



One Hope – Response by Katarina Kuhnert

Ms Katarina Kuhnert

Thank you Bishop Jackelen for your reflections on hope in context for our assembly. As a young climate change scientist, the emphasis on Greta Thunberg’s quote was of particular interest to me. “I don’t want you to have hope, I want you to panic”. In climate change work, we use the term “solastalgia” to describe a kind of climate change related panic. Solastalgia is described as the grief of those who intimately know and care for their lands, who understand that the land is changing and that this change is beyond their control. This is especially salient in Indigenous communities with intimate and foundational relationships to the land.

Living North of the Arctic Circle, as a white settler on the Indigenous lands of Inuvialuit and Gwich’in peoples, in a region designated a global hotspot for climate change, this panic feels like a daily experience in the face of change. We are currently living through the sixth mass extinction event in planetary history, the Anthropocene Extinction, where over 1 million species are facing extinction. We understand that this degradation of ecological integrity is human caused, from industrial greenhouse gas emissions and land-use change intervening in planetary cycles resulting in the climate crisis.

If it is as Sami theologian Lovisa Mienna Sjoberg says, that on judgement day, all humans are bound to be silent while the animals are given the gift of speech, What will they say to us? The living beings around us know panic to be a true lived experience. In the context of the climate crisis, place based cultures know panic to be a true lived experience. In the context of the polycrisis, youth know panic to be a



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true lived experience. But when panic is a daily experience, you almost come to know it as a neighbour and even in the midst of the strain, you learn to live with it.

I believe that our global community is becoming increasingly aware of the decay around us caused by the systems of extraction that have become the primary mechanism of relating to the world around us. There are many extractive structures that aim to weaponize the word of God, strip resources from the Earth to the point of environmental collapse, exploit our neighbours, and divorce ourselves from our own minds and bodies. We turn the vitalities of our relationships, from the divine to the internal, into a resource that always seems to be running out and it leaves us spiritually impoverished. These extractive dynamics include the aversion to authenticity, vulnerability, rootedness, and accountability.

Bishop Jackelen refers to the Book of Revelation as a source of hope, dealing with struggle and victory in apocalyptic terms and containing a clear criticism of the imperial power of its time, as violence is exposed to fundamental change. If Reformation was a critique of economic exploitation through spiritual extractivism, then we maintain the roots of our Lutheran faith now by clearly criticizing the imperial powers of our times, exposing violence to fundamental change, and committing to constant reformation of systems of power and privilege. The world is hungry for moral and spiritual leadership. If we want to have a role in that leadership, then our actions must match our theology with integrity. That means letting our hope lead us over and through the unknown.

As Bishop Jackelen says, with the abyss opening before our feet, we are making the leap of faith and love into the unknown. This is against the white cis heteronormative paradigm of incremental change that is impeding our ability to respond to the polycrisis. When people with power refuse to risk to lose their relative influence by using their voice and actions to oppose polarization, populism, protectionism, post-truth and patriarchy, despair risks to overcome and overwhelm our hope. These



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forces exist in and are perpetuated by the infrastructures of our religion, forces that undermine the foundations of our faith by scapegoating the vulnerable, imprisoning the impoverished, disappearing the LGBTQ, assimilating the Indigenous, isolating the disabled, exploiting and excluding the women, violating the children, weaponizing supremacism in all its forms against the rich diversity of God's Creation, modelled by the land and embodied in God's children.

Bishop Jackelen highlighted Latine theologians that assert that eschatological hope is about the transformation of society and the creation of community. In the midst of this ongoing transformation, hope must be greater than despair because there is no other choice. Hope is not a delicate, ephemeral whisper but rather hope is full of dirt and grit and sweat and blood that continues to rise to meet the challenges of the day, in spite of and in response to adversity. People who despair are easy to divide and control because fear can be leveraged into oppositional and disposable ontologies. It is easier to give up on each other than it is to stay with each other through challenge and change. Relationality means risking to be brave enough to be honest with each other. It is the challenge of our active and embodied hope to maintain a relationship to land and place through catastrophic conditions. To maintain our relationships and stay in community with each other to work through shame, embarrassment, disagreement, and harm. To bear witness to the consequences of taking too much from each other and the land. To engage in active curiosity with the resilience of the land and reject unconstrained mobility, including the instinct to run away. To cultivate a relationship to time that rejects time as a resource but rather views the longevity of land and community and compassion through waves of experiences of transformation, knowing that we do not always have to perfectly understand each other to have compassion for each other. To wrestle with intergenerational justice in understanding those who came before us and sharing the truth of our understanding, our successes and our faults, with those who come after us.



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Hope is not cemented in infrastructure crafted by human hands, destined to crumble with the rule of the empire. Bishop Jackelen calls hope “a tough plant” that can bear and resist a lot. I was told once that nothing that was learned from the land can ever be lost because even when we forget, the land remembers. Take your troubles to the land, because the land is big enough to bear them. The land holds many infinities. Gender and sexually diverse communities understand that the land knows no binaries. Like transgender communities, the land also shows us how to transform. The land holds the good with the bad. It is strong enough to hold you too.

We may be forced to live with panic but we choose to live with hope and we decide not to let our hope be consumed by despair. If as Bishop Jackelen says, hope coexists with anger, humility, and courage, then let hope burn in your spirits, like the fires of Pentecost, the intervention of the Holy Spirit, fierce in burning change. I believe that hope lives in the land. And as we were each made in God’s image from the land, my hope lives in each of you too. The divine, the transcendental, and the sacred are actively embodied in the world around us, vibrating at the frequency of urgency and calling out to us to come home to our relationships, to God, to Earth, to each other, and to self, from a place of active and agential hope rather than extraction. Hope is not a resource that risks to run out. Bishop Jackelen speaks of hope as a choice, as a virtue exercised like a muscle. We can ground our choice to continue to hope in a motivation that comes through love, in all its forms. Love, not shame or guilt or fear, but love that sustains and that guides us to be ever more gracefilled in how we respond to challenge and change.

The [Thirteenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation](#) takes place 13-19 September 2023 in Krakow, Poland. The theme of the Assembly will be “One Body, One Spirit, One Hope.” It will be hosted by the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland.



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