



World Council of Churches

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Greetings to Hindus on the occasion of Diwali

Dear brothers and sisters,

On behalf of the World Council of Churches and all our member churches I offer you greetings of peace and prosperity as you celebrate the festival of Diwali. Diwali, as the festival of lights, offers a strong sign of hope. It brings with it the message of peace - understood as freedom from fear and threat; and prosperity - understood as the flourishing of creation. As you celebrate this auspicious occasion with your families and your communities may your joy be all the more complete!

In a world of increasing divisions and deprivation, festivals like Diwali have the potential to foster healing and hope. This is possible by letting generosity flow from our prosperity. May this season of celebration be truly a time when your prosperity leads to hospitality, and the sense of peace you long for contributes also to the wellbeing of the 'others' in our midst.

Festivals like Diwali are also occasions where we focus on the most vulnerable in our midst and recognise the bonds of our common humanity. At this time of Diwali I am reminded of the principle of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* – “the world is one family” - that is found at the heart of the Upanishadic writings. This concept has offered moral strength to many communities across the ages to be involved in acts of caring and sharing. The time is ripe to rediscover the riches of this teaching and reaffirm the familial bonds which bind humanity together through a common creator. Otherwise we are likely to be gripped by fear and hate of the 'other'. As the *Taittiriya Upanishad* affirms, “until we realise the unity of life, we live in fear”.

The World Council of Churches cherishes the bonds of friendship that we enjoy with our Hindu brothers and sisters across the world, especially through our member churches. We are keen and committed to fostering further collaboration as we seek to move forward in the 'pilgrimage of justice and peace' that we have chosen as our thematic focus through 2021. We recognise that interreligious cooperation is crucial in walking the paths of justice and peace.

I recently visited New Delhi. My visit reiterated that the embrace of difference and affirmation of harmony are crucial to building up just and inclusive communities where all are cherished and affirmed irrespective of their religion, caste or gender. There is a lot of work that we can do together on this and I am confident that this can be a process of mutual growth and learning. As it is said, together we are stronger. Even as I wish you a peaceful and prosperous Diwali, I invite you to join the WCC in lighting lamps of hospitality, hope and healing in the world today.

With very best wishes for a joyful celebration,

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary