



*World DIAKONIA Prayer Letter*

October 2017

As I have contemplated what I would share in this prayer letter, I am struck with the number of significant observations and celebrations that are happening this month. I choose to write this letter each October because in it is the anniversary of my birth, and I can remember that I have the privilege of sharing my life with all of you. This is also the month in which we, in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at least, commemorate Theodor Fliedner on October 4<sup>th</sup>, along with Saint Francis. I like to take the time to reflect upon the work that Pastor Fliedner and his wife began in Kaiserswerth, to remember my visit there in 2013 following the World Gathering in Berlin, and to give thanks for the work God began so long ago in Germany.

This month we are also coming to the end of a year-long observance of the Reformation, continued not begun, when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the Cathedral door in Wittenberg, inviting debate in 1517. We ushered in this year with a Joint Ecumenical Celebration of the Reformation in Lund, Sweden with a live-streamed worship service, prepared by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church. How my heart sang to worship together in this way! I sat at my computer in Seattle, Washington at 6:00 am, watching, praying, singing, laughing with joy, tears running down my face. What a gift it is when brothers and sisters worship together in many languages and one voice!

This summer we celebrated 70 years of DIAKONIA World Federation together in Chicago, singing, praying, studying, visiting, eating together. The cacophony of many languages washed over us in joy and peace! Old relationships were renewed and strengthened, new relationships were built. The Body of Christ, who serves the world, was united again, challenged & refreshed to return home to go out and serve!

There are so many places we have been called to serve since we returned to our daily lives of service. The headlines and news programs are filled with stories and pictures of violence, of suffering and of pain. Hurricanes and typhoons seem to appear out of the oceans, the earth is shaking and trembling, people have lost their homes, their lives, their families. In all these stories we see pictures and examples of people reaching out to help, to walk alongside those affected, to serve. I give thanks for all of you who are involved in this work and pray for you daily.

At the same time, we are seeing the other side of humanity. The voices of racism in the United States are becoming more strident, fear and suspicion is fed and multiplied. Threats are flying between heads of state, violence grows. The cries of despair, "How long, O Lord, how long?" ring out over the land. Those who have escaped the natural disasters, are facing hate and violence in ways we have not seen displayed so clearly in years.

I share the words to this song, found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, (#704) which has been speaking to me deeply this week as I have reflected on all these things. It reminds me of my call, it strengthens me in my times of sorrow, and it causes me to give thanks daily for all of you at work in the world.

## When Pain of the World Surrounds Us

- 1 When pain of the world surrounds us with darkness and despair, when searching just confounds us with false hopes ev'rywhere, when lives are starved for meaning and destiny is bare, we are called to follow Jesus and let God's healing flow through us.
- 2 We see with fear and trembling our aching world in need, confessing to each other our wastefulness and greed. May we with steadfast caring the hungry children feed. We are called to follow Jesus and let God's justice flow through us.
- 3 The church is a holy vessel the living waters fill to nourish all the people, God's purpose to fulfill. May we with humble courage be open to God's will. We are called to follow Jesus and let God's Spirit flow through us.
- 4 We praise you for our journey and your abundant grace, your saving word that guided a struggling human race. O God, with all creation, your future we embrace. We are called to follow Jesus and let God's changes flow through us.

Text: Jim Strathdee, b. 1941

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*Thanks be to God for hymnwriters who capture our thoughts and challenge our lives.*

### *Prayer*

*Holy God, holy and mighty, Holy and Immortal,  
Have mercy on us.*

*For food in a world where so many live in hunger,  
For faith in a world where so many live in fear,  
For community in a world where so many live alone,  
Let us pray.*

*For those called to serve this world in pain,  
For Theodor Fliedner, who answered God's call  
For Martin Luther, who called us to debate what it means to be God's people,  
For DIAKONIA World Federation, and the fellowship and community we share.  
Amen*

**Deacon Jan Cherry, DOTAC President**

*Deacons of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*