



# STRATEGY OF THE FINNISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN MISSION (FELM)



# Felm's Mission

In the Great Commission, Jesus calls the Church and all Christians to missionary work:

*'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'*

Matthew 28: 18-20 (NIV)

**T**his commandment, together with the example Jesus set through his deeds and words, lays the foundation for holistic missionary work. It comprises proclaiming the Gospel through words and deeds and acting for justice. Holistic missionary work acknowledges the various physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs that people have as well as humanity's connection with the rest of creation. Proclaiming the Gospel, diaconia and advocacy for a better world both near and far away are a part of holistic missionary work. The Gospel invites people into communion with God through faith and love as well as into participating in the Word and the sacraments.

The gospel and the faith born from hearing it transform individuals and communities. The promise of liberation, salvation and eternal life ignites hope and a desire to act in a way that enables God's goodness to become a reality in the world. God's kingdom has an impact here and now, and it will one day come in all its fullness.

From the beginning, the Church has had a spiritual but also socioethical mission to work alongside the weak, the suffering, the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden. In its missionary work, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (Felm) emphasises the importance of human dignity, human rights and protecting creation. Felm's work is founded on a human rights-based approach. The goal is for people to be aware of their rights and be able to advocate for them. It is equally important that decision-makers are aware of their human rights obligations and are capable of implementing them. An approach based on human rights also has its basis in the Bible. Each person has been created in God's image, and we are equals. Missionary work includes respectful dialogue with different religious traditions.

We carry out this missionary work together with our partners and congregations.



# Vision, mission and values

## Vision

**Faith, hope and love are strengthened around the world.**

## Mission

**We testify to the love of God through words and actions.**

## Values

### Loving one's neighbour

We are committed to following Jesus' teachings and example of loving our neighbours. The Christian principle of loving one's neighbour is radical: it extends to every human and all of creation, while inviting us to love even when it is difficult. We grow stronger in this task by supporting each other.

### Justice

We support the realisation of human rights and a life of dignity for all people everywhere. We will draw attention to and address the root causes of poverty and inequality.

### Responsibility

We are responsible for the quality of our work, our methods and the effects on the people we serve. In everything we do, we take into account the impacts that our actions have on those who support our work, our partners, our personnel and the environment. We are a reliable long-term partner. Our operations are transparent and responsible.

### Working together

We work together and listen to each other. Our operating method is dialogical. We engage in dialogue and work together with partners, congregations, volunteers and other stakeholders, both in Finland and internationally. Collaboration is the source of our creativity.

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Through Felm's values, we are also linked to the principles of international humanitarian aid, and we follow a human rights-based approach. We emphasise our responsibility and accountability to the people affected by our work. Our work is based on the needs and agency of the people and the communities we are involved with.



# What kind of actor are we?

*Mariam planted a tree sapling in the courtyard of the primary school in Lukonde, Tanzania. Planting trees is part of Felm's climate work.*

## Felm's identity

**T**he Great Commission, which is the basis of our work, means living as a witness of the resurrected Christ. We do not see the global situation as inevitable and without alternatives. We live by faith, which is 'confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see'. Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

We work in communion with God by serving humanity and creation. Together with congregations and partners, we live in true hope for a better and more just world in which God's love is realised.

Felm is a church missions organisation and one of the largest development cooperation actors in Finland. We serve our members and carry out the international work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland with local churches and other partners around the world. Together with the congregations, we carry out missionary work and challenge them to carry out their own missionary work in accordance with the church's strategy. We invite congregations and parishioners to establish connections and become more involved in Christ's global Church.

In particular, we cooperate with other actors engaged in holistic missionary work. This strengthens the effectiveness of our work and gives us the opportunity to learn from one another as we support our partners. We are continuing ecumenical collaboration with the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. We also take an active role in carrying out our responsibilities as a member of the ACT Alliance, a joint umbrella organisation for church relief actors. We seek opportunities to collaborate with NGOs and other actors to implement and develop our work. We also engage in broad-based cooperation in Finland.



# What kind of world are we living in?



*A women's rights training group met at the church office in La Paz, Bolivia.*

## Felm's operating environment

**W**e are making Christian hope a reality in our lives, even as the current situation is rife with major global uncertainties. Many structures and practices are changing both internationally and in Finland. Developmental challenges, economic uncertainty and civil unrest caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as increased wars and civil unrest, have left their mark on societies both in the North and the South. Emergencies and a prolonged need for assistance have become more prevalent. Europe has turned inwards and focused on its own security.

Tensions are growing in international politics. Democracy has declined, autocracy has gained ground and the human rights situation has deteriorated globally. The international treaty system faces unprecedented challenges.

The **climate crisis** and biodiversity loss serve as drivers for many megatrends in the world. Changes in local climate conditions and long-term conflicts increase poverty, inequality and the number of refugees. **Crises are multi-layered** and simultaneous. Increasingly, these crises must be addressed at the same time. We have the ability to do so, as long as we also have the will.

**The importance of religion is becoming more pronounced globally.** Many societies place great trust in church and religious leaders to give them a sense of hope and to act as peacemakers. The impact of religions extends from the highest level of society to village communities. Religions maintain service and advocacy networks that serve as pillars of society. However, there are also examples of religious communities maintaining unequal and harmful structures, spreading misinformation and inciting conflicts.

**The global Christian Church** is growing, particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In Europe and the United States, on the other hand, more and more people are alienated from the Church and organised religion, even though the desire for spirituality remains.



**In Finland**, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is going through a significant change. The decline in membership is continuing, and the church, its congregations and its members are polarised theologically, ideologically, economically and regionally. Our church also needs prospects of hope from the global Church in order to fulfil its mission in Finland and around the world.

**Finns still have a strong desire to help and participate**, and the channels for participation are diversifying. People are interested in seeing the effects of their own contributions and in having a direct connection to the work being carried out. The competition for supporters and volunteers remains fierce.

**In developing countries, children and young people make up a large demographic.** The educational opportunities and labour markets in these countries are insufficient for these larger generations of young people. Young people seek the feeling of belonging, purpose and identity, and they may be prone to radicalisation. The most vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, are often excluded from economic development and their rights are not realised.

**Women and young people have become advocates of change both at the grass-roots level and internationally through networking.**

At the same time, the so-called anti-gender movement has gained traction. The anti-gender movement aims to further reduce the opportunities of both women and gender and sexual minorities to operate in both churches and society. These issues are also sparking debates in the Church and affecting relationships between churches.

**The role of local actors** and the new division of power are emphasised. The debate on the uneven division of power in the international aid system has become a mainstream topic. The conversation about anti-racism and decolonisation calls for development cooperation, peace and humanitarian aid, and church work to be detached from their colonial heritage and for power to be transferred from the North to the South. Local actors require a change in the structures of international cooperation, in which power and resources currently remain largely under the control of actors in the global North. Felm wants to be an active participant and frontrunner in this transformation.

Digitalisation has also taken a big leap globally. This presents new opportunities for interaction and learning, also with the people involved in our work. On the other hand, developments have created bubbles and increased inequalities, and the poorest still have no access to the opportunities offered by the digital world. The transformative effect of **AI** will be significant in the near future. In addition to affecting the production and processing of information, it could produce solutions for multi-crisis contexts. Its uncontrolled development and utilisation are also tied to threats related to ethics and fundamental human rights, for example.

The global international community is committed to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**, known as Agenda2030. These goals provide an opportunity for broader networks to work together to achieve common objectives.

While there is no return to the old normal, we can build a good future. The best way we can build the future is by collaborating with churches globally and with other parties pursuing common goals, as well as with the help of Finnish congregations and supporters.



*Cambodian Dara Yin and his wife Sreylay Sath have received food security support from the church. Daughter Rebecca is in her father's arms.*



# How do we pursue change?

*In Amero Atta, Ethiopia people have to climb up small ladders to get to the church.*

## Operational principles

**H**olistic missionary work strives toward transformation or **a holistic change**. It means liberation of people from the destructive forces that bind them, whether spiritual, material or social. Repentance and reconciliation with God, brought about by Christ, create a desire for mutual solidarity, renewal of communities, building mutual peace and protecting the environment as part of creation.

The example and teaching of Jesus once revolutionised the perception of power: the small ones are the greatest and the last ones the first. Churches' understanding of missions and diaconia emphasises the agency of marginalised and excluded people as part of the transformation.

Felm's partners are always rooted in local communities, which are the source of change. Felm's partners in Finland and around the world are very diverse, but they are committed to working together and to defining the goals of the partnership together. Felm's many partnerships are characterised by their long-term nature and their tested trust and deep knowledge of the local situation.

The majority of Felm's international partners are churches and Christian organisations. Many NGOs and international networks are also partners. In Finland, our most important partners are congregations.

Felm aims for an equal and reciprocal partnership in which the connection between the partners is also important. The concept of partnership takes into account the partners' strengths, needs, operating environments and situations.



Partnerships change over time. We commit to joint learning in order to develop partnerships and to identify and evaluate power structures. We do not avoid difficult conversations. Together, we develop operating methods that enable our partners to increasingly participate in Felm's decision-making and in setting work objectives.

We also follow the principles of collaboration, inclusion and work partnerships with our Finnish partners. We work together with the Finnish state to support the achievement of our goals in peace work and development cooperation.

**Our principles** in all our activities are inclusivity, a human rights-based approach and local leadership. **Inclusivity** means taking into account the needs of all people and ensuring their inclusion in vulnerable operating environments. Vulnerable groups of people are particularly prone to discrimination. The aim of inclusivity is to promote equality and combat discrimination so that everyone can participate in the development of their communities as full members and benefit from the results of development work. Inclusivity manifests as promoting equality, accessibility, non-discrimination and appreciation of diversity.

**Human rights** and their related obligations guide our activities. Respect for human rights as well as the protection and promotion of human rights are the basis of our work. In particular, we work together with vulnerable people to promote the realisation of their rights.

**Local leadership** is at the core of our thinking. We base the planning, implementation and evaluation of our work on the needs, objectives and priorities of the people involved and the communities, NGOs, churches and governments in participating countries. The work and its development are managed on the terms of the partners in the participating countries. This is how we achieve sustainable and effective results.

Felm carries out its international work by supporting the work of churches, carrying out development cooperation, providing humanitarian assistance, working for peace and carrying out advocacy. In all our activities, we follow the ACT Alliance's common Code of Conduct, the basic principle of which is that people are able to receive support and participate in our work regardless of their background\*. With the Code of Conduct, we commit to the principles of protecting all people involved in our work, good personnel practices, transparent and responsible finances and administration, and preventing any abuse in our operations.

\*ACT Alliance Code of Conduct 2024



*Ethiopia has a different demographic structure from Finland. There are more young people than older people.*



# What are we aiming for?

*Arley Perea, a Colombian who was injured in a mine accident but survived.*

## Objective and priorities of operations

**C**hurches and fragile and vulnerable people are at the core of Felm's activities. Through our work, we want to strengthen churches and create sustainable and prosperous communities.

Churches testify about Jesus and strive to change structures that maintain inequality and poverty in accordance with the churches' diaconal calling. Deepening theological education and developing church leadership skills are a precondition for the Church's missionary work. They create comprehensive change and a congregation life that is open to all. This enables churches to better fulfil their basic tasks, meet people's needs and reach new people.

Churches and other civil society actors are important drivers of the transition towards a just, equal and sustainable future. They are peacemakers that strengthen communities' resilience to and ability to recover from climate change and other crises.

Churches can serve as important examples by supporting human rights and strengthening the principles of non-discrimination in all activities.

We want to reinforce this change by focusing our work on the following priorities:

- Development of outreach work and evangelism
- Expanding theological education, diaconia and leadership in churches
- Strengthening the role of local actors, especially churches and religious communities, as peacemakers and actors for reconciliation
- Climate justice and sustainable solutions to climate crisis
- Taking the special needs of children and young people into account in education
- Strengthening advocacy based on local expertise

These priorities apply to Felm's international work, advocacy, fundraising and communications.

Felm is an official missionary organisation owned by congregations.



As per the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church's strategy, we help congregations to strengthen their missionary work and identity as part of the global Church of Christ, and we invite and inspire parishioners to find their own role in the missionary work of the Church.

Our educational work in partnership with the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church supports congregations in teaching about missionary work, particularly among confirmation school-aged children and young adults. Felm's volunteer activities related to global education work and fund-raising will be developed and implemented in cooperation with congregations. In Finland, we collaborate with Christian organisations. Congregations and private individuals are invited to support Felm's work around the world with donations and intercessions.

In Finland, we focus on the following priorities:

- Deepening the trust and communication between congregations and Felm
- Church employees and volunteers acting as advocates and carrying out missionary work
- People's active support of our work and participation in activities and joint advocacy work through interesting channels and methods
- Inspiring young people and young adults to become interested in issues related to the global Church and missionary work

In all of our work, we seek resource-efficient and meaningful solutions, promote peer learning and utilise the opportunities offered by digitalisation.



***On Saturday evening, the youth at Riihikirkko Camp make a cross out of candles.***



# How do we achieve results?

*Children from Lotpakha village in the Jajarkot district of Nepal, where Felm has development cooperation work.*

## Organisational goals

**W**e work in a rapidly changing world that is beset by many crises. Our goal is impactful, responsible and sustainable work. To achieve results, we have set ourselves the following goals:

- The resources of Felm and its partners will be strengthened to deepen and expand the impact of the work
- Connections and joint activities with current and new partners will be deepened as part of ecumenical networks, and they will be supported by active communication and advocacy work
- Congregations, parishioners and supporters of our work will be regularly consulted and the activities will be developed together with them
- We value our personnel's professional development, ability to meet strategic needs and well-being. Our personnel will commit themselves to contributing to the implementation of Felm's strategy as part of a strong work community
- Management and organisational culture will support working together, interaction, and ability to adapt to change
- The organisation's operating methods and digital services will meet the changing needs of the strategy and operating environment

## Strategic development projects

Strategic development projects are medium-term development projects for all Felm's activities. They help us achieve the goals outlined in the strategy more quickly.

- New types of partnership and network models that deepen interaction and joint learning (Felm Fellowship and strategic cooperation with peers)
- Diversifying and increasing the revenue sources of Felm and its partners in a controlled manner to ensure economic sustainability and to expand the scope of the work
- Strengthening knowledge-based management and using artificial intelligence to strengthen decision-making and improve operational efficiency

# Strategy of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (Felm)

## VISION

Faith, hope and love are strengthened around the world

## MISSION

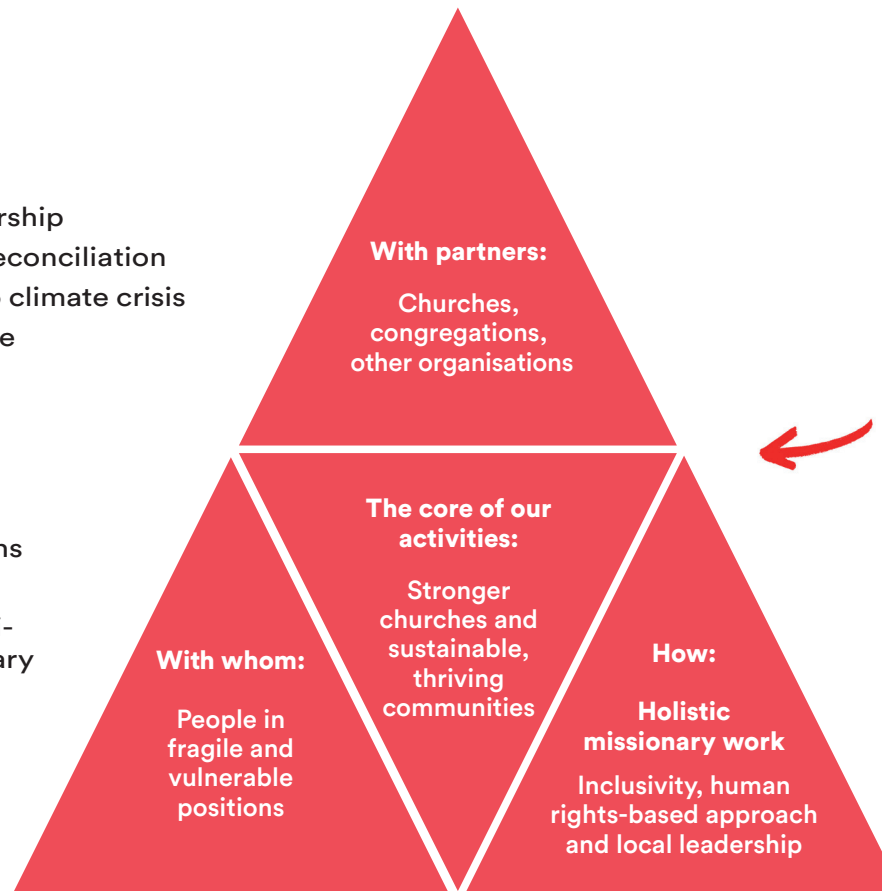
We testify to the love of God through words and actions

### Priorities of international work:

- Outreach work and evangelism
- Theological education, diaconia and leadership
- Local actors working towards peace and reconciliation
- Climate justice and sustainable solutions to climate crisis
- Special needs of children and young people in education
- Local involvement in advocacy work

### Priorities of work in Finland:

- Deepening the trust between congregations and Felm
- Church employees' and volunteers' enthusiasm to act and speak on behalf of missionary work
- People's desire to support and participate in activities and joint advocacy work
- Inspiring youth and young adults to be enthusiastic about global Church issues and missionary work



Crises with many layers  
Changing climate conditions

Increased importance of religion  
The changes in the Church globally  
and in Finland

New division of power in international  
aid work  
Local involvement

Children and young people a large  
demographic in developing countries  
Young people and women as advocates

Multiple channels for donations and  
volunteer work

Digitalisation and artificial intelligence

## VALUES

Loving one's neighbour, justice, responsibility, working together





# The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission's (Felm's) understanding of missionary work

This summary is based on the existing theological document 'Towards Life and Justice. Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission's Theological Foundation and Principles of Cooperation'.

## The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit work in the world

- 1.** God is good and loves people. He has created all visible and invisible things, and He cannot be fully understood by the human mind or through human language. He is present in the world that He created and, at the same time, completely different from it. God does not abandon His creations: *'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'* (Jeremiah 29:11)
- 2.** God's goodness and love towards the world are embodied in Jesus. *'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'* (John 3:16).  
  
Jesus was a human and the Son of God, who lived, died and was resurrected. Christians and the Church ground their lives on this. Because of Jesus there is peace and reconciliation between humanity and God. Our Lord has overcome death and defeated the power of evil. He gives us eternal life. *'And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.'* (1 Corinthians 15:14)

The life, teachings and deeds of Jesus are an example of what it means to live life as a Christian. In addition to believing in the resurrection, it means promoting justice through action. *'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor'* (Luke 4:18-19)

- 3.** The Holy Spirit was already present in the creation of the world. Alongside the Father, She maintains all creation and the life in it. She gives the followers of Christ continually renewing life as children of God. The Holy Spirit inspires repentance, change and transformation. She is the Spirit of renewal, peace and reconciliation, and Defender and Comforter. *'For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.'* (Romans 8:14)

## Missionary work

- 4.** The Church's missionary work is grounded on the work of the Holy Trinity in this world. The global Church and local congregations participate in God's work. The congregation is a community where a Christian can grow in his/her faith and as a follower of Jesus. The mission of Christians is to bear witness to Jesus. They are supported and guided in this by the Holy Spirit. God gives the gift of faith and strengthens it through the Word of God as well as baptism and communion. We accompany partner churches in their missionary work. Yet, God also acts outside the Church. Church operations must also be critically evaluated, because, in addition to human action, the effects of sin extend to structures, practices and attitudes.
- 5.** Following Christ is the mission, gift and joy of Christian life. We invite people to accept reconciliation with God and to follow Christ. God's love draws people in, and the words and deeds of Christians must reflect God's love. This is how the Gospel becomes a reality and encourages people to follow Christ. It is our joy to keep promoting the Good News. We respect people's right to accept or reject the call. *'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'* (Mark 1:15)



6. From the beginning, the Church has had a socioethical mission to work alongside the weak, the suffering, the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden. Christians also have a duty to remind both those in power and each other of the fact that they will answer to God for their choices and their use of power. Here, we follow the example set by Jesus. *I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. (Matthew 25: 36)*

## Justice

7. A human being is the object of God's love, His image and His partner. Each human being has inalienable dignity on which human rights are based. Human dignity is born from the fact that God has created each human being, and Jesus has died for all of us. Human dignity is inviolable and equal for all. Holistic missionary work is based on God's good creation. The physical, psychological, emotional, social, sexual, spiritual and biological dimensions are inextricably intertwined in human beings.
8. God's will toward the world is good, but humans have a tendency to use the power that they have been granted in ways that are unfair. Many factors such as wealth, geography, disparity in education and knowledge, social status, gender, ethnicity, disability and age create centres of power and marginalise people. The Church must recognise the theology of the marginalised, as it stems from poverty, suffering and violence. Western churches, which are allured by power, must recognise and dismantle the burden of colonialism and power relations that is also connected to missionary partnerships. *'Rather, he made himself nothing, by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!' (Philippians 2:7-8)*

9. Salvation has been promised to all creation, not just humankind. *'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.'* (Mark 16:15). In its own way, creation proclaims the message of salvation. The Lord said, *'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.'* Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. (1 Kings 19:11-13)

10. Our world is facing an environmental crisis. It is a crisis that affects world views, ways of life and human perception, but it is also a spiritual crisis. We must understand that creation and humankind interact with and are dependent on each other. Humanity cannot survive without creation. Creation is valuable regardless of what it can produce for humanity. Instead of controlling, damaging and overusing natural resources, humans should look after creation, promote its well-being and praise God together with it. Human beings are one creation among many. They must use nature with care and moderation.

11. Dialogue with other religious traditions is a part of missionary work. This is important in multi-faith environments. We hold fast to the uniqueness of Christ while simultaneously seeing the work of the Triune God in other faiths. We are open and receptive to the goodness and wisdom that can be found in other religions, faiths and cultures. *'For he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.'* (Acts 17:27-28)





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