



Pressezentrum

Sperrfrist: 27. Mai 2017 15.00 Uhr
Projekt: Zentrum Regenbogen
Veranstaltung: **Queer und religiös?!**
Jüdische, christliche und muslimische Positionen
Zeit, Ort: Sa. 15.00 – 18.00, Kosmos, Saal 10, Karl-Marx-Allee 131A, Friedrichshain (532 | D9)
Referent/in: **Kristin Gunleiksrud Raam, Vorsitzende Kirchenrat Norwegische Kirche, Oslo/
Norwegen**

First, a brief historic background:

In Norway, we used to have a State church until 2012. 73 % of the population are members.

In 1992 there was an act of Domestic partnership. In 2009 there was a new legislation of marriage in Norway. The Marriage Act states that two people of the same or different sex can get married. But it was not possible to have a church wedding.

As in most churches, LGBTTIQs have been the topic of debate also in the Church of Norway. Could they be employed as priest? Could they “be allowed” to marry?

In the Church of Norway we have been constantly discussing so called “gay issues” since 1995. It has been THE issue in 20 years, dividing the church, and creating a demarcation line in many other questions. But more importantly: in these 20 years those of us with LGBTTIQ-identity have been refused jobs in the church, and having their lives and love discussed in the open over and over again. The great paradox of it all for me is that the church has contributed to making people lie about who they are, hide who they are. The church, who is in this world to proclaim the truth about God and love. The church has contributed to people bowing their head in shame and hide their life. Many have not been able to say with pride: You see me, God! You see who I am. There is dignity in being able to stand erect before the eyes of God. Many LHGTTIQ have not been able to do so. Therefore I as a church leader, have said the church must apologize for it.

In 2013 the Bishops Council published a study on the theological basis of love and marriage. There was found arguments both for and against same sex marriage in the Bible, in the words and doings of Jesus. The Bishops council was divided in the issue. Then it was up to the synod to decide.

The synod in 2014 voted – with a few votes short – against allowing same sex marriage.

Two months later a new organization was founded: Open People’s church. We were only a handful. But we knew that we had a year. September 2015 was our goal: a church referendum. The new synod, consisting of 11 diocesan council should be elected. We were in it together. Queer and straight. LGBTTIQ and heterosexuals. We campaigned all over the country, and it had a great impact on me to meet all the people who said: The church should be the place in the world where everyone can feel that we are equal. So in my opinion the members of the church of Norway gave a strong message of equality and dignity for all.

The organization Open People’s Church won. We now have the majority in the synod. The synod in 2016 voted – with a 2/3rd majority that a new liturgy that could be used by ALL couples should be made. We decided also to keep the old liturgy for man and woman. The reason is that we agreed that there should be room for both opinions in the church. And if a priest did not want to marry a same-sex couple, he or she should be able to follow his or her conscience. But all couples should be able to get married in all churches. This was an important agreement. We wanted to make a space for disagreement that has never been there. But no same-sex couple should be rejected in their childhood church. It is the responsibility for the church to find a priest that will marry them

Some are of course sad and very much opposed to this decision. But it is important to say that in the synod as in the church as a whole, many of those who believe that same sex marriage do not have a biblical basis and will not perform it themselves, voted in favor of it. They say: we can live with the decision that we do not agree on this, as long as both opinions can exist within the church.

In January, the new liturgy was approved by the synod, applied from midnight February 1st. A few days before the synod should make the decision, I got a mail that said: “We are two men of 67 and 70 years. We have been living together for 36 years, and we will not wait one minute longer than we must. By midnight February 1st we will

be married in the church we belong to." And they did. With the national broadcasting company there to film the historic event.

After that it suddenly became everyday business. I attended a same sex marriage a few weeks later, and it was like: Two people are getting married. Wonderful. But what's the big deal?

I am so proud to have been given the privilege to be a part of this. To change the church. To change the conditions for life and love. And thereby faith. Because this is not really about an organization. It is not really about the church. It is really about human dignity and equality. It is about knowing that God sees us all, we do not have to hide who we are before His eyes. And no matter who you love, you can promise eternal love and faithfulness before the eyes of God.

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