



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We have met, as the European Methodist Council, in recent days in Bulgaria near the crossing-point with Romania. As Methodist representatives from all over Europe, much of our time has been spent in conversation on migration in light of the reality of hundreds of thousands of desperate people crossing the borders of Europe, fleeing conflict and persecution and seeking the possibility of a future for themselves and their children. We have prayed together and been strengthened in our fellowship in the Methodist family. We have drawn hope and inspiration from stories of Methodists working in many places to assist migrants and refugees. Often these are small groups of our sisters and brothers tirelessly fulfilling our common commitment to Christian hospitality and care. We give thanks to God for their vision, courage and continuing service in the name of Christ. May we all draw inspiration from their example.

In renewing our fellowship, we have recognised our differences and drawn strength from the knowledge that our primary identity comes through our union with Christ which transcends ethnicity and nationality and is always open to receive those who differ or disagree. We have been reminded, through study of the Scriptures, that the people of God have often been on a journey and frequently known what it is to be outsiders and even refugees. We have been challenged to recognise the neighbour rather than fear the stranger. However, the experiences we have shared show our tendency to forget the commandment to love when God unexpectedly gives us new neighbours.

We know that migration raises a complex set of issues that cannot be solved with simplistic solutions. We struggle together as Churches whose members continue to hold a variety of political and theological views. We seek to move beyond a sterile discussion about the rightness of migration to engaging with the many complicated issues involved in the crisis affecting our continent. In all this, we are aware of our own limitations and the need of the help of others.

The following general principles are offered as a basis for further conversation and action as Churches seek to formulate a co-ordinated response from their members.

We are called to:

- renew our understanding and practice of the obligation to radical Christian hospitality to all, recognising the practical implications for congregations and individuals
- acknowledge that migration has and always will be a part of the human story
- recognise that we experience and interpret the reality of migration to and within Europe in different ways, depending on our context

- resist false narratives, generalizations and negative stereotyping and challenge those who would play on people's fears
- reaffirm our Christian commitment to honour Christ in the face of the stranger regardless of religious background or the prevailing political situation
- encourage and support those who dare to open their doors and offer hospitality to those in need
- pledge both our continuing solidarity with those parts of world from which migrants and refugees come and our active engagement to achieve a just and peaceful world.

God calls us to continue our journey together. We believe that God also calls us to welcome those who arrive as our fellow pilgrims. We commit ourselves to immediate actions and the long-term perspectives that the issues raised by migration require. With a united voice, the European Methodist Council calls on our fellow citizens across the continent to join us in reflection and action.

May Christ bless us all, as we seek to faithfully express and reflect his love and mercy in our lives and ministry.

Don Kerr and Christian Alsted

Co-chairs of the European Methodist Council