

Bishops' Post February/March 2024

Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Corinthians 16,14)

With this watchword we begin the new year. Be loving to one another this year! A year of love! Wouldn't that be wonderful?

All around us things don't seem to be so loving. Wars in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Unemployment and civil unrest in South Africa. An upcoming election, where many people fear divisive statements by politicians that can cause more conflict and strife among South Africans.

Where is the love?

Our watchword for the year 2024 is found in the first letter to the Corinthians. The congregation had been established around 50 AD. It consisted of people from various cultures and social classes, and they were often not very loving to one another. Some years after the establishment of the congregations Paul writes two letters to them. Letters that are still found in our Bible. In these letters, he writes clearly about what is wrong in the congregations, but he also gives a clear solution, and this solution is found in love, not the love of friendship or erotic love, but in the love described with the Greek word "Agape", an unselfish, interpersonal love demonstrated by Christ and found in God.

Let all you do be done in love.

For me this is not a command to do more or to earn God's acceptance in some manner, but rather an invitation to receive the Agape love of God daily and to pass it on to others. It is an invitation to allow the love of God to flow through me to others. In John 15 Jesus says: *"9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. 12 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.'"* (John 15, 9-12)

Let all you do be done in love. May each one of us experience the love of God through Jesus Christ this year. May we experience the abundance of God's grace and acceptance and may this love flow through us toward others and into a world that so desperately needs it.

Theo Jäckel



Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, during these challenging and uncertain times and the upcoming case of genocide against Israel, initiated by our government and supported by various organisations and churches, I ask you that we unite in prayer for justice and peace. May truth prevail and respect for human life and human dignity be upheld.

In the last time there have been many questions about where the Lutheran Church stands on what is happening in Palestine and Israel. Various churches have issued statements. I would hereby like to forward the statement by the Lutheran World Federation from 11 October 2023 for your attention.

A statement of The Lutheran World Federation – 11 October 2023

(LWF) – The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is gravely concerned about the continued escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine, particularly, the targeting of civilians. LWF unequivocally condemns all attacks by all parties on civilians.

LWF strongly condemns the brutal attacks by Hamas on Israeli citizens. Taking hostages is unacceptable, and LWF calls for their immediate release.

LWF urges Israeli forces to act according to International Humanitarian Law and prioritize the protection of civilians who are not warring parties. A breach of International Humanitarian Law by one party does not justify another breach by the other party.

The rules of war, set out in the Geneva Conventions, must be upheld. Targeting civilians is never justified, and attacks on civilian infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals, are unacceptable.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is rapidly deteriorating. Hundreds of thousands of people have already been displaced, basic infrastructure, including medical facilities, has been destroyed, and the population has nowhere to flee. Civilians who want to leave must be guaranteed safe passage, and humanitarian corridors must be opened without delay to allow aid to reach the population.

LWF calls on authorities in Israel and Palestine and the International Community to ensure the access of the United Nations and other humanitarian actors in the region to provide urgent life-saving assistance to Palestinian civilians trapped and helpless in Gaza.

LWF stands with all affected by this violence, with those who grieve, and those who live in fear and without hope for the future.

The people in the Holy Land deserve peace, which will only be achieved through negotiations that meet the needs of Israelis and Palestinians and bring long-term stability to the Holy Land and the region.