

~From the Bishop



*"...Then shall
all the trees
of the forest
sing for joy
before the Lord;
for he is coming..."*
~from Psalm 96

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

From November 17-27, 2018, I was honored to be chosen by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton to be one of two newly elected leaders to attend a Retreat Of Newly Elected Leaders (RoNEL) sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation. The other ELCA representative was Bishop Pedro Suarez of the Florida-Bahamas Synod. The two of us joined bishops from all over the world: India, Chile, Canada, Angola, Guyana, Tanzania, Mexico, Hungary, and Poland.

The Lutheran World Federation came into existence out of a desire to respond to the overwhelming refugee crisis after World War II. With much of Europe in a shambles, millions of people were displaced. Some estimates put the number of refugees from Europe at nearly 60 million. Around 10 million of these were Lutheran Christians. Immediately after the end of the war, Lutherans around the world mobilized to provide assistance. This was the context in which LWF was founded in 1947.

We spent about five days in Geneva, Switzerland at the Ecumenical Center. The Lutheran World Federation shares space with the World Council of Churches and they partner together, where possible, for deeper and broader impact.

Some statistics:

The Lutheran World Federation is a partner representing 148 churches and 75.5 million

from Lutheran traditions in 99 countries. The three areas of their work are:

1. Service
2. Holistic Mission & Theology and
3. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

There are 75 staff people in Geneva overseeing the work of over 5000 deployed staff and volunteers. Pretty impressive.

After hearing about the work of the LWF, our group travelled to Wittenberg, Germany. There we enjoyed worship at St. Mary's church where Martin Luther had preached over 2000 sermons, and we took in the sites of the Castle Church where the 95 theses was first posted. A highlight for me was planting an apple tree as part of the Luthergarten project to observe the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. We are tree #468! I invite you to go to www.luthergarten.de, click on the British flag for English and find more information on this project.

Martin Luther once said, "If the world were to end in disaster tomorrow, I would plant an apple tree today." In this new year, may we look for and plant signs and seeds of hope. May God bless our efforts for the work of Christ in the year of our Lord, 2019.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop Katherine Finegan

