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Title of abstract: "Partnership of Separateness? Migrant Churches and Mission in the Norwegian (Church) Context"

This paper seeks to examine how migrant churches in Norway look at mission in relation to the larger Norwegian (church) context. From a comparative and analytical perspective, I ask how migrant churches, assumingly representing predominantly non-Western perspectives, understand mission and the church now situated within a predominantly Western societal context. I also ask to what extent mission defines the church, if this is different from how Norwegian churches understand mission, and if mission thus represents separateness or partnership with existing Norwegian church bodies.

The empirical material for this paper stems from interviews with largely pastors and key leaders of migrant churches in Norway, as well as interviews with some key Norwegian church leaders and pastors connected in some respect to the Norwegian migrant churches.¹ Culturally, these pastors are Asian and African of origin. The denominational contextual parameters are formally or informally associated with Pentecostals, Baptists or independent church bodies, though what seems to be a rather fluid approach to Norwegian churches, it is difficult to establish clear denominational adherences.

In addition to representing ethnic and cultural differences from the general ethnic Norwegian population, Christian migrant minority groups often also mean ecclesiological minority status as well. For various reasons, the 'status' of migrant churches in Norway seems to a various extent not yet to be fully defined. Financial issues, lack of own church buildings, and cultural frameworks often seem to contribute to African and Asian migrant Christians feeling disadvantaged with respect to their Norwegian church bodies. At the same time, migrant churches have expressed theologies of mission and through migration represent a growing ecclesial presence.

With respect to the Norwegian church and mission, we often hear migrant church leaders express thankfulness and attribute part of their existence to the reciprocal return of prior Norwegian mission to African or Asian contexts. Likewise, migrant church leaders often indicate that they are on a similar mission to Norway, as well as expressing a desire to partner with Norwegian churches in this. Yet, for many, language, culture and finances barriers on "both sides" seem to hinder to extensive partnership. This paper then looks at various initiatives taken both by migrant churches and

¹ At the time of writing, the presented 'results' here are based on preliminary research and premature analyses of research in progress.

Norwegian church bodies related to integration and common “mission”. In this, I asks more reflectively to what extent the migrant church challenges the Norwegian church about mission and how they feel received.

For the relevance of these questions, I believe that it is needful to know more about how the migrant churches experience their own existence in relation to such a central issue as mission. I also believe that it is needful for the Norwegian church to learn from the global (migrant) church with respect to mission, and ask if these perhaps can work together to create new structures or revise old ones, share ideas and flow.