Hope for the Future - A Study Document for Renewing Jewish-Christian Relations

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This study document is intended as an educational resource and reflection tool to stimulate a renewal of Jewish-Christian relations in the various LWF member churches and their respective contexts. It aims to strengthen Jewish-Christian relations beyond the Thirteenth Assembly in Kraków and to promote constructive contact and meaningful dialogue between Jews and Christians.

Preface

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is committed to foster constructive contact and meaningful dialogue between Jews and Christians, as well as between neighbors of different faiths all over the world. The discussion about Jewish-Christian relations requires Lutherans to critically review our past, invite others to join into the conversation, and also carve out paths to move forward in new ways of engaging the topic as a global communion of churches. It is important to review how the LWF has engaged in processes to improve Jewish-Christian relations, specifically addressing Luther's 'anti-Semitic' writings. But it is even more important to commit to address new challenges that have emerged in our contemporary setting.

The position that Lutheran churches reject anti-Semitism and affirm the integrity and dignity of the Jewish faith was stated clearly at the LWF Assembly in Budapest, Hungary, in 1984, where the LWF member churches also distanced themselves from Martin Luther's writings and expressions against Jews. It was a significant step for the global communion to reexamine the writings of the pioneering figure of the Reformation. Since then, the LWF has recognized the shifts and the complexities around Jewish- Christian relations in dialogue with our Jewish and ecumenical partners.

In 2021, The Jewish-Christian Relations Study document task force that consisted of representatives from all seven regions of the LWF was formed. Besides regular online meetings, they met in person both in Amman, Jordan, and Kraków, in 2022, and completed the work in 2023, including significant engagement with Jewish partners to inform the final publication which you are now reading.

Throughout this process, the LWF also renewed its relationship with Jewish partners such as the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) with a view to continue strengthening Jewish-Christian relations beyond the Assembly in Kraków. Meaningful encounters often require dialogue partners to wrestle with the complexities of social and political realities that impact theological conversations as well.

Hope for the Future is a forward-looking title that resonates with The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Thirteenth Assembly theme "One Body, One Spirit, One Hope," in Kraków, Poland, in 2023. I invite LWF member churches to use this study document as an educational resource and reflective guide in renewing Jewish-Christian relations in their respective contexts. In our world increasingly characterized by polarization, hostility, and even hate toward people who are different from us, may this document inspire member churches to be messengers of hope both locally and

globally bringing justice, peace and reconciliation to all.

Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt
LWF General Secretary

Source: Lutheran World Federation.