

**National Celebration of 500 years Reformation,
18 June 2017, Bern**

**Greetings of the General Secretary of the WCC,
Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit**

“The kingdom of God is...justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”—Romans 14:17

Dear friends, sisters and brothers in Christ,

“The kingdom of God is...justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” - with these words from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans, I bring you the greetings and best wishes of the fellowship of churches of the World Council of Churches (WCC). This great family of churches from the different Christian traditions is celebrating with you the 500 years of the Reformation. The Swiss churches are an important part of our fellowship. This city of Bern and also Geneva, where the WCC has its offices, have been beacons of hope during the Reformation and since.

Rediscovery of the gospel of Christ as a gospel of love and transformative grace was at the heart of the Reformation and its liberating message to the world. Today, this message leads the churches on their way toward reconciliation and a strong common witness to the world—as we have seen last year in Lund in the joint event of the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church. The ecumenical movement is, indeed, a movement of love and transformative grace, liberating the churches from past prejudice and strengthening them in their witness for justice, peace and the care for creation in the world. On the basis of the gospel, we are calling one another to visible unity in the world of today, so the world may believe in the gospel giving hope to the world.

It was in this spirit that the 2013 Busan assembly of the WCC called the churches and all people of good will to join in a pilgrimage of justice and peace and to engage in transformative action. Looking for the traces of God’s own way to justice and peace, we discover the signs of God’s presence in and with the world. On this pilgrim-way, we are called

- to celebrate together the God of life,
- to be with those suffering from violence, injustice and destruction of their very way of life, and
- to engage in advocacy and practical action for change.

When we look around and reflect on recent developments in this world, we see worrying signs of crises. I know many people who are losing hope and are afraid that worse things are to come. But we also see a search for unity that embraces the diversity of humanity. I also know many who are inspired by the good news of the gospel as the treasure they trust. They do not give up; they search for signs of God’s reign of justice and peace. I have been with them here in Europe on the pilgrimage for climate justice, for water-justice in Israel and Palestine, for peace in Iraq and Syria or South Sudan, for new ways of dialogue and cooperation in Nigeria and on many other occasions. Walking together the way of justice and peace, they find new community, courage and joy. This experience tells me. We can trust the words of the apostle: *“The Kingdom of God is...justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*