



FAITH AND MISSION - SHARED COMMITMENT

**Theological basis
of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission
and guidelines for co-operation**



**THE FINNISH
EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN MISSION**



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P R E F A C E



In its 140 years of ministry the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has faced challenges that have shaped the future of humankind. Sometimes the future has seemed more hopeful, sometimes gloomier. As I write this, in the aftermath of the terrorist acts in the USA, the future seems disquieting.

It is when the structures of everyday life are shaken that the message proclaimed by the church of God's presence and liberation from sin and fear becomes more concrete. Hope grows from the conviction that redemption and forgiveness are gifts of God. The person whose heart has been touched by the Gospel sees his or her neighbour near and far. Jesus set an example that we should strive for righteousness, human dignity and peace. The Christian has a heart for being a companion, not a world conqueror.

The mission of the church is anchored in this faith, whatever the future prospects might be. The Triune God is the Creator and the Sustainer. Christ brings liberation from the bondage of sin, and salvation and eternal life. The Holy Spirit continues to speak to people all over the world and in different cultures, creating local congregations and providing hope in the midst of everything that poses a threat. The Gospel is still good news for the world. This is the basis of the church's missionary challenge. The Gospel messenger is the one who brings good news.

In 1997 the management group of the Finnish Evan-

gelical Lutheran Mission initiated a project with the purpose of clarifying and harmonising the dozens of agreements on co-operation with its partners. At that time it was impossible to foresee the kind of situation in which the project would be completed. The final result is something different from what was envisaged at the outset. The finished document, entitled *Faith and Mission – Shared Commitment*, does not deal solely with agreements on co-operation. Rather, it contains the theological basis of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission and the principles of co-operation adopted. The document presents the basis for co-operation with churches and organisations in different countries, approved by the Board on October 1st, 2001.

The document is the result of many years' elaborations and of an extensive process of consultation and feedback. In this process the staff of the FELM have played a major role, especially during the years 2000 and 2001. The churches in partnership with the FELM were invited to take part in the process. They were consulted several times during the process and were asked to provide feedback on their experiences of co-operation with the FELM. The English translation of the draft document was the basis for discussions at the international consultation held in Paltamo from June 10 to June 13, 2001. The consultation was organized in connection with the annual Mission Festival, held that year in Kuusamo. This consultation in Finland was the first time in the history of the FELM



that leaders of the fourteen partner churches had come together.

The Paltamo Consultation was significant in many respects. It set up a network for partners of the FELM. It influenced further elaborations on the document by providing Christian fellowship, by identifying future challenges and by clarifying the principles of co-operation. This experience may promise more diverse partnership in mission in the near future.

At the moment, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is discussing closer integration between the Church, its mission agencies and FinnChurchAid. This discussion has increased interest in the document and heightened the challenge it presents. Diocesan consultations with pastors have been organised to provide feedback on the draft.

The document *Faith and Mission - Shared Commitment* is the missiological contribution of the FELM to the mission of the whole church, a process within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. It was drawn up primarily for the FELM and its personnel, but also for the parishes in Finland and for the churches in partnership with the FELM. It is a Finnish contribution to the international discussion on mission within the Lutheran communion. The FELM hopes that the document will be used as a tool for deepening co-operation. The FELM sees itself as an organ of the mission of the Church and the parishes. The document will be presented to Archbishop Jukka Paarma on December 5, 2001.

The time of mission continues. The churches born out of the missionary work of earlier centuries are engaging in cross-cultural mission. Despite the increased dangers, there are today more open doors for Christian mission than there have been for a long time past. The new millennium will witness the emergence of a new missiological paradigm. Perhaps never before has the missionary vision of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah been as appropriate as it is today. Jesus applied this vision to himself in the synagogue of Nazareth. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19, NIV).

Our hope and salvation are based on our faith that Jesus Christ is the centre of mission. In him the mystery of the kingdom of God broke in among us, proclaiming justice, love, mercy and redemption. The last chapter of history will be written by Jesus Christ.

On Reformation Day, November 4, 2001

Seikku Paunonen
Executive Director

1. INTRODUCTION

God's mission continues

God's mission in the world has not yet come to an end but will continue until God's reign reaches fulfilment at the second coming of Jesus. Until that time, Christians, churches and the missionary movement are called to proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus to all people and to all nations.

Mission is by nature the dynamic action of God's people on the move. Breaking down barriers, it finds its way to new people and new groups of people. It calls Christians and churches to renewal. The Gospel calls, heals and encourages.

Mission from everywhere to everywhere

Churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America are growing and making an increasing mission contribution. Their missionary effort is directed not only at their own country and continent, but also towards secularized Europe and North America. In the coming decades these churches may send out more missionaries than the Western churches. Churches liberated from the yoke of Soviet Communism are seeking ways to make their own mission contribution. In the future they will probably make an even greater contribution than at present.

The idea of mission from everywhere to everywhere is more concretely true today than ever before. The Western churches take more seriously the need for mission in their own cultures and countries. The number of Christians in Europe is expected to decrease.

Mission co-operation will bring new structures of partnership. The traditional task and role of the missionary¹ is in the process of change.

The situation is a challenge to the Christian churches and their missionary work, and they need to adjust their patterns of work accordingly. The new context of the churches' mission can be described as follows:

The rich become richer, the poor become poorer

The beginning of the new millennium in the history of humankind has been a surprise in many ways. The

period is still marked by confusion as a result of the end of the Cold War. On the one hand, the future is looked forward to with hope, while, on the other hand, the emergence of new threats is feared. The global market economy seems to crush the very poorest people. Confidence in globalization as a mechanism for the benefit of all seems to be shaken. The gap between the rich and the poor seems to grow wider both within and between societies.

A common interpretation of the situation is that the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe has made capitalism the dominant ideology. When taken to extremes, capitalism has revealed itself as a model of open exploitation, fuelled by self-interest and egoism. As a reaction to globalization, the search for cultural, ethnic and religious identity has become stronger and occasionally caused religious fanaticism and other extreme phenomena. In these cross-currents people seek constructive elements for their own world-view and permanent values for the future, hopeful and frightening at the same time.

In mission it is impossible to close one's eyes to the fact that the world economy has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. The churches have pointed out the negative consequences of globalization. Economically weak countries cannot benefit from a global market, but lose out in competition with the industrialized countries. Those who already have gain more, and those who have not, lose the little they once had.

Opportunities and threats

The growing gap between the rich and the poor is contrary to the will of God as well as opposed to love of neighbour. In the developing countries poverty and population growth drive people from the countryside to the cities, in the hope of a better livelihood. Migratory movements break the bondages of family and descent, as well as the traditional social structures of rural societies. The number of poor people living in city slums is increasing. AIDS is spreading at an alarming rate.

Free mobility and the flow of information across geographical and cultural frontiers more easily increase occasions for cultural exchange. Many people



have opportunities for personal encounters with foreign cultures, peoples, churches and religions. Global connections create a new point of contact for mission.

Surprisingly enough, globalization has increased racism and strengthened ethnic, cultural and nationalistic extremism. In some countries this has led to a concentration of power based on culture and religion.

Organised crime and terrorism abuse the opportunities opened up by globalization. Opposition to terrorism unites people, but there is also fear of new confrontations.

All over the world, churches come into contact with uprooted people and communities that various profiteers attempt to exploit to their own ideological and economic ends. Mission among immigrants and the urban poor, originally from the countryside, is becoming one of the major concerns.

Fundamentalism and self-service religion

Some decades ago it was predicted that religions would die out and secularisation would become more pronounced. In the last decade of the twentieth century these predictions proved to be at least one-sided or even totally delusory.

Islam and other world religions have sharpened their profile, often as a reaction to globalization. The religion of the majority is felt to maintain national, ethnic and cultural coherence. The religiosity of the new millennium is characterized by both fundamentalism and syncretism. The term 'fundamentalism' has become ambiguous. Often it is used of extreme religious movements ready to foster their interests by violent means. In the industrialized countries globalization causes post-modern religious nomadism, a type of collector's or consumption religiosity.

Appraisals of the consequences of this development for religions vary. Pessimists fear that post-modernism undermines the universal values of religion. Optimists regard post-modernism as a challenge to the church to discover new ways of reaching people alienated from religion.

Religious pluralism obliges religions to bring their



identities into sharper focus. Freedom of religion and good interfaith relationships have become necessary conditions for social stability. The churches, too, have to give profile to their own faith, actions and basis for mission.

¹ The term 'missionary' has caused some controversy, as it is felt to refer to paternalistic working methods.

2. THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE FINNISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN MISSION



2.1. God's mission in the world

Political changes and the theological development of the last century required thorough reflection on the origin and purpose of mission. The old Western concept of Christendom proved to be out of date as a starting-point. According to this way of thinking, the geographical extent of Christendom would expand through missionary work, finally reaching the ends of the earth. The new approach regards the whole world as a mission field, in which mission takes place from everywhere to everywhere.

The enduring basis of mission is God's saving acts. Theological discussion after the Second World War discovered a deepened understanding of mission. The concept of God's mission became central, and this helped theologians to discover the roots of mission in the communion and love between the persons of the Holy Trinity. The basis of mission is what God is in himself. The Father sent the Son and the Holy Spirit into the world (John 17:18). The mission entrusted by Jesus to his followers offers participation in the mission of the Triune God: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

In world mission, human beings are charged with great responsibility, but in the end it is God who will complete the work. Mission is always God's mission.

The trinitarian basis

God's mission is a mystery of the Trinity which cannot be grasped or explained by rational thinking alone. For the Christian church, mission is a source of thanksgiving and praise.

The concept of God's mission (*missio Dei*) has proved to be open to various interpretations. In ecumenical discussion it has often been detached from classical Christian mission, and has been used only to describe God's general work in the world and in society. In this document the term 'God's mission' is used to denote God's action as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. The central themes in God's mission are God's saving acts in Christ, the calling of Christ's followers and their sending out to proclaim the

Gospel. The Trinity places mission in its historical and eschatological framework.

God's mission has a profound effect on the understanding of the nature, aims and contents of the church's missionary task. Jesus himself gave an example of how all the gifts and talents of people may serve God's reign in a variety of ways. The servant who hid his talents was rebuked. The success of mission cannot, however, be estimated by the number of converts. God has his own purpose whereby one is called to plant the seed, another to water it, and a third to reap the harvest.

God's mission reminds us of God's love. God, the Almighty Creator, is continuously creating anew and sustaining life in the creation. General knowledge of God's existence and providence can be found in religions, cultures and the lives of individual people, but God has revealed his saving love only in Christ. In the Gospel of John, Jesus describes the inseparable union between the Father and the Son in the words: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Jesus declared to his doubting disciples: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Mission has always been fundamentally Christ-centred, drawing people everywhere to faith in the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

God's mission emphasizes the reality of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and is prayed to, praised and worshipped. The Holy Spirit has been sent to glorify Christ, and as the Spirit of Christ reveals the reality of redemption and resurrection.

As the Spirit of Pentecost the Holy Spirit is the real agent and leader of mission. The Holy Spirit prepares the ground for people to receive Christ, and it is the Holy Spirit who guides and is ultimately responsible for the entire missionary task.

Shared commitment in mission, together with many churches in other countries and on other continents, has enriched the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. The Church and its mission continues to serve, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who opens up new tasks in world mission.

God's reign

God's mission points to the reality of God's reign. Christ has entrusted the missionary task to the church and its members. The Christian church is an instrument and sign of God's reign. It is not an end in itself but is called to prepare the way for the breaking in of God's reign in its fullness.

God's reign gives the church an eschatological dimension. The aim of mission is the second coming of Christ and the complete fulfilment of God's reign. Justice, the renewal of the creation and ecological questions find their proper theological context in connection with God's reign.



God's mission is a mystery of the Trinity. God, the Almighty Creator, is continuously creating anew and sustaining life in the creation.

God's mission points to God's acts as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. The central theme in God's mission is God's saving acts in Christ, and the calling of Christ's followers and their sending out to proclaim the Gospel.

The Holy Spirit is the real agent and leader of mission. The Christian church is an instrument and sign of God's reign. It is not an end in itself but is called to prepare the way for the breaking in of God's reign in its fullness.

2.2. The mission and identity of the church and of Christians

Christian mission began at Pentecost when the promised Holy Spirit was given to the disciples for witness to Christ. The Acts of the Apostles can be seen as the first mission history describing the expansion of the Christian faith in the time of the apostles. However, the roots of mission extend further than the apostolic age, because mission is rooted in the Holy Trinity and demonstrated in God's saving acts, beginning from creation.

The church – called and sent

The church, corresponding to its Greek name *ekklesia* (*ek-kaleo*, 'to call apart'), is called from the world to listen to God and worship him. The church is called to live in communion with God. This means that being sent is the beginning of mission. The church participating in God's mission is empowered and sent out into the world to witness to Christ.

A local congregation lives in mutual interaction between calling and sending. Its worship is missional in proclaiming the great works of God. Sharing one's faith is a characteristic of worship. Mission is inbuilt in the worship and very nature of the church. Mission is not merely one of the functions of a church, but rather an essential element of its identity and selfunderstanding. In this sense, when a church rediscovers its roots and identity, it also rediscovers mission.

Since the context in which a church lives is subject to constant change, the search for identity is a continuous process in which the church must both analyse the context and evaluate its relationship with it. In this analysis of society, time and culture the church needs mission, because mission explains its calling.

The Christian identity

Mission also explains the identity of individual Christians. A Christian's life is two-dimensional: being in the world, but not of the world. A Christian's identity is based on faith and the encounter between faith and the surrounding world. A Christian is always ready to share his or her faith with others.

In mission, the Christian's inner need to share his or her faith with others becomes enlarged to include a world-wide fellowship in which Christians from different nations and cultures are together called to witness to Christ. In the life of each local congregation and each individual Christian there should be a natural contact with the chain of witnesses which extends from the immediate environment to one's region, country and the world (Acts 1:8).

The connection between mission and the identity of the church is well illustrated by the catholicity or universality of the church. Christians need one another, because alone they are incomplete and limited. The fullness of faith is found only in Christ and in his body, the universal church. Universality is present in every experience of faith and is manifested in worship and baptism. The Eucharist proclaims Christ's death, resurrection and presence. The uni-

versality of the church reminds us of the coming fulfilment, when all will be made one and renewed in Christ. As it brings the Gospel to everyone and to all peoples, mission is the herald and forerunner of this coming fulfilment.



Mission is inbuilt into the life of every Christian and every local congregation. For this reason the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission supports the strengthening of the missional nature and responsibility of the church, within the Finnish church and elsewhere, so that the church might remain faithful to its task. The renewal of the church and mission always nurture one another.

2.3. Interaction between faith and culture

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is one and the same for all, but is always expressed in a particular language and culture. The Gospel speaks to people in the midst of their everyday lives, so that they hear God's call in their own language and through their own cultural understanding. In order to renew human life, Christian faith must mould the roots of the culture that guide human thinking, attitudes and behaviour. This mutual interaction between faith and culture is a continuous process.

Culture and the interpretation of faith

In order to make the Gospel understood, it must be applied to each cultural situation, using local languages. As the native language forms the core of the culture, mission has performed an invaluable service to many cultures in helping to create a local written language.

Culture is needed not only in the reception of faith but also in its interpretation. Each culture can enrich the interpretation of faith and make its own contribution to the world-wide church of Christ. It is thus necessary in mission to search for the most natural means and ways of expressing Christian faith in each culture. It is important to support theological studies and theological training in different cultural contexts.

Theology offers tools for analysing and evaluating the relationship between faith and culture. The fragmentation of cultures also prompts studies to discover what are the permanent and unchangeable features of the culture in question, and what factors unite different cultures.

Culture can be seen as a gift given in creation whereby a human being identifies himself or herself as part of his or her own community and environment. As a human system, culture is never complete nor faultless; rather, it is limited in many ways. Sin has extended its corrupting effect to cultures, too. For this reason churches have a real need for critical feedback from outside their own cultures. Participation in mission provides cultural interaction, in which the partners can learn from each other. Cultural interaction is also needed because there may be different cultures within one church.

Throughout its existence, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has had the privilege of learning from churches in other cultures. The churches and cultures of Africa, Asia and Latin America have left their traces in the life of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission and, through it, in the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Influences can be seen in theology, church music, the appreciation of fellowship in community, and also in critical evaluation of Finnish culture.

Contextualization

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is committed to promoting contextualization in the interpretation of the Christian faith, without changing the core content of faith. In this process the representatives of local cultures are always in a key position, having being raised in their respective cultures. Those coming from other cultures have the task of sharing the experiences of their churches and of their members. The Gospel leaves no culture untouched. It challenges Christians to evaluate cultures and brings new elements to them. This means a never-ending learning process for the churches, mission agencies and their workers.

Besides local co-operation, the process of contextualization also requires wider ecumenical co-operation. Globalization may pose difficult problems for the churches, and they need to reflect on them together. Globalization is creating a new superficially common culture which does not appreciate local cultures. The local culture is central in the inter-

pretation of faith, but at the same time it is important to maintain fellowship with the universal church and faithfulness to the creeds of the early church.



The Gospel leaves no culture untouched. It challenges Christians to evaluate cultures and brings new elements to them. In its mission co-operation, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is committed to contextualization, in which, based on cultural interaction, the Christian faith is applied to a local culture.

The representatives of local cultures are in a key position, having being raised in their respective cultures. Co-workers coming from other cultures have the task of communicating the experiences of their churches and of their members.

2.4. The whole Gospel to the whole human being and to the whole world

The renewing effect of the Gospel on the whole of life was from the very beginning evident to the first Christians. They felt that they had received new life as a gift that revolutionized their thinking and their way of life. For them, the new reality of faith was one and indivisible.

A holistic approach

The question of the holistic nature of the Gospel was raised in ecumenical discussion in the twentieth century. Different interpretations of the relationship between evangelism and the social responsibilities of the church led to serious confrontation. This confrontation, now to a large extent a thing of the past, has reflected many problems in Western thinking, the roots of which are to be found in the philosophy of the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment unnaturally divided human life into two areas, separating facts verified by the natural sciences from subjective values and religious

beliefs. Another characteristic of Western thinking is the distinction between the intellect, the will and the emotions. This distinction has often obscured the holistic nature of human life. For example, the African holistic concept of life and the appreciation of fellowship in community may help Western churches to see life as one and indivisible.

Proclamation and service

According to the Bible, spiritual and material needs are inseparable. Jesus' parables and his example portray the effects of faith on human life. The description of the Last Judgement in Matthew chapter 25 is a telling example: people are condemned for their neglect of others. The parable of the Good Samaritan raises the question of authentic faith while the story of the sick being healed on the Sabbath (Matt 12:10-14, Luke 13:10-17) reminds us that salvation often infringes the religious practices of men and women.

Every aspect of human life is the object of God's saving and healing actions. God as the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier enfolds men and women in his love and helps them to become whole persons here and now, in this life.

Words and deeds belong together. Verbal proclamation and service inspired by Christ's love together communicate the good news. Jesus' manifesto (Lk 4:16-20) shows how the Gospel makes contact with people and liberates them from their bondage. Jesus preached good news to the poor, proclaimed freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, and set the oppressed free. God's love in Christ takes seriously the anxieties of human beings.

God's Word contains word and deed. The Word is not only a matter of words about God, because the Word of God can accomplish what it promises. It is "like fire and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces" (Jeremiah 23:29). "It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

Renewal of life

The ministry of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has been guided by a holistic vision of mission, in which the Gospel renews both the individual person and life in community. Feeding the hungry, healing the sick, education and improving conditions of life

have been essential elements of the work, anchored in worship and proclamation of the Gospel. Local contexts have guided the setting of priorities. The purpose has been to empower suffering people to take control of their own lives.

The holistic nature of the Gospel has not always become a reality as has been hoped. Polarization has occurred where mission has been narrowed down either to evangelism alone or to the churches' social responsibility alone.

Guilt and alienation from the original purpose of creation accompany human life everywhere. The whole creation, together with human beings, is suffering from the devastation caused by sin. Guilt and alienation cannot be solved by mere human effort. Peace with God can be found only in Jesus Christ.

The forgiveness of sins initiates a healing process leading to self-acceptance and reconciliation with one's neighbour. Mission struggles everywhere to liberate human beings from the bondage of destructive forces. The issue of justice and peace in society is necessarily on the agenda of mission.



According to the Bible, spiritual and material needs are inseparable. Jesus' parables and his example portray the effects of faith on human life. Every aspect of human life is the object of God's saving and healing actions. God as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier enfolds men and women in his love and helps them to become whole persons here and now, in this life. The ministry of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has been guided by a holistic vision of mission, in which the Gospel renews both individual persons and life in community. Words and deeds belong together. Verbal proclamation and service inspired by Christ's love together communicate the good news. God's Word in itself contains words and deeds.

3. THE SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND IDENTITY OF THE FINNISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN MISSION



3.1. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission as a mission agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Early Protestant missionary efforts in the 18th century were especially influenced by the Pietist and Moravian movements. Mission gathered indivi-

dual Christians from different churches to organise alliancebased missionary societies. In the 19th century, as mission became more accepted within the churches, confessional missionary societies were founded. The founding in 1859 of the Finnish Missionary Society, now known as the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, was part of this development. The revival movements within the

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the early independence movement contributed to the foundation of the FELM. The FELM was from the very beginning widely supported by the leadership of the church.

Later, new mission organisations were founded in Finland. Mission also became recognised as the task of the church and its parishes, not solely as the task of the mission organisations. At present, mission is defined in the Church Act of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland as one of the main functions of the church: “According to its confession, the church proclaims God’s word and administers the sacraments, and in all things seeks to spread the Christian message and to promote love of neighbour” (Church Act, Chapter 1, Paragraph 2). Mission is defined in more detail in the Church Order: “The parish and its members are to foster mission, the aim of which is to spread the Gospel among those who are not Christians” (Church Order, Chapter 4, Paragraph 4. Translations by the drafting committee).

It became necessary to initiate a process to evaluate the organisational basis of mission and to define responsibilities between the mission agencies, the leadership of the church and the parishes. In 1975, the General Synod established the Office for Global Mission to co-ordinate mission co-operation within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. In 1979, the General Synod defined in more detail the basis on which an organisation can be accepted as a mission agency of the church. However, the role of a mission agency of the church has to some extent remained vague. It is clear that when the General Synod accepts organisations (at present seven) as mission agencies of the church, it regards their ministry as its own.

Confession

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is committed to the confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Its confessional nature has provided a solid basis for its ministry. The confessional basis is not merely a tradition to be maintained but also the key and tool for deeper understanding of faith and for interpreting and analysing the contemporary context.

Organization and activities

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission wishes to develop fellowship and partnership in mission.

Even though for decades the FELM has found its own place within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the position of mission in the church as a whole is not clear. The Office for Global Mission and related agencies are not authorised to introduce motions and proposals directly to the General Synod or the Church Council. In addition, co-operation between the mission organisations and FinnChurch-Aid calls for improvement. At the same time the mission organisations must be recognised as important agents in development co-operation and international diaconia².

Co-operation is needed not only for the inner integrity of the church but also because in several countries various mission agencies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland are operating, as well as Finnchurchaid. The situation is confusing for the partner churches as well as for the Finnish parishes.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has made significant contributions to developing the international relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Since the Middle Ages, the Finnish church has enjoyed active contacts with the churches in neighbouring countries and in Central Europe, especially with the churches in Germany, where the Lutheran Reformation began. The launching of the ministry of the FELM in 1870 in Ovamboland, present-day Namibia, and in China (1902) brought a totally new dimension to the international relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Mission became the common task of the church.

² In Finland, the term ‘international diaconia’ has been used to describe the response of churches and Christian organisations to international humanitarian and development needs.

Parishes as members of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission co-operates closely with the parishes and dioceses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. All the parishes of the church have been corporate members of the FELM since 1984, and have been entitled to send two delegates to the Annual General Meeting. Almost every parish has an agreement on co-operation with the FELM. These agreements deal with financial support, sharing spiritual gifts and resources in proclaiming the Gospel and in theological training. Most of the agreements concern missionaries seconded by the parishes.

The FELM has supported diocesan activities since 1958 by an agreement to appoint a full-time mission secretary in each diocese. In recent years diocesan mission secretaries have been integrated more closely into diocesan work and have, for instance, participated in episcopal visitations in many dioceses.

The FELM has been touched by many movements of spiritual renewal. The FELM has largely reflected the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, and has been open to co-operation with revival movements within the church. Although the FELM has always emphasised the importance of spiritual renewal, it has not wanted to become a revival movement itself. It has desired to remain a missionary society of the whole church, which the revival movements can join as corporate members.



The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is committed to the confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. It considers confession to be a resource. From the very beginning the FELM has been widely supported by the leadership of the church. It has played a significant role in the development of the international relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission wishes to develop close co-operation with the parishes and the dioceses as well as the revival movements within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

3.2. Mission as the common witness of the church and of Christians

Since the beginning, mission has been a movement for unity. The Great Commission was given to all followers of Christ, to the world-wide church of Christ. The trinitarian approach reminds us that God's mission started from unity. It creates both unity between God and human beings and a community – a congregation.

The existing divisions between Christians and between churches is a scandal which is a hindrance to the credibility of mission. The churches have realised that, in order to be credible, they must be able to give a common witness on the basic questions of faith. They may have differing views on many matters, but on the fundamental issues of faith they should be able to give an unanimous message. The search for unity thus has a strong missionary foundation. In this search, the unity of faith, apostolicity and catholicity have become central concepts. The search for unity has taken various forms.

The goal of the ecumenical movement has been defined as visible unity. Different definitions of visible unity have been proposed, as well as various models for achieving it. The search for unity has been organised in the form of both multilateral and bilateral activities and consultations.

The bilateral documents of the Porvoo Declaration between the Anglican churches of Britain and Ireland and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches (except for the Latvian and Danish Lutheran churches who are observers), and the Common Declaration on Justification, signed by the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, have become of great importance to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

After the Second World War and in the 1950s the principal goal of the ecumenical process was the uniting of churches. In recent decades the churches seem rather to have maintained their confessional identities, identifying those factors which divide and reciprocally recognising their ministries.

Besides the official activities of the churches, there have been attempts to create unity based on co-operation or fellowship between individual Christians. These movements have led to the creation of various co-operative organisations and networks.

The International Missionary Council, in which missionary societies were active, was integrated into

the World Council of Churches in 1961. Organisational structures have been a hindrance to developing co-operation with the World Council of Churches. Mission organisations cannot directly participate in the ministry of the World Council of Churches, which, according to its rules, can accept only churches as members. In appointing delegates of the member churches serious consideration should be given to mission.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission desires to establish good relationships between churches wherever it works, and to remind them and others of the ecumenical nature of the Lutheran faith.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission as part of the Lutheran communion

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission participates in the discussion on ecumenical relations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and follows the decisions taken by the church. Most of its partner churches are Lutheran and members of the Lutheran World Federation.

The Lutheran World Federation is especially important for the mission co-operation of the FELM. The FELM has encouraged its new partner churches to join the Lutheran World Federation. It co-operates with the Lutheran World Federation e.g. in development aid and diaconia, research, training and evangelism.

In some countries where the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission works, Lutherans are divided into many churches. The main reason for this is that many mission organisations began work without any joint planning. The FELM hopes that these Lutheran churches will co-operate more closely and eventually unite. When the work extends to new countries, the FELM wishes to encourage co-operation between Lutheran churches and mission organisations.

Other ecumenical relations

Working in various countries, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission must be in contact with non-Lutheran churches. Because in most cases it works in partnership with national Lutheran churches, these contacts form part of these churches' ecumenical relations, and any decisions taken are their responsibility.

In some countries the FELM has agreements on

co-operation with non-Lutheran churches.

The FELM is working in multiple networks consisting of churches and Christian organisations with various confessional backgrounds. The networks become visible in co-operative organisations, e.g. the so-called Lausanne Movement that came into being towards the end of the twentieth century. The charismatic movement has created fellowship between members of various churches based on common experiences. The world mission situation is also affected by the emergence and expansion of the Pentecostal movement and its fragmentation, and also by the so-called independent churches.

The FELM desires to establish fellowship based on mutual respect and understanding. It is involved in ecumenical co-operation, maintaining its own identity as a mission agency of the Lutheran Church.



The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission participates in the discussion on ecumenical relations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and follows the decisions taken by the church. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission hopes that the Lutheran churches will co-operate more closely with each other, and unite when there are many Lutheran churches in the same area.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission desires to establish good relationships between churches and promote unity everywhere that it works. In most cases it is in partnership with Lutheran churches, which means that decision-making concerning ecumenical relations is the responsibility of the respective churches. The FELM wishes to develop co-operation with organisations of other confessions, while maintaining its own identity as an agency of the Lutheran church.

3.3. The significance of spiritual renewal

Renewal is crucial for Christian mission. The rapidly changing world requires constant evaluation. Being attached to out-of-date attitudes or old methods can lead to the loss of dynamic vision. The FELM was born as a result of a revival, and continuous spiritual renewal is essential for its life.

The ministry of the FELM as part of the international mission movement is not based solely on human expertise, human planning or efficient administration. All kinds of knowledge, skills and experience are necessary in leadership and in practical mission work, but they do not explain the dynamism of mission.

Spiritual renewal is the starting-point for all other re-orientation in the church and in mission. We must always humbly confess that the work is blessed only when the Lord of mission grants his blessing. Finally, everything depends on the presence, power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Mission and spiritual renewal

The churches have experienced how spiritual renewals have also led to the recovery and strengthening of mission. Renewal motivates Christians to mission and leads them to realize their world-wide responsibility. Therefore mission and renewal belong together. An essential element of the identity of the revival movements within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has also been participation in mission. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has had the privilege to learn how revival has contributed fruitfully to the life of the churches and mission organisations, for example in East Africa. Revival is important for mission, but it alone cannot bring a community to renewal. The starting-point of all renewal is that the community itself continuously seeks new strength and new vision in the Gospel.

A new approach

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is a part of the renewal movements within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, with impact on the local congregations in evangelism, music and youth work, as well as in seeking a new approach to Christian work. The co-workers of the FELM, including 1,425 missionaries sent out by the end of 2001, have parti-

icipated in this process. In the future, the FELM will continue to nurture spiritual life and the search for new dimensions of mission. The large number of missionaries is an indication that the FELM has allowed room for different spiritual emphases.

Theological reflection helps to describe new discoveries verbally and adapt them to everyday realities. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has had the great privilege of exploring creative new ideas with its international partners.

The whole staff of the FELM, and its supporters and partners at home and abroad, must share the concern for spiritual renewal. The presence of the Holy Spirit leads to repentance, recognition of one's own faults and a new openness, and then the ideal described in Ephesians can become a reality: "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:15-16).



Ongoing renewal is crucial for Christian mission. Spiritual renewal is the most important foundation for any other re-orientation. Revival motivates Christians to mission and leads them to take on world-wide responsibilities. Mission and spiritual renewal belong together. Theological reflection helps Christians to describe new discoveries verbally and to adapt them to everyday realities. In the future, the FELM will continue to nurture spiritual life and the search for new dimensions of mission.

4. GUIDELINES FOR CO-OPERATION ADOPTED BY THE FINNISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN MISSION



4.1. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission in mission partnership

In its ministry the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has sought patterns of contextually relevant co-operation with its partners. Its ministry began during the period characterised by the emergence and dominance of missionary societies. The independence of the young churches challenged their role. Particularly since the 1970s there has been an active search for new forms of partnership.

The FELM began its ministry in south-west Africa, present-day Namibia. The early years of the work can be described as pioneer mission characteristic of its time. Like other missionary societies, the FELM adopted a role in which it had a leading position in the planning, implementation and development of the work. National leadership was developed gradually. In its ministry in China at the beginning of the twentieth century the FELM entered a pioneer situation which was influenced by discussion on the principles of the Three Selves.

The nature of co-operation began to undergo change after the Second World War, when new patterns began to emerge. The independence of churches established as a result of mission work led to a change of direction: the young churches in Africa and Asia rightly demanded independence and the full leadership of their churches.

The concept of integration was an attempt to develop further forms of partnership. In practice it has been used to describe different models of co-operation. Full integration aimed at dissolution of the mission organisations and their incorporation into the ministry of the young churches. In the practical implementation of full integration problems were met with in the vision for the work, in planning and in the sharing of resources. The FELM has been part of this development. In the 1970s the FELM and other mission agencies heard the demand to discontinue the sending of missionaries.

Together in God's mission

The missiological document *Together in God's Mission*, published by the Lutheran World Federation in 1988, influenced the development of the co-operation principles of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission. In the FELM and in many Lutheran churches it became clear that there is a need for flexible and up-to-date models of co-operation.

Co-operation has led the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission to enter a continuous process of mutual interaction and learning. Through partnership in mission, Western Christians have had a fresh experience of the Gospel which has been preached in their countries for centuries. They have received a glimpse of the idea that poverty and wealth cannot be measured solely in material terms. No one is so poor that he or she has nothing to give, and no one is so rich that he or she cannot receive.

Partners in mission

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is involved in ministry in over twenty countries on five continents. At the present time the FELM is committed to approximately forty different agreements on co-operation with its foreign partners. The parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland participate in mission with the FELM through their agreements on co-operation. The FELM has such an agreement with almost every parish of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, as well as with many revival movements and Christian organisations. The FELM is also a channel for the development funds allocated to Finnish non-governmental organisations by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for development co-operation abroad.

Lutheran churches in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe are the most important partners of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission. As the work has expanded, the guiding principle has been to co-operate with local Lutheran churches wherever there has already existed a church of the same confession,

or it is planned to found one. Thailand can be mentioned as an example of a new kind of co-operation. There among the partners of the FELM were Lutheran churches from other Asian countries before the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand was established. The FELM also co-operates with churches of other denominations, and it is involved in a network of evangelical and interdenominational organisations.

Examples of organisations with which the FELM is in partnership are the United Mission to Nepal (UMN), the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Wycliffe Bible Translators), the Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF Europe), SAT-7, broadcasting Christian TV programmes to the Middle East, Joint Christian Ministry in West Africa (JCMWA) and the Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (ProCMuRA), carrying out research on Islam.

The challenge of ecumenical partnership in mission is met in the ministry of the FELM because of the globalization of mission, the increasing involvement of the churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the fragmentation characteristic of the post-modern era.

Agreements on co-operation

Among the FELM agreements on co-operation, some represent the old mother church – daughter church situation, while others are from the period of integration; some agreements are multilateral frameworks between perhaps dozens of mission organisations and churches, and others only between the FELM and its partner church. In recent years more and more agreements are drawn up to reflect the principles of partnership of equals. These most recent agreements have been an attempt to give greater consideration to issues arising from the context, and also to define more clearly the methods of practical partnership in mission. A recent emphasis is also the importance of sharing visions and planning.

The FELM wishes to renew its agreements on co-operation in such a way that they strengthen partnership, and so that they might increase confidence and openness in Christian work.

Strengthening of co-operation between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, its parishes and the partner churches of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is one of the visions for future partnership in mission. This development includes both new opportunities and tensions, and it requires development of new forms of co-operation.

The Finnish parishes look for direct grassroots

contacts with the partner churches of the FELM and their local congregations. Up until 2001, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has concluded agreements on co-operation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia, and with the China Christian Council. Three Finnish dioceses have partnership agreements with partner churches of the FELM. The FELM supports the development of growing interaction, mutual sharing and co-operation. It is involved in the development of new models of co-operation and is prepared to deal with unresolved questions in a more concrete way than hitherto.



The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has been searching for patterns of contextually relevant co-operation with its partners. Its ministry began during the period characterised by the emergence

and dominance of missionary societies. The independence of the young churches challenged their role. Particularly since the 1970s there has been an active search for new types of partnership.

Lutheran Churches in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe are the most important partners of the FELM. As the work has expanded, the guiding principle of the FELM has been to aim primarily at co-operation with local Lutheran churches.

The strengthening of co-operation between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, its parishes, and the partner churches of the FELM is one of the visions of partnership in mission. The FELM is involved in the development of new models of co-operation and is prepared to deal with unresolved questions in a more concrete way than hitherto.

4.2. Guiding principles for co-operation

On whose terms?

The central question in partnership in mission has been whom mission concerns. The greatest difficulties have been connected with this question. There was a time when mission was considered to be the task of so-called Christendom and its missionary societies. After the Second World War, when

the colonized countries all over the world were gaining their independence, so-called moratorium thinking was supported by representatives of the Asian and African Churches. It was suggested that the Western missionary agencies should withdraw from the work in the areas of the young churches.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission considers the principle that mission is the Triune God's own mission to be the key to partnership in mission. God has called human beings whom he has created and redeemed to be his co-workers. The FELM is engaged in God's continuing mission all over the world, a mission to which it and all its partners are equally called.

Trust as the basis for co-operation

Recognizing that God is leading his mission in the world, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is committed to exploring for various contextual models of co-operation with its partners. Contextualized mission challenges us to a new flexibility and sensibility, with openness to learn and the ability to listen carefully to those who speak of their own experience, history and culture.

Co-operation between the FELM and its partners is guided by respect for diversity. Communion, *koinonia*, is the starting-point of co-operation and its necessary foundation. The FELM is committed to seeking deeper communion together with its partners, by praying, studying the Word of God, receiving the holy sacraments and being strengthened by worship.

Trust is the necessary condition for partnership in mission. Even the best-formulated agreement on co-operation will not work unless it is based on trust. Co-operation needs continuous openness and transparency. For this reason the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission desires to listen to its partners with an open mind and hopes that they in turn share the same attitude towards the FELM.

The key word for partnership in mission in the new millennium is 'together'. Togetherness can be learnt only by staying together.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission invites its partners to seek a vision of the future in common prayer.

The FELM invites its partners to set goals for the work, to share spiritual and material resources and to make plans in consultation.

The FELM is committed, with its partners, to evaluating the quality and achievements of co-operation.



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The FELM is committed, with its partners, to evaluating the quality and achievements of co-operation.

4.3. The changing role of missionaries

A missionary is called to be a messenger of God's saving love. According to the Lutheran concept of calling, the task of witness is entrusted to all Christians, regardless of their education or profession.

In the 18th century, missionary societies began to be founded in the Protestant churches for cross-cultural mission abroad. Mission became a profession for the men and women sent out by these organisations. Mission can still be a lifelong commitment, regardless of one's education or profession.

Sending

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland sends out its missionaries through its mission agencies. Missionaries are sent to serve with other churches as well as to areas where there is as yet no church in partnership with other Lutheran churches.

The term 'missionary' has caused some controversy, as it is felt to refer to paternalistic working methods. A deeper understanding of the missional nature of the church and the initiation and expansion of missionary activities on the part of the churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America have brought the role of missionaries into a new light.

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland the word 'missionary' means a person who has had special training and who has been sent out by the church to do cross-cultural work. The qualifications required include a good education, professional skills, work experience, an openness to learn and the willingness to make a solid commitment to the work. The quali-

fications of future missionaries will still include an emphasis on a thorough knowledge of the local language, the local culture and the partner church, as well as co-operative skills.

Short-term workers are sent abroad on special duties, after a brief period of training. Shorter periods of commitment may be developed towards a programme of mutual personnel exchange. There is a continuous search for flexible solutions in the sending of missionaries.

God's mission is ultimately God's actions in calling and sending men and women to witness for Christ, beginning from their own locality and continuing to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Missionaries are also needed in the northern hemisphere, where the number of non-Christians is increasing. A missionary is not only one who comes from the West or the North, especially as the majority of Christians live in the southern hemisphere.

People who work full time or as volunteers in the mission organisations, in the various church posts and in their local churches have an important role to play in mission. Mission, the basic task of the church, must be understood in a sufficiently broad sense. No one need go abroad in order to be able to participate in mission.

Courage, freedom from prejudice and the ability to work with people

In a foreign religious and cultural context, a missionary cannot act as if he or she always knows best. The Gospel spreads from one person to another only in an atmosphere of true human equality, no matter whether it is a question of collaboration between Christians or of meeting with non-Christians. Christ did not set any pre-conditions for meeting people but rather set an example by his own attitude and actions in breaking down the separating barriers erected by human beings themselves.

The missionary of the third millennium is ready to face the new and unexpected challenges of the changing world. He or she is ecumenically open-minded, free from prejudice and capable of working with people. His or her working environment is becoming increasingly international. The need to work in the way set out in Jesus' manifesto (Luke 4:16-20) will not decrease. In spite of the high hopes and efforts of the international community in the last decades of the twentieth century, poverty, marginalization and disease will remain a common, heavy burden of humankind in the new millennium.

Mission is increasingly a matter of co-operation between mission organisations and churches. In this context missionaries are still needed in carrying out the world-wide mission responsibilities of the churches, in the spirit of the universal church of Christ. Expansion of the ministry to new areas and to new groups of people is achieved in partnership. Searching for new models of co-operation with its foreign partners, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is ready for personnel exchange and joint mission projects, for which the co-workers are recruited and trained together.

The Christian churches in Finland are not only senders but also receivers of missionaries. Foreign co-workers sent by the partner churches of the FELM have brought blessings to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and its parishes. Experiences so far have been encouraging.



The missionary is called to be a messenger of God's saving love. According to the Lutheran concept of calling, the task of witness is entrusted to all Christians, regardless of their education or profession.

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland the word 'missionary' means a person who has had special training and has been sent out by the church, and who more often than not works outside of Finland. The missionary of the third millennium is ready to face the new and unexpected challenges of the changing world. He or she is ecumenically open-minded, free from prejudice and capable of co-operating with other churches and their missionary work. His or her working environment is becoming increasingly international.

Finland and the Christian churches in Finland are not only senders but also receivers of missionaries.

5. THE CHALLENGES OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM



5.1. Mission and the renewal of the Western churches

Since the great discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Western churches have played a central role in world mission. Developments after the Second World War forced them to look upon their own countries as mission areas, too.

Western culture has been regarded as rooted in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and the ministry of the churches as an essential part of Western society. However, for many reasons the situation has changed. Migration has altered the relations between different faiths. The adherents and symbols of the great world religions are visible on the streets of European and North American cities. European history with its world wars has weakened the credibility of Western culture. In recent centuries the development of the Western societies has been dominated by the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which has not directly denied the significance of religion, but has had the tendency to make it a private affair.

Mission in Europe and North America

Owing to the changing situation, mission in Europe and North America will pose a great challenge to world mission in the future. The Western churches need the co-operation of the churches in Africa, Asia and on the other continents, beginning with the work among the millions of immigrants. As a sign of this development, an increasing number of church workers sent by African and Asian churches are arriving in Europe and North America.

The Western societies have become divided into successful and well-off people benefiting from globalization, and marginalized groups. The churches have the responsibility to bring the Gospel to all groups and levels in society. Co-operation with the churches of other continents is needed in this task. There are indications that they may contribute

here in the forms of the charismatic movement, community life and the witness of lay people.

The resources of the Western churches

It is also important for the future of world mission that the resources of the Western churches be shared in mission and development co-operation. The churches of the wealthy countries possess financial resources that many other churches do not have. Owing to their historical development and financial stability, the Western churches also have a strong tradition of training and research which could benefit all churches. The question is how to share these resources of training, money, and literature with other churches so that they can develop their own contextual theologies, for instance.

In many ways the Western churches are standing at a crossroads. Will the traditional main-line churches survive and maintain their credibility? They can discover and maintain their identities only by means of renewal and transformation. The renewal of the Western churches is thus a major issue in world mission.



In the future Europe and North America will pose a great challenge for world mission. Here the Western churches need the co-operation of the churches on other continents, beginning with the work among the millions of immigrants.

The churches in the wealthy countries possess financial resources that many other churches do not have. Owing to their historical development and financial stability, they also have a strong tradition of training and research which could benefit all churches. Through the renewal of the Western churches these resources can be placed at the disposal of all.

5.2. New networks of mission

The situation in world mission had radically changed by the end of the twentieth century, as a result of factors within Christianity as well as of cultural, political and social factors in general. The new situation involved above all a spiritual and theological change that took place within the churches. This change concerns co-operation between the churches, including cross-cultural mission.

In the years since the Second World War, churches born as the result of the mission work of past centuries have gained their independence. At the same time they have discovered the resources of their own cultures. Churches born during the first centuries of Christianity have been revitalized and have made the younger churches aware of the long history of Christianity in Asia and Africa.

Since gaining their independence, these churches have sought wider co-operation. Regional co-operation has become important, as well as the establishing of contacts with churches on other continents.

Churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America have started their own cross-cultural mission outside their own countries. In accordance with its calling, the FELM supports and promotes mission co-operation and looks for new forms of partnership.

The most visible political change has been the collapse of Soviet Communism and the cessation of its influence throughout the world. This has given increased freedom to the churches that previously lived with restrictions, and has provided them with an opportunity once again to make a contribution to partnership in mission. They can more freely seek contacts all over the world. The era of colonialism of the last century is past, but this has not removed the tensions between the industrialized and developing countries.

The contribution to mission of the churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America

The cross-cultural mission of the Protestant churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America was started by the spontaneous activities of individual Christians and congregations. Christians worked among culturally related groups of people in nearby areas. Evangelists or evangelistic teams sometimes reached out to regions further away.

After the Second World War, Asian and African

missionaries began to join Western mission organisations as their co-workers. At the same time Asian and African churches also began to send missionaries through their own organisations.

During recent decades new centres of world mission have become of importance, such as South Korea, the Philippines and the Chinese communities in different parts of Asia. In addition, many Lutheran churches have become involved. This has strengthened and deepened co-operation between the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission and its partner churches and the whole Lutheran communion. As a sign of this development the FELM has partners both in their home countries and in third countries.

The mission activities of the churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America often focus on local congregations. Strong local congregations choose their mission areas and carry out the work independently. Besides church growth, the result has often been increasing fragmentation of the work. These churches have often concentrated on the verbal proclamation of the Gospel and the establishment of new congregations. There are also practical reasons for this, since the churches in Asia and Africa generally lack the financial resources for large-scale development efforts.

The Roman Catholic Church and evangelical movements have experienced the most rapid expansion in recent years. This development, including increasing fragmentation, shapes ecumenical relationships. The established tradition and practice of the ecumenical movement do not seem to correspond to this challenge. New patterns of fellowship are called for.

Renewal of working patterns in mission

The mission involvement of the partner churches of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has been strengthened with the consequence that there is a need to renew working patterns and redefine the role of the FELM. The FELM can facilitate in networking between Lutheran churches with the aim of strengthening their missional nature. In this way partnership of equals can take practical and useful forms.

The FELM is actively seeking new forms, areas and partners in mission. The present models of co-operation must be critically evaluated and new ones explored. Networking is a challenge to the ministry of the FELM and its organisation in Finland and abroad.



The cross-cultural mission involvement of the FELM partner churches is a source of joy and encouragement. This development leads to renewed working patterns and has an impact on the role of the FELM.

The FELM can strengthen co-operation between Lutheran churches and offer new opportunities for the mission of its partner churches. In this way partnership of equals can take practical and useful forms. The FELM can facilitate networking between Lutheran churches with the aim of strengthening their missional nature.

5.3. The missional nature of the church

Mission is inherent in the nature of the church because an authentic church is missional by nature, being expressed in a local congregation. It is open, involved in outreach, prayerful, hospitable, able to act in changing situations, and a warm-hearted community of love.

For many Finnish people the church largely represents stability and security, as it follows people from the cradle to the grave. It helps them to cope with individual, social and national crises. Its statements and opinions concerning developments in society are highly appreciated.

Along with all these positive trends, however, the church can turn in on itself, and forget its world-wide witness and service. For this reason the church needs a continuous reminder that it should be participating in the world-wide missionary task given by Christ.

A new church can face the same danger. The internal affairs of the church can consume energy and

prevent it reaching out to new people. In a minority situation a church can turn inwards and concentrate solely on taking care of its own members. A church can also become the church of a single ethnic group or social class, unable to reach out to other groups.

The church as God's people on the move

Missionary congregations are an encouragement to world mission. Churches are inspired by the example of other churches. When the fire is dying down in one place, it is blazing in another part of the world and can be found there.

The church as God's people on the move is in contact with all the nations of the world, and is called to bear witness to God's forthcoming reign. Mission invites churches to move, to see the world, to take part in the struggle for those who have not heard the Gospel and are deprived of their share of the common good. It encourages churches to commit themselves to advocacy on behalf of the oppressed and those who lack the hope given by the Gospel.

Ordinarily the missional church is characterised by growth. The spread of faith to new areas and new people is always a miracle. Together with its partners, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is committed to study the factors affecting the dynamics of church growth. The discovery of the missional nature of the church leads to an evaluation of working methods and priorities and, above all, opens up the way to a renewal of spiritual life.

An increase in the number of members does not necessarily indicate the missional nature of the church. Sometimes a quiet testimony can be given in hostile surroundings.

The role of facilitator

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission can act as a facilitator. Contacts with growing churches in the world are becoming increasingly important to the Western churches for their own life, witness and service. Churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America can benefit from the long experience of the Western churches in research and training. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission can act as a link between churches, utilising its experiences in multicultural work.

Carrying out its own church's mission, the FELM, by networking with churches in different parts of the

world, including churches that are still small in size, facilitates their participation in world mission.



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The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission can act as a facilitator, utilising its experiences in multicultural work. By networking with churches in different parts of the world, including churches still small in size, it can facilitate their participation in world mission.

5.4. Credibility and the commission to proclaim the Gospel

The Gospel is the central message of the New Testament and thus also one of its focal terms. It can be found together with verbs meaning to proclaim and to preach. Some fifty times there also occurs the verb *euangelidzo*, which means to proclaim good news. This word is used when the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds.

The proclamation of the Gospel is also called evangelism or evangelization. In this document the word 'evangelism' indicates calling people to Christ and into the fellowship of the church. In the Lutheran churches a distinction is often made between ministry to non-Christians and ministry to those who have become alienated from the church. Evangelism among the members of the church can then be seen in the light of the parable of the Prodigal Son as a call to return home and to the grace of baptism.

The Gospel is good news for the whole of humankind. The Christian church is commissioned to reach out to every group in society.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is called to bring the Gospel through proclamation and service to those who have not heard it. Together with its partners, it looks for new groups of people and new areas where the Gospel has not yet been preached. The FELM sometimes works in areas where the majority of the population already belong to the church. Then, too, its special calling is to participate in reaching out to non-Christians and those who are alienated from the church. Following the policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the FELM rejects proselytism and does not persuade members of other churches to leave them.

A new challenge is to call immigrants or foreigners living temporarily in Finland into the fellowship of the church. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission serves the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and its parishes, providing them with experience of different cultures and different religions.

The FELM offers various ethnic and cultural communities a channel for engaging in the missionary task of the church.

Goal and methods of evangelism

Under the ministry of the Holy Spirit the Gospel gives birth to personal faith in Christ, leads people to baptism and the birth of a local congregation, or to renewed fellowship with the church. Various methods applied to local cultures can be used. Lack of personal everyday contacts and spontaneous witness reduces the credibility of evangelistic campaigns aimed at reaching multitudes of people.

The whole church and its every member is called to witness, motivated by Christ's love. Theological training can offer resources for equipping the members of the church for evangelism.

In the church there may also be persons specialized in evangelism. In many partner churches of the FELM there is an office or ministry of evangelist with varying definitions and duties. It is important that this ministry be developed as a special ministry.

Missionaries in evangelism

When the churches born out of mission became independent, there were voices calling missionaries to retreat from active evangelism. In the view of the

FELM, this can take place only in certain circumstances. The role of missionaries in evangelism varies according to the context and the gifts exercised. Everyone, however, is called to bear witness to Christ. Every missionary has the possibility of personal witness even if there are no opportunities for public proclamation of the Gospel. It should be emphasized that evangelism is team work, and that it requires many kinds of gifts. The growing challenges of evangelism require ecumenical co-operation.

In evangelism, the opportunities offered by new information technology, including radio, television and the Internet, should be exploited. In this, short-term and volunteer workers also have a contribution to make.



Together with its partners, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission seeks new groups of people and new areas where the Gospel has not yet been preached. The FELM sometimes works in areas where the majority of the population already belong to the church. Then, too, its special calling is to participate in reaching out to non-Christians and to those alienated from the church.

The whole church and its every member is called to witness, motivated by Christ's love. In the church there may also be persons specialized in evangelism.

5.5. The encounter with other religions and theology of religion

Since the beginning of its ministry, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has encountered people of different religions and has equipped its personnel to be aware of the variety of religious phenomena. Many of its missionaries have made a thorough study of local cultures and religions.

The trinitarian basis

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier offers a solid basis for encounters with non-Christian religions. Having faith in the Triune God, we acknowledge God's work in creation and in the conscience of every human being. At the same time we confess that Christ is the only source of salvation. We confess that the Holy Spirit alone generates faith.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission rejects the position that there are many ways and paths leading to salvation.

Creation and general revelation

The creation and the sustaining of life tell of God's activity and presence in the world. The apostle Paul takes this as the starting-point when speaking to the Athenians (Acts 17). God created human beings in his own image and meant them to live in relationship with himself. They can never deny their religious nature.

The various religions can be perceived as expressions of the human search for God. God's law, the law of life, is one and the same for all human beings, even though it can be expressed in different ways. Every human being is conscious of right and wrong, though the definitions vary. However, the definition can be distorted to the extent that people may think that they are acting rightly even when they are committing crimes against humanity.

The ethical teachings of the different religions contain similar features relating to both individual and social ethics. This provides an opportunity for people of goodwill to work together for peace, social justice and human rights.

Salvation

As Christians, we believe that those who hear the Gospel and profess Christ alone will be saved. There are two basic points of departure here: first, human beings are sinners by nature. Even the search for God is tainted by sin and error. Religions have valuable features, yet still they reflect the human situation alienated from God. A person cannot save himself or herself through religious systems and the best of human efforts. Second, God has revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Human beings may come to God only through Christ, without any own works or merits of their own. The central emphases of the Reformation, Christ alone (*solus Christus*), by grace alone (*sola gratia*) and by faith alone (*sola fide*) manifest the uniqueness of Christ.

However, God's plan for those who do not hear the Gospel during their earthly life remains unrevealed.

Interfaith dialogue

Dialogue between people of different faiths is carried out in daily life based on mutual respect.

It is difficult to define dialogue with precision. It can be seen as a method of mission, or it can be used to describe various religious encounters. There is a fruitful tension between dialogue and mission, which need not be resolved. This tension safeguards both dialogue and mission from extremes.

The basis of genuine dialogue is that both parties are deeply rooted in the content of their faith, are committed, and show mutual respect for each other's faith. Without commitment to the Gospel, dialogue becomes meaningless for Christians. Encounters at the general level may be easy, but attitudes will become controversial as soon as the questions of conversion and baptism are touched upon.

The forms of dialogue vary. Besides encounters in daily life, there may be organised and planned forms of dialogue. They may be termed social, cultural and theological dialogue, or the dialogue of witness.



The doctrine of the Holy Trinity as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier offers a solid basis for encounters with non-Christian religions.

The creation and the sustaining of life tell of God's impact and presence in the world. Every human being is conscious that there is right and wrong, though definitions vary. However, the definition may be distorted to the extent that people may think that they are acting rightly even when they are committing crimes against humanity.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission rejects the position that there are many ways and paths leading to salvation.

Dialogue can be seen as a method of mission, or it can be used to describe various religious encounters. The basis of genuine dialogue is that both parties are deeply rooted in the content of their faith, are committed, and show mutual respect for each other's faith.

5.6. Theological training and theological seminaries

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission has always emphasized the necessity of theological training in local languages. When the ministry of the FELM began in present-day Namibia, one of the first tasks was to create a written local language, to translate the Bible, to prepare material for the education of the people and to begin teaching the congregation. According to the needs, training was given to congregational teachers and to other church workers. Theological seminaries for ministerial training were founded in due time.

In theological training, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission emphasizes comprehensiveness, the academic level of training for the ordained ministry and faithfulness to the church's confession.

By theological training is meant here both the biblical teaching of the members of the church and the training for the various voluntary and full-time posts of the church and the local congregations.

Comprehensiveness

Theological training concerns the whole life of the church, beginning from the baptismal instruction of new members and the equipping of Christian families to the Christian education of children and young people. Members need a deeper level of Christian teaching. Volunteers involved in administration and congregational ministries require training. This training does not necessarily lead to receiving diplomas.

Training for the ordained ministry must guarantee adequate theological knowledge and other skills. In defining the syllabus required by the churches for ordination, the general level of education and its improvement must be taken into consideration in each country.

Contextualization and confession

The goal to be emphasized is contextual theology in faithfulness to the confession. Theological traditions play a decisive role in the development of contextual theology, either explicitly or implicitly. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission aims to connect theological training closely with congregational work.

Contextual theology should induce the co-workers of the FELM to analyse their own background critically. The FELM and its co-workers should be able to identify the positive and negative influence of the Finnish context on their interpretation of the Christian faith, and to observe how the Bible and the confession of the Lutheran church have been contextualized in Finnish Christianity.

The contribution of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission contributes to the establishment and running of theological institutions. Theological seminaries may take students from churches in several countries. National, regional and international languages are employed. Studies in international languages should support the development of theological reflection in local languages.

Higher theological degrees are often required of expatriate missionaries working as seminary teachers. The FELM creates opportunities for further studies for its personnel. Participation in the work of theological seminaries requires long-term commitment. Before starting their teaching activities in theological seminaries, foreign teachers should have experience of congregational work, in order to become

acquainted with the grassroots context in which their future students will work. This also concerns those who teach in international languages.

The exchange of teachers and students between seminaries is envisaged as becoming more important in future co-operation. The FELM supports networks generated by exchanges as well as supporting its partners' plans to organise post-graduate theological studies. The FELM has a joint scholarship programme, administered with its partner churches.

Contextual theology requires that appropriate literature and educational material be available in the vernacular languages. The FELM contributes towards the production of this kind of material by providing human and financial resources and promotes the exchange of material between its partner churches, including theological literature.



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confession.

By theological training is meant here both the biblical teaching of the members of the church and the training for the various voluntary and full-time posts of the church and the local congregations.

The FELM supports the exchange of educational materials and theological literature between its partner churches.

5.7. Diaconia and the social responsibilities of mission

The church is involved in mission in a world dominated by injustice. Taking seriously the whole content of the Gospel, mission always has a social dimension. Diaconia and the social responsibilities of mission include not only service but at least three other dimensions: spirituality, advocacy and the prophetic voice.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission fulfils its social responsibility and service as the mission agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland at home and abroad in conjunction with its partners.

As a foreign organisation its latitude to act in another society is limited, and any action taken must be negotiated with its partners. The effects of such actions on the life of local Christians and churches must always be taken into account.

Threats in the globalizing world

It is generally thought that poverty, population growth and ecological problems are the most serious threats of the modern era. The world does not seem to be heading towards better times. The number of poor people is on the increase. Economic developments all over the world force people to move away from their home regions in order to guarantee a livelihood. The explosive growth of cities creates large and unsafe residential environments.

There are whole generations living in areas suffering under conditions of war. These people have not experienced a time of peace and normal life. Traumas will be recovered from slowly. Terrorism, the drug traffic and crime increase the feeling of insecurity.

Work to improve mental health has been taken onto the agenda of mission. Broken human relations and families present a growing challenge to mission, and in a variety of ways. Sub-Saharan Africa is suffering from the spread of AIDS. The same disease is also casting a shadow over large areas in Asia.

Pollution of the environment is a threat to human health and to the conservation of life in general. There will soon be a shortage of pure water. Social and ecological concerns and their effects are included in the planning of the future operations of the FELM, in co-operation with its partners.

Diaconia

Diaconia has always been an essential part of the work of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission. The term 'diaconia' is used here to refer to Christian service, as well as ways in which the church and mission can exert influence in society. In Finland, the term 'international diaconia' has been used to describe the response of churches and Christian organizations to international humanitarian and development needs. Local and international diaconia supports people's struggle to take control of their own lives and become masters of their own destinies.

Diaconia has brought many significant changes to people's attitudes to disease, disabilities, poverty and marginalization. At its best, diaconia is a people's

movement. It is characterized by crossing frontiers, seeking out new people and groups of people.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is seeking new opportunities to serve. Together with its partners, it is searching, without prejudging the situation, for appropriate forms of diaconia for the third millennium, and is aiming to extend its operations more in the direction of ecumenical co-operation.

Spirituality

God's reign is the reign of grace and of love motivated by grace. Diaconia and social actions stem from worship. The Christian congregation worships and serves.

The social dimension of mission is anchored in prayer, the Bible and Christian fellowship. Remaining faithful to the core message of the Christian faith has empowered and encouraged Christians living in the midst of difficulties to carry out their prophetic call.

Advocacy

The church, the body of Christ, suffers if only one of its members suffers. In many countries following Jesus and calling new members into discipleship may prove costly. The Holy Spirit is the advocate of God's people to be relied on even when other safeguards fail.

Mission is also called to be a reminder of the fact that Christ is present in the oppressed neighbour who is deprived of human rights and dignity.

The prophetic voice

The Old Testament prophets gave an example of exercising the prophetic voice, one also valid for our time. Speaking to the people of Israel, the prophets condemned social evils and identified oppression, pursuit of personal interest, and worship of idols as sin. The prophets were not afraid to confront those wielding power in society. Jesus referred to the message of the prophets when describing God's reign as a reign of peace and justice, leaving his followers an example and obligation.

Supporting the diaconia of the local congregations

The FELM considers the diaconia of the local congregations to be fundamental. Christian mission

must confront people face to face. In practice this is possible only when the churches and mission organisations support the diaconia of the local congregations by training members of the congregations to identify needs and those in need, and to act for their benefit in the most appropriate way. Community-based diaconia, stemming from the Christian calling, does not require great financial investments.

Supporting development

Mission participates in the development of the entire community. The FELM receives funds allocated by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs to non-governmental organisations for specified projects to foster justice, human rights and development. The use of such funds requires that a report be sent to the Ministry. The projects are carried out in co-operation with the partners of the FELM.

Human rights

Human beings are created and redeemed by God for eternal life. Their dignity must not be violated. Social injustices which lead to discrimination against people on the basis of their birth, ethnicity, finances, influence or nationality violate human dignity.

Freedom of religion is an inseparable element of human rights. Its enactment makes possible, among other things, the mission and activities of minority churches.

The FELM acts to guarantee human dignity and human rights to every human being. In this aspiration it is guided by an operational programme entitled *Human Rights in Mission*, drawn up for its co-operation.

Women and children

The experience of mission shows in a concrete way how improvement in the social status of women and children affects the lives of families and the whole community. In spite of many efforts on their behalf, women and children are still those who are often neglected in society. In its ministry the FELM has aimed at the improvement of the status and livelihood of women and children.

The deprived and marginalized

The hundred-year-long experience of mission

highlights the fact that the God of righteousness is the source of empowerment and encouragement for oppressed minorities, the poor, refugees, immigrants, the disabled and those despised by others.

The concern for marginalized and deprived people gives direction to the proclamation and service of the FELM, in conjunction with its partner churches, with the aim of correcting injustices in society as a whole.

Prevention of racism and the search for reconciliation

Mission is called to create fellowship wherever people and groups of people are discriminated against on grounds of nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or social status. The work of the FELM has included a strong social role with the aim of the prevention of discrimination. Its work continues as relevant as ever.

Peace and reconciliation cannot be achieved if violations are not confessed. Only repentance and penitence render reconciliation possible.



The diaconia and social responsibilities of mission include, besides service, at least three other dimensions: spirituality, advocacy and the prophetic voice. Diaconia has always been an essential part of the work of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission. The diaconia of mission has helped to provide extensive health services and social benefits, as well as bringing many significant changes in people's attitudes to disease, disabilities, poverty and marginalization. Mission has aimed at improving the quality of life and increasing security.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission desires, through its activities, to prevent conflicts between people and groups of people and to support the partner churches in their efforts to resolve such conflicts.

APPENDICES

1. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission and its ministry

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) is the oldest and largest of the mission agencies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland that sends out missionaries. It was founded in 1859 “to spread the Gospel of Christ, according to the teaching of the Evangelical Lutheran confession, to peoples who are not yet Christians”.

In 1870 the first workers of the FELM arrived in Ovamboland in the northern part of south-west Africa, modern Namibia. The first baptisms were administered after thirteen years of work.

In 1901 the work of the FELM was extended to the province of Hunan in China, where the missionaries contributed to congregational, educational and health work.

In 1924 work began among Jewish people in the area of modern Israel.

After the Second World War the work grew rapidly and extended to new areas in Africa and Asia. Since the 1980s there has been co-operation with local Lutheran churches for the purpose of work among non-Christian immigrants in Western Europe, as well as in cities of Latin America and, since the 1990s, in Russia.

2. The purpose of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission

“The purpose of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission is to participate in the mission of the Triune God in the world by carrying out among non-Christians the missionary task entrusted by Christ to his church. The FELM carries out this work according to the confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland in co-operation with the church and its parishes, both in Finland and abroad.”

(Statutes of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Paragraph 2)

3. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, its mission agencies and FinnChurchAid

The Office for Global Mission was established in 1975 to co-ordinate the mission activities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland at home.

The Finnish Bible Society (FBS)

Founded in 1812.

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM)

Founded in 1859.

The Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF)

Founded in 1873.

The Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (SLEAF)

Founded in 1922.

The Finnish Lutheran Mission (FLM)

Founded in 1967.

The Messengers

Founded in 1973.

The Finnish Lutheran Overseas Mission (FLOM)

Founded in 1974.

FinnChurchAid (FCA)

Founded in 1947. Operating as a foundation since 1995.



Illustration:
painting by John Muafangejo,
The Nativity of Christ (1977)



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