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**Bremen Mission Theological Consultation
Peki, Volta Region, Ghana
12th – 15th October, 2009**

Theme: Preserving Human Dignity

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Communiqué

1. Who, where and why of the consultation

a. who

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- Delegates came from the six partner churches of Norddeutsche Mission (Bremen Mission). Among them were the Moderators of Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana (EPC), Bremische Evangelische Kirche, Lippische Landeskirche, the Bishop of Evangelisch-lutherische Kirche Oldenburg, the Synod Clerk of Eglise Evangelique Presbyterienne du Togo (EEPT), the Vice-President of Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche, and the President and the General Secretary of Bremen Mission.
- Delegates also came from Italy (Communauté d'Action Evangélique Apostolique, CEVAA), Cameroon (United Evangelical Mission, UEM) and PCGhana.
- Resource persons were drawn from academic and other institutions in Germany, Ghana and Togo.

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b. where

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E.P.Seminary (Green Hills Campus of EP University), Peki, V.R., Ghana hosted the Consultation. Peki is the historical birthplace of the EP Church, where the first sermon of the EP Church was preached by the Bremen Missionary Lorenz Wolf in 1847.

c. why

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Bremen Mission Theological consultations take place regularly every third or fourth year in Togo, Germany or Ghana. They focus on the common mission of the six churches within the international and intercultural network of Bremen Mission.

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2. Our Procedure

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The meeting had a deeply spiritual character. Prayers and hymns accompanied our sessions and we shared in the Lord's Supper in the closing service. Each of the four days started with worship and bible study, papers and perspectives were presented in plenary, experiences and views from our respective contexts were shared in small groups and plenary. The work in smaller groups helped to intensify exchange of ideas and insights among delegates. The Lorenz Wolf Memorial EP Church, a local congregation in the Peki Valley welcomed delegates to a Sunday forenoon service and to a Monday evening service where an exhibition of history and work of Bremen Mission was mounted for the first time in Africa.

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The work of the consultation was facilitated by the logistics of EP Seminary, Peki. The Bremen Mission is most grateful to the Principal and staff of the Seminary once more for good food and lodging, technical assistance, a cultural evening and a wonderful surrounding.

3. What we recognized in the Bible, by the lectures and in story-telling with one another

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- For the purpose of our work we understand dignity as “the worth, value and demand for respect which human being have or which can be attributed or accorded them”.
 - In the Bible the word “dignity” does not occur. The Bible-study-leaders turned our attention to divers aspects of human dignity:
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- In case of misuse of power, there is a prophetic voice denouncing that as violation of Human Dignity. (1.Kg.21)
 - Overcoming slavery begun with the respect for the slaves as human beings and mutual respect in the christian community. (Philemon)
 - Violation of human dignity as part of our reality is not excluded from our Holy Scriptures.
Breaking the Silence and referring to the righteousness and justice of God are necessary. (2.Sam.13,1-22)
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- Judges should know that there is God as the highest judge over them, so that they respect the rights of the weak.
The voiceless are encouraged and supported to raise their voice. (Lk.18,2-5)
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- Victims can sometimes become victimizers.
Advocacy can become dangerous. Who is protecting the advocates? (Mt.14,1-12)
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- Victims often are blamed. Jesus restores their dignity. (Joh.8,1-11)
 - Human dignity is God-given or divinely ordained.
God-given dignity is egalitarian,
self-made dignity by own achievement (individualistic society) and
society-given dignity (communalistic society) tend to bring inequity.
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- The gift of human dignity comes with human duty, what has been referred to us “the twin divine gifts of dignity and duty” (cf.Eph.2,8-10).
 - Power can promote and/or violate dignity at the same time. When power empowers then it is dignifying and when it oppresses then it is demeaning.
 - The prophetic voice of the church in addressing injustice must be clear and powerful but respectful of the victims and their dignity.
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- The alliance between powers (political, economic, cultural, intellectual...) and church can be a hinderance to the correction of violation of human dignity done by them.
 - Sometimes churches themselves violate the dignity of their own members and employees.
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- Jesus restored the dignity of the sick, poor, “sinners”, unclean, demon-possessed, foreigners, children, women and the elderly and urged Christians to do the same. (some quotations from NT, e.g. Mk.1,29-34)
- 100 • Miracles and deliverances can be understood as restoration of human dignity and a way of reintegrating the excluded into society. Jesus consistently removes the curse of exclusion and re-establishes relationships.
- Often we see ambiguities in the approach to restoring of human dignity. Should the individual rights or the communal/social rights or traditional regulations be given priority?
- 105 • Both the individualistic and the communalistic approaches to human dignity are not perfect. They have their strengths, but also their weaknesses.
- Criminals have dignity as any human being – cf. the story of Cain and Jesus and the criminals on the cross.
Capital punishment and life long sentences do not promote human dignity.
110 Everyone deserves a second chance.
Perpetrators should be treated with dignity as victims are because they are all human beings.
- Categories of violations of human dignity can be distinguished:
 - physical violation and limitation of expression of human capacities
 - 115 - violation by structural misuse of power and by rejection of civil rules
 - ignorance and violation of dignity
- Human dignity can be violated in such way as:
 - uncontrolled financial, political, military and intellectual power
 - absence of solidarity
 - 120 - ignorance and superstition
 - poverty
 - silence
 - shame
 - fear
 - 125 - gender injustice
- Basic social structures must be improved and new ones put in place to promote human dignity. There are governmental and non governmental institutions that collaborate with the churches to promote human dignity.

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4. Basic Affirmations

The Bremen Mission Theological Consultation 2009 in Peki, Ghana hereby affirms the following:

- 135 • That every human being is divinely endowed with dignity. Therefore every human being has dignity. There are no second class human beings.
- That human dignity is the “Mother” of all human rights.

- That the individual must be protected from the societal atrocities.
- 140 • That society must be protected from egoistic abuse of power by individuals and groups.
- That we have a duty to promote and protect human dignity in every sphere of life.
- 145 • That in Jesus we have an example how to restore dignity to the poor, sick, strangers, prisoners, unclean, physically and mentally challenged, children, orphans, widows, elderly etc.
- That as Christians and Churches, the Gospel gives us enormous power to empower the powerless.

150 **5. Recommendations and some practical suggestions to the churches**

The Bremen Mission Theological Consultation 2009 in Peki, Ghana concluded that the Church must stand where God stands, on the side of those whose dignity is at risk or has been violated. He calls His Church to follow him in this, to stand against any
155 form of injustice and with the wronged. God invites His Church to become part of His mission to preserve and restore human dignity for justice and peace to prevail.

Therefor the Consultation calls upon the six Churches of Bremen Mission to:

- Strengthen their advocacy for a just economic order and fair trade in the world (e.g. the cases of Bananas and chicken wings).
- 160 • Care for the rights and the dignity of refugees, be they political or economical and to spread information on the true situation of the refugees in Northern Africa and Europe.
- Strengthen their programmes for improving the situation of children and act against child-labour, trafficking, neglect, abuse (e.g. trokosi (shrine-slavery),
165 female genital mutilation and refusal of birth-registration).
- Act against discrimination of physically and mentally challenged people. “There is no second class in human beings” or “It is normal to be different” should be the churches’ approach.
- Promote the integration of elderly people in church and society and support
170 them not only to exist as objects of help, but also as responsible subjects with a regained dignity. Their dignity (especially in case of dementia) often is violated by the overstressed helpers in carehomes for the elders. The church parish should become a kind of extended family for them.
- Encourage a culture that dignifies the end of life. Unbalanced expenditure on
175 medical treatment and funerals on the one hand and anonymous funerals on the other hand are challenges for the churches.
- Create a safe space for expression of those whose dignity has been violated, e.g. by domestic violence. The churches must attend to their professional counselling work.
- 180 • Review lectionary and liturgy so as to give space to tell biblical and contemporary stories of victims of violence. Texts like 2.Sam.13 should be added to the church calender of biblical pericopies (e.g. Partnership Sunday).