

January 31, 2019

Dear Rev. Gerardo Hands, Pastor President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela!

I wish to greet you as a friend and brother in faith and, by extension, to the entire community of brothers and sisters in the IELV with the word of Jesus that in this year 2019 will illuminate the reflections and actions in the IECLB: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you". (John 14.27a).

The LWF issued a statement regarding the difficult situation in Venezuela. A timely and necessary statement before the extremely delicate situation that you live.

With apprehension, I have been following the news about Venezuela. The situation in Venezuela and the IELV are reminded in our intercessions. The information on murders and prisons that you shared highlight how dramatic became the humanitarian crisis which brings the need an urgent search for a negotiated, peacefully constructed resolution.

Latin America and the Caribbean, our region, lives in extremely delicate contexts, in all the ways: politically, economically, ethically. In recent times, we had experienced a lot of polarization and violence in our countries. It is terrible that before the forces that kill and divide, both in society and in the churches, we no longer recognize ourselves as brothers and sisters who witness the Gospel. The Gospel is source for a proclamation of peace as antithesis to the upsurge of hate, injustice, and death.

The peace that Jesus left to us is one reason to exercise the practice of care and solidarity among ourselves as we are in fellowship as a communion of churches in the LWF. We are one body, if one part suffers, the whole body suffers.

Kindly receive my fraternal and supportive embrace. I wish and pray that the Word of God will be the inspiring and guiding source for our prayers, our diakonia, and our words to foster peace without hiding what is happening in the reality. I hope that from solidarity before human suffering can be like sprout for peace sown by Jesus.

Dear Rev. Gerardo, brothers and sisters in the IELV, may God bless you in these difficult times. We pray for new times to come, times of peace that grow from justice.

Fraternally,

P. Dr. Nestor Paulo Friedrich
LWF Vice President for Latin America and the Caribbean Region