



June 2018 - #046

Dear praying friends in Europe –

Jesus told us to love our neighbours, even our enemies.

Brother Andrew has often challenged his audiences by stating that, for him, ISLAM means: **I Sincerely Love All Muslims**. Let's examine our hearts concerning our attitude towards Muslim neighbours, even Muslim 'enemies'. How much are we influenced by fear and the world around us - news headlines & social media - and how much by the love of Jesus? Bert de Ruiter, author of *Engaging with Muslims in Europe*, encourages us to respond to Muslims with a compassionate heart, an informed mind, an involved hand and a witnessing tongue.



Jeff Fountain

Fear or opportunity? The challenge of migration for Europe

Migration, closely tied to fear of Muslims, is right now the hottest item on the European agenda.

The language of crisis is being played to create fear among Europeans (FEAR = False Expectation Appearing Real.) Moderate centrist parties everywhere move towards the political right, hardening their position on migrants. Far-right governments have been elected in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and now in Italy.

But how true, for example, are Trump's latest claims that (Muslim) migration to Europe is 'sparking violent cultural change'? Or that 'The Netherlands will no longer exist in fifty years' time' due to immigrants from Islamic countries', as a Dutch populist politician declared recently?

Researchers dismiss Trump's suggestions as simply 'fake news': crime in Germany is the lowest in decades. The Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute calculate that Muslims will increase from 5 percent in 2006 to 8 percent in 2050, 10 percent in 2060. The percentage of non-western persons of foreign heritage in fifty years' time will be around 20%, while 66% of the population will still be of native parentage.

Official EU statistics record that almost half the migrants entering the EU are active church members (e.g. from Africa); 30% are from Muslim-background countries, of whom only one third are active mosque-goers. That means, for every active mosque-goer, there are five active church members among EU migrants!

Europe's urban churches are being renewed by such migration. In Amsterdam's Bijmer neighbourhood, a district of 50,000 built 50 years ago as a 'future city for the new man',

not one church building was planned. Migrant believers began meeting in all sorts of spaces – including parking garages – so that today up to 11,000 worshippers attend 150 Christian fellowships there!

We face a crisis of values, not of immigration. Compared to post-war years, the number of displaced persons is relatively low - up to two million -- spread across an EU population of about 500 million.

As Christians, we should reject this negative attitude towards migrants and Muslims. We should be the first to turn to the stranger, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless and protect the weak and vulnerable.

It is regrettable that countries close their borders to migrants in order to safeguard their so-called Christian culture: acting unchristianly in the name of being Christian! We should rather reject the growing xenophobia and resurgent nationalism and act to counter the marginalization, discrimination and exclusion of Muslims in finding housing, jobs or internships.

For God is doing something new today. More Muslims have become believers in Isa (Jesus) since 9/11 than in the whole 1300 years before! Let us recognise the historic opportunity we have in Europe to welcome these Muslims in Jesus' name.

Let us pray for

- political, church and civic leaders to insist on the values of equality, dignity and freedom to be reflected in European, national and local policies towards Muslims and migrants.
- us all to seek concrete ways to respond to Muslims with 'a compassionate heart, an informed mind, an involved hand and a witnessing tongue'.

Please also pray for

- The new Austrian presidency (July - Dec. 2018) to put into practice what was agreed upon in Brussels on the 29th June.
- A new stabilisation of the EU following the newly accepted compromise including the Eastern and Southern member states (thank Heaven!)