

## **Words of Greetings and Opening of the Conference Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel**

**São Leopoldo:** Reformation – Education – Transformation

Respected colleagues, eminent church leaders, dear sisters and brothers in Christ!

Let me express my warmest wishes and fraternal greetings to all those who have followed the invitation to join this important consultation in Escola Superior de Teologia in São Leopoldo, Brazil!

The twin consultation project on Reformation, Education and Transformation is at the heart of the theological and programmatic concerns Bread for the World wants to contribute to the preparatory process towards the Jubilee of the Reformation in 2017 and particularly to the thematic year on “Reformation and One World”.

We are glad to have worked with a committed team since several months for the preparation of this important event in collaboration with EMW and several other ecumenical partner organizations like the Lutheran World Foundation, the World Council of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches.

We do not look at Reformation as only or mainly a past historical event. And we do not look at it as a call and move which has only shaken individuals and churches in Europe. Nor do we see it as an affair of inner church ecclesial debates. Reformation in its essence has been a global liberation movement and the light of reformation still is a liberating power: a liberation of faith, a liberation of the human being, of men and women, a liberation of the church, a liberation of thinking and education, and finally but not lastly a liberation of the world from worshipping golden calves like money and military might.

We have planned this major ecumenical consultation with key partners of German protestant churches in North, South, East and West in order to open a dialogue process among churches - many of them our partners - about the reading of the impact of Reformation tradition on life, witness and service in different contexts. We want to initiate and encourage a truly ecumenical and global dialogue on the achievements, current challenges and new learnings about the relevance of Reformation principles for our contemporary collaboration as churches within one ecumenical family.

The Reformation tradition has been re-shaped, newly contextualized and re-interpreted in many churches in non-Europe contexts. Therefore we have a variety and multitude of different Reformation traditions or accents in interpreting the Reformation tradition today. We are interested in mutually learning from different contexts of Reformation churches about critical insights and challenges which we are facing for continuing the Reformation heritage today.

We are convinced, that in Protestantism both public theology and theological education can be identified as two vital resources that our ecclesial tradition can contribute to the current challenges World Christianity is facing in the context of rapid globalization, growing inequalities but also pluralization of religious traditions in this world.

The Gospel as interpreted in Reformation tradition always has a public relevance and leads to critical engagement in civil society in areas pertaining to human rights, social development, good governance and ecological integrity. What can we do to mutually strengthen our churches capacities for

public theology, for critical engagement for political and social issues, for Christian leadership development and diaconic engagement designed to facilitate the public relevance of the Gospel in witness and service within civil society today? These are some of the questions I am sure you will reflect upon in a rich and promising process during the conference.

I very much deplore not to be able to join with you like originally planned. But huge working pressures and the current situation in Germany which brings unprecedented additional tasks in terms of coping with rapid political and social processes related to the massive influx of refugees within this part of Europe have kept me from participating like originally planned.

But I am with you in my thoughts and prayers and do hope to fully join the process in the second step in the Halle conference in May 2016.

I wish you all God's blessing for a fruitful and mutually benefitting process during the Sao Leopoldo consultation.