

A service of celebration to mark the retirement of Professor Dr Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel on 29th May 2021, and subsequent words of greeting

Words of greeting: Reverend Dr. h.c. Martin Junge, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation

“Pan para el Mundo”, “Bread for the World”. I find this story inspirational each time I think of it: a few years ago, a group of local partners were waiting at the airport to meet a high-ranking delegation from Bread for the World. To identify themselves, the local representatives held up a sign in Spanish stating, “Pan para el Mundo”. After a few minutes, they were surrounded by security forces, who then led them away ... What was that all about, they were asked. Which political party or social movement did they belong to and why were they using such a sign to stir up trouble. Political demonstrations would not be tolerated in the airport building, they said. And in any case...

It all took a while, with even the local bishop showing up at one point to explain the situation and try to calm things down, before the local partners were eventually released. Without their sign, of course. That was confiscated. Much too inflammatory. Subversive. Bread for the world – where, on earth, would that lead?

This incident, which did actually take place in a Latin American country, is a potent reminder of the enormous explosive power of the Gospel message: that in Christ all people may have life, and may have it to the full (John 10:10). According to Christian understanding, works of charity reach their culmination in the all-encompassing vision of the dignity that is intrinsic to all people, and of the justice, to which all people are entitled. And that is why Christian charity is always both: an intrinsically spiritual matter, an unavoidable expression of Christian faith, and, simultaneously, a deeply political issue.

Dear Cornelia, I chose to begin my words of greeting with this incident, because I have always recognised these two dimensions throughout your long and beneficial leadership at Bread for the World. You have always been able to do both: to argue your case on a biblical and theological basis, and, also, to take political action or incorporate basic principles of Christian faith into political discourse. You have had the ability to communicate complex political issues to the churches – Bread for the World, of course, also stands for tremendous educational work – while, as head of a German organisation with global connections, simultaneously bringing theological and ethical issues into political discussion: at local and global levels through your involvement in ecumenical structures.

The Lutheran World Federation has close ties with Bread for the World. We are travelling together in today's world – a world that is becoming increasingly rough in tone and behaviour, and, in which, inequality, instead of decreasing, is continuing to grow – with the aim of establishing tangible signs of change, of empowering people and communities and strengthening civil society structures. We remain committed to the vision that there is enough bread and that all people should have their daily bread. In the area of scholarships, in which we are jointly involved, in our support of refugees – primarily in Africa, in our advocacy work on climate justice and for human rights in general.

But, over and above the solid partnership and co-operation between Bread for the World and the Lutheran World Federation, I would also like to thank you on a personal level for the exceptional communication between us and for your active support, especially in working areas, for which there can never be enough support and co-operation. For one of these, the Augusta Viktoria Hospital in East Jerusalem, you have kindly consented to continue serving as a member of the advisory board. The Lutheran World Federation is most grateful to you for this.

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God's blessing, dear Cornelia: for the duties and responsibilities you are now handing over – that they continue to bring about change and satisfy the hunger for bread and justice; for all that remains unfinished and fragmented – that God may bring it to a satisfactory conclusion; for your further path – that you can continue your journey in the spirit of Jesus, with eyes open for the people, who are oppressed, with strong hands that are always willing to help out, with an astute mind that not only recognises problems but is also determined to get to the bottom of them.

Brot für die Welt. Pan para el Mundo. Yes, in God's name: Brot für die Welt!