



January 1, 2023

Dear church,

Yesterday we awoke to the news of the passing of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. As part of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), we mourn his death and celebrate his life eternal in Christ Jesus.

In the [LWF statement](#), which I commend to all of you, General Secretary Anne Burghardt reminds us of Pope Benedict's enduring commitment to the unity of Christ's church and, in particular, "his appreciation of the 'Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification' that has enabled many advances in Lutheran-Roman Catholic relations." His brilliance as a theologian and his ecumenical spirit will continue to challenge us to build bridges of mutual understanding and visible unity through dialogue, cooperation and common witness.

We also pray for Pope Francis, who will continue to lead the Roman Catholic Church in this historic time – the likes of which haven't occurred since nearly a century before the Reformation. We extend our condolences and unceasing accompaniment to all our Catholic neighbors, including the bishops, priests, deacons, scholars and laypeople with whom we are in dialogue and partnership.

Pope Benedict lived in the surety that "whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8). Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace: your word has been fulfilled. Amen.

In Christ,

Elizabeth A. Eaton

Presiding Bishop, ELCA