

## “Reformation Traditions Engaging with Key Areas of Education and Societal Transformation”

First block: tracks 1, 3 and 5

### 1. Public Theology and the Churches’ Social Witness

#### *1.1 Churches called to witness and action responding to social challenges and injustices*

This group will focus on the public role churches assume and will study the ways in which they act as agents for justice in their respective societies. To what extent are churches developing the dimension of public theology and which issues are they addressing?

Drawing on the Reformation heritage: Which aspects of the Reformation heritage do they call into play in order to justify their acting in the public sphere and to define their message? To what extent are churches using their educational facilities to prepare the younger generation to take effective social action in the public sphere?

*1 a: Moderator: Simone Sinn*

*Presenters: Asir Ebenezer David and Romi Bencke*

*Listener: Nestor Miguez*

*1 b: Moderator: Helmut Renders*

*Presenters: Hial Anupama and Jerry Pillay*

*Listener: Nicolas Panotto*

#### *1.2 + 1.3 Churches called to witness and action by (indigenous) peoples’ claim for economic, social and cultural rights and land conflicts*

This working group will focus on indigenous communities and their encounters with the Christian faith, whether through Roman Catholic or Protestant Churches. How have indigenous communities responded to the Christian faith and what forms have their inculturation and contextualization taken? Which role do churches of the Reformation traditions play in these communities today?

This group will also address the theme of group 1.2, conflicts over land. This refers to the migration of persons dispossessed of their land but also to conflicts arising from the land-grabbing activities of the Global North and Asia in African and Latin American countries.

Drawing on the Reformation heritage: Which theological tools do indigenous churches use to analyze these encounters and to position themselves? In what ways do they educate and empower people to retain their cultural identities and to stand up for their rights? In what ways do churches educate and empower people to stand up for their rights?

*Moderator: Martin Krieg*

*Presenter: Graciela Chamorro and Johnson Mbillah*

*Listener: Natallia Vasilevich*

## 3. Human dignity, integrity of creation and alternative development

### *3.1 Discerning concepts of human rights and dignity in church and society*

The “holiness of the human person”, the “sanctity of the human being” or the “freedom to dissent” / “freedom of belief” have been key concepts in Protestant theology and mission thinking from early on. In time, these principles evolved into the concept of universal human rights which presents itself as a blend of secular humanist values and traditions with key biblical insights. Did however the Protestant churches actively contribute to the founding and theological articulation of human rights, or did they merely belatedly and hesitantly absorb what was articulated in social movements into their own teaching? In what way could the Reformation heritage play into current challenge of defending and protecting human rights?

*Moderator: Riley Raudonat-Edwards*

*Presenters: Susan Durber and Jan Dus*

*Listener: Jorgen Thomsen*

### *3.3 Affirming leadership capacity development for accountability in church and society*

As in the late medieval era, many lament today the absence of clear standards for proper political and social leadership. Bribery and corruption have pervaded social, political, economic and even ecclesial organizations. How can the Churches of the Reformation guarantee adequate formation for both their own leaders as well as for leaders in public life, economy and social services? In what way could key principles of Reformation theology lend themselves to the development of leadership formation models in the modern context? What can churches learn from each other in this respect? What models of leadership formation might be appropriate for inter-church collaboration in an cross-contextual settings?

*Moderator: Marina von Ameln*

*Presenters: Lilana Kasper and Dietrich Werner*

*Listener: Aikaterina Pekridou*

## 5. Suffering, Solidarity and the Theology of Empowerment

### *5.1 Articulating a theology of empowerment in light of economic suffering, health care disparities and the prosperity gospel*

Proponents of the Prosperity Gospel claim that it empowers the poor by stressing the relationship between faith and work. Its detractors see it as an ideology through which

impoverished people are stripped of their meager resources and made dependent, rather than being transformed into active subjects of their own emancipation. In any case, this “gospel” poses a challenge for the Churches of the Reformation.

This group will also address the focus of former group 5.2: Jesus’ power of healing was a central aspect of his ministry. To this day, the church is obliged to offer a healing perspective if it is to minister credibly to the sick.

Accordingly, we ask: In what way do key theological principles of the Reformation take up the huge longing for holistic mission expressed in phenomena such as the Prosperity Gospel? Where do we see the Churches of the Reformation articulating a true theology of empowerment in word and deed? In what way are Christian health services unique, different or better than those of other providers? To what degree do they address the entire person, i.e. both spiritual and physical well-being?

*Moderator: Amélé Ekué*

*Presenters: Carlos Ham and Ulla Sörensen and Rufus Okikiola Ositelu*

*Listener: John Uzuh*

### *5.3 Articulating a theology of empowerment in light of gender–injustice and discrimination*

Gender injustice and discrimination on whatever grounds run counter to the Gospel in general and Jesus’ persistence in reaching out to the marginalized in particular (cf. Luke 4:18f et al). Why is it then that within the same theological tradition, churches have arrived at different approaches to the role of women and regarding discrimination? Further: Many Churches of the Reformation and the mission organisations associated with them have formulated gender policies. Do what extent do these draw on Reformation traditions? Have they been effective in promoting gender justice? Can these policies be improved upon?

*Moderator: Márcia Blasi*

*Presenters: Gao Ying and Elias Wolff*

*Listener: Carola Tron Urban*

## Second block: tracks 2, 4 and 6

### 2. Political Participation and Democratisation

#### *2.1 Churches en route towards reconciliation and healing of memories after experiencing dictatorship and violent conflict*

This group will reflect on the tensions and challenges experienced by churches of the Reformation heritage in countries which have experienced severe conflicts, divisions and violent clashes (i.e. apartheid in South Africa, genocide in Rwanda, military dictatorship and oppression in Latin American countries or the current violence unleashed by groups like the anti-educational “Boko Haram” in Nigeria). In which ways and on the basis of what theological reasoning have churches become complicit in oppressive structures and systems? In which ways and on the basis of what theological reasoning have churches acted as catalysts in peace, healing and reconciliation processes?

*Moderator: Valinirina Nomenjanahary*

*Presenters: N.N. and Susan Mark*

*Listener: Chul Chun*

#### *2.2 Churches together with social movements en route towards responsible civil societies*

Mission endeavor has generally gone hand in hand with the development of the civil society. Often, for example, the leaders of independence movements and major contributors to nation-building received their education in mission schools. Today, however, the situation is different. In many national contexts, the space allotted to the church for influencing national political and social policies or human rights issues is shrinking or is nonexistent. How can the Churches counter this trend? Drawing on the Reformation heritage: What theological principles should be invoked in order to ensure a proper and right place for the churches within and alongside social movements within the civil society?

*Moderator: Temjennaro Pongen ?*

*Presenters: Cephas Omenyo and Walter Altmann*

*Listener: Daniel Beros ?*

### 4. Education, Liberation and Societal Transformation

#### *4.1 Education transforming vulnerable groups into resilient societal actors*

The educational input of mission schools, Christian universities and church-related seminaries in most of the global South is undoubtedly enormous. Are churches still committed to be transformative agents of liberative education and transformative leadership formation in their own contexts? Are the current church systems of secondary or tertiary education accessible to vulnerable or marginalized populations? What changes would allow more liberative and transformative educational aspects to unfold and to flourish anew in the Churches of the Reformation? To what extent is “mission from the margins” not only a slogan but a living reality within these churches today?

*Moderator: Elisabeth Salazar Sanzana ?*

*Presenters: Micheline Kamba and David Mesquiati*

*Listener: Biniel Mallyo*

#### *4.2 Education transforming societies into just and peaceful communities*

The process of transforming societies accustomed to conflict resolution through violence into societies willing to employ more peaceful ways of resolving conflict has sometimes taken decades or even centuries (cf. the aftermath of the 30 years war in 17<sup>th</sup> c. Europe), and is far from being complete. What is the future of Protestant peace ethics vis-à-vis the challenges posed by new dimensions of military warfare as well as a new politicization of religion and instrumentalization of religion, particularly in Christian-Muslim contexts? In what ways has the recent dialogue between Lutheran and Reformed churches with those of Baptist and Menonite traditions led to to more credibility in witnessing for peace and reconciliation?

*Moderator: Jack Urame*

*Presenters: Atola Longkumer and Jonathan Seiling*

*Listener: Makariso Ngantchui Fandio*

#### *4.3 Education transforming churches into liberated and liberating spaces*

During the socialist era in the former “German Democratic Republic” or “East Germany”, the Protestant churches became a space in which civil society actors could articulate their visions of human rights and liberation. How do the Churches of the Reformation provide safe spaces for dialogue, counselling and the articulation of new visions with and for those suffering from discrimination and marginalization in today’s context? What hinders churches from offering space for proper dialogue with and on behalf of the vulnerable? Which best practice examples can we identify in which churches serve as catalysts and safe spaces for liberating movements with regard to human dignity and new ethical values?

*Moderator: Adriana Castellu Camp*

*Presenters: Daniel Chiquete and Brigitte Rabarjaona*

*Listener: Ritah Muyambo*

## 6. Public Witness amidst Religious Pluralization and Secularization

### *6.1 Discerning churches' prophetic role with regard to today's media society and the power of the media to influence public opinion*

One reason the Reformation insights spread so quickly was that the newly-invented printing press was immediately employed to spread the message. In our time, however, the media are engaged in a constant struggle for audiences and funding, meaning that they often focus on crisis situations and have a tendency to blend out the complexities of a given issue. How can the Churches of the Reformation mobilize the media to take up the plight of the marginalized rather than the interests of the powerful? How can they with their proclamation act meaningfully and effectively in today's media society? How can they effectively make use of the media to present their own concerns in the public sphere?

*Moderator: Gabriele Hoerschelmann*

*Presenters: Martin Engels and Carla Eburn Kruger*

*Listener: James DeKam*

### *6.2 Understanding and defying fundamentalism (in religion)*

Fundamentalist groups oppose plurality and open societies. They seek to block the empowerment of those who do not ally with them and fight, sometimes violently, interpretations of a given faith tradition which differ from their own. Accordingly, the Church is called to defy the political and violent expressions of fundamentalist groups regardless of their religious tradition. The Churches of the Reformation have a special calling here, as they themselves represent a tradition which sought to return to the fundamentals of faith. How can they effectively critique fundamentalism on theological grounds?

*Moderator: Christa Olearius*

*Presenters: Nabil Maamarbachi and Santanu Patro*

*Listener: Miriam Zimmer*

### *6.3 Communicating Christian and ethical values in contexts characterized by de-Christianization and secularization*

Raising a distinctly Christian voice vis-a-vis social milieus characterized by de-Christianization and secularization has become a major challenge for churches almost everywhere. In some contexts, it is now only a minority of young children and adults that have even a minimal access to basic symbols and narratives from the Christian tradition. What key theological principles of the Reformation tradition and innovative best practice models can inspire and motivate missionary witness in such contexts, both urban and rural? How can the Churches of the Reformation strengthen the capability of their individual believers to "give an account of the hope which is within them" (1. Peter 3:15).

*Moderator: Thorsten Göbel*

*Presenters: Daniel Cyranka and Marilze Wischral Rodrigues*

*Listener: Patrick Schnabel*