

Evangelical Church in the Rhineland

Synod 2018

Extract from the Minutes of the Regional Synod
of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland
12 January 2018

On Encounter with Muslims. Theological position statement

(Document 30)

and

Motion proposed by the Wetzlar District Synod re Encounter with Islam

(Document 12 No 23)

Resolved

1)

On Encounter with Muslims. Theological position statement

The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland has been engaged in dialogue with Muslims for more than forty years. It has already made its position clear on numerous aspects of coexistence, of dialogue and of theology. As an expression of our continuing along this road, we are today formulating the following important insights and impulses for future work:

1. Listening to what is in the Holy Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments and in responding to our faith, the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland acknowledges itself to be bound by its confession of faith in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Son of God, who stands for the covenant of God with his people. It owes this commitment to the salvation received through the grace of God. At the same time it recognises the faith of Muslim people as commitment to the one God.
2. The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland sees a basis for a relationship between the two religions in the commitment of both Christians and Muslims to the biblical traditions, in the high regard in which Muslims hold Jesus as a special prophet, and living in respect of God's justice and mercy. These provide the starting points for theological conversations in which both what we have in common and also our fundamental differences can be spoken about openly. The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland emphasises that the relationship between Christianity and Islam is different from the substance of the ongoing relationship between Christianity and Judaism.
3. Jesus Christ himself approached a wide range of people with love and in so doing is an example for Christians in our encounter with Muslims. The Synod encourages members of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland to be frank and outspoken in explaining their own faith when in dialogue. The aim of dialogue is getting to know more about one another, working together and tolerating our differences, along with a deeper understanding of our respective traditions, but it is not about conversion to the other religion.
4. The Synod intends to broaden Christian-Muslim dialogue in the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland and to hold firm to it even in difficult situations. The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland regards this dialogue as a duty for the church and encourages all those in local congregations, in church districts and institutions who are engaging in dialogue, to develop further these enriching conversations, partnerships and models for living and working together. The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland rejects the exclusion and denigration of people on grounds of their religious affiliation. In our secular and democratic society Christians and Muslims have a responsibility for creating a positive example of living in community. This includes a commitment to oppose all forms of racism, antisemitism, islamophobia, religious extremism and fundamentalism.

5. The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland affirms: As Christians we take a stand for religious freedom as a universal human right. Religious freedom includes the right to believe or not to believe and also to change one's faith, as well as to live it out and to confess it publicly. The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland welcomes the efforts of Muslim organisations in Germany to further develop their relationship with the state in legal matters. It supports Islamic religious education as a normal school subject, and the teaching of Islamic theology in universities. The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland encourages collaborative work by Christians with Muslims, for example in hospitals, penal institutions, emergency pastoral care, in practical welfare work and in the field of education. It makes a permanent commitment to the possibility of intercultural openness in its own employment laws.
6. The Synod asks the Church Executive Board to make an evaluation of the wide range of suggestions made in the responses to the discussion process by local congregations, church districts and institutions and on the basis of this conclusion to present and to implement proposals on how encounters with Muslims can be strengthened at all levels of the church.

Resolved

II.

The motion proposed by the Wetzlar District Council Synod to the 2018 Regional Synod re Encounter with Islam (document 12 No 23) was resolved.

(By a large majority, with 7 against and 7 abstentions)