



World Methodist Council

Consultation on Diaspora / Migrant Churches

3 to 6 June 2019

God Is On The Move: A Call to Be the Church in a New Way

We believe, at this particular time, God is calling us to be the church in a new way.

In the spirit of Pentecost, churches of the Methodist tradition gathered recently outside London. We were called together by the World Methodist Council to explore concerns among churches that were being formed by migrants in their new lands and concerns of long-standing churches in the host countries. In essence, we were called to explore what John Wesley really meant when he said “The world is my parish.” Together, this unlikely group of people from the global Methodist family with different roles from different countries came to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. We cried together, laughed together, and listened together to our stories of migration.

We soon realized that we all had migration stories. And we realized that we all had stories of ministry with migrants. We affirmed that migration is difficult, but that migration also brings new ideas, possibilities, and opportunities, for migrant and host alike. The pain and suffering and loss that everyone in migration feels can also become healing and hope and even joy. In our time together, we recognized that everyone, even if we have never left our country of birth, has a longing for home – the place we left, the place we are now, or a new safe place.

We realized that the stories we were telling were stories of transformation by the Holy Spirit. We recognized that discipleship happens from everywhere to everywhere; that migrants can minister to settled people; that the church can and is being called to let itself be transformed into something new; something like the church of Acts, where people from all around the world were able to communicate with one another when they opened themselves to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

We are concerned that migrants, to the extent that they wish, not lose contact with their faith traditions and expressions of worship, but that they also have connection with the faith communities in their new neighborhoods. We are concerned that rigidity of form, either from

old church structures or from the church in the new country, will mean that neither expression of faith will be truly transformed by the Holy Spirit. Thus, we have committed to be the church in a new way. We have committed to go back to our ministry settings with a new attitude about migration and church.

We recognize that migration is not a disaster to which we respond for a short period, but a phenomenon that will always be with us. The world is constantly on the move and the pace of movement in this world is unlikely to slow down. Migration and migrants will not go away. They cannot be walled out or banned. And without them, someone is missing from God's table of grace.

How the church works with the phenomenon of migration matters. If the church welcomes the stranger among us – not to be like us and do things our way- but if we truly welcome the stranger with radical hospitality, then, maybe the world will have an example and will begin to adopt migration policies and practices that are more dignified, transparent, and predictable. Likewise, only if we, as migrants are willing to change and be transformed, will we be able to live fully into the discipleship to which God has called us and our transformation of the world will not be limited. If we, as the church, reject the other, we cannot expect the world to engage those who are different.

The group that gathered in London agreed to go home with a new way of looking at the relationship between church and migration. Those principles are listed below. This is a living document, not a prescription. We believe these principles are a starting point. They are not a program or a solution. They are the first stanzas of a new song we believe the church is being taught to sing. It is our hope that these principles will be shared and incorporated into practice by churches everywhere working with migrants and by migrant congregations establishing themselves in new places. It is our hope that churches will, as one participant said, “feel the gentle breeze of Pentecost and the people we serve will be refreshed.” It is our prayer that this document inspires local churches to engage in migration ministry in a new way so that we might more fully live into the reign of god's justice and peace.

This is our call....

MISSION TOGETHER MEANS:

Reclaiming our Christian identity with theological and biblical foundations such that we focus on our citizenship in the reign of God; and,
Working together between migrant and host churches on understanding of mission and mission priorities.

Expressed by:

- 1) COLLABORATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY
 - A. Intentionally practice hospitality between migrant churches and host country churches.
 - B. Host and migrant church work together to enable new migrant churches to be supported by, and included in, the structure of accountability of the host Methodist connection.
 - C. Practice effective communication, mutual understanding, and a spirit of inclusion so that existing connectional and denominational structures, agencies, and agreements are utilized as much as possible.
 - D. Design and implement jointly all development and fundraising strategies related to migration ministries.
 - E. Utilize existing resources and documentation from World Council of Churches, World Methodist Council, and their member churches, and other ecumenical agencies.

- 2) INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS:
 - A. Sensitize host churches and migrant churches alike to language and cultural differences and equip them to bridge gaps of communication and understanding.
 - B. Increase communication and points of contact so that migrant and host churches have a greater chance of connecting early in the development of new congregations.
 - C. Expand awareness of, and sensitivity to, the root causes of migration.
 - D. Develop ministries with special attention on caring for future generations.

- 3) ADVOCACY AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE:
 - A. Intentionally develop joint understandings and implementation of advocacy efforts around justice and peace for migrants.
 - B. Conduct shared assessments between migrant churches and host churches to identify humanitarian needs and respond together.
 - C. Commit to being a prophetic voice that affirms the human dignity of all God's children and denounces the violence and injustice inflicted against migrants.

London, June 6, 2019