

## A Christian Left Manifesto

1. We, the Christian Left, are radical believers with a passion for peace, solidarity and justice. We are a progressive force for an open and democratic society; we are a bit redder, a bit greener.

2. We strive for a world free from superiority and subordination, without class difference, without ethnic or religious chasms, without inequality because of sex or sexual orientation, where everyone is needed and everyone has a place, where everyone has the same rights and value to society. We want a world built on solidarity. We want to carry each other's burdens, but also share each other's joy and success.

3. We believe that whatever a human has gone through, whatever she is guilty of, that after she has taken responsibility for it she has the right to redemption and ever new chances. It is not only our economic and social security which must be defended, but also our human dignity and creative ability.

4. We strive for the freedom of every person to take power over her own life. Culture, work and lifelong learning make people strong and prepared to meet a society in change; these things give people the necessary tools to understand themselves and their society.

5. We encourage all aspects of human relations that are an expression of mutual love. All love is good love. Every person should have the right to define themselves, in interaction with others.

6. We see the truth as something only God can fully know. Our task is to seek. Dialog with dissidents is not a threat, but a great asset.

7. We have to show our respect for Creation. As the Christian Left, we must take responsibility for the effects of the society we live in and not leave that responsibility to the poor of the world or to future generations. We yearn for a better world and believe that together, we can administer it with solidarity.

8. We want all children to have the same opportunities to grow and develop regardless of their parents' situation. Jesus ordered his disciples to respect and care for the children. In that spirit, we want to build a society that creates the most favourable conditions for the growth of every child.

9. We are guided by the words of Jesus in Matthew: "Truly I say to you, whatever you have done to the least of these my brothers, you have done to me". We want to see these words put into political action all over the world.

10. We want to lead a mobilization that seeks to permeate society with God's commandments of love. An active political struggle for freedom, equality and solidarity is the best way to be doers of the Word, and not only listeners.

## Passion

We, the Christian Left, are radicals and believers who yearn for peace, solidarity and justice. We are a progressive force for an open and democratic society, a bit greener, a bit redder. Our movement has its roots both in the labour movement and in the Christian ecumenical movement. As the Christian Left, we see belief in God as a source of hope, meaning and a path to human growth, reconciliation and liberation.

Our point of departure is the commandments of love and the almighty grace of the Lord. God is Love, and since man and woman are created in Gods' image, we all take part in the divine love within.

The value and dignity of each human is sacrosanct; we each also have the same value, same rights and responsibilities because we are all part of Gods' love.

Together we have a responsibility towards each other. Especially when we are at our weakest or when we are exposed and vulnerable, we need each other. Regardless of what any person has done, she has the right to forgiveness, to restitution and to a life of dignity. Our mission is to take the responsibility to create political and societal prerequisites for this redemption.

To us as the Christian Left, faith is an inspiration to political action; our faith is a force for the radical change of society. Faith convinces us that man is a creature of fellowship, that each man is undeniably dependent upon other people. Not until each and everyone sees themselves and others as unique individuals, dependent upon others, can society be transformed in a direction where the inner freedom of man is not in contrast to equality and solidarity.

Our message walks hand in hand with the labour movement's goal of a society free from superiority and subordination, without class differences, without ethnic or religious rifts, without inequality because of sex or sexual orientation, and a society free from prejudice and discrimination, where everyone is needed and there is a place for everyone, where everyone has the same rights and worth. These basic principles shape all of the political positions taken by the Christian Left.

## Solidarity

We, the Christian Left, are guided by the words of Jesus' in Matthew "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me". We want to see these words put into political action all over the world. We believe in a society where everyone has an equal responsibility to see this fulfilled. We will carry each other's burdens, but also share each other's joy and success. Our welfare is supported by all of us together. Humanity is incomplete and a strong society is needed to help us manage our shortcomings. It can help us bring forth the divine within us and within each person. Our welfare is a contract between people about our rights and obligations, a shared responsibility and consideration for each other.

Through the Swedish welfare state, the labour movement built a society where ever more of us, even when we were economically and socially exposed, had the opportunity to enjoy a worthy life. Exposure still exists in the form of confined quarters, inaccessibility, loneliness, homelessness or unemployment, and must be fought. When the mechanisms of welfare are disman-

tled, those of us who are farthest from the labour market, who need long rehabilitation or who live with illness are the ones who are affected the most. The number of foreign citizens who live and work in Sweden without a work permit is increasing. Many are protected neither by labour law nor by social welfare systems. The working class of today is different from the past, but is as exploited as workers were in the beginning of the 20th century. It is not only our economic and social security which must be protected, but also our human dignity.

We, the Christian Left, strive for the freedom of everyone to take power over their own lives. To us, true freedom of choice means that the economic resources in society must be shared, so that everyone is given the opportunity to make their choices in the personal as well as the economic realm. In the world of the Right, differences increase between those who have and those who have not. As the Right defines it, freedom is all too often about enforcing a superior position or about making use of a higher rank.

Good education, with a focus on lifelong learning, gives men and women the tools to understand themselves and their society and puts them in a better position to control their own lives. Because of this, the school debate should be widened, to not only be about grades and discipline in school. A school should represent tuition, it should provide knowledge and understanding, and give every student a firm ground to stand on. We also want all children to have the same opportunities to grow and develop irrelevant of their parents' circumstances. Jesus ordered his disciples to respect and care for the children. In that spirit, we want to build a society which creates the most favourable conditions for growth for every child.

The Swedish welfare state needs to be extended, to make room for everyone. Sweden also needs to look beyond its own borders and make its contribution to peace, justice and freedom in the world.

The globalization of economies and markets, the increased movement of both goods, services and people – means that the line between domestic and foreign affairs is erased. Many of today's political challenges do not stop at a nation's borders. They must be solved together with other countries. The European Union and the United Nations are becoming more central in addressing political challenges.

The Christian Left is a strong voice for peace, international law and human rights. A modern security policy puts man's survival, not only the survival of the state, in front. International law will protect people and create long term conditions for peace and justice. It will add to the greatest possible unity when we are faced with hard decisions, for example, military deployment and endurance in peace, as well as the task of reconstruction.

Our global responsibility has increased. In a world where dependence between people and nations is increasing, solidarity cannot stop at in the village, as it did in agricultural society, or at the national border, as it did in industrial society. Today the politics of social welfare has to be global. International aid is but one tool for global distribution. A global development policy must cover all kinds of policies in accordance with the Millennium Goals, not least in relation to trade, defence and security policy. For instance, the Swedish arms trade comprises elements that impede global development and deepens conflicts.

We have to respect Creation. Our task is to leave a better world with clean water for generations to come, food with fewer toxins and production systems where raw materials are used in a greater harmony with the environment. Our common resources are finite; environmental pollution and global warming are problems that are mostly the responsibility of the industria-

lized world to solve. The effects of a changed climate will hit hardest those who were the least responsible for creating it. These insights challenge our lifestyle and have to impact the policies of the rich countries of the world. Investments from Sweden in these areas and our global development policy are more important than ever.

The strong development of fair trade, fair terms for purchases and accountable rules of ethics are strong prerequisites, so as not to allow people and the environment to be destroyed. Consumer power can be our own “market force” to affect the behaviour of global corporations. Global pillaging of the environment often goes hand in hand with unhealthy and unsafe working conditions for workers and consumers alike. International cooperative organizations have to make stronger demands for environmental responsibility and the responsibility for those put in harm’s way by environmentally dangerous activities all over the world. As the Christian Left, we want to take responsibility for these effects on the society we live in and not leave that responsibility to the poor of the world, or to future generations.

## Openness

The Christian Social Democrats of Sweden, the organized Christian Left in Sweden, was born when the tension between church and labour movement was high. It created an inner conflict in many Christian workers. To them, faith and politics depended on each other and moved in the same direction, in a society where the church was often a conservative force supporting those who had power in society. We grew as a counterforce against conservative Swedish Christianity. We wanted –and still want– to show how our Christian faith can be united with an engagement in society to realize human rights.

Today this counterforce is needed more than ever. The Christian Right allow their own interpretations of a divine right stand above international law and human rights; it counteracts demands for solidarity in social welfare which could balance social shortcomings; it has an exclusive view on love and family, an obsolete stance on gender which limits both women and men, and views which lead to limits on women’s rights to control their own bodies. Where the Christian Right locks in and locks out, we, the Christian Left, stands for openness. Where the Christian Right focuses on its own personal success, as the Christian Left we seek the common good.

We, the Christian Left, accept all aspects of human interactions when they are an expression of mutual love. Each one will have a right to define themselves in interaction with others. Where others exclude and make judgments with respect to persons, we do not want to be transgressors. We seek to include and combine the values that come with faith together with the labour movement’s defining idea of freedom, equality and solidarity.

We, the Christian Left, see the truth as something only God comprehends in full. Our mission is to seek. Dialogue with other religions and with dissidents is not a threat, but a great asset in our search. We want humanity’s need for development and renewal to be given a central place in the labour movement.

The core of our organization is the cooperation between religion and politics. The religious influence on politics and in conflicts has increased in recent years, both in our country and throughout the world. Prejudice and intolerance, like anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and the fear of discussing religion, works against peace and integration both within and without the borders

of Europe. When religion is abused it can become a political poison. Religious fundamentalism with political ambitions adds to a simplified view of the world in terms of Good and Evil and hence can add violence and power politics to our global existence. This is evident when political leaders presume to represent a view where divine right is considered to be above democracy, international law and human rights. We also see the opposite. When religion emphasizes basic values like peace, understanding and justice; when it opens itself up to an understanding of other faiths as well, it becomes a deepening complement to politics.

To the Christian Left, the dividing line is not between people of different faiths, but within each religion. The dividing line runs through the open search for truth and the intolerant administration of truth, whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim or secular. Also, each individual is constantly faced with the choice; what of this is he or she ready to defend? It makes the differences of opinion greater within the religions than between them. We work to build a global political left which cooperates across religious and ethnic borders to decrease the divisions between us. We are the democratic Christian Left and to us, faith is an experience which creates a path to talks and cooperation with other people of faith.

## Hope

The freedom of all people is the freedom of the world. Freedom is the condition for true equality. The free individual and the education and protection of the creative person is the dream and goal of Christian Left politics.

Humanity lives in the tension between the will for freedom and independence and the need to be part of a community. Today's Swedish society is more individualistic than perhaps any other society so far in human history. But individualization has to be combined with a sense of community to hold a society together.

We, the Christian Left, want to fight against individualization in the form of egoism and isolation, but instead as an expression of human liberation and the liberation of our creative abilities. We yearn for a better world and we believe that together, we can administrate our Earth with solidarity.

We live in a post-secular time, when religion has returned to the public space and where questions of faith and politics have a central place in public debate. The Christian ecumenical left movement mobilizes on questions regarding refugee and asylum politics, human rights and peace.

We are the Christian Left; we want to join the leadership for the mobilization which aims at letting society be permeated by the commandments of love. An active political struggle for our values of freedom, equality and solidarity is the best way to do the will of God.

Accepted by the congress of Broderskapsrörelsen, August 2009. Translated from Swedish.