

Our vision!



- churches vision document on immigration and integration



CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF NORWAY
NORGES KRISTNE RÅD

Multicultural Church Network

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1. edition 2.000 eks

Published 2010

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Grafisk form: GreenBox as

Trykk: CopyCo

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The material can be ordered from

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It is also electronically available on

www.norkr.no/flerkulturelt

Front-page picture: Norsk Misjon i Øst

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A small family fleeing to a foreign country. Father, mother and a baby boy in their arms. Perhaps they came by boat across the dangerous sea. Away from persecution in their home country. This was one of the first experiences Jesus had when Joseph took his family and fled to Egypt to escape from King Herod.

The Bible contains many stories of migration and exile, people who leave the land of their ancestors, to escape or to find a better life, migrant workers, people leaving to join their families. Jesus was one of them. These experiences and stories affect our Christian faith, also today.

The bible makes it clear that the value of human beings and their participation in the community does not depend on their nationality, cultural background or legal status. By his life, Jesus gives us an example of commitment to the poor, the outcasts, the powerless and the victims of discrimination. This means that the church is also committed to be involved with refugees and immigrants in our society.

Several bible passages are about welcoming strangers who come to our country, telling us to treat them in the same way as we treat our own compatriots: "When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 19:33-34). Also that we should show hospitality, and that welcoming strangers leads to blessings: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2). The two travellers on their way to Emmaus invited the stranger in to eat with them, and had Jesus as their guest (Luke 24:28-35). Abraham and Sarah provided food for three men who visited them at Mamre. The three were in fact the Holy Trinity, bringing them news that they were to become parents (Genesis 18:2-15). Perhaps inviting a stranger home for a meal is one of the easiest ways to experience the presence of God?

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As churches, religious organisations or institutions, we are enriched by people who come from different cultures and become a part of our community. We also meet people who are lonely in Norway because they have left their family, friends, network, language and job. We meet people who do not feel included and have not been invited or found their way to places where they can contribute to Norwegian society with the resources they have. And we meet people who are desperate and afraid because they feel that their application for asylum has not been considered justly, and who are therefore afraid for their lives and their future, for their children and their families.

The Multicultural Church Network is a network of churches, Christian organisations and institutions that wish to work for and with refugees and immigrants in Norway in order to create an inclusive community – both within their own context and in society as a whole. Some of the participants work in community projects where they meet many refugees and immigrants, some have many immigrants in their churches and do their best to integrate them in the community, others have taken part in or taken the initiative for interreligious dialogue with other Norwegian faith communities which have many immigrants as members. Others again have their greatest commitment abroad, through projects and international work – working for a just world, where people do not have to experience war, live in fear of persecution or live in poverty. Our network also includes migrant churches, the most of whose members have come to Norway as immigrants. These churches provide a home and a sense of belonging which many immigrants are very grateful for in their new life in a new country. In recent years, migrant churches have become an important element in the ecumenical fellowship of churches in Norway, making it plain that we are a community transcending boundaries of culture, nationality, language and background.

The Multicultural Church Network is part of the Christian Council of Norway, an ecumenical council with most of Norway's churches as members. The Christian Council's executive has given its overall approval to this document. The contents are compiled by the network, which is responsible for the publication.

Our Christian faith, the people we meet and the practical experiences we have had in the course of our work are the reason that we want to say what we say in this document. We would like to thank the Christian Council of Sweden, which inspired us with a similar

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publication. We have adapted this to our Norwegian context, to our ideas and priorities. With this document, the Multicultural Church Network wants to challenge the churches, politicians and society in Norway to accept their part of the responsibility for creating a just and inclusive society. The document will be used by the network as a political platform in its future work.

We encourage all the participants in the network, local churches and organisations to make use of and spread the document.

This is our vision!

Oslo, December 2010

Mette Marie Bommen
Leder styringsgruppe

Lemma Desta
Prosjektleder

Participants in the Multicultural Church Network 2010

Det Norske Baptistsamfunn
Den Norske Kirke
Frelsesarmeen
Frikirkelig studieforbund
KA Kirkelig arbeidsgiver- og interesseorganisasjon
KIA, Kristent Interkulturelt Arbeid
Kirkens Bymisjon
Kirkens Nødhjelp
Norges Kristelige Studentforbund
Metodistkirken i Norge
Oljeberget Menighet
Oromo Evangelical Church in Oslo
Oslo Katolske Bispedømme
Scandinavian Chinese Church of Oslo
Stiftelsen Betanien Oslo
Syvendedags Adventistamfunnet

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1 ● An inclusive society is everybody's responsibility.

'You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.'
Matthew 5:13

'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.'
Matthew 7:12

'I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'
Matthew 25:35

'Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.'
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 30

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Therefore we want :

- Immigrants to be welcomed in Norwegian society and to be greeted with solidarity and love.
- Everyone to take on themselves responsibility for opposing racism and all forms of discrimination.
- Everyone to take on themselves responsibility for giving people with a foreign background the possibility of participating in the community, not least in the employment and property markets.
- All local authorities to be willing to receive more refugees and the state to implement an effective policy of integration

Therefore we are against:

- The spreading of prejudiced opinions about people because of their background, colour or religion.
- Basing a restrictive asylum and immigration policy on public opinion which is said to be opposed to immigration.

Therefore we encourage one another:

- To contribute to more contact, respect and cooperation between people with different cultural and religious backgrounds.
- To include immigrants in our churches and work for good intercultural relations in our local communities.
- To influence local decision-making and try to persuade local authorities to receive more refugees on the basis of a comprehensive view of integration.
- To influence national decision-making and support politicians who work for more humane immigration and integration policies.

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2. All human beings are created in the image of God and have the right to a life in dignity.

God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
Genesis 1:27

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."
John 10:10

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 1

"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 3

"Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 14.1

"No State Party shall expel, return ("refouler") or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture."
The United Nations Convention against Torture, article 3.1

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Therefore we want:

- Norway to observe its international obligations and accept its part of the global responsibility by giving protection to refugees.
- Norway, one of the richest countries in the world, to welcome more quota refugees than is the case today.
- Norway to follow the recommendations of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to a greater extent, and to permit actions contrary to the UN's recommendations always to be appealed to the tribunal (stornemnd) of the Board of Immigration (Utlendingsnemnda).
- No refugees to be returned to countries where they can be in danger of persecution, torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- No asylum-seekers to be returned to their first safe country if their application for asylum will not be examined there.
- Asylum-seekers with life-threatening illnesses to receive adequate medical treatment in Norway.

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3. Basic rights must apply to all human beings

"When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."
Leviticus 19:33-34

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."
Galatians 3:28

"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 2

Therefore we want:

- Norway and all European countries to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- People who are in Norway without a residence permit (papirløse) to be given the right to necessary medical treatment.
- The government to draw up a provision ensuring that there is a limit to the number of years a person can be illegally in the country, irrespective of age (one of the demands of the campaign "No human being is illegal", autumn 2010).
- A report on the possibility of granting more visas and work permits to migrant workers in Norway, especially unskilled workers from poor countries.

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- Norway to actively oppose the migration of well-qualified resource persons from poor countries (the "brain drain") and to seek to establish international systems of compensation when this kind of transfer of manpower occurs.
- Flexibility when religious leaders seek work permits in Norway to serve in churches and faith communities; that they are not subject to unreasonable demands concerning their qualifications and economy.

Therefore we are against:

- The return of persons who seek asylum in Norway on the grounds of political or religious convictions with the advice to "adapt to the country's social and cultural norms", when these persons are in danger of persecution in their home countries.
- The return of persons who seek asylum in Norway on the grounds of their sexual orientation – homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons – with the advice to "adapt to the country's social and cultural norms", when these persons are in danger of persecution in their home countries.
- The exploitation in the employment, property and prostitution markets of persons who reside in Norway without a residence permit (papirløse).

Therefore we encourage one another:

- To welcome all people into our community irrespective of their background.

4. The situation and needs of children must be given special consideration

"When Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs..'"
Mark 10:14

"In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."
The UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 3.1.

Therefore we want:

- Children's asylum cases to be taken seriously
- Children who have been in Norway legally for more than three years to be granted permanent residence permits.
- All children without residence permits to be given the right to schooling and medical assistance.
- Children to be spared from acting as interpreters when their parents are involved in difficult conversations.
- All children who come unaccompanied to Norway to be given the care, support and protection they need.
- The role of provisional guardians for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum to be strengthened and improved.
- An end to the practice of putting the lives of minors seeking asylum on hold by only granting them temporary residence permits that expire when they reach the age of majority.
- The government to lay down guidelines that make it clear that the interests of children have higher priority than immigration policies, and that children who have lived in Norway for a long time (for example four years from the date of arrival) should be granted permanent residence permits together with their families (one of the demands of the campaign "No human being is illegal", autumn 2010).

Therefore we encourage one another:

- To put children first, especially children who have been forced to flee from their home country.
- To try to recruit provisional guardians for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum.

5. Families have the right to live together

” Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt.”

Matthew 2:13-14. – Baby Jesus flees with his family to Egypt.

” The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 16.3

Therefore we want:

- A swift and just consideration of applications for family reunion.
- Relatives of persons living in Norway to be given better opportunities to be granted a visum and to visit Norway.
- All who have residence permits for Norway to have the right to be together with their family without the requirement of four years' employment or education.

Therefore we encourage one another:

- To support families that are split.

6. Our goal is peace, justice and a sustainable society – “new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home” (2 Peter 3:13)

” Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Matthew 5:9

” The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me

to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,

to let the oppressed go free,

to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Luke 4:18-19

” Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 28

Therefore we want:

- Integration to be regarded as a mutual process and not as assimilation.
- Migration policies to be regarded as part of the struggle for global development, human rights and peace.

Therefore we encourage one another:

- To support one another with perseverance and joy in working for a better world for all human beings.

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Participants in the network (2010)

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Frikirkelig studieforbund
KA Kirkelig arbeidsgiver- og interesseorganisasjon
KIA, Kristent Interkulturelt Arbeid
Kirkens Bymisjon
Kirkens Nødhjelp
Metodistkirken i Norge
Norges Kristelige Studentforbund
Oljeberget Menighet
Oromo Evangelical Church in Oslo
Oslo Katolske Bispedømme
Scandinavian Chinese Church of Oslo
Stiftelsen Betanien Oslo
Syvendedags Adventistamfunnet

For more info: www.norkr.no/flerkulturelt



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