Global Ecumenical Theological Institute – GETI

Let’s share our experiences and our visions for the future of ecumenical formation!

Hamburg, 12\textsuperscript{th} – 14\textsuperscript{th} May 2014

Minutes and Report

Dr. Uta Andrée – Academy of Mission

30.5.2014
**Initiative**

The initiative of a Follow-Up-Meeting of GETI on an European level, was taken during the EKD Post-Busan Conference in Loccum / Germany in January 2014. Some GETI participants were present in this conference and saw the necessity of an evaluation meeting of GETI, that could also provide further visions on ecumenical theological formation in Europe. Another GETI Follow Up meeting has taken place in April in Chicago USA.

Benjamin Simon (Karlsruhe), Jonas Widmer (Hamburg) and Uta Andrée (Hamburg) planned the conference and invited as resource persons: Dietrich Werner (Bred for the World); Fernando Enns (University of Hamburg; University of Amsterdam); Ulrike Link Wieczorek (University of Oldenburg; Faith and Order), Gerdi Nützel (Church of Berlin and Brandenburg) and Andreas Wandtke-Grohmann (Church of Northern Germany).

The conference was generously supported by the EKD (Hannover), the ETE-department of WCC (Geneva) and the EMW (Hamburg).

**Participans:**

Koslowski, Jutta (Germany); Eisenberg, Charlotte (Germany); Malmström, Nils (Sweden); Bargar, Pavol (Tchech Republic); Acheampong, Joseph (Ghana / Missionsakademie Hamburg); Khai, Ciin Sian (Myanmar / Missionsakademie Hamburg), Walter, Pearly (India / Missionsakademie Hamburg); Lavatai, Sanele (Samoa / Missionsakademie Hamburg); Sakupapa, Teddy (Sambia; Missionsakademie Hamburg); Anupama Hial (India / Missionsakademie Hamburg); Widmer, Jonas (Germany); Simon, Benjamin (Germany); Andrée, Uta (Germany); Nützel, Gerdi (Germany); Link-Wieczorek, Ulrike (Germany); Werner, Dietrich (Germany); Fernando Enns (Germany / Netherlands); Elorm, Nick (Togo / Germany); Kituri, Rebecca (Kenia / Germany)

11 of the participants were GETI students, faculty members or organisers and another 7 were interested in hearing from GETI and planning together similar events or ecumenical training in General.

**Programm:**

Monday we looked back to Busan: first listening to words of greeting and reflection of Dietrich Werner, having a lecture of Fernando Enns about the pilgrimage-idea of the assembly in Busan, watching the GTEI film which is now available for everybody under: https://vimeo.com/96104820 and finally sharing our experiences with a personal item that everybody brought to Hamburg.
On Tuesday we had three guests who reflected on ecumenical formation in their specific context of educational work: 1. Ulrike Link Wieczorek who is teaching systematic theology at the university of Oldenburg. Her students will be future teachers of religion in German scholl system. 2. Gerdi Nützel who is training future pastors (vicars) in intercultural, interreligious and ecumenical themes for their work in the parishes. 3. Andreas Wandtke-Grohmann who is involved in the formation of lay preachers for the Northern Church of Germany. An interesting discussion on theological formation in Germany and the ecumenical dimensions of it was brought up through the impulses of our three guests. In the afternoon we visited the ecumenical forum in the Hafencity Hamburg. Antje Heider Rottwilm welcomed us and talked about the history and present ecumenical life in the ecumenical center in Shanghaiallee. Having dinner in an Indian restaurant gave us the opportunity for informal discussions and personal evaluation.

On Wednesday three projects were presented: 1. Benjamin Simon informed us about an international GETI initiative, that will take place in Berlin / Germany 2017. It will include the protestant gathering (Kirchentag) and will happen in the jubilee year of Lutheran reformation. 2. Nick Elorn gave some information on a conference with young theologians who originally come from Africa, but live now in Europe. This will take place in the beginning of 2015 at the Academy of Mission in Hamburg. 3. Jutta Koslowski referred to the installation of a tutor group, that will coordinate further worldwide GETI initiatives. Jutta is heading this group which is maintaining the contact to the WCC and encouraging the responsible persons for planning and facilitating further GETI programs along international conferences.

**Highlight of the exchange:**

The conference was very dynamic, after each short presentation we had a extended discussion, in which many points could be highlighted. The following paragraphs are just a mixture of what the resource persons shared and what the discussion brought up.

**Dietrich Werner** gave a tremendous impression of his view on the present krisis, that the world is going through. He compared the present situation with the economic and political crises of the 20ies of the last century. He remembered the COPEC (Conference on politics, economy and citizenship) in 1924. From this conference a manual of 20 volumes was published and it shows that in that time Christianity opened up for political and economic questions. He called this enterprise the first Encyclopedia of ecumenical thinking. His analysis culminated in the statement that: “We are facing a global catastrophe today, this is a call to churches including the next generation.” For him the main objectives of GETI are 1. a strategic leadership formation of young theologians (lay people and future pastors), 2. the Cooperation with local theological institutes / committed to contextual theology (like Asian oikos theology). The great chance of GETI is according to
Werner, that its constituency is wider than that of the WCC. Finally Werner observes the danger of Global "Apartheid" in theological education where different levels of Ecumenical Theological Education are disconnected. Lay formation and academic theology must be brought together, European and North American theology must open up to new concepts from Asia, Africa and Latin-America.

Fernando Enns put emphasis on the claim, that issues of justice and peace must be at the forefront of the agenda of the ecumenical movement. He provoked a vital discussion on his statement: “A church that does not put justice and peace in the centre of the agenda is not church.” Enns mentioned witnesses like Dorothee Sölle as prophetic voices of the church, including the spiritual dimension of Christian mission. (Sölle in Vancouver 1983). Enns sees the essential task of the WCC in providing a safe space where we respect each others vulnerability and where the divisive question can be openly discussed. And again he led us into a hot discussion with his affirmation: “Who leaves the table is leaving the pilgrimage.” According to Enns Ecumenism need disagreement and listening. In the following exchange eight dimensions of the pilgrimage were fixed. Pilgrimage has to include: 1. spirituality, 2. movement (physical pilgrimage), 3. hospitality, 4. learning and sharing, 5. confessing faith, 6. repentance, 7. stations (halts) – as it is a protesting pilgrimage, 8. life commitment (religious vows). Dietrich Werner concluded, that we need to dream big dreams in the ecumenical movement and that: “Commitment for ecumenism is like passion for the impossible!”

Ulrike Link Wieczorek explained the situation of ETE for future teachers. She is experiencing a big loss of reflection of faith among her students but also in the society in general. It is a great challenge for her teaching situation (but also for the churches) to find a language for religiosity and faith. To reveal the existential questions of life and faith is the task today: Why Christ? What is the brokenness of life? She observes a structural analphabetism in religious topics. For the ecumenical movement she discerns three major relevant fields in this situation: 1. Ecumenical engagement is intercultural training, it has to do with an exodus of the knows spheres we feel comfortable in. It is to train habits and open up for the other. 2. Ecumenical engagement deals with justice, peace and life, it asks for the consequences of faith in everyday life. These questions are still accessible for secularized Christians in Germany. 3. Finding common expressions of faith is a need today, because individualized spirituality is overtaking the ecclesial reality.

Andreas Wandtke-Grohm ann, showed us a very specific case of ecumenical learning: The northern Church only came into being in 2012. People from the three formerly separated churches still try to find their way of coming together as former united and Lutheran Christians in a new church Body. This is what also toches his training of lay preachers. The group suggested to bring the lay preacher formation into contact with ecumenical trainings and intercultural programs in the region. Learning in a wider horizon can modify the perspective and bring new dynamics of perceiving the body of Christ in its diversity and unity. From this the very concrete
idea was born to join the African Theological Training in Germany and the Lay preachers formation of the Northern Church.

Gerdi Nützel gave a detailed report on how vicars in Berlin and Brandenburg are trained in ecumenical and interreligious matters. She observes that many of those who want to become pastors have very few experiences with other confessions, other contexts and other religions. Only a few of the young pastors in the parishes are engaged in traditional ecumenical organizations. Some have their personal relationship to some ecumenical partner, but the framework seems to be very arbitrary. Gerdi states, that in the case of Berlin, the migrant churches could play an important role as eye opener (and heart opener) for the church. She asks, why a common theological training is not possible, why are foreigners not integrated in the formational system of the church. She even claims, that Muslims and Christians could come together / be trained together for the discussion of theological questions as part of their formation. She complains on walls and walls in the educational system of her church. One example was the application of an ordained Lutheran pastor from Liberia. He could not been accepted, because he did not go through the German system. Where is this ecumenical self-understanding of the church?

Perspectives:

Coming together, was a very important step view to the strengthening of ecumenical theological education and recognizing each other as interested in deepening the networks of young theologians involved in programs at university level, in migrant formation, in lay formation, in interreligious formation etc.

GETI / Berlin 2017 will be an important event. The participants were very inspired by the presentation of Benjamin Simon. Many new aspects for the further planning were mentioned.

Charlotte Eisenberg indicates a meeting of the network of young theologians MEET (More Ecumenical Empowerment Together) again in Hamburg from 21st to 23rd of July (ecumenical forum Hafencity).