



Missionsprovinsen i Sverige och Finland

Halmstad 6 of July, 2011

Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idosa, President

Rev. Dr. Berhanu Ofgaa, General Secretary

Grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank God for the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, for your spreading of the Good News of salvation in Christ Jesus and your holistic ministry, for the sacrifices of the pioneers in the past and the diligent ministers of your Church serving even now in spite of powers and principalities.

Two years ago, the Church of Sweden decided that same-sex marriages could be performed within the Church. The decision was taken without any consultation with sister Churches. As the Church of England has noted, such a unilateral decision is not in accordance to the rules in the Porvoo Agreement on cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches and the Anglican Churches of the British Isles.

Last year, your Church sent a letter to the Church of Sweden (24 of December, 2010). In that letter, you stated that same-sex marriages are not according to Biblical teaching. With its decision, the Church of Sweden has deviated from Biblical faith and ethics as catholically adopted and taught. You asked it to repent and to change its decision. We are very grateful for your letter, which has given support to the opposition to this devastating development in our Church.

Now the Archbishop of Uppsala has answered your letter (7 of June, 2011). To our sorrow, though not to our surprise, he states that the decision will not be changed. Last year the Church Assembly confirmed the decision taken two years ago. The Church of Sweden refuses to repent.

By its decision, the Church of Sweden has taken one more step on a road away from the teaching of the Bible. It finds it more important to adapt to the ideologies of the modern Western society. The Church which is supposed to be salt in the world has instead become a mirror of it. It has been more important to follow the winds of the time than to be faithful to the Lord and the teaching of his apostles.

The Archbishop, however, maintains that the decision is in accordance with Biblical faith and Lutheran identity at this time and in the Swedish context. Of course, a Church has to know and understand the culture in which it lives in order to communicate the Christian message in a relevant way. The Biblical message, however, is above the changing cultures. The teachings on gender, sex and marriage are founded on the basic structure in God's creation. When the modern societies of the Western world declare that there should be no difference between the sexes, they deny these facts, and are in rebellion against the Creator.

Not all in the Church of Sweden are happy with the decision. There are a number of priests/pastors and substantial groups of laypeople who oppose it, and are worried for the future. The decision was taken with a clause that a priest/pastor has a personal right to decline to perform a same-sex wedding. But already a development has begun – there are congregations that do not want to receive priests/pastors who are not ready to perform such marriages, and at least one diocese hesitates to ordain candidates who are unwilling to adapt to this new order of the Church of Sweden.

With this letter, the Mission Province in Sweden and Finland wants to thank you for your letter, and to affirm that there are still Christians in the Church of Sweden, in various congregations around the country, as well as in the Lutheran Church in Finland, who want to uphold Biblical and Orthodox doctrine and worship. They are also found in the Mission Province, which was formed in 2003, with support of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, as a free jurisdiction, with its own bishops, but claiming to be part of the tradition of National Lutheran Churches in Sweden and Finland. Our aim is to preserve Biblical and Apostolic faith and order, which is rapidly abandoned by these Churches. Free worshipping communities are formed, to give spiritual homes to those who are not any longer able to find Orthodox faith and ethics preached in their ordinary congregations.

Before the decisions on same-sex marriage was taken, in the Parliament and in the Church Assembly, the bishops of the Mission Province issued a pastoral letter, which was sent to the members of Parliament, to the delegates to the Church Assembly, and to the parishes of the Church of Sweden. We maintained that the decision proposed was not only against Biblical teaching, but also against the natural order. Thus, your letter has come as an important support for us.

We are grateful to you, and to all Christians in Africa, Asia and Latin America, who stay faithful to the Gospel. When Biblical teaching is eroding in the Churches of the Reformation in the Western world, it is of great comfort to us that we have true Christian friends in other parts of the Church Universal. In these times, when the society in Sweden is more and more secularized, and the Church of Sweden with it, we need your support to be able to stay faithful to the Lord.

We assure you of our prayers for you, and humbly ask for yours.

In the name of the Lord – for the Mission Province in Sweden and Finland

Rt. Rev. Roland Gustafsson
Presiding Bishop of the Mission Province in Sweden and Finland

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