

Strategy 2022–2032

# You shall be my witnesses





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# Introduction

During the General Assembly of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) in 2018, the work on a new strategy for the organization was launched. The anchoring is important; a great number of people have therefore been involved in developing the new out of the new strategy. An extensive group work was orchestrated during the General Assembly, and further on, a process with contributions from all the Mission's fields, as well as all the regions in Norway was undertaken. The strategy committee also arranged meetings with several of NLM's institutions to get their input.

The present document is the strategy of NLM for the period of 2022–2032. The strategy sets the course for the entire work of the organization, as well as for the Norwegian Lutheran Mission Young. Unless otherwise specified, all points apply both in Norway and internationally. The strategy document replaces the strategies of NLM International, NLM in Norway and NLM Young that were adopted for the period lasting until 2020. The strategy is therefore an overarching strategy for both NLM and NLM Young. The different regions, departments and institutions in Norway, as well as the various international mission fields, will all develop their own action plans based on the new strategy. Local groups and congregations are also encouraged to make their own plans of action. A global strategy shall result in concrete work. We wish that everyone, volunteers and the employees alike, will understand our goals and identify with them.

It has been almost 2000 years since Jesus commanded his followers to preach the Gospel in the whole world, to every people and nation. This task will last as long as the world exists. NLM was founded as a response to the Great Commission of Jesus. The task of global Mission is therefore at the very core of NLM's existence, and NLM's strategy is therefore a Mission strategy.

The document first provides a brief assessment of the parts of the societal development that we assume will have substantial impact on NLM's work. Then follows an overall description of the goals and of how they are intended to be realized.

## 2.

# The Biblical foundation

The seven points of the strategy build upon the words of Jesus that we shall be his witnesses till the ends of the world (Acts 1:8).

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to witness to the least reached (Luke 24:47; Marc 16:15; Rom 15:20). The results of Christian Mission are painted for us in the book of Revelation, where we can read about the great multitude wearing white robes, too numerous to be counted, from every nation, tribe and people (Rev 7:9). Jesus introduced himself as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), and the disciples proclaimed that there is no other name by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

God's people are called to pass on the Gospel to the next generation (Deut 4:9–10 og 6:6–9; 2 Tim 1:5). In the New Testament we can hear how Jesus receives the children and opens the Kingdom of God for them (Marc 10:13–16; Acts 16:15).

God equips his Church through spiritual gifts (Eph 4:11–13). These gifts are to be used to serve one another, for the glory of God (Col 3:16–17).

In the Bible we find numerous encouragements to

love your neighbour by for instance showing care for vulnerable groups (Exod 22:22–23; Deut 14:28–29; Acts 6; Gal 2:10). God's love is communicated through both preaching and good works (Matt 25:34–36; 1 John 4:12).

Jesus called his disciples to follow him (Marc 1:16–20), make disciples and teach them all that he commanded them (Matt 28:18–20; 2 Tim 2:2).

In the book of Acts, there are numerous examples of innovative communication where the Gospel was preached in new places and in new cultural and religious environments (Acts 4:20; 8:4–25; 10:28–35; 17:16–34). The Gospel is the same, but the ways it is communicated may vary according to the context (Acts 21:18–25; 1 Cor 9:20–23). First and foremost, our task is after all to preach and convey the word that creates new life.

We, human beings, are created by God and have been given the responsibility to steward the whole of creation (Gen 1:28). Man is created in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and have, from conception till death, the same right to protection and care, regardless of age and capacity (Psalm 8; 139:13–16).

## 3.

# The social development

NLM has various activities in many countries on several continents and must therefore relate to many different cultural and social development features. While staying true to an unchanged Mission, we must be aware of both global trends and local conditions. The local conditions, culture and traditions affect the work the most.

### Religious conditions

About 30 percent of the world's population is regarded as unreached by the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> More than half of the non-Christians in the world belongs to the least reached people groups.<sup>2</sup>

In recent decades, the Church has had considerable growth in South America, Africa, and Asia.<sup>3</sup> In Europe and in North America, the position of Christianity in society is weakened. The centre of gravity of the Christian faith has shifted, and an increasing share of the Mission responsibility is borne by the churches outside Europe and North America.<sup>4</sup>

Almost half of the world's population is under 30

years of age.<sup>5</sup> Young people are more curious about the Gospel, and research shows that the vast majority of those who accept Jesus make the choice before the age of 18.<sup>6</sup> Many young people grow up with little exposure to the Christian faith, and a good portion of those who grow up in Christian families lose their faith during their 20s.<sup>7</sup>

In the next few years, Norway will be characterized by increased diversity of world views and individualized faith.<sup>8</sup> This can create greater openness for religious messages and thus provide more opportunities to share the faith with others. At the same time, changes in schools and in society at large mean that knowledge about the Christian faith is declining, and the influence of Christianity in Norway will weaken. In the low-church organizational landscape, a continued shift towards formation of congregations is expected.

Freedom of religion is under pressure; half of the earth's population live in countries where the gospel cannot be preached freely, and where religious

practice is hindered.<sup>9</sup> Individualized religiosity can lead to increased resistance to influencing others' beliefs and convictions. Theological and ethical debates among Christians are likely to continue, and the value of human life, as well as of the traditional marriage, will always be under pressure.

### **Social conditions**

Certain factors are expected to particularly affect our work: globalization, digitalization, urbanization, greater inequality, and loneliness.

In a globalized world, people will, among other things, move and migrate over long distances. Some of the world's 270 million migrants come to Norway or other areas where NLM works.<sup>10</sup> The globalization also makes it easier to keep in touch over long distances. Society becomes increasingly digitalized, and new opportunities for fellowship are emerging. In addition, we are influenced by thoughts, ideas, and theological currents from other parts of the world.

Historically, both in Norway and internationally, NLM has worked in rural areas much more than in cities. The demographic growth will be particularly strong in the cities and urban zones and now, for the first time in history, more than 50 percent of the global population live in cities and towns.<sup>11</sup> In Norway, more than 80 percent of the population now live in towns and urban areas.<sup>12</sup>

Globally, urbanization is associated with relocation to slums and to poverty challenges. About eight percent of the world's population today live in absolute poverty, and many have an everyday life affected by pollution and climate change.<sup>13</sup> There is less economic and social inequality in Norway than in most other countries. In step with the economic growth in society, the social consequences of poverty become greater, especially for children and young people.

Loneliness and exclusion are growing problems among young people in the Western world.<sup>14</sup> In Norway, there has been a significant increase in those who live alone, which has contributed to increased loneliness also in other age groups. We see the same development in other parts of the world.

### **Economy and political regulations**

Christian values are continuously challenged by changes in laws and regulations in Norway. Even though NLM's finances are largely based on public support for kindergartens, schools, development aid, children and youth work and religious activities is important to keep the work going. National and international laws protect freedom of religion and faith. However, this is a fragile area, might will easily come under pressure both in Norway and elsewhere in the world. Political changes could cause unrest in some parts of the world and endanger life and health. At the same time, political changes can open up new possibilities for missionary work.

### **Technology**

The technological development will continue. This will open up new opportunities and methods for interaction and communication. At the same time, this development means that information security is threatened and new ethical issues constantly arise, especially related to biotechnology.

### **Climate and environment**

Climate and environmental issues will be central to the debate on society and its values. Commitment to the environment is likely to remain high. Theologically, environmental issues are linked to responsible stewardship of creation and the concept of humanity. NLM places itself in a tradition marked by moderation and solidarity, both locally and globally, and these will always be important values for us.

## **4.**

# **The heritage**

The liberating understanding of the gospel, combined with the spiritual needs of those who have not yet heard, were the reasons for the establishing of the NLM in 1891. Boldness and radicalism were prominent characteristics at the start. This also affected many of the choices made over the years. NLM has been able to look for and utilize new methods to reach all peoples with the gospel. In a new age, the gospel must also be communicated in new ways and through different means.

NLM has always emphasised the liberating preaching of the gospel, the decisive importance of prayer and the free flow of the spiritual gifts. Further, we place great importance on the fundamental trust in the Bible as the word of God, as well as a strong commitment to the Bible as the authority for doctrine and ethics.

NLM has developed a close relationship with many partner churches around the world. This

collaboration has been strategically important in reaching out to new people groups with the gospel, especially to the unreached.

NLM has a holistic view of Mission, where preaching the Gospel goes hand in hand with diaconal work. Revival, training and the sending out of workers is typical for the organization. The work in Norway has not only been done for the purpose of fundraising, but has had great intrinsic value, where preaching to young and old alike has been a cornerstone. In NLM, Mission is understood as

the responsibility of all Christians. The organization has also emphasised the right of the lay people to preach and share the gospel.

From the very beginning, the goal of NLM's work has been to form local groups of believers, congregations and churches, or to support such developments. We wish to stand with our brothers and sisters in Christ, in both established and new partner churches, and to work together, inspire each other and together bring the gospel further.

## 5.

# Purpose

NLM's purpose is to spread the Kingdom of God. This is why we want to proclaim the Gospel and promote Mission responsibility nationally and internationally. We want to train, send, and support missionaries, and train and support national collaborators in the mission fields, especially in China, but also in other countries (cf. The Basic Rules §1).

NLM Young comprises the work for children and youth and the organization's goal is to spread the Kingdom of God amongst children and young people, on nationally and internationally, to make them know the triune God, and to know Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. (cf. Statutes 1.1)

## 6.

# Goals

NLM's work is based on the Great Commission and our vision «The world for Christ». Our main goal is to reach new people with the gospel - nationally and globally. In line with the Great Commission and expected societal developments, we strive to achieve this goal through the following focus areas:



## The gospel to the least reached

We want to proclaim the gospel in Norway as well as internationally, so the whole world will have the possibility to hear the word of God and receive Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

### How:

- call, equip, and send people to areas where there are few Christians, to be witnesses and plant Christian fellowships, especially in urban areas
- prioritize a bigger share of our missionaries to the least reached people groups in the world
- work alongside partners to reach new people groups
- translate the Bible into new languages
- prayerfully ask the Lord to send workers into His harvest



## The gospel to the next generation

We want all children and youth to have the possibility to hear about Jesus and receive him.

### How:

- work with child and youth work shall be given priority when recruiting new employees, and should be protected if downsizing becomes necessary
- strengthen the work amongst children and youth and facilitate volunteer involvement
- strengthen the work amongst young adults
- equip the parents for education in the Christian faith at home
- build relationships with, and share the gospel with children and youth in our neighbourhoods
- help to preserve faith through childhood and adolescence and during important transition phases in life



## Serve one another

We want to build strong, inclusive, and warm communities.

### How:

- prayer, the Word, and the sacraments shall be paramount in our communities
- all congregations shall have an offer of small and large relevant meeting points for all generations
- show care and help each other to live and grow in the Christian faith by serving each other with our gifts of grace
- help build relationships between people of different generations, different cultural backgrounds and life situations
- strengthen relations between our envoys and our groups and congregations in Norway
- there will always be room for others in our communities

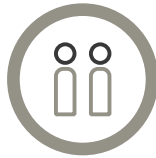


## Love your neighbour

We want to show diaconal care and hospitality.

### How:

- getting to know the people around us, praying and caring for them
- congregations should have multicultural activities
- have a plan to show care for people in our local area
- help people out of loneliness, poverty, oppression, and injustice



## Make disciples

We want to equip people to follow Jesus and teach them to keep everything he has commanded.

### How:

- provide practical biblical teaching relevant for daily life, and theological training for all generations and target groups
- equip each other to share the gospel in our relationships
- develop plans and resources for faith education and leadership training in our fellowships and homes
- facilitate a healthy use of apologetics, to face challenging questions on Christian faith and thinking
- collaborate with our educational institutions, to equip and train people for ministry within NLM.



## Innovative communication

We will continuously search for new ways and tools in the preaching of the gospel.

### How:

- preach the gospel in ways that are relevant to the listeners by using available knowledge on target groups, social trends and world views
- equip people to participate in various arenas to ensure that there is a Christian voice in the diversity
- use existing and new technologies to reach out to new regions and people groups
- share and adapt resources for mutual enrichment, including across national borders



## Responsible stewardship

We will practise whole-person care and care for creation.

### How:

- protect human dignity and respect for human life from conception to a natural death and adapt our activities for people with different needs
- promote moderation and frugality as good values and care for creation for the benefit of our neighbour and for future generations
- create engagement for – and an commitment to – the ministry of giving and strive for an increase in donations
- ensure that employees and volunteers may perform their ministry in a sustainable manner
- take climate and environment into account in the operation of institutions, congregations, and arrangements
- ensure the recruitment of volunteers and employees in the whole organization
- maintain and further develop the good relations with partner churches in old and new mission fields



## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> In this strategy, we mostly use the term «unreached», but this should be understood as synonymous with the wording «the less reached». Internationally, some prefer to talk about ethnic groups that are «among the least reached» rather than «unreached», because there are very few ethnic groups, strictly speaking, who are not touched by the gospel at all. It is possible to define somewhat differently which ethnic groups belong to the «least reached» or «unreached». We emphasize that we are talking about ethnic groups with very few Christians (often numbered at less than two percent) and without a church that can spread the gospel without external help. <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2020/02/Status-of-Global-Christianity-2020.pdf>  
See also: <https://joshuaproject.net/>. There, the number of people that belong to the unreached peoples is 41.8% (of the world's population).

<sup>2</sup> [clarifying-the-remaining-task.pdf](#) (joshuaproject.net)

<sup>3</sup> [Christianity in its Global Context, 1970-2020](#) (gordonconwell.edu)

<sup>4</sup> [mission-trends-facts.pdf](#) (joshuaproject.net)

<sup>5</sup> World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.barna.com/research/evangelism-is-most-effective-among-kids/>  
<http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/ages.htm>

<sup>7</sup> [Här för att stanna-rapporten – Bibeln idag](#) shows that more than 50% of Swedish children leave the faith before the age of 30. There is reason to believe that the situation in Norway is quite similar.

<sup>8</sup> Repstad (2020): Religious trends in Norway: [Blinker ut ni religiøse trender i Norge anno 2020 – Vårt Land - Norges største kristne dagsavis](#) (vl.no)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.opendoors.no/wwl-2020/forfoelgelse-foer-og-naa>  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/09/30/key-findings-about-restrictions-on-religion-around-the-world-in-2019/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/migration/index.html>  
<https://www.flyktninghjelpen.no/global/statistikk/statistikk/#static-main-table, 79,5 millioner flyktninger og internt fordrevne>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/no/miljosignaler/miljosignaler-2011/artikler/en-urban-verden>

<sup>12</sup> <https://statbank.ssb.no/befolkning/statistikker/befteft>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.fn.no/tema/fattigdom/fattigdom> Accessed 30.11.2020

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ssb.no/sosiale-forhold-og-kriminalitet/artikler-og-publikasjoner/blir-vi-stadig-mer-en-somme>