

Love never ends

NMS' FOUNDATIONAL
DOCUMENT ON MISSION



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LOVE NEVER ENDS

NMS' foundational document on mission

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Rationale

The Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) has traditionally had a foundational document on mission. The National Board adopted the previous foundational document "Worldwide Joy" in 2004. This document has served as a foundational document and a guideline for mission work and has given guidelines for NMS's mission understanding and strategy. However, much has happened since then, both in the world and in the worldwide church. Thus, it seems appropriate to write a new foundational document. This is natural, as there is a need to repeatedly reflect on our paradigm of mission, how it should be expressed and what consequences it should have on our lives.

A foundational document can easily be mistaken for a strategy or strategy plan, but a document on NMS' foundational understanding of mission is not a strategy plan. It is a document that builds a bridge connecting the biblical concept of mission with the specific context of our time. The imperative to express this in a way that communicates effectively is not new; it has always been necessary. So, now, we once again reframe and describe our missional directives so those who want to actualize NMS's vision can readily grasp what it is all about. The goal is to provide a document that communicates what the rationale for a mission is, in such a way as to create engagement for mission work. In other words, we simply want a foundational document that calls and inspires mission!

1.2 The Content

This foundational document first describes the biblical basis for mission by emphasizing relevant aspects of the biblical material. Then the document describes a missionary spirituality for our time. This is a spirituality that challenges the individual to live a missional life. A missional life is the life Jesus calls the baptized believer to live.

The next chapter describes the mission context of our time. The chapter does not, of course, describe all aspects of Christianity's position in the 21st century, but provides an overview of the mission context of which NMS's mission work is part. This chapter describes developments in the expansion of Christianity as well as in prosperity, living conditions, educational level and other aspects that are important to NMS's work.

Mission is done in many ways. The following chapter therefore describes what is the NMS's mission identity and character. It is about the basic and sustained features that NMS's mission work has maintained over time. Changes in the basic and sustained features may of course occur, but these features are relatively stable.

Finally, the document addresses current issues and sets guidelines for the form and content of NMS's work in the future. Here, the document points us in the proper direction for the work to be done and provides guidance regarding how NMS's work may evolve as we look to the future. Such a description will naturally begin with the work that is already going on and lead us towards different future crossroads.

2. Love Never Ends

2.1 The Foundation

The starting point for Christian mission work is, and always has been, the conviction that the triune God, the Creator of heaven and earth has made himself known to us. God did this by electing the people of Israel, and to this chosen people God promised a future Saviour. These promises were fulfilled by God becoming human in Jesus. Through Jesus's suffering, death, and resurrection, a community of love was established to include people of all races. The story of the election, the promises, and their fulfilment are gathered in the scriptures of the Bible. The Christian church understands the reading, interpretation, and liturgical celebration of what these scriptures tell us to be the mediation of God's saving presence to people today. Through her missionary work, the Church invites people into this fellowship of divine love. The goal is for this community to grow both in depth—by better understanding the reach of God's love—and in breadth, by inviting others from ever-new people-groups into it.

2.2 The Objective

Although the story of God's revelation is connected with one group of people and with specific persons within this people, the purpose of this story is to include everyone in the divine community of love, because the God who in this way has made himself known to us has created the whole world, and because all people everywhere are created in God's image. The world is full of adversity and difficulties that sometimes blind people to the reality that its Creator is their loving Father. God the Father became human in Son and sends the Holy Spirit to overcome this resistance and restore the divine community of love for which we all are created. This is sometimes referred to as God's mission, or in Latin, *Missio Dei*.

We are called to service of this mission when we are part of the church's missionary work. The community of love we are thus included in is characterized by love of God, our fellow human beings, and the world which God has not only created, but also given custodial responsibility for. Because all people are created in the image of God, the commandment to love one another applies to everyone regardless of faith, nationality, or social status. The task of mission will therefore be to try to reach everyone with the message of God's love. At the same time, it is also an aspect of the mission that we try to help with humanitarian, social and environmental problems. Underlining and gaining an understanding of the principle of all people's equality is an important component of effective service. Nature, too, is God's good gift to us. Therefore, we view work that safeguards the integrity of all creation as part of our God-given mission.

2.3 Testimonies in Words and Actions

Both evangelism (reaching people with the gospel of God's grace) and diakonia (reaching people with works of love) are indispensable elements of this mission. In short, we can describe this as a holistic understanding of the mission task. Because our resources are limited, we may have to choose between emphasizing gospel ministry on the one hand and diaconal and social work on the other. It can be a challenge, for both are included in the love command Jesus gave to his disciples. However, it is an overarching task to reach everyone with the gospel of God's love, and to state that God's love for us is never conditional or based on how well people succeed in following God's will in their lives. We are enveloped in God's love even when we do not realize it in our lives. Therefore, conveying the gospel of God's grace is always the all-encompassing goal.

Christians are part of a social community that includes people with different views of life and religious beliefs. Some of these individuals will be dismissive of the Christian message, while others will be more open and inquiring. In meeting such diversity, we will also bring with us the conviction of the equality of all humans. Therefore, we will meet everyone with respect and listen to and learn from their life experiences. As we strive to solve social and ethical challenges, we will be able to interact with many regardless of their beliefs and beliefs. At the same time, it is important to maintain both the uniqueness of the Christian message and the right and the duty of an uninterrupted preaching of that message.

In many countries, this right is not recognized. The principle of religious freedom is not respected, and both Christians and others can be persecuted for the sake of their faith. In such contexts, the goal of our work will be to uphold both the principle of religious freedom and the right to make a Christian confession even where this may be problematic, while trying to find ways to reach people with the gospel which are not perceived as offensive or threatening to other beliefs. It is also important to promote the principle of religious freedom in a manner that does not make the situation more difficult for Christians who cannot freely profess their faith.

The Bible tells us that God is love. However, it also tells us that Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead. We will then be confronted with the fact that we did not live up to the commandments God established to keep us from selfishly harming others, or the world God has created. The gospel is the message that God, for Jesus's sake, acquits us in judgment. This can produce cognitive challenges for us, as finite humans with limited understanding, concerning those who do not profess faith in Jesus, either because they have not heard the Good News or because they reject it. We do not understand how God's rejection of anyone in judgment can be reconciled with the message of God as eternal infinite and unchanging love. Our task, however, is not to solve that problem, but to preach the gospel of God's salvation with faithfulness. That was the mission Jesus gave his apostles, and we welcome the call to continue standing in this ministry.

3. Mission and Discipleship

3.1 The First Christians

It is interesting to read about how the early Christians lived and practiced their faith. In the Acts of the Apostles, we get a good insight into how the first Christians lived and related to one another:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common" (Acts 2:42-44, ESV).

This glimpse shows that the first groups of Christians lived communally; they shared what they owned, were hospitable and showed great care for others, in addition to sharing the Word of God and the fellowship of other Christians. Soon, they would be caught up in a brutal reality that eventually involved bloody persecution, torture, and martyrdom. However, the persecutions did not produce the result the Roman authorities anticipated. First, both the Christian community as a whole and the Christian beliefs in each individual member became stronger. Second, the Christian faith spread throughout the ancient world as Christians scattered because of the persecution. As these Christians told others about their faith, more and more were converted and baptized.

3.2 Through Baptism One Becomes a Disciple

In God's worldwide church, there is a consensus that baptism is a one-time act that is the gateway to the Christian community. In addition, one agrees that faith and baptism belong together and that when one is baptized, one becomes a disciple. The connection between baptism and discipleship is clear in the last words Jesus said before his Ascension:

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:18-20 ESV)

Jesus says in these verses that one becomes a disciple by being baptized in the name of the triune God and keeping what he taught. Because these verses are often read as words of consecration during baptism, they are often called the "baptismal commission." More correctly, it would be to call the verses the "discipleship commission," because it is a command to make people disciples. In the same verses, Jesus promised the disciples to be with them for life. Jesus thus links baptism, discipleship, and the Christian life. This is something the worldwide church seems to agree on.

3.3 A Disciple is an Apprentice

The word "disciple" is a somewhat strange word in our day. In Nynorsk, the word is translated "læresvein" (apprentice). A trainee is a student who goes to the teachings of a teacher and who is then put to practice the lessons. Hence the word "apprentice."

Using the term "apprentice" to describe a disciple of Jesus makes sense. Since in baptism you become "apprenticed" to Jesus as teacher, the teaching goes from master to disciple. Still, being a disciple breaks the framework for being an apprentice in a secular context. The status as a disciple is a gift from God and is a lifelong walk with Jesus as a teacher.

The story of the two who were on their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus is revelatory. As they walk along the road, Jesus speaks to them, but is not recognized. He goes with them to Emmaus, teaches and explains the biblical texts to them. Only when he says grace and breaks the bread do they recognize him. Similarly, we as disciples must spend time with Jesus to deepen the relationship.

3.4 Mission and Discipleship

Jesus' last words—referred to above as the "discipleship command"—are also called the Great Commission. In John 20:21, Jesus is clear that the mission of sharing the faith involves moving beyond:

"As Father has sent me, I will send you."

Here, Jesus encourages his disciples to share their faith with new people. Christianity is therefore a missionary religion. It began in Jerusalem and spread to many different parts of the world. A branch went east through the Middle East to India and China, another south toward Egypt and Ethiopia. Another stream went from Jerusalem, through Asia Minor, to Europe and the Mediterranean. From Europe, Christianity spread to North America. From North America and Europe, it spread to South America, Africa, and Asia.

In the Early Church and well into the Middle Ages, Christianity spread by Christians actively sharing their faith with new people. The apostles were the first missionaries; they actively worked to spread the good news of Christ and plant new churches. As Christians travelled because they were traders or migrated because of persecution, Christian faith spread rapidly. It is only in the past couple of centuries that the modern Protestant missionary activity, as we now know it, grew. The basis for the call to mission was the conviction that God's love applies to all people and that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world.

The connection between discipleship and mission is therefore obvious and fundamental. The conference of the World Council of Churches in Arusha underlines this in its final statement^[1]. Some of the excerpts clearly state:

- We are called through our baptism into transformative discipleship . . .
- We are called to preach the good news of Jesus Christ . . .
- We are called as disciples to belong together in a just and inclusive community
- We are called to be faithful witnesses of God's transforming love . . .

Here, emphasis is placed on discipleship and sharing faith, and everyone has a responsibility to preach the good news of Jesus Christ!

4. The World We Live in

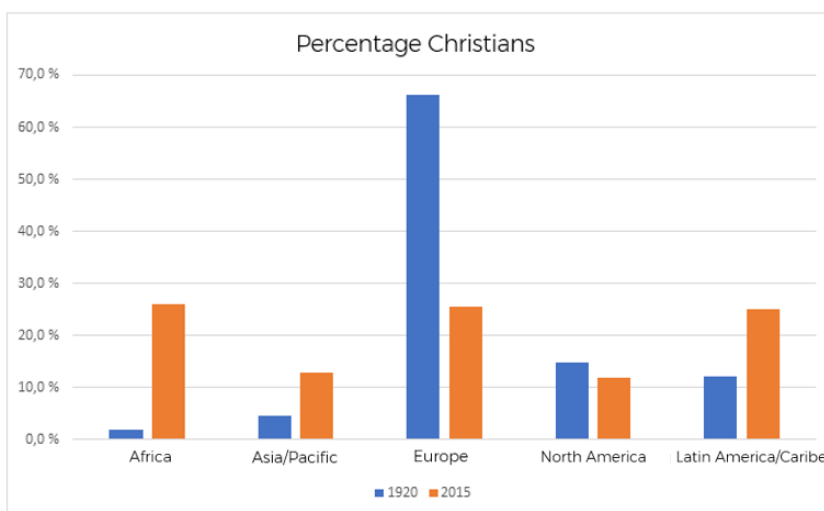
Based on a comprehensive understanding of mission, the discussion of how the mission assignment should be concretized and take shape always must be designed in dialogue with the challenges and opportunities presented by both global and local context. NMS works in four continents (Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe), in many different countries and in collaboration with numerous and varied national and local churches and other mission organizations. This means that NMS relates to many different contexts and partners, and that the development of plans and strategies will have to reflect this.

This chapter first provides a brief overview of the prevalence and evolution of Christianity since 1910. Subsequently, some important developments in the world today are presented with significance for NMS's work. Finally, some key changes in mission understanding and practice are pointed out.

4.1 The Spread and Development of Christianity

Christianity is a worldwide religion (a world religion), and the Christian church is present in all parts of the world today. If we look at Christianity's spread and development over the past hundred years, we find several interesting developments with great relevance to the understanding of the missionary task. The first thing we notice is that the percentage of Christians in the world has remained relatively stable over the last 100 years (34.8% in 1910 and 31.2% in 2015), and that Christianity remains the world's largest religion.

Second, there has been a significant shift in the centre of gravity of the world's Christians. If we compare figures from 1910 and 2015, we get the following picture:



In 1910, therefore, over 80% of the world's Christians were in Europe and North America. In 2015, this has fallen to less than 40%. Over the same period, the number of Christians has increased significantly in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and Christianity continues to grow in these regions. In Asia, for example, Christianity is the fastest growing religion. Europe, which in 1910 understood itself as a Christian continent, today has only a quarter of the world's Christians. Many have also pointed out that the relative weakening is even greater because a growing proportion of Europe's Christians are immigrants from Africa, Asia, or Latin America. Calculations based on birth and death figures show that by 2060, 42% of the world's Christians will be in Africa, but only 14% in Europe. North America's share of world Christians will be reduced to 9%. The other regions will remain more stable compared to the 2015 figures.

A third trend that is worth noting is that the number of Pentecostal and charismatic Christians is growing about four times faster than other groups of Christians. In other words, we see significant growth in charismatic forms of Christianity. In 1970, it was estimated that approximately 5% of all Christians belonged to this group, while by 2010 this had grown to 26%. It appears that much of the growth is through the recruitment of people from other

denominations. The reasons for this growth are relatively complex, but some of the factors most often cited include that these churches are good at adopting new technology and that their preaching and practice is adapted to a modern, individualized, urban lifestyle on full march of the global south. Furthermore, these forms of Christianity have been able to communicate with popular religiosity in a way that has won the hearing among many.

These changes are well captured in the following description of "an average churchgoer" today:

An average churchgoer is found today neither in the Protestant core country of Germany nor in the historical centre of Catholicism in Italy. Instead, she or she can be found in one of Africa's and Latin America's major cities, on a Catholic church bench or on a plastic chair in a Pentecostal church. And for the first time in almost 1300 years, the world's most powerful Christian leader is not from Europe.[\[2\]](#)

Christianity as a religion has become more diverse transnational and polycentric, partly because of the demographic shift we have just outlined, as well as globalization and migration.

4.2 Climate, prosperity, health, and education

One of the greatest challenges of our time is escalating climate change. The climate is changing, and the consequences are great and serious. Poorer countries are more greatly affected when drought or floods destroy homes and livelihoods. Many of the changes are man-made, and both local and global efforts are required, intended to limit global warming. Poverty is increasingly linked to climate. Coastal and equatorial areas are especially vulnerable. The number of climate migrants is increasing.

In the areas of wealth development, health and education, major advances have been made globally. At the same time, many challenges remain, clearly expressed in the UN's sustainability goals.[\[3\]](#)

At the global level, there is a significant decline in poverty. But poverty is still not eradicated. In vulnerable areas, food production is threatened by climate change. Furthermore, there is a tendency for the gap between poor and rich to widen.

When it comes to health, there are advances in several areas. For example, life expectancy is increasing worldwide. Maternal and child mortality is reduced. Many diseases are under control, and many have access to the necessary vaccinations and medicines. At the same time, child mortality is still high in areas of high poverty. There are also major challenges preventing the total eradication of several diseases that take many lives, such as malaria and tuberculosis. Lately, we have seen how the corona pandemic impacts churches and societies as meetings and fellowship building gatherings can no longer be arranged. The pandemic has led to both a health wise and a financial crisis.

The field of education also reflects many positive developments. Significantly, more and more children, including many girls, attend school. This means that the number of people that cannot read and write decreases. Despite this, several challenges remain that need to be addressed, such as the fact that, statistically, girls in poor areas quit school earlier than all others. Still, it is encouraging that illiteracy is on the decline, and the proportion of children in the world attending school has increased significantly.

4.3 Globalization and migration

If there is one thing uniquely characteristic of our time, it is that the world is changing rapidly. Different types of globalization processes have been and are the engine driving this metamorphosis. Since the Internet became widely available in the early 1990s, modern communication technology in record speed has changed how people interact across borders and continents. While social relationships were previously tied to the places people were physically located, technology allows for contact and interaction with colleagues, friends, and acquaintances on the other side of the globe regardless of place of residence. The technology further provides new opportunities to share information across continents without any gap or

lapse of time. Religious sociologist and political scientist Ruth Marshall-Fratani tries to capture this by describing globalization as a "flow of images and ideas."[\[4\]](#)

Furthermore, technological developments related to transportation have made it easier to move from one place to another. This has led to increased trade, increased tourism, and increased migration. Therefore, in addition to being described as "flow of images and ideas," globalization can also be said to contain "flow" of products and people. Globalization has spawned economic progress and development in many countries, but also intensified inequalities both within countries and between nations. Inequality contributes to economic and structural challenges that, thus far, have no solutions. Moving people internally across nations and across borders is one of the most obvious and visible effects of globalization in recent decades, and this movement of people today has such a scope that our time is often called the age of migration. The increased flow of refugees is also part of this picture. Economic uncertainty, political turmoil, famine, and environmental devastation mean that more and more people have been forced to leave their homes and become refugees.

Different types of migration processes have led to changes in the religious landscape as well. The fact that people of different faiths and worldviews meet and interact often contributes to religious pluralisation, both between religions and within the various religious denominations. In Norway, for example, migration has meant that Islam has become an important religion and that the Catholic Church has grown significantly. In other countries, migration leads to other types of change. It is otherwise interesting to note that half of the world's migrants are Christians and many of them have a conscious desire to witness about their faith in their new homelands.

These developments have also led to discussions around the issue of secularization. In Europe, secularization has come a long way, but earlier theories that religion has played its final part in modern society have now been severely challenged. Religion seems to be an increasingly important social, political, and cultural marker globally, and this also leads to changes in how Europe, including Norway, relates to religion in public space. It seems that the religion of our global situation becomes both relativized and revitalized. People must relate to their own religious tradition and beliefs as one of several possible alternatives, and therefore religion becomes an important marker of identity.

4. 4 Mission in Change

The call to participate in God's mission, God's mission in the world, is given to the entire church. Developments in the twentieth century clearly showed that the concept of mission as a movement from the global north to the global south was outdated and in need of change. Mission is today understood as a mission on six continents, and churches and mission organizations around the world are challenged to collaborate both locally and globally. Individual Churches all over the world testify to their faith not only in their local community but also across different types of borders. As wealth, education and competence levels increase, local Churches also take on more responsibility for the education of their own staff and for evangelistic and diaconal work (including health and development work) in their own communities. The resulting implications then inspire new ways to think about collaboration and collaborative efforts in the church globally and between Churches and mission organizations.

People still travel to foreign countries as missionaries, but it is interesting to note that over half of today's missionaries come from the global South. Major missionary sending countries are, for example, Brazil, Nigeria, and South Korea. In addition to the more traditional missionary activities, globalization and migration processes have led to major changes in global mission. One example is how, one of Africa's fastest growing churches, Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), uses new technology for communication to plant new congregations in important big cities in Africa, in Europe and USA. In addition to large churches in Nigeria, the Church runs a mission in over 180 countries. It is interesting to note that the Church is headquartered for its missionary activities in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Europe (the Netherlands), the United States and Canada. In Europe, RCCG has started hundreds of

churches. Another example of how the mission map has changed is NMS's work in Spain, where we support an endeavour run by an Egyptian congregation for North African immigrants. Missionaries from Venezuela, Brazil and the United States are engaged in this work. NMS provides financial support and sends teams from NMSU on shorter assignments at the centres.

5. NMS – Identity and Character

5.1 God's Mission

NMS as an organization consists of a community of interests of people who want to share the gospel of God's love with others. The background is the call we have received from Jesus and our own desire to share what we experience as good in our own lives—our faith in God. Mission work begins with us. We want to be generous and inclusive in such a way that Jesus is visible wherever we gather. Our identity is linked to our belonging to the worldwide church. We believe that NMS's commitment to working with other partners is a tangible expression of God's mission.

5.2 The Love of God

As pointed out earlier, the gospel dissemination in NMS takes place through both word and action. Based on NMS's theological understanding of mission, it is important to make God known by conveying God's love from the living Christ to all people without discrimination. NMS wants to have transparency in its gospel dissemination, working without arrogance and leaving room for wonder. This is especially important in the face of new contexts where language and culture pose many challenges in a world that is becoming increasingly global and at the same time more and more complex. In NMS, it is important to state that we are to carry out a mission. The discussion is not about the abstract concept of missionary work, but more about the pragmatics of how to do it. The goal never changes, but methods change as the world changes.

5.3 The Whole Person

NMS has a holistic attitude to mission. Relationship with God revolves around the whole of humanity and to the contexts of which humans are a part. It is about being reconciled to God and to each other. It is about being part of the whole creation of God and being connected to the worldwide church. Atonement involves freedom: freedom to experience God's love and freedom to share further.

5.4 Sharing Faith with New People and Groups

All Christians have a mission call that involves sharing faith with others. The NMS has particularly taken on a responsibility to share faith with those who have not heard of Jesus before – to new people and groups. The term “people and groups” is used to avoid a nationalistic language based on geographic or affiliation or ethnicity. Today there are various ways of defining people groups, which makes it more difficult to define the term “people of all races” as a starting point for mission work. The gospel must be shared with all new generations. This involves, among other things, a focus on marginalized and underprivileged groups. Ethnic and linguistic minorities, that have never heard the preaching of the gospel, have a special focus. In our time, the call to mission among refugees and migrants is a special challenge.

5.5 Poverty Alleviation

Participating in the work to eradicate poverty is high on NMS's agenda. A worthy life with a good quality of life for all is a goal. The focus on rights is strong in NMS. In the diaconal work, the basic rights are foundational. This means access to food and water, education, and comprehensive health care. In a poverty perspective, NMS works with structural changes and root causes as an integral part of diaconal work. NMS is concerned with local ownership and sustainable project work. All development work under the auspices of NMS is diaconal, justified based on the biblical principle of charity. Diaconal work is unconditional and important. It is a consequence of faith, actively manifested as love.

5. 6 Men, Women and Children

NMS has taken the lead when it comes to working with underprivileged women, championing gender equality. This is a high priority. Both men and women are created in the image of God and experience the same love of God. NMS believes that this means each of us are given the same right to serve God and participate in church and community life on equal terms. Children and young people are understood to be active and independent individuals who participate in family, church, and community here and now, and not just as entities who will become socially beneficial sometime in the future.

5. 7 Respect for the Faith of Others

Although NMS emphasizes and shares its own beliefs in each encounter with different believers, it is important to have respect for the beliefs of others and to place a high value on freedom of speech and beliefs. The NMS is engaged in work with Christian minority faiths, especially in areas where Christians are persecuted for their faith and maintains that these rights must be the same for all religious groups.

5. 8 Our Own Lifestyle

In a world of ever-increasing and uncontrolled consumption, where egocentricity increases as the gap between rich and poor grows, it is important to focus on one's own lifestyle. We are anxious when we observe how greed is defined as something we deserve in rich countries and that consumption comes at the expense of others. This becomes an ethical dilemma in a Christian perspective. NMS has set the fight against greed as an important focus area going forward with the campaign #grådighetsbekjemper (greed fighter). Along the same lines, NMS is working to preserve God's creation with a focus on climate and the environment.

5. 9 Characteristics

In the NMS, in recent years, a stronger and renewed recognition that mission begins with our own faith life has emerged. In the work of renewing the mission understanding of the NMS, specific characteristics of what it means to believe in Jesus in our time have been worked out:

- We will seek God in Bible and prayer
- We want to serve Jesus where we live
- We want to live simply
- We want an open table

The characteristics begin with a "we" because those who believe in Jesus together make up God's family. The Christian life is lived in communion with others. Seeking God in Bible and prayer is the most basic. To serve Jesus where we live is to mean something to people around us.

The challenge of living simpler is about encouraging each other for choices that simplify life, remind each other to be grateful, and to take care of the creation. Having an open table is about having a good time together and being inclusive. The purpose of the features is to help each other live as Christians, especially in a Norwegian context, and gain greater boldness to live freer towards expectations and demands that we face.

5. 10 Meeting points and fellowships (Associations, Groups and Recycling Shops)

Mission associations and groups affiliated with NMS are an important resource and have a visible role in their area. These are a mission engagement channel where people come together to keep up with NMS' activities, get information about their work, and support with prayer and money. NMS is working on how Norwegian volunteers can have a more active role in mission work, for instance through participation in global teams. The NMS mission centres and camps are important meeting places for the gospel to be communicated to children, youth, families, and adults. The work in the recycling shops brings people to social meeting places and generates an increasing share of NMS 's revenues for outward activities. Environment, climate, and reuse are in line with NMS's priority areas of work. Eventually, we will probably see greater diversity in terms of what brings people together based on the topics NMS puts on the agenda. Web-based groups are growing, both as discussion groups and as places where one can get up-to-date information and provide input on work NMS is involved in.

5.11 Ecclesiastical Cooperation

NMS views itself as an ecclesiastical mission organization that partners with churches nationally and globally through various networks. We collaborate with various church communities in Norway on missionary dispatch and project support. NMS is in a special way linked to the Church of Norway (Dnk). This implies good interaction with Dnk. The NMS encourages its members to engage in boards and councils in the Dnk and strive to give the mission perspective greater room in the church. Agreements on project collaboration with congregations have a lot of room. NMS does not seek to form its own churches to become a church community but cooperates with churches in Dnk. In some areas, it is important to contribute to the establishment of new congregations in collaboration with diocesan councils and parishes. NMS is part of a church development network and would like to contribute experience from the global church work we are part of.

6. How NMS Works

6.1 Comprehensive Understanding of Mission

NMS's mission work is based on a comprehensive understanding of the mission assignment. Communicating the gospel in words and deeds is the essence of the work. Churches form the starting point for fellowship, comprising people who share faith and life experiences. Here you also get a share in caring for each other and knowledge of different living conditions. Priority areas of focus change in accordance with the challenges we see in our own context and with our partners. Experience has shown that the focus areas become more global than before and that international challenges become a common area of action. Currently, we are seeing an increasing focus on challenges that need global solutions. These are issues that are also rooted in a biblical understanding of caring for the entire globe and all people who live there. Therefore, poverty reduction, human rights and climate issues are matters in which NMS engages, through collaboration with partners in Norway and other countries. The diaconal work helps to make God visible in the world. Preaching and communicating who God is to all people is the active part of our missionary work.

6.2 Use Your Talents

The Church of Madagascar, together with the NMS, has developed the concept *Use your talents*. All people have talents to be used and further developed. These talents, both human and material, are valuable resources that represent great potential if they are effective. NMS strives to make all resources more visible and active. The motto is that we will use the available resources we have here and now. Such a way of thinking has changed the view of parts of the project work in NMS to focus more on smaller, local initiatives where own resources are used instead of waiting for someone from outside to initiate a development project. NMS will be more cautious about large money transfers and would rather support our partners in their efforts to become financially independent. Development committees in local congregations initiate cooperation with other stakeholders and municipal authorities. Local savings groups act as savings banks so that it is possible to save up for start-up capital for their own business activities. This way of working creates greater ownership and less dependency. It changes the lives of individuals and leads to major changes in the life of the church and in society.

The starting point for *Use your talents* has been poverty-related, but the new thinking has originated in church life with a greater focus on the use of talents in all contexts. This has transfer value to many different contexts, including in Norway. Churches and organizations in several countries participate in a large network to support and further develop this methodology. This will be a primary model for NMS's outward work. NMS's role is to facilitate participation in networks and workshops with various themes that we have professional knowledge of through the work of our global teams.

6.3 Vulnerable Groups and Institutions

Over the years, NMS has contributed to the establishment of several ecclesiastical institutions, including schools, health institutions and theological institutions. In the case of schools and

health institutions, the country's authorities have gradually taken over responsibility for these sectors. There will still be a need for support from NMS for some time in relation to some special areas where the state services are not yet adequate, such as the education of children and young people with various disabilities. NMS wants to spotlight inclusion as a goal for this work. This will take time and will probably require support from various institutions in the future as well. For most of the partners, the operation of such institutions is a financial burden, prompting them to ask for support from NMS. NMS will be careful about contributing to the establishment of new institutions, instead placing more emphasis on professional work in networks with partners.

6.4 Theological Teaching

NMS has a strong commitment to theological teaching and support of Bible schools. Through education, ecclesiastical personnel become proficient in relevant gospel teaching. These learning places have few sources of income and struggle with the operating budgets. Here one must find new financing models and ways of organizing the work. Distance learning in collaboration with other educational institutions, including VID, is constantly undergoing further development.

6.5 More Cooperation in Global Teams

NMS has had a strong focus on raising competence both by contributing scholarships to further education and by collaborating in workshops and courses. Competence has increased significantly in recent decades. This means more professional cooperation and more specific expertise. This opens for new methods and means to carry out missionary work.

We need more collaboration to solve common tasks and want more teamwork across with a focus on different academic themes. A team can be composed of a couple of missionaries and some national staff, along with people possessing an academic foundation and information specialists who can convey what is happening in the field. It is also desirable to collaborate in teams with participants from NMSU. The work will be enacted using both virtual contact and physical meeting points. Tasks can be associated with drafting project agreements, following up on current projects, reporting, arranging professional meetings and communicating with those involved. Research-based projects in the form of follow-up research and action research can open collaboration with fellows and practice students, which in this way can be involved in NMS's work. Global teams with equal employees who have different employers are seen in the NMS as a future model.

6.6 Missionary Families

Cultural and language knowledge from missionaries who live long-term in another country are important resources in their work. Such knowledge can be more difficult to establish in newer models. The trend within NMS indicates a gradual reduction in missionary families with long-term commitment. Some continue as commuter missionaries. In some countries, it may still be desirable to facilitate active recruitment of missionary families who have both long- and shorter-term perspectives about their service. However, experience indicates that many people believe that the costs of moving whole families to new countries are too high. NMS sees that fewer people than ever are willing to take risks on behalf of the family. Political unrest and terrorist threats in several of NMS's partner countries pose major security challenges, especially for families with children. This challenges NMS to look at new models.

6.7 Network-based Work

The mission assignments ahead are demanding. Many who have not yet heard the gospel live in inaccessible areas. Most missionaries are no longer in the front line working rather in middle management supporting the local partners. National team members are better equipped both linguistically and culturally to serve and can collaborate through belonging to professional networks where the work is discussed and possibly corrected. While there is still great value. In addition to physical meetings, technological advances provide new opportunities that enable direct face-to-face communication despite geographical distance. A distinctive feature of networking is that it is built by the involvement of stakeholders, and not by the fact that someone organizes something for others. In this way, the role of the NMS is different and perhaps even limited.

6.8 Power and influence

New working methods give less power to NMS, which is an advantage in an equal partnership. NMS will nevertheless have some agendas and areas that it desires to influence. This applies in theological matters as well as in relation to administration and education. NMS has its own policy documents, including on gender and women's rights, cohabitation ethics, diakonia and Muslim mission. Views from these will be expressed by NMS in dialogue with Church of Norway, sister churches and other partners.

6.9 Management

NMS practises established international rules for management, in co-operation with our partners. This is based on approved agreements between NMS and different partners. There are also agreements at the project level with clarifications about length of the period and budgets. NMS has zero-tolerance misuse of funds policy. Freezing of funds can be implemented in cases of misuse. This includes also misuse of power. Capacity building in areas of management and financial knowledge is prioritized.

6.10 Organizational models and voluntary involvement

In the future, we will see entirely new organizational models, probably without hierarchical structures. In a network-based model, we can have a flatter structure which involves more people both in terms of executive work and in terms of responsibility and authority. One of the main challenges is how volunteers can be involved in the executive work at all levels and contribute more with their resources. One idea is that volunteers can also participate as members of global teams.

6.11 Cultural sensitivity and ecumenism

In the missionary work ahead, humility and increased cooperation with others will be vital. Culturally sensitive mission work is as important as ever. Ecumenism plays a bigger role than before. Willingness and the ability to listen effectively gains importance as well. NMS has its roots in a Lutheran tradition while at the same time expanding ecumenical cooperation. Confidence in one's own faith and tradition of belief is important but learning from others' faith stories and religious dialogues give each of us an expanded perspective.

7. Loving Never Ends

God's love for us humans never ends. It is eternal and without limits. It includes all people, always regardless of condition and position, race, and gender, age, and orientation. God wants everyone to be saved. Besides, God is righteous and wants all people to have what they need to live a dignified life on the globe he has created and which he has given man to manage. This obliges the one who believes in him to act and calls us to preach the gospel in words and deeds by sharing faith in Jesus with new people, eradicating poverty, and fighting injustice. God grant us grace to follow this call and pass it on to those who come after us!

Attachments: Other Mission Documents

NMS does not exist in a vacuum. Since the adoption of "Worldwide Joy" in 2004, various parts of the worldwide church have held conferences on missions and prepared various mission documents and mission statements. Space does not allow for a detailed presentation, but below is a brief exposition of what characterizes the individual documents with a view to building a new basic document for NMS. The documents are presented in chronological order. Those interested in delving into the individual documents can find them on the homepage of the Collaboration between Church and Mission <https://kirken.no/nb-NO/SMM/om-missie/misjonsdokumer/>.

The overview begins with two documents prepared by the Lutheran World Federation, "Mission in context," released in 2005, and "Diakonia in context," released in 2009. These documents are the Lutheran church family's founding document on mission through evangelism and diakonia. These foundational documents promote a holistic missionary understanding where the preaching of the gospel and diakonia goes hand in hand.

The Lausanne Movement organized a major mission conference in Cape Town in 2010. It is worth noting that the central theme was the love of God toward us and our love of the whole gospel, the whole church as God's people, and of the whole world. What was new in this document was a stronger emphasis on the responsibility the Christian church has for diakonia, social work and work to create peace.

In Edinburgh in 2010, the entire world-wide church celebrated the centenary of the Great Mission Conference in Edinburgh in 1910. The first Edinburgh conference in many ways formed the basis for the ecumenical movement and mission commitment that led to the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948. The Edinburgh Conference in 2010 adopted a statement that states that the worldwide church is united in the mission of sharing faith in Jesus through baptism and teaching. The declaration adopted is called "A common call."

In 2011, the World Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, and the World Evangelical Alliance issued a joint guide on how to mission in a multi-religious world (Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World—Recommendations for Conduct). The document provides guidelines on how to conduct a mission in a respectful and sensitive manner in a multi-religious setting. The document was ground-breaking as these three groups, which make up more than three billion Christians, came together to encourage reflection on missionary practices and practices.

The Norwegian Church adopted the statement "Misjon til forandring" (Transforming Mission) at the church meeting in 2012. This document states that churches have a responsibility for the gospel to be shared with new people both locally and globally. The statement binds baptism and mission together by emphasizing that all baptized are called to share faith in Jesus with others. It is emphasized that all Christians belong to the worldwide Church of God, that the Church is called to preach the gospel and to show charity to all people.

The head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis, writes in a so-called "apostolic exhortation" in 2013 on mission and evangelism in our day. The Pope's statement is extensive, and the most striking thing is that all who believe are called to testify about the gospel. The pope also emphasizes the consideration of the poor and the marginalized.

In 2013, the World Council of Churches adopted a new mission document entitled "Together towards life". The document's distinctive character is that it recognizes, to a greater extent than before, that mission is about each generation needing to hear about Jesus and come to believe in Him, and reaffirming the connection between baptism and mission; all who are baptized are called to bear witness of Jesus. Other new features are that marginalized groups are highlighted as a missionary resource, that the fight for climate is explicitly expressed, and that the emphasis is on the work of the Holy Ghost.

Finally, mention is made of the statement prepared during the Church of the World Council's conference in Arusha, Tanzania in 2018. The conference was organized by the "Commission for World Mission and Evangelism," and the central motive is that all who are baptized and believe are called disciples. Discipleship is concretized by sharing faith in Jesus, showing charity, promoting dialogue with other faiths, fighting injustice, aiding migration, raising marginalized groups, and more.

[1] https://kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/bispemotet/2018/documents/bm-saksdokuments/bm-16_18-6-the-arusha-call-to-discipleship-med-norsk-translation.pdf

[2] Vebjørn Horsfjord, Sven Thore Kloster, Gina Lende and Ole Jakob Løland, *Global Christianity. A Contemporary History* (Oslo: The University Proposal, 2018), 269.

[3] <https://www.fn.no/About-FN/FNs-sustainability> .

[4] Ruth Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism," in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, ed. André Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 82.