



THE ARCHBISHOP
UPPSALA

The Most Rev. Dr. Jānis Vanags
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
M. Pils iela 4
Rīga, LV-1050

September 1, 2016

LATVIA

Dear Archbishop Vanags, dear Brother in Christ,

“Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles and they were in Christ before I was” (Romans 16:7).

These words from the apostle Paul are read in the Church of Sweden on Apostles’ Day, the Feast of Peter and Paul. They bear witness to us about the history and life of the early years of the one and indivisible Church of Christ. And they remind us of the very essence of the apostolic ministry, which is being “in Christ”. Neither origin nor gender, neither freedom nor imprisonment makes the difference, but this only: “in Christ”.

This year we celebrated Apostles’ Day and read the words of the apostle Paul with grief over the decision made by the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia on June 3, 2016, changing the constitution and restricting the apostolic ministry of word and sacrament to men only.

We consider this decision not only a step backward on the common path that the Lutheran World Federation has followed for 32 years, based in the decisions of five assemblies, but also a step away from the words of the apostle Paul to the Romans. Today most Lutheran World Federation member churches ordain women, and their membership includes more than 90 percent of the members of the communion.

At its recent meeting in Wittenberg, the Council of the Lutheran World Federation affirmed its commitment to the ordination of women. As you know, the Council stated:

we are convinced that the scriptural witness, in its breadth and scope, honors the equality of all created in God’s image and recognizes the gifts of all in the same Spirit to those baptized into the new creation. [...]. Therefore, no discrimination of women and men is conceivable in the life of the church. Any kind of discrimination in the way women participate in the ministry of the church (including ordination) harms the fulfillment of the mission of the church in the world, as it is contrary to the nature of God’s reign.

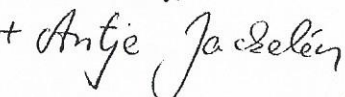
In the Church of Sweden we have 56 years of experience of ordaining women to the apostolic ministry of word and sacrament, and almost 20 years of women in the episcopate. We know that there are

differences in the doctrinal and ethical teachings between the Church of Sweden and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, as there have always been such differences in the history of the Church. "But God has so arranged the body [that] the members may have the same care for one another" (1 Corinthians 12:24, 25). As members of this body we do make our own decisions respectively. However "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

As Archbishop of Uppsala and Chair of the Swedish Bishops' Conference, I would like to express our deepest concern about this decision. We express our solidarity with the sisters and brothers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia who suffer from the restriction of ordained ministry to men only, thus taking away from the fullness of apostolic service "in Christ", that the Apostle talks about in Romans 16. It has been a blessing for the Church of Sweden, and for the indivisible Church as a whole, to have both women and men serving in the ministry "in Christ". We pray for the work of the Association of Lutheran Women Theologians in Latvia that since 1995 has been working to organize educational events in order to inform society about women's and men's service in the Church.

Dear Brother, we are united through our baptism to Christ alone. We are united in our love for the indivisible Church. We are united "in Christ". Thus we should jointly pray his Spirit to call, support and guide the Junias and the Andronicuses the world so desperately needs.

Yours sincerely,

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The Most Rev. Dr. Antje Jackelén
Archbishop of Uppsala

cc Consistory of the ELCL
M. Pils iela 4,
Riga, LV-1050
LATVIA

PROTOKOLL	DATUM FÖR MÖTET	PROTOKOLL NR	SIDA
Biskopsmötet	2016-08-29	2016/5	6 (7)

§ 104

Evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Lettland beslutade den 3 juni att ändra sin konstitution så att endast män fortsättningsvis kan vigas till präster.

Evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Lettland
Brev till ärkebiskop Janis Vanags

Biskopsmötet beslutade

att gemensamt genom ärkebiskopen skriva till ärkebiskop Janis Vanags med anledning av beslutet. Brevet skulle också sändas till ärkebiskop Lauma Zusevic, Lettiska evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan utomlands, samt Association of Lutheran Women Theologians in Latvia.

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