

## **Keynote Address**

**by**

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### **The Socio-political Background of the Reformation and its Relevance for Today**

#### **ABSTRACT**

The historical background at the time of Luther has been discussed and described in many different ways, very often with confessional depictions of history. Recent research has contributed to a changing perception of the past interpretations. There are more inclusive approaches that have emerged both from Catholic as well as Protestant researchers of this specific period. There is a new interest and attention made to a vast number of non-theological factors as well as political, economic, social and cultural domains that play a crucial role in what might have been described as a religious sphere. I wish to focus and to reflect on three main areas: Firstly, some reflections on the historical background of the reformation. Secondly, to elaborate on the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue – diapraxis and its progress in the last few years. Finally, some thoughts on their current relevance, drawing upon some of the approaches from The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and own its experiences.

I will also emphasize the dynamic character of the Reformation as a movement. Taking an insight from The Lutheran World Federation (LW) that ‘the Reformation is ongoing, ecumenical and global in its nature’. What’s ‘on stake in the time of Martin Luther is not exactly ‘on stake’ in our times. Hence the current attempt should be to contextualize and reframe old questions and concepts in a different way ‘close to home’. What does grace and liberation mean in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Climate change, increased inequality and polarization of ethnic and religious groups, are some examples of ‘what’s on stake’ of our times. Today humanity as whole ‘is on stake, has become a commodity for sale. God’s creation is under threat and laments and Salvation is hijacked by other agents like the Market and its desires. Renewing the gifts of the Reformation in our time, churches and faith-based organizations should mobilise every opportunity more publicly to recognize the urgency of our issues as they can be resolved.

Martin Luther brought a new understanding about the vocation to serve fellow human beings and promote common good. The works of mercy, according to the reformer, “are not to be performed within the confines of religious buildings or practices, but in everyday life for the sake of one’s neighbour.” Today we are compelled to add the demanding ecological dimension as the Mother Earth has been made vulnerable and though interlinked. The commitment and the Church’s Mission today is rooted precisely here, *Together in Hope*.