

"Mission Today.

A Reaction to the Mission Paper from the Perspectives of an IKK Pastor
(John Uzuh)

Introduction

It is very welcome that the Evangelical Church of Westphalia is devoting time to the topic of mission and evangelization. For, what strikes Christian migrants in Germany are the empty churches and citizens who have drifted away from the church! Christian migrants pray for this and believe that God will awaken Germany spiritually again.

I. God's Mission

We fully agree with the sentence "Mission is the heartbeat of the church" (E. Jüngel). It continues "For our church's understanding of mission today, worldwide mutual learning is important." Here we would like to note that many Christian migrants in Westphalia do not come from partner churches of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia and have a different religious background. This fact should also be increasingly considered.

Thesis 1

"Mission proceeds from the triune God (missio Dei)". Recognizing that the core of Christian mission is in God Himself should also mean that God decides the practice in mission. There have been practices during both the crusades and the colonial period which are unacceptable today. This is because Europeans, through their supremacy, have secured for themselves the sovereignty of interpretation. Their ideas were imposed on indigenous peoples in the name of missionization. The reappraisal is still ongoing.

II The Challenge of Modern Society: Evangelical as One Voice Among Many

Thesis 2

We recognize the double task of the church as stated in Thesis 2: "to affirm diversity and religious freedom and at the same time to contribute and strengthen its own evangelical profile".

We emphasize, however, that dealing with one's own profile is essential for survival. Therefore, one's own profile should not be oriented to world views that are in a constant state of change, but to the Word of God, which remains eternally.

To affirm diversity should not mean to give up one's own recognized truths. We in the IKK congregations want to live in peace with all people, but we recognize Christ alone as the only way to eternal salvation, because He alone bore our sins on the cross as a sacrificial lamb. In "respectful regard for the freedom of other religious and ideological certainties" we want to share this message.

III. Inspiring communion: learning from one another in a global perspective

Thesis 3

Thesis 3 says: "As a learning and journey community, we are ecumenically on the way together with many churches.....". The great success of the UEM in Tanzania was named, which is based on the fact "that they succeeded in combining indigenous traditions with an invitation to Christian faith without pushing either side to give up its identity".

Since many IKK congregations have Reformation origins but are now Pentecostal in character, they are organized in a different ecclesiological way. Here it is important to affirm this diversity in a clear way.

Thesis 4

We welcome the naming and addressing of violations caused by oppression and discrimination. The specific question is how the Evangelical Church of Westphalia plans to implement this thesis in relation to the IKK congregations? Does this mean the recognizing pastors of IKK congregations as full pastors in the Evangelical Church? Does it mean the recognition of their pastoral trainings? Does it mean opening the pastorate to qualified migrants? Does it mean providing access to financial and structural resources of the churches? How does the EvKW want to deal with the "Theology of Third Space"?

Thesis 5

We can affirm that the Evangelical Church of Westphalia exists in a society where people from other countries and other cultures live. However, in the perception of fellow human beings, it is important to emphasize that we do not interpret the "manifold, multicolored grace of God" (1 Pt 4:10) as if there were different ways to God past Christ. Social forms of life and concepts of life will experience God's blessing if they are oriented to the Word of God. From the IKK point of view, society must orient itself to God's Word and not vice versa. Since we practice democracy and not theocracy in Germany, it is important to emphasize that we must not impose God's standards on anyone.

Thesis 6

We consider the emphasis on the solidarity of the United Evangelical Mission and the Evangelical Church of Westphalia to be exemplary. The IKK would also be happy if both the EKvW and the VEM would discover and promote the work of the IKK congregations. We think that if the EKvW and VEM support partner churches abroad, they should also support domestic migrant congregations of Reformation origin in Westphalia. Charity begins at home!

Thesis 7

We very much welcome the emphasis on the IKK congregation in Thesis 7. The employment of a Farsi/Persian pastor for people from this area is also commendable. We wonder why the Evangelical Church of Westphalia had to wait until refugees from Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan arrived before taking such measures? We welcome an expansion of such appointments for other IKK community groups.

IV Encouragement: Asking for God in the world and with people.

What does it take to make our hearts beat?

Thesis 8

We would like to supplement Thesis 8 with "giving free space to the Spirit of God." The calls to listen, pray, speak, celebrate, set out, to engage and to be changed, and the encouragement to dialogue are practical steps and very understandable.

Nevertheless, we would like to note that the heart of the first generation Christians was set beating by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:1ff). Mission is God's work and only the Spirit of God can rekindle our hearts. He is the Helper who enables us to become a witness of Christ (John 15:26). Therefore, we ask to give space to the Spirit of God.