



APRIL 2009

INSERT ARTICLES

SAMS, WFTL, WSF January-February 2009

A few notes from a three Conference Journey

Southern African Missiological Society (SAMS) Conference, Pretoria

The first week was in South Africa at a missiology conference focusing on ecology and climate change. It was mainly Protestant theologians and missiologists with a few Catholic missiologists present.

The most interesting presentation argued that to contribute to a change in behaviour around the climate change gases we emit, knowledge is not enough ... and even knowing what to do to change does not often lead to any action. The theologian, **Ernst Conradie**, from the University of the Western Cape, argued that we need to expand our moral imagination that we need to imagine a lifestyle without oil, without neoliberal capitalism and without inequitable distribution of wealth. He challenged theologians, church leaders and anyone concerned about justice, peace and creation to accept the responsibility to be shapers of a very different moral imagination amongst our communities and nation.

Another speaker, **Samuel Kobia**, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches spoke of the WCC's journey around Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). The revisiting of the journey was because in May 2011 in Jamaica, JPIC will be a significant part of the WCC discussions. Sam talked about the prophetic juxtaposition of J-P-IC and the tensions inherent in this juxtaposition. While violence, structural injustice and environmental destruction are three inter-related threats to life, concern for the integrity of creation (IC) challenges all approaches to justice and peacemaking that take no account of the finite reality that is the planet. He also spoke of the need to recognize that because of 500 years of colonisation, slavery and extraction of raw materials the North owes the South a huge debt, far more than is claimed to be owed by the South in so-called third-world debt. And now with the North being the biggest culprit in carbon dioxide emissions, the responsibility of the North increases.

Charles Fensham from Knox College, Toronto, Canada, had an interesting reflection on *missio dei*. This phrase has been seen as referring to God's mission and God calling us and sending us in this mission. Charles talked about *mission dei* as God creating, God giving birth and birth being a sending forth. Sallie McFague talks about creation as the body of God, Charles suggests that creation is the "child" of God. **Annalet van Schalkwyk**, of the UNISA missiology department, challenged us to re-image abundance so that all of life can share in it. She raised questions about how we broach the issue of our/others complicity with injustice and with ecological destruction. How do we become less complicit? **Andrew Warmback**, from the Durban-based OIKOS project, quoted Michael Pollen dismayed at the immense disproportion of what Al Gore named in "An Inconvenient Truth" and the puniness of the request to change our light bulbs. **Tim Gray**, a Johannesburg Anglican priest talked about eco-audits of all areas of parish and church life.

World Forum on Theology and Liberation (WFTL), Belém, North Brazil

Then I flew to Brazil and up to Belem on the edge of the Amazon. The first five days were the World Forum on Theology and Liberation which focused on ecology and mission and liberation theology attempting to broaden its concern to include the oppressed planet. There was a strong presence of **Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur** with a stall and DVD presentations about the life and work of **Dorothy Stang**, the member of their congregation murdered four years ago because she stood with Amazonian tribes to protect the forest.

The keynote was a liberation theologian **Leonardo Boff** who had been silenced by the Vatican but found a way of still teaching and writing. His key insight was that human beings are not the yardstick but life and particularly

life of the planet. The planet can survive without humans but humans cannot without the planet (at present). ... And for the planet we are at a critical moment in its history. This is a critical moment that needs, not technical management, but a new art of relating to Earth, where we see ourselves as part of the whole and not above it. We need new values and a new paradigm that shape how we live in this “living organism” we call Earth. We need these because we human beings are now using 30% more of Earth’s resources than Earth can replenish. The injustice of it is that 20% of humans control and consume 80% of Earth’s resources while 930million go to bed hungry each night.

Boff sees a number of obstacles to a new art of living in the living organism of Earth: 1. Anthropocentrism (to quote Einstein ... It is easier to decompose an atom than to remove a human prejudice.) 2. Human reasoning to domination and we forget other ways of being. The deepest part of being human is not rationality but feeling. We need to feel things, we need to feel people hungry, species extinction. Darwin was wrong. Competition was not the fundamental law of nature – cooperation is. We must not be afraid of our true roots. 3. Our loss of a sense of mystery. We need not to talk about ecology but creation and thus keep being open to the Creator with a deep sense of reverence. ... We need to be more with less!!

Another speaker was **Emilie Townes**, an African American Baptist Feminist Theologian from Yale University. Emilie began by focusing on God’s naming God’s creation as good. She believes we rush too quickly past this reality to focus on Genesis 3’s fall and sin and in doing so we dismiss creation and therefore the Creator who is revealed in creation too easily. Human beings are part of the creation. We are made in God’s image, we are graced beings called to live this grace in its fullness through caring for what God cares for – God’s creation. Yet human arrogance has made us handmaidens of ecological suicide, so we need to become communities living environmental justice.

The way forward is to accept the challenge that sustainability presents, to put into place new patterns of understanding and analysis, stop collapsing creation into environmentalism, take an uncompromising look at our social locations and the way we are socially constructed beings, realise that no one can do this work alone, no one is an expert, and be willing to be changed, to grow and to admit of participation and our resistance to living sustainably. And finally Emilie called us to live this new life through and everydayness because what is more important is what we shape our everyday lives around rather than grand moments of indignation and action.

A third speaker, **Steve de Gruchy**, a missiologist from South Africa, argued passionately about the importance of what we do with our “shit.” Sewage is where economics and ecology collide and because we have to live with our waste, we all need to accept that we all now live “downstream” of the places we dispose of our sewage. Sewage is also where the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth come together. It is important not to play one off against the other.

In searching for a metaphor, a motif that might contribute to imagining a new way of being on this planet Steve named the limitations of the liberation exodus motif and the ecological genesis motif as each being one sided. He wanted to build on a spirituality of rootedness, of sticking around, a spirituality that takes cholera, bucket toilets and sustainability seriously.

He then pointed to a new motif – the Jordan River motif. Though he recognised significant limitations of his new motif (he is aware of the impact upon the Canaanites) – he also saw that it has much to say if we moved beyond the sense of “promised land” but to a “land of promise.” He sees that when the Israelites reached the Jordan they were given a responsibility to care for the land, and to care for each other in the land. He sees the land as a common gift. It belongs to God; it is shared and not private property. Rules were created to govern

and bind the strong and a vibrant prophetic tradition arose that spoke truth to power. All were called to give account of how they used the commons and how they lived with the land and their neighbours. The Jordan River motif is also about communal celebration as living across the Jordan has to do with gift and promise. The point of the motif is to provide a way of touching our imagination that might help spur us to taking responsibility. We need better ways of dealing with our “shit.”

Jean-Francois Roussel from the Centre for Contextual Theology at Montreal University presented work he was doing concerning “Aboriginal Residential Schools in Canada and the role of the Churches: Partners in dismantling a relationship with Territory. From 1920 till 1969 Aboriginal children were FORCED to attend residential schools a great distance from their homes by law and 5 churches were party to this. 150,000 indigenous Canadians were affected over this time of which 80,000 are still alive.

The residential school for each tribe was deliberately a great distance from their tribal territory. The goal was to deliberately disorientate the children, to limit their relationships with their families, home community, culture, language, spirituality and land. It was to turn the children to the white culture of their educators. Jean-Francois argues that it was to de-territorialise them at every level of their being and in every sense of the word. It was a deliberate de-territorialisation of the body, mind and spirit.

The main-line churches with their “universalist” theology were active participants in this process. Jean-Francois believes that a key theological task today is to let go of an abstract universality and begin a sustained local reflection about, and on, the experience of “territory”, about the experience of context, of particularity, of local in all its facets.

Chung Hyun Kyung, a Korean feminist theologian now in New York, called for a new paradigm in liberation theology. She reminded us that we are not human beings outside of nature; that our concept of God needs reconsidering - to ever-creating loving compassion; that we need a democratising of power- power with, power to empower; that notions of masculinity and femininity need to be re-envisioned- to move away from the dualism and categorisation of “other”; and that there are different kinds of knowing outside of rationality.

Felix Wilfred, an Indian Catholic theologian and missiologist, in reflecting on Boff’s presentation named that there are limits not only to the enlightenment paradigm but also of the Christian paradigm. We need many religions together, an interdependence. It is not a question of doctrine but of basic vision, of relationship with life.

World Social Forum (WSF), Belém, Northern Brazil

The third event I attended was the World Social Forum. The focus – **Another World is Possible** – was extended to the planet and choosing to hold the forum on the edge of the Amazon rainforest was a symbolic way of connecting with a part of the planet most at risk.

The numbers quoted of registrations were 90,000 to 100,000, with about 90% from Brazil. So there were really two forums happening. One very local with lots of workshops and choices and one where those who could not understand Portuguese had fewer choices and kept seeking each other out. There was simultaneous translation in the bigger auditoriums so I went to a few of those run by Brazilians and found them very rewarding. For the locals it was very much a grassroots/NGO/trade union/church event. For the foreigners, particularly the English speakers it was very much a middle-class reality ... those who could afford the exorbitant airfares to get to Belem ... with a hope of hearing/engaging/learning and be touched by the voices of the Global South.

The theme **Another World is Possible** was morphed at times into another planet is possible, another development is possible and another human consciousness is possible. I went to a session run by a New York Sociologist asking if Another U.S. is possible. There had been a North American social forum in Atlanta sometime last year and the US and Canadian anti neoliberal forces gathered ... but while Obama has won the election there seems little feeling that there will be a significant change. Yes they will sign up to Kyoto, but the evidence is that Kyoto is too little too late and that a 90% cut in North American carbon emissions has to occur over the next few decades.

Sessions included feminist dialogues and Gender Based Violence, Trade union and workers rights issues including the global labour charter, educating for another possible world, the so-called financial crisis ... which got put into context of a development crisis, a capitalist crisis and a planetary crisis ... fair trade agendas, right to livelihood, right to land, food crisis, race and discrimination issues, Palestine and Gaza, HIV in Zimbabwe, Indigenous environment networks, right to water, building global democracy ... plus a whole range of groups just talking about what they do ... like the Consolata Missionaries, the Brazilian Catholic Religious Congregational leadership, World Council of Churches and the American Quakers service unit.

I went to sessions run by the **Paulo Freire Institute**, who were the local hosts and organisers of WSF2009. It focused on using stories of another possible world as a pedagogical tool to unpack experiences of struggles against the neoliberal agenda, to reflect on them in a way that carefully names the context, what moved us to respond, to act and to protest and how can we draw on that energy in future contexts. Essentially the sessions were about how to recognise what empowers us to act, what thinking, emotions, events so that in knowing that we can draw on similar energy in the future. This sort of knowing was named as a political act and was named as the basis of a political pedagogy.

Another session was a meeting of English speaking academics (mainly U.S. and Canadian) who were trying to link research and activism. The chair founded the US Global Studies association as an interdisciplinary approach to global issues. The two questions posed at the beginning ... How do we get people to understand the issues we raise? and What does it take to get people to move to become involved in issues? set the tone. BUT outside of exposure/immersion experiences and getting students/ people to intern with social justice groups they did not have any more ideas.

Another two sessions were looking at the WSF and the way forward. What was actually being achieved in the WSF and was that enough to want to carry it forward. Many wanted a more political set of responses and to link with political parties but most wanted to keep it at NGO and social movement level and see the WSF is a space to meet to hear each other's concerns and to build alliances and strategies for action together. Speakers included Chico Whitaker one of the co-founders of the WSF process, Noam Chomsky, Meena Menon a feminist activist, Walden Bello a Filipino activist and academic and Francois Houtart a sociologist with a cutting analysis of capitalism and the neo liberal agenda. There was a strong sense that the linkages/ alliances that had occurred were of great value and that coming to listen, and less to argue your own particular agenda, was key to making best use of the process. The WSF was named as a form of socialization ... in the process people are actually learning new ways of listening and new ways of being with each other even when there are disagreements about vision and strategy. The hope is that this small process can contribute to a new global democracy based on a horizontal equality and a consensus process. There was a strong belief that we need alternative spaces to learn these processes.

Climate Change and Sisters on the Planet

From an article in 'The Circular' (National Council of Women) February 2008

by Barry Coates, Executive Director of Oxfam, New Zealand

We face a crisis which could cause massive damage to families and communities across the globe. No, not the financial crisis, although the consequences of speculation and greed will hurt many, people, particularly those who are already hungry and vulnerable. It is a climate crisis. If we don't stop pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere at an ever-increasing rate, we won't need a financial system.

Time is running out to limit global warming to well below 2° – a critical threshold. If we fail, the effects will be catastrophic and irreversible. It's a huge injustice as those most affected are those who are least responsible and least able to cope – especially women and children in the poorest countries who are likely to bear the brunt of climate chaos. Amongst the most vulnerable are our sisters in the Pacific.

At the UN negotiations on climate change in Poland in December, Barry Coates of Oxfam, NZ, reinforced the message that climate change is not just an environmental crisis, but also a threat to the survival of families, communities and even whole nations, a point strongly made by the Prime Minister of Tuvalu.

But despite pious words of compassion, developed countries (including New Zealand) are ignoring evidence of the accelerating pace of climate impacts and still shirking their responsibilities to take action on climate change. We have done little since the first UN climate change agreement was signed in 1992. Now, 2009 must be the year for action. We need an agreement on climate change that extends beyond 2012 (when the first period of the Kyoto Protocol runs out). The deadline is December 2009 in Copenhagen.

That is why Oxfam, with their partners and allies in New Zealand and around the world, are planning a huge global campaign to build momentum during 2009 from World Environment Day in June, through to the UN summit in September and on to the Copenhagen conference in December.

We are asked to support the campaign by using and promoting the Sisters on the Planet DVD and supporting materials to help others to act. The Sisters on the Planet stories tell us that climate change is already having a major impact on people's lives – and those being hit hardest are women in developing countries.

Some positive action we can undertake:

- Write to Oxfam New Zealand at campaigns@oxfam.org.nz for a copy of the Sisters on the Planet kit to be sent to you..
- Take Sisters on the Planet to work and show the DVD at morning tea or lunch time.
- Organise a local event to show the DVD and talk about Sisters.
- Get Sisters into schools
- Write to your local MP and explain to them why the poorest women are at greatest risk from the impacts of climate change.
- Encourage people to sign the 'Feel the Heat' petition (at www.oxfam.org.nz/climatechange) asking the New Zealand government to put people living in poverty at the heart of the international climate change deal.

Helen Doherty Auckland Pax Christi group

Transitions Towns

What are transition towns?

The Transition Towns (TT) concept was initiated in Kinsale, Ireland in 2006 and has now spread around the world with more than 100 officially recognised Transition Initiatives, including over 60 setting up in New Zealand (e.g. Raglan, Waiheke, Orewa and many others). The focus is on peak oil and climate change education. It is envisaged that each transition group, which may be a street, a neighbourhood or a church community, networks with their local community and local government on a coordinated range of projects designed to transition from high energy to low energy lifestyles in a positive and creative manner.

Groups choose to focus on whatever the community considers vital for them – for example they may work on gardening groups, educational groups, awareness raising groups, cooking groups, slow Sunday groups, and local government contact groups. Some groups are working on developing localised currencies. The aim is to re-localise our communities, making them vibrant, resilient and truly sustainable.

Transition Initiatives are based on four key assumptions:

- That life with dramatically lower energy consumption is inevitable, and that it's better to plan for it than to be taken by surprise.
- That our settlements and communities presently lack the resilience to enable them to weather the severe energy shocks that will accompany peak oil.
- That we have to act collectively, and we have to act now.
- That by unleashing the collective genius of those around us to creatively and proactively design our energy descent, we can build ways of living that are more connected, more enriching and that recognise the biological limits of our planet.

The Transition Towns in Titirangi/Green Bay/ Laingholm, for example, started to meet in response to a Transition Towns Aotearoa meeting in September held in Waitakere. Our group is focusing on a positive 'Vision of the Future' and how we can, with our local community, implement that. We believe that we must take charge and plan for our future. Even if the current financial turmoil settles down, there are still huge issues that we all face which will change our lives forever. We know we are living beyond our ecological means; it is as if we are living on resources from an environmental overdraft and these are the very resources our children will need in the future to survive. Our dependence on oil and the implications of climate change are both issues that urge us towards greater local resilience.

A future with a revitalised local economy would have many advantages over the present, including a happier and less stressed population, an improved environment and increased stability. We have to change our way of living and we believe that we can prepare together for the transition to a more localised economy, before it is forced upon us. Wouldn't it be great if we could plan how we can reduce our dependence on energy rather than deal with collapse – to envision together and construct rather than be thrown together in panic.

For further information

- For global and local news about TT: www.transitiontowns.org.nz .
- For information about Titirangi/Green Bay/Laingholm group, contact Patrick Doherty: phdoherty@orcon.net.nz (phone 8168475)

Book Review

Doing Democracy

Bill Moyer, New Society Publishers (2001)

Reviewed by **Matthew Hodgetts** Auckland Pax Christi group

This book is an excellent overview of the movement for social change and how social change occurs. It is very encouraging. The book sets out how social activists often believe that their movement is failing, even when it is going through the normal processes of success. Moyer thinks that activists should move away from getting burnt out and believing in movement failure. Often it is untrue they are failing and the social change process is just moving through stages.

He shows that the illusions of failure may be due to the following reasons:

- Nothing has changed. Power-holders haven't changed their minds and unethical policies and practices continue. He shows that this is probably false because power-holders will be the LAST to change their mind.
- The power-holders are too powerful and don't listen. This is their role to appear to ignore dissent as a deliberate strategy to stifle change. However, official power-holders are hyper-sensitive to public opinion so the correct target of social movements, therefore, is not official power-holders but the citizenry.
- The movement is reactive instead of pro-active. The struggle between social movements and power-holders is like a chess match, competing to win the confidence of the public. Activists often only see their side, when they need to see the interplay.
- Experts, media and power-holders say we are failing. This again is part of their role. Activists need to make their own objective judgement of their success.
- The movement isn't as big as it used to be. Evaluation of movement success needs to distinguish appropriate troughs in activity from real movement weaknesses.
- There have been successes but these were brought about by outside forces. Most positive events are connected in some way to the movement but because movements do not recognise their own successes, they allow the power-holders to claim them for themselves.
- The movement hasn't achieved its long term goals. However, social movements take many years and often move along a long-term path to success.
- The movement hasn't achieved "real" victories. As movements achieve short-term goals they are used to undercut the movement. However, these are often a consequence of power-holders being forced to adopt new policies that could be seen as victories for the social change movement.
- A belief in movement failure creates a self-fulfilling prophecy and produces unhealthy movement conditions such as discouragement, despair and movement dissipation; reduction in recruitment of new members; and getting stuck in "protest" mode. Attitudes of anger, hostility and frustration lead to activities that turn the public against the movement. Social change agents do not always show an ability to acknowledge and take credit for success.

Moyer argued that because of this there is a need to adopt a realistic belief in social movement success. He points out that beliefs and attitudes have a tremendous self-fulfilling impact in replacing the unrealistic belief in movement failure with movement success. Social change activists need to give up the "advantages" of feeling powerless and adopt a model of movement success, and strive for personal and political maturity.

Talking Cents

March 2009

Talking Cents is a group charged by the Anglican Diocesan Council to promote an alternative to current economic and political thought, and to encourage debate within the church. Ministry Units are encouraged to distribute these articles. This issue is contributed by John Roberts, Mission and Ecumenical Secretary Methodist Church of New Zealand.

“We told you so!” Spotlight on the world economy

Davos! A luxury alpine Swiss resort town that hosts the annual World Economic Forum (WEF). The WEF is attended by heads of state, leading world economists, bankers and other gurus sympathetic to its cause, which is to uphold global capitalism. It is an invitation only event where stringent measures are taken to keep out the unwanted. The 2009 event took place 28 January to 1 February with the theme *Shaping the Post-Crisis World*, with some 2,500 people attending. The theme refers to the current world financial crisis. The WEF is a gathering of the world's richest and most powerful people who come together for a few days of debates, dinners and parties. The idea of its founder Klaus Schwab, a German born professor, was to hold an affable event at which the world's leading company executives could mingle with and lobby presidents and prime ministers.

This year the atmosphere at Davos was rather different to previous years. The much promoted Davos consensus broke down in spectacular fashion when Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, stormed out of one debate claiming unfair handling of the discussion he was taking part in. Overall the cosy world of Davos was profoundly shaken by the global financial crisis. The world's leading bankers, widely held responsible for the financial crisis, mostly stayed away. Some world leaders also stayed away, including Barak Obama and top officials of his administration in the USA. Steven Schrage of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington DC said it would have conveyed a very bad signal to send a large contingent to an event that has an elite aura when there are real domestic problems. Entertainment celebrities such as Bono were left off the invitation list. *Bloomberg* (one of the world's leading sources of

financial information) said the Davos gathering was marked by fear, anger and bitterness. Most of those attending saw it as the grimmest Davos they had ever attended. Evidently little was achieved. Arif Naqvi, chief executive of Abraaj Capital (a Dubai based investment company) said, “People are looking for the solution but don't yet have the question formulated.”

New Zealand had a presence around the edges of Davos. Trade Minister Tim Groser was there with trade ministers from around the world, lobbying Davos to apply pressure for a completion the World Trade Organisation's Doha Round of free trade negotiations. In the face of the world's economic crisis they fear many countries will return to protecting their industrial and agricultural sectors and will introduce subsidies. They may have generated a lot of words, but there was little action in response. The Doha round looks increasingly doomed to failure. In a moment of frankness, India's Trade Minister, Kamal Nath said, “The only thing that's shining is the sun.”

Belem! A city located in the Amazonian rainforest of Brazil that was host to the World Social Forum (WSF) 2009. It was chosen to draw attention to environmental and climate change issues as well as to encourage the participation of poor and ethnically diverse communities. The WSF is the face of the world's anti economic globalisation movement. It meets in different places each year. With unrestricted entry some 100,000 people from 150 countries attended Belem, participating in events under the theme *Another World is Possible*. The WSF was held 27 January to 1 February, timed to coincide with the WEF's meeting in Davos. The WSF seeks to present an alternative to the views of the WEF. But it is Davos

that captures the media's attention. The New Zealand Herald gave quite a bit of attention to the Davos meeting, with no mention of Belem.

The WSF is a place for debate rather than deliberation and there was much debate at Belem. The presidents of Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Paraguay put the blame for the worldwide economic turbulence on developed nations, particularly the USA. President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela called on WSF participants to go on the offensive against the neoliberal economic agenda. He said, "In Davos the world that is dying is meeting, here the world that is being born is meeting." Trade unions said capitalism was on the ropes. Fears were expressed of cuts in overseas aid and development budgets. Jean-Louis Veilasjus of the French NGO Coordination SUD said, "There is a sense of injustice that so many billions [of dollars] are being spent shoring up the battered world financial system while so little is going to fight poverty, deforestation, hunger and sickness."

Rory Carroll of Britain's *Guardian* newspaper said, "The bankers and politicians gathered in Davos for the WEF may have only admitted it to themselves privately, but a rival summit [the WSF] wanted to remind them: you really screwed up." He went on to say while the theme of Belem was *Another World is Possible*, the unofficial motto was *We Told You So!*

Where were the theologians? There may have been a few religious leaders on the fringes of Davos but they don't seem to have had any impact. There were however a number of theologians and church leaders at Belem.

Brazilian economist Marcos Arruda from the Institute on Policy Alternatives for the Southern Cone said real alternatives are needed to the current financial system. Martin Guck, from Kairos Europe, a network of church-related justice movements spoke of the need to reverse the imbalance of power in the current financial market system which favours banks and financial institutions that have no democratic base and are not accountable to society. "An alternative development model needs to be people-led and driven by local demand", said Percy Makombe from the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa. He advocated the rejection of global financial and trade systems, and refusing aid that forces

developing countries to open up their markets and put food security at risk

Rogate Mshana, a Tanzanian economist working for the World Council of Churches in Geneva, addressed the need for a more just financial system. "It's a question of the market," he said. "The market is a gift from God because people cannot live without a market. But that relationship must be just. It should not be dogmatised in such a way that it is left free to go without any rules. From a Christian perspective there is no system that is so sacred that it cannot be changed. We need a contribution from faith based groups, civil society and other groups around the world. It must not be left to the G20 group (made up of leading economies from the developed and developing world), because they are talking about how to stabilise the current system and not the need for a new economic architecture."

Key proposals to emerge from Belem included mechanisms to control international capital flows, an international monetary system based on regional reserve currencies, citizens' control of banks and financial institutions, progressive taxation schemes both at national and international levels, prohibition of speculative funds and non-regulated markets, eradication of speculation on primary products including food and elimination of tax havens. It was proposed that a reformed and democratised United Nations put reform of the financial system at the centre of its work. Belem also recognised that the crisis is not just financial. There are multiple crises affecting the environment, social and political structures, food and energy supplies. Rogate Mshana believes that in pressing for reforms at different levels, civil society organisations and churches around the world have a lot to contribute.

Brazilian Chico Whitaker, one of the founders of the WSF and a Roman Catholic influenced by liberation theology said, "At this forum it is clear that it is really possible to have another world, and not just possible, but urgent and necessary." He went on to say, "In Chinese the word for crisis means a risk and an opportunity. Those gathered in Davos are facing the risk of seeing their system go down the drain. We in Belem have a moment of opportunity."