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Two pieces of work

A summary from United Evangelical Mission

topics:

- *pastoral care and the issues of the ecumenical movement*
- *relation of pastoral care and pastoral action*

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“Ecumenical Workshop” – the title is our program!

Ecumenical, that means cooperation with people from different countries and churches as well as from different cultures and contexts. And in every seminar or conference conducted in the “Ecumenical Workshop”¹ of “United Evangelical Mission” (UEM) here at Wuppertal, participants can start a “piece of work”, which they can develop further while they continue with their work in their daily lives. The same happened to me during the cooperation with SIPCC and the issue of “Global Economy and Every Day Life”.

Even the slip of the tongue “Economical Workshop” in one working group (not for the first time!) is programme: It is most characteristic for the worldwide ecumenical movement, that it has always seen and included into its theological discussion and work, that there is an influence of global economy on the every day life of the people of the world.

During the cooperation between SIPCC and the Ecumenical Workshop / UEM in the conference for me mainly two “pieces of work” were shaped, on which I would like to continue working:

1. Pastoral Care Needs Pastoral Action

That there were only very few participants in the conference from the North and the West of the world (seen from the European perspective) while SIPCC-members from the South and the East would have wanted to participate in greater numbers than it was possible, shows the reality of today’s societies and the churches within them (and in fact is the general issue of the development education programme of the Ecumenical Workshop):

In the North and the West life is still ruled by one principle: “One doesn’t speak about money, one has it!”. People don’t like to deal with the global economic issues, not least because they know or assume, that then they will have to tackle with their involvement into the global system and their profit from it (even against

their will). All the more only in exceptional circumstances the economical context of every day life is included into the work of pastoral counseling in the churches of the North and the West. For many people's problems it doesn't seem to be relevant.

In the case study groups at the latest colleagues from the South and the East have taught me to see things in a different way: For them and their clients the economic situation is of such great influence on their reality, that there will be almost no case, which will not take the economic context of clients' lives into consideration. And the case studies from Germany have made clear to me, that in our context it is time to stop leaving out the context of economy but to include it into the theory, practice and research of pastoral care and counselling.

Reliable pastoral care and counselling, that has Ronaldo Sathler from Brazil made clear in many statements,¹ can not stop knowing about the economic influence on every day life, let alone help people to hold out. True care will at certain times and places require action against the negative effect of global economy and therefore break the long existing "division of labour" between pastoral care and political action in the church.

2. Pastoral Action Needs Pastoral Care

Development education programmes in the Ecumenical Workshop in Wuppertal, UEM-projects for the improvement of the economic situation of people in Africa and Asia, cooperation with international organisations against the negative consequences of global economy – these are the ways UEM (e.g.) proposes to overcome structural economic violence – right in line with the above mentioned "division of work" in the churches.

But the cooperation with SIPCC for UEM establishes an important process of learning: Dealing with structures very often lacks the personal level of the affected people and the work of pastoral care makes that obvious. Many politically and economically high efficient projects do not take into consideration the pastoral aspect and the well known "division of work" functions here as well: On one side economic improvements, pastoral care and counselling on some other. Improvement of the economic situation in strong connection with pastoral care does already happen in some projects, e.g. the counselling for female workers in the Batam / Indonesian textile industry. But economic improvement and pastoral care should go together without saying.

Two "pieces of work" from an interesting cooperation, which are worth being worked on in the future. The training course for Indonesian pastors, which will be run by Helmut Weiss and sponsored by UEM in early 2002 in Sumatra, will be a good start.

Notes

¹ SIPCC's 15th International Seminar on Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counselling was conducted at the "Ecumenical Workshop", an educational institution of United Evangelical Mission at Wuppertal/Germany, in co-operation with the staff there. The theme of the seminar was "Pastoral care between global economy and every day life".

² See e.g. his article in this workbook, p. 144.