



Message from Women's Meeting

European Pre-Assembly, Bratislava 13 March 2010

At the Women's meeting at the European Pre-Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, on 13 March 2010 we identified human trafficking, food justice and the continuing controversy about women in leadership as issues that mar the lives of many of God's children and are in opposition to the Gospel message of grace, love and wholeness. Through the pervasiveness of sin, the relationships of traffickers and trafficked, hungry and fed, women and men with God and one another are destroyed.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human beings – men, women and children- are profoundly affected by the tragic business of human trafficking. For many of us in Europe, this seems like an invisible problem. In our ignorance and naivete we do not see the fact that people are being trafficked across borders in Europe on a daily basis. This happens for different purposes, all resulting in the violation of human dignity where lives and bodies are bought and sold.

This lack of awareness and coordinated action allows the organized crime of human trafficking to flourish, with the destruction of the minds and bodies of all involved: Victims ending up in virtual slavery, perpetrators destroying themselves as well as their victims.

As a church we believe that all men and women are created in the image of God in body, mind and soul. The loss of human dignity involved in human trafficking, damages the integrity of body and soul and leaves scars of unforeseeable consequences.

This cross-border challenge needs cross-border cooperation, between the worldwide church communions, NGOs and governments to act at a political level. We recognize that in order to deal effectively with this complex issue, it is necessary to understand the driving forces behind this business. It is crucial that the church acts through their congregations in helping all the affected to restore their dignity and in finding ways to make their stories heard.

Women in Leadership

We strongly affirm the LWF PreAssembly commitment "that women bring an essential perspective to all types of ministry – ordained and lay." As we approach the 2010 Assembly, we deplore the fact that there are still member churches that do not ordain women, and hinder women from leadership in decision-making bodies in the church. Prayerfully we encourage and continue our solidarity with women who long to live out their God-given

vocation, and encourage them not to give up their struggle to serve the church on all levels in an expression of gender justice.

The church's 'renewed' practice in gender justice in lay and ordained ministries and leadership could become a sign and a witness to society for the healing of gender inequalities in our world.

At the present the LWF has operated a quota system for 20 years that has ensured a more equal participation of women and men in its decision-making bodies. We ask the LWF community to evaluate the impact of this practice in its member churches. We also firmly ask to LWF to respect gender balance in all its governing bodies.

We also strongly reaffirm the message of the "Ongoing Reformation of the Church: The Witness of Ordained Women Today" (2008 Ad-Hoc meeting) and the Message of the Pre-Assembly Women's Conference in Bossey in October 2009.

FOOD JUSTICE

We praise God for the wonderful gift of food, a source of joy and life. We affirm that this gift is a human right for all people, but it is constantly an object of political and economic interests. Due to unjust systems and structures we see that people suffer from lack of access to sufficiently nutritious food. The need for food justice demands action in Europe in the areas of politics, economics and ecology.

Europe is facing an increase of poverty and malnutrition on one hand, and overconsumption on the other hand. This is a situation that is shared with other continents. However, Europe's strong position on the world food market demands a particular awareness of the environmental impact at a global level which follows the habits of consumption and export/import systems in Europe. This awareness needs to be followed by action at all levels.

We call upon all European churches to

- join the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance
- consider the promotion of fair trade at every level
- direct diaconal work to interpret global issues in the local context

We regard all of these issues as not only women's issues, therefore we recommend this message to be included in the overall message of this Pre-Assembly.