

Lutheran parishes facing religious & cultural plurality in the capital region

Societas Oecumenia Conference

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Intercultural facts about Finland

- Finland used to be culturally a homogenous country which was located on the edge of Europe
- Lutheran church has had a strong influence on life in Finland; culture is permeated with Lutheran reformatory ideas, such as welfare society,
- Finland is changing: in 1990 people who speak foreign languages as their native language were 25 000, 25 years later at the end of 2015 near 330 000 (6 %) of the population speaks as their mother tongues other languages than Finnish, Swedish or Sami; biggest groups are Russian, Estonian and Somali speakers

Ev. Luth. Parishes in the Capital Region

- Cities of Espoo, Helsinki and Vantaa with a population of 1,4 million
- About 60 % Lutherans, about 30 % without any official religious affiliation
- Altogether 34 Evangelical Lutheran parishes,
- Less than 1 % are Lutheran church members who speak a foreign language as one's first language

Asylum seekers & refugees

- Year 2015: ca. 32 500 asylum seekers to Finland, mainly from Iraq, Afganistan, Syria and Somalia
- Year 2015: Ca. 3 500 underage children who came alone to Finland
- Before 2015: ca. 3 000–4 000 person à year
- Year 2016: An estimated 10 000 asylum seekers to Finland

Multicultural church work with "new Finns"

- Lutheran church work in Arabic, Chinese, English, Estonian and Russian language
- Motivation: Christian mission & love for neighbours
- Aim: integration of worshipping ethnic communities to the Lutheran church life
- Profile: Work is done in local Lutheran parishes: Lutheran ministers & premises & theological focus
- Future perspective: a multicultural and intercultural church life in the capital region

Challenges in intercultural church work

- Different emphases on how Christian faith is expressed: experiential & emotional vs. doctrinal
- Traditional Finnish way of practising faith colliding with charismatic way of living up to faith
- Cultural tensions between "old Finns" and "new Finns"

Our strategies in multicultural work

- Tolerance, Recognition, Respect
- Not talking to but talking with.
- Multicultural/intercultural/ecumenical church life means that we all need to be transformed by God
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