

**Resource materials
for the keynote paper**

**I was a
stranger**

**and you
welcomed me**

The stranger is unfamiliar not only in a foreign country

“I was a stranger”– an attempt at a change of perspective

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The issue and why it is worth exploring

The title of the keynote paper is deliberately in the first person. It invites readers to identify with the topic, to explore the question of what it feels like to be a stranger, and to identify with the individuals who speak up and tell their stories. We deliberately want to show not only the perspective of the migrants but also that of the ‘locals’ who report on how their surroundings have changed and what makes them feel strange. It is about culture and the increasing diversity of cultures, about transformation, social changes, and ultimately about the role of the church in a society characterised by migration.

Is the church itself increasingly becoming a foreign body, an outsider, because it takes in people who society at large rejects? Will it succeed in becoming a force for integration in society? Will it remain close to its classical milieu or make the break into a multiethnic, ecumenical church? Will it win or lose in terms of the acceptance of its membership? Internationalisation is essentially Protestant, theologically speaking, but to what extent is it possible at all within the existing organisational form of the Protestant churches in Germany?

Propositions and text modules from the keynote paper

- “‘I was a stranger and you welcomed me’: The biblical phrase encourages us to see more in the stranger than merely a needy person... In the stranger, Christ as Lord of the church gives himself to the church as a gift. This slight presentiment, this strong provocation, this profound promise has also been understood in the Evangelical Church of Westphalia. (...) It prompts us to ask curious questions about what refugees bring with them and what they need. How can we serve peace in questions of displacement and migration, strengthen our life together and respect the dignity of all? We may well be amazed at the many opportunities for the church to change and open up, in order to encounter its stranger Lord anew” (Foreword, PDF page 4).
- Introduction “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (PDF pages 6–10)
- 2.1 A league match of hearts (PDF page 22)
- 2.2 Germany as a society shaped by migration. Suitable starters for discussions are the inserts “They came as refugees” and “Ghetto formation and growing roughness” (PDF page 26)
- 2.4 Opening ways towards integration. “Although the concept of integration is used as a matter of course, it is often unclear what it means, and what expectations are directed to whom. Basically, integration means a mutual process, giving the same opportunities for participation in all societal goods. Integration therefore does not mean one-sided assimilation of migrants but the involvement and participation of everyone. In this spirit, integration calls for reciprocal stories of encounter, as are often enabled by local connections with your ‘own’ neighborhood, your ‘own’ city or the local sports club. Integration grows best from below, through common experience in the neighborhood, at the workplace, not least in the church or religious communities at the local level” (PDF page 30).

Questions for group discussion

- Where have you sometimes felt like a 'stranger'? What did you do to overcome this feeling and where did you depend on others?
- What does 'integration' mean, in your opinion? Where do you see it as different from 'assimilation'?
- What behaviour of other groups of people seems strange to you? How do you handle it? Where do you draw the line?
- Are there groups of people in your town of whom you would say they are more, or less, integrated? What does that mean for the question about what is 'strange' and 'familiar'?
- In your opinion, do difference and diversity belong to ...
 - a) German culture?
 - b) Protestant culture?
 - c) the essence of Christianity?
- Should the church tend more to adapt to a societal consensus or insist on another view? Where do you draw the line? How do you react to public statements by the churches?

Materials and media

- The interactive pictures before each chapter, particularly those before chapters 1, 2 and 3 are suited to putting yourselves in the shoes of other individuals and imagining what is strange to them seen from their perspective.
- Film: Daniel Cham Jung
youtu.be/ueAN9QmISUw
- Chapter 3 "Citizens with the saints and members of the household" (PDF page 35)
- Prof. Dr. Alexander-Kenneth Nagel, Integration and assimilation, 2.4 (PDF page 30)
- Edgar Born, Integration from a pastoral perspective, 2.4 (PDF page 30 f.)
- Many authors have published on the topic of being strangers in Germany, e.g. Dunja Hayali, "Haymatland, Wie wollen wir zusammenleben? (Homeland, how do we want to live together?)" , Navid Kermani, "Wer ist wir?" (Who is 'we?') et al.

- Those wishing to engage objectively with the worldview and political goals of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), a new political party, should read "Nie zweimal in denselben Fluss" (never twice in the same river), Björn Höcke in conversation with Sebastian Hennig.

Practical ideas

- Arrange a reading, exhibition of books for children and young people, a cultural event or the like with local book shops, civic library, adult education centre or theatre.
- Hold a series of sermons on "being a stranger" with prominent preachers, e.g. during Trinity.
- Arrange a video/short film project with youth groups and confirmation classes.

Contact

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