

Here I stand!

Women, Reformation and the One World

Women's Consultation 2016 at Berlin Mission



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Welcome!



Program

Wednesday Oct. 26th

Arrival
Welcome/Who is who

Thursday Oct. 27th

Bible study
Maria and Martha (Liudmilla Hernández Retureta, Cuba)

Opening statements:

- Rev. Ulrike Trautwein (regional bishop of Berlin)
- Rev. Dr Min Heui Cheon (Ecumenical Relations Department, PROK)

Group work: statements

Friday Oct. 28th

Participation at EKBO's General Synod:
Presentation of the statements

Discussion

Three visions for a gender-equitable church:

- Sarahi Garcia Gomez
- Dr. Dr. h.c. Sumaya Farhat Naser
- Superintendent Viola Kennert

Excursion:
Women's projects

Saturday Oct. 29th

Bible studies
Sarah and Hagar
(Magdalena Möbius, Berlin)

Excursion: women's projects

Women's festival

Sunday Oct. 30th

10.00: Church Service:
St. Nikolai Church, Berlin-Spandau

Evaluation and transfer of the statements

Monday Oct. 31th

Excursion to Wittenberg
(domain of Martin Luther)

"Here we stand! Women, Reformation and the One World." By Barbara Deml

Under this heading, women from twenty reformatory churches met from 26 to 31 October 2016 to deliberate where women globally stand today: with a view to management responsibility in the churches and gender-equitable access to education, when dealing with violence or poverty, and with regard to a life shaped in the spirit of fairness. These are issues that do not only affect women who work or want to work in the church full-time. But all women.

These female representatives of the churches clearly see themselves as acting in the tradition of the Reformation. When in 1521, at the Diet of Worms, Martin Luther was asked whether he was ready to revoke his statements, he is said to have answered that, unless he was convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason – since popes and councils, hitherto the most important authorities, had often erred -, he could not revoke them. In the end, he is quoted as having exclaimed: "Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me! Amen."

Just like Martin Luther stood firm in his convictions, there is no going back from other emancipatory processes – for example of the women's movement. And as churches in the world, we are "semper reformanda", i. e. a church is always reforming, and this includes the presence of women at all the different levels of our churches.

Women who have dealt with gender-related issues and questions of justice for and involvement of women, cannot go back to the stage preceding their insights: "Here we stand! And unless convinced by clear reason or the Scriptures, we

will remain standing here. Ready to talk, but without giving up our convictions."

This was the spirit in which the consultation took place, and in the same spirit, our women participants presented their statements to the autumn General Synod of the Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia, inviting all those present to contribute their perspectives.

We invite everybody most cordially to continue the discussions, form and question opinions and to remain in contact and discussion even if our views might sometimes differ.

May this documentation serve as help and inspiration.

Revd. Barbara Deml is officer for parish related services and the Head of department of communication and cooperation at Berlin Mission.



Welcome!



„Here I stand!
Women, Reformation and the
One World.“

How is the situation of women worldwide 500 years after the Reformation?



“Martha und Mary”

By Liudmila Hernández Retureta

Motivation: “AND Pedagogy”

In Spanish the letter “O” is used as an element to separate, compare and to choose an entity. A while ago I’ve read about a pedagogical model that advocates the respect to each judgment, each person and each entity (criterion?). This model was named: “And Pedagogy”.

“AND” in Spanish, as well as in English, is used to link, to connect two words or sentences that are related. Sometimes this model goes beyond human logic and sets as an example that:

- God can be a person and in the Trinity doctrine be considered as three.
- It helps us to believe that Jesus is God and also a human being.
- That it’s possible to be Christian as well as modern, to pray and to act.
- That we can be free as well as obedient.
- To love God and the world.

In conclusion, it means to open your heart to get over something instead of choosing, it’s an invitation to value the different ways to get to the same truth.

When I heard about today’s bible study, I instantly remembered how many times I’ve heard the interpretation of this passage with a completely opposed meaning to the “And Pedagogy”.

This text can be read to compare the sisters, and instead of thinking about them as Martha and Mary, remember that we

have to choose to be like Martha or Mary. That’s why my study won’t put Martha and Mary into a balance.

Text Study

The text is an example of keeping marching together as a church and to admit that once again the Bible can open ways of liberation and personal realization to women.

Luke Gospel tells us about its histories in a very exact and detailed way, we know the text as:

- Gospel to the Gentiles
- Gospel of praising
- Gospel of praying
- Gospel for/of women: In Palestine woman had a very unimportant role. In the morning prayer, the Jew thanked God for not making him Gentile, or slave or women.

But Luke gave women a very special place. It’s in this Gospel where we read about Elizabeth (chapter one), about Ana (2:36-38), about Nain’s widow (7:11-17) and the women that anoints Jesus feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50).

I would love to have met Luke; he had a very wide vision of God’s love and only he presents this brief and home-loving story to bring Martha and Mary to live.

John (11:1) tells us that the village where Martha lived was called Bethany.

- It’s a little town near the Olives Mountain, on the way to Jerusalem, almost three kilometers before it. Mary and her brother Lazarus lived with her.

- It’s possible that Jesus knew this family, the trustful way they talks in as well as the familiarity indicates so.
- It’s also there where Lazarus resurrection happens. (Jn. 11:1-44).

The one and the other: The text shows two ways of approximation to Jesus in a few words. Actually both of them are valid and Jesus doesn’t criticize Martha as other interpretations had shown. He rather points out that what Mary is doing is well done and makes sense, while Martha’s activities distract her (at this time) from something far more important, which is the house labor.

As in many other texts Luke plays with a high level of symbolism. In this case we are going to analyze three gestures that express life attitudes.

Receiving Jesus

The first gesture is to receive Jesus (V.38). This happens after Jesus was rejected in a Samaritan village (9:51-56) as well as in cities very close to his own life such as Chorazin (10:13) and Capernaum (10:15).

Now a woman welcomes him at her house. It was unusual that a woman receives visit from a man; as matter of fact there were no women out of one man’s protection.

But this is not the first time that the Gospel surprises us by showing Jesus or the followers in situations that discard the socially accepted traditions; on the contrary, Jesus and his followers often appear innovating and violating those social traditions.



On this opportunity it is an act of bravery and independence that Martha receives him and opens her house ◊ doors for him.

Jesus, who was rejected in so many places, is received by a woman now. This is another scene where we find the important role that this and other women played in Jesus ministry, though later for leadership reasons in a patriarchal society most of those actions were unregistered.

Even when there are central scenes where they appear, it's very probable that there have been more women around Jesus ministry or following him.

Sitting and listening to be word

The second gesture is to sit and listen to his word. Mary sits by Jesus feet in order to listen to his message. The meaning of this gesture has to do with dedicating a time to God, with saving some time to hear him and meditate on his words. In a quick interpretation of this passage it was understood that pausing and listening to the Gospel was an important activity; while dedicating time to some other things was a waste of time. Not few religious closure orders base the practice of a contemplative life in texts like this, far from daily things. Far from our understanding of that practice, Mary's attitude not just leaves space for an active life but also recognizes her.

So what we are saying is that Mary is taking advantage of a unique opportunity in her life, and she is doing it completely. Sitting at Jesus feet, is the recognition of his authority, and shows that she is willing to hear his word.

Two Times

The third gesture that we would like to talk is Martha being busy with other things. We've already pointed out that this is not a criticism to an active life opposed to spiritual or intellectual contemplation. Martha is doing her labors. Maybe she thought giving a place in her house with opening her doors for him to rest from his trip was enough. Perhaps she thought that her only responsibility was to be welcoming, and that she was doing it just right.

Also it's fair to say that receiving visit at her place would've generated unexpected labors, like it happens to all of us when some visit arrives unannounced. Martha was worried about giving a proper attention to her guest.

Anyway what Martha missed in that time was that the most important thing was listening to Jesus.

Some interpretations often give us the idea that Martha was a very worried and obstinate woman, but this is not the full story, for what it has been told in other readings (specially the one from her confession, John 11:27) we realize that Jesus shows something to this woman. A new horizon, a new world, a new way to see and interpret things. She keeps learning in her relation with Jesus, he induces a change in her, what was precisely what he wanted for the marginalized ones.

I can't go without mentioning, that this woman who shows herself as a person that doesn't care much about Jesus instruction, then makes a great confession, that for many people and in my personal opinion, is even more eloquent than

Bible study

Lk 10, 38-42

Pedro's; she said: Yes sir, I've believed that you are Christ, the son of god, who has come to the world.

Marthas and Marys of Today's church:

From the text study many ideas and motivations for women of today's church arise:

- Every human being and of course every woman has singular spiritual gifts to share and hand over to the church.
- The gifts, attitudes we have are all different and respect the diversity of spirit and the freedom that every person has.
- Many women have a spirit of work, they think that if they make a big effort and try very hard, then God's kingdom will truly spread upon the earth.
- There are others that decide to trust in and wait on/for God and instead of taking action, they just pray, learn, thank and listen to God; in a quiet, faithful and trustful way.
- So it's very important that we find a balance between our personal devotion and our practical duties.
- There are priorities in the practice or our faith where the most important thing is communion.
- It's upon the base of love, respect and communication that we'll be able to talk about our differences.
- We women are an example to others; God uses us as disciple models.
- There two attitudes that Martha and Mary stand for, can be united in one and the same way of living. Without comparison or conflicts.
- Let's be like Martha and Mary, let's work hard representing our active part thanks to contemplative attitudes.

Liudmila Hernández Retureta, woman minister in the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba (IPRC)



Sara and Hagar

By Magdalena Möbius



Bible study

with Rev. Magdalena Möbius, EKBO, Women's Desk
(Gen 16, 1-16 and Gen 21, 8-21)

"You see me!" This will be the motto of the German Protestant Church Convention in May 2017, in the year of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. This festival will take place in Berlin and in Wittenberg, the place of Martin Luther's work. We expect about 140.000 visitors from all over the world.

Although this motto is not „Here I stand“ like in our Women's Consultation in the story we find a woman standing for herself in a double sense of standing alone and taking responsibility for her life.

„You see me“ is a short version of the Bible verse „You are the God who sees me“. It is spoken by the only person in the Bible who gives a name to God. There isn't any other story about a person, male or female, who gives a name to God! Hagar is the only one.

Indeed, it is not the "Urmutter" (mother in faith) of our Jewish and Christian tradition, Sara, but Hagar, the Egyptian slave who was oppressed by her mistress Sara so that she had to flee.

Hagar is not only the only person giving a name to God but also the first person who is visited by God.

The visitor - the messenger, the angel - finds Hagar and asks her: „Where have you come from and where are you going?“ although he knows her.

For me these words sound like: Hagar, slave of Sarai, where do you stand?

And Hagar's answer sounds like: Here I stand. I ran away from my mistress Sarai.

During the next winter and spring the management of the German Protestant Church Convention (DEKT) will spread advertisements all over Germany, big posters with big round eyes and the message „You see me“. I imagine myself seeing them thinking: This is God speaking to me, Magdalena, asking me: „Magdalena, where have you come from and where are you going?“ Or in the meaning of our Women's Consultation: „Magdalena, where do you stand?“

Coming back to our text there are some aspects I want to add:

When we started to write a publication to prepare the DEKT we asked a Jewish and a Muslim women to write something about their perspective on Hagar.

Hagar is the "Urmutter" (mother in faith) of the Muslims as in the Bible is told that the twelve tribes came from Ismael (Gen 25, 12-18).

Muslims remember Hagar during their pilgrimage to Mekka. According to their faith this is the place of the source in the desert where God revealed himself to Hagar for the second time. Hagar was there together with her son Ismael sent away by Abraham and Sara. From a Muslim perspective Hagar is a role model that has a strong faith and takes her life into her own hands also in difficult situations, in desert situations (Noha Abdel-Hady, Dr. des. of Islamic Theology, Hamburg).

According to the Jewish perspective (I learned that from a Jewish woman and so it became also my perspective on the Bible) the name Hagar can have two meanings in Hebrew: Ha-ger: „the stranger“ or He-gar: „God is inhabiting“. So the Bible tells us: God resides in the stranger, in the Egyptian woman, in the female slave ... God resides in the one we see as a stranger, in the one we treat as a slave. (Chana Karmann-Lente from Hamburg)

According to the older Jewish tradition Sara is the only woman to whom God spoke face to face. Of course she is the only women of Israel to whom God speaks in the Old Testament. But nowadays Jewish interpretations are newly reflecting on Hagar, as Chana Karmann-Lente does. In my opinion these new reflections give hope for our Interreligious Dialogue with Jews and Muslims.

I am deeply impressed by the way how the Chana speaks about us Germans who have to reflect about how we treat strangers. In the face of the narration of Sara and Hagar we have to rethink our welcome of „strangers“ and our empathy and our readiness to share their experiences.

Reading the Hebrew Bible verses we recognize that the name Ishmael means „God hears“. And if we know the Jewish tradition we know how important these Biblical words are: The Hebrew "Sch'ma Israel" means: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. "

The son of the woman who calls God „You are the God who sees me“ is called „God hears“. (Gen 16, 11)

If I look at this narration from my perspective I recognize women in different situations. I see one woman having power, governing her house, using and then oppressing her female slave – and on the other hand I see a powerless woman, a surrogate mother and a domestic worker being sexually exploited.

Hagar gets some reputation because she became pregnant. But in the eyes of her mistress Sarai she gets too much reputation and so she oppresses her.

Hagar takes responsibility for her life and flees - and realizes that God is on her side.

The God she formerly only knew as the God of her masters! But then God sends her back!

Why?
Because Ishmael (God hears) has to be born in Abrahams house and has to be one of the heirs of Abraham. But he is no longer the heir of Abraham and Sara but of Abraham and Hagar and so, this I just recognized in these days, Hagar becomes „the first single mother“!

Due to Hagar's coming back Abraham became the father in faith of both Jews and Muslims. And consequently of course of us Christians following the Jewish tradition.

Another aspect I want to stress: God makes the same commitment to Hagar he is – later! – making to Abraham (and, though not personally, to Sara). She is the only woman in the

Bible getting such a promise! So in a way we may say that Hagar is the mother of faith for us women (and also, consequently, the Arabs would be a people descending from a single mother).

One further point: Both Sara and Hagar are mothers with sons/children in danger of death, Ishmael in the desert and Isaak in danger of being sacrificed.

Moreover: Sara is one of the women in the Bible who has bad thoughts. This is also an aspect of female life, isn't it? And last not least: Sara and Hagar in all these narrations do not speak one word with each other. This is the sad reality: don't we also know this, sometimes not being able to speak to each other?

Now I would like you to take a further step into these stories. Let us go into the roles of these two women and reflect about what they might think and what they could say if they would speak to each other.

Some aspects of the exchange of thoughts:

- Sara did nothing bad. We understand why she acted like this.
- God uses imperfect people to be agents of change.
- In most societies and churches women who are not able to give birth to children are disregarded and have problems to cope with it.

Magdalena Möbius, woman minister at EKBO's Women's Desk

We are called to freedom

By Ulrike Trautwein



Yes, here I stand and wondered immediately: How did I get here? The well-known ecumenist Bärbel Wartenberg-Potter, in her biography entitled "Anfängerinnen" (Beginners), describes a session impressively opened by a West African theologian: "In our culture", she said, "whenever we reach a crossroads in our lives, we think of our ancestors. We stand on their shoulders. They left their mark on us and they are with us."

On whose shoulders do I stand? My biography is both typical and untypical at the same time. Typical because, like so many theologians, I was born the child of a pastor. We have had pastors in my family for generations, at least on my mother's side. But untypical because my grandmother studied theology as early as in the 1920s. Only that it was impossible for her to become a pastor back then. So she married a theologian, had nine children and followed her "vocation" as a pastor's wife. At the same time, she was always a very committed theologian. I never saw her accepting to "play second fiddle". She fought for her convictions with self-confidence and got involved whenever she could. As was common at that time, she joined the "Pfarrfrauenbund", the association of pastor's wives. I am glad that she was able to see my ordination in 1987 and that she was able to be with me for another 17 years of my professional life.

Later, my mother – daughter of this theologian – was not able to study at the university. This was because of the post-war years. She became a parish worker, also married a pastor and assisted him as a pastor's wife. But she was increasingly dissatisfied with this role. And so she looked for involvement of her own, was particularly active in anti-apartheid activities and la-

ter became a councillor in Frankfurt's city parliament. She has always been volunteering in many different areas and she still does. She still is a dedicated fighter. I have not spoken of my other grandmother, but she, too, was an impressive woman.

Which means: I have and have always had strong women in my family. And the older I get, the more I appreciate it! And today I am touched, time and again, to see how proud my mother is of me. Strong shoulders provide good support.

After 25 years of parish ministry in the Hessian church, I have been in Berlin and held this senior ministry as the superintendent general of the Berlin diocese for almost five years. What I experience here is a very diverse environment that cannot be painted with a broad brush. There might be one parish with many women participating and partly presiding over the church councils, while in others the gender distribution would be 50/50, and in yet other parts of town, a majority of men would be running the parishes. The picture is very varied indeed.

However, two observations can clearly be made: the work of the churches on the ground, in the parishes, initiatives and so on, is mainly organised by women. At the same time, the highest offices are mainly held by men. This certainly does not surprise you. Everything in between is very diverse. Many things are evolving. While on the one hand, we have to try and get more women into decision-making and leadership positions and offices, we also have to motivate more men on the ground to commit themselves to the many support tasks that keep parishes and groups alive.

What is the situation of women in our churches? It is splendid to see that we have many women pastors, currently around 40% and the number of female students is high!

This makes me glad, but at the same time I know that we have to keep working on the job description in order to change the working conditions in such a way that young trained women pastors start ministry and in doing so, find a good place to live and work. The concept of what it means to be a pastor is still very much marked by men. And young women pastors with families, in particular, complain that they suffer disadvantages when, for example, they become pregnant. One child might be accepted, but if the second one is on its way, people might say: Again! How do you think this is supposed to work? The traditional image of a pastor with his wife is still deeply rooted in the souls of many parishes and their volunteers. And this entails the idea of having universal access to a women pastor's life, including her family life.

Here we are working on a change of culture which will hopefully lead to greater openness and flexibility. A few years ago, a Munich-based professor of theology brought a perspective which is very harmful for us as women into the public debate: the so-called "feminisation of ministry". This triggered a debate that I found excessively annoying as it suggested that the profession of pastor would see its status diminished if it was predominantly chosen by women. Some participants in that discussion claimed that the high share of women in ministry would lead to a situation where no proper theology would be practised because ministry would then mainly be associated

with caring and motherly tasks and there would not be a sufficient public theological dispute any more.

That fact that theology has been pushed back from the public space in our society is certainly true. But women are surely not the reason why. I am happy that the share of women has increased so much. Many young women have better school-leaving grades and higher levels of education. That is great. Their career choice is significantly influenced by the questions whether they will be able to reconcile work and family – and this is wonderful, too, because it bears witness to the responsibility they feel towards society as a whole. However, it is only good as long as men show the same consideration. For the time being, they focus more on their career when they choose a profession, although this is starting to change. Let me emphasise once more that we are trying to develop more and more models that make it possible to combine your ministry and your family, without requiring too many sacrifices on any of these sides. My husband and I have had very positive experiences with this, and we always strictly shared everything: our parental leave as well as our working time. This was not exactly easy 24 years ago, some sneered and others marvelled, all the more so as we were working as pastors in a relatively conservative region. But at least, our way of life made people think, and it certainly worked well for us.

Here in Berlin we are just starting a process in which young colleagues actively contribute to the necessary processes of transformation. Under the heading of "Pastors in the 21st century", we have set up a dedicated group to deal with this topic.

The growing number of women in ministry will advance the church. However, not as long as women, because of gender attributions, mainly play the role of carer. This would mean that ministry is reduced to a mere service of care. But, thank God, we also have other – more powerful! – images of women. We have to act on them much more, which we are not doing to a sufficient extent right now. It is, for example, reflected in the fact that we were hardly able to convince women to apply for the office of superintendent, they simply refuse to do so. In the ten parishes of my Berlin diocese, we only have two women superintendents. In the other 16 parishes, the picture is even more grim: again, only two women act as superintendents. The image of this office is so dominated by men that women do not even seem to consider it. They feel that it is not about "the essential", theology and the relations between individuals.

Although research has shown that people holding this office are very satisfied with their work, it has a negative image.

Having latitude for economic or staff management is still in the domain of men in our society. Very few women want to venture into that space. They separate these tasks from their identity as pastors and ignore that these are precisely the areas where they can make a difference. This is where decisions are made, this is where the money is spent. Many of them do not realise how fundamentally these tasks are connected to shaping the church and that, as a consequence, they require theological skills.

So it is only typical that there are two female and one male





Collision with glass ceiling

By Dr. Min Heui Cheon

superintendents general. This office of a regional bishop is strongly identified with pastoral care. It includes conflict management, facilitation, visits and representative tasks as well as thematic, content-based work: the focus is on relationship work, there are no administrative tasks, not a budget worth mentioning and, consequently, little opportunity to shape policy.

In conclusion: We need strong shoulders. We need women who show us how we can lead powerful lives without denying ourselves. We need increasing flexibility. Concepts of what it means to be a woman or a man have to be questioned and transformed, or else the fear of not being able to do justice to all the different roles will make people withdraw from society, which would be left impoverished. I am a superintendent general with my heart and soul, but not always: I am also wholeheartedly a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister and also very importantly in my life: a friend. I am also interested in things not related to the church.

I want to be and to remain a contemporary citizen, not least to spread the message to our society at large: We are called to freedom, the freedom of God's children.

Ulrike Trautwein is Superintendent General of the Berlin Diocese.

Situation in Korean Society

Within Korean society, there has been rapid change since the end of the Korean War in 1953. Urbanization and industrialization has brought significant changes to both women and men. Notwithstanding the fact that the President of South Korea is a woman, there are many issues for equality of women. Statistics show that while 55.6% of the total number of all Korean females aged 15-64 are employed, this number is 22.0% lower than the number of working males, 77.6% of the males. This makes Korea the country with the lowest level of women's economic participation among the OECD countries. In addition, few senior managers or board members are women and pay gaps are large—in South Korea women are paid at 37% the wages of men, the largest wage disparity in the OECD.

PROK Situation

Although PROK is one of the few Korean denominations which ordains women, the same factors are disappointingly evident within our church. After a long campaign and struggle of the women in PROK, the ordination of women pastors was accepted by the General Assembly in 1974, now 42 years ago. The first woman, Rev. Yang, Jeong Shin was ordained in 1977, and since then, 320 female pastors have been produced in PROK. If we closely look at the numbers by time period, in the 70s there were 2 women pastors, in the 80s there were 26, in the 90s there were 80 women pastors ordained, and after 2000, within these 16 years, 220 females have been ordained in the PROK.

Presently within the PROK there are 296 women pastors now in ministry; among them 209 (70.6% of the total) are doing full time ministry and 87 (29.4%) (including those who live outside

of the country) are currently not involved in any kind of church work. By type of ministry, there are 79 senior pastors, 66 associate pastors, 51 pastors working for church-related organizations (Migrants ministry, Durebang (with sex trade workers, social welfare agencies, etc), 13 missionaries abroad, and 87 ordained women currently not in ministry (including those who reside abroad).

Senior Pastors

In PROK, there are 1656 churches; among them, 1002 are unauthorized churches and 654 are authorized churches (churches that are unable to maintain themselves financially). Among 1,486 pastors of PROK doing ministry as senior pastors and as pastors in unauthorized churches, there are 78 women pastors (which is 5.2%). In April of 2013 the PROK Women Pastors' Association conducted a survey on the current situation of PROK women pastors; there are 114 churches with women as their senior pastors; among them 41 are located in big and small cities and 73 are in rural areas. Among these, 9 have churches with more than 50 members; 105 have less than 50 members; 90 of them are with people less than 30 and 12 churches have less than 10 members.

There is no case of a church with over 100 congregation members having a woman senior pastor. On the other hand, churches with less than 50 members or newly founded churches do invite women pastors (these are unauthorized churches and churches in rural areas and suburban areas). The tendency is for male pastors to avoid churches with financial instability, and those churches with poor financial status tend to invite single women pastors or women pastors with

working husbands. This is the why 64% of women pastors are concentrated in the unauthorized churches or in churches in rural areas. Women pastors are struggling to maintain the poorest and weakest churches of PROK.

Associate Pastors

Large churches in Korea employ associate pastors, some 1 or 2, some up to 5 associate pastors. In the statistics of 2013, in the PROK, relating to 1,486 senior pastors (as in previous paragraph) there were listed 353 associate pastors. The number of women associate pastors was 55 in 2013 and 66 in 2014. The research shows that over 60 churches with two associate pastors do not have a woman pastor, while 5 churches having 5 associate pastor positions do not include any women pastors on staff.

Areas for Challenge for Reformation

What can be done in the PROK to make a more equitable position for women in ministry? The Women Pastors' Association has identified a number of categories in which to move forward:

Invitations for senior pastor positions

It is almost impossible to find cases in which authorized churches (churches with the capability of self-support) invite woman pastors for their senior pastor positions. The present patriarchal perception of church congregations and pastors of women, traditional customs and cultural perspectives are way behind and outdated. From the research, we recognize that people perceive a pastor as a leader figure, while ironically they perceive a woman pastor to be more of an assistant.

Thus, we definitely need an education campaign to bring about a reorientation of this perception, especially of those who are in leadership positions in Presbytery and General Assembly.

Adopting a quota system

There are very few churches having women associate pastors. Thus, adopting a quota system which guarantees 30% of associates are women pastors is needed. Each church is in a different situation, however, generally, a church with 200 congregational members and over 250 million in its annual budget has one senior pastor and two associate pastors. In this case, we can regulate the church to invite at least one woman pastor out of two by adopting the quota system. If there are 5 positions for associate pastors, two seats can be guaranteed by the quota. (In the same way, a quota system is needed to ensure women's participation in Presbyteries and General Assembly, as it does not come about voluntarily).

Overcoming the existing patriarchal role in ministry

Even if a woman pastor gets invited by a church to an associate position, her role is limited and typically fixed only on work such as children's ministry, caring for new comers, making pastoral visits etc. Giving sermons, setting and planning mission policies and ministry, administrative and financial management, youth and young adult groups all belong to the category of 'male pastors', and women pastors are placed as the subsidiary of male pastors. This indicates the stereotypical roles based on the patriarchal system found in ministry. Thus, the opportunity of giving sermons and benedictions and conducting ceremonies such as communion and funerals,



along with administrative functions, should be given equally to women pastors as well. As congregations become familiar with seeing women in those roles, it will become more 'normal' for them.

Couple's ministry

Many women pastors give up ministry because of the existing obstacles which comes with marriage. In reality, there exist women pastors who do ministry after their marriage with other pastors, but because they are not recognized as official pastors, they are not included in the statistics. Moreover, women pastors who have husbands who are pastors, due to the fact they are pastors' wives, are not allowed to participate either in the presbytery or in the General Assembly. Hence,

women pastors have very limited space. Thus, the wives of the pastor couples who are doing ministry together should be recognized as official pastors and be given equal opportunities for service and advancement.

Preparing proper measures for pregnancy, maternity leave and child care of women pastors.

When church members get pregnant, they not only receive blessings, but we also share joy with them. But, this is not the case for women pastors. When women pastors get pregnant, they tend to hide because often they can be treated unfairly or have to resign. Women have to be in charge of all marriage, pregnancy, giving birth and child caring duties. Thus, this puts them at a disadvantage because people see the role of

motherhood as an obstacle to doing ministry effectively. On the other hand, this whole process from giving birth to raising children is the obligation and necessity not only of individuals but also of the whole church community. A church should raise and nurture children with proper mechanisms and systems as a community and a family. For instance, we need to systemize the 3 months of maternity leave. First we need a perceptual change on giving maternity leave to pregnant women pastors, and then we need a policy to support it not on an individual or local level, but on a denominational level. We need human resources and a monetary budget for the system.

Salary and the life after retirement

As already mentioned above, women pastors are underpaid between 500,000 won to 1 million won per month in almost all cases with the exception of the 9 relatively big churches. Thus, it is impossible for women pastors to prepare for their retirement years. The Women Pastors' Association does not have the actual figures and present conditions of the pension; therefore, this will be the first step they need to take. The PROK needs to know how pastors are preparing for their later years after retirement, and then, we, churches, presbyteries, and the General Assembly should systematically support the pastors in unauthorized small churches by encouraging and helping them to have pensions.

Conclusion:

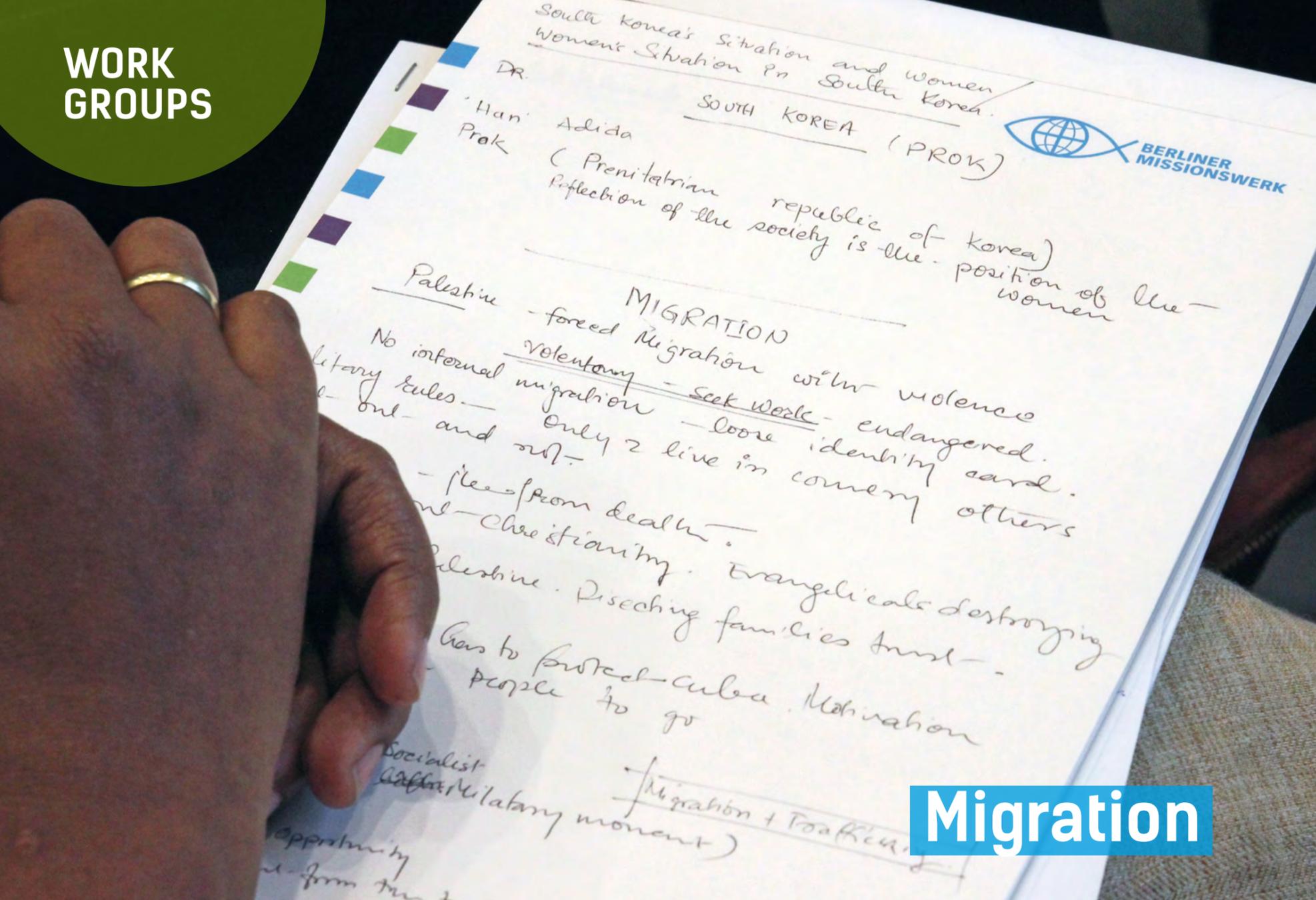
The litmus test which will show whether PROK stands for justice and how much it maintains its progressive character is the status, role, and position of women pastors without

discrimination. We not only need equal opportunity in ministry, but also preferential treatment for the weak who suffer from the continuous collision with the invisible but existing glass ceiling.

Dr. Min Heui Cheon, woman minister at the Ecumenical Relations Department of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea

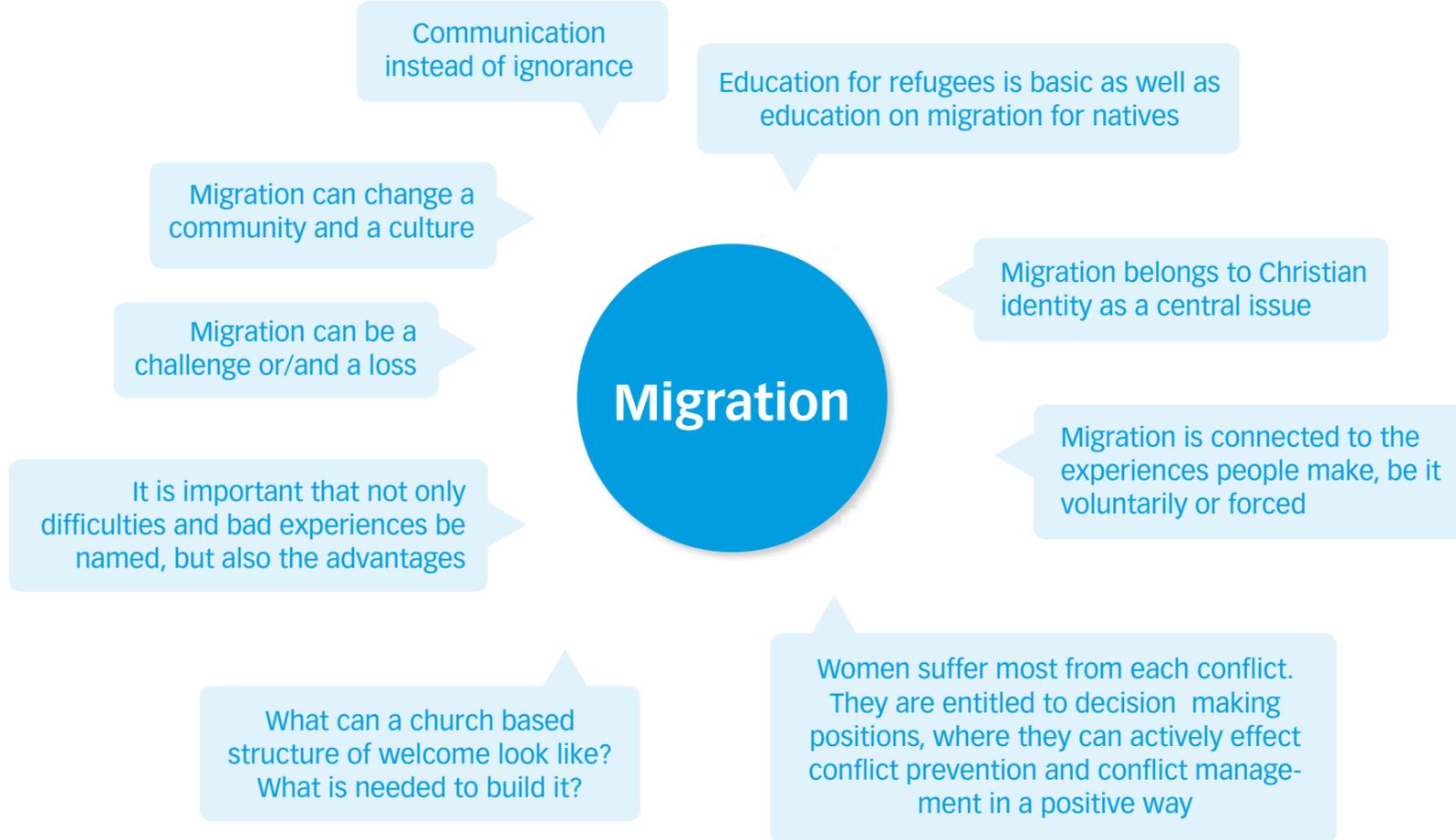
**WORK
GROUPS**

**How do women from all over the world
appreciate current issues?**



Migration

Migration



Social Care and Employment



Fair Life



The world's agriculture produces far enough food to feed every person ... and still there is hunger

This is an opportunity for the church to model a more just way of life!

Fair Life

Do think theologically about economies, fair wages and worldwide environmental health.

Let us consume and encourage other people to consume regional and seasonally grown products.

We encourage every congregation to use Fair Trade Products generally (e.g. coffee, biscuits, flowers). And do this as an act of solidarity and as a political statement



Poverty

Are the poor really poor because they are poor?

Who defines what poverty is? You cannot generalize, it depends on the context, the different situations in various countries

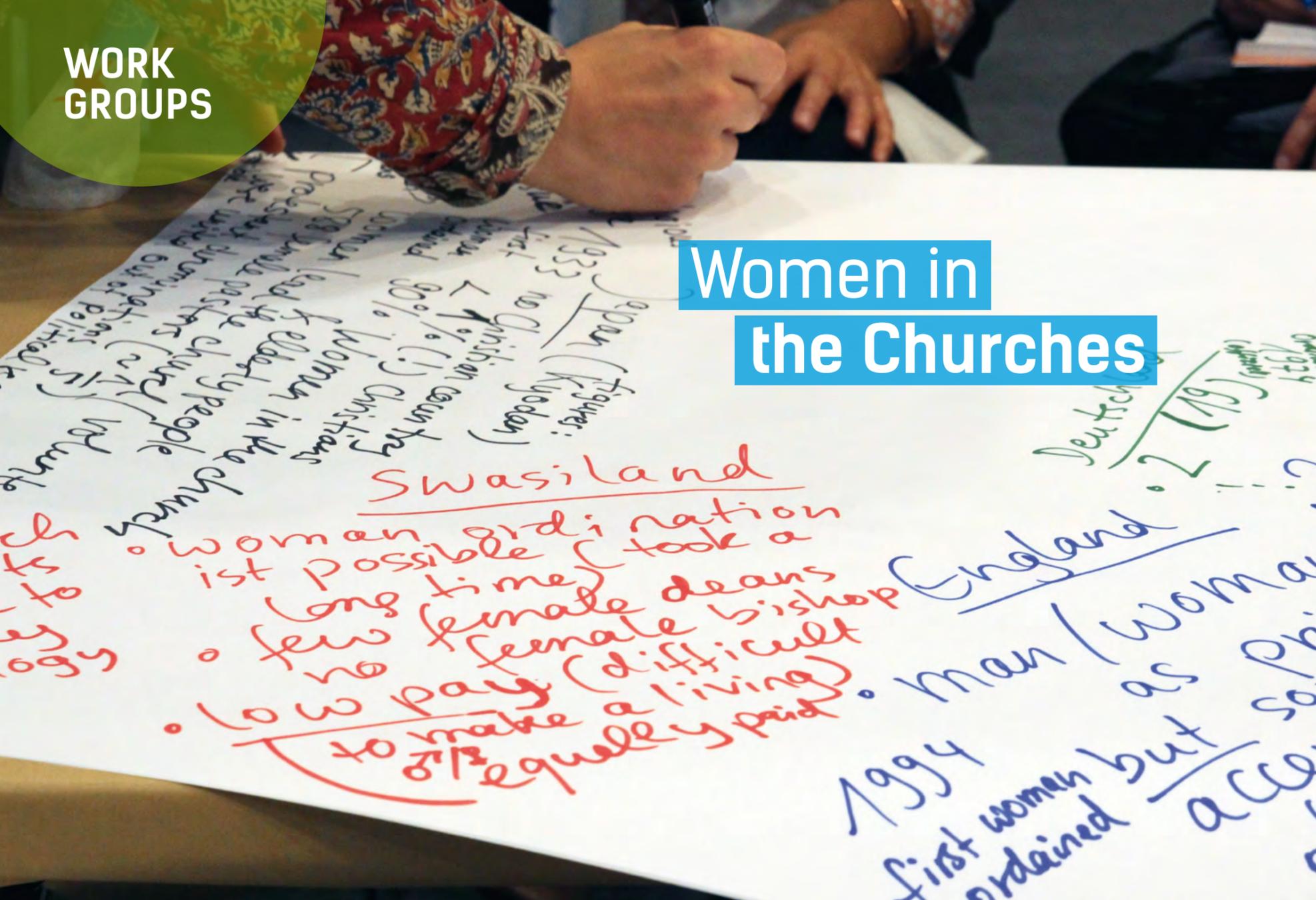
Poverty

Women as agents of transformation:

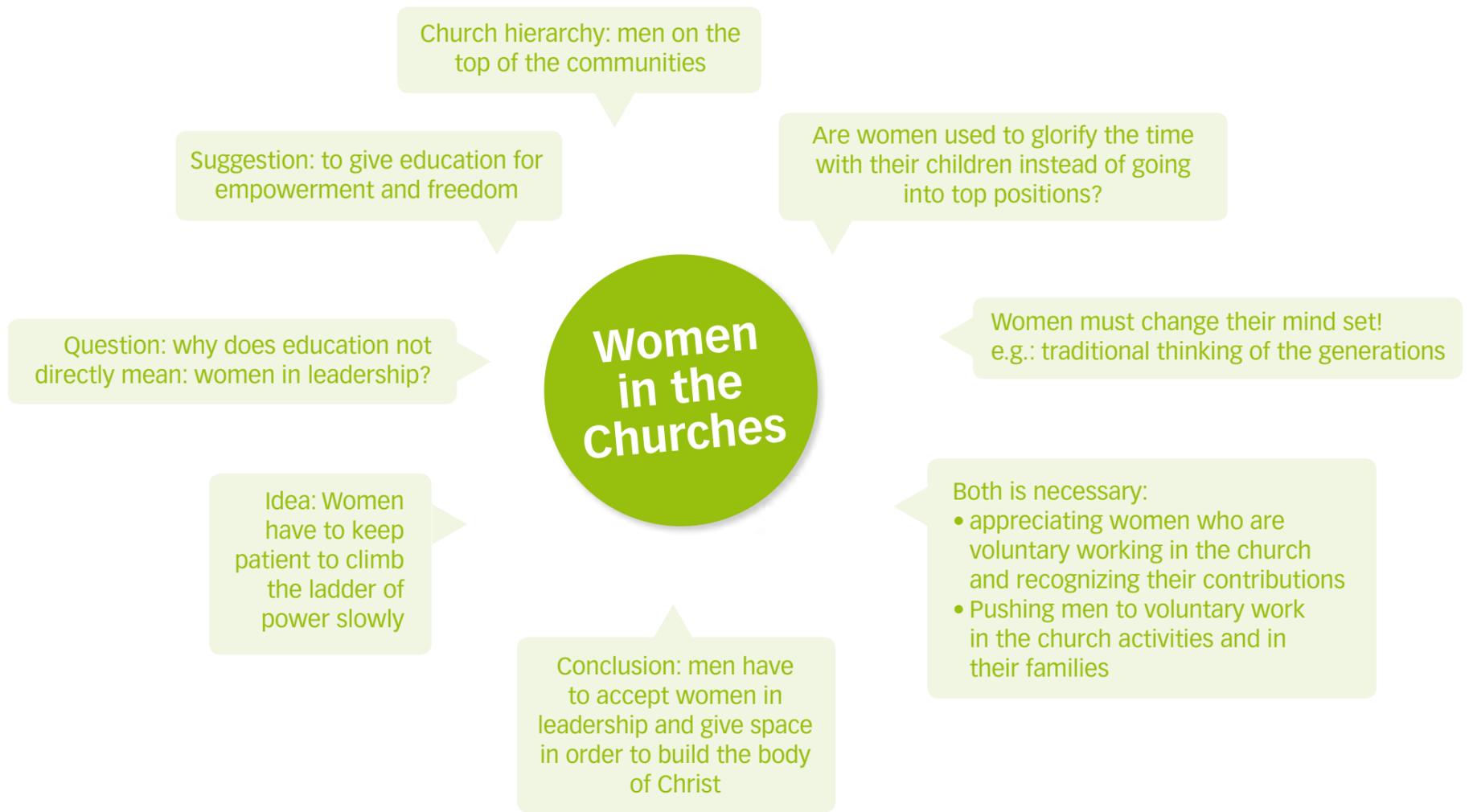
- Changing mindsets
- Self-employment
- Collective responsibility for the whole society

Poverty: missing the basic needs: food, shelter, clothing.
But also: basic rights, education, employment, equal payment, social care, participation in social life

Women in the Churches



Women in the Churches





Women's theology

Women's theology

Our starting points of thinking are various:

- No knowledge about the meaning of women's theology
- Many questions, skepticism or a critical view
- Women's Theology as female Liberation Theology
- Theologizing in a religious pluralistic context and thinking also about scriptures of other faiths and women in general

We exchanged our understanding:

- Women's theology is doing theology as women and understanding God in our own situation and experiences

Women do church ministry in other ways than men

- counseling women as a woman
- knowing a lot about giving care and personal touch

Reading the Bible with women's eyes

- variety of female role models in the Bible
- getting engaged/ wrestling with the words of the Bible
- understanding the Bible in its historical context
- naming God not only with male terms
- naming God only with male terms would be a form of idolatry
- affirming the Bible as inspired word of God
- But also recognizing that inspiration is continuing by reading and understanding the Bible in our context

Conclusion:

- We face churches as not very dynamic institutions (being patriarchal and hierarchical). But women as individuals within churches are willing to move into new directions.
- Women's theology can help de-constructing the hierarchical nature of the church.

Overcoming Violence

The problem of violence:

- A lot of violence is hidden
- "normalizing" violence accepts it
- Military violence leads to domestic violence

Overcoming Violence

Why does it matter?

- Violence denies others and ourselves our full humanity
- We are an image of God

What can be done in our churches?

- The language we use matters
- Be angry but do not sin
- Where do we talk about violence?
- Make church a safe place
- Let us not be bystanders!



Women change society – but how?



GENERAL
SYNOD

Visions
for a gender-equitable church



Diversity By Viola Kennert



The logo that introduced me to the work of and for the cause of women in our church was an impressive little picture: a turtle, rather happily going her way, big and strong because on her back, she carries a small church made of bricks with quite a sizable steeple. “Women carry the church”.

However: The church does not even notice. It is so busy with itself and its own space and does not realise that it is being carried and sustained by the daily work and the commitment of many women who (and this is what the picture shows, too) hide themselves like under a turtle shell: in women’s circles, women’s initiatives, feminist theological conversations, cheerful and self-confident – but still somehow hidden inside the large turtle with the cheery face. Not least, it is an image of great slowness, yet constant movement ahead. We have been making headway.

A gender atlas of the Evangelical Church in Germany has been created. So out of the turtle shell, into the public statistics. Many were pleased about this. And much has changed indeed. Women are not just perceived, their work is actually appreciated – and: in our church, women theologians are ordained and elected to high-level offices as a matter of course. Not only our synod is chaired by a woman, but also the synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany.

But they still exist, these “blind spots” (these spots in our hearts and minds that we prefer to blank out): There are still some shortcomings concerning the higher spiritual offices, in our European ecumenical neighbourhood it is still not (or not any more) possible to ordain women theologians. The



situation of our sisters in Latvia and Poland was a rather preoccupying topic at this synod and at the ecumenical women’s consultation.

Our language has changed. For ten years now, we have had an “inclusive language” bible translation, which is not always mentioned, but frequently used.

In both our society and the church, women have turned some things upside down. Some would say: caused disorder. Women have ideas how they can reconcile family and work life and still make a difference. They call for new leadership styles, want more communication, fewer orders. They construe power more as “empowerment”, which is something else than

enforcing your own interests. It is about promoting communication and accepting debate.

And: they mind their language. They persist and they patiently protest when inclusive language is bashed for being complicated, redundant and superfluous.

In today’s churches, you will find job-sharing schemes and reduced working hours, for example for people who need to look after family members or who temporarily want to spend more time with their children as they grow up.

So has everything been achieved? Yes, but... but it still and too often sounds like a complicated exception.

What I dream of is that everything new, inclusive and innovative is not primarily considered and reflected on as a disturbance, but as an opportunity.

I dream of a society and a church with the courage to negotiate. In this church, we discuss our community of values and how to preserve these values, we discuss the defence and the dissemination of occidental and Christian values. Flight, migration and globalisation confront all cultures with the same questions and put all cultures in one space of communication, in which reasonableness is required by everyone and the way we live together has to be negotiated.

Negotiating involves more effort than creating order by interference. In our social and cultural history, women had to learn how to navigate between all the different expectations by negotiating and making compromises. In inter-faith, inter-cultural and also in ecumenical conversations, it is necessary to negotiate and to cope with diversity. The balancing act between living “next to each other” and “with each other” is to be shaped.

In some parts of our society and also in our church, the indignation is growing. Our universalist claim – “what is true for us, has to be good and right for all”- is currently being shaken. Starting from the debate about correct and incorrect greeting gestures to the understanding that bikinis for women must be allowed and burkinis banned – you name it. And most of all: confusion. (At the same time, there is rather little fuss about men’s attire our outfits.)

So what I learn is this: The defence of freedom can also turn into paternalism – especially vis-à-vis women. Freedom can be abused as ideology when it is being defended on the basis of selfish motives.

I learn that the emancipation of women and men does not hinge on questions of greeting or dress. I acknowledge that equal opportunity is not up for discussion, but I also learn that values cannot be enforced, but need to be negotiated and further developed by persuasion.

When preparing for this statement, I asked myself once more: What is the situation in our church when it comes to the patience to negotiate and the urge to implement things as quickly as possible?

Justice, peace and freedom cannot be imposed on people, but they need to be filled with life. Skillful negotiation rather happens in the shadows, while glorious victories are presented in the bright light. I would like to see that we redistribute the light and the shadow – and I believe that this also has something to do with women and men.

Let me close with another image that I would like to see applied to our church: The “Bunte Reihe”, literally translated as the “mixed line”. It refers to the good old tradition of placing men and women alternately around a table. This may be considered an outdated practice which, on top of that, often discriminated against singles. Still: for our church, I keep dreaming of this genuine mix, everywhere and all the time. In theoretical and mathematical terms, this would mean that

there would have to be an equal number of men and women in all parish groups, management bodies, synods and conventions, bishops’ and church conferences.

For that to happen, we would have to find men for visiting services, as teachers in daycare, for the bustling initiatives who cook and bake for congregational festivities – and women, most of all for episcopal office. But at some point, we would achieve a situation where we could pick a seat and would always find ourselves surrounded by “mixed lines”.

Mixed lines in the church – men and women mixed together. People would look at us and how we do it, and they would feel that it makes us vigorous, flexible, diverse and perhaps also surprisingly straightforward.

I have heard and experienced in the last few days that such mixed environments are still not a given in the worldwide Christian church either.

However, the first thing we need to talk about – and that debate is indispensable – is: Do we want it to happen and how much of an effort are we willing to make to achieve this dream? May this consultation be a beginning, and not the end of the process.

Viola Kennert is Superintendent of the Evangelical church district of Berlin-Neukölln.

Removing the stones to clear the way

By Sumaya Farhat-Naser

On 15 February 2015, the synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) voted on a law concerning gender equality in the context of family life and endorsed equal rights for women in matters of family and inheritance law. This gender-equitable church policy practised at the Evangelical Lutheran court spiritual is exemplary, albeit exceptional in the Middle East. It is the result of many years of intensive collaboration between women and men within the church and of the commitment of progressive and righteous men with responsibility and decision-making powers in the church. It is a precedent which other churches are following and which Muslim women can use as a basis for demanding equal rights.

Fierce opposition came mainly from the other Christian churches which asked Christian lawyers to invalidate the decision of the Lutheran synod. However, the sovereignty of churches according to the Palestinian legislation grants protection and guarantees acceptance of church decisions by the political institutions. This progressive decision of the Lutheran Church and its courage to enforce the independence from existing Islamic legislation with its own courts was met with great joy by the women and admiration and praise by many others. We trust that there will be more steps to promote gender equality in the church and in society – both in Palestine and here in Germany.

It is actually not that difficult. For there are countless qualified and able women for leadership positions in the church. What is needed are courage and liberation from entrenched traditional views and structures – for the benefit of all.

Women are called to get the right qualifications for high-level posts in politics, society and the churches. Everyone is entitled to knowledge and the power of persuasion as well as respectful communication based on equality and equal rights and obligations. These are the ideals and the values of our faith.

Let all of us together remove the stones out of the way, for this will enable us to achieve our goals faster and with less effort.

Dr. Dr. h. c. Sumaya Farhat-Naser is a peace activist in the West Bank. She is a Palestinian Christian, born in Bir Zait near Jerusalem, and went to the Talitha Kumi school in Beit Jala close to Bethlehem.



A church that smiles and dances

By Sarahí Garcia Gomez

Our ecclesiological perspective has its roots in the Jesus movement and in the experience of God that this movement has made us aware of: a prophetic movement which denounces exclusion and the injustice of the powers-that-be. A movement which opens our eyes and which heralds the advent of the kingdom of justice in which, as a reversal of the current logic, the poor, the women and the marginalised will be subjects in their own right. A movement which teaches us that we have to be like children because the smallest in the eye of humans are the greatest with God. Jesus and his movement teach us that we as women have to be heard, that we have to learn a lot, that we can be followers and preach the gospel. In fact, women were the first witnesses of the resurrection. This movement has devised a narrative of strength, of resistance and opening up which gave those who were excluded, especially women, participation and a voice.

Based on these roots, much momentum has evolved in the course of time to raise our voices in order to transform unfair realities. One of these movements was undoubtedly the Reformation which decried the distorted understanding of power, the manipulation of God's living word and other transgressions of the church. However, history turned out to be unjust when it concealed the voices and the faces of women who had also been protagonists of this movement.

Without any doubt, social change in the 20th century made these faces visible again and gave a voice to women, children, indigenous people, blacks and mestizos, rural workers and social outsiders, and created the space for an ongoing battle for peace and justice.

We have learnt from the prophets that it is impossible to develop a vision for the future without having properly understood the past and the present. What are the challenges related to social justice and exclusion in Cuba? Where do we as women stand in that battle? Where is the church?

With the triumph of the revolution in 1959, many people in Cuba thought that paradise in terms of social justice had finally come. And indeed, it has given the weak many rights, such as the return and redistribution of land – from the hands of big landowners and transnationals to the hands of smallholders. The realisation of women's rights, of education, the stepping out of the private, domestic environment into the public space in which many gender stereotypes later on collapsed – all this was the fruit of these radical political changes. Children from all walks of life came together in schools and there was a national literacy campaign in which the churches, too, participated.

Still, Jesus challenges us to do more than change laws. After a while, we realised that women, although they had been empowered, were suffering from the burden of long working hours, because they were still left with all the household chores. We also noticed that smallholders needed more space for fairer associations, that there were only very few black students in universities and the number of elderly people living alone and under untenable conditions was constantly growing. At the same time, migration of predominantly young people searching for work and better living conditions exacerbates the problem. This migration does not only have an impact on care for the elderly, it is a challenge for society

and also the churches in many different ways: The high level of internal migration from the rural areas to the cities, from the east to the west, leads to increased ghettoisation on the outskirts of the cities. Migration also has an impact on women in Cuba: More and more often, they have to assume to role of head of the household. Now, this could be an encouraging piece of news, but it loses its positive connotation if we look at it in connection with the poverty index.

While there are state-run and social initiatives to improve the situation of the most vulnerable and processes of reform and adaptation, it is uncontested that the social gap is widening. The weaker members of our society are asking us to take concrete action and to be that inclusive church that we dream of.

But in our church, too, the majority of the members are female while the decision-making bodies are mainly run by male pastors. It is worthwhile to question this? Which role models for pastoral ministry does the church offer? How do the congregations envisage a good pastor, male or female? How are decisions made? How do they read and interpret the bible? Will the interpretation of the bible remain an instrument of power, used to pass judgment on experiences of faith in an absolute and totalitarian manner? To be sure, there is some free space here and there, but we still have a long way to go.

According to my personal experience, it was difficult to share my work in and for the church with my husband and also plan a family at the same time. Some members of the congregation thought that he should be the pastor and I should look after



A church that smiles and dances

the kids because I should not take on a high-level post as a mother. As women, we are still viewed negatively if we take decisions that diverge from the socially accepted framework imposed on us by a patriarchal culture.

This multi-faceted and complex context challenges us to shape the inclusive society we dream of. Our vision is connected to how we live our experience of God and how we see ourselves in this relationship. Let us leave behind the binary and anthropocentric view, which is the image of a God that promotes exclusion. This is the precondition for making the inclusive church a reality. We have to question the notion of an authoritarian God. How can we experience God as a tender and fragile, yet strong God, who is both close and a mystery at the same time, a God who teaches as well as learns. I believe that this is an important key for becoming a healthy, prophetic, hospitable, transparent, responsible and protective community that preserves the historical memory.

In this spirit – what is our vision? A diverse society, in terms of faces, colours and rhythms, diverse when it comes to the way we plan our lives, with the freedom to express faith and spirituality. A community that promotes dialogue and celebrates diversity. In our churches, we experience the reception of the bible with the methods of popular education, which is a part of our daily lives and our daily struggles, with the aim of finding our own lights in the bible that help us ease the realities of exclusion and injustice. This experience of bible reception promotes dialogue in a context where it is sometimes difficult to express your own opinion, because it enables us to follow the one voice.



We have to continue promoting these and other free spaces so that people do not cling to their old patterns of thinking, but just like Mary from Bethany or the Ethiopian eunuch, ,unlearn what they have wrongly learnt and experience a transformation of reality in these processes.

And then, we dream of a prophetic community full of justice and respect. The church is called to denounce injustice. This holds the risk of coming into conflict with structures and stereotypes that are hostile to life. With its prophetic call, the church has to encourage people to find hope and to preach, even under circumstances which suggest that there is neither a light nor a solution. When I dream of a church that defends

justice, I also speak of a democratic church without one-sided decision-making. I speak of a sensitive community that listens, acts and shows empathy.

A church which has a holistic vision is informed by the idea of independence. We have been told the story of creation from a perspective of equality. It is a call to find and recreate life in equality and oppose everything that wants to destroy and kill it. This includes a church of responsible relationships which acknowledges the holiness of life. This integrated vision runs counter to the trend of looking at reality from the perspective of antagonisms which lead to separation and division: weak against strong, small against great, old against new ... I am

thinking of a church with a mainly holistic vision in the sense of creating a balance, it emanates from the wisdom of all, it does not repudiate anything. Our environment makes us think in cycles, allow things, not fend off anything. This type of thinking should accompany our sense of relationships, the building of our community – a church that looks to the future, to a liberating and questioning kind of education. Jesus teaches us to ask questions, to question our reality. We have to dig beneath the surface if we want to reflect and expose problems. This is what I mean when I say that it is not enough to change laws. We have to change the way we think and we need to develop an emancipating, liberating and constructive education. This is the very key. Take the ordination of women: it is good that women have the right to be ordained. It is a major structural step forward, but we have to go further. For some parishes do not want female pastors because of the “risk of motherhood”. And that is just one example of the long way we still have to go to the renewal of our congregations when it comes to gender equality. At the same time, some churches and institutions in Cuba are setting up educational programmes that teach women how to start their own small business. These are examples of a church that provides practical and spiritual tools which help deal with the challenges ahead.

A church that plays, that smiles, that is joyful, that dances. We believe in a God who dances and smiles. This is what Jesus spoke about when he invited us to be like children. Still, in many cases, the church is a very serious place.

I dream of a church full of hope that does not forget to smile,

since rejoicing is a part of our culture. So let us speak of a celebrating community where people share as they sit around the table, just like Jesus did. Let us speak of a creative and proactive church, like the women of the Jesus movement whom nobody could stop from leading the way. A church that is able to survive in the face of economic and social limitations, that helps us master crisis and uncertainty.

I dream of a diaconal church which serves and cares with affection, not out of motherliness, but out of the responsibility to appreciate people. A church which devotes special attention to those suffering from exclusion, which puts them at its centre, not because of pity, but in order to learn from their faith and their spirituality, to listen to their voices and hear about their struggles and to acknowledge that they are subjects in their own right. In our country, we have many projects to give old people food and to clean their clothes. This is good, but we have to go further and offer protection and service from a holistic perspective, as we have learnt from Jesus Christ.

A song from my country says: it is the dreams that attract people. Our vision is anchored in the promise to be a Church of the Way, which day by day is building the kingdom of God that Jesus has opened for us. We go our ways every day hoping for what is in the future. I invite you to dance and sing this song as a sign of the promise and the community in this promised and longed-for kingdom.

Let us take each other’s hands, let us connect as we move ahead, since this might be a way of refreshing ourselves on

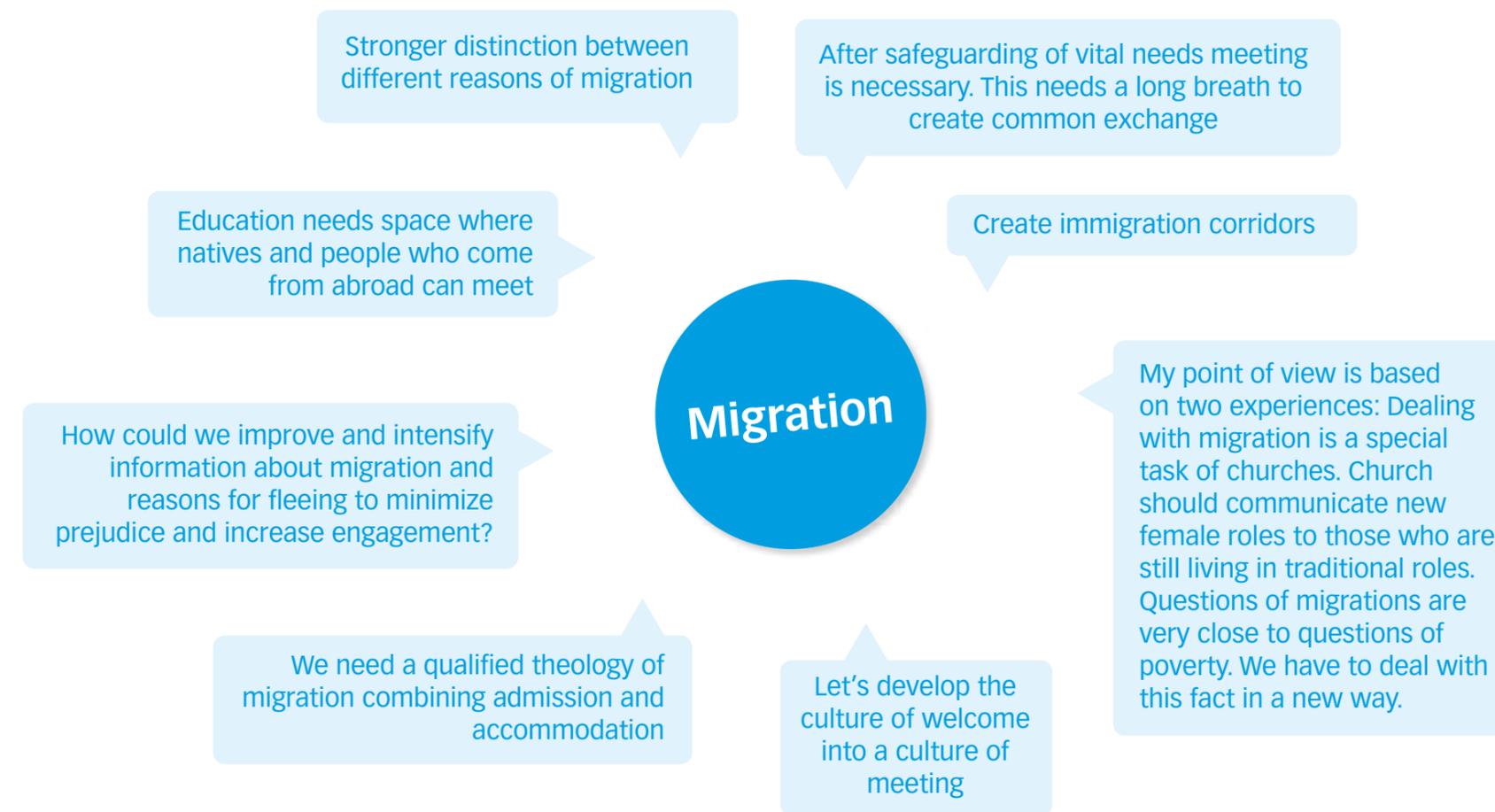


this tiring way. We sow love, affection and friendship, and from Christ, we bring peace.

Sarahí García Gomez (40) is a psychologist, theologian and lay preacher as well as Vice-Moderator of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba.

Points of View (General Synod)

MEIN STANDPUNKT:



POINTS OF VIEW

Overcoming violence

Overcoming of violence is a central subject to initiate changes in all other areas. Violence is omnipresent in various forms. Overcoming it is a daily task!

Maria and Martha belong together, there is no "either... or." The question which is a better life strengthens hierarchies. So: Sisters, we want the complete life!

Yes, men have to accept women and have to give them place but women shouldn't wait for invitation, permission. They have to fight for their spaces. Just do it!

It is difficult to become a part of the society as a small church, as Christians. Churches have to empower people!

Women change society – but how?

Women must fill the culture of competition and exploitation with alternative structures wherever they live

Stereotypes, gender roles and discrimination are not useful and shouldn't be taught to next generations. Classifying people by making up categories can't be a way to "judge". People are different and should be treated as individuals!

Poverty

We can change our situation; we are responsible for our life: who was born poor need not stay poor

Strengthen help for self-help

Don't hesitate, dear women, say it out loud: The Northern world has to change totally (reduction of the standard of living and of consumption of resources)

Search for justice, so that „justice and peace kiss each other“

Education for children and adults

Do vote out of office corrupt governments

Worldwide network against poverty

Create human conditions

Not only emergency help, but creating independence

POINTS OF VIEW

Women should not glorify the time with their children instead of going into top positions

Are the poor really poor because they are poor?

Women in the Churches

Women in churches may change the way leadership works

Women in churches bring the reality and the colours of real life to God and into the congregation

Is there really a "feminist" and a male theology or isn't it rather a male dominated language of theology?

Women's theology

"Feminist theology": Isn't it a mistake to talk about "feminist theology"? Don't we want to replace "male" theology by "gender-neutral" theology?

Social Care and employment of women

- Work load of women in Ethiopia
- Clothing
 - Health care providers
 - Supporting the husband
 - Washing
 - Literacy classes
 - Office work
 - Fetching water
 - Cleaning
 - Grinding
 - Gathering firewood
 - Farming
 - Cooking
 - Caring for children
 - Trading

We should find out whether fair trade products are consumed in every parish

Fair Trade is a position ("Oikocredit" should be strengthened)

Fair Life

Of course fair traded products are more expensive than in the super-market. By the involvement with the subject we also deal with the limited resources on our planet

Hope remains that we as a church help to bring products and consumers closer together. We can do this by looking at the "One World"





Changing this world for the better

By Roland Herpich



Congregation, distinguished guests, participants in the Women's Consultation,

It is with great pleasure that I greet you on behalf of the Berlin Mission, its staff and its supporters, and also the Evangelical Church Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia, its leadership and its bishop, at this festive service. I would like to thank you for coming here and assure you how glad we are that you have contributed to turning this consultation into such a symbol of fellowship for this world.

We have been looking forward to this for years, because in the history of our Mission, women have always played a very special and very important role. Even if it were men who were trained and posted all over the world as missionaries, the main part of the work was done by women. They ran hospital wards, organised schools, taught children, they had access to the homes of people in Africa and later China and elsewhere, where men would never have been allowed to enter. However, the picture that people remembered and had in mind were the faces of the missionaries, even at our Mission. To this day, although the life of the church depends so much on the commitment of women, they are still not the most frequently seen or most well-known faces of their churches. This makes it all the more important that you have gathered here today.

It is very fitting that this consultation is held in the week of Reformation Day. The idea of the reformers to provide people with education without vested interest, so that they could

read the Holy Scripture themselves, so that they could form their own opinion about what God wants from us as human beings, and so they could stand by God's side in the creation of this world – this mission of the Reformation is still being fulfilled and implemented by you. As the bible verse for Reformation Day says: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1. Cor 3:11)

Finding this out is our joint task. For biblical reasons, because God wants it, we become involved, at his side – especially many women all over the world, and this leads to the cultural transformation and the changes in civil society that this world needs.

And this is also true in Germany. Here as well as in many other churches, the importance of women in shaping the world is becoming ever more apparent.

Once again, thank you for your participation and your fellowship. I hope that you will remain by God's side and, all of you together, change this world for the better. For no one can lay any other foundation.

Roland Herpich, director of Berlin Mission

REVIEW





IMPRINT

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Photo: Konstantin Börner

Photos:

Konstantin Börner: 3, 5, 35, 36, 38, 40, 42, 50, 51, 52.
Gerd Herzog: 6, 8, 30, 48
Jutta Klimmt: 11, 14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 32.

December 2016



Information:

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The participants came from India, Ethiopia, South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana, Tanzania, Palestine, Egypt, Poland, Czech Republic, Sweden, England, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Cuba, USA and Berlin and Land Brandenburg.

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