

Thank you, Christine (Keim)!

Good morning to everybody! What a joy to see you all on the screen!

Sisters and brothers from many different regions and time-zones.

I warmly welcome you to our International Partnership Consultation.

Thank you for accepting our invitation!

We, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Württemberg,

we host this Consultation together with our partner-organisations:

the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity,

Gustav-Adolf-Werk, Evangelisches Jugendwerk and Diakonisches Werk Württemberg.

I am grateful for this cooperation.

Our last Partnership Consultation took place almost a decade ago, in 2016.

In preparation of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, which we celebrated in 2017.

And followed by the ecumenical visitation in 2019.

I am glad to see, that amongst us there are a few, who already participated in 2016.

Some of you may wonder why this time we only meet online.

How wonderful it would have been to get together in person here, on-site, in Stuttgart!

I would have enjoyed to shake your hands, to share meals, to walk together.

But in these times, when we all experience the effects of climate change,

it seemed better to us, ecologically more sustainable, to meet online.

I am grateful that we do have these possibilities nowadays.

To get together and to connect in the digital space.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits! (Ps 103,2)

This opening-verse of Psalm 103 is the weekly-saying,

that spans our being together.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!

The year 2025 has presented us with two extraordinary benefits.

We celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea,
the Council, in which our common festive confession originates.

And we have been gifted with a shared date of Easter.

I perceive this double-blessing as a clear hint at the unity,
that is given to us in Christ himself, and to which we are called in the spirit of Christ.

The anniversary of Nicaea is being celebrated in various ways all around the world.

With our consultation we join this celebration round.

We won't so much deal with the historical context of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed.

We will rather focus on the presence and future of our churches.

Faith, Mission and Unity are the key topics of our time together.

Each of these heading one of the three days. We start today with faith.

Faith, I am convinced, is the antidote against fear.

In a time of global polycrisis fear is rising.

And where it becomes overwhelming fear breeds hatred.

Faith is the antidote against fear.

In confessing our faith, we remind ourselves and each other of God's presence.

The presence of the triune God in our lives. Life, love and hope.

Faith gives us strength in all our weakness.

Strength to confront our fears.

And to act alert and sensible in this world.

May the triune God bless our time together in these three days.

May God nourish us with fresh thoughts and insights.

May Christ unite us in his love.

And may we be guided by the Spirit, that encourages us on our common pilgrimage.