

# Ich bin fremd gewesen und ihr habt mich aufgenommen. Kirche und Migration – EKvW 2018



## Remarks from UEM

### 1. Preliminary Remark

UEM welcomes and appreciates highly the initiative of EKvW to take up the issue „Being church in a migration society“ as a central topic of the synod and in all levels of the church. UEM regards the profound material as a “best practice” example to be communicated and used also within UEM. UEM has therefore contributed to the translation and will willingly continue to cooperate in the spreading of the material.

### 2. Aim and vision

The material provides a lot of very valuable insights, examples, experiences and impulses for thought and reflection. What to us seems necessary now is the formulation of a vision for EKvW. Where does the church want to go as a church in the migration society? Formulating a clearer vision together could provide more orientation for congregations and all people involved of the directions to go and to be developed.

### 3. On „Strangeness“

The material describes the situation of strangers and migrants from different angles, but the terms „stranger“ and “strangeness” are continuously used as central terms.

The theological insights of the paper, however, draw a far wider frame: Strangeness is described there – with biblical references – as a fundamental human condition and a basis for central biblical insights and faith experiences, e.g.: “In der Fülle biblischer Migrationstexte spiegelt sich zum einen der Umstand, dass Menschen seit jeher auf Wanderschaft sind. (...) Dabei berichten sie nicht bloße Fakten, sondern verdichten sie zur Erfahrung, zur Hoffnung und Gewissheit, dass in genau solchen Geschichten und Realitäten des Fremdseins Gott selbst erfahrbar ist und dass in ihnen Menschen zum (Über)Leben und Glauben befähigt werden, mehr noch, dass sich darin Gott selbst als ein mitgehender Gott zeigt.“

EKvW – being a founding member of the international communion of churches in different continents - could widen the perspective more and question the categories of “strange” and “stranger”. Theological reflection in congregations should include the critical reflection of human identities being separated into “being at home” and “being strange”.

### 4. Strangeness and diversity in congregations as normality

From the members of the Network Young Adults, UEM frequently and regularly receives feedback that the young people do not feel at home any more in local congregations, because they miss the internationality and diverseness they feel belongs to their identity. For them and in their view, being a member of a diverse community is a „normality“, not an exemption. Therefore, greater diversity in congregations is wanted, and congregations should be encouraged and empowered to perceive these wishes and needs from within, too.

## 5. Organizing the process

The change of UEM from a German mission society into an international communion of churches (1996 and the processes before and afterwards) has shown all members that becoming internationally diverse can only be done through constant long term processes. In UEM, such processes have been going on since the founding of the international UEM nearly 25 years ago. Processes of pursuing more international diversity in congregations need to be consciously and adequately organized and managed. Becoming internationally diverse will change the church. Increased diversity requires broad theological discussions not only among experts, funds for pilot projects, support for innovative programs and new forms of personnel management, e.g. the employment of pastors with non-German background. Teams to steer changes may also be needed on different levels of the church.

The synod material gives a lot of inspiring examples. UEM is ready and willing to cooperate and support where possible the planning and implementation of concrete change processes.

UEM will be glad to make available the experiences and insights of EKvW also for other members.

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