world. Every day we see the opposite, everywhere. This is the time to receive salvation from sin and to go out fighting against all the negative effects of our misbehaviour and sins. We see them in climate change, in violent conflicts, in economic injustices, in abuse, even of religion. It is time to continue confessing our shared faith in our Lord and Saviour. We do that by continuing our Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace together and sharing the good news with all the people. Be not afraid!

May you have a blessed Christmas and a grace-filled new year in 2018!

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit  
General Secretary  
World Council of Churches