

## Summary of report of group work

(by Pastor Günter Baum)

Deviating from the usual practice, no closing communiqué was elaborated. Instead of that, the contents of the lectures, bible discussions and excursions were laid down in protocols by individual persons, subsequently they were discussed and finalised in group work. A small working group prepared three questions:

- 1) What is for me, for us the basis of the attractiveness of our God?
- 2) In which respect could our words and actions obscure or witness the attractiveness of our Christian faith?
- 3) What is of significance for our mission:
  - the meaning of our cultural and confessional differences?
  - The meaning of our mutual faith?

*(Some of the notes which are of subjective nature were added by us to the wording of the documents. They can be identified by a grey background)*

I wish to highlight some of the notes which are considered important by me. I believe that they need further discussion:

- 1) Relating to question No. 1:
  - The question is two-sided: on one side, it implies great confidence in God who is the original creator and who continues with His creative work. On the other side, it means that He is near to the small and insignificant people. Both these questions are tied together by the word “empowerment”.
  - God is described as a power that is stronger than any other powers who consider themselves as “divine”. He is the Lord who is capable of changing structures and individuals.
  - God's almightiness covers the weaknesses of mankind, too. Our mission does not require wizard-like happenings or unusual religious experiences in order to be convincing.
- 2) Relating to question No. 2:
  - A church that is alive must reflect the actual life of people (considering the composition of the congregation); on the other hand, church has to transform, to change people's lives (by the liberating message of the

Gospel). God is the counsellor of the weak.

- The objectives of the mission are promoted by flexible, participatory and manifold activities.
- In every aspect of our life, we have to ensure that our behaviour corresponds to the love and to the grace of God.
- Our specific Christian universal task is to protect the creation. The world which God has given into the hands of people, asking them to cultivate and to preserve it, needs justice. Christians commit themselves to this purpose the Christian community serves this purpose, too.
- It is the duty of our church to praise God.

### 3) Relating to question No. 3:

- Autonomy of the different churches is a valuable asset (this applies inside Bremen mission, too). This means that each member bears the mission responsibility within his or her own context.
- Because of our diverseness, we are enriched and we receive new ideas for our mission, each in our own contexts.
- Joint reading of the Bible unites us in our diverseness.
- Our belief in the resurrection of Christ removes all cultural and confessional limitations.
- Because Bremen Mission is structured like a family, we are capable of experiencing unity without uniformity. Mutual enrichment comes to us without rivalry. We challenge each other without feeling superior.

Other things that catch my eye:

Whenever summaries or recapitulations are prepared, it rarely happens that christological topics are explicitly mentioned. (As an example, I name the theology of the cross - the resurrection of Christ is named as the power to exceed limits). In the foreground, one finds the theology of the creation and, from the New Testament, concepts of liberation theology. This fact was already mentioned during the closing session of the consultation. My own opinion as a reformed theologian is: this position results from the fact that many participating theologians have a reformed background. For them, the grace of God is expressed not only in the New Testament but also in the Old Testament.

The attractiveness of faith, of believing in the God of our Bible, was the central point of our consultation, not the attractiveness of our church and its activities. In my opinion, this is a pleasant difference which distinguishes us from some impulses in our German church landscape.