



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION  
Office of the  
General Secretary

Assembly of the Conference of European Churches

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Geneva, 16 June 2023

Rev. Christian Krieger - CEC President  
Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen - *CEC General Secretary*  
H. E. *Metropolitan Stephanos* of Tallinn and All Estonia  
H. E. Archishop Urmas Viilma  
Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Please receive cordial greetings for the 2023 Assembly of the Conference of European Churches from the Lutheran World Federation, the worldwide Communion of altogether 150 Lutheran Churches. I very much hoped I could bring the greetings to you personally, as this assembly takes place in a city that has a special place in my heart, having been my home town for many years. As 2023 is an assembly year for the LWF as well, I unfortunately will not be able to be in Tallinn in person, as I'm currently attending the LWF Asia pre-assembly in Kuala Lumpur.

The times in which you are gathering are not the easiest for Europe, with the war ranging on the continent, with polarization causing deep rifts in the society, and with many people seeking for orientation in their lives. However, there is a saying that there is not a better time to be the church than today. It is today that we are called to proclaim the Good News and to share hope. Hope is not the same as optimism. Václav Havel, a former dissident and President of the Czech Republic after the end of the Cold War, once said: "*Hope, in its deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but rather an ability to work for something because it is good...The more unpromising the situation in which we demonstrate hope, the deeper that hope*". The churches are called to be messengers of hope, peace and reconciliation, not only to the church members but to the wider society as well.

Your Assembly theme, "Under God's blessing – shaping the future" calls churches to actively participate in God's holistic mission, helping to shape a future for Europe but also beyond. Participating in God's holistic mission means a call to churches to be active in the public space. "The Church in the Public Space", a study document that the LWF issued in 2016 and which is very much actual also today, talks about the ABCDE of this engagement, calling the churches to (A) assess public issues in participatory ways, to (B) build relationships of trust, to (C) challenge injustice, to (D) discover signs of hope and to (E) empower people in need.

I believe that the CEC is very well positioned to do important advocacy work in Europe on behalf of its member churches but also to continue with sincere efforts for Christian unity. It is not the time to concentrate on what divides us as Christians but on what unites us.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and many joyful moments together with your sisters and brothers from other parts of Europe. May you be blessed so that you may be a blessing to others through your witness and service.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anne Burghardt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt  
General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation