

Communiqué

## **“Walking together the Way of Justice”**

*God has told you what He requires of you:  
„To do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.“ (Micha 6:8)*

### **The setting and the participation**

From 12<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> September 2015 we, almost 60 delegates from churches from Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Middle East, from the United States of America and Latin America and several European countries, met with representatives of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Northern Germany in order to celebrate and affirm our partnership, to reflect together on issues of justice in our various contexts and to seek for ourselves and our churches how we can walk together as global partners the way of justice. That we perceived our partnership within the context of the global Christian community was meaningfully expressed through the presence of the President of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Bishop Dr Munib Younan, and a message of greetings that the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Rev Olav Fykse Tveit, sent to us.

We were thankful that almost all who had been invited could secure visas for travelling to Germany. Nevertheless, we regret that in cases of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Papua New Guinea the granting of a visa failed.

We had the chance in groups to be exposed to challenges that the church across northern Germany is facing regarding justice issues, and we were able to share experiences and concerns that arise out of our individual contexts in different parts of the world. We listened to one and other, studied the Bible, reflected on common topics and themes, celebrated and sung. We prayed, crying out to God over experiences of injustice and human agonies, praising God for all the gifts and talents granted to us in order to engage in the complexities of the world.

### **Reclaiming our Christian vision for justice**

Our reflections centered around a fresh articulation of the interpretation of the biblical vision of justice. The emphasis on the notion of justice has a strong biblical grounding; it is a key word in the Old as well as the New Testament and should be rediscovered as an identity marker of our being as churches. Justice is a gift of a God who seeks to heal and reconcile individuals and to transform unjust situations and structures in human communities and societies. Justice is a task that God has given to us as followers of Jesus Christ; God commissions us to seek justice in the world and to be, as individuals and as churches, both locally and globally, witnesses to the gift and claim of justice that God wants established in the world.

As we engage in travelling together the way of justice, we recognize that there exist different discourses and concepts of justice. We affirm that the notion of justice embedded in the scriptures seeks the wellbeing of all, and particularly for those regarded as the most vulnerable - the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the captive.

### **Identifying areas of vulnerability**

In our exposure programs and the sharing of our experiences from different continents as well as in our reflection on the challenge of justice we identified many areas where matters of justice are at stake today. Out of the many issues and concerns we discussed we would like to draw the attention of the Christian community particularly to four areas.

## **1. The situation of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers**

Meeting refugees and listening to the stories and experiences of asylum seekers has been a heartbreakingly experience for us during our exposure programs. We lament the destiny of so many people who had to flee their home countries for reasons of war, violence, discrimination or denial of human rights and freedom of religion, or in order to escape the poverty that makes living almost impossible. We have seen the vulnerability of the many people seeking refuge and shelter, and we shared stories from the countries we have come from. The issue of refugees confronts us all, wherever we live. We are called to stand alongside those who are vulnerable, to foster in our communities a culture of welcome, to encourage political solutions and systems, which enable people to live life in dignity, peace, and harmony.

## **2. The gap between rich and poor**

The breadth of delegate representation enabled us to hear stories of desperate living conditions and of the work of church among people struggling to find the means to feed themselves and their families. We recognize that the gap between rich and poor continues to grow. Poverty, however, has different dimensions. Many people lack food and shelter, health care and clean water, but many also lack the access to participation in the political process or are denied basic human rights. Poverty is a fact found today all over the world. Everywhere people are falling into poverty, become vulnerable, and often lose hope and even the courage to live. A priority for us as Christians is to confront poverty and economic injustice as means of empowerment for all.

## **3. Human rights**

Our churches often represent minority situations existing in secular contexts or where the majority faith is a different religion. Refugees have often had to leave their home countries due to persecution or dictatorship. It is a matter of justice that human rights, such as freedom of religion, gender equality, culture and sexuality are respected everywhere in our respective churches and societies.

## **4. Care for the Creation and the issue of climate justice**

We shared our different experiences regarding climate change, the preservation of nature and the care for the environment. We discussed our responsibility for the protection of creation, unequal impact of climate change and its threats in particular on poor, developing countries as well as impact of climate change on future generations. We affirm responsibility of people living in western industrialised countries for unsustainable patterns of consumption, production and lifestyle and the need of a radical transformation. We affirm common and shared responsibility of all of us to act on climate justice in our respective churches, countries and communities.

We join the European Pilgrimage for climate justice, which is a symbolic action, witnessing our commitment, a call for a transformation and an appeal to political leaders who are going to meet at the UN climate meeting in December this year in Paris.

### **Affirming our commitment for Justice**

Despite our different contexts, we rejoice together in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which announces good news for the poor, and healing and salvation for all. We commit ourselves anew and afresh to strive for justice in our churches, our societies, and – together – on the global level, seeking cooperation with other actors in the civil society. Justice is not only to be proclaimed, but it is to be

lived out and put into action. As Christians we are called, as “salt” and “light”, to the transformation of society and making the world a better place. We commit to walking the way of justice together.

We confess that we as churches and individuals have often failed to respond to vulnerability, and we admit that we often are a part of the problem rather than a part of the solution. We all acknowledge that we have no easy solutions to the complexities with which we are faced today. We need further studies and discussions, and we therefore would appreciate at some stage to continue with consultations in which we try to grapple together in the light of the vision of God’s justice deeper with the issues of vulnerability.

As we leave here, we commit ourselves to further engagement, further study and reflection. We encourage our churches and congregations to walk together in solidarity on the way of justice!

**The participants of Consultation 2015 “Walking together the Way of Justice”  
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