



CHURCH OF NORWAY

Contact

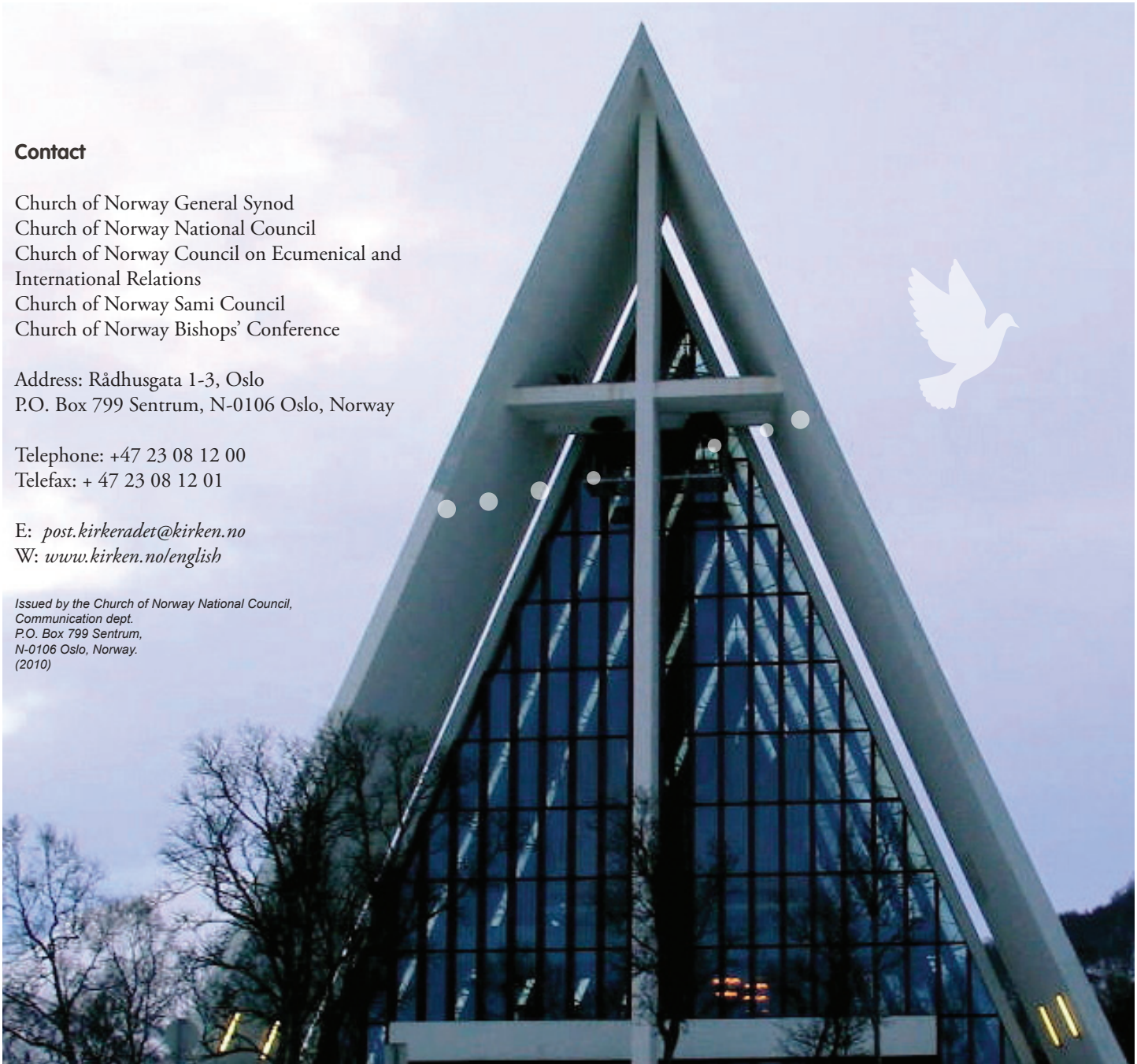
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*Issued by the Church of Norway National Council,
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P.O. Box 799 Sentrum,
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(2010)*





The Church of Norway has been a folk church comprising the majority of the population for a thousand years. It has belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran branch of the Christian church since the sixteenth century. About 80 % of Norway's population holds membership in the Church of Norway.

1000 years of Christianity

The Christian faith came to Norway in the ninth century. It was brought to western Norway by missionaries from the British Isles, and to eastern Norway by missionaries from Germany and Friesland, by way of Denmark. Norwegian kings played an important part in the country's Christianization, and political interests were an undeniable part of their endeavor, along with the spiritual. King Olav Haraldsson, and his death at the Battle of Stiklestad (north

of Nidaros, now Trondheim) in 1030, played a significant role toward uniting the nation in the Christian faith. With its roots in the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages the Church of Norway became a Lutheran church through the Reformation in 1537. At that time, Norway and Denmark were united, and the Lutheran confession was introduced by the Danish king, Christian III. In a certain sense, the Church of Norway has been a "state church" since that time, although this designation fits best for the constitutional form

of the church after 1660. The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 confirmed that the Norwegian state, independent from Denmark, would retain "the Evangelical Lutheran religion" as the official state religion.

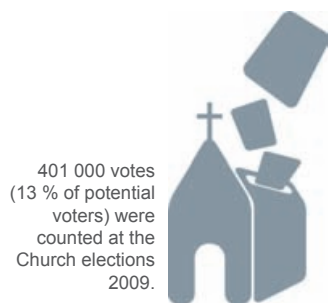
The Church of Norway today

In 2009 approximately 70% of all infants were baptized in the Church of Norway. 1280 parishes have 9000 parish council members, 1400 pastors and 6200 other employees. The Church of Norway's long-standing episcopal order was

supplemented by a synodical structure in the twentieth century. Parish Council members and members of the Diocesan Councils are elected by the church members. The eleven Diocesan Councils gather once a year for the General Synod of the church. A growing number of pastors are women (23% in 2009) and four of the eleven bishops are women (2009). The Sami people are a significant part of the Church of Norway. Since 1992 there has been a Sami Church Council. Its task is to develop Sami



Norwegian church architecture spans the period from the stave (wooden) churches and Romanesque stone churches of the 11th century to the streamline concrete of the 21st century. Photo: Ræge Church in South-Western Norway, (Jiri Havran).



church life built on Sami languages and cultures. The King is the constitutional head of the Church of Norway. Deans and bishops are still named by the Council of State. Strong lay movements in the last two centuries, organized through domestic “inner mission” and societies for mission abroad, have shaped the Church of Norway by gathering groups under lay preachers in prayer houses.

New church order

The future relationship between church and state is currently the subject of a broad

discussion, involving both the church itself and the political parties. Any fundamental change in this relationship must be decided on by the Norwegian Parliament. A Government appointed State-Church Committee 2006 recommended that the state church system should be discontinued and that the Church of Norway be organized as a statutory popular church. The committee took the view that it still should be a public responsibility to finance the church. It recommended state grants covering personnel costs for all church employees and municipal grants covering the construction, maintenance, management and operation of church buildings. Decisions on a new church order are expected 2011-2012.

Church relations

Strong commitment to missionary activity brought



In the Church of Norway a renewed focus on religious education has stimulated the creativity in many congregations. Here children are having an Easter meal in Vangen Church in Aurland. (Photo: Bjarne Aagaard.)



This symbol marks the pilgrimages to Nidaros (symbol designed by Johanna Figur Waddington).



In 2004 and 2009 the Scandinavian churches together arranged Nordic Sami Church-days. Photo from a service in a Lavvo (tent) in Jokkmokk, Sweden 2004.



Around 70 % of those born in Norway 2009, were baptised in the Church of Norway.

international awareness and knowledge of other cultures to local parishes in the mid-nineteenth century. Grass root contact with Christians from other traditions has remained a significant feature of the Church of Norway. And in the twentieth century the ecumenical movement has shaped the church's identity and profile in significant ways. It is among the founding and active members of the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and the Conference of European Churches.

The Church of Norway participated actively in the establishment of the Christian Council of Norway in 1992.

In 1996 the Church of Norway signed the "Porvoo Agreement", by which Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches and the Anglican churches of Great Britain and Ireland affirm each other's proclamation, sacraments and ministries.



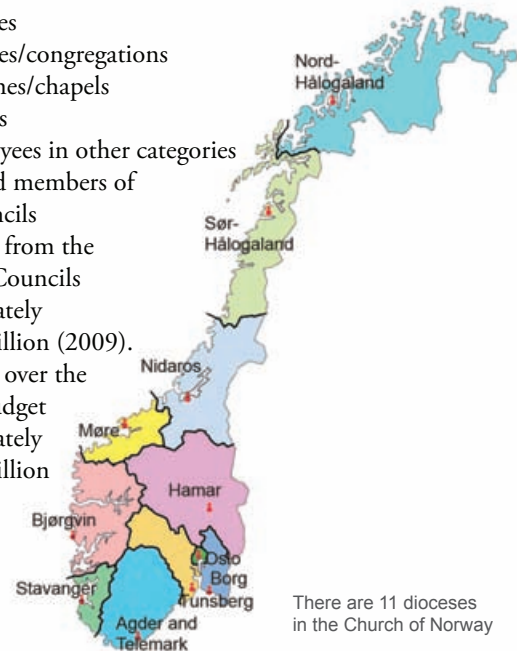
The signing of the Porvoo Agreement in the Cathedral of Nidaros on 1 September 1996. (NTB-photo, Gorm Kallestad).

The agreement with the Methodist Church, signed in 1997, "The Church – A Community of Grace", links the Church of Norway with the Methodist Church of Northern Europe. And the "Leuenberg Concord" (1973), between the Reformation churches in Europe, was ratified and signed by the Church of Norway in 1999.

The Church of Norway has close partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and has signed formal agreements of cooperation with the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil, and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa.

Church of Norway figures

- Church membership 3.9 million – 80 % of the population
- 70 % of all infants were baptised in the Church of Norway 2009
- Approximately 100 people attend each service
- Approximately 70 000 services are held per year
- 11 dioceses
- 103 deaneries
- 1280 parishes/congregations
- 1600 churches/chapels
- 1400 pastors
- 6200 employees in other categories
- 9000 elected members of Parish Councils
- Total grants from the Municipal Councils – approximately NOK 2.2 billion (2009).
- Total grants over the National Budget – approximately NOK 1.5 billion (2009).



There are 11 dioceses in the Church of Norway