## Messages and FAQ – Ecumenical Commemoration 2016

**I Messages**

*Core messages: Being together – transitioning from conflict to communion – working together.*

**Message 1: Unity – From Conflict to Communion**

From *Conflict to Communion* calls Lutherans and Catholics to witness together, taking as a point of departure the perspective of *unity* rather than conflict, to strengthen what we have in common. It calls us to be continuously transformed by the encounter with the other and to commit to seek visible unity, and elaborate together what this means in practical terms.

**Message 2: Unity – Reconciliation I**

We are carried by the profound conviction that by working towards **reconciliation** between Lutherans and Catholics, we are working towards justice, peace and reconciliation in a world torn apart by conflict and violence.

**Message 3: Unity – Reconciliation II**

When we speak of unity we speak of reconciliation. It is possible to overcome fragmentation and we will learn from each other. It is possible to heal memories and we need to do so in order for us to jointly serve our wounded and fragmented world. This commemoration is a contribution to that end.

**Message 4: Unity - Relationships**

Our relationships have deepened. For us this means increased trust, greater awareness of our common ground in faith and greater eagerness to serve together in this world.

**Message 5: Unity – From Conflict**

In times of overall fragmentation and sectarian violence, also grounded on religious fields, it is good news that we can leave conflict behind and work towards unity. We are not adding to fragmentation but seeking visible unity and joint witness.

**Message 6: Unity – The process**

We have come to the point to seek to transition from conflict to communion on the basis of substantial and sustained ecumenical interaction. 50 years of dialogue with significant results, such as the JDDJ, provide the theological basis upon which we seek to take this important step.

**Message 7: Working together – For justice, peace, reconciliation**

*From Conflict to Communion* calls Lutherans and Catholics to “witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and in service to the world”. In preparing for the anniversary in Lund we are particularly seeking for the ways to serve in more concrete terms. Because of the gifts that we have received together, we are called to use these gifts for the purpose of **justice, peace and reconciliation** in the world. Because we are moving from conflict to communion it is our task to work together for the sake of the suffering neighbor.

**Message 8: Working together – For neighbor and creation**

We are committed to stop looking back, leaving conflict behind and instead looking towards the future. In this moment of transition we also want to look around us, discerning our work amongst the suffering neighbor and the groaning creation, for refugees, in the fight against poverty, climate change and unjust wealth distribution.

By healing our clouded memories we find ourselves in an even better position to work together, with a passion for the suffering neighbor and to witness the mercy of God.

**Message 9: Working together – Increased cooperation**

Lutherans and Catholics are already working together in situations of violence, conflict, displacement and ecological crisis, e.g. in Colombia, in Cameroon, in the Central African Republic. And LWF and Caritas are looking forward to increase this cooperation on a global level.

**II Reference material**

F**rom the Common Prayer**

1. “It offers an opportunity to look back in thanksgiving and confession and look ahead, committing ourselves to common witness and continuing our journey together.”
2. “Thanksgiving and lament, joy and repentance, mark the singing and the praying as we commemorate the gifts of the Reformation and ask forgiveness for the division that we have perpetuated. Thanksgiving and lament, however, do not stand alone: they lead us to common witness and commitment to each other and for the world.”
3. “We want to express our mutual joy for the gifts received and rediscovered in various ways through the renewal and impulses of the Reformation.”
4. ”… in order to bear fruit. The fruit is twofold: witness and service”
5. “Oneness” in purpose and service witnesses to God who is love. “That they may be one so that the world believes... .” (Jn 17:21).

**Five imperatives / commitments**

1. Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced. (#239).
2. Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith. (#240)
3. Catholics and Lutherans should again commit themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps, and to strive repeatedly toward this goal. (#241)
4. Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time. (#242)
5. Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world. (#243)

From Conflict to Communion is available in 12 languages**III FAQ**

## 1 Why Lund?

The city of Lund carries strong significance for the LWF because this is where Lutheran churches came together and formed the LWF in 1947. The LWF and the Catholic Church both agreed that this is a good place to host the ecumenical commemoration. The Cathedral of Lund is also a symbolic venue because it has a 1000 year history that is shared by Catholics and Lutherans.

## 2 Why not Wittenberg, why not Germany?

The LWF and the Catholic Church both agreed that Lund is a good place to host the ecumenical commemoration.

The Reformation is a global citizen today and it is important to express that global nature through the places in which we commemorate the anniversary.

Wittenberg is a very important and meaningful place for Lutherans. This is why the LWF Council will meet in June 2016 in Wittenberg and get in touch with the historic place of reformation. From there we will go to Lund for the joint commemoration. In May 2017 the LWF will hold its Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia. Thus we express both the dynamism and the global nature of Reformation

## 3 Why 31 October?

Lutherans around the world mark this date through special worship and activities as the Reformation Day.Already in 1999 Lutherans and Catholics took the Reformation day as the day to sign the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

**4 Why in 2016 and not 2017?**

The LWF has focused on activities related to the Reformation anniversary in a period of three years (2015 – 2017).

We want to make sure that as the churches engage in the last stretch towards the Reformation anniversary we send a strong ecumenical message through the commemoration. This is a good day to send such a message. As a global communion the LWF will celebrate 500 years of reformation at its Assembly in May 2017 in Windhoek, Namibia.

## 5 What has brought you to this event?

The LWF and the Catholic Church have held dialogues for 50 years and we can look back at important milestones. They have brought us to where we are today – for instance the signing of the JDDJ in 1999, the publication From Conflict to Communion in 2013. From Conflict to Communion includes 5 ecumenical imperatives, which we want to explore together. There is a solid journey of theological engagement that leads us to the joint commemoration.

## 6 How do you interpret the fact that the pope is coming?

In the spirit of ecumenical accountability which the LWF has pledged in view of the Reformation anniversary it is with gratefulness that we acknowledge the readiness of the Catholic Church to co-host the event. It means a lot to the LWF that the pope is co-hosting the commemoration. We see this as an important milestone in the conversation between the LWF and the Catholic Church which has been going on for almost five decades.

**7 Who represents the LWF?**

The President and the General Secretary on behalf of the LWF, together with other leadership from the LWF. We want to make sure that the global nature of Lutheranism is represented at the commemoration.

## 8 What do you expect to achieve?

We want to give visible expression to our commitment to transition from conflict to communion, as Lutherans and Catholics in the world. We want this to be a moment of joy, repentance and encouragement for common witness (From Conflict to Communion) and we want to do that publicly, together with our ecumenical partners. Thus we prepare ourselves for better service in the world and engage in further ecumenical dialogue.

We know that many churches are already engaged in similar commemoration events on the basis of the *Common Prayer*  that we shared in January.

## 9 Are you celebrating or commemorating?

The LWF is approaching the Reformation anniversary in a spirit of ecumenical accountability. We are coming together 1) to rejoice over the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as it spoke then and continues speaking to the world; 2) we are aware of the mistakes and the pain resulting from division, violence and disputes; 3) we want to be encouraged to work together to address a suffering world. We believe that a c*ommemoration* is a good way of expressing this process.

## 10 Are you going to apologize?

The commemoration event is indeed an opportunity to express lament over division and the wrongdoings, so much suffering, crime, the alignment of a theological dispute to political interests. We cannot ignore all of this suffering and pain, but rather seek forgiveness for it.

In the Common Prayer we read:

*“Thanksgiving and lament, joy and repentance, mark the singing and the praying as we commemorate the gifts of the Reformation and ask forgiveness for the division that we have perpetuated. Thanksgiving and lament, however, do not stand alone: they lead us to common witness and commitment to each other and for the world.”*

## 11 Are you going to be one church?

The commemoration of the reformation in Lund is not going to mark the unity of the Catholic and the Lutheran church. This event is to help us to leave conflict behind so that we are better equipped for the work that lies ahead. There are remaining doctrinal differences, these relate to the way in which we understand unity, the church, the ministry and the Eucharist.

**12 Are all the LWF churches behind this?**

Lutheran churches and the Catholic Church around the world are at different places in their relationships. As the LWF we received a mandate from our 145 member churches for dialogue with the Catholic Church. The report *From Conflict to Communion* was adopted by the LWF governing body in 2013. The *Common Prayer* based on this report has been sent to Catholic and Lutheran churches around the world. All of this gives a broad basis and strong legitimacy to the step that is ahead of us.

**13 What about Lutheran bodies that are outside the LWF**

They have their own dialogues with the Catholic Church. We are responding to the mandate approved by our 145 member churches.

## 14 What do you agree and disagree on?

Lutherans and Catholics have a lot in common: we believe in a triune God, read the same Scriptures, believe in one baptism. We have signed the JDDJ and together we have published *From Conflict to Communion* which includes five ecumenical imperatives for continued dialogue between Catholics and Lutherans and earlier this year the *Common Prayer*.

By transitioning from conflict to communion the remaining differences are not wiped away but we are in an even better position to engage with them.

There are remaining doctrinal differences, these relate to the way in which we understand unity, the church, the ministry and the Eucharist.

## 15 Lutheran churches e.g. Church of Sweden blesses same-sex marriages and ordain women for the priesthood. How does this influence your cooperation with the Catholic Church? Is this one of the issues you will discuss?

What this commemoration will be all about has been explained already (three steps). The Catholic Church and the LWF have jointly agreed that Lund is the right place for this commemoration to happen.

## 16 What is your message to churches?

*Key messages are outlined above.*

We’re carried by the profound conviction that by working towards reconciliation between Lutherans and Catholics, we are working towards justice, peace and reconciliation in a world torn apart by conflict and violence.

We see this as way of expressing unity and reconciliation, affirming our will to work together for a just and peaceful world (LWF World Service, Caritas) and as an important step in the dialogue between the LWF and the Catholic Church.

It is possible to overcome fragmentation and we will learn from each other. It is possible to heal memories and we need to do so in order for us to jointly offer service in this wounded and fragmented world. This commemoration is a contribution to that.

**17 For further reflection - What is From Conflict to Communion?**

The report *From Conflict to Communion* is the first ever attempt by Lutherans and Catholics to tell the story of the Reformation together. It traces the developments and the theological discussion between Lutherans and Catholics and identifies where commonalities exist and where differences remain. It provides us with five ecumenical imperatives to work towards unity.

The ecumenical commemoration is based on *From Conflict to Communion*. We recommend this publication to churches for further reading and studying and invite them to participate with us in this ecumenical journey nationally and locally. We also want to invite our other ecumenical partners to participate and be witnesses to this event.

Currently *From Conflict to Communion* is available in 12 languages: English, Finnish, French, German, Polish, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, Swedish, Norwegian, and Hungarian. Having the document available in so many different languages underlines the importance of both the global and local communion.

**18 Are you making little of or forgetting the past?**

We are fully aware of history. And the joint commemoration is not an event to walk out of history. But it is an event to open us up for the future, thereby also helping us not to get stuck in the past.. From *Common Prayer*:

“Lutherans and Catholics often focused on what separated them from each other rather than looking for what united them. They accepted that the Gospel was mixed with the political and economic interests of those in power. Their failures resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. Families were torn apart, people imprisoned and tortured, wars fought and religion and faith misused. Human beings suffered and the credibility of the Gospel was undermined with consequences that still impact us today. We deeply regret the evil things that Catholics and Lutherans have mutually done to each other.”

**19 What are the Five Ecumenical Imperatives?**

*From Conflict to Communion* includes five ecumenical imperatives, which we want to explore together.

1. The first imperative: Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.
2. The second imperative: Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith.
3. The third imperative: Catholics and Lutherans should again commit themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps, and to strive repeatedly toward this goal.
4. The fourth imperative: Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time.
5. The fifth imperative: Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.

**20 How should churches use the Common Prayer**

The basic hope of the LWF and the Catholic Church in preparing the *Common Prayer* is that Lutheran and Catholic congregations in the same neighborhood might get together in commemorating the forthcoming Reformation anniversary. They could also use this opportunity to discuss the publication *From Conflict to Communion*. Both processes are very much built around the themes of thanksgiving, repentance and commitment to common witness.

These meetings for study and prayer may happen over a period of time, weekly or monthly. The *Common Prayer* may mark a special moment on the journey of the two parishes. Situations differ worldwide. In some contexts Lutherans are a majority, in others the Catholics but the basic principle is that the local initiative to hold such ecumenical prayer service may come from either of the churches.

**22 Eucharist together?**

Sharing the table remains the ultimate goal of our ecumenical engagement towards unity. It is painful that we are not yet at this point. We believe that healing our memories and transitioning from conflict to communion - as we will do with this joint commemoration - will equip us to work and pray even harder to attain this vision. This is captured in the *Common Prayer*:

*“God our sustenance, bring us together at your eucharistic table, nurture within and among us a communion rooted in your love. Your mercy endures forever!” (Common Prayer)*

**23 Will other ecumenical partners be involved – What is your message to ecumenical partners?**

We want them to be with us as we transition from conflict to communion and we want them to hold us accountable. With each of those bilateral partners we have other specific initiatives and events to jointly commemorate the anniversary of the Reformation