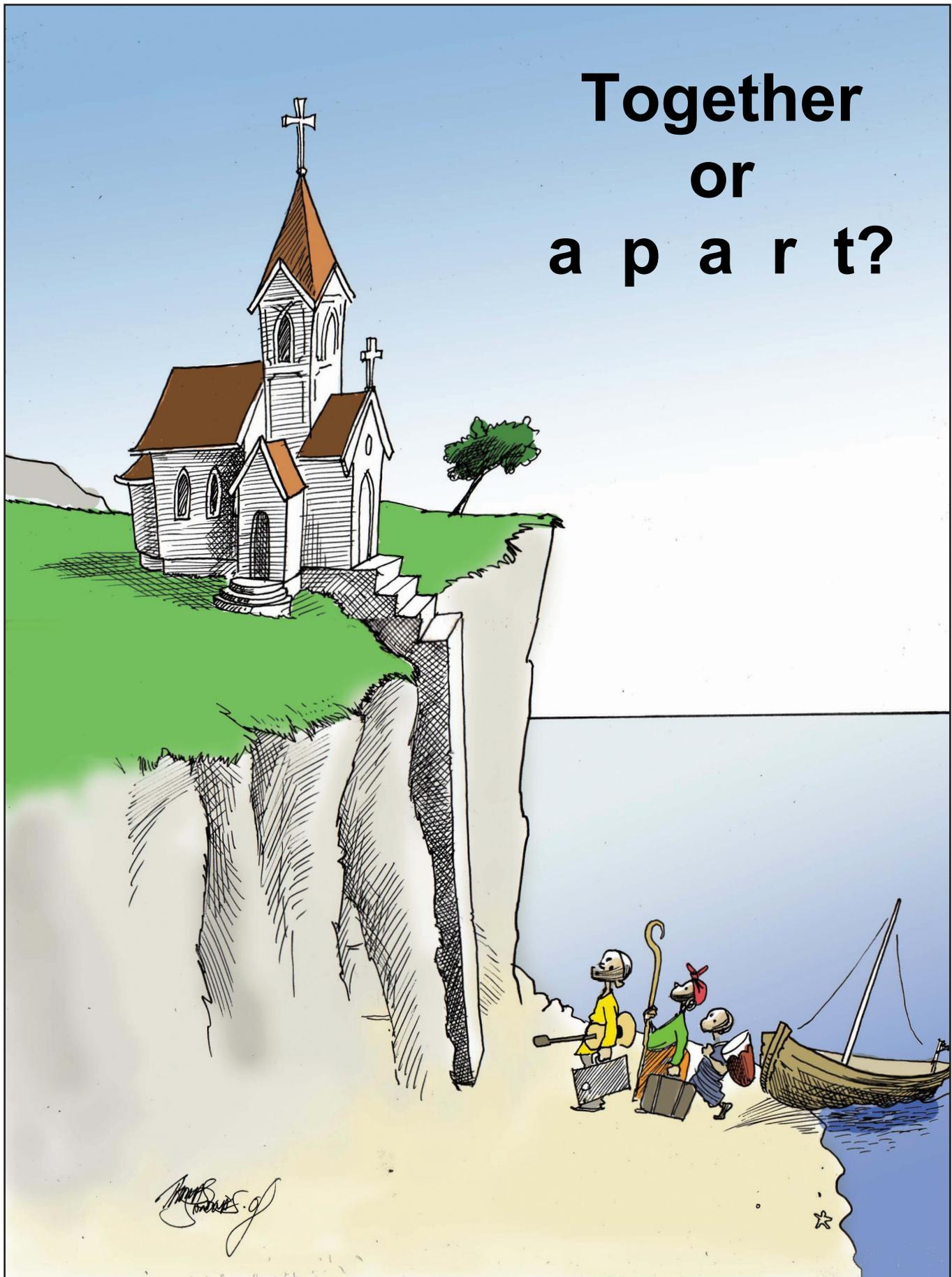


# Together or a p a r t?



**Report from the Nordic Consultation on  
Migration and Changing Ecclesial Landscapes**

**Birgittine Sister's Convent in Djursholm, Stockholm, 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

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The Nordic Ecumenical Working Group on Migration is an informal network of national church officials working with migration and integration in the Christian Councils or the Lutheran majority churches in the Nordic countries; Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland.

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## Introduction

More than 30 scholars, church officials, deacons, clergy and others from the Nordic countries were gathered in Stockholm 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> of October 2008 for a consultation on church, migration and integration. The purpose of the consultation was to present and discuss different mappings of how migration influences the ecclesial landscape in the Nordic countries. This report is addressed to church leaders, members and staff in the different Nordic churches and presents parts of the outcome of the conference. Part 1 gives a short abstract of the issues dealt with in the plenary discussions in the form of a brief analysis of the Nordic contexts and a list of issues for further consideration and action in the churches. Part 2 consists of some of the presentations held in the conference.

Churches are involved in migration issues in different ways. One of the important tasks for the churches today is to play a responsible role in the organisation of civil society so that the value and human dignity of all minorities are respected. Advocacy and the struggle for human rights and dignity are key issues here. However, and even more significantly, churches also face migration as faith communities. In this regard the task of the churches is to demonstrate and share their Christian faith with migrant communities – both those with whom we share faith in Christ as brothers and sisters belonging to the same church family or to other denominations, and those of other faiths or none.

In the Nordic countries the indigenous mainstream churches have related to Christian migrants in different ways. Migration has been considered an ecclesial opportunity as well as a challenge. In some cases organizational and social integration have taken place. In other cases multicultural congregations have been established. More often than not the mainstream churches have remained culturally homogenous and migrants have established their own churches and communities. This situation forces us to ask whether churches are in fact integrating or segregating factors in society. If most churches are dominated by one particular ethnic group (indigenous or migrant), it seems that there is a risk that the churches mostly contribute to segregation. Or are ethnically and culturally homogenous churches a necessary platform for respectful integration in a multicultural society?

When dealing with migration and integration there is always a risk of using the wrong words. It is easy to create unhelpful images and misleading metaphors – especially in a foreign language (such as English is for Nordic people). Language is political and ambiguous. Words used to describe reality also create reality. Therefore the words that we choose are of great importance. This report uses words and concepts which are ambiguous and polysemic, i.e. migration, migrants, integration, church, mainstream churches and new churches. These terms are used with some reservation. In the papers in Part 2 the authors are responsible for their use and choice of terminology. In Part 1, we understand these key terms as follows:

- "Migration" is understood as a neutral term. It includes both immigration and emigration. It is used neither pejoratively nor to claim elevated status for any particular group or individual.

- The United Nations defines a migrant as a person who stays outside his/her country of residence for at least one year. In this report this definition is used, although we do not operate with a strict time limit before a person is considered a migrant. Also, the length of time that an individual resides in a host country before he/she is no longer considered a migrant will differ from country to country – both due to variations in the legal framework and to the national discourse on cultural, ethnic and linguistic identity.
- "Integration" is widely misunderstood as little more than the assimilation. In this report we understand integration as a truly mutual process where groups and individuals integrate with each other - in other words a two-way process.
- "Mainstream churches" is the term used to describe the traditional and indigenous churches in the Nordic countries such as the national Lutheran churches and churches of other traditionally European denominations.
- "New churches" is the term used to describe all the new ecclesial communities which occur due to migration. It covers what often is referred to as migrant churches, immigrant churches, black churches, Diaspora churches etc.
- "Church" is a living and dynamic entity which can be difficult to define theologically as well as sociologically. In the list of issues for further consideration and action in part 1, the term "church" is not understood theologically normative in any sense. When used here, it includes many interpretations, such as any congregations, church leaders, all baptized members, and those people, structures and rooms that encounter migrants who come into contact with a Christian community.

Migration and its effects on the changing ecclesial landscape is one of the core issues in recent European ecumenical work. Organisations such as the World Council of Churches and Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe have addressed migration and integration for many years. Migration concerns all of Europe – also the Nordic countries. Thus we are happy that these issues have recently been given more consideration also by the Nordic churches. We hope that this report will inspire ongoing processes as well as encourage new processes of reflection and action so that we will continue to respond to and engage with the fundamental question: What does it mean to be a church in an increasingly multicultural and pluralistic society?

The conference was planned and this report worked out by the Nordic Ecumenical Working Group on Migration in cooperation with Ecumenism in the Nordic Region (Ekumenik i Norden). We are grateful to the Church of Sweden for subsidising the conference in Stockholm and to the Church of Norway for financing this report.

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## **I. Brief analysis: Migration and churches in the Nordic countries**

Migration is no new phenomenon in the Nordic countries. Nevertheless, we have experienced an increasing number of migrants over the last 40 years. A great variety of different individuals and groups have arrived in our countries. Some have come as guest workers, labour migrants or through family reunion. Others have come as refugees, asylum seekers or students. Many have come from other Nordic countries or from the rest of Europe. Others have come from Africa, Asia, the Americas or the Pacific. Many come from a Christian background. Others are Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, or atheists – people of other faiths or none.

Migration has led to more pluralistic and multicultural societies, especially in the big cities. From being societies marked by traditional mainstream churches, the Nordic countries today experience a great flora of new churches and faith communities. This has resulted in new and more varied ecclesial landscapes.

The new churches represent a great variety of different migrant groups, ethnicities and denominations. Some belong to traditional church families such as Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Anglicans, Pentecostals, Lutherans and different Orthodox families. Others are independent churches or Diaspora churches of national or international mother churches in Africa, Asia or Latin America. Some identify themselves with post Pentecostal communities and some are on the outskirts of Christian belief. Some of the churches are organized according to ethnicity, culture or language, others are transnational and multicultural. As the new churches increase in numbers and membership, they are increasingly becoming a significant part of the ecclesial landscape and the ecumenical processes in the Nordic context.

Within the new churches there are different attitudes and approaches to integration – as there are within the Nordic mainstream churches. Good relations between the different new churches, and between the new churches and the mainstream churches, depend on the prevailing attitudes found in these churches and actual initiatives taken by the churches to stimulate integration and dialogue.

## **II. List of issues for further consideration and action in the churches**

The changing context of the ecclesial landscapes in the Nordic countries urges the churches to deepen their reflection and to strengthen their action in relation to migrants. A list of areas of concern for such reflection and action is presented here. We want to stress that these issues must be addressed in cooperation with the migrants themselves so that this becomes an inclusive process resulting in shared agendas.

### **Theological reflection**

There is a strong need for further theological reflection on migration, integration, pluralism and diversity within churches and the theological seminaries. Ultimate worth, equal dignity and value of all human beings should be the main premises and purpose of such reflection. The theological reflection should be contextual and depart from the churches' new experiences in late modern society.

We encourage churches to:

- consider and further elaborate on the significance of “the stranger” in the biblical texts.
- articulate theologies of hospitality and inclusiveness and face the ecclesiological consequences this might rise.
- respond theologically to brokenness caused by migration and engage in physical and spiritual healing processes – both in relation to individuals and communities.
- promote practical and visible unity beyond linguistic, ethnical and cultural barriers and to argue theologically for this. Expressions of oneness do not limit or dilute traditions and cultures, but enhance them.

### **Identity is relational**

Christian identity is based on the nature of God who unites all people. Christian identity is fundamentally relational as the Triune and relational God relates to human beings and calls us to relate to each other. From a relational and Christian perspective the human condition holds a tension where, on the one hand, we are all migrants, cast out of the Garden of Eden, and on the other hand, none of us are migrants but children belonging to the household of God. This stimulates further theological and sociological reflection on identity in general.

We encourage churches to:

- further reflect on what constitutes identity in a normative sense and what makes people belong to a church community (traditional or migrant).
- consider the relational role of language and to make necessary adjustments in order to promote multilingual integration.
- consider whether temporary linguistic/cultural segregation can function as empowerment for migrant groups in a multicultural community.
- explore practical ways of worshipping together.
- reflect on the tension that can occur between a group identity and the different individual identities within that group and to develop different strategies of integration accordingly.

### **Attitudes within churches**

Migrants are often the ones who take the first initiative by contacting a local church. How the church responds depends on openness of the leadership and congregation. The churches' attitudes towards integration are profoundly significant for the further process of integration. Our attitudes and the way we welcome each other matter. We encourage churches to:

- see migrants as blessings and as persons that can contribute to the life and work of the congregation.
- contribute to inclusive societies and demonstrate in practice that integration is a mutual process where we integrate with each other.
- listen carefully to migrants and let them define their own needs and the contributions they want to make to the church.
- challenge the attitudes and actions of the church leadership in relation to integration of migrants.
- develop ecumenical strategies built on a clear understanding of the Christian Gospel and willingness to share respectfully what Christians believe, transparency and trust to avoid misunderstandings and accusations of proselytizing when welcoming migrants.

### **Different contexts require different models: Dare to experiment!**

We see a great variety of models of integration both within the mainstream churches and the new churches. Engaging with the changing ecclesial landscape always requires a contextual approach. Because contexts are very different and open to many interpretations, attempts to describe a particular context must be done with caution, taking into consideration the prevailing attitudes to integration within the local community, local power structures and the fact that there will always be multiple interpretations of these.

We encourage churches to:

- dare to experiment: go new ways and work out new models of integration and of processes that will transform the life of communities and individuals. Share experiences and evaluations with other churches. The fear of failure should not stop churches from exploring new models.
- discuss how different models can promote integration at both individual and organisational levels.
- respond positively to the need expressed by many first generation migrants for places of worship where they can preserve their own cultural/religious traditions and language.
- ensure that children of migrants are given opportunity to mix with native children of the same age group in the church.
- take into account that the needs of migrants differ between first generation and second generation, as well as between individuals.
- investigate whether there are legal structures within the church which can be a hindrance for integration. How can legal structures be made inclusive? For example, can a migrant church meeting in another language have the same legal status as a church using the native language? What is required for a migrant pastor to be given an official status?

**Part 2: Key papers**  
**from the Stockholm consultation 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> October 2008:**

In this following section some of the key papers held in the consultation will be presented. The different papers vary in methodology, theology, sociological perspectives and linguistic level. In that sense they represent some of the variety in this subject area. Each contributor holds the full responsibility for his/her own paper, be it contents or language.



# Migration and the changing ecclesial landscape - a theological perspective

By Revd Arlington Trotman

Moderator, Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe

*In this paper we look at how migration influences the ecclesial landscape. The main question is, are the churches an integrating or segregating factor in the society? If most churches are dominated by one ethnic group is there a risk that the churches mostly contribute to segregation? Or can ethnic based churches be a necessary platform in the multicultural society? Can we unite the need to worship in our own mother tongue with the vision not to divide Christians according to ethnic belongings?*

## Introduction

The question s here presupposes or assumes a vision of the nature of the Church which gives the question legitimacy in the context of this conference. It appears from a biblical perspective, however, that the unity of the Christian family is already a given reality. In addressing the issue, I approach 'Migration and the changing ecclesial landscape', therefore, from the standpoint of the essence of Christian unity, first by a brief general reflection on the biblical picture, and then on the challenges and opportunities migration brings to contemporary Scandinavian contexts.

### *Biblical references to migration*

Throughout the Old and New Testaments we are commanded time and again to welcome and serve the needs of the 'stranger', which is defined differently as 'man', 'sojourner', 'alien'. About the stranger, there is no question about God's expectations of us.

- In the earliest Hebrew books, the prophets taught the Israelites that the test of their society would be how well the widows, the orphans, and the aliens fared among them.
- This theme carries on throughout the Bible to Luke's story of the Good Samaritan and Matthew's dramatic eschatological vision, in which he tells us that in the final judgment, our destiny would be determined on the basis of whether we welcomed, fed, visited, clothed, and supported Him, by doing this for the stranger.
- In Genesis, Abraham and Sarah provided hospitality to three strangers from another land;<sup>1</sup> this response became a paradigm for the treatment of strangers by Abraham's descendents.
- The children of Jacob became forced migrants, with Joseph sold into slavery (Genesis 37:1-36).

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 18:1-8. Hospitality in the scriptural sense incorporates all the acts of kindness that are prescribed or recommended in the Scriptures. It takes precedence even over prayer and spiritual exercises. Hospitality is closely associated with the covenant that God made with Abraham. In fact, it is a covenantal responsibility. Consequently hospitality must be understood in the context of social justice and right relationships.

- The enslavement of the Chosen People by the Egyptians, and then God's liberation of them led directly to the commandments regarding strangers: 'You shall treat the stranger no differently than the natives born among you, have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt' (Lv19:33-34).

The Israelites were not only commanded to care for the stranger, but they structured the welcome and care of aliens into their gleaning and tithing laws as well (Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 14:28-29).

Biblical authority is especially clear about how and why we must treat new communities (strangers) with care and respect. As we note how Abraham bowed in homage to the three strangers, how we formalise and structure our response towards the other today points to a possible resolution to our concerns about human relations.

A fundamental fact about human relations is that the encounter of one person to another often falls into two categories: One, the way we relate to family, friends, and community, and two, the way we relate to the stranger, or the 'other'. Those we consider members of our community are those with whom we have bonds, with whom we live, play and work, who have interests, values and commitments in common with us. Our instinctive reactions to these persons are positive and open.

Our reactions to the newcomer, whether the actual stranger or the thought of a stranger, is another matter: Our instinct is often suspicion, uncertainty, questions, hesitation, and sometimes alarm, even hatred, fear or death. The term 'stranger' is ominous and the word 'alien' tends to create resistance and hostility in us. The stranger is the outsider, someone who doesn't have the same claims upon us as do family, friends and community. It is especially important to note, however, that biblical tradition puts the person who is a migrant at the heart of concern.

There is no more poignant migration theme in the Scriptures than that of Jesus and His family's flight from Herod's tyranny as refugees. Not only did the Son of God become man, but just as the Israelites of old, He became a refugee in the land of Egypt. Who Jesus is therefore gives us some fundamental response to being together or apart, and I want to approach the subject from the standpoint of the immanence and transcendence of God as revealed in Jesus.

### *Immanence ad Transcendence*

The theologians of mediation of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as Tillich, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Barth, have addressed the question of our essential unity as human beings. Although transcendence (distance) is defined as the opposite of immanence (nearness), the two are not mutually exclusive. God is said to be both far *from us* and also *near to us*. Given the biblical picture which assumes our unity, I want now briefly to contrast two major inputs as we consider the central theme: *Together or Apart?* I take this title to ask whether, as Nordic (European) Christians (Churches) we can live with together with or must exist apart from the new communities which result from migration. I approach this on two levels:

First, a simple answer in the affirmative to either question is insufficient. If we respond to the challenge to live together affirmatively, we must then ask why is living and worshipping together a problem? If we decide that being apart is the logical response, then we must ask what the nature of the human family is. and are human beings any way interdependent?

Secondly, if we take the basic idea that the Being of God establishes, secures and maintains our faith as Christians, then we presuppose something about His presence and distance from all human beings. This nearness and distance is proper to the nature of God not merely as a concept of ontological reality, but person as manifested in Jesus Christ.

## **1. Immanence and Transcendence - Migratory Transformations**

In contemporary Scandinavian society impregnated by migration, we are compelled to ask how do we understand the nature of God, and what is the basis for understanding our unity as Christians? Well, in traditional Christian thought, church theologians and scholars have conceptualized God as immanent and 'living', the concrete central reality manifest in Jesus Christ. Karl Barth, like Paul Tillich, had his early grounding in the liberal tradition, but Barth vigorously sought in later life to liberate biblical tradition from the distortions of the culturally determined religion, which characterised Tillich's approach.

Firstly, Tillich came to hold that Jesus Christ for the Christian's understanding of his own existence is revealed through the historical self-disclosure of God, because his appreciation of the Divine-human economy is rooted in his understanding of the God-man Jesus Christ, rather than an abstract idea of 'Being'.

If contrasted with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, we get a more rounded viewpoint. Bonhoeffer holds that because Christ's Being is being for others, both God and human beings cannot be conceived in isolation, but only in relationship with others. Bonhoeffer's socio-ethical understanding of transcendence is presented here terms of I-You or I-Thou relation. In other words, Jesus' freedom for others is the 'experience of transcendence'; and as faith means participation in Christ, so relation to the transcendent God is not to 'an imagined most powerful Supreme Being – "that is not authentic transcendence" ...The Transcendent is... the neighbour who is within reach in any given situation.'<sup>2</sup> The key to a system of belief which maintains that God acts in human affairs is the reception of Jesus Christ as 'Person', but also one in which He also transcends 'Person' in His otherness manifested in relationship.

Secondly, God's Being is not in transcendent isolation and absence, but He is revealed in His Being-in-relation-to-us, which is the meaning of the Incarnation. This shows that to be human is to be a person before God, and in relation to God. We incarnate Christ, and God is at the core of human existence, therefore, and the inner Trinitarian life of God is made known through Jesus Christ. For Bonhoeffer, God's Being is Being-for-humanity, so that human relationships in God's image are reflected in one person being-free-for-the-other in love.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, John W. de Gruchy, ed., (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1999), p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

One of the challenges we face about living and worshipping together relates directly to how religion is conceived and understood in Europe. In some instances religion is liberal, distant and prone to empty formalism, because it is abstractly conceived. This definition of can be contrasted with relationship in the traditional sense. In others, understanding rests, not on the abstract premise that God is the ground and power of being, but on *relationship* through God's self-revelation.<sup>4</sup> Relationship from this standpoint implies that God is at once 'personal' and fundamentally 'other' in His relatedness to human beings.

Thirdly, the Christian Gospel of love traditionally informs and represents the holy life. It is the prospect of a life of meaningfulness as expressed in God's laws for all people; love understood merely ontologically as intrinsic to the concept of being has been a matter of enduring contention whether love in this ultimate sense is ever achievable. Yet, to deny its attainment would be to deny the effect of God's action in all human life.

*Agapé*, the highest form of love, is understood as God's love for humanity without exception, actualised and manifested in the Jesus Christ who enables human beings to be free for each other in love. In essence, the question is about redemption, and redemption is about dying, which inevitably places the church in conflict with death-denying liberal society. 'In the end,' Bonhoeffer concludes, 'there are only two possibilities of encountering Jesus: either [human beings] must die or [they] kills Jesus.'<sup>5</sup> If Christ's suffering and death is appropriated, then the identity common to all humanity dictates re-union and liberation regardless of existential differences, and human beings die. Existential differences, however, have been allowed to distort, divide and separate what Jesus unified, the single human family. If we die the question whether we are a unity disappears!

## **2. The Challenge of 'otherness' in Christian Missiology: Cultural and Existential Distortion**

Swedish theologian and scholar, Daniel Calero Davyt, acknowledged the historicity of people movement as an important part of the human condition. Humans beings have been in motion since time began, he notes, and 'in spite of the fact that we consider permanent living sites to be a major step in our progress through history, humans have continued to move in order to find new worlds... For ten thousand years people have wandered around the earth in their hunt for food, safety and freedom. No people now living in Sweden, not even the Sami, can state with truth that they have never migrated anywhere'.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, finding new paths and longing for better lives are an essential element of the human identity, all human beings. 'Being a migrant is being a human being'. But some people mainly from the south can be heard to say: '*But when we come here they treat us as though we were not human. ....*' Our understanding of the human situation, however, does not begin with geography or economics or political

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<sup>4</sup> See Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, pp. 94-116.

<sup>5</sup> Bonhoeffer, p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Calero Davyt, *Motion – an important part of the human condition*.

philosophy, but with acceptance of the dignity and humanity of each person. Every person belongs to a single human community and civil society, regardless of colour or culture, in its politics, economics, its laws and its international organization, and is judged by how well it responds to the needs of the human community.

But cultural and existential distortion persists in many ways:

- an historical belief that Europeans are intellectually and morally superior to Africans, which was exploited in transatlantic slave trade;
- systemic structural discrimination and racism in society, perpetuated through discriminatory legislation on equalities, asylum and migration, criminal justice, and perceptions of lost opportunity in European societies, e.g. the expression, 'they come here to take our jobs';
- unease in dealing with 'difference' or 'the otherness', such as culture, colour or ethnicity. Differences **between** different people groups, or 'race', account approximately for only 5%, whilst the differences which occur **within** people groups, is reckoned scientifically to be approximately 85%<sup>7</sup> (Stephen Cohen, *Ethnicity, Class and Immigration*).

These distortions have been allowed to divide us, and have taken roots in our educational and cultural formation.

### 3. Historical and intellectual roots of racism and division

While every individual and people have the power to discriminate against and exclude difference, and often exercise it, the record of white people's use of conversational, material, and military power to discriminate against, exclude, and exploit non-white people is arguably unsurpassed in modern history.<sup>8</sup> This is reflected in the works of great thinkers.

- **David Hume:** 'I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There was scarcely a civilised nation of any other complexion than white...nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences.'<sup>9</sup>
- **Immanuel Kant**<sup>10</sup>, a contemporary of Hume, went as far as creating a hierarchical chart classifying human beings into different races with white people on the top of his scale and non-white people at the bottom. In his thought, non-white people were therefore, inferior to white people. Kant even ascribed to skin colour (white or black) the evidence of rational (and therefore human) capacity or lack of it.

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<sup>7</sup> Scientific evidence suggests that the differences in the physical features of human beings exist only in the level of tissues, cells, and molecules – distinctions that are quite insignificant.

<sup>8</sup> Mazrui, Ali. A, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*. London: BBC Publications, 1986, pp. 301ff.

<sup>9</sup> David Hume, *On National Characters: An essay on the nature and immutability of Truth in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism*, 1753.

<sup>10</sup> Immanuel Kant, essay, 'On the Varieties of Different Races of Men'; Naomi Zack, *Philosophy of Science of Race*, Routledge, 2002, pp. 13-18.

- **Georg Wilhelm Hegel**<sup>11</sup> like Hume and Kant, denied full humanity to non-white (especially black) people, even recommending and justifying the practice of colonialism on the grounds that it benefited Africa because Europe imparted Africa with reason, ethic, political order, culture, and mores and therefore gave Africa history which Africa did not have. Africa, he argued, is a wasteland of lawlessness and paganism waiting for European soldiers and missionaries to conquer it and impose order and morality on it.
- Imperialist expansion in the late nineteenth century, in particular the 'scramble for Africa', exacerbated the sense of difference between Europeans and non-Europeans.

Yet, credible authorities<sup>12</sup>, contrary to Hume, Hegel, and Kant views of non-white peoples and their societies, tell us that India, China, and Japan were all highly developed civilisations before the age of colonialism, as were the Inca and Mayan civilisations in Latin America and the kingdoms of Ghana, Songay, Mali, Benin, Nyakusa, and Mwanamutapa in Africa.

Jewish scholar Jonathan Sacks pointed to Platonic philosophy of *universals* which helped great thinkers and explorers to cement these divisions. In the theory of universals, plurality and heterogeneity must give way to homogeneity and unity: one people, one culture, one language, one book, one goal; what does not fall under this all-encompassing 'one' is ambivalent, polluting and dangerous. It must be removed. 'We want a pure world and must push the "others" out of our world; we want to be pure ourselves and eject "otherness" from within ourselves, the outer worlds of our families, neighbourhoods, and nations.'<sup>13</sup> But the divisions and segregation can be healed and overcome because they are antithetical to the biblical picture, the unity of the Christian family in Christ.

#### **4. Challenges and Opportunities: Being, Identity and Belief, A Basis for Inclusive Church**

Calero remarked that 'If we welcome the person whom we experience as "the other" – the one who is different – we are practising how to welcome God who is the ultimate other, the one who is totally different to us but who also wants to meet humanity. Meeting the stranger trains us in how to meet God. As Christians we should not hesitate to take up such a challenge.' We can do this by acknowledging the threefold structure of identity as expressed in relation to being, identity and faith.

##### **a) Being**

- all human beings have ultimate worth, equal dignity and validity;
- the nature of God unites Asian, majority Europeans, continental Africans and the African diaspora as people of a single human race.

<sup>11</sup> In his 'Lectures on Philosophy' and 'Lectures on the Philosophy of Right'.

<sup>12</sup> Mazrui, Ali. A Op. Cit; Davidson, Basil, *Africa: History of a Continent*, New York: Macmillan; 1969; *The African Genius: An Introduction to African Cultural and Social History*, Little, Brown & Co (Boston, Massachusetts, 1978); *Discovering Africa's Past*, (Longman, London); Hope, Anne & Sally Timmel, *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers III*, Gweru (Mambo Press 1984) pp. 8f.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Sack, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilisations*, (Continuum Books, London: 2002), p. 49.

- reject racism the sin of exclusion, disrespect and segregation, as a way of dealing with ‘otherness’;
- resist white supremacists or fascist concepts and ideologies;
- address the *existential* questions of every day life: options, preferences, ‘deep yearnings’ for meaning and participation, for just dealings, and for togetherness.
- affirm people’s *essential* nature, potentiality and promise;
- revise Euro-centric perspectives that dominate and exclude;
- embrace God’s divine act that embraces created existence by Word.

**b) Identity**

- validated our unity in its Christological or Christ-centered concreteness;
- appreciate that human beings in their *essential* identity are not distinct from each other, nor do the *existential* (religious, cultural, ethnic etc.) characteristics diminish or damage what is *essential*;
- the Christian belief system (Acts 17:24-28) must inform *why* and *how* we work for togetherness and inclusion.

**c) Faith**

- it is meaningful for Christians actively to express their belief or faith and prayer together and apart;
- understand that *all* our created nature is in relation to the nature of God;
- explore ways of worshipping together and apart, because essentially we belong together;
- expressions of our oneness do not limit or dilute our traditions and cultures, but enhance them.

Calero concludes that refugees are ‘no longer a case of a few thousand, politically committed individuals trying to escape from dictatorships – now it is tens of thousands of women, children and men escaping from the wars of the Middle East or from European countries torn apart by mass murder and the disintegration of states. The refugee is no longer a politically committed man, now the refugee is perhaps a raped woman, with young children’.

The fact of our unity transcends our differences, and is echoed in a telling statement from Dr Martin Luther King Junior, who affirmed:

‘the self cannot be self without other selves...The worth of an individual does not lie in the measure of his intellect, his ethnic origin, or his social position. Human worth lies in relatedness to God.’<sup>14</sup>

We are compelled then to thought and action in terms of worshipping together and apart:

- understand cross cultural realities and ministries;
- revisit and expand the biblical hermeneutic;
- with a large captive audience, the Christian Churches in Sweden (Europe) have an important opportunity to convey the values and principles of equality

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<sup>14</sup> James Melvin Washington, *A Testament of Hope, Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (HarperCollins, New York: 1991), p. 119.

and cultural diversity to their congregations, and exploit the impact they could have on changing and leading public attitude;

- never fear the struggle or the consequences of the struggle (Mandela)
- respect otherness
- take together, Being, Identity and Belief: it re-establishes *essential* unity and dignity; renders segregation, or the division or gradation of our essential identity fundamentally un-Christian, illogical and fragmentary;
- acknowledge 'racism' in the churches and seek to repent of and address it;
- mainstream a theology that takes the connectedness, relatedness, and the **interdependence** of creation and life more seriously than you now do;
- mainstream conceptual and linguistic frameworks;
- be in as much **contact** as possible
- mainstream leadership training for all sectors and ministries;
- mainstream equal rights and justice-based approaches to ministry and service;
- ensure that all stakeholders are proportionally represented at leadership, decision-making, and service provision levels;
- revise mission statements.

## 5. Overcoming segregation - Healing and Celebration

A theology that overcomes oppression, marginalisation, and segregation takes seriously essential differences which make up identity - ethnicity, class, colour, gender, culture - but it also acknowledges man's existential estrangement (Genesis 1:26-27). The Church can help to heal this, and has been entrusted with the responsibility to transform the human condition.

When we understand by Easter the resurrection of none other than the crucified Christ, and at that the one whose death was in fact our death, then there is real and honest hope that is not optimism, but an actual transformation.

- Atonement that overcomes existential distortion and division of the human family responds appropriately to the problem of segregation and 'otherness'.
- Afro-centric and Asiatic Christian theologies stress liberation, inclusiveness and respect not merely as a facet of justice (Luke 4: 18-19), but represents the priority of repentance, reconciliation and full participation in the community and academy.

Consequently, we are no longer strangers, foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household (Ephesians 2:19).

# Welcome here? Responses to migration from churches in Denmark

By Birthe Munck-Fairwood

National Coordinator at Tværkulturelt Center, The Intercultural Christian Centre in Denmark

When talking about his experience of coming to Denmark as a refugee some years ago, an Iraqi professor told me, “When we came here, we did not start life from zero. We started from below zero where it is freezing.” Sadly, he is not the only one who wonders about the nature of Danish hospitality to people who have fled persecution or have come to join their family, to work or to study. Most migrants feel that they have to overcome negative assumptions and prejudice before they can start rebuilding their lives and become part of Danish society. They simply do not feel welcome.

Is the churches’ response to migrants any different from that of a secular affluent society? Do churches welcome migrants with understanding, compassion and human solidarity – or are they met with indifference, suspicion (*why did you come here?*) or even hostility and discrimination? These are questions that we need to ask ourselves and each other – and to listen carefully to the answers.

## (1) Accepting the facts: Refugees and immigrants are here to stay

Refugees and immigrants will not go away if only we shut our eyes and church doors. They are here to stay. Their children play with our children. Their grandchildren will play with our grandchildren and help build the future of Denmark. Out of 500.000 *New Danes* more than 120.000 were born here. 200.000 are Danish citizens holding Danish passports. Perhaps 40 per cent come from a Christian background. For the established churches these basic facts have at least two implications:

### **A need for reorientation: The familiar church landscape is changing**

Firstly, Christianity in Denmark is no longer purely white and Lutheran. Contrary to what most people believe not all migrants are Muslims. Four in ten come from a Christian background. While church attendance in Denmark is at a record low compared with the rest of the world (only about two per cent attend church on a regular basis), a higher percentage of Christian migrants attend church. Some find a new spiritual home in the Lutheran church. In a village outside Copenhagen a Chaldean Christian from Bagdad is the most regular churchgoer in the parish. Asked why he explains, “These people have been so good to me. On the first Sunday they all came and talked to me, and I and my son were invited home for lunch.” The warm welcome he received made a lasting impact so that eight years later he still attends this small village church. Others have not received such a warm welcome. They are tempted to give up going to church like the majority of Danes (integration?), or they start their own churches where they worship in their own language and cultural tradition. Today there are some 200 migrant churches and congregations scattered throughout Denmark according to a recent survey.

### **The established churches face new challenges**

Secondly, new issues have appeared on the churches' agendas. The challenge is twofold: From migrants of other faiths, and from Christian migrants.

Migrants of other faiths: These migrants are often very visible in the local community because of their dress code and the colour of their skin. Out of perhaps 210,000 Muslims in Denmark less than 8,000 are ethnic Danes. The presence of people of other faiths in our own communities has forced a growing number of churches to grapple with issues such as:

- What does mission and evangelism mean when we are neighbours and live in the same community? Do we hope that Muslims will convert to Christianity? What if they don't?
- Is dialogue an easy way around the Great Commission – or a simple necessity?
- What does peaceful coexistence mean? How does it happen?
- How can we build meaningful relationships as people of faith – as individuals, families and churches?
- Are there things we can and should do together to make our society a better place for our children?
- How can we show respect for each others' religious festivals and use them as points of contact?

Until recently Christian migrants from non-Lutheran churches (the large majority) were an overlooked group. - "Because I have black hair and don't look Danish, everybody thinks I'm a Muslim." Most Christian migrants coming from a non-Western background would echo this comment made by an Arab Christian. The presence of Christians from other church traditions – and of converts to Christianity from other faith backgrounds - has raised a number of issues:

- What does it mean to be a host community?
- What are the responsibilities of a majority church in relation to minority churches? Are we willing to share our resources?
- Are we open to learn from Christian brothers and sisters (often but not always coming from poorer countries), and whose Christian traditions may not be as long and well-established as ours?
- Are we willing to listen and receive from others? As a pastor from Ghana put it: "You took the Gospel to us. We are grateful. Now we take it back to you." A church leader from East Africa was even more direct: "You had the fire. But now you have lost it. That is why we have come. We want to preach to the Danes."

## **(2) Growing interest in migrant churches**

Migrant churches are the most significant new chapter in recent Danish church history. In Copenhagen a few years ago it was estimated that one third of all churchgoers attended a migrant or international church. But until recently the established churches were hardly aware of the new churches and showed very little interest in getting to know their new neighbours. Today there is growing interest in migrant churches and several examples of new initiatives in relation to the newcomers supported by the official Lutheran church. Increasingly, migrant churches

are met with interest, curiosity and willingness to listen and learn. – Some reflections on the role of migrant churches in Denmark:

**DEFINITION:** In Denmark a migrant church is defined as a congregation which consists of at least 10 adults meeting regularly (at least four times a year) for worship or fellowship. It is a church that was started by an immigrant or refugee, the majority of the congregation are not ethnic Danes, the language is not (exclusively) Danish, and the pastor is not an ethnic Dane.

The first migrant church was founded in 1575 (the German Lutheran congregation in Copenhagen) followed by the reformed church (French/German) in 1685, the Anglican church in 1834 – and the Swedish Church in 1901. Each has their own fascinating history. But it was not until the arrival of larger groups of guest workers and refugees from the late 1960s onwards that the number of migrant churches began to grow significantly. Within the last ten years more than 50 new churches have sprung up. They are African (e.g. Congolese), Burmese/Chin, Chinese, Pakistani, Iraqi, Armenian etc. 17 pastors and 14 church members (first, second and third generation) were interviewed in the first book offering a national survey and inside view of the world of migrant churches: *ANDRE STEMMER / OTHER VOICES: Migrant churches in Denmark - seen from the inside (2004)* where I had the exciting privilege of doing a number of the interviews. Two new publications and a website on migrant churches are on their way as a result of a recent initiative from the Danish bishops to have the existing information updated and expanded.

**WHO ARE THE MIGRANT CHURCHES?** All major denominations are represented: Orthodox, catholic, reformed, protestant, pentecostal and charismatic. In all their sometimes frustrating diversity they are a timely reminder that no one church embodies all aspects of authentic Christian spirituality and practice. All church traditions have something important to offer. In God's global mosaic we need each other.

**HOW MANY?** In Denmark at least 12,000 refugees and immigrants attend international services on a regular basis. That is about 6 per cent of all Christian migrants in DK. For a total picture of church attendance among migrants we have to add all those who attend Danish churches. Here no precise figures are available, but in many churches there are New Danes in the pews on Sunday morning. - Could it be that the number of Christian migrants who attend church is in fact higher than the number of Muslim migrants who attend the mosque?! It is estimated that the two migrant groups, Christians and Muslims, are about equal in size (200,000-210,000).

**SERVICES:** Services in international churches are extremely diverse – from the 2,000 year old apostolic liturgy in Aramaic complete with chanting, intense symbolism, incense and bell ringing to vibrant gospel music, power praying, exuberant spontaneity and exorcism.

**Languages:** Services are held in more than 35 different languages from Korean, Indonesian, Chin, Urdu, Farsi and Arabic to Swahili, Kinyarwanda, Twi, Amharic, Serbo-Croatian, Portugese, French and English. In addition some migrant churches offer translation into Danish.

**How long:** Services last from one hour (the International church of Copenhagen and the Anglican church) to four hours (the Coptic-Orthodox church where the

congregation stands most of the time) - and anything in between. Two hours are quite normal.

**BUILDINGS:** Very few international churches own their own buildings. They beg and borrow and plead and sometimes pay exorbitant rent. They meet in church halls, former auction rooms, hotels, basements and factories. They are very mobile and highly skilled at packing and unpacking a church service complete with keyboard, amplifiers, powerpoint and African drums.

**CHURCH LIFE:** Many migrant churches have an extensive programme during the week with cell groups, Bible studies, prayer meetings, choir rehearsals and women's meetings etc. Therefore it is seldom sufficient to borrow a church hall on a Sunday afternoon after the Danish congregation has gone home. Many migrant churches function seven-days-a-week.

**PARTNERS OR COMPETITORS?** It is important that we remind ourselves that migrant churches are not competing with Danish churches. Rather they reach three groups whom the established churches don't and cannot reach in the same way:

Temporary migrants: Business people, embassy staff, students, contract workers, au pairs, tourists.

1. Migrant churches attract temporary migrants because they offer places to pray and worship in a world language such as English, French, Chinese and Arabic.
2. Migrant churches provide a social network: New friends and a new family. A sense of belonging helps people feel better during their stay in Denmark - and to do their jobs better.
3. People learn new things and acquire new skills.
4. Migrant churches bring the Gospel to people who may later become key leaders in their home countries. Most prime ministers and key politicians in non-Western countries have studied in the West or lived here for some time.
5. Some migrants return home to help plant new churches in their home countries.

Permanent migrants: Refugees and immigrants and their descendants

1. Migrant churches help people retain their Christian faith in unfamiliar surroundings. For most people it takes at least a year or longer before they feel at home spiritually in a new language. Therefore Danish language churches cannot fulfil the same role.
2. Migrant churches provide a platform for migrants to help and learn from each other.
3. Migrant churches provide a context where people are needed and asked to be involved in the life of the church.
4. Migrant churches build bridges to national churches and form a platform for contact with the official Denmark (legislation, registration, tax forms etc.)
5. Migrant churches provide important links to the home country in the form of mission and charity projects.
6. Migrant churches give refugees and immigrants a break from the Danes and a necessary breathing space – just as 53 Danish churches abroad provide Danes with "a home away from home."

Ethnic Danes: An increasing number of ethnic Danes who are not attracted by the traditional Danish version of church.

1. Migrant churches offer a window to global Christianity and a chance to experience international church life. There are other ways of doing things than what is traditionally Danish!
2. Migrant churches try to integrate teaching and lifestyle.
3. Migrant churches offer an attractive social network with much joy and lots of fun, food and fellowship!
4. Migrant churches demonstrate that integration is possible, that diversity can be enriching, and that unity is possible in the midst of diversity.

### **(3) Some examples of responses from churches in Denmark**

Some churches are still fearful or simply do not want contact with the newcomers. - "They are not our responsibility. If they come we will not turn them away. But don't expect us to talk to them. - And anyway there are no foreigners in our parish..." The overall picture, however, is one of a rich variety of responses – a colourful mosaic of good will, curiosity and genuine attempts to build bridges. Some examples:

#### **(a) Responding to people of other faiths**

It is interesting to notice that in the early days it was the presence of migrants of other faiths that made churches respond with various initiatives. Christian migrants seldom received much attention. Some examples:

- Mødestedet Vesterbro: A Christian meeting place started nearly 25 years ago. Key activities: Tea house, women's activities, koinonia, advocacy, help with homework.
- The Islamic Christian Study Centre: Dialogue work and academic courses.
- KIVIK (Christian Info Centre): Exhibitions, Ramadan and Christmas dinners
- Folkekirke og Religionsmøde: An dialogue initiative of the official Lutheran church. Hosts a National Christian/Muslim Discussion Forum.
- Independent (free) church initiatives: The Internet Cafe HangOut (immigrant and refugee youth)

#### **(b) Responding to Christian refugees and immigrants**

##### Lutheran churches

- *Sunday services as contact points*: Many churches try their best to make refugees and immigrants feel welcome – sometimes with unexpected results. In one parish the church board decided to have church coffee after the service so that they could talk to the refugees – and discovered that the Danes also started talking to each other! Another church decided to pay for 29 refugees from the parish to attend a cross-cultural Christian summer camp. Others have started having international services or offer local contact families.
- *Advocacy*: A number of local churches and pastors have spoken up for especially Iraqi asylum seekers, many of whom have waited in asylum centres for up to 8 years.
- *Services for asylum seekers*: The past 20 years 15 Copenhagen churches have taken it in turn to offer regular services for asylum seekers who are

fetched by bus from a reception centre. For the majority this is their first contact with a church in DK.

*The Roman Catholic Church:* Started services for other language groups back in the 1950s (Polish immigrants). Today there are R.C. masses in at least 10 languages.

*Independent churches* have for many years been much better than Lutheran churches at including migrants. Many migrants come from a free church background and naturally feel at home here – and the free churches are often more flexible in terms of services than the Lutheran church. *Example: The Danes in the Baptist church in Svendborg suddenly found themselves an ethnic minority with the arrival of a large group of Burmese Baptist refugees. They wanted to welcome the newcomers – but had a few things to work out!*

### **(c) Hosting migrant churches – models of partnership**

*Lutheran churches:* More than 40 Lutheran churches all over the country presently host migrant churches. Some use the church premises for free. Others pay a (nominal) rent. Sometimes there are joint activities such as special services or meals.

- Partnership: A Copenhagen church recently faced the prospect of having to close down and wanted to let their premises to an international church on Sunday morning. This partnership is an example of a new chapter in Danish church history.
- Mentor relationships: Some Danish pastors meet with migrant pastors on a regular basis to offer practical as well as spiritual support.
- Exchange: In a few places pastors from majority and minority churches regularly preach in each others' churches.

*Lutheran parachurch organizations:* In recent years Lutheran "mission houses" have started hosting Ethiopian, Burmese, Congolese and Vietnamese churches and organizing occasional joint activities. Some of the larger organizations offer help with Sunday school and youth activities, summer camps etc.

*Independent churches:* More than 30 free churches host a number of migrant churches and fellowships.

*The Roman Catholic Church:* Offers services in more than 10 languages in at least 60 language groups (congregations) attached to Danish congregations.

### **(d) Local activities and meeting points**

... such as criss-cross meals, free language classes, contact/friendship family schemes, church concerts, multilingual Sunday services, cross-cultural Christian summer camps, sports and fishing trips etc.

### **(e) Support and resource ministries**

TVÆRKULTURELT CENTER (The Intercultural Christian Centre): Founded in 1994. This is a national resource centre and network of 150 Lutheran churches, migrant churches and Danish parachurch organisations. Among other things the Centre offers multiethnic conferences, publishes resource materials and a quarterly newspaper, gives a voice and a platform to (Christian) migrants and makes their needs and resources known.

KIT (The Churches Integration Services): Founded in 2003. A national network of Danish free churches and migrant churches. Among many other things KIT offers

help with registration and missionary visas etc, runs contact family schemes, supports an International Pastors' Fellowship and a Tamil Pastors' Fellowship, coordinates a National Day of Prayer initiated by international churches and runs a project for au pair girls in Denmark.

FUN (Association of Young New Danes): Founded in 2006 by KIT. FUN is currently in the process of building up a national network of local groups and activities.

*The National Council of Churches in Denmark:* This official church body has recently decided also to work with migrant churches.

#### **(4) Conclusion**

Do churches contribute to integration or increase segregation? Are they spiritual ghettos or shortcuts to integration? There are no simple answers to these questions. Some migrants withdraw into their own churches and ethnic fellowships for reasons of language, culture, shared history, denomination, church tradition, understanding of spirituality or feelings of fear and insecurity – just as some Danes isolate themselves in ethnic Danish churches for very similar reasons. In other words: Ethnic segregation is part of the overall picture. Monocultural churches do to some extent contribute to ethnic segregation. But this may not necessarily be a bad thing. On the contrary it may be a necessary part of living together in an increasingly multiethnic society. The alternative is unlikely to be better integration. For many first generation migrants a non-Danish church is a necessary platform and starting point for integration. Here they find a familiar identity and that dignity which comes from knowing what to say and do – and being able to say it fluently and confidently without sounding like a four-year-old. Here there are people with shared or similar experiences who understand what exile means. Here they don't need to explain everything – knowing that Danes will never understand anyway. Many migrants would say that until they started their own church no one noticed them. From being *nobody* they become *somebody*. They could rent facilities and started receiving invitations from Danish churches. Their choirs were invited to give concerts in churches. They found that they were seen and given a voice in a way they would not have been if they had gone to a Danish majority church.

Thus the overall picture points to migrant churches as significant platforms for integration rather than ethnic ghettos that reinforce segregation. For many immigrants and refugees churches have played, and continue to play a very significant role in their integration process.

People of other faiths often feel that they have more in common with Danes who attend church on Sundays than with secular Danes who seldom or never see a church from inside. People of faith often share some of the same values and concerns in a secular society. Therefore it is not surprising that many Muslims and others attend Danish classes and meals in churches and are happy to have Christian contact families.

For Christian migrants churches represent something familiar. They are used to prayer and singing and Bible teaching. When they meet Christians who openly share

their faith in God they feel at home. They trust Christians more than Danes who do not believe in God. "In Iraq I had never met anyone who did not believe in God," a Christian Iraqi girl told me. Through churches they make Danish friends, practice their Danish language and learn about the Danes and Danish church life.

## LESSONS LEARNT

(1) We need more theological reflection. Over the years we have seen that what motivates Christians to welcome immigrants and refugees is sound biblical teaching and theological reflection on a Christian response to migration.

(2) Responding to migrants is not an additional burden for a church. There are challenges and difficulties, but most Danes who have contact with immigrants and refugees feel that they have received more than they have given. They have grown in their own Christian faith. They are people who have been blessed. This was the repeated message on a day conference hosted by Tværkulturelt Center a few years ago where some 40 practitioners from all corners of Danish church life shared their experiences.

(3) Often it is refugees and immigrants who initiate contact with Danish churches – rather than the other way around. They take the first step and turn up in church on a Sunday morning or they come to the church office and ask for a venue where they can meet. How we respond is often decisive for further contact. If they are ignored they will go elsewhere – or give up on church altogether. If they are welcomed by people with warm eyes, the door is wide open for further contact and future blessings.

(4) We need to listen carefully. It is both foolish and arrogant to think that we know what others need. It is absolutely vital that we spend time asking questions - and listening to the answers. Then we may discover some of the real needs. And it is by beginning to honour them we may earn the right to be listened to when we speak – to become *significant others*.

(5) We need to improve our relational skills. The ability to develop personal relationships with people from other cultures is absolutely essential if we want to build bridges to migrants and their churches. This means that we need to be much more aware of issues such as honour and shame, indirect communication patterns and non-Western ways of solving conflicts.

EPILOGUE: Last Sunday I attended Evensong at Coventry Cathedral in the UK. This magnificent modern cathedral stands on the ruins of the old cathedral that was bombed during the Second World War. In this splendid building which in a special way is a symbol of reconciliation and forgiveness we were reminded of a party at the end of time – a party that will be for people from all nations and cultures. This is a party we do not want to miss. And we can have a foretaste already today when we welcome migrants into our churches.

# Integrating and disintegrating factors in the relation between migrants and the Church of Norway

By Revd Ingrid Vad Nilsen

Former chairperson of the Council of Ecumenical and International Relations, Church of Norway

## Olav stipend – presentation

My work started in a Lutheran Church in Manhattan, New York, three years ago. I was an observer to the UN general assembly and on a Sunday morning I walked to the nearest Lutheran Church for worship. This particular church had a rather high church liturgy, but nevertheless: There was something about the atmosphere – it felt open, warm and including. It was certainly multicultural; you could spot people from most comers of the world. And those who took active part also reflected this wide spectre of people.

This caused me to reflect: What is it that make me feel included in this church, what makes me feel welcome and taken care of – even if I did not take any initiative to speak to other people?

The experience from my home church was that it is not easy to become a multicultural worshipping community.

This led to an application for one year of study leave to dig deeper into the issues of migration and migrants within the Church of Norway.

We know that migrants tend to gather in faith groups based on nationality, ethnicity, language or culture. They choose faith-based **segregation** – or maybe this was not their first option? Many places in Norway, migrants are so few that separate faith groups is not an option. What happens then? Do they become **assimilated** into Church of Norway congregations – as backbenchers? Or are they **integrated** and welcomed as partners of faith – where a new multicultural congregation evolves? Or are they becoming **marginalised** and passive as they can not find the style of church they are used to?

I have conducted field research in three congregations along the coast of Norway – in the east, south and north. I will present some of my findings.

Along with this, I have read literature from other countries on issues of migration – to look for common trends and something to learn from others who have lived with larger numbers of migrants over a longer period compared to what is the case in Norway.

## Numbers

Out of a total population in Norway of about 4.7 millions approximately 10% are immigrants.

They come to work, to study, as family members and as asylum seekers. They are spread all over the country, but in Oslo the migrant population is 25%.

During the past 30 years, some 230.000 new Norwegians have become citizens.

We often seem to think that these numbers are record high in history, but in comparison: In 1915, 21% of the population of Europe lived outside of Europe.

The most visible group of migrants are the Muslims, and we tend to think that they are the vast majority of migrants. However, approximately 40% of all migrants in Norway come from a Christian background

Who are they? Many are Catholics – for example Filipino wives or au pairs and domestic workers and Polish guest workers in the building industry. The Catholic church in Norway has a hard time trying to accommodate all these newcomers. Among the Christian migrants are also groups of Orthodox Christians from Ethiopia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and new congregations are being established. We also have Protestants of all kinds from all over the world among our migrants.

### **This is being done today**

The Christian Council of Norway organises a Churches Network on Integration of Refugees and Immigrants by. This network has become a place for networking and contact between established and migrant churches. The Norwegian Mission Society has established multicultural congregations in the largest cities and is working to get them recognised as congregations within the Church of Norway. There are churches that are renting out rooms for worship to groups of migrants and some congregations have also formalised cooperation with migrant groups. And some congregations are engaged into diaconal work with migrants.

The General Synod has had migration on its agenda twice during the last years. But in general, we have to admit that minority churches have done much more to accommodate Christian migrants. In addition to the Roman Catholic Church, both the Baptist Church and the Pentecostal Church have developed new forms of co-operation with migrants.

### **To see the same context**

In one of the congregations I visited, there were different notions of what the context looked like. One person said:

*"There are very few immigrants here. That is the main thing. This is a white society; we see very few immigrants or they are very well integrated."*

Where as another person said this:

*"There are quite a few immigrants here – so many that ethnic Norwegians would not believe it."*

If multicultural integration in church life should be given priority, we need to see the same context. And if we do not see the same, we need to investigate and talk us through together in order to see the same reality.

Even if we see the same context, we need to go a step further in order to realise what consequences this has for us as a local community and congregation. Unless there is a strategy and a focus, not much will be done in congregations that always have more challenges than resources. The challenges vary: In some communities the majority of migrants are not from a Christian background. Or they could come from a predominantly Orthodox or Catholic background with 100 miles to their nearest congregation. Some have come here to work; they have an income and can go home whenever they wish. Others are refugees or married to a Norwegian. All of these represent different challenges for a multicultural and multilingual worshipping congregation.

### **Diakonia**

The first "language" we use in church when we meet new groups of people or new needs in the community, is *diakonia*. We wish to help, to console, to comfort, to integrate, and *diakonia* seems to be an important way of meeting new people in the community who feel foreign to most things in their new life. In all three congregations I studied, the deacons were the first person to make contact with migrant newcomers.

Some places this area of work continues as the responsibility of the deacon. Other places, the deacon manages to involve the whole congregation and community in a process of integration.

It was migrants who first came to the local church – it was not the church that offered an invitation. One can wonder whether separate migrant faith groups are the migrants' first option or if it is their only option to preserve faith in a new and strange environment.

### **Worship**

Most Christian migrants are longing for Christian fellowship in worship. Whereas the deacons are essential in the first phase of contacts, the pastors become instrumental in this phase.

Many are not satisfied with their pastors. They wish they would open up much more for different cultural expressions. Not only for the sake of the migrants in the congregation, but for the benefit of the whole congregation!

One person says:

*"Worship – I understand very well that they go to the Pentecostal congregation. I have experienced African worship, it is a different spirituality. The togetherness around their faith feels stronger – the unity. It would have been beneficial for our congregation if the Africans were allowed to participate more. More people would have come."*

A pastor says:

*"We found that we could not change our worship a lot – we could not be African. We have a responsibility for our own culture. It is not ok to act as an African even if it is colourful and happy."*

What kind of theology is this? What kind of responsibility for our own culture does a church have? It is not hard to understand that we should not give up all that is dear to us in cultural ways of worshipping or in language. There is no help in marginalising the Norwegian part of the congregation – if that was what this pastor meant.

But if 50% of the people in the pews on a given Sunday are visibly African – who are the "we" that celebrate? Is it the 50% Norwegians and the rest are strangers or visitors or backbenchers? Or do we need to change the way we constitute who the "we" are that celebrate together?

Sometimes our self-understanding as a folk church does not help us. We say that we are an open church, open to all people. But if we never invite (at least not non-members), and never use other languages than Norwegian, we will not be viewed as open to large groups of people. As I have read official Church Synod documents, I also discover that we tend to say that we wish to be part of Norwegian heritage and tradition; we want people to feel they belong. But if the belonging is tied up to tradition, language and common history, the mission perspective of our Church in today's world will loose.

Sometimes I wonder whether we are capable and willing to enter into the new landscape of change that migration implies.

In the European study "Mapping Migration", they comment on this issue: (page 10)

*"Migrants are portrayed as strangers and strangers are a major irritant because they disturb the logic of a given society. The presence of strangers interferes with the dichotomy between inside and outside, friends and enemies. Enemies stay on the other side of the battle line, but strangers do*

*not maintain their distance. No one knows whether they are friends or foes. Modernity's response to the disturbing presence of strangers has been typically to adopt one of two strategies: assimilation or exclusion."*

Integration as our societies and our faith is calling for, is not an easy option!

### **Mission**

Only one of the congregations I visited seems to be willing to work towards a multicultural worship community. This is a congregation with a vivid mission tradition. Many missionaries were and are recruited from this town and when they settle here after their mission work, they are not afraid to face the newcomers in their home congregation. There is a notion of "mission that has come to us" and a willingness also among the lay people and the volunteer workers to see migrants as a new challenge for their congregation.

One of the other congregations runs a kindergarten with a multicultural group of children. However, this is not used as an entry point for children and parents to become more active members of the congregation. So again: One need both to see the context and to act as an inviting worship community and fellowship if things are to change in favour of a multiethnic faith community.

### **Ecumenism**

The Church of Norway has changed its attitudes towards ecumenism during the last decades. Yes, we are the majority church, but not the only church. There are good working relations between congregations of different church families locally. This also seems to effect the way we look at migrants – for good and maybe also for not so good!

We are good at drawing local maps for migrants who come for their first time to our church. We tend to ask where they come from and what church they belong to. If they have a Pentecostal background, we will gladly show them to the nearest Pentecostal congregation! On the one hand, this is positive and in accordance with our policy of non-proselytism. On the other hand: If a person comes to my church and the only welcome she gets, is a map of how to find the closest Pentecostal congregation – have I done what I need to do when a newcomer comes to church? She will hardly feel very welcome...

There is a difference between sheep-stealing and welcoming new guests or potential members. And there is no law against changing church affiliation as long as it is the individual's free choice.

With Orthodox and Catholic migrants, I see quite an effort from our pastors to accommodate their needs. They invite priests to celebrate masses in the local church and so forth. But if the Catholic mass is once a month, how can we help to accommodate Catholics for the rest of the month?

Catholics who come from majority churches sometimes seems to feel more at home within our majority church than within the minority Catholic Church in Norway. How can we welcome these people without being accused of proselytising?

There are further challenges with faith education of children of Lutheran/Catholic parents. Often the Catholic part is the newcomer to Norway and the Norwegian spouse is often a secularised member of Church of Norway. Often they live far from the nearest Catholic church and the Catholic church has asked Church of Norway for co-operation in order to accommodate these families and their needs.

The presence of migrants challenges us ecumenically to find new ways of working together locally.

### **Religious dialogue**

Much effort has been made over the last few years to get congregations involved in religious dialogue in the community. The government has seen this as an important tool for improving integration. However, my findings are that it is hard for the same congregation to do both mission with migrants and religious dialogue. One of my informants from the congregation that worked hard to become multicultural said:

*"We are not very good with Muslims. How shall we meet them? Evangelise? It is difficult for them to come to Christian gatherings. Do we have a big mission field here? We want to be friends, show respect and at the same time try to get them over to us? It is very challenging.*

*One example: We had a couple where the husband was Catholic and she was a Muslim. She was baptised and that became so difficult in relation to their Muslim friends here that they moved to Oslo."*

Many Christian migrants have had negative experiences as a Christian minority in a Muslim country. For them it is hard to accept and understand the need for dialogue. For Muslims it is still extremely hard to accept a Christian conversion. Maybe we need to say that congregations need to specialise: Either to be welcoming to Christians from different cultures or to concentrate on religious dialogue in the community. This needs however not to be the case forever.

### **Membership**

One normal way of belonging to a Christian fellowship, is to become a member. This is however not an issue in any of the congregations I visited. On the contrary, it seems like pastors avoid this because they do not want to evangelise or proselytise in a situation where a couple are getting married or they come to baptise a child. One says:

*"This is certainly not an issue in relation to weddings or baptisms."*

Another says:

*"Some get baptised and become members. Otherwise I do not find this very important."*

Yet another says:

*"In relation to baptism, we do not meet this very much. They have their religion and I am very reluctant to wriggle them out of their religion. They are welcome, but it is not my responsibility to take them out of where they belong. I am not pushing for people to get baptised."*

I think we would all agree that it is not wise to be pushing for people to be baptised, but if we do not at all invite people to talk about faith and present the faith that they are now giving their child, have we not deceived our mission?

By accident, I heard a story from two sides. One of my informants told me about a Lutheran/Buddhist couple. The pastor had married them and visited them at their home. The wife seemed to be interested to know more about the Christian faith and the pastor hoped that she would make contact on this. One day, both spouses came forward for communion. The pastor was happy about this and continued to hope that she would soon make contact.

A pastor from Norwegian Church Abroad also told a story – and from the details told, it has to be the same couple. They lived close to his church in Spain part of the year and both were very active in the work there. He knew that the woman was a Buddhist, but congregations abroad are wide open to all people as a principle. One day this woman makes contact with the pastor, telling him that she wants to become a Christian. He welcomes this decision and asks her to make contact with her local pastor back home in order to enter into a baptismal program. And here we are: This woman does not need to be pushed. But there is no one inviting her either.

### **Theological obstacles**

Being a majority church, we might have lost the ability to be welcoming in a way that newcomers in the community can understand. Besides, we have an unhappy story of trying to get our membership lists in order by removing people who are wrongly in them. I have never seen a welcoming brochure to the Church of Norway – except for invitation to baptism for newborns with one or both parents as members of our church.

Some of the theological tensions lie in the New Testament itself. On the one side, the global Christian family is portrayed as one body or as one tree. On the other side is the story of Pentecost where the gospel was contextualised into all the mother tongues that were present in Jerusalem on that day.

There is a strong emphasis on unity and at the same time also on context.

Migration challenges this in new ways since we now live in mixed and multicultural communities and need to show both unity and respect for different contexts within in the same community.

The two most important experiences we have in this field, is the story of the Norwegian Church abroad (the Seamen's Church) and the establishment of a Sámi church life. We use great resources every year both human and economically, to be church for Norwegian citizens who live abroad for shorter or longer periods. And the Seamen's church is not only a church – it also claims to be “a home away from home”, a place where people meet traditions, culture, fellowship, food and worship that are familiar for any Norwegian.

During the work with Sámi church life, we have come to understand the need for Sámi language in Bible translations, worship material and catechesis. This also includes cultural ways of celebrating faith.

We have acknowledged and developed faith communities out of Norwegian and Sámi language and culture. How do we respond to migrants with the same needs?

### **Needs of first generation migrants**

To move to a foreign country with a new language, culture, climate and traditions is a challenge for all, regardless of reason for migration.

When everything is new and a lot of energy is used in order to learn everything that is new in the host society through language courses, work and school, religion can be an important fellowship and identity mark.

Some people come to our congregations wishing to be assimilated into the Norwegian way of doing things. I met some of these, but they do not seem to be many. When we talk about integration into our congregations however – this is often what we mean: “They are heartily welcome to become like us.”

But most people cherish their familiar ways of celebrating their faith. To get together with

"their own clan" in a way that they know all the cultural codes, where people care for each other and help each other in a social fellowship, where there are people to ask when you have questions about the Norwegian ways of doing things – that can be a very important social factor for migrants. It offers social capital to new Norwegians, which is important in order to adjust to the new society.

By first sight, this might seem like pure segregation. But it is the same as we have acknowledged for Norwegian Church abroad and for Sámi church life.

In my material, I found that the African group in one of the congregations has gathered in the form of a choir. Besides coming to worship in the local Church of Norway congregation (only one hour per week!), they also meet in the premises of the Pentecostal church to worship there. Their leader has become a member of the Church of Norway parish and is also an employee there.

In another congregation, they wish to employ one of the migrants as a deacon for migrants. They want this because they realise that migrants have a lot in common and should be helped to help themselves within the framework of the local parish. Even if the number of migrants in the community is not large enough to provide for a full congregation, they anyway seem to tend to organise in groups out of the same need for a fellowship that it is hard for the Norwegian part of the congregation to provide.

### **Integration and culture**

Integration into our church can be difficult because of the differences in culture that also implies different understanding of the Bible. We are generally speaking, marked by secularism, individualism, equality and weakened family institutions. We have adjusted our lives and theology to these values.

People from other Christian faith traditions fight secularism and are often marked by strong religious systems and traditional values. It is easy to feel threatened by our "dissolving" values.

If we want to work seriously with integration, I believe it is important to understand these cultural differences. It is important in order for migrants to be equal co-operators – not only guests or exotic inputs in our worship services. It is only when both parties are ready to give and receive, that we will have an integration that can function in the long run.

### **Second and third generation**

Whereas the first generation feels a need to preserve their own religious traditions, that might not fully apply to second and later generations. They grow up here, go to school and socialise here and many will, as time goes by, have Norwegian as their first language. Their parents' way of worshipping is not necessarily very attractive to them and might be rather foreign compared to the daily life they live. If they do not get help to translate faith into "Norwegian", they might become as secular as their Norwegian friends. Most parents see this as a great loss and want help to avoid this. If we are not able to make good working relations with Christian groups of first generation migrants, there will be little communication also with second and later generations.

Our work with children and youth need to be in co-operation with groups of migrants for the benefit of both!

### **Individual or organisational integration**

As a church, we are not as welcoming as one could wish or even expect. At the same time, it seems to be difficult to integrate people individually. Often that ends up more or less as assimilation. Individually, new members are not “strong” enough to make a difference.

On the other hand, we are very good in organising. If a group of migrants come to our church, we are more than happy to share some services with them, having their choir to sing or do different activities together. We are ourselves structured in a way that organised groups are more easily integrated than individuals. This is also the experience from the Danish research on this. Migrants in Denmark say that they have more contact with Danish Christians after they formed their own faith group of migrants.

### **Legal obstacles – new structures**

This however, leads us into new challenges. If a group of Catholic Croats comes to the Catholic church in Oslo, the Catholic bishop will try to find a Croat priest to minister to them. That is all it takes to integrate them into the Catholic church the way they are working. If a group of migrants linked to the Baptist church, wants to form their own Baptist congregation, this is no problem. If they want to be part of an existing Baptist congregation, that is also no problem.

With the geographical parish system as the only way of organising congregations, the Church of Norway has a distance to go in order to facilitate new groups of people into the church. If the American and German Lutheran congregations in Oslo wish to be part of Church of Norway – there is actually no way they can be so, since they are not geographically organised. If a multicultural group of Protestants or an Ethiopian Lutheran group want to become members, there is no way they can become so with today’s legal structure.

Our geographical based parish system system has worked for centuries and it works well. But there are challenges and questions that are not answered if this is the only way of organising church. We need to investigate more in order to facilitate those who actually want to become full members of the Church of Norway with another organising factor than geography.

In addition, we need to elaborate on light structures and more ad hoc co-operation with groups of migrants as well as formal structures for contact between the Church of Norway and Christian migrants. We have such a forum for contact with Muslims and need the same priority given to Christian groups.

### **Summary**

Migrants both in the USA and in Europe seem to form their own Christian groups and congregations. Maybe it is up to us whether this will function as segregation or as integration in the long run.

If we are willing to enter into processes of change and redefine our own ecclesial thinking in line with the new reality in all our local communities, lots of good and exciting things can happen. At the same time, we should not be naïve. There are real challenges, but I do not see that we have other options as Christians than entering into these challenges if we want to be followers of Christ. If we are not entering into this new landscape, we will get both Christian and political segregation as a result. We need to look at ourselves and migrant groups as equal partners and we need to enter into the dialogue with migrants with both humility and respect and a wish of both giving and receiving.

The starting point has to be that we are all part of the one, global body of Christ and a fellowship of Christian sisters and brothers regardless of what might keep us apart.

The luck is still on our side in Norway. We still have not done too many mistakes. We can learn from churches abroad and make the right choices and priorities now – in order to get good co-operation with migrant groups – and a good integration in the long run.

We often have the notion that an immigrant or a migrant has dark skin and is a Muslim. Knowing that 40% of the migrants come from a Christian background, this should lead us to rethink our mission as the majority church of the country.

## Migration and the changing ecclesial landscape – an Orthodox perspective

By Father Misha Jaksic

Coordinator for the orthodox family in the Christian Council of Sweden

A walk around the Orthodox Christian Ecclesial landscape is indeed something of a migration through a liturgically dynamic landscape; an organism, a body, to its essence unchangeable, as the Lord and the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, “is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8). Therefore we will start this our short pilgrimage through the Orthodox ecclesial landscape, as well as end it up, in the Divine Liturgy, the only real migrational act towards a genuine change, or rather transfiguration, of landscapes of human souls, as well as of the changeable creation.

Still young as priest, at my first pilgrimage to the Holy Land, I was to concelebrate in the Sunday-liturgy of the parish of St Nicholas in Beit-Jalla, in the outskirts of Bethlehem. Unfortunately the clergy of the parish hadn't been informed about our group's arrival, and I found myself critically scrutinised by the priests of the parish as I entered the altar-room and made my modest request. The answer was not 'no', but the question was 'are you Orthodox, a canonical Orthodox priest'. A couple of times (probably three, as it seems most holy) I had to answer I was, and once all suspicions were set aside, I was given the honour to be the main celebrant of the Liturgy. And it came to be one of the liturgies I will specially remember: me using the Swedish language, the other celebrants, the choir and the people predominantly Arabic with elements of Greek.

This was a Liturgy at its best, if I may say so – a manifestation of the Ecclesia (meaning to call together, to gather, to assemble what has been dispersed). After the liturgy one of the participants of our group, a Protestant Christian, evidently affected by what he just had experienced, asked us and himself rhetorically, with tears in his eyes: “Could we ever come closer to the Miracle and Mystery of the Pentecost!?” Indeed the experience is a beautiful and visible manifestation of the Church's catholicity - for the Orthodox not in the first place meaning “universality”, but “the fullness of ecclesiality (*pleroma*), the fullness of true faith and worship (*Orthodoxia*).

The experience was an obvious manifestation of the Ecclesia's overcoming of any kind of boundaries: ethnical, racial, generational, gender-related (Gal 3:28). The experience was a manifestation of the Church's true identity and origin in Eschaton, the Kingdom of God, and the faithful people's *true Citizenship in Heaven* (Phil 3:20). A couple of stone's throws from the place where God became man – in order to unite whole humanity with Himself, not only one group or people; to transform whole creation, not only fragments of it – at this place I had one of my most important experiences of the Church's catholicity not being overshadowed by ethnicity, a phenomenon actually condemned by the Orthodox Church as the heresy of *philethism*, but unfortunately still haunting contemporary Orthodox contexts, above all in the (Orthodox) Diaspora.

I am perfectly certain that Orthodox theologians throughout history, be it clergy or laymen, dealing with an issue like ours, with a headline like the one given to me, would not primarily put the emphasis on the changing ecclesial landscapes due to

migrations inside the *oecumene*, the inhabited world. They would, most likely, emphasise the migration needed for the Christian person or community to achieve the very goal of the Christian life, *theosis*, the change of the ecclesial landscape of the microcosmic man through the divinization. As I once heard the Swedish historian and expert on Russian history, Per-Arne Bodin, say, when speaking about the Orthodox Russian people in relation to all the historic Golgothas it has experienced: "The Russian people deny the everyday, but affirm the Sunday, the Resurrection."<sup>15</sup>

To be honestly Orthodox, this lesson primarily has to be dressed in an ecclesiological, a theological and liturgical garment. Maybe our contemporary theological consciousness is turning all to pale from to intensive a washing in waters of secularism. Maybe we have to strive also for a migration to a change of the theological/ecclesiological landscape of the contemporary Christianity, thus awaking our collective memory of times when theology formally permeated both society and the everyday-life of the Christians, indeed also risking a creation of a "non-ecclesial street-theology. St Gregory of Nyssa, great a theologian as he was, is actually even complaining about his contemporary situation in Constantinople, addressing a situation of theological individuality, a deviation from the Ecclesia and her Orthodoxy - a comparable situation of that with the Tower in Babel, with people, in their *hubris* and alienation from God, disperse from a God-given unity, landing in a state of diaspora:

"If you ask one for some coins of change, he will philosophise about begotten and unbegotten. If you ask one for the price of a loaf of bread, he will reply, 'the Father is greater, and the Son is subordinate'. Supposing you say you want a bath, the bath attendant will say, 'the son's being is from non-being'. I don't know what name to give to this evil, this mental perversion, craziness or madness, plague or epidemic".<sup>16</sup>

In the very beginning of his book "The way of the Ascetics", the Finnish-Orthodox theologian Tito Colliander teaches: "If you wish to save your soul and win life eternal, rise from your sluggishness, make the sign of the cross over yourself saying: In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen." Further on he writes: "Like Abraham you have heard the voice of the Lord: *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.* (Gen 12:1)<sup>17</sup>

Actually the Lord's exhortation to Abram, here referred to by Tito Colliander as a kind of *Charta Ascetica*, a kind of roadmap to a changed ecclesial landscape inside the micro-cosmos of man, is in a close theological, patristic relation to the anthropology of the Orthodox Christian Tradition.

Already the creation of man contains a kind of emigrational act. This act of creation of the being, who was to be created last, as an icon of the Uncreated, is preceded by a dialogue inside the Divine Relations of the Triune God: *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness* (Gen 1:26). With this special act of creation the unchangeable and immovable God actually by a movement, a migration, out from

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<sup>15</sup> *Voskresenye* in Russian means both Sunday and Resurrection

<sup>16</sup> St Gregory of Nyssa: *On the Deity of the Son and the Spirit*. PG46:557B

<sup>17</sup> Tito Colliander: *Asketernas väg*, Ortodox Kyrkotidnings Förlag, Stockholm, p.7-8

Himself, not by His inexplicable and inaccessible Essence, but by His uncreated Energy, makes a radical change in the created world, where He puts a creature, a unique being who, being the icon of the Uncreated and a recapitulating microcosm of the creation, is given a special mediating role between the creation and the Creator. St Maximos the Confessor actually sees man as a *micro-ecclesia*, a little church, as he inversely sees the Church, Ecclesia, as well as the whole of cosmos, as a *macro-anthropos*, a cosmic man.<sup>18</sup>

Ontologically the Orthodox Christian Tradition sees migration and a changed ecclesial landscape through the Church, through Ecclesia herself, and her ecclesial, eucharistic, eschatological event of gathering, assembling, actually whole the creation, through man, the image of God, being the created steward on the behalf of this process of collection.

The humanity is, together with the whole creation, suffering from a devastating emigration from its true homeland (Phil 3:20), created by God in the Garden of Eden, an emigration from life to death, from being to non-being, as the Church fathers, like St Athanasios of Alexandria, put it.<sup>19</sup> Having a micro-cosmic call (function) man is standing in the very centre of this existential drama, his migration from the blessed state of Paradise to a state of non-being, from where he once was called to be, having a direct impact on whole the created context he recapitulates. (Gen 3:14-24)

Ecclesia is the mysterious encounter between Heaven and earth, between Eternity and time and space, between God and man. One of the great theologians of our time, Professor Lars Thunberg (+2008), associating to the patristic teaching of e.g. St Gregory of Nazians (the Theologian) and Diadochos of Photike expresses the state of fallen man in relation to the Church and the Kingdom of God as “an ongoing emigration”<sup>20</sup>, an emigration from *the valley of the shadow of death to the green pastures* of Life eternal (Ps 23), from the *plain of the dry bones* in the vision of the Prophet (Ez 37) to the heavenly glory of *the New Jerusalem* in the divine vision of the Apostle, Evangelist and Theologian (Rev 21-22).

Liturgically and theologically (as the liturgy and the prayer coincide with faith and dogma), the Orthodox Church is in a perpetual movement, an ongoing migration from the darkness to the light, from death to life, an emigration from the Diaspora in the alien country of the Prodigal son to the citizenship in the Kingdom of the Father (Luke 15:11-32). This wonderful parable, told by our merciful and man-loving Lord himself, really expresses a migration towards the most important change of an ecclesial landscape – that inside of man, the *micro-ecclesia* itself, and the image of God in a transformation toward its goal, the God-likeness.

The parable of the prodigal son is truly a roadmap towards this most important change of the ecclesial landscape of man, which has impact on the whole cosmos. As our forefathers Adam and Eve, by ignorance in their microcosmic call, brought death and corruption both to themselves as to the whole of cosmos, so Christ, the

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<sup>18</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *The Church, the Liturgy and the Soul of Man – The Mystagogia*, St. Bede’s Publications, Still River, Massachusetts, 1982.

<sup>19</sup> Athanasios av Alexandria; *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*

<sup>20</sup> Lars Thunberg: *Den gudomliga ekonomin*, Artos, Skellefteå, 2001, p.225

last Adam, born by the second Eve, *Theotokos* Maria, Mother of God, by His death and resurrection brings life and incorruptibility to all men as to the whole of cosmos. Analogously the parable teaches us how the Church through her Sacraments, her Holy Mysteries<sup>21</sup>, is leading the sinful and mortal man to divinization and immortality:

The alien country is death and sinfulness. The prodigal son's coming to himself is the Repentance. His arising and turning homewards is the catechumenate. The son's coming home and the Father's reception of him is the Confession and the forgiving of the sins. The putting on the son the best robe is the Baptism (the dressing of the robe of righteousness and incorruptibility). The ring on the son's hand is the Chrismation, the Confirmation of the receiving the gifts of The Holy Spirit, as well as the matrimony, the wedding of the Bride, the Church, and her people with the Bridegroom, Christ. The eating of the fatted calf is the Supper of the Kingdom, which begins as an eschatological event in the Holy Eucharist on earth and gets its fulfilment at the second coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ (Luke 22:30).

This emigrational state of man's is, like the prodigal son's, a perpetual state of death agony - by unsurpassed love and compassion shared by our Lord himself in His own agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22.41-44) – is a perpetual longing for the state of ontological being, given to man by *Him Who is*; by Him Who presented Himself to Moses and Israel as *Jahve*, He Who is, in the burning yet not perishing bush at Sinai (Ex.3:14); He Who presents Himself to whole *the oecumene*, whole the cosmos, being born as a man by the Most Holy Theotokos, the Mother of God, she who analogously, according to the often used Orthodox hymn “without perishing gave birth to God, he Word”, without Whom no existence would be possible at all - He Who presents Himself at His Baptism at Jordan, together with His heavenly Father and the life-giving Spirit (Matt.13-17); He Who presents Himself at the Mount of Transfiguration, transfiguring the whole cosmos into what is to become (Matt.17:1-9); He Who, first of all, presents Himself as the Conqueror of death, the Giver of life, as the One Who leads man an the cosmos from the valley of death to the Life eternal in the Kingdom of God.

*David, the ancestor of God, foreseeing in spirit from afar the sojourn with men of the Only-begotten Son in the flesh, called the creation together to rejoice with him, and prophetically lifted up his voice to cry: 'Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Thy name.' (Ps 88:13) For having gone up, o Christ, with Thy disciples into Mount Tabor, Thou was transfigured, and hast made the nature that had grown dark in Adam, to shine again as lightning, transforming it into the glory and splendour of Thy own divinity. Therefore we cry aloud unto Thee. O Lord and Creator of all things, glory to Thee.*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Three of the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments) of the Orthodox Church have a unique doxology - praising introduction. The Baptism (connected with Chrismation), The Matrimony and the Eucharist (inside the Divine Liturgy) all begin with: “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Sprit. Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.” This doxological intro actually is a manifestation of the entering into the Kingdom of the Triune God - by the person/s in the baptismal act, by the couple in the wedding act and by the faithful people in the liturgical assembly. All these sacramental events are characterized by a migrating people of God, a people being on the move towards the Kingdom, like the people of Israel walking to the Promised Land.

<sup>22</sup> Aposticha from the Great Vespers on the Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord

By the Incarnation of God's Only-begotten Son (the Christians of Nazareth would probably say: By the Annunciation) the re-migration of man's is initiated, towards the state of life, the state of being. Our compassionate and man-loving Lord Jesus Christ is giving Himself in a kenotic act of outpouring love; He is giving Himself as a living materialised icon, a mirror for man – the image of God – to mirror himself in his divine origin, in order to anticipate and approach his divine future: "God became man, so that man would become God."<sup>23</sup> Even a sinful traitor like Pilate teaches us this fact by his judgement of the Judge of whole creation, when he prophetically exclaims: "Ecce homo! This is Man!" (John 19:5b)

The re-migration of man is completed in time and space through the biggest ever event in cosmos – the Resurrection of Christ, the entrance of Eschaton into time and space, the transfiguration of time and space into eternity, the beginning of the end of man's despair and death agony, his state of non-being. Liturgically it is emphasised in the totality of the life of the Orthodox Church, especially in her Liturgy and her cosmic joy at the feast of Pasha, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we sing, again and again:

"Christ is risen from the dead, by death hath He trampled down death, and on those in the graves hath He bestowed life!"

The Resurrection (the baptism of Ecclesia) and the Pentecost (the Chrismation of Ecclesia) are the start point of man's, humanity's, the cosmos's re-migration to its genuine state of being, the re-integration into its genuine condition; in ontological sense, the beginning of the whole creation's changed, transfigured, ecclesiological landscape, which begins here and now, in time and space, and is fulfilled with the second coming of Christ.

Here on earth, the Ecclesia, being an icon of Heaven, is given her true identity (as is man, the micro-ecclesia) in the true meeting of God and man, Heaven and earth, Eternity and time/space, in the Eucharist of the Divine Liturgy. Within and through the Liturgy man and the cosmos are given the true foretaste of the Kingdom of God, completed, as well, by the second coming of Christ. Through His true presence in the Divine Liturgy and its Eucharist our Lord responds to the cry of His Christian flock, heard already from the very first Christians : "Maranatha! Come, o Lord!" (1 Cor.16:22; Rev 22:20b)) as He is giving Himself to us, truly and fully in space and time, transfiguring thus the landscapes of our souls, giving us our heavenly citizenship, already in time and space, already while we are still only on the move, in the process of re-migration towards and re-integration into the Eschaton, the coming Kingdom of God.

From the Orthodox Christian perspective the whole creation is called to become, to be, a Church – to be reintegrated into its ecclesial state of being, to regain its true state of existence. Man is the steward of the creation, who through his microcosmic call is to recapitulate, "ecclesiate", assemble and uplift the creation unto the Triune God. Also the same Triune God has given man a triune call: to be the king of the creation (being its steward), to be the priest of the creation (bringing it forth eucharistically), to be the prophet of the creation (being an interpreter of the whole

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<sup>23</sup> E.g. St Athanasios of Alexandria and St Irenaeos of Lyon

created context's of his). In this context the Church in her Divine Liturgy, being the eschatological event *per excellence*, appears as the very centre of all existence, of all being.

Finally: You might already have heard the story about a Russian-Orthodox bishop who managed to survive the enormous oppression and persecution during the atheistic era of the Communistic Soviet Union. After the collapse of both the regime and the atheistic ideology the bishop, in a context of the World Council of Churches, was asked how he and his flock ever managed to survive this systematic and ruthless persecution of the Church, the goal of which was to extinguish all religion and, at the best, preserve it as museum exhibits, reminiscent of a past time. The questioners were probably expecting concrete survival-strategies of an underground movement activism in a struggle against the regime. The answer, though, might have been rather unexpected as it was concise: "We celebrated the Divine Liturgy!"

# **Singing the Lord's song in a strange land: African churches in Sweden between segregation and integration**

By Anne Kubai

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## **Abstract**

This research project (August 2008 – July 2011) focuses on the presence of different African immigrant churches in Sweden, and analyzes how they can function simultaneously in an integrating and segregating way in the context of migration. The research addresses the discourse of constructing identity: 'hybridity', synthesis, conversion, separation and isolation, among others. The use of liturgy, music, hymns, rituals, symbols, religious objects and practices such as prophesying, exorcizing demons, faith healing etc., will be analysed to establish how they constitute a field of action that African believers occupy and control in the host Swedish environment.

It seems that the immigrants are not concerned first and foremost with adaptation, but with psychological, social and economic survival. In this situation, religion can function either as an important part of the survival strategy, followed by an adaptation strategy or it can mirror the suffering of the immigrants, offering them a form of escapism. A romantic dream supported by the belief that "what happens in their lives is willed by God and so God's providence will prevail", could hinder them from creative use of the available opportunities in order to transform their marginalized or bordered existence into spaces of presence. Thus religion can serve the function of hindering the immigrants from moving toward integration, by offering unrealistic lens through which to see and interpret the reality of their own situation.

On the other hand, my observation is that there is an emerging discourse where the immigrant churches are struggling to transform their "marginalised status" and as they urge the members of their congregation to "partake" of what God is "empowering" them to "in this land". They are urged not to think of themselves as aliens, but as people who are "here by the will of God." At the same time, there is a clear emphasis on individualism, individual prosperity and wellbeing, which are considered by some to be "gifts from God for the righteous".

There is no doubt that religion provides a central motivation for action within the integration process in the host countries, but this claim should not obscure the ambivalent roles and functions of religion in negotiating and reshaping immigrants' identities. Living in a multi-religious context in the host society, where the migrant churches provide the much needed networks and infrastructure to recent immigrants could lead to increased tendency of integration and segregation – integration as the more established immigrants embrace the recent ones, and segregation as the latter are integrated into Christian migrant communities rather than the wider Swedish host society.

## Why the word integration makes me tired

By Pastor Belton Mubiru

Pastor in the International congregation in the Pentecostal Smyrna Church, Gothenburg, Sweden.

What I am about to share is my personal experience in regards to my reflection to the term "integration" being used in the church. Having moved from Uganda and settled in Sweden 1991, I started the Smyrna International church in Gothenburg. It is a 200 member congregation with people from over 28 nations meeting every Sunday. The church is a part of Smyrna kyrkan – an 80 year old Pentecostal church.

I am an evangelist, church planter and pastor by calling by the grace of God. With this in mind I am very careful of the words I use in the church, especially today where the ecclessial landscape has changed by the diaspora.

I can begin by saying that words are creative. They have power to create positive or negative reactions from people when spoken. They create pictures, give limitations to anyone who desires to breakthrough from the mediocrity, hindering a person to explore his or her own potential. We are generally formed by the words spoken into our lives. Some of us are locked in a box of some kind because of the words we have been called or used to describe us.

On this note I am in this presentation trying to defend my position on why I am careful to use the word "integration" in the church. This and many other borrowed unbiblical terms should be avoided if we are to have a church family.

I can begin by saying that the word "integration" is a not a biblical term. The Bible never uses that word. That is why I am careful to use it too. It is defined as "bringing people of different racial or ethnic group into unrestricted or equal association - as in a society or organisation." Please note the word "equal". It is also defined as a free association of people from different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

You very well know that governments, institutions and communities have tried and are still trying to practice "integration" and have not succeeded to even come near to the true definition of "integration" i.e. an equal association or free association of two or more groups. My conviction is that we in the church do not "integrate" as in the actual meaning of "integration". We have another biblical terms we use and the word is "Family". We are "family" in the church.

- We read in Romans 8:14-17 that we are adopted, not "integrated"
- In Romans 11:17 we read that we are grafted in, not "integrated"
- In John 1:12-13 we read that we have been given the right to be called the children of God.

Well, that is why I am talking about "family". We are God's family!

Can you imagine a father and mother discussing how to not "integrate" their children or the adopted son from Asia into the family!

In a family we use words like working close together, understanding each other or learn to love one another but not integrate!

Another word that is used biblically is “nations”. We see God calling nations back to himself. Not a nation, but nations.

- Psalms 72:11 Calling all nations to serve him
- Isaiah 56:7-8 My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations
- Ephesians 2:19 We are not strangers or foreigners

We see God is calling nations to his temple, this is the same mind set we must have as the church to welcome Nations in God’s presence.

I am very careful to use the word “migrant” In case of "migrant churches" I was called a “migrant pastor” which I rejected with biblical support. I encouraged these persons that in order to receive the full blessing from my ministry, it is better not to "box" me up as a “migrant pastor” but instead embrace me as a “pastor” anointed and called by God!

### **Why am I not a “migrant”?**

The Bible says the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof ... He who owns the earth is “My father”... I am his son... I can be where ever he wants me to be and to serve him where ever he allows me to – not as a “Migrant”, but as a servant of the living God! He goes on and say that where ever I put my foot he has given me that place.

God has given me Gothenburg. God has placed me in Sweden and I have been commissioned to preach the gospel in Judea, Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Jesus prayed for his followers from all over of the earth to be one! (John 17:20-21) Now if we are one, why integrate? Is something wrong in the way we are carrying on “the kingdom business”?

What ever I share here is out of a personal experience that radically changed my way of thinking and instead gave me the heart and mind of God. When I came to Sweden in 1991 for a short visit, I found my country men, people I had led to faith in God, backsliden and completely lost and blinded by the materialism and secularism in the country. I gathered them together in my hosts' home and preached them back to faith. I asked for a residence permit very convinced that God had called me to Sweden to reach the Ugandans.

But one day, after I was swimming in the glory of success, because by now the fellowship had grown to over 60 people, God rebuked me in love by asking me: “Who told you to reach only Ugandans?” You cannot imagine what shock I had! I was truly convinced that I was in the perfect will of God Why would it be wrong to reach only the Ugandans in the community?

God told me: "I called you to reach “my people". He led me in his Word in 2 Chronicles 7:15: "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face."

The words "my people" echoed so loud in my spirit and completely changed my mind set to have the heart of God. People – "his people". So I abandoned my agenda to reach only Ugandans, handed over the fellowship to new leadership and went ahead to start the International Church. And our foundational scripture on which we built the ministry was ... you guessed right: 2. Chronicles 7:15.

I launched out right away to reach "people". I mean people, not immigrants, not Swedish people, not cultures, but people! And as of today when I meet a person I will tell him of Jesus. That is our high calling and there is no limit apart from the limit you put on yourself!

Dear friend, this is the heart of God. The heart of God is to see nations gathered for worship in one place for his glory, a preparation for what we read in Revelation 7:9 at his throne. May churches reflect the future glory when we from all nations will stand before the throne of Jesus praising him in one accord? I have never thought of integrating people since the International Smyrna church started. I have the international vision, God's vision, to reach to the sinners and turn them into saints. The Bible says we all are sinners, and our churches must be open wide to receive all sinners, to welcome all people in. I do not care where they come from. All I care is that I can communicate the love of God to them all and see them receive Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives!

The only thing that you have to consider is the language of communication. The Bible says "how shall they believe unless they have heard?" I chose the English language for the International church because there are many Swedish speaking churches in Gothenburg.

As Martin Luther King Jr. said: "I have a dream". I have a dream too. To see International English speaking churches, International Swedish speaking churches, International Finish speaking churches, International Spanish speaking churches, International Arabic, Assyrian, swahili and Japanese speaking churches started all over the world. We need the language to communicate the gospel, not culture, not tribes, races or styles.

Church leaders are using the word "integrate" to sound politically correct. They have no idea what they are asking for, how to do it, when to do it and where to do it. We are a family and I strongly believe the Holy Spirit is the agent who commissioned to bring the family together so that we will see all nations come together to worship the true and living God. We are a part of each other, 1. Cor 12:12-20. We are one body, the hand cannot integrate with the leg. These parts just need to work together! We can use terms like..work together, build together, love, respect, strengthen the family. This is not integration, this is organisation.

This is creating a vision that is inclusive and contain all people, with no prejudice but having a family that is well balanced.

We as church leaders, church planters, pastors, bishops and vision carriers, we must be generous, ready to open our churches to the people out there – having an open mind set, ready to preach the gospel, not culture or style.

That is why when I meet the Christian church family around the world, I know I belong. I know I am welcome. I do not need to be integrated, but I need to be welcomed! – Welcomed home in the family, to worship my father with the rest of the family in Spirit and truth.

I am thankful for the different churches around the community. But all churches must have the “mind of God”, that is to serve the community so that whoever comes in the church feels like a family and not a culture or a group. Migration has and will influence the church today. The church leaders must adopt their churches to receive this evident change in the ecclesial landscape.

The circular world has organisations like the European Union, the United Nations and the African Union. Are these bodies trying to do what the church must have done, what I mean uniting nations?

Finally, a word of caution to us all. We must be free from the pressure of being politically correct but instead serve and minister to people as people. We have the Holy Spirit with us to help us build and fit the body perfectly together in love. Politicians should by this time come to us and ask how we can gather 50 nationalities under the same roof every Sunday without a hustle. This is not integration... this is family!

But it will start with the church leaders embracing change needed in their churches to serve their communities. There will be a need to redefine church and work to reach the people of God, not groups. Church arise and let us win souls for Christ – not ethnic groups, cultures or styles, but the people of God!

God bless You.

# Migrants and local churches in Finland

By Rev Mark Saba

Executive Secretary for Multicultural Work, Dioceses of Helsinki and Espoo, Finland

## History of language as a line of division

We need to understand history and analyze the present situation to see if there is a connection in order to make right decisions in the present situation.

The Bible is the most translated book in the history of mankind. Having a short look at history we can say that the Jewish community started considering translating the holy text long before what is known for us as The Old Testament of the Bible. Translating the holy text was not an easy thing for Jews to accept. The question was about the untouchable holy word of God that should not be translated or moved to another language. Attempting to translate the word of God was considered breaking the law of the God almighty. It is interesting to know, however, that according to some historians the Torah was read in synagogues during worship services in Hebrew and translated consecutively into Aramaic for the congregation.

During the Renaissance period in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century both Greek and Roman cultures were much appreciated. This changed by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Many scholars argue that God centered style of life that was prevalent in different European societies started to change into more secular and humanistic way of thinking.

National languages and cultures got stronger and the position of the Latin language started to weaken. Northern Europe was greatly influenced by the Reformation.

Churches started using national languages. Individualism, nationalism and humanism became important values for European cultures. Reformation lifted up the value of own language and own culture in the daily church life. Thus language became the line of division in the modern way of thinking.

Many churches around the world and especially in Europe have developed into folk type of churches that emphasize strongly ethnicity and local language instead of diversity in the life of Christian congregations. In fact, there are cases where language has been a cause of division in some churches in Europe. However, we need to acknowledge that Europe is a continent with strong language diversity and identity.

The question is then, how can we have diversity in churches that are linguistically and culturally not diverse?

Language identity has become an important element for some denominations. In my opinion this is due to the fact that the national and lingual pride has been an elemental part of thinking throughout the European history. Bearing that in mind, we can notice that ethnic and lingual diversity in Europe emphasizes strong group division and group identity. I think this is particularly visible in most protestant churches.

The EU also asserts language differences and identity. The EU is in favor of linguistic diversity, which is along the line with the traditional way of thinking on the European continent. Therefore, since language and ethnical identity have such strong roots in Europe, the European Union has 23 official languages for 27 countries.

There is no one dominant language among the official EU languages. Naturally, there are some bigger language groups, but the EU wants to emphasize equality in language possession. However, the English language has become an international global language that many international church services are using in Europe and elsewhere.

### **Multicultural and ethnical society and church**

What do we really want our churches to be? Three models:

#### *First model, A Multicultural Church*

Church that has a multicultural identity. In order to have a multicultural church, we need to redefine our church identity by making sure that our church has a multicultural identity. Also, we need to work on our church legislation to emphasize diversity in our churches. The early church was a multiethnic church.

#### *Second model, Church with multicultural ministries*

According to this model some local church congregations or parishes are involved in multicultural and migrant work while others are not. It means building ministries within parishes according to their location and demography.

#### *Third model, Church that is only present in multicultural society*

This refers to local churches that work with migrants occasionally. They may address migrant issues sometimes in public, or they may be involved in occasional diaconia activities.

### **Inclusiveness not exclusiveness**

In my opinion the Christian church should be an inclusive church in this present world situation. We need to start working on establishing inclusiveness in our churches. The question is how to create and operate as an inclusive church?

- **Inclusiveness** on different levels of church structure, both on administrative and operative levels and in all parishes.
- **Inclusiveness** in working with both groups and individuals
- **Inclusiveness** in seeing migrants as positive potential to local congregations instead of viewing them as a separate group.
- **Inclusiveness** in having migrant Christians as part of decision making and church leadership

### **Models**

A migrant is in many cases a person that has a dual citizenship, cultural understanding and interests. Many migrants want to maintain relationships with other migrants from the same background. However, most of them also want to establish relations with local people and local churches. Migrants are often assured of their right to have access to their own language and ethnicity. Sometimes that closes the door for developing relations with local church people. If a migrant is asked whether he or she wants to have a church group in his or her own language, the answer is

usually yes, but this is not the full answer. In many cases migrants still want to have an access also to local churches and to develop relations with local people.

*Local congregations need to start seeing themselves as multicultural / multilingual congregations. This means that parishes should serve different groups with different languages as part of their ministries, not as separate congregations. In my opinion the Christian church should not use ethnicity as a dividing factor. The Christian church should include Christians regardless of their ethnicity or background. The Christian church should, however, serve in different forms and in different languages.*

## **Different types of new church groups formed by migrants**

Models of migrant church groups and their relation to local congregations in Helsinki area:

### **Model one**

1. Migrant church group with own activities and with own worship service, using church facilities, with a volunteer pastor or leader serving an interdenominational group:
  - How to develop interactive dialogue between the local church and this Christian group? How to establish relationships?
  - How to build a program that helps the group to be part of the local church? How to build bridges?
  - Sometimes this model does not serve the main goal of building up a diverse multicultural local congregation due to the fact that many of these new Christian ethnic groups grow separate from other churches and groups.

### **Model two**

2. Language group that has a Lutheran pastor working in the local parish, serving this particular language group:
  - How to develop relations between this particular group and the local church?
  - How to develop dialog between this particular Christian group and the rest of the local congregation?
  - How to make this group a part of the whole congregation and not consider it a separate group with completely separate activities?
  - How to develop communication so that the pastor of this language group is not the only bridge between the group and the local congregation he or she is working in?
  - How to use individual resources from this group for the good of the whole congregation?
  -

### **Model Three**

3. Independent Christian migrant church group, having some connections with local churches but quite independent:
  - There will always be this type of migrant church groups. New ones are emerging all the time. The main challenge for local churches is to find

the means to work with these Christian groups ecumenically in order to promote multicultural concepts within a particular local parish

## **Inclusiveness in local parishes and congregations**

### **Some practical points**

As mentioned before, congregations and local churches need to think and work on the question of inclusiveness as part of the congregation's way of implementing different activities and ministries. Here are some thoughts to help us to approach inclusiveness:

- Being more inclusive by reaching out and inviting local neighbors and strengthening contacts with migrant families to include their children in pre-school activities and kids' clubs
- Indicating "Welcome" to guests by using flags or banners that invite others to join us, or using inviting, thoughtful phrases on other churches' signs
- The need to be very conscious of the words we use in worship and throughout our church life
- The need to see the differences between our traditional church music and Christian music used in other cultural contexts.
- Language of the hymns is important for people in how it helps them feel connected to God; sometimes hymn choice is like asking someone to speak a different language.
- Developing different types of Bible study groups or discussion groups encouraging migrant individuals to participate.
- Children in the church's choir
- Above all, reaching out to others in a genuine way to show hospitality by inviting them to what I consider to be my home church.
- How to have contact with migrant visitors or with those who have just entered the country?
- We often emphasize differences in our encounters with migrants instead of similarities in our churches. Yes, we are different, but when a migrant comes to church, he or she is looking to find himself or herself as a Christian in a bigger Christian church family. Some of the differences that are typically emphasized are language differences, culture differences and ethnicity differences.

### **Theological reflection / foundation for migrant work**

The work among migrants in different churches has been placed under diaconal ministry. In many cases deacons are migrant church workers. However, church's multicultural work is more than deacons' work or financial support that many local churches offer for migrants who live in the area of the parish. In order to do effective church work among migrants we need to include theology. Migrant work should be based on a theological understanding of the question of migration.

One important challenge in serving migrants in our local congregations is to see different needs in the present situation, and for local congregations to be able to meet those needs. In order to build a multicultural church we need to reach out to migrant Christians in our own parish area. Theologians and pastors play a crucial role in creating a foundation for multicultural churches. Theological reflection on migration and diversity is also needed in preaching. The church should also start preaching reconciliation.

Is our goal to renew our local churches to become multicultural?

Do we want to open our local congregations for migrants, and would we like to see more Christian migrants integrate into our congregations? How to be effective?

Multicultural congregation is multicultural in all level of services:

- In reaching out to people
- In serving
- In diaconal services
- In personal and pastoral services

Pastoral care is important in helping people in different situations.

The most common symptoms migrants have in the process of integration are:

- Uncertainty
- Identity crises
- Experiencing loss
- Feelings of rejection
- Ego problems
- Emotional problems
- Dignity conflicts, feeling never good enough
- Cross-cultural marriage issues

Local churches and in particular theologians, clergy, workers and also laymen need to have an input in serving people with those types of problems. We may need to consider if the proclamation of the church today separates psychology from theology. In my opinion the church has to create a new language for human psychological issues. Ministry among migrants should not be considered only as a part of a church aid program. A spiritual message needs a psychological dimension and vice versa. Without doing that, our picture of human beings from different cultural backgrounds will remain very slim and narrow and influenced by the media like it is unfortunately today. We need to make our churches able to see migrants in biblical and psychological terms through human perspective.

# Majority-minority relationship in the religious scenery in Iceland

By Toshiki Toma

Pastor for immigrants, the National church of Iceland

Before I go to my report from Iceland, I would like to confirm two points that regard the majority-minority relationship. The first thing is that the majority-minority concept is a relative thing. For example, as an immigrant in Iceland I am in a minority group, as Japanese absolute minority, but as a Lutheran I am in the majority when we talk about the religious scenery in Iceland.

The second point is that the majority – minority relationship is connected to the social system, sort of social privilege or disadvantage. But at the same time it is related to psychological feelings and emotions of people. Iceland itself is the minority in the context of Europe. Now in the financial crisis, I can see very clearly how Icelanders are being emotionally involved to being the minority in Europe.

## 1. Immigration issue in Iceland

Between the years of 1980 and 1997, the proportion of people of foreign origin to the whole population of Iceland had been constantly 1,5- 2,0 % (ca 5.000 people).

In the early 90's, Asian women and immigrants from former Jugoslavians became more visible among immigrants in Iceland. \*1)

Through out 2000 – 2004, the proportion of foreigners increased to 3,0- 3,5 %.

Migrants from Lithuania was one of the direct factors behind this.

This increase kept hold in 2005 and reached 4,5 %. Guest workers from Poland began to flow in to Iceland during this period. But at the same time, the Government applied stricter methods of issuing work permits to EEA workers. Also the Government set a new article in the alien act, that proclaimed not to issue residential permits granted on being the spouse of an Icelander unless the applicant is younger than 25 years old. Thus entrance of non EEA citizens to the Iceland became very narrow.

During the summer of 2006, the freedom of movement in EEA came to effect in Iceland and opened the door for the new EU countries such as Poland or the Czech Republic. This period was exactly the time when the Government promoted some big plant constructions in Iceland and there was almost endless demand for labor. Thus many guest workers from Poland or Portugal came to Iceland. The proportion of people of foregn origin reached 6,8% in 2007, that is approximately 21.000.

In October 2008 a severe financial crush hit Iceland as we all know well, and that moved considerable numbers of our guest workers from Iceland. Nobody knows how the situation will be in 2009, but surely the proportion will go down to 4-5 % again.

If we take a brief look at the outstanding nationals among immigrants in Iceland, it is as follows;

Polish	8.400	(m. 5.800, f. 2,600)
Lithuanian	1.400	(m. 800, f. 600)

Portuguese	1.000	(m. 800, f. 200)
Former Yugoslavia	500	(m. 300, f. 200) * 2)
The Philippines	700	(m. 300, f. 400) *2)
Thai	400	(m. 100, f. 300) * 2)

## 2. Religious diversity in Iceland

The diversity of the religious scenery has developed in the last 10 years in Iceland. It is partly because of the increased number of immigrants, but also partly because of increased or decreased interest in other religions than Christianity among Icelanders. The major group that has been causing religious dispute in the Icelandic society is “Sidment” (Humanists) and not Buddhists or Muslims.

Main membership in registered religious associations are the following: \*3)

Name	Number	%
Total	312.872	100
National church	252.461	80,7
Free church in Rvk.(Lutheran)	7.498	2,4
Free church in Haf.(Lutheran)	5.024	1,6
Catholic	7.977	2,5
Russian Orthodox	200	0,4
Serbian Orthodox	167	0,1
Pentecostical	1.963	0,6
Buddhist association (Thai)	758	0,2
Muslim association	371	0,1
Bahai	399	0,1
Ásatrú (old Nordic gods)	1.149	0,4
Out of religious association	8.714	2,8
including Humanists	271	0,1

Increasing numbers in the Catholic church, the Orthodox church, Islam and Thai Buddhism are directly related to immigration. At the same time, considerable numbers of Icelanders themselves converted to atheism and Buddhism. The Orthodox church has not built a worship-hall yet, but it will be the first migrant church in Iceland when it begins to serve like an ordinary church.

## 3. Things to be (re)considered in the majority – minority relationship

As we can tell from the statistical numbers that have been shown above, in Iceland the National church (Lutheran) is the dominant majority in its religious scenery. Most of the religious associations are only 0,1 – 2 % in proportion. If we make a sum of the Christian churches, it will be over 90%.

In this scene where the majority and the minority is clearly divided, there seems to be two particular topics that Icelandic society has to pay attention to in order to promote inter-faith dialogue and humanitarian cooperation:

A) How the National church should be?

- 1) The status in the constitution (oppressing?)
- 2) The contents of Christianity teaching in public education. Still somewhat “confessional” rather than “neutral”. (oppressing?)
- 3) The status of the National church in the “public space” such as in the papers, radios, public events etc.
- 4) The National church serves all? (integrating?) Is it abandoning the Christian mission? (losing identity?)
- 5) Do we need “migrant churches”?

B) How can we work together?

- 1) The fact of 80% (the National church) to 0,1-4% (the others)
- 2) The difference in human resources. 170 ministers and some hundreds of staff in the National church, while many other associations don't have even one professional staff.
- 3) Lack of capability in some situations, such as accidents or funerals. How can we work together? For example allowing the usage of church halls.
- 4) “The forum for religious associations” since 2005, now with 15 religious associations and the inter-cultural center of Reykjavík. The forum is planning to strengthen the communication among its members and bring more matured relationship.

#### **4 Segregation and integration in the majority –minority relationship**

The National church has for a long time been the symbol of solidarity for Icelanders. Actually it had played a role to preserve the Icelandic language as a living language, while the Danish was used as the public language in Iceland. But today, many ask if it is an appropriate thing that the constitution proclaims that the Lutheran faith is the religion of the state of Iceland and gives a sort of “privilege” to the National church. The National church of Iceland has been also the guardian of Icelandic culture in many ways. Indeed it looks in many ways like the Icelandic cultural institute. Therefore we need to ask of another question if this church is now the symbol of unification or the obstacle for multi-culturalism.

Many in the National church, both ministers and laymen, are well aware of those questions and try to seek for the balance between being the National church and opening the door for multi-culturalism. An example of this is the policy among the hospital chaplains and ministers in special assignments to serve all people regardless of religious background if the people wish it. Namely it is the policy that the National church of Iceland has responsibility for all as the majority church. This attitude is somewhat crossing over the borders of religion and trying to unite all. In the interfaith dialogue process, it is the National church that is setting up and pulling the dialogue forward without being too overwhelming. In those aspects, the National church is functioning also as the uniting institute. On the other hand, while the interfaith or religious crossover cooperation goes forward, there comes time to ask the question about its identity as a Christian church.

Traditional questions ask which is more Christian to a man with social problems; either to give him support to be an independent person with his own dignity, or to enforce upon him the gospel as an “almighty card”. This is a typical dilemma for the majority church, especially when it is combined with certain privileges in the society.

On the other hand, the minority religious groups may also face an identity crisis. First of all, they have to manage their religious activities by using what they have in Iceland. This can be both about materials /environment or human resources. For example, suppose a Jewish community. It is not possible to get “Kosher” products for foods. It is very difficult task to keep Saturdays as “Sabbath” as it is commanded to be.

This applies also to their group leaders. At this moment there is no Levi or well educated leader. So when they get together to celebrate for example the feast of Passover, it is inconsiderably different form than is seen in Jerusalem or in other big Jewish communities. Those things apply also to muslims in Iceland more or less. Absence of well trained leaders can be a problem when a minority religious group meets because of unexpected accidents, urgent calls or funerals. Of course, those situations are not easy for unexperienced leaders or laypeople. The Forum for religious associations” is now working on the matter by making a plan how the religious groups, both the majority and the minorities, can help each other, particularly in the case of accidents or critical occasions.

At this moment, the question whether migration churches are a segregating factor or an integrating factor doesn't fit to the situation in Iceland. In Iceland, the question is whether the National church plays the role of a segregating factor or an integrating factor.

- \*1) Statistical numbers are all from the statistic bureau of Iceland, Dec. 2007.
- \*2) There are more than those numbers. Those who obtained the citizenship are no longer counted as foreigners.
- \*3) Statistical numbers are all from the statistic bureau of Iceland, Dec. 2007.

## Appendix 1

### List of participants at the Stockholm consultation 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> October 2008:

Gunnel Borgegård	Ekumenism in the Nordic Region
Mette Marie Bommen	Baptist Church in Norway, national office
Daniel Calero Davyt	Church of Sweden, diocese of Stockholm
Ravi Chandran	International Christian Community Copenhagen
Pieter-Jan van Eggermont	Christian Council of Sweden
Rabbela Hatami	Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East, in Sweden
Marco Helles	Swedish Covenant Church
Kristina Hellqvist	Church of Sweden, national office
Misha Jaksic	Christian Council of Sweden
Iselin Jørgensen	Christian Council of Norway
George Joseph	Caritas Sweden
Sven Thore Kloster	Church of Norway, Council on Ecumenical and International Relations
Anne Kubai	University of Uppsala
Elisabeth Krarup de Medeiros	Church Integration Ministry, Denmark (Kirkernes Integrations Tjeneste)
Marja-Liisa Laihia	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Church Council
Sigrun Saltbones Lauvland	Christian Intercultural Association in Norway
Peter Lööv	Church of Sweden, Märsta

Roger Marklund Luleå	Church of Sweden, Diocese of
Jean-Luc Martin	Church of Sweden, Brännkyrka
Vo Tri Minh	Vietnamese Baptist Church in Oslo
Lennart Molin	Christian Council of Sweden
Belton Mubiru	Smyrna Church in Gothenburg
Birthe Munck-Fairwood	Intercultural Christian Centre in Denmark (Tværkulturelt Center)
Ingrid Vad Nilsen	Church of Norway
Aleksander Roszczenko	The Orthodox Church in Jyväskylä, Finland
Mark Saba	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Diocese of Helsinki & Espoo
Tua Sandell	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Diocese of Borgå
Toshiki Toma	Church of Iceland
Arlington Trotman	Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe, CCME
Martin Valman	Church of Sweden, Huskvarna
Nancy Wang-Hedström	The Chinese congregation, Helsinki parish union, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Göran Wennström	Church of Sweden, Diocese of Luleå
Michael Williams	Church of Sweden, Diocese of Västerås







- Can we unite the need to worship in our own mother tongue with the vision not to divide Christians according to ethnic belongings?
- If most churches are dominated by one ethnic group, is there a risk that the churches mostly contribute to segregation, or can ethnic based churches be a necessary platform in the multicultural society?
- What does it mean to be a church in a increasingly multicultural and pluralistic society?

These questions are discussed in the report "Together or apart?" that you presently hold in your hand. The report is the outcome from a consultation on migration and changing ecclesial landscapes which took place in Stockholm 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> October 2008. The consultation and this report is worked out by the Nordic Ecumenical Working Group on Migration in cooperation with Ecumenism in the Nordic Region (Ekumenik i Norden).