

**Message on the occasion of the beginning of the investigation
of the wreck of M/S „ Estonia“ in the Baltic Sea on 9 July 2021**

On 26 November 1994, two months after M/S “Estonia” perished in the autumn storms in that same year on 28 September, a service of prayer and blessing took place at the site of the wreckage. At that service Archbishop of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Jaan Kiivit blessed a wreath of flowers which was strewn on the waves to mark symbolically the consecration of the site of the wreckage of M/S “Estonia” as a grave. Since then the site of the wreck of M/S “Estonia” and its surrounding area has been regarded as a place of burial where already over a quarter-century, along with the sunken ship, lie hundreds of passengers and crewmembers. The peace of this final resting place is protected by the international [agreement](#) concluded in February 1995.

No contract which prohibits, even under the threat of punishment, the disturbing of the peace of the final place of rest at the site of the wreck of M/S “Estonia”, can spare anyone from suspicions nor give answers to questions that have remained troubling for the relatives of the victims of the disaster, as well as for the general public of the surrounding nations. Until we are not able to do something concrete in order to find answers to questions, we have to accept unawareness. For many, up until now, consolation has come from the belief that not knowing can give more peace of mind than doubts and half-truths. Questions, however, remain...

Twenty-six years ago at the service of prayer on the site where M/S “Estonia” perished, Archbishop Jaan Kiivit said: *“Every loss, the more shocking the loss, forces us to ask the question: Why? Endless line of such questions arise. And there are no answers for them. For me, above the endless line of questions there is an even bigger question: Why is there anything at all? Why is there land and sea, sky and nature, and us – human beings –, as part of all of this? Why is there birth and death? Why life? Why us? This mystery forces me to be silent. In the face of this, I stand in reverence and astonishment. Things are not in my hands nor for me to govern. They are not in the hands of people, as I had thought.”*

For existential questions that arise from shocking accidents or catastrophes one can provide an answer through a prism of faith. The Christian faith affirms the inevitability of death and yet proclaims the passing of death and sufferings and the victory of life. The core message of our faith is about the resurrection from the dead and the hope of life everlasting.

In believing in the victory of life over death, one still has to seek answers to practical and to human reasoning accessible questions with the aid of tools and opportunities given to us by the development of science and technology. Using today’s technological instruments and acquired knowledge to investigate the wreck of M/S “Estonia” is an attempt to fill in the gaps of knowledge. For this investigation states have achieved an international agreement and the approval of churches.

In order to honour the peace of all those buried in the sea together with the wreck of M/S “Estonia”, to hold dear the memory of all the departed and to express respect for their final resting place, the leaders of the churches in Estonia, Sweden, Finland and Latvia, in co-operation with the persons and institutions carrying out the investigation, have requested to hold a service of prayer at sea before commencing the investigative activities. This service of prayer is an expression of love toward all whose journey on 28 September 1994 remained unfinished. They never arrived at the destination they were heading to However, we believe that they arrived home – eternal home.

We pray God to grant peace and eternal bliss to the souls of all the departed. We thank the Creator for all those who survived and were rescued, who were granted a new beginning for life ahead. We pray God to bless the investigative work and let it be completed successfully, so that all of us could receive peace of heart and soul.

Urmas Viilma
Archbishop of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church