



October 31, 2016

*All this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ,
and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.*

– II Corinthians 5: 18

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

Today in Lund, Sweden, the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church will inaugurate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. After five hundred years of division, and 50 years of dialogue, Lutherans and Catholics will publicly remember their history, and look to the future—together. For the first time, a centennial anniversary of the Reformation will take place in a spirit of reconciliation, for the whole world to see. In our broken world, this ministry of reconciliation is a faithful response to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

As churches shaped by the 16th century reformations—the Anglican Church of Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Episcopal Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—we also participate in this ministry of reconciliation. Over fifteen years ago, our churches’ respective full communion agreements inaugurated new relationships in which we fully recognized each other “as churches in which the gospel is truly preached and the holy sacraments duly administered” (*Called to Common Mission*), an achievement that “marks but one step toward the eventual visible unity of the whole Church catholic” (*Waterloo Declaration*). We are committed to working together toward reconciliation—of the church, and of the deepest social ills that plague our world. It is our hope, together with you, to be signs of anticipation—of the “already, but not yet” of God’s realm of reconciliation, justice, and peace.

In this spirit we have prepared a series of devotions for the season of Advent, which may be used as bulletin inserts. The Lutheran World Federation’s 500th anniversary theme and sub-themes provided a fitting framework: We are “liberated by God’s grace” and affirm that “salvation, human beings, and creation are not for sale.” The devotions can be downloaded from each of our churches’ websites, and shared broadly. May our prayers united be a modest but hopeful sign of what our churches can do together as we bear witness to the One who first reconciled himself to us.

In Christ,

The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz
Primate
Anglican Church of Canada

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop
Episcopal Church (United States)