



“I was a stranger, and you invited me”
Inclusive Communities and the Churches –
Realities, Challenges and Visions

In a world torn apart, where millions of people are marginalised, rejected, excluded, or even eliminated, representatives from UEM member churches met at a seminar in Stellenbosch, South Africa in November 2014. They wanted to encourage each other to explore new ways of becoming inclusive in the way Jesus showed in His life and His proclamation of the imminent Kingdom of God. They also had the opportunity to visit programmes and projects of the hosting churches and organisations (Rhenish Church, Uniting Reformed Church, New World Foundation) with the aim of inclusivity in a post-apartheid context.

Jesus overcame barriers and boundaries of tradition, culture and even religion to reach out to people at the margins and promise God’s blessing to those outside the religious, economic, and social institutions of the time. He is an inspiration to the participants, who see it as imperative to continuously

reflect in a self-critical way on where exclusion is practised in our own church life and diaconic work, as well as in the local and global societies of today.

The concept of inclusion offers a new perspective for looking at issues such as injustice, violent conflicts, and poverty. If we look at biblical tradition and the life of Jesus Christ, it becomes obvious that it is not enough to understand inclusion as merely an academic or legal exercise. Jesus lived and acted inclusively, building relationships that overcame exclusion in various ways and creating new communities and communions.

The seminar participants and representatives from the hosting churches used this perspective to share sad stories of exclusion and encouraging stories of hope. These stories are documented in this publication, together with the message of the seminar. Some of the stories featured here may encourage readers to share their own stories on the UEM website (www.vemission.org/inclusive_communities) on ‘inclusive communities’, where the documentation of the seminar can also be found.

Inclusive Communities and the Churches

f

Inclusive Communities and the Churches – **Realities, Challenges and Visions**

Documentation of the UEM International Conference
in Stellenbosch, South Africa, November 2014

Edited by Jochen Motte and Theodor Rathgeber



*f*oedus

ISBN 978-3-938180-51-8