

# CHURCH OF NORWAY

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

Date: 18.08.2011

Our ref: 11/821-95 BHA

Your ref:

## **Thank you for your prayers and solidarity in a time of sorrow**

We wish to express our deep gratitude towards all who have sent us condolences after the terrible terror attack in Oslo and at Utøya on the 22nd of July. Just a few hours after the dreadful and incomprehensible event, we received the first telephone calls and messages from concerned friends. During the following two weeks the Church of Norway has received numerous Letters of Condolence from ecumenical organisations, churches and individuals all over the world.

Your prayers and words of consolation and solidarity have given us comfort and strength in days of shock and deep sadness. You have shown us what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. Paul's words to the Corinthians: 'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it', became reality in a very special way through your compassion and sharing in our suffering and fears. Your sympathy has strengthened our faith and hope in Christ, knowing that His love and care is stronger than the worst evil.

Many mourners have found comfort in the many churches which have been open all day since the catastrophe. They have prayed in silence, lit candles and laid down flowers both inside and outside the churches. All over Norway pastors, deacons and other church workers have give pastoral care to those who lost their dear ones and many others who grieve. The majority of the victims were members of the Church of Norway, and many pastors have done an impressive effort officiating at their funerals.


The darkness is never wholly dark. In these terrible weeks since the attacks, Norwegian political leaders, the King, religious leaders and most impressively, many young members of the Labour Party Youth Movement who lost their friends, but themselves survived the massacre at Utøya, have insisted in unison that the Norwegian people's response to the terror is love and continued dialogue. We want more democracy, more openness and an even more inclusive society. The attacks have resulted in a strong expression of national fellowship and willingness to assert common values.


The discussions about the many difficult questions raised by the tragic event are now beginning. The Church of Norway hopes - as a fellowship - to be a prophetic witness of God's love and the God-given dignity of every human being - through our pastoral Ministry, and by taking part in the public debate. We shall need your continuous prayers in this challenging task.


We greet you with the words of Jesus, read by our presiding Bishop at the first service in Oslo Cathedral after the tragedy.


*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me'. (John, 14,1)*

Yours in Christ,

  
Helga Haugland Byfuglien  
Presiding Bishop

  
Svein Arne Lindø  
Moderator  
General Synod Church of Norway

  
Jens-Petter Johnsen  
Director  
Church of Norway National Council

  
Berit Hagen Agøy  
General Secretary  
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