



# Communicating Gender

## Gender Identities in a Globalised Europe

24-28 October 2011

Løgumkloster, Denmark

Communicating Gender isn't the easiest topic to wrap one's head around but through blogs, the Preparatory Committee helped participants to start thinking about whether God has a Gender; how faith is influenced by gender and how gender is influenced by faith; how gender changes when borders are crossed and when we enter the virtual world. 35 students and young people from across Europe joined together to discern and discuss these questions at a folk high school in Løgumkloster, Denmark. Workshops, video making, lectures, and small group discussions opened up this topic and allowed the group to talk about their gender.



### Breaking the Ice

Almost all the participants met in Hamburg to travel together to the small town of Løgumkloster getting to know one another on the three hour train journey. Participants were given secret friends to surprise with gifts and compliments throughout the week helping to bring a warm atmosphere to the whole event. The first evening the group participated in 'get to know you' activities by finding out trivia facts about one another. They also drew self portraits on their heads giving themselves three important qualities that had to be guessed by others in the group. The silliness broke the ice and set a comfortable tone for the week.

### Lectures: Gender, Faith, and Psychology

Renato Lings (Denmark), author and translator, began the conference by introducing the topic of Gender and how it differs from biological sex; its connection to sexuality; and how it pervades all aspects of society. He also introduced the topic of gender in the bible and walked the group through different translations of the creation story that challenged the traditional understandings of male and female.

On a day trip to Aarhus University, Cecilia Brynskov (Denmark), Phd student in Psychology, gave a fascinating lecture about the psychological development of language in children. She showed how humans learn language and the differences in the development between boys and girls. She also offered her research on autistic boys and their language development.

Heikki Huttenen (Finland), an Orthodox priest and ecumenical leader, looked closely at gender representations in the bible leading the group through a deep bible study of various passages explaining Orthodox teachings behind them. He challenged the group to think about gender and relationships in a more open way.



On the final day of the conference Kathy Galloway (Scotland), leader of the Iona community, gave a lecture on her personal faith experience related to her gender. She invited small groups to discuss poetry and the feminist perspectives of faith, spirituality and God.

"What we have in common is a shared belief in the Truth. And for us the Truth has a name – God. Regardless of the language we address It with or our gender perception we assign to It...." never truly known, mystery of mysteries, calling us Your own."

Gabby Bradocova, Slovakia



### Lessons from Each Other

The conference offered many opportunities for students to learn about the topic from one another—as we are all experts when it comes to our gender! There were participant and local teacher led workshops on Body Hair in Art (Anja Kjolby), the Five Genders (Nataliya Pylypiv, Ukraine), Bible, Sexuality, and Language (Renato Lings), and Gender in the Church (Zusanna Babicova, Slovakia)

### Gendered Words

Dima Bartalevich (Belarus) led students in a small group activity that challenged participants to find a way to express characteristics that are often associated with one gender or the other through a video presentation. The excellent group work can be seen on WSCF Europe’s YouTube page. Gabby Bradovkova (Slovakia) led the group in another exercise where participants compared the gendered aspects of their native language. They created charts and discussed in plenary how some languages are more gender neutral than others.

### Theological Exploration

Martin Bonde Christensen (Denmark) led a very creative bible study that allowed participants to become artists, dancers, musicians and actors of the resurrection of Lazarus. The experience of the story and the feelings evoked were made known through these artistic displays. Dima Bartalevich also led a bible study where small groups discussed the role of women in the bible.

### Local Context

Students were given the opportunity in Aarhus to visit the modern art museum where they could discuss the topic in relation to the art they saw. Others chose to visit the local Student Christian Movement in Denmark to meet with students and hear a presentation about Ethics in Warfare. They also joined the local students in a weekly worship service.

### Positive Gender Language at Home

Marie Bohn Olsen (Denmark) led a workshop for participants to see how to continue this conversation on the blogosphere. They were all encouraged to post blogs on WSCFConnects. Pawel Pustelnik (Poland), *Mozaik* Editor-in-Chief offered a workshop on writing for *Mozaik* which will be another wonderful opportunity to bring this topic into local SCMs. Jill Piebiak (Canada) led a small group discussion session that allowed students to brainstorm about making the Internet a gender friendly space and to analyze the implications of Internet anonymity.

The conference was held together with evening gatherings, an intercultural evening (a casual sharing of traditions) and, of course, morning and evening prayer services that we were both ecumenical and denominational. The closing worship planned by students was a beautiful time of prayer, each praying in their own language for one another and saying goodbye to the new friends they’d made.



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