

## **Country Report, May 2022**

### **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark**

Council on International Relations

### **Ukraine**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark has initiated many ways of welcoming Ukrainian refugees into the church as well as facilitating prayer services for peace in Ukraine. Many initiatives have been taken on national as well as the local level, and there is also dialogue with the authorities. The initiatives vary from opening the churches to Ukrainians and facilitating inclusive services to a catalogue on ideas for activities for and with Ukrainian refugees and recommendations on how to engage locally. Furthermore, information for refugees and translations of prayers and liturgies etc. are available as well as information for Danish congregations on the churches in Ukraine.

See more [here](#)

### **Pastoral Care Online**

The digital chat service Sjælesorg på Nettet (in English: Pastoral Care Online) has made digital pastoral care conversations available in English. The initiative is for everyone but a special focus on those affected by the current situation in Ukraine is maintained. English speakers – both residents and people outside the Danish borders – can chat with a pastor on [www.sjaelesorg.nu](http://www.sjaelesorg.nu)

See more on the project [here](#) and [here in English](#)

### **Green strategy for the Church**

A new project supported by many levels in the church is set for a greener church (DA: Folkekirkens Grønne Omstilling). Just like the surrounding society is working at many levels for a greener agenda, so the church will work on this. The project has five focus areas, being Church properties/land, energy usage, waste, procurement & transport, and to inspire the surrounding society. On Monday 16 May 2022 the project ran a one-day inspirational sold-out conference with 700

participants in Fredericia.

The project will run from 2022-2026 with a budget of 18,7 mio. Danish kroner.

See more on the project [here](#).

### **A new study on religiosity and the relations to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark**

This new study investigates the faith of the population and its relation to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark. It shows that the population's relation to Christianity and Church changes through the whole life. Furthermore, there is no indication that religiosity should be declining within the Danish population. The study is based on interviews with both church members and non-members and include findings on the significance of faith and rituals throughout life.

The study is published in May 2022, 508 pages. Read more [here](#) and download [here](#).

### **Initiative to counter future lack of pastors**

In the end of 2020, a new possibility was introduced to prevent a foreseeable lack of pastors in the near future, allowing academics with other degrees than theology to apply for individual extra academic/theological education (2-3 years fulltime study). Upon completing this, candidates can apply for pastoral positions. This new possibility appeared to be very popular as 261 individuals applied. Around 70 persons were admitted to the new academic course, which began in September 2021. It is yet to be seen what percentage will complete the rather demanding self-paid study program.

### **Work on liturgy**

The ELCD bishops initiated a work process on liturgy a couple of years ago, where everybody interested was invited to contribute with suggestions for revisions etc. 350 contributions were received, from individuals, parish councils and organizations. At the bishops' meeting in early January 2022, it was decided to initiate working groups to make recommendations on the mass and the supplement to the Alter book. A liturgical forum is being instituted and the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs is requested to initiate two new commissions to work on baptism and Eucharist. It is envisioned that the process will take 8 years.

### **New authorized Bible translation**

A new authorized Bible translation is being planned for 2036.

## **Challenged work environment**

In December 2021, 178 pastors signed a statement where they wanted to break the silence on strained work environment, marked by stress, bullying and conflict. The bishops have reacted by complimenting the pastors for speaking up and being willing to work on solving the issue, by listening and via open dialogue.

## **Churches in Times of Change**

Churches in Times of Change, which is a common project by the Nordic Lutheran World Federation member churches, has completed the pilot project entitled 'Baptism in Times of Change', by a Nordic conference 19-20 January 2022 where results and conclusions were discussed.

Learnings and recommendations can be found [here](#).

## **New bishops**

Mr Thomas Reinholdt Rasmussen was installed as the new bishop over Aalborg Diocese on 12 December 2021, following bishop Henning Toft Bro who has retired.

At the time of writing, The Diocese of Roskilde is in the process of electing a new bishop, as bishop Peter Fischer-Møller will retire. The election will be concluded on 15 June 2022. This year furthermore marks the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Roskilde Diocese.

## **Proposed bill on translation of sermons in other languages than Danish**

The Danish Social Democratic government planned to introduce a bill early 2021 on sermons in other languages than Danish. The aims are to fight parallel structures and primarily Islamist radicalization but will affect churches carrying their services in other languages than Danish. In practice it will mean, if carried, that congregations, churches and faith communities using other languages will be forced to translate all homilies into Danish. All costs relating to translations, financially or regarding human resources, are to be covered by the faith communities. This proposal has been protested by the ELCD bishops, the National Council of Churches, as well as the Church of England Diocese in Europe, Church of Sweden, CEC/KEK, The Lutheran World Federation and others. The Lutheran World Federation and COMESE (The Catholic Church in the European Union) criticized it as conflicting the rights of religious freedom. For several months the proposed bill has been put on hold, though the Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs, Ms. Ane Halsboe-Jørgensen who came

into office in August 2021, has stated that the proposed bill is still on the table. Yet it is unlikely that the government can find a wording for the bill that does not violate basic rights/human rights and international conventions regarding freedom of religious belief.

See more info on Ms. Ane Halsboe-Jørgensen (in English) [here](#).

### **Membership statistics 2022**

(as per 1. January 2022)

73,2% (ca. 4,3 million) of the Danish population (ca. 5,9 million) are members of the ELCD (compared to 73,8 % in 2021).\*

52,4% of infants (under 1 year old) were baptized in 2021 (compared to 55,6% in 2020).

81% of all funerals in 2021 took place in the ELCD (compared to 82,7% in 2019).

66% of a year group (13-15-year-olds) were confirmed in 2021 (compared to 68,3% in 2019).

28% of all weddings in 2021 took place in the ELCD. In addition, 1.464 civil wedded couples had a church blessing after the ceremony at City Hall

8.961 persons left the church in 2021 (compared to 9.053 persons in 2020).

This is the lowest number of people leaving the church in 15 years (compared to 2007 when 8.810 persons left the church).

12.097 persons older than 1 year joined the church in 2021 (compared to 8.734 in 2020).

This relatively higher number in 2021 could be related to baptisms being postponed in 2020 until 2021 due to the pandemic. In 2021 more children 1-4 years old were baptized than in previous years.

\*Membership percentage is influenced by non-Christian and non-Lutheran immigration as the membership percentage is compared to the total population. Membership percentage is between 87-88% among those coming from families, who in more than two generations have been born and raised in Denmark.

Recent studies (fall 2021) show that Christian immigration has surpassed Islamic immigration, as circa 5,5% of the Danish population is comprised by Christian immigrants and descendants, and circa 4,4% of the population is comprised by Islamic immigrants and descendants. Christian immigration is mostly from Central and Eastern Europe, primarily from

Poland and Romania, hence Catholic and Orthodox. There is now more than 100.000 Orthodox Christians in Denmark (fall 2021).

*/TR 19.05.2022*