



Geneva, November 5, 2018

Greetings from the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches

the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit on the occasion of Diwali

Dear Hindu brothers and sisters,

I send you warm greetings on behalf of the World Council of Churches as you celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights. May this time of celebration bring with it blessings of peace and prosperity to you, your families and your communities.

Festivals often invite followers of particular faiths to make meaning of their present lives in the light of their sacred narratives from the past. They help people of faith to not just to be rooted in their scriptural and spiritual traditions but also to discover afresh their relevance for contemporary times. Some of the most well-known traditions of Diwali have at their heart the return of Rama from exile, to his home in Ayodhya. It is this return from exile which becomes the source of celebration and joy, and results in the symbolic lighting of the lamps at the thresholds of houses. The lamps signify welcome, joy and hope.

Personally I find it interesting that at the heart of Diwali is a one who in contemporary terms could be described as 'stateless' in his own kingdom. I cannot help but wonder what this focus on someone who has been banished unfairly to exile might mean in our world which is under the scourge of statelessness.

Diwali as the celebration of Rama's 'home coming' has a restorative dimension to it. Intrinsically interwoven into this narrative is celebration of the prospect that injustice will not have the last say. This message of the power of justice to overcome injustice,

and the promise that truth will triumph over untruth, is also reflected in the other narratives associated with Diwali. I am confident that such a message will provide a strong impetus to you and your communities to persist in the pursuit of justice and peace in our world today.

The World Council of Churches sees itself as being on a pilgrimage of justice and peace. However, we recognise and affirm that this is not a pilgrimage to be walked alone, but a pilgrimage to be undertaken in humility and partnership with all people of faith and goodwill. In this regard we are grateful for the partnership we enjoy with our Hindu brothers and sisters across the world. We hope and pray that this relationship will be further deepened in the coming years so that together we can work towards a world where justice and peace will embrace.

As you light your lamps this Diwali and pray the famous words of *Bṛhadaraṇyaka Upaniṣhad*: “Lead us from untruth to truth, lead us from darkness to light, lead us from death to immortality”, may you welcome into your lives all that has the potential to renew and transform. May your joy, peace and hope be all the more complete this Diwali and always.

With best wishes



Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary