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Paper proposal for the Study group Theology of Mission

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An Abstract

In search for a common witness

The voice of the people in mission

In my paper I intend to describe and present the results of an analysis of the rapidly changing landscape of Christian missions as expressed in the new Finnish Lutheran Church mission strategy. My paper will be a summary of an academic peer-reviewed article (to be published) of a joint process for a common mind in mission.

I will give an account of an ambitious process exceptionally managed in defining the church's view on common witness. The new Finnish document on basic mission principles, no longer called a strategy, builds on the common theological framework in the Lutheran church mission strategy approved for the years 2010 to 2015. Unlike previous equivalent documents the new updated document has been prepared innovatively and transparently: not by a church committee or expert missiologists but with the help of almost 2,000 church workers, parishioners and mission practitioners involved in God's mission nationally and internationally in their various capacities. The document has been approved in autumn 2015.

The new document is the result of the understanding of those interviewed with the help of an electronic questionnaire. They have also commented on the drafts of the document. In the final version their views are reflected and collected together with more than 30 Finnish Lutheran Church strategy guidelines (on many different church activities) and with the WCC document "Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes" (2013), the WEA document "Cape Town Commitment" (2010) and the LWF document "Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment" (2004).

Based on the search for a common ecclesiological understanding I will ask how the church in its missional nature faces the modern challenges, including new margins, in engaging all parishioners, in strengthening partnerships and cooperation with other churches (sharing of resources), in media and information technology, in multiculturalism and flux of immigrants and in the dialogues with world faiths and ideologies.