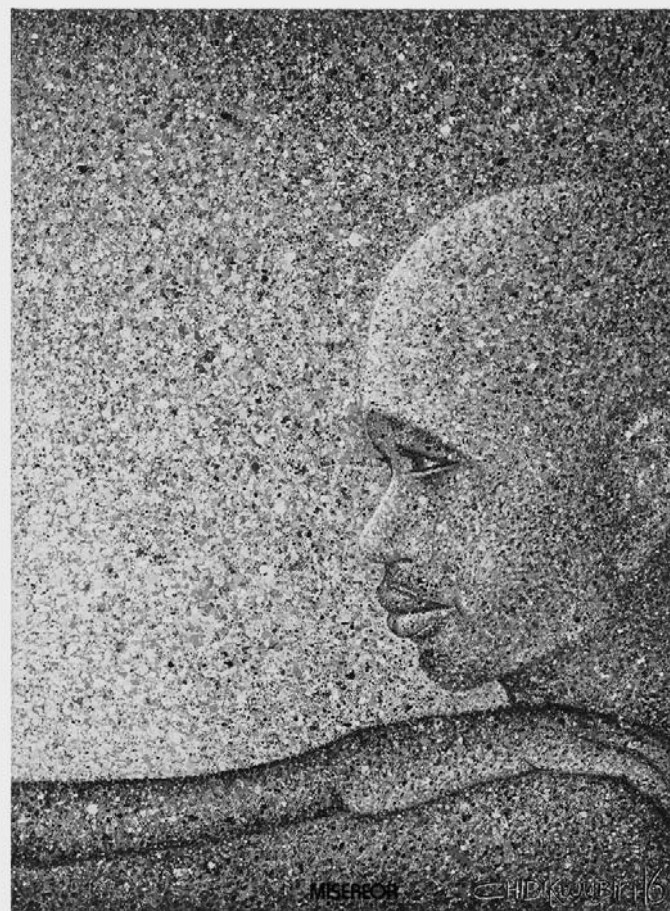


2018/2019

OUR VOICES

ems women's network



ENGLISH

”GOD SEES ME“ THEOLOGY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING



Evangelical Mission in Solidarity

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**Dear women,
dear sisters in the EMS International Women's Network,**

A new issue of OUR VOICES is in your hands:

"God sees me – theological reflections in the context of human trafficking".

In December 2017 various paths brought women together at an international theological conference dealing with the struggle against human trafficking.

Firstly, in 2016/2017, within the framework of the International EMS Bible Project, activists from Argentina, Costa Rica, Cuba and Germany worked together via e-mails on biblical texts concerning sexual harassment and violence.

These women then met in Stuttgart in December 2017 – and we took this opportunity to host a conference with experts from Latin America and Europe.

Secondly, two years previously, the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW), had held specialist consultations on the subject of trafficking of women in the Academy of Mission at Hamburg University. Ten demands were drawn up for churches and mission associations and presented during „the Kirchentag 2015“, the German Protestant Church Festival in Stuttgart. We asked our colleagues in the EMW Gender Commission:

What is the outcome and current stage of these demands? Which possibilities of action do we have?

Regarding trafficking of women, cooperation between regional and international organisations and movements is indispensable: Mission 21, as an EMS sister organisation, works with multipliers from Latin America and Asia on migration and human trafficking.

The Information Centre for Migrant Women in Stuttgart (Fraueninformationszentrum FIZ) advises and accompanies survivors of human trafficking, including victims from West Africa.

Most of the following articles are related to this theological conference and in particular to the cooperation between EMS, Mission 21 and FIZ.

We thank all organizations that have supported us financially and with personnel:
Women's Association of the Protestant Church in Baden, Women's Association of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg, „Oberkirchenrat“ of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg, Unit Mission and Services as well as Gender Desk in Stuttgart.

With warm greetings from Stuttgart

Gabriele Mayer, PhD
Head of Women and Gender Unit
International Women's Network
June 2018

"You see Me"- where and how is God in the face of human trafficking?

Expert Conference on December 15th, 2017:

PowerPointPresentation and lecture by Dr. Birgit Susanne Dinzinger, Head of Department Migration and International Diaconia at the Social Service Agency of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg

A God who sees me

In four steps I would like to subdivide the topic:

- I "You See Me" – beginning with some pictures and impressions
- II "You See Me" – exegetical observations on Genesis 16.3 (the story of Hagar)
- III Where and how is God? – Approximations to a theology of the face of God
- IV Implications for the context of human trafficking

I looked after the Divine who looked at me. *Genesis 16:13*

II Exegetical observations on Genesis 16:3

- Who is this Hagar? (Hagriter, tribe in northern Arabia; in Hebrew this means stranger and is the first person to whom a messenger of God talks.)
Hagar gives God a name: God sees which means that the perspective of "oppression" is perceived.
- Seeing the perspective "You See Me"
- The name of the son "Ishmael" means "God listens" and reflects again her experience of God.
- The name of the well "Beer Lahai Roi" – the well of the living points to the God who sees me.

Jewish Theology: We can only see God's back,
God is only seen in the traces.
Traces of God can be found in the Bible.

- Basic questions of contextual theology are coming up such as:

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God! *Psalms 13:4*

III Where and how is God? Approaches to a theology of the countenance of God

I am speaking from the context of Europe, more precisely the German history:

The term "countenance" can be found 2,400 x in the Bible:
with regard to human beings, and also with regard to God: Divine presence and care.

- The personal God
- The sympathetic (compassionate) God

- Jean Baptiste Metz: "The true authority of the world comes from those who suffer."
What we need is a world ecumenism of Compassion
- The interested, inter-esse god. Levinas and Eli Wiesel elaborate on this kind of God understanding.
- Theology as an expression of hope
Theology = as longing that murderers should not triumph over innocent victims. (Horkheimer)

I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will lead them and repay them with comfort. *Isaiah 57:18*



IV Implications for the context of human trafficking

- Seeing – Looking – Dignity
- Spiritual and political "Practice of the Together"
- No reduction to "being a victim" or "being a helper"
- That means rediscovering lamentation!
Sufferers turn into subjects! Break-through through praying.
Lamentation becomes a public act.
Lamentation has three directions: towards God/ towards the complainer / towards the adversary
- "Even up to here" – Learning to hope together by remembering the biblical tradition:
Hagar: Desert and Well Stories
- Sharing the vision of the Kingdom of God
- Combining mysticism and politics
raising awareness for the compassion of God over and over again
... is such a sentence...
formulating theology out of human knowledge and experience.

But your wells are your diaries, o Israel

As if struck by a rod
your heart quivers
where the bowls of night
hold the depths of a well
beneath which the landscapes of God
begin to bloom,
which you, rememberer among the nations,
lift up
with the vessel of your heart –
lift up
in the spaces of forgetfulness
where no wells are.

Nelly Sachs
Excerpt from Sternverdunkelung / Star Eclipse
1949

“Resisting trafficking in women “ a feminist and theological perspective from Latin America

Nidia Fonseca*, M.A., lecturer at the Universidad Biblica Latinoamericana in Costa Rica

Gender-specific violence

Patriarchal structures** can be found today in all fields: in science and society as well as in personal and collective surroundings.



Josefina Hurtado and Nidia Fonseca

The patriarchal culture, which goes hand in hand with global capitalism, lives on in various ways: in hierarchies – in relationships of power of superiors over their subordinates. This happens because the oppressive and hierarchical power ascribes complementary roles and functions to women and men, so they themselves become multipliers of this culture.

The most common symptom of this culture is gender-based violence. The "panderer state" favours the emergence of different forms of violence side-by-side.

The "panderer state" creates a hierarchy of social relationships. It ascribes to us women the role or place as sexual exchange object which is common in all societies and cultures, i.e. women are refused respect as independent beings.

This global panderer* ideology on the basis of which societies "organize life" is the cause of various forms of gender-based violence: impoverishment, femicide, modern forms of slavery such as human trafficking, which also leads to organ trafficking, prostitution and other forms of bondage.

In order to maintain these identities and the roles and relationships ascribed, a double standard is invented. This double standard justifies discrimination, exploitation and violation of the rights of some with the protection of the rights of others.

This double standard also justifies the impunity of the perpetrators. If, for example, networks of human trafficking are denounced, only the female victims are visible,

men and their different roles within the chain remain invisible.

Women, girls and boys living in a situation of social and emotional alienation easily fall into the trap of pimps, especially when they live in poverty, when they are indigenous or coloured and come from rural areas.

In view of this situation, which I have only described in outlines, we ask ourselves: how can we speak in the name of the victims? How can we give them a voice? How can they be accompanied in face of their psychological and emotional trauma?

In our church, we have initiated a process that tries to respond to this specific context. Let's take a look at this:

Breaking the Silence

In impoverished families – impoverished not only economically but also emotionally – there are often family secrets that need to be brought to light so that the situation can change and the home can become a "safe space".

If silence is broken in this situation, confidence can slowly grow again. In this way, equality and equal rights in relationships can be re-learned.

Life stories can be shared with people who are in similar situations. We are also looking for creative-artistic possibilities for dealing with psycho-social trauma after physical, sexual, patriarchal and emotional violence.

Giving a voice

We have launched the initiative "Open Your Mouth". The people who live together in a house or neighbourhood read Biblical texts together. They learn by "playing" and work therapeutically on the basis of the Bible. This new method of reading the Bible in Costa Rica is called BiblioTherapy and includes four steps:

a) Reading aloud

Everyone reads the text aloud; those who cannot read repeat the text aloud. The texts are read while standing. The significance of persons acting and the places or their positions become clearer.

b) Linking

The participants state what the text is about which is then summarized and written down. Here the theory of the reception of the text applies: The text speaks to each person depending on their emotional state at the moment, i.e. the text tells something about what the person unconsciously projects.

c) Transforming

The text is read in depth. Elements of the text are checked: Scenes, the time, people, theme, structure, typical or repeated sentences, comparison with parallel verses also in other Biblical books.

Then the text is put into scene with the group. Afterwards, each of the participants report what they felt and experienced with the text, not what was explicitly said, but also what could have been said or what could have happened in the context of the events that the text tells.

d) Reading with liturgical elements

In this step, we systematically record what the text wants to teach and what the participants believe what the text wanted to say, after the process of repeated reading and transformation. With a liturgical element this step is terminated.

Factors of Resilience or Resistance

Factors of resilience also include concrete actions by persons from outside, so that those affected can start to reorganize their life situation. These factors make it possible to mobilize resisting powers in people affected. Theology calls this the "concretization of hope".

These resistance factors are supported by two groups of people: those who offer possible ways of prosecuting against injustices and who can point out economic, social and legal pathways that can change the causes of injustices; e.g. the "Madres Víctimas de Trata en Argentina" movement (Mothers Against Human Trafficking in Argentina) which enables civil society participation.

The second group of people are the mediators who directly accompany the target group and identify the approaches that can promote the skills of the people so that they can continue "despite everything"...

One example are the employees of the FIZ Women's Migration Centre in Stuttgart.



Nidia Fonseca (on the right) and Sibylle Dirren (translating)

Giving meaning to personal existence

The faith communities offer opportunities to experience empathy and tender care, for example, through the Eucharist, the "New baptism" and confirmation, without any doctrine and without any obligation to membership. It is about rituals that give the name of the person concerned a new meaning and new meaning of life. Symbols are named that stand for the new meaning or existence of the person and enables her to "go from here to a new direction".

Advocacy/Actions

This is about empowering those affected to take their life experience and abilities as survivors seriously. This can be done through ecclesiastical, public and legal-political advocacy initiatives that the churches can carry out together with other allies:

- Official Announcements
- The provision of workshops raising awareness for other religious communities in the district, in this case on the topic of human trafficking
- The provision of learning materials for the communities of faith in the neighbourhood, which warn about the traffickers and expose their methods.
- Participation in working groups or round tables with the aim of achieving laws or advancing the implementation of existing laws – whether national agreements or international treaties. ☺

From Spanish: Bärbel Wuthe

* Nidia Fonseca held this lecture (abbreviated) in Spanish on the subject. Since great interest in their biblical-therapeutic approach was expressed, we have inserted the passage a-d here.

** Patriarchy: Form of society in which the male has a preferred position in society and family

Challenges and possible action

Results and analysis at the end of the day led to recognizing challenges and intensifying scopes for possible actions. G. Mayer and K. Neumann

During this conference day, a lot was expected from the participants:

First of all, they had to listen to intellectual theological lectures from a German perspective and from Costa Rica. In small groups and in different languages they discussed what they had heard and related it to their own specific environments. In the afternoon they held detailed discussions about the specific contextual conditions in Romania and Argentina. And what remains in the end for local interested people, social workers, staff of counselling centres? How can they develop the necessary courage to continue with their efforts?

In plenary we summarized:

Challenges we are now facing:

Consternation in view of these developments

- How can space be developed for a spiritual dimension?
- How can we give space to distress and suffering?
- How can we make audible the suffering in churches?
For example: observing silence for two-minutes
Reciting the psalms of lamentations from the Bible and not hiding behind general phrases.
- Facing up to the difficult topic over and over again; the theological background can help to gain a different perspective.

Impunity of perpetrators

- How can networks of human traffickers be destroyed? Who are our opponents?
- Deadlocked structures of institutions
How can political commitment and networking be strengthened?
- How can the risk be avoided of institutions withdrawing when they think they have done their job?

Lack of communication

between counselling centres and interested groups of women.

- How can we find ways of creative and effective networking? How can we not lose our courage?
- Do not despair! What can WE do here and now? Support small initiatives such as e.g.: "Red light out!" (Initiative in Stuttgart to ban prostitution) Think about the consequences for families etc. when we employ cheap labour from Romania?

Energy and tenacity which have become important to us for further possibilities of action:

- Conference days like this one and subsequent documentation are important! Publicity is of prime importance!
- Continue drawing attention to the Ten Demands for Church Action! (published in OUR VOICES 2015/16) Churches could help more resolutely – keep reminding and urging for action to be taken
- Diversity in the struggle against structures: "We are many". Learn from the strength of the women involved.
- Emphasis on Practice: the Romanian shelter with lavender cultivation – a home and at the same time an income-generating farm for former victims of human trafficking.
- Pass on to congregations Nidia's theme game on the subject of human trafficking, which she has developed with her students, etc. It is important that people know about the problem.
- Appreciation of further development: At the end of the 1980s there was not even a name for the phenomenon of "human trafficking". Today, many perpetrators have been arrested.
- It needs politics and mysticism.

From German: Bärbel Wuthe



Farewell Liturgy

At the end of the expert day “God sees me“ we celebrated together a farewell liturgy:

Song: *Within our darkest night (Taizé)*

Opening: We are here together in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

Silence: Review the day which thoughts and impressions are in your mind?

Flute Music

Bible Text: Genesis 21, 14-20 reading in German and Spanish

Free prayer: What do I want to thank God for? For whom or what do I want to pray?

Our Father in Heaven: praying in one's mother tongue

Song

Blessing Prayer: see below, reading in German, English and Spanish

Personal Blessing: drawing a cross on one's forehead (or hands) with anointing oil Speaking words of encouragement such as “God bless you with courage, tenderness, tenacity....”

Song: *Nada te turbe (Taizé)*

May God bless us with discomfort
at easy answers, half-truths,
and superficial relationships,
so that we may live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger at injustice,
oppression, and exploitation of people,
so that we may work for justice, freedom,
and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those
who suffer from pain, rejection, hunger, and exploitation,
so that we may reach out our hands
to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough foolishness
to believe that we can make a difference in this world,
so that we can do what others claim cannot be done,
to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

author unknown

Romania: “The house of treasure” – Rescue from the vicious circle

Iana Matei, Romanian activist rescues minors from human trafficking for prostitution



Iana Matei illustrates the vicious circle of poverty and trafficking in women and girls

All of us have seen them, young women, their age difficult to estimate with too much make-up applied – sex workers, leaning against cars or walls in parts of our cities and towns we wouldn't want to walk in the dark. The presence of Romanian and Bulgarian citizens working in prostitution increased noticeably during the last years. We know that the vast majority of these young women and men are victims of criminal networks.

International laws, UN-conventions, and global action plans address the urgency to find immediate solutions to human trafficking. The challenge is to cooperate beyond borders as well as beyond religious, ethnic and class identities. These young victims of prostitution and modern-day slavery, however, cannot hope for support of a strong civil society to enact concrete, practical steps. Romania today is characterized by drastically increasing numbers of people who want to leave home in search for a better life elsewhere. Most of the twelve to fifteen year old victims rescued from traffickers hail from dysfunctional families, with parents earning money abroad and grandparents bringing them up in what is left of traditional social pattern. Easily lured into dependency, many a times caught through the promises of 'lover boys' these kids are nothing but a commodity in a lucrative business model. The traffickers, however, are rarely punished. Hinting at their good connectivity within political circles, Iana Matei explains in her presentation during the workshop that there is no political will to hold them responsible. The number of girls and boys trafficked is increasing.

The Romanian human rights activist Iana Matei had arrived in Stuttgart in the early morning. She had come all the way from Bucharest in her car, 1750 km, all by herself. "Wherever I get a chance to talk to people who are willing to listen, I do it", she says. We are all impressed with her 'matter-of-fact'-presentation. She does not speak about herself but about the girls, she works and lives with. The committed involvement of her son I remember vividly; he is part of the new family that gives the abused, physically and mentally tortured girls a sense of home.

Not having a good home is where Iana starts explaining the vicious circle of sexual exploitation. Brought up in impoverished, broken-up families these girls have a very low self-esteem. Traffickers prey on such condition and easily win them over pretending to fall for them and promising well-paid jobs in rich European countries. The dream of a better life very soon turns into a nightmare of violence and exploitation with love meaning nothing but being raped by up to thirty 'clients' a day. Those who are rescued by the police or government agents are sent to orphanages or right back to their families. Conservative cultural pattern and values force the family to reject the girls, especially when they are pregnant. The circle starts anew.

Some of the girls Iana Matei meets on the streets; others are brought to her by police or organizations that know about her work. The only effective way

out of this vicious circle, she argues convincingly, is to deprive traffickers of their tool, which is the false promise to work abroad. Many of the victims need medical help; all of them need counselling to rebuild self-esteem and training in vocational skills to be able to make a living for themselves and their babies.

Since the beginning of her work in Romania around the year 1998 Iana Matei has rescued 520 children. Freeing them from this modern form of slavery, providing a safe home and helping them to reclaim personhood and self-respect are the tasks of 'Reaching out Romania', Matei's non-governmental organization that runs a shelter and is in the process of building a second one.

She shows pictures of lavender fields that started growing as a new project to help victims of trafficking find new meaning in life.

And with joy she talks about the four children she has adopted, children who were born of the children she has saved.

Iana Matei's engagement requires courage and patience. For many years, her shelter, "The House of Treasure", was the only one in Romania. There are four now, not even one run by the government.

Iana's experience and expertise made her reach far beyond the borders of Romania. She addresses the problem in Western and Northern European countries that offer the markets for sellers of minors; she speaks to public authorities and informs international agencies. It's no wonder that she received a number of prizes.

Her motto is: "God sends us to earth so that we care for one another" ☺

Dr. Kerstin Neumann, Head of Department Mission and Partnership and Deputy General Secretary at EMS



Voices of Human Trafficking Survivors of Argentina

María de los Ángeles Roberto is from Argentina, having received an undergraduate degree in Literature, a Master in Sacred Scripture (ISEDET) with a certificate in Prevention of Human Trafficking (UCA). She is a member of the Evangelical Methodist Church, and a member of the 8M International Woman's Strike and of the communication team of the organization "Mothers of Victims of Human Trafficking".



María de los Ángeles Roberto



Raquel Libermann

I will tell you the story of three survivors of Human Trafficking in Argentina. The first voice comes from the past, from the early twentieth century, the second and third voices come from the present, an adult woman and a teenager.

The first woman, Raquel Liberman, was born in 1900 in Ukraine. She emigrated from Ukraine to Warsaw in Poland with her family as a young girl. In 1919, she married a Warsaw tailor, according to Jewish tradition. They immigrated to the small Argentinian village of Tapalqué, in the province of Buenos Aires, with her two sons in 1922. Unfortunately, her husband died of tuberculosis soon after their arrival. Needing economic support and not knowing Spanish, Liberman left her children with a foster family and looked for a job in Buenos Aires.

Unable to find work as a seamstress, she was forced to enter into prostitution, through a Jewish human trafficking network called Zwi Migdal. This network operated in Western Europe under the cover of a Jewish Mutual Aid Society, which lured girls and young women to Argentina where they were exploited sexually. For at least four years, Liberman was a captive of the human trafficking network. But eventually, she managed to save the money to buy her freedom and opened a shop. But Zwi Migdal started to harass and threaten her to avoid her example being copied by other female captives. A member of Zwi Migdal fooled her with a false marriage proposal and married her in a fake Jewish ceremony. He then stole her savings and attempted to force her back into a brothel. Liberman escaped a second time on December 31st 1929. She reported Zwi Migdal to Police Inspector Julio Alsogaray, whom she knew to be an honest, uncorrupted member of the force that would take her claims seriously. Her judicial complaint was the first to publicly expose these criminal networks in Argentina and evolved into the dissolution of the human trafficking network. Her testimony brought to light the criminal organization's methods, where women were forcibly transported from one place to another, and constantly abused, physically and psychologically, to make them subservient and prevent them from reporting the organization.

The judge ordered the detention of 108 members of Zwi Migdal and the arrest of 334 fugitives on charges of corruption and conspiracy. The lengthy trial ended in September 1930, with 108 criminal convictions. During the investigation, the federal police were to be complicit with the criminal organization. Eventually, the judges' ruling was appealed. Despite Liberman's testimony, the judge in the appeal retained only three members of the

organization in custody, freeing the other members. However, the trial increased public awareness of Zwi Migdal, and led to its dissolution. Raquel Liberman's story ends on April 7th, 1935 when she died of thyroid cancer at the age of 34.

The second story I would like to tell is about Alika Kinan, born on June 24th, 1976 in Córdoba, Argentina. Her life begins with a difficult childhood. Her parents separated when she was fifteen and her younger sister was nine, and her father stopped supporting the family. A year later Kinan's mother went to Buenos Aires, leaving her to care for her sister. Kinan tried cooking and selling pastries to raise money but could not earn enough to support herself and her sister. Her father refused to help her. Reportedly, he told her "You know what you have to do," implying that she should enter into the same profession as her mother and grandmother before her, prostitution. She entered a brothel run out of a private apartment and had to hand over 60 percent of her earnings to the pimps. In 1996, at the age of 20, she was offered a flight to Ushuaia, the capital of Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, commonly regarded as the southernmost city in the world. Ushuaia is a coastal city with an important port and naval base with an international population of manual laborers, sailors and fishermen who hail from all over the world. The prevalence of these jobs, typically performed by men, has created demographic imbalance and a high demand for prostitution.

At the age of 20, she had already spent three years in the sex industry, but she was unprepared for the brutal culture of exploitation that had developed in Ushuaia's cabaret clubs and whiskey bars, known centers of prostitution. The walls surrounding the brothels were lined with barbed wire. "It was a prison. They kept you isolated. The madam said that we could not have any contact with anyone outside the brothel. We were not allowed to have friends. They controlled everything."

In October 2012, Alika was rescued from the brothel by police along with seven other women. Looking back, she calls the day of her rescue "the first step in our becoming people with rights. Women with rights. It was the first step towards freedom." But at first, she could not recognize herself as a victim. When social services offered her a place in a refuge for trafficking victims for herself and her daughters, Alika was initially reluctant: "I didn't understand the nature of the crime and I refused to consider myself a victim of human trafficking. I saw myself as a strong woman who had arrived there because she had no other option, which is an idea promoted by human traffickers, because they make you believe that once you enter the network," she affirmed.



Demonstrations in Buenos Aires against human trafficking

Alika's courageous decision to take her former captors and the municipal council of Ushuaia to court was unprecedented. Following four years of anxious expectation, the trial began in November 2016 amid an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Brothel owner Pedro Montoya, his wife Ivana Garcia and Lucy Alberca Campos, the brothel's madam, were all accused of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The case revealed many uncomfortable truths about the government's complicity in the sex trade.

In the months, leading up to the trial Alika received numerous threats and was physically attacked several times. Despite the dirty tactics employed against her by those in support of the sex trade, Alika went ahead with her testimony and received strong support from a large section of the Argentinian public, led by several feminist collectives and anti-trafficking organizations such as Ni Una Menos (Not One Less), AMADH and RATT. An Internet campaign was launched using the hashtag #AlikaNoEstaSola, meaning "Alika is not alone", and there were huge protests in Buenos Aires and in the street outside the court in Tierra del Fuego as the trial began.

In a historic verdict, the pimp received a seven-year prison sentence and a \$70,000 fine. For the first time in

history the state was also found guilty; the municipal council of Ushuaia was ordered to pay Alika \$780,000 in damages for having facilitated the crime of trafficking. It is now hoped that the judgment will set a precedent and encourage more women to come forward. On hearing the judge's verdict, Kinan embraced members of the feminist organizations who supported her and declared, "now we're going after the pimps all over the country."

Today Alika lives in Buenos Aires and works at the National University of San Martín, in Buenos Aires, doing research and giving lectures on human trafficking, and organizes activities related to the same topic.

The third and final story is about Ana. She was born in 2000 in Paraguay. When she was a girl, her mother separated from her father and immigrated with her three children to Buenos Aires, Argentina. Ana grew up in a slum in the outskirts of the city. Her younger sister is disabled and her older brother has a criminal record. She was abducted from a shopping mall in August 2015. She spent three months in different brothels until she escaped from a brothel in one of the most difficult slums of Buenos Aires because it is an epicenter of drug trafficking. When she returned to her mother's house, she was hurt, abused by her captors and had cigarette burn marks on her body.



Deeper insights in the Spanish language group

Her captors told her that she had to pay a debt that her father had supposedly contracted in Paraguay and that was the reason for her kidnapping. Ana, her mother and sister, entered into a protection and assistance program for victims of sexual violence. Despite that, she was kidnapped for the second time in the month of December 2015. Ana was captive for another two months and escaped again. She went to Madres Víctimas de Trata (Mothers of Victims of Human Trafficking), the organization that accompanied her and attended her since the first kidnapping. Mothers of Plaza de Mayo gave special permission to Mothers of Victims of Human Trafficking's organization so that, one Friday per month, the Mothers of Victims of Human Trafficking make their rounds around the Plaza de Mayo in order to claim justice for their disappeared daughters in democracy. In one of those rounds we met Ana and her mother.

Legally, her case is considered as a victim of trafficking offense and a process is being carried out in which the two kidnappings are investigated. This year, Ana had a baby during a risky pregnancy that was complicated by a sexually transmitted disease she had been infected with when she was forced into prostitution. Ana's story is a proof of the state's abandonment. The state has yet to rescue or stand by the victims. Only the Rescue and Accompaniment Program of the province of Buenos Aires was somewhat more sensitive, especially with the accompaniment of Dr. Adrián Sein in the judicial area.

Conclusion:

The three stories have some things in common: immigration from one country to another or from one province to another, such as in Aliká's case, extreme poverty, kidnapping, sexual slavery, violence based on gender, physical or psychological violence, disregard and indifference from the Estate, corruption between the networks and the police, and a lack of information about women's rights.

Human Trafficking encompasses many different types of gender violence: economic, sexual, psychological, physical, symbolic. We, as feminist theologians and activists, as male and female pastors, all of us need to deconstruct the stereotypes of women as objects and merchandise and establish bridges with institutions related to Health, Education and Justice. This is the way we could fight together in a more effective and organized way against the scourge of trafficking. ☹

From Spanish: translation office Buenos Aires



Doris Köhncke thanks María De Los Ángeles Roberto.

Women weaving on networks against injustice and social exclusion – "Tejiendo Redes – Seguimos"

Cecilia Castillo Nanjarí, is a Chilean theologian and lawyer, gender and human rights activist in Latin America in liaison with Mission21 in Basel, Switzerland.



Cecilia Castillo Nanjarí

"Tejiendo Redes – Seguimos", we weave on our networks, we do this with our voices, with our written words and our actions that come from our hearts. We are aware that this daily exercise – *sui generis* – triggers something that is sometimes uncomfortable, that is incomprehensible in the light of the overpowering realities in which we are stuck. And yet we keep going!

We are weaving on women's networks for a life of dignity, with joy and happiness. From the transformation of life and conscience, empowerment of women can be recreated.

I would like to report here about the women's networks, partners of Mission 21, as a learning community for political action in the context of trafficking of women and girls.

Outcries reach us through women's networks of Mission 21 in Asia, that trafficking of women and girls is bloody reality in their countries and is linked to the pandemic of AIDS. Women's networks in Africa have been painstakingly working on this problem for a very long time

Josefina Hurtado, Director of the Women and Gender Desk at Mission 21, accompanies and supports the education and training of leaders in Asia and Africa facing such challenges.

Latin America and the Caribbean are also confronted with this reality. That is why Mission 21 called on us to formulate a basic paper on the issue of human trafficking in the region. The subject of human trafficking is often ignored or suppressed especially by the Christian churches.

Trafficking of women and girls is clearly shown in the names and bodies of victims in Latin America* and the Caribbean. In view of this situation, a basic paper on human trafficking in the countries of Latin America which are partners of Mission 21, was drawn up and presented on September 8th, 2014 in Santiago de Chile: "Workshop on human trafficking: challenges and chances of prevention".

Seventeen representatives of institutions in Bolivia, Peru, Chile and the Continental network of Mission 21, represented by María de los Ángeles Roberto, shared their thoughts and ideas. These findings complement the baseline that we have drawn up at Mission 21 Women and Gender Desk.

We have been on this laborious, energy-sapping journey for a long time. Nevertheless, it was a challenge for ecumenism, which is now bearing fruit: we can offer awareness-raising, training and authorisation of leaders. We were

given impetus for new Biblical and intercultural hermeneutics in the Afro-Indo-American networks of women in rural areas and cities. In addition, initiatives from the various continental networks against human trafficking are also included.

In Lima, in September 2017, the basis was laid for the Latin American programme "Towards a strategy for political advocacy on gender justice for the partner organizations of Mission 21 in Latin America." Eighteen partner organisations from Mission 21, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and Costa Rica took part in a workshop for leaders who participated in the TOT – Training of Trainers. The aim was to strengthen the links with those who are committed to human rights for women, especially in Mission 21.

Seen from the perspective of Latin America, Asia, Europe and Africa, it is noticeable that the number is increasing of those who believe that women's networks are an effective instrument in tackling the injustices of the established order.

New networks are being established every day, refusing to give up in the fight for a life in dignity, a life without violence for girls and women. Every day more women and girls are empowered by words, actions and testimonies from other women and girls.

We will continue to weave on our networks like the waves of the sea – never-ending and tirelessly. For the human dignity of women we continue to weave – "Tejiendo Redes – Seguimos". ☺

From Spanish: Bärbel Wuthe



Motivated discussions in the working group

Counselling and assistance for victims of human trafficking at the Information Centre for Migrant Women in Stuttgart (FIZ)

Doris Köhncke, head of the centre, reports:

Around 100 women per year who have experienced human trafficking find psychosocial counselling at the Information Centre for Women (FIZ) in Stuttgart.

Different topics play a role: Sometimes a woman is brought by the police, which might require immediate sheltered housing, or it is about financing her living in a precarious situation or about assessing her risk situation. Good accompaniment is necessary from a testimony to the police and till later to the court.

Other women want to return to their country of origin as soon as possible, and we organise the journey and mediate contact persons at home.

Others again have to face the asylum procedure. We listen to the experience and suffering of the women, and very often it is the first time that a woman talks about it. We then write statements and support women through systematic preparation for their hearing or administrative court proceedings.

There are also practical concerns: transferal to medical and psychological treatment, assistance to get into contact with authorities and filling in forms, searching for a place in a kindergarten or a German language course. For victims/survivors from West Africa we offer special group meetings and a prayer group. Due to spiritual dependence in their country of origin, they depend on the strengthening of their Christian faith. ☺



Staff at the Information Centre for Migrant Women in Stuttgart

Oba of Benin moves against human traffickers in Southern Nigeria

The background to this special pastoral and spiritual support for women from Nigeria (page 18, FIZ), is a practice in southern Nigeria: The traffickers initially bring their victims to traditional healers in order to take an oath which obliges them to never give away the names of their dealers and financiers. Thus, they are trapped in a vicious circle of fear, from which it is very difficult to break out, flee, or testify in court in Germany.

In early March, the journalist Alemma-Ozioruva Aliu in the "Nigerian Guardian" reported how a curse of the Oba of Benin can mean liberation for victims of human traffickers:

"During a meeting in his palace in Benin City with tribal leaders of the Federal State Edo, traditional leaders and priests of different deities as well as market women leaders the Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo Oba Ewuare II, has placed curse on perpetrators of human trafficking with far-reaching consequences:

„From today, we no longer want to hear of human trafficking in Benin. I hope those who have been involved in this illegal trade will stop from today. All native doctors who have administered oath of secrecy on victims of human trafficking should also tell those they administered such oath on to speak out. I am appealing to all native doctors to stop administering such oaths on trafficked victims and all such oaths are hereby nullified. No native doctor should do any charm for any potential illegal migrant to cross international border. Those who did it before now are forgiven and whoever does it from today will face the wrought of our ancestors“, the monarch warned.

Oba Ewuare referred to statistics from relevant agencies revealing that most of the victims of human trafficking are from Benin and condemned this current practice.

„The Oba's intervention is a significant milestone in the war against human trafficking and illegal migration“, as was pointed out by the zonal commander, Barrister Nduka Nwanwenne, from National Agency for the Prohibition in Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP).“

From: <https://guardian.ng/news/oba-of-benin-moves-against-human-traffickers-cultists/>



From OUR VOICES 2015/16

Ten Demands for Church Action

formulated by the participants of the International Expert Consultation on Human Trafficking of Girls and Women – a Challenge for Mission and Ecumenism from February 23rd – 25th, 2015 at the Missionsakademie, University of Hamburg

URGENT ACTION IS NECESSARY:

Churches and their networks are called upon to develop strategies against the globally organized business of abduction, trafficking and enslavement of women and girls! Human trafficking of girls and women is organized worldwide according to the same scheme: poverty, lack of prospects and dependence of girls and women are exploited by human traffickers who take them to other places where they are subject to even worse subservience. The girls and women suffer from physical and mental violence leading to lifelong traumatization. Very often they are raped which leads to unwanted pregnancies. These children are thus born without citizenship, i.e. they are homeless and stateless. Women and children are the losers in this situation while the human traffickers ruthlessly enrich themselves, usually getting away with it unpunished. People fleeing from areas of conflict or war are especially at risk.

In comparison to the importance given internationally to this complex topic of human trafficking of women and children, it has not been given adequate attention either by the churches and mission societies here in Germany or in international relationships between partner churches and congregations. Participants in an international expert consultation in Hamburg, organized by the EMW in Germany, urge for this to be changed.

Here the message of the churches is always twofold: the positive part of welcoming, accompanying and comfort-

ing the people affected, the victims, and at the same time clearly pointing to and defining the vicious circles causing such destruction of human lives, combined with demands for justice and termination of violence and exploitation. The message of the churches is directed towards the victims of violence themselves as well as towards politicians and church authorities who are called upon to throw light on the situation, to change living conditions and to prohibit such criminal activities.

WE DEMAND:

1. **Open discussions on the topic of Human Trafficking** in Germany's churches and in the international relationships with their partner churches. The topic must be placed on the agenda of all committees and bilateral encounters and must be brought to the attention of congregations and church circles. Experts, for example from counseling centers and also survivors of human trafficking, should be invited.
2. There is obviously an enormous information deficit on this topic in general and especially with regard to the legal framework of human trafficking. For this reason we ask **for easy access to information material**, which is clearly formulated and offered on homepages to be used by congregations in Germany as well as by partner churches on an international



- scale. An interdisciplinary, **international information network** should be established and expanded.
3. Major international events such as the Football World Cup or Olympic Games are particularly threatening scenarios for Human Trafficking. It is vital that **international campaigns against trafficking are initiated and carried out prior to these major events.**
 4. The churches are called upon to point to injustice loudly and clearly and to work persistently towards transformation. Each and everyone should ask themselves **how they personally can work towards a change?** Where should we begin to rethink? Where do we look away or even where do we actually profit from human trafficking, e.g. by buying textiles from cheap production?
 5. The topic of human trafficking must receive more importance in the **educational mission of the churches.** In Germany, there should more focus on low-wage labour and fair trade. In the partner churches the international interdependence and the dangers of human trafficking must be much more in the focus of attention. **Educational work about the importance of preventive action** must be carried out in families and schools.
 6. Particularly because it is women and girls who come from poor backgrounds who are the victims of human trafficking that it is necessary for the churches to raise their voices. **Where the dignity of humans is violated, God's own self is violated.** In theology and common congregational practice women should experience that they are valuable human beings loved by God and must not be debased by ambiguous morals and false shame. This must be in the focus of gender justice research, teaching and community work.
 7. In regions where human trafficking is carried out with ruthless brutality, the churches **must become politically active** as quickly as possible. They must help the victims and promote transparency and exchange of information by establishing interdenominational and international networks (e.g. at the Horn of Africa with the churches in Eritrea).
 8. Churches worldwide are called to establish **safe havens for victims** of human trafficking. Migrants must be accompanied and supported – also when returning into a life of dignity. They need health care, trauma therapy, pastoral care and counselling. Both the churches in Germany as well as the churches in partner countries must invest money and personnel in this important field of work.
 9. In many places in the world, churches can be **the bridge between the countries of origin and target countries** of human trafficking. In this role they should establish relations between the different agents of churches and governments. In open dialogue they must **work against the taboos of negative cultural traditions.**
 10. When combating human trafficking churches worldwide can use their resources **and learn mutually from positive examples.** Mission societies must publicise projects where church networking against human trafficking and with the affected women and girls takes place. ☺

Photos: Ulrich



Four context specific working groups developed the demands for action. From left: Africa, Sinai, Indonesia, Brazil

Demands on churches and mission societies – what is the outcome after two years?

In May 2015, *Our Voices* was published on the topic of "Human trafficking – a challenge for mission and ecumenism". Simultaneously, it was the documentation on the international expert consultation carried out by the Protestant Association for World Mission in Germany (EMW), which had developed the "Ten demands for church action" in February 2015 (see page 20-21).

In January 2018 we had an exchange between colleagues in the EMW Women and Gender Commission: what is the outcome of these demands? How was the issue taken up in the various mission societies? What is happening today?

Ulrike Hansen reports from MEW, Center for partnership and development mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria. The "Walk for Freedom" took place in Munich on October 14th, 2017, organized by the Active Alliance against Trafficking in Women, www.gegen-frauenhandel.de. A documentation is available on Ten Years of Active Alliance.

Irene Girsang from the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) presents the current human rights campaign "Zwingt mich nicht" ("Do not force me") with a focus on women.

Appropriate materials have been developed specifically for candidates for confirmation.

With *Our Voices* 2015/16 as the documentation of the international expert consultation in Indonesian translation they made very good experiences in their Indonesian member churches, it helped to deepen the topic on site.

Heike Proske, secretary general of the German Seamen's Mission refers to their annual theme "Modern Slavery". July 30 as World Day against Human Trafficking is in their focus. From the various international naval stations they come to hear serious experiences of intersectionality of the problem field.

One example: an Indonesian boatman lets himself be exploited to avoid that his daughter is forced to prostitute herself.



Networking during the expert conference: Prof. Dr. Monika Barz; Jutta Arndt, management board of the association of international youth work, Saskia Ulmer, Evangelical Women in Wuerttemberg

From **Barbara Deml, Berlin Mission Work**, we hear: There is not much done at the moment visible from the outside; however, there are several points of contact and places of action within Berlin Mission Work: a stand at the German Protestant Kirchentag in Berlin 2017, where comfort women from South Korea convey their message that women appear before the public to reclaim their dignity.

Elisabeth Müssig-Heban from the Protestant Association for World Mission in Germany (EMW) points out that before major events such as the Football World Cup members/partners of the EMW become very active and engage in strategic alliances.

IN OUR DISCUSSIONS IN THE EMS WOMEN'S ADVISORY BOARD IN FEBRUARY 2018 WE HEARD:



Mission 21/Basel, Switzerland:

Josefina Hurtado writes: Human trafficking is one of the "burning issues" of the advocacy work at Women and Gender Desk. In Indonesia, church women are on the move as activists to train/inform congregations with a specially developed handbook and in seminars on the dangers of migration and human trafficking/organ trafficking. In March 2018, Mery Kolimon, president of the Church in West

Timor, received the Sylvia Michel Prize for her courageous commitment in Aarau, Switzerland.

Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck (EKKW):

Andrea Wöllenstein: The theme is always on the agenda, among others in various meetings and programs of the church district partnerships, but also at the Protestant Association for World Mission in Germany (EMW) and at United Evangelical Mission (UEM); the latter mission society has repeatedly (most recently in January 2018) performed well-attended events and the so-called Committee on Justice, Peace & integrity of Creation (= JPIC) in the UEM, in which Rev. Bernd Müller is a member, picks up the topic regularly. Under the leadership of the former head of department, Dr. Ruth Gütter, the EKKW organised an international women's consultation on "Violence against women" with partners from various partner countries in South Africa in 2016. This resulted, for example, in a project for consciousness-raising and prevention of violence

in the partner church in Kyrgyzstan ("Stop Violence").

Protestant Church of the Palatinate:

SOLWODI ("Solidarity with women in distress") has been supported in the past with collections during women's meeting on a regional church level (deanery).

Annekatri Schwarz informs that the Women's Magazine EFA reports on these events and the work of SOLWODI.

Protestant Church in Baden:

Anke Ruth-Klumbies writes: As protestant women in Baden we have been accompanying the development of the project "Freija- Active against human trafficking and forced prostitution" in the cooperation network of the three countries triangle, based in Freiburg, Kehl and Strasbourg through the Social Welfare Service of the Protestant Churches in Baden.

Freija offers advice and support for girls and women who are forced into prostitution or exploited in it. In 2006 the Specialist Counselling Service Freija was officially initiated. Since then we belong to the responsible body of Freija and P.I.N.K.- a project to support the exit from prostitution.

Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN):

Johanna Wirxel: We have not forgotten the subject of human trafficking and will deal with the topic more in detail to order to contribute qualified work to the EKHN. We are aware of the importance in the context of European migration and refugee policy. For example, we have a focus on the work of Medica Mondiale and we will adopt this topic in the future.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg:

Financial and personal support for the work of the FIZ, the Migrant Women's Centre in Stuttgart. In April, "Trafficking in Women" is negotiated by the Evangelical Women in Wuerttemberg (EFW) as a special topic in their Network International, says Lore Raudonat. ☺

From German: Bärbel Wuthe

“Paul and Silas and a slave-girl” – Exchange between Buenos Aires and Stuttgart

Acts 16:16-24 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹⁶ One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, “These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you[a] a way of salvation.” ¹⁸ She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour.

¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. ²⁰ When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, “These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews ²¹ and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.” ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. ²³ After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴ Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

INSIGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS ON THE TEXT BY THE BIBLE GROUP OF THE INFORMATION CENTRE FOR MIGRANT WOMEN (FIZ), DORIS KÖHNCKE:

For Paul and Silas, the slave-girl got on their nerves. First, through her shouting, and then it was because of her that they were tortured and imprisoned. And although she was shouting the truth, giving a declaration of the one and holy God, they did not accept her as disciple, as a woman joining their group and community. They drove out the spirit – more, we do not know. It seems that the truth is not so welcome when spoken out in a way that is going on our nerves.

It is her, the servant, who speaks out the truth. She is a servant of her bosses, and Paul and Silas are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Was she touched by seeing Paul and Silas being free by being servants of God? Did she follow Paul and Silas and did she become a Christian? We don't

know what happened to the woman afterwards. Where did she go to? She was free from that spirit – but was she also free as a person? Or did she still belong to her Lords, did she continue to live in dependence from them? Or did they send her away? Where could she go? Could she return to her parents? A single woman could not live and survive alone at that time. So maybe the situation became even worse for her, because now she was useless for her Lords. Did they search another way to make use of her – through hard physical work, prostitution ?

Question to the FIZ group: How does the text relate to your life experiences, your current challenges as social workers working with survivors of human trafficking?

Traumatized persons can be strenuous, it is not easy to have them. Nobody wants to be with them.



Bible group at Information Centre for Migrant Women in Stuttgart

We were wondering what kind of "spirit" had taken possession of the woman. Sometimes, victims of violence have an aspect in their personality that makes them to become victims again and again. Maybe this woman was that type of being a victim always, until through meeting Paul and Silas, she became more self-aware, so that she could leave the role of the dependant victim.

First, the woman plays the main role, then, the focus changes back to the men, to Paul and Silas. She disappears from the story. This made us think about the role of victims who testify at court: often, the victim of human trafficking is needed for the case at court, until then, police and institutions care about her to make sure that she will be available for the case at court. After telling her story at court, the focus turns back to the men, the perpetrators, and nobody bothers about her anymore.

INSIGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS ON THE TEXT BY THE BIBLE READING GROUP IN LATINAMERICA, MARÍA DE LOS ANGELES ROBERTO

Our sisters from Germany drew our attention to an issue that we did not realize. The fact that the screams of the girl could be a consequence of the Post-Traumatic Stress caused for being a victim of gender violence went unnoticed for us. We realized that as the colleagues at FIZ are in a daily contact with victims of abuse of all kinds, they are much more aware of the situation than we.

It was a real challenge to have a second reading of Acts 16:16-24 focusing on the issue of human trafficking. We agree on the fact that this text is usually read without bearing in mind the condition of women slaves and what their masters did to them. The text is only taken into account to highlight the doings of Paul and his companions. It is clear that the girl has masters; hence, she is a slave. She is a nameless, anonymous young woman with a divination spirit (it is important to insist that it is she – and not her masters – the one who has the spirit). This turns her into a source of profit for her owners. This girl is economically exploited; she is no longer a subject but an object. What really worries these traffickers is that they will lose their profit once Paul has cast out this divination spirit. The fact that the girl's story does not have a conclusion

struck us: what could have happened to the slave? Was she released? If Paul and Silas were sent to prison for such a doing, what could the masters have done to the girl who would no longer generate any profit? The offended masters must have noticed that the girl would no longer be a source of income; they could no longer take advantage of her special gift. The question is: was she sexually exploited? Was she forced to work as a prostitute? Was she murdered? Or was she released and thus able to join the emerging Christian community?

Paul's attitude and his indifference to the slave's destiny is also striking. He freed her from the divination spirit (Python's spirit) so that it should stop bothering him by declaring that they were messengers of the Most High God. For the Greek, the "Most High God" was Zeus. Thus, in the geographical context of this story, this is not a statement of faith. However, traditional approaches on the text show this to be an exorcism performed by Paul so as to show the power of the Spirit of God acting through him and through Silas. But the text does not show any hints of liberation, whether spiritually or physically, in the girl's life.

All the elements in the text are present in the modern reality of human trafficking for labour exploitation purposes. Here the real victim is the slave. Paul and Silas were sent to prison and later miraculously released. But there is no further mention of the girl in the text. In an essay, Néstor Miguez says, "No more will her name be remembered, nor her condition or existence. Not even Paul. She will no longer be considered. Her story will surely be part of the misery of pain and exploitation and will be one of the many unknown stories of unpersons in this world."

Continuation of the FIZ Bible Group

Question: What do you like in your tandem partner's report?

- that they mentioned human trafficking from their own context and that it is still happening all over the world
- the reflection about how in vulnerable contexts, some are used to make profit for others.
- the honest reflection of the male Argentine pastor who found it difficult to read "between the lines" of the text and to see the situation of the slave.



Bible group "Online" in Latin America: Argentina, Costa Rica, Cuba

Continuation of the Bible Group in Latin America:

The fact that human trafficking is as evident today as it used to be. How could we, then, get rid of this scourge?

In a direct way: It implies reporting the presence of traffickers in country borders or passing a migration law with clear provisions to that end. It also implies raising awareness on human trafficking through educational devices, especially when it concerns young people or people from a certain neighbourhood or parish.

In an indirect way: It implies providing environments for gender equality and economical justice as well as granting access to education to all people, especially to the most socially vulnerable (jobless women, impoverishment, illiteracy).

What actions can be initiated? How can we perform such actions?

- by having Paul’s and Silas’ faith; such a faith is a witness of what happened with Jesus Christ; in this way it will be possible to find other people willing to join the movement and to seek prayer gatherings.
- by being aware of social conditions that may make women vulnerable and that facilitate the influence of human traffickers or of people performing illegal acts that may result in enslaving others. ☹

* NEWS FROM EMS WOMEN’S NETWORK

LEBANON

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2018 WITH THE LITURGY FROM SURINAM

The World Day of Prayer (WDP) English worship service was held on Friday, March 2nd 2018, at the Near East School of Theology (NEST). The theme was “All GOD’s creation is very good”. It focused on God’s gifts to people and how to use them for the welfare of families. Women and men from different churches attended the service. The room was full.

Children’s choir from the Armenian Evangelical Church was highly appreciated. The theme of the song “Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle” was very much related to our daily struggle around the globe.

Dr. Fifi Kallab, a consultant in environmental science and a believer in preserving the nature, mentioned the difficulties people face in their daily lives such as scarcity of water, pollution and unethical use of scarce resources. She recommended proper coordination between governments, non- profit organizations, and people at large in taking action against the destruction of Mother Nature. During the service Ms. Maria Haboush, played the guitar and sang “the Lord’s Prayer”. She was accompanied on the piano by Ms. Nadine Mouwaadieh. Mrs. Samia Boulatd made a presentation about the contribution of “A ROCHA” organization in preserving Mother Nature and in developing natural reserves in the Bekaa Valley. The three women

mentioned above are members of the National Evangelical Church in Beirut.

Papers in the form of a frog symbolizing “the blue frog” one of the protected animal species found in Suriname was distributed to the audience. Each one was asked to write his/her commitments towards preserving Mother Nature and keeping it sustainable to future generations.



At the end of the service, a final commitment was made by the audience focusing on protecting the earth for future generations and hence leading to healthier people and a cleaner planet. Small baby pine trees were distributed to the audience and an olive tree was planted in the garden of the NEST symbolizing the importance of preserving greeneries in nature. ☹

*Dr. Renee Ghattas
Committee member, National Evangelical Church in Beirut*

The Liaison Women of the International Women's Network



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María De Los Angeles Roberto (private): page 12,13, 25
Mission 21: 16, 17

Articles identified by an author do not necessarily reflect the editors' opinion. Copies or reprint welcome, please indicate EMS source.

*May God bless us with discomfort
at easy answers, half-truths,
and superficial relationships,
so that we may live deep within our hearts.*

*May God bless us with anger at injustice,
oppression, and exploitation of people,
so that we may work for justice, freedom,
and peace.*

*May God bless us with tears to shed for those
who suffer from pain, rejection, hunger, and exploitation,
so that we may reach out our hands
to comfort them and turn their pain into joy.*

*And may God bless us with enough foolishness
to believe that we can make a difference in this world,
so that we can do what others claim cannot be done,
to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.*

author unknown

