



A joint statement from  
the bishop of the  
Roman Catholic  
Diocese of Tucson  
and the bishop of the  
Grand Canyon Synod  
of the ELCA



## **Lutherans and Catholics: For the Healing of Memories**

This year, 2017, marks the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. For all Christians, this anniversary recalls an era of tremendous change in history. In the centuries since Martin Luther posted his "95 Theses" to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, there have been times of great strife and division among Christians. In recent decades, we have worked hard on reconciliation. Throughout the years of our shared ecumenical endeavors, we have learned there is much on which we agree theologically and practically. While certain issues remain to be resolved, we are committed to continuing dialogue in seeking deepened mutual understanding. We recall the exhortation of Pope John Paul II to pursue a healing of memories.

Currently, many lines of division are being drawn between people in our country and our world. Some leaders in various places in the world spread fear instead of calling people to the hard work of genuine compassion, justice for all, and abiding peace. Likewise, leaders of Christian communities are summoned to be voices for the oppressed and untiring agents of reconciliation.

Two recent summaries of our Lutheran-Catholic dialogue are available online and offer marvelous summaries of the work we have done thus far to build relationships of mutual understanding and respect. Those documents are the *Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification*, signed on October 31, 1999, as an official statement of Lutherans and Catholics, and the 2015 document *Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist*, which provides 32 statements of agreement as a result of a half century of formal Lutheran-Catholic dialogues. These documents offer significant insight into the work we have committed to do together.

On this occasion, October 31, 2017, as the date of the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation, we publically declare that we are committed to the work of Christ for the sake of the whole world. We are convinced that – under the blessing of God's Spirit – we will continue to discover together profound paths to reconciliation, mutual respect, and care for the neighbor. We commit to this work in the name of Jesus Christ.

As fellow servants in Christ,

Bishop Lowell Almen  
Grand Canyon Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas  
Apostolic Administrator  
Diocese of Tucson