

CHURCH IN MIGRATION THROUGH THE MIDDLE EAST

A Vision for Reflection and Action for the Churches

Pilot Workshop organized by
The Middle East Council of Churches
in collaboration with

The Gulf Churches Fellowship, the Anglican Alliance,
Kerk in Actie, Al Amana Center and Al Sabeel Center

Christ Church, Jebel Ali, Dubai (UAE), 24-25 January 2024

The Project Concept

The Middle East is considered the cradle of Christianity, where the first Christian communities were formed. While many eastern Christians emigrate, putting in question the future of Christianity in the region, there is another trend visible. A large number of migrants, among them many Christians, are moving within or to the region. Their journey is often not an easy one. Churches are active in welcoming them, but at the same time challenged by the context.

What does this context mean for the local churches in the region? Diaconal questions relating to social justice issues, but at the same time also ecclesiological and missiological ones. What does it mean to be Church, the Body of Christ, in this particular region of the world? What is the impact of migration on both indigenous and migrant churches? How does migration influence the mission of the Church? What does it mean to be rooted in the land? These are some of the questions to address.

The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), in collaboration with the Gulf Churches Fellowship (GCF), the Anglican Alliance, Kerk in Actie (KiA), Al Amana Center and Al Sabeel Center, is proposing a programme on « Church in Migration through the Middle East. A vision for reflection and action for the churches ».

The scope of the programme is the whole Middle East in a broad sense, to include Cyprus, the Levant, Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, Sudan, South Sudan and Turkey. Although contexts differ, churches across the region can learn from and inspire each other.

The aims of the programme are to strengthen the meaningful fellowship of Christians across the Middle East, citizens and migrants as one in the body of Christ; to look at migrants and understand their situation on different levels, spiritual, social, economic, educational; and finally to help churches, communities, parishes and congregations, to be better prepared to respond to those who arrive at our doors with loving service, and with real knowledge.

The Pilot Workshop

As a first step of this long term programme, the core group invited to a pilot workshop to explore the role of the churches in migration. The workshop took place in Dubai, on 24-26 January 2024, right after the GCF annual meeting.

The 2-day workshop gathered approximately 25 participants coming from different areas and church denominations, who had the opportunity to discuss, on theological and practical level, around Ecclesiology, Missiology, and Diakonia, in light of migration for the purpose of 1) understanding what is already happening, 2) establishing the needs and 3) exploring the expectations.

Based on the discussions, the core group considered the recommendations and drew the conclusions that will guide the next steps for a long-term project.