



NORWEGIAN  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

# For North Korea to become Paradise on Earth

Stefanus Alliance International and its partners' mission and visions for impacting the lives of North Koreans

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*Painting from North Korea. Private collection.*

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## Abstract

This master's thesis presents an empirical study of how Stefanus Alliance international together with its partners understand their mission directed at the North Korean people and what impact they envision. Inquiring into this has implied exploring their motivational basis, their hopes and expectation for the outcomes of their work as well as their missiological perspectives. The approach of the thesis is a qualitative case-study making use of triangulation in the data sampling. Hence the research is based on data retrieved through interviews, document analysis and participant observation in Norway and South Korea. The data has been processed by thematic analysis and discussed against a theoretical backdrop consisting of the Lutheran World Federation's *Mission in Context* (2004) as well as J. Andrew Kirk's *What is Mission?* (1999).

The research concludes that Stefanus Alliance and its partners understand their work as motivated by God's love, a belief in human worth and dignity as well as the experience of a God-given calling to intervene in the appalling North Korean humanitarian and human rights situation. In spite of differences in how they understand the balance between evangelism, humanitarian work and human rights efforts they work well together. Their partnership is characterized by values such as respect, trust and mutual understanding. Further the thesis concludes that SAINT and its partners envision impacting the North Korean people in such a way that they too may experience God's love and achieve an improved life-quality and human rights situation.



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## Abbreviations

COI	Commission of Inquiry
DPRK	The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)
HHK	Helping Hands Korea / HHK_Catacombs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NKnet	Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights
SAINT	Stefanus Alliance International
UN	United Nations
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
USA	The United States of America

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# Introduction

## **The scope of the thesis**

For my thesis I have chosen to focus on the role of religion in a contemporary global societal setting. More particularly my interest is in Christian mission organizations' potential to influence the situation for the North Korean people. As a result of my arrangement with SAINT about focusing on the work it conducts together with its local partners, my thesis is a case-study of their work directed at the North Korean people. In the following paragraphs I will elaborate on the process of these choices.

## **The role of religion in contemporary global societal settings**

As a student in the master program of Religion, Society and Global Issues at the Norwegian School of Theology, I am intrigued by the way religion in societal settings is understood cross-nationally. Since the middle of the nineteen hundreds, loud voices have claimed that the significance of religion would fade and disappear; furthermore this was understood as a natural and good development of society. Also, this implied the consequence that religion would vanish from the public space and would have no function in society. However, the hypothesis has been criticized for several reasons. One of these was that the concept of secularization was only meaningful in a Western setting and not in development countries in which it was claimed that people would hold on to religion for personal security. Around the millennium one of the main authors of the secularization thesis, Peter Berger, proclaimed that he had been mistaken and that religion has not disappeared from public space. Recently, another critique of the hypothesis has added that it is found unlikely for it to be possible to separate religion from the public sphere. The argument is that it is in the nature of religion to be political and to influence society. (Deneulin & Bano, 2009, pp. 52-57). On the basis of this short *status quaestionis* it can be argued that religion continues to play a role in society and as such is an interesting field of research.

## **Christian mission organizations**

Being a Christian I have a particular interest in the potential of Christian influence and engagement in societal matters. I do not wish to take a specific denominational stance in the

matter; instead I will take an ecumenical position. This should not cause any internal interest conflict from my side: I have moved within many types of church communities and my main affiliation is not to a specific denomination, but to Christ. Also, without going into a deep theological argument for this, I will claim that being Christian involves a calling to take care of people in need<sup>1</sup> and to work for peace and reconciliation<sup>2</sup>. Although I do not expect to be able to make much of a difference, I feel obligated to consider what can be done to ease human suffering globally.

Christian involvement in societal matters can be addressed from many platforms: We can act as individuals, families, groups and church communities. However, the perspective I have chosen for this study is that of Christian non-governmental organizations. I find this angle interesting because such organizations often have greater capacity to and focus on working with societal involvement than individuals and churches.

### **My interest in the North Korean situation**

It would be possible to focus on many societal settings to explore the impact of Christian mission organizations in society. However, as I have a personal interest in the North Korean setting, I have chosen this as the focus of my thesis. My interest started when I in 2009 set foot in South Korea for the first time. I volunteered for six month in a Christian mission organization to teach English to their staff and at a boarding school for missionary children. Following this trip I developed an interest in the division into North Korea and South Korea – how the two Koreas since the Korean War have distanced themselves from each other ideologically and economically. Also, learning about human suffering in the isolated North Korea deeply touched me.

From a mission's point of view North Korea is an interesting arena to explore: Encompassing evangelism in North Korean mission is difficult; some would say impossible. Also, including a focus on human rights work connected to mission in this thesis is an interesting angle in the

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1 For example the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

2 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

backdrop of the fact that this country holds a terrifying record of crimes against its own people. Hence diving into how mission work is balanced by Christian organizations; including proclamation, humanitarian aid and human rights work is particularly interesting academically and research-wise in the North Korean setting.

### **Case-study of Stefanus Alliance International**

In order to explore how Christian organizations can make a difference in a societal setting, I needed to sample specific organizations to focus on. For the purpose of providing information about how Christians here in Norway can support the efforts, I preferred to focus on an organization that has its base in Norway. Since I also wanted to aim at the situation in North Korea the selection of organizations that has this focus is limited. Researching and making contact to possible choices of organizations, I was met with positive interest by Stefanus Alliance International (SAINT) and this is how it became the pivot organization for my research. SAINT is a mission and human rights organization that in cooperation with local partners among others aims at the North Korean situation. Hence, this choice implied a focus on its partners as well. The focus on Christian organizations' work is especially challenging and interesting in this North Korean setting, as the North Korean state has developed a strong the resentment towards religion and especially against Christianity; in its propaganda Christianity is associated with the horrors of the Korean War. (Fure, Wegge and Heitman, 2014, p. 113)

### **A globalized case**

A side-effect of the focus on SAINT as well as its partners is the impression of a globalized world; this organization based in Norway works together with partners in North and South Korea about improving the situation for North Koreans – and they all cooperate with individuals, churches and organizations across country borders. Pointing to globalization, in *Globalization – A critical introduction* (2005), Jan Aart Scholte explains that this has sometimes been used as a synonym to liberalization, universalization or Westernization. However, he suggests that globalization should rather be defined as the “re-spatialization” of social life manifested through – among others – communication, movement of people, economy, organizations and a global consciousness. (Scholte, 2005, pp. 49-84). This understanding is well in line with the cooperation

between SAINT and its partners in that their work is not hindered by their geographical distance. Instead, it could be claimed that they as Christian organizations are brought together by the common bond to Christ and so by a global Christian consciousness. Also, electronic communication forms and an efficient global travel infrastructure as well as the uncomplicated transference of funds are features of globalization that can be claimed to ease the cooperation.

### **The research question**

On the basis of the choices I have made in regards to the scope of my thesis, I have formed the following research question:

#### **How do SAINT and its partners understand their mission work directed at the North Korean people and what impact do they envision?**

Formulating this research question, I have consciously chosen the phrasing “the North Korean people”, rather than “North Korea”. The reason for this is that I am both interested in what SAINT and its partners do for the people living *in* North Korea and for the refugees *outside* who have fled to China, South Korea and other countries.

To answer the research question it is essential to deal with *why* SAINT and its partners are involved with the North Korean people. Now, a “why” can refer to different aspects. What I find particularly relevant is the motivational basis of their work and also what goals and expectations they have for the outcomes of their work. Additionally, I wish to explore the missiological perspectives of SAINT and its partners. In sum, my research will be guided by the following sub questions:

- 1) What is the motivational basis of SAINT and its partners’ work aimed at the North Korean people?**
- 2) What are SAINT and its partners’ hopes and expectations for the outcomes of their mission work directed at the North Korean people?**
- 3) What are the *missiological perspectives* of SAINT and its partners?**

Answering these three sub questions will form the basis of providing an answer to my research question.

### **Presentation of SAINT and its partners**

As a part of the introduction to my research, it seems at this point necessary to clarify SAINT and its partners' profiles and scopes of their work directed at the North Korean people.

#### **Stefanus Alliance International**

Stefanus Alliance International<sup>3</sup> (SAINT) is “a Christian missions and human rights organisation, with a special focus on freedom of belief and religion” (SAINT’s website, 2012: *Sammen for de forfulgte*). Its work consists of moral support, practical assistance and advocacy for human rights; both for the sake of Christians and others. Also, it encompasses informing the Norwegian population about the situation of the persecuted church globally and about human rights violations.

SAINT was established in 1967 with mission behind the Cold War Iron Curtain as its focus. At the current time the scope of the work is described as directed towards countries that are under Muslim or Communist ruling in Asia and the Middle East as well as countries in Europe that were earlier under Communist ruling. The organization has had different names and in 2012 the current name Stefanus Alliance International was applied. The name refers to the first Christian martyr, Stefanus. (Acts: 6-8). SAINT is organized with 16 representatives as the highest authority. These representatives select a board consisting of 8 members. In addition, there are currently 17 people employed in SAINT.

SAINT’s focus on human rights is pivoting around § 18 of the UN Human Rights Declaration about freedom of religion or belief. Here it is stated that:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others

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<sup>3</sup> Where nothing else is mentioned, the information in this sub-chapter is based on the contents of SAINT’s website. (2012: *Sammen for de forfulgte*)

and in public or private to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” (UN UDHR, 1948, p. 5)

The article emphasizes that everyone has the right to choose what to believe, to express that belief and to change belief. These rights are what SAINT works for through advocacy, legal counseling and information campaigns. Even though SAINT is presented as a mission organization, it does not send out emissaries. Instead it works through a network of churches and organizations that are locally based.

In the work directed at the North Korean people, SAINT’s website mentions two partners: Helping Hands Korea and Whitestone. Helping Hands Korea also goes by the name HHK\_Catacombs, however in my thesis I will mostly refer to this organization by using the short abbreviation “HHK”. Another partner that SAINT cooperates with and who will be included in this thesis is a man called C. K. Park. In the following I will present these three partners.

### **Helping Hands Korea**

The founder and director of HHK<sup>4</sup>, Tim A. Peters, and his family started their work for the North Korean people in 1990 because of the notion that they as Christians could not ignore the human tragedies in North Korea. From the beginning they donated and raised money for food aid and Peters gave speeches in universities, churches and in other interested arenas in South Korea to inform about the situation in the North. Later, Peters was interviewed for various News Medias; among others Times Magazine in 2006. He participated in protest demonstrations directed at Chinese embassies to show disapproval with how North Korean refugees in China are returned to North Korea to inhuman treatment. During the process, HHK started collecting the testimonies of North Korean refugees.

At present HHK can be described as a humanitarian and human rights organization and as a non-denominational NGO. As such it is funded by donations. It is not clear on HHK’s website how the work is organized or how many are involved.

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<sup>4</sup> Where nothing else is mentioned, the information of this sub-chapter is based on the contents of HHK’s (HHK’s website, 2016)

The main part of HHK's work takes place outside of North Korea; assisting refugees who have fled to China. Included in this is delivering food and other necessities to orphans and other particularly vulnerable individuals. Its work also encompasses the "Underground Railroad": Assisting North Korean refugees in fleeing from China to South Korea and other countries. Aside from practical assistance and emotional support, HHK emphasizes providing biblical teaching to meet the spiritual needs of the refugees. One of the ways in which HHK is raising awareness of the humanitarian crisis in North Korea is through weekly "Catacomb forums" held in Seoul, South Korea. A smaller part of HHK's work consists of sending aid to churches inside North Korea. HHK partners with a network of individuals and organizations to help North Koreans; among these are Whitestone and C. K. Park.

### **Whitestone**

The work of the organization Whitestone<sup>5</sup> takes place around the North Korean town Rajin which lies close to the Chinese border. Whitestone provides 4000 poor school children with one extra meal every day consisting of nourishing bread rolls and soy milk. Also, it has established a fertilizer factory which helps the farmers produce more food in an environmentally friendly way. Implied by this is that Whitestone works for development by supporting the initiation of businesses in the local community. The founder of Whitestone was born in North Korea, but has lived most of his life in South Korea and in the USA. At the time of his retirement he felt a calling from God to see to the needs of the North Korean people and as a response started his work.

### **Presentation of C. K. Park**

Although not mentioned as a partner at SAINT's webpage, SAINT has supported C. K. Park's<sup>6</sup> (Park's) work on different occasions and continues to partner with him<sup>7</sup>. Park's current efforts encompass raising awareness among South Koreans about the human rights situation in North Korea and encouraging them to intervene and take responsibility for this part of the Korean

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<sup>5</sup> Where nothing else is mentioned, the information of this paragraph is based on the contents of SAINT's website (2012: *Sammen for de forfulgte*).

<sup>6</sup> As C. K. Park's current work is not described in an English website, the source of the presentation of C. K. Park (where nothing else is mentioned) is the interview he granted me in the fall of 2015.

<sup>7</sup> This information was confirmed by representatives of HHK and SAINT.

population. He has named this project The Third Way. Also, he is working on a book project to raise awareness in the international society by documenting the human rights violations in North Korean prison camps. Earlier he established the North Korean Database Center (NKDB) which has systematically catalogued the testimonies of defectors about North Korea. At present Park has resigned to be an honorable member of the NKDB. Park is additionally involved in projects that aim at inspiring the North Korean people to stand up for themselves in reaction to the suppression and human rights violations they currently live under.

### **Literature review**

Outlining what already has been written as pertaining to my research can be carried out from a variety of approaches: As I stated in the introduction, this thesis is a result of a combination of my interests in how Christian organizations can impact society and how Christians can help relieve the terrible situation in North Korea. When inquiring into how the North Korean situation can be influenced from an overall point of view, many disciplines are relevant to include: military efforts, economics and politics in addition to social science, just to mention a few. The way Christians can impact society can and has been approached both theoretically and practically. The theoretical way in which it has been addressed shows in the still topical discussion of the role of religion in contemporary society; the core of which seems to be the debate about secularization and resurgence of religion. Practically, the issue is being addressed in various ways by churches and organizations that are active in societal work. A typical approach to assess the impact of societal work is similar to that of private businesses and corporations: Making strategy plans and then evaluating iteratively and upon a project's completion. In contrary to these approaches my research question points to SAINT and its partners *understanding* and what they *envision*. This means that my main focus is not on measuring the effect, but on the perceptions of and visions for the work that SAINT and its partners hold.

Zooming in on the topic of how Christian organizations then envision to impact the North Korean situation, the theme is regularly touched upon in connection with the statements given



when the media brings stories about missionaries being detained or released by the North Korean authorities. However, when searching for literature within social science that is distinguished in level of insight and academic quality, the selection decreases noticeably. An article that deserves attention was written by Kim Hyun-Sik, a Korean War veteran and former professor at Pyongyang University: *Reflections on North Korea* (Kim Hyun-Sik, 2008). Being a devoted Christian and engaged in mission work, Kim describes the motivation, goals and hopes of missionaries who focus on the North Korean people. His article has been peer-reviewed by Ben Torrey who among others has studied and taught theology, history and comparative cultural studies. (Torrey, 2008)

Accounting for what has been written specifically about how SAINT and its partners understand their work directed at the North Korean people and what impact they envision produces a very short list. Of course the topic has at some level been described on the websites of the organizations and in the material that the organizations publish, but aside from that not much else has been written. I do however have two publications to point to:

Both Peters from HHK and the General Secretary of SAINT, Hans Aage Gravaas, have contributed to the latest book in the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary series: *Freedom of Belief & Christian Mission*. (Gravaas et al., 2015). In this book Peters deal specifically with work aimed at North Korea whereas Gravaas' contribution is a more general analysis of contemporary mission. Gravaas advocates for the idea that Christian mission go well in hand with working for human rights.

In addition to the articles published in *Freedom of Belief & Christian Mission* (2015) the South Korean "Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights" (NKnet) published an article in 2013: *An Interview with Christian Activist Tim Peters, Founder of Helping Hands Korea*. The article contains interesting insights on Peters' motivation and goals for the work of HHK.

Also some Danish newspapers have interviewed Peters on different occasions. On one of these occasions Kristeligt Dagblad (that focuses on issues regarding faith, existence and ethics)

brought a short article describing the integration challenges that North Korean defectors face when settling in South Korea. (Telling and Nielsen, 2009). Peters was interviewed about how Christianity is presented to these defectors and hence the article provides insight into HHK's missiological perspective.

To the extent it is relevant I will include the articles presented above during my discussions.

I have not been able to locate any material by or about the understandings and visions of Whitestone and C. K. Park. The only exceptions are what is expressed through organizational websites as already mentioned and these will receive due attention during my data report.

A third angle on existing literature is to look at previous cooperation between SAINT and academic students. Cooperation with SAINT was not an original idea from my side. As late as in 2015 the former student at The Theologian School of Norway, Ingrid Straume, wrote her master's thesis with Ed Brown, the Head of SAINT's Human Rights Department, as her co-supervisor. Straume's topic was on how Dalit Christians in India experience and are affected by the discrimination they are met with by the surrounding society. A part of her conclusion is that the Dalits respond to the persecution by uniting and focusing on raising their educational level instead of defending themselves through violent means. The study is of little relevance to the present thesis; however it deals with freedom of religions or belief; a theme that is also central in my thesis. (Straume, 2015)

Jumping back a few more years, Brown also co-supervised a master's thesis analyzing ethical challenges for journalists in Turkey. (Stav, 2013). Here as in the other case the object of the study has little relevance for my research; it however also deals with some human rights aspects that are touched upon in my thesis such as discrimination of minorities and freedom of speech.

Fundamentally my master's thesis is focused on the understanding of as well as the outcomes of mission work and this is central to the area of missiology. If I were to regard the perspective from which to outline existing literature as missiology in general, the scope of my inquiry would

be endless. The literature in this area is vast not least due to the fact that missiology as an academic discipline has developed through many years. Also, there is much variation in what the different scholars believe to be the best way to describe and approach missiology. The bottom-line is that I as the theoretical backdrop of my thesis have chosen to include Andrew J. Kirk's *What is Mission?* (1999) and *Mission in Context* (2004) published by the Lutheran World Federation. I have argued for these choices in the theory chapter.

To conclude on this literature review; what is "new" in my thesis is the way I analyze how a mission organization understands its work and envisions the impact on the North Korean people; and especially the specific angle on SAINT and its partners and *What is Mission?* (1999) and *Mission in Context* (2004) as the theoretical backdrop is a combination that has not yet been seen within the existing literature.

### **Research strategy and method**

When exploring how SAINT and its partners understand their work and envision the impact of this on the North Korean people, I have chosen a qualitative research strategy with a case-study of SAINT and its partners. My primary data sampling method has been interviews of key informants in Norway and South Korea. In addition, I have conducted participant observation during my visit in South Korea. Finally, my data sampling will encompass a small degree of document analysis; looking into available websites by SAINT and its partners. Methodological considerations and choices will be elaborated on in the method chapter.

### **Theoretical backdrop**

For the purpose of analyzing my data against existing insights, I have chosen missiological perspectives as the backdrop for the discussions in my thesis. The primary sources of these are the document published by the Lutheran World Federation: *Mission in Context* (2004) and J. Andrew Kirk's book *What is Mission?* (1999). Whenever relevant and within the scope of my thesis, I will bring in the perspectives of other theoretical scholars.



## Background

In order to understand the setting for SAINT and its partners in their work directed at the North Korean people, it is necessary to first outline the historical background as well as the current societal situation of North Korea.

### The Korean War

The historical background for the North Korean situation can be told with an outset in the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. From this time Korea was under Japanese ruling until the end of World War II in 1945 when the allied forces took control of it; USA from the South until the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel and USSR from the North. (Keum, 2008, pp. 110-112; Kim, In Soo, 2008, pp. 136-137). In 1948 North Korea was named Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and with mandate from the Soviet, Kim Il Sung took leadership. South Korea was at the time - and to some degree still is - under the wings of the USA and was named the Republic of Korea. (Gravaas et al., 2015, pp. 296-297). Since then several clashes between the North – supported by the Soviet and China - and the South took place. The Korean War broke out in 1950 when North Korea initialized an attack on South Korea. Before this, South Korea had conducted local attacks in the border area. (Keum, 2008, pp. 110-112; Kim, In Soo, 2008, pp. 136-137). Short after the event of North Korea attacking South Korea, Seoul was taken and the USA and South Korean forces were pushed all the way down to Pusan - in the very South of South Korea. USA forces stroke hard against North Korea and took all of South Korea back - and even took control of Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. But then the Chinese military intervened and push back the Southern forces. Later, peace talks began and an armistice agreement was reached in 1953 with the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as the division line for North and South Korea. (Keum, 2008, p. 113)

### The situation in the two Koreas today

Technically, North and South Korea are still at war since no peace treaty has ever been signed. It has been more than 60 years since the armistice was reached. (Fure et al. 2014, pp. 45-46). During this time the situation has been a complicated political dance with ongoing peace talks mixed with aggressive actions on both sides. On several occasions the respective governments

have expressed wishes of reunification; they have however been unable to compose a plan that both parts could accept. (Noh, 2008, pp. 147-148). At the current time the North Korean population counts 25 million people, (the South Korean population counts 50 million) and the North Korean system can be characterized as a totalitarian military dictatorship based on “Juche”-ideology. (The World Bank, 2015; Fure et al. 2014, p. 284). In the South the current governmental system is most often referred to as a democratic republic. After the war South Korea quickly began a process of rebuilding and developing and today the technological and economic state of the country is among the leading in the world. (Peters, 2016 p. 296). North Korea also started out well after the war. However, its human rights situation has significantly deteriorated as documented in UN’s report based on the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Human Rights in the DPRK. In the conclusion of this report it is stated that the human rights violations “(...) reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world” (UN OHCHR COI, 2014, p. 15). The state’s food access monopoly is used to enforce political loyalty. Further the conclusion establishes the gravity of the human rights violations in that:

(...) the State systematically uses violence and punishment to deter its citizens from exercising their human right to leave the country. Persons who are forcibly repatriated from China are commonly subjected to torture, arbitrary detention, summary execution, forced abortion and other forms of sexual violence. (UN OHCHR COI, 2014, p. 15-16)

Concerning religious development, Korea as a whole has a long Confucian and Buddhist tradition. In spite of these well-established religions, Christianity has had a huge impact on the peninsula during the last 250 years. At present 30 % of the South Koreans confess to Christianity. In North Korea however the COI report concludes about the freedom of religion or belief that all expressions of religion are suppressed to avoid the official ideology being questioned. This stands in contradiction to North Korea’s own constitution which states that “Citizens have freedom of religious belief. This right is granted through the approval of the construction of religious buildings and the holding of religious ceremonies.” (DPRK, 2014, art. 68). Perhaps the way the North Korean authorities justify their harsh response to religious

activities lies in the paragraph that follows immediately after: “Religion must not be used as a pretext for drawing in foreign forces or for harming the State or social order.” (DPRK, 2014, art. 68). It is plausible that the North Korean state interprets most religious activity as undermining the state or disturbing the social order. At present, North Korea is notorious for the most extreme persecution of Christians in the World. (Fure et al. 2014, pp. 112-115)

UN’s COI has provided a glimpse of why North Korea is occasionally referred to as “the country without human rights”<sup>8</sup>. (Fure et al. 2014, pp. 71; 96). Ironically, the North Korean constitution claims that the state shall “(...) respect and protect human rights” (DPRK, 2014, art. 8). It is hard to image a people more in need of humanitarian help; and - one could claim – more in need of the Gospel of God’s love.

Some of the means that have been effectuated to change the North Korean situation are trade embargos and diplomatic interactions. Even though these efforts are unavoidable at the moment and – if nothing else – perhaps function as situation stabilizers, they do not seem to ascertain any change. To mention a recent suggestion of how to bring about change, UN’s COI report recommends working for change through human rights dialogue, more people-to-people contact and efforts for inter-Korean reconciliation. (UN OHCHR COI, 2014, p. 16)

Nurtured by Western media coverage, a commonplace position to the historical development of Korea has become considering North Korea as the “bad guy” and USA as a victorious hero. However it should not be ignored that propaganda is in effect on both sides on the conflict. Based on Korean history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it is not possible to point to just *one* of the parts in the conflict as the “bad guy”. But there is *one* group of victims: The North Korean people.

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<sup>8</sup> My own translation.





# Theory

## **Initial remarks**

In order to answer my research question I will analyze my data findings on the basis of concepts and perspectives known from theoretical literature. A presentation and discussion of the latter is the purpose of this chapter. In order to discuss the theories, I will present them alongside each other as opposed to separately. The intention with bringing in theories from the research field of missiology is partly to provide a basis for answering the third sub-question of my thesis: “What are the missiological perspectives of SAINT and its partners?” However, even the motivational basis and the hopes and expectation for the outcomes of the work (sub-questions number two and three) are connected to the missiological perspectives. In other words, bringing in this theoretical basis is expected to contribute to my answering the overall research question.

## **Arguments for choice of theory**

In my selection of theory from the rich rainforests of material about missiology, I have handpicked two presentations that provide different perspectives. A factor of my selection criteria has been finding different perspectives on the balance between mission in words and in action. Another essential factor has been the inclusion of different principles and goals for mission. I have selected two separate presentations of missiology. The first is drawn from J. Andrew Kirk's book: *What is mission?* The second perspective is presented by The Lutheran World Federation in its publication *Mission in Context* (2004). In addition to these two theoretical sources I will occasionally include material from other scholars that will contribute to my discussions.

### **J. Andrew Kirk's *What is Mission?***

I have chosen J. Andrew Kirk's book *What is mission? Theological Explorations* to be part of my theoretical foundation. Kirk is a recognized scholar within the area of missiology and he provides a holistic and academic perspective that is relevant for my thesis. During his career he has taught in British and South American Universities and has written a number of books within

missiological matters in a contemporary context. He is now retired from his position as Dean and Head of the School of Mission and World Christianity at Selly Oak Colleges. (Augsburg Fortress, 2015; Goodreads, 2015; Kirk, 1999, back cover; Kirk, 2006, back cover). With *What is Mission?* (1999) Kirk seeks to give an account of what mission is in an introductory way. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 1-2)

### **The Lutheran World Federation's *Mission in Context***

The document *Mission in Context* (2004) is chosen as representative for a practical understanding of mission. Since the document is published by The Lutheran World Federation it represents the global Lutheran churches and congregations and these are also the primary target group for the publications. In this sense the document is written by and for people with hands on many mission projects. Even though the material is directed at churches it also has close ties to the organizational level: Local congregations often run their own mission projects or provide financial support to mission organizations' projects and are also often included in the councils of mission organizations. As an example several pastors are part of SAINT's Council<sup>9</sup>.

It may seem puzzling that I have chosen *Mission in Context* (2004) as part of the theoretical foundation for my analysis when the object of my analysis is a declared ecumenical organization like SAINT. However, even though the background for the publication is Lutheran, the document seems relevant in a larger, ecumenical context. Furthermore, the tendency in current academic discussions is to draw in scholars from many different denominations. This trend is supported by Kirk in that he emphasizes that his works should not be identified and labelled with a specific denominational connection. (Kirk, 2006, p. xiii)

When the Lutheran World Federation published the document in 2004, one of the aims of this was to:

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<sup>9</sup>Reidulf Stige, Jens Bjelland Grønvold and Andreas Hegertun are all active pastors and members of SAINT's representation. (Stefanus Alliance International's webpage (2015): *Styre og representantskap*)

(...) serve as a tool to accompany Lutheran churches in their self-analysis and reaffirmation of mission in their respective contexts. This means inviting the Church at all levels (...) and related agencies to reevaluate their responsibility for mission and to stimulate them in their efforts to seek new ways of understanding their recent and future participation in God's mission. (LWF, 2004, p. 7)

In other words, the purpose of the publication was partly to encourage Christians to a renewed focus on mission and partly to provide them with tools that could prove practical in acting on this focus.

## **Outline**

My presentation is divided into three parts. The first part will be about defining the concept of mission; this includes the idea of *Missio Dei*, the view on human nature in mission work and the relationship between proclamation of the Gospel and diaconal work. After that I will move on to a second part about how working for justice and human rights relates to mission work. In the third part, I will discuss how the responsibility of mission work can be shared. Components of this last part are the role of partnerships in mission as well as involving the target group of mission in the work.

## **Defining mission**

Defining mission is not a simple task. It is a disputed issue and is not only about what mission *is*, but also what it *does* or should do. It is clear that to Kirk, mission is essential to the church: "Mission as the essential being of the Church has not yet been properly recognized" (Kirk, 1999, p. 20). He later states about the church that "(...) if it ceases to be missionary, it has not just failed one of its tasks, it has ceased to be church" (Kirk, 1999, p. 30). In *Mission in Context* (2004) this understanding of mission being an intrinsic part of the church is also expressed: "Mission is of the very being of the church. To be in mission is not optional for the church." (LWF, 2004, p. 28). Kirk defines mission in the following way: "Mission is quite simply, though profoundly, what the Christian community is sent to do, beginning right where it is located". (Kirk, 1999, p. 24).

Later in *What is Mission?* (1999) Kirk elaborates that it is central to understand mission as *God's mission* and to conduct *mission in the way of Jesus*.

*Mission in Context's* (2004) definition of mission is slightly more complicated:

The mission of the church is to point to and participate in the eschatological reality of the in-breaking of God's reign in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, anticipating its final fulfillment as the basis for transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment.

(LWF, 2004, p. 7)

In a sense this quote seems to communicate the same understanding as Kirk: That Christians are to participate in God's work. However it also expresses another idea: That mission work provides a taste sample of God's Kingdom with a reference to when God's reign will be complete. The anticipation of God's Kingdom is meanwhile also emphasized by Kirk as central to mission. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 29-30). Returning to the quote, it links the terms transformation, reconciliation and empowerment to the definition of mission. These terms function as a red thread throughout the document and we shall return to them shortly. A much more straightforward definition of mission is found in Risto A. Ahonen's book *Mission in the New Millennium* (2000): "Mission fundamentally consists of making Christ known everywhere in the world." (Ahonen, 2000, p. 264)

### **Missio Dei**

Central to the definition of mission in *Mission in Context* (2004) is that fundamentally it is God's work: Mission is based on God as *Creator, Redeemer* and *Sanctifier*. The concept of God as *Creator* implies that as human beings are created in God's image they have inherent value and hence mission must include work for justice, trust between people and against hunger. *Redeemer* is about how Jesus was incarnated, hung on the cross and rose from the dead. In the light of Jesus' example, workers within mission should identify with human suffering and be solidary with people in need to enhance transformation, reconciliation and empowerment. From this perspective death and suffering will not have the last word. *Sanctifier* refers to the

way the Holy Spirit provides power and equips for mission to proclaim the gospel which in turn creates transformation. (LWF, 2004, pp. 23-27)

In similarity to this understanding, Kirk emphasizes that mission is God's mission and that when Christians engage in mission activities they become "(...) part of what God is about in the World". (Kirk, 1999, p. 32). For evangelism this then implies that mission primarily should be seen as God's work through the Holy Spirit. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 73-74). Kirk extends the idea of God's mission to be *mission in the way of Jesus*; because Jesus was sent to Earth to enact God's mission. Kirk elaborates that mission in the way of Jesus means that mission should 1) create life by working for physical health, psychological and social wellbeing through emphasizing human dignity and by providing practical help and education. Additionally, mission should 2) create welfare through political and societal justice and 3) create non-violence by working for peace between groups in conflict and by communicating the grace of God. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 52-55)

Seeing mission primarily as God's mission like both Kirk and *Mission in Context* (2004) do is in line with the theological concept that during the mid-twentieth century has been developed under the label *Missio Dei*. *Missio Dei* refers to the understanding that mission is initiated by God and operates according to his intentions, power and methods. (Taber, 2000, p. 24). Risto A. Ahonen describes that *Missio Dei* should be understood on the basis of God's love: "Mission is based ultimately on the very nature of God, who is love, and this love is directed towards the world" (Ahonen, 2000 p. 43). According to David J. Bosch's *Transforming Mission* (1991) (a book that Kirk in his introduction refers to as the most important within missiology) the role of the church in mission can be seen "at most, as an illustration – in words and deed – about God's involvement in the world". (Bosch, 1991, p. 390; Kirk, 1999, pp. 1-2)

### **View on human nature**

Besides the understanding of mission as God's mission, in defining mission it is also necessary to take into account the target of mission; in other words what view on human nature is implied. According to Kirk the church needs indiscriminate love in order to fulfill its mission calling. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 209-210). Kirk's understanding entails that no human being should be excluded from

the reach of mission. When Kirk points out that mission should include working for justice for the poor, he argues that the motivation for this is based on a belief that every human being is created in the image of God and thus has intrinsic worth and dignity. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 97-108). As we have already seen, the understanding in *Mission in Context* (2004) is in line with Kirk in this matter. Kirk goes so far in his interpretation of the implications of human beings as created in God's image that even people who do not see themselves as Christians are prone to take part in God's mission; both in their cultural expression and through compassionate actions towards others. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 33-37)

### **Words and action**

We have established that the present definition of mission involves the understanding that mission essentially is God's mission and that it is directed towards every human being; created in God's image and thus bearing intrinsic worth and dignity. Hence, we shall now look into the practical implications of mission. Particularly, I wish to discuss the tension between whether mission implies evangelization, proclamation of the message of the Gospel in words, or if it mainly should be seen as actions of compassion - like humanitarian work, work for justice, diaconal work etc. Commenting on the phrasing of mission as words and deed, as we have just seen, what terms are used in the theoretical literature in reference to these sides of mission work varies. Hence, I will also make use of varied terminology to refer to these two sides of mission throughout my thesis.

Kirk states that the role of the Christian Church in response to God's mission calling is to be a living interpretation and anticipation of God's Kingdom in words and action. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 33-37). To him mission involves a focus on evangelization through the gospel as well as advocacy for and insistence on justice. This includes meeting people's needs with compassion and working in a non-violent manner. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 52-55)

In likeness with this *Mission in Context* (2004) holds that proclamation and service are both integral aspects of mission. Christians are called to proclaim the Gospel and invite people into a relationship with God. (LWF, 2004, p. 47). Earlier, this was by many understood as the main part

of mission work. But since the 1970s the approach has become more holistic. (Taber, 2000 pp. 34-35; Ahonen, 2000, p. 229). *Mission in Context* (2004) represents the stance that as a main principle proclamation and diaconal work are interdependent: "Word without deed can be abstract and powerless, and deed without word can be mute and open for any interpretation." (LWF, 2004, p. 38)

When touching upon this question about whether either evangelization or practical assistance can stand alone Kirk and the document *Mission in Context* (2004) are not in complete agreement. Central in understanding this disagreement is that Kirk emphasizes distinguishing evangelization from overall mission work. He argues that in case all (mission) activities are called evangelism then nothing is really evangelism. (Kirk, 1999, p. 57). At the same time his perspective is that it is "(...) necessary to stress (...) that there can be no authentic evangelism apart from a living testimony to the transforming power of the Gospel in action". (Kirk, 1999, pp. 56-57). In other words, Kirk believes that mission must encompass both evangelization and faith-based service.

*Mission in Context* (2004) on the other hand presents the stance that there are situations in which evangelization should not be included. For example in emergency situations, the church should not use the vulnerability of people to "(...) impose its Christian belief". (LWF, 2004, p. 38). One could argue that especially when people are in vulnerable situations they are in need of the comfort, peace and strength that the Gospel can provide. But if attempting to understand the warning about "imposing" constructively and as it appears to me, the essence is to remind mission workers of being conscious of timing and of clearly expressing that receiving the Gospel is voluntary. *Mission in Context* (2004) also claims that there can be situations in which proclamation is not possible and that in such cases, diaconal work must stand alone as a silent testimony of God's love. (LWF, 2004, pp. 37-38; 46). In contradiction to this Kirk argues that even though life style is a very important part of the Christian testimony and that this approach can be used to probe curiosity among, evangelization cannot only consist of a lived testimony. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 205-225). Ahonen contributes that: "The clear, concrete message of the Gospel

cannot be transmitted by keeping silent". (Ahonen, 2000, p. 240). Connected to this is the common idea that one of the ways of probing curiosity and preparing people for the Gospel is to start by helping them with their felt needs which once again underlines the idea of including both evangelization and practical assistance in mission work. Kirk elaborates that even though there is a risk of Christians speaking arrogantly and as if they can represent God, words are needed too in order to avoid misunderstandings. For example the recipients could be left to guess that salvation depends on adapting the same life style as the missionaries instead of on God's mercy. (Taber, 2000, p. 101; Kirk, 1999, pp. 205-225)

Speaking of arrogance it is relevant to raise other issues concerning risks of bad effects and intentions in proclamation work. Kirk recognizes that the role of evangelization is contested because of the claim that it can become a mere project of recruiting more members to the church or even that it is about Western arrogance and promotion of Western ideologies and agendas. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 57-61). *Mission in Context* (2004) takes this issue into account and recognizes that occasionally mission work has been criticized for taking part in development work that in turn has been reprimanded for being a catalyst for the implementation of Western modernism in contexts where this is not appropriate. Additionally, Christian mission work has sometimes been met with the critique that it has been using diaconal work to lure people into Christian faith. (LWF, 2004, p. 48). On some occasions critical voices have spoken of missionaries creating "rice-Christians" which means the event of people converting to Christianity in the prospect of benefits. On the other hand, when the church has neglected to see to other than the spiritual needs of people they have been accused for lack of compassion. (Taber, 2000, pp. 36-40). *Mission in Context's* (2004) response to this criticism is that because of the risks, it is important for mission to be contextualized. (LWF, 2004, p. 46). However, according to Ahonen, the problem of "Rice-Christianism" is an exaggerated problem that has made Christians over-cautious. He argues that "genuine love hides nothing and misleads nobody. (...) Concealing one's own conviction is not love, but calculated hypocrisy." (Ahonen, 2000 p. 237). In line with this, Kirk elaborates in his later book *Mission under Scrutiny* (2006) that he sees rejecting evangelism altogether as an over-reaction to fear and past mis-deeds. He continues claiming that the



church has no right to reject evangelizing as the world has a prerogative to hear the Gospel. He explains that evangelization is God's way of salvation and that discipleship is the measure of mission containing both following, witnessing and serving. (Kirk, 2006, pp. 210-219)

## **Justice and human rights in mission work**

Justice as an essential part of mission work is a central theme in Kirk's *What is Mission?* (1999). To Kirk, work for justice is motivated by the view on human beings as created in God's image. Due to this they are seen as possessing inherent worth and dignity and should be treated justly. On the backdrop of biblical scriptures Kirk argues that God's mission must include a focus on justice with the logic that: "Justice is what God does, for justice is what God is" (Kirk, 1999, pp. 97-108). At best the local church should see itself as being on the move towards God's new creation and at the same time placing itself in the midst of human suffering to help and sympathize with those in need. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 205-225). Kirk goes as far as stating that mission should encompass bearing witness about Jesus even to the point of martyrdom. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 52-55). Based on this sacrificial willingness, mission should *create welfare* including political and societal justice and *create non-violence* by working for peace between groups in conflict and by communicating the grace of God. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 52-55). Now it can be claimed that there is a tension here: On the one hand to fight for justice and on the other to work for peace. The two are nevertheless closely related: The way Kirk expresses it, peace can only be built on justice and at the same time it is a pre-requisite for justice. He elaborates that peacebuilding and reconciliation are connected to justice, but are more than the advocacy for justice: They also include working for improved relationships between people; between antagonist groups as well as between those who have been unjustly treated and their perpetrators. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 143-162)

## **Justice & peace building**

Concerning mission work aimed at justice, Kirk speaks of advocacy for justice in terms of constituting a prophetic voice against injustice. Also it is the duty of "the Gospel of justice" with God's help to create preferential options for the poor. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 111-117). In Kirk's

understanding, the sacred (mission work) cannot be excluded from the secular space and faith matters should not be constrained to the private sphere. In other words, also in political matters Christians should provide a prophetic voice against claims that are not morally defensible as well as serving society through prayer, volunteer work and evangelization. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 205-225). In likeness with this, *Mission in Context* (2004) emphasizes that mission work should engage in societal problems. Indeed it is stated that it should deal with the root causes of societal problems. (LWF, 2004, p. 37). *Mission in Context* (2004) also includes the concept of raising a prophetic voice against injustice. (LWF, 2004, p. 52)

In Kirk's understanding one of the preconditions for peace building in mission is to understand the causes of violence. Violence can be triggered by estrangement of people to others and God. This results in a fear of those whom are experienced as dangerous enemies or competitors. In other words, violence can be caused by people experiencing identity problems or creating enemy pictures due to lack of dialogue. Violence can also be nurtured by a want for power. A third common scenario that creates violence is when it is a product of violence suffered. Or to put it differently: the former victim becomes the victimizer. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 154-161). Part of Kirk's understanding of how the church should work against violence and effectuate peace building is that it should focus on building trust. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 154-161)

Peace building can be especially challenging when attempted through Christian mission in countries with nationalist tendencies. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 78-79). Kirk explains that Christian mission challenges nationalism because Christians are called to submit themselves, their ambitions and identities to each other and for the sake of God's mission. (Kirk, 1999, p. 35). Kirk specifically points to accounts of missionaries who have gone to Asia and have been met by great skepticism because Christianity is connected to bad Western values and an aggressive economical approach. Also, in some Asian societies conversion is seen as betrayal of the loyalty towards the family or the national and cultural bonds. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 78-81). The risk of discriminatory implications of nationalism is one of the reasons why mission work should not adapt uncritically to all features of a local culture. Kirk emphasizes that the church should never

fully submit itself to the power structures of a society, but needs to continuously critically assess its setting. This is achieved through what Kirk calls a form of *Inculturation* in which there is balance between adaption to the local situation and accountability to a regional, national and international church community. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 89-94). It can be argued that one of the ways accountability to the international church community can be established is through partnerships in mission work.

Very much like Kirk, in *Mission in Context* (2004) both peace building and justice are considered important elements of mission work. Derived from the idea we have seen in the document about God as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier are the three dimensions of mission: *transformation, reconciliation* and *empowerment* throughout which we see both elements of work for justice and for peace reoccur: *Transformation* is about rejecting everything that dehumanizes - like violence and economic injustice - and about promoting societal peace and justice. *Reconciliation* both deals with reconciliation between God and human beings through the gospel and with enhancing reconciliation between people locally and internationally. A premise for reconciliation is liberation, and reconciliation should be focused on restoration for both oppressors and oppressed. *Empowerment* partly refers to equipping mission workers through the power of the Holy Spirit and partly to raising up victims, supporting re-gaining of human dignity and the right for all to have control over their own lives. (LWF, 2004, pp. 32-36). In *Diakonia in Context* (2009); - a later document also published by the Lutheran World Federation - it is elaborated that work for *transformation* includes advocacy, education and mobilization and in this way *transformation* can contribute to *empowerment*. (LWF, 2009, pp. 61-62; 71). Also in *Diakonia in Context* (2009), it is stated that central elements in working for people's right to have control over their own lives are citizenship and democracy. (LWF, 2009, pp. 61-62). In this way, democracy is often mentioned together with work for justice. But to Kirk, instead of stating that Christians should promote democracy, he simply points to that in democratic settings overcoming violence and building peace are easier, as democracies are founded on representative governments and that the rights of minorities are maintained. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 154-161)

## **Human rights**

When it comes to issue of human rights Kirk and *Mission in Context* (2004) are not completely in tune. In *Mission in Context's* (2004) concepts of transformation, reconciliation and empowerment, the idea of human rights is connected to and included in the understanding of mission work. (LWF, 2004, pp. 13; 17). In contrary to this, in *Mission under Scrutiny* (2006), Kirk counters that the idea of secular freedom has reached almost cult status. He connects freedom in the secular sense to the ability of resisting external pressure and expressing identity freely and to each individual's right to become what that person chooses without interference by external authorities. He elaborates that in contrast to this, freedom to choose is only valuable when having something valuable to aim at and continues by claiming that "(...) freedom is a gift of grace, not an intrinsic right that pertains to human beings as such". (Kirk, 2006, p. 23). Kirk's view is in contrast to the idea of freedom as a human right: In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the preamble states that "Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and *fundamental freedoms* [emphasis added]". (UN UDHR, 1948, *Preamble*). According to Kirk, human rights in general are not matters of course without a reference to a higher power who grants human beings worth and dignity. He warns that in case a belief in "natural rights" is insisted on, this leaves it up to each state to determine the meaning of human rights. (Kirk, 2006, p. 20). As opposed to the freedom that Kirk describes as secular, he promotes the freedom of Christianity: To become what we have been created to be and to proclaim it. (Kirk, 2006, pp. 11-25). In other words, Kirk is not against the idea of freedom, but opposes the ideal freedom in a secular sense and points to how the focus in mission should be on true freedom achieved by surrendering to God.

## **Sharing the responsibility of mission work**

### **The importance of partnership**

A central feature of mission work is partnerships. Due to globalization processes international partnerships can be claimed to be of even greater relevance at present than earlier. *Mission in*

*Context* (2004) emphasizes that mission is not solely an individual calling or a local responsibility; it is intrinsic to and a task for the whole world church. (LWF, 2004, p. 44)

One of Kirk's arguments for the importance of partnerships in mission is that God has called Christians to live in fellowship - and a way to outlive this calling is by working through partnerships. Kirk explains that when mission work is conducted without sufficient regard to partnership, the message loses credibility because lack of cooperation goes against the Gospel's message of love and fellowship. Kirk elaborates that in order to achieve successful cooperation through partnerships some extent of agreeing as well as a genuine concern for each other is required. Still, Kirk advocates for the position that churches of different geographical and denominational backgrounds can cooperate about mission. A challenge in cross-geographical cooperation is a tendency for churches in the West to have considered Christianity a Western feature and thus held Christianity in the West as "church" and Christianity in other countries as "mission". In this way the Western stance sometimes indicates arrogance towards churches elsewhere. Kirk emphasizes that mission should not be seen in light of geography, but rather focus on crossing the boundaries of beliefs and convictions. Kirk's understanding implies that mission is something relevant inside each country as well as outside. Kirk further explains that in order to gain a full partnership, churches must both send and receive Christians from each other to share the responsibility of mission. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 24; 184-204). Also *Mission in Context* (2004) mentions the importance of both receiving and sending. In this document the significance of exchanging Christian workers as a feature in partnerships is argued to be of special importance because of the risk of professionalized mission work that implies a division into sender and receiver. (LWF, 2004, p. 45)

### **Sharing, interdependency, equality and accompaniment**

Kirk argues that partnership involves a shared project and a feature of supplementing each other as Christians who have been granted with gifts from God that benefit the church. Kirk mentions two other central ways in which partners must work together through *sharing*: Sharing of material goods as well as sharing in suffering when the consequences of being

Christian are harsh. To outlive a partnership will generally be met by obstacles, Kirk writes. Often the access to resources is a basic reason for this. To gain full *interdependency* people must be equal. Equality can be about societal power, knowledge, status and also access to funds. If the partners are not equal in the sense that they all have access to the funds, *dependency* is what develops instead. Only through equality all partners can have the same access to influence and have the freedom to make decisions. Inequalities can for example result in situations in which the partner with the most funds makes the decisions – or that this partner out of guilt of past power abuses donates without asking questions. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 184-204)

Concerning the idea of reaching equality through sharing in partnerships, the understanding in *Mission in Context* (2004) is in line with Kirk's: The document points to a recently developed model which aims at achieving equality in partnerships and this is called *accompaniment*. Here the central idea is that the partners share all their resources with each other based on a biblical example. (LWF, 2004, p. 45)

### **Involving the receivers**

Another important angle on the topic of sharing the responsibility of mission work is to involve not only local Christians and churches, but also people who are target groups for mission work; be it evangelization or diaconal work. According to Kirk an important aspect of evangelization is not only conveying a message, but also inviting to act in response to the message. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 60-62). In this connection action can be interpreted either as passing on the message to others or to take on various missional responsibilities such as diaconal work or advocacy for justice. Kirk describes how receiving the message of the Gospel is an all-encompassing decision: "Evangelism is an invitation to people to hand over the direction of their lives to Jesus Christ." (Kirk, 1999, p. 61). It seems that Kirk's focus in this context is on whether the people of the target group receive the Gospel. In case they do, they logically belong to the Christian community and then the principles of partnership that we dealt with above apply. The focus in *Mission in Context* (2004) is different. Here the emphasis is on empowering the receivers of help: "The church seeks ways to assist those in need, regardless of their origin or creed, to

regain their human dignity by asserting control over their own lives.” (LWF, 2004, p. 36). In other words, *Mission in Context* (2004) includes a focus on involving the help-receivers regardless of their response to the Gospel.

Through these perspectives by Kirk, *Mission in Context* (2004) and the occasionally drawn in additional contributors, I believe to have achieved a theoretical basis for analyzing my collected data and thereby gaining insight that contributes to answering my research question.





## Method

For my thesis, I have conducted qualitative research and primarily made use of interviews as research method, but also to some extent document analysis and participant observation in order to collect data. My research design entails a case-study of the work of SAINT and its partners HHK, Whitestone and C. K. Park. In the present chapter I will present and argue for my methodological approach.

### Research strategy

I have chosen a qualitative offset to explore the topic of my thesis. The reason is that I wanted to *understand* SAINT and its partners' perspectives on their work. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 27-32).

Working inductively – as is common for qualitative research - is well in line with my approach: I have explored the topic on the basis of my research question and sought to extract the essence from the data I have collected. (Bryman, 2012:32-36)

### Epistemology and ontology

Working qualitatively has had implications for the epistemological and ontological stances of the research. Conducting qualitative research implies adapting an interpretivist perspective. In my thesis this position is easy to defend: Exploring people's perspectives are matters of perceptions and concepts and the object of the study here is the way SAINT and its partners *interpret* the situation and their roles in it. My epistemological stance is primarily inspired by a phenomenological idea; consequently the ontology of this project it is mainly constructivist: The interesting thing here has been to research how the social order of the issue is constructed on the basis of a continuously changing social reality – with SAINT and its partners as focus and active parts in this. "Bracketing" my own perspective and striving to really understand the positions of the actors at play have thus been central. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 28-34)

### Research design

I chose a case-study design for my master's thesis because I wanted to explore only one case in depth. The case that has been my unit of analyses is SAINT – and the work it conducts through its partners. By choosing a case-study I gained the possibility to go into detail with this particular

case and organization. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 66-72). It can however be questioned whether my research can in fact be regarded a case-study and whether I am only dealing with one case since I will go into the work of SAINT as well as its partners. But I have chosen to see it as a whole because my starting point has been the perspectives and efforts of SAINT – and these are closely linked to those of its partners. Focusing on SAINT can be seen as the case type “exemplifying case”: Due to my broader interest in how Christians and Christian organizations can make a difference in the world, this organization functions as an example of these. Or to take another angle, there are other organizations, individuals and groups working on changing the situation in North Korea. SAINT represents one example of these and this research project is then a possibility to explore the situation and process of how an organization understands and envisions the impact of its work.

### **Research quality criteria**

Traditionally, social science research has been assessed on the basis of the quality criteria from quantitative research. This means that research has been evaluated on its validity and reliability. From my qualitative approach I have not expected to gain a high generalizability (which is what external validity normally refers to). Instead I have found data and made conclusions that have enabled me to achieve *theoretical generalization* so that potentially my results can be relevant in other social settings and could prove useful as part of a theoretical backdrop in future research projects. Achieving this type of research quality is sometimes referred to as *transferability*.

The internal validity might be difficult to argue for since I have been conducting the research project alone. Instead, I have sought to present my findings and my understanding of these as openly and fairly as possible in order for the reader to be able to assess my interpretations and the way I have connected these to the theoretical material. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 69-71; 389-398)

As for what concerns the reliability of the project, this term traditionally refers to whether there is consistency in the way data is measured. In qualitative research and therefore in my project it may make more sense to speak of possibility to replicate. Now, it would be possible to repeat

this study in the sense that I have been clear about the process and emphasized transparency. Another way I have enhanced reliability is through my use of *triangulation*. This implies including different types of methods in order to gain data in different ways and so being able to cross-check the findings. I have done this by adding document analysis and participant observation to interviewing as research methods. Some label the quality of qualitative research, which is achieved through this form of transparency and triangulation, *dependability*. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 69-71; 389-398). Still, if someone actually tried to replicate my research, it is unlikely that the result would be exactly the same. The reason for this is connected to the ontology of the project: Since my focus has been a social reality that is in constant change with variables that it is not possible to isolate, it is unlikely that the results would be exactly the same even though I have sought to conduct my project with a high level of integrity. However, since my focus has been the way key actors within well-established organizations understand their work and envision the impact on the basis of it, it is probable that the findings would be similar in a second research project. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 69-71; 389-398)

In my research, I have sought to gain credibility through respondent validation. By this I refer to assuring a high quality of my data by having more respondents whose input I have compared. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 389-398). Also, in my interview guide I have included more than one question about central issues to illuminate the topics from more angles; and I have asked follow-up questions to gain depth in the responses. Additionally, as mentioned, I have amplified the findings through triangulation.

It seems relevant to mention one more parameter of research quality and this is *authenticity*. Authenticity in this connection refers to which impact the research project has on the implicated respondents. I believe to have gained *catalytic authenticity* which has provided some inputs for the future work of the involved organizations and about how these organizations' work can inspire and inform other organizations, individuals and groups that are interested in mission work in general or specifically directed at North Koreans. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 393)

## Values

An issue, which it has been important to be clear about in order to maintain reliability and dependability, is transparency about my position as a researcher. As a researcher within qualitative research I believe it is impossible to be completely objective and avoid bringing my own world view and values into the process. Because of this, I have chosen to be open about my position and also attempted to put aside - to “bracket” - my own world view when I have collected and interpreted the data so that my conclusions have become as reliable as possible. My position is that I am a Christian who believes that God has called humanity to take care of each other and the Earth. I believe that we as Christians have a calling to pray, take part in God’s mission and to take care of people in need. In connection with this project my position implies that I have sympathy for organizations that focus on living out this calling. Also, I believe that when we hear about people who live under egregious humanitarian and human rights conditions like it is the case in North Korea, we simply cannot ignore their pain. In other words, I cannot claim to be impartial in this project, but I have sought to achieve *conscious partiality* through self-reflection. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 18-41). Being clear about my position can then be said to have contributed to increased *confirmability* of my project. Thus, through seeking *dependability, credibility, transferability* and *authenticity* I believe to have achieved *trustworthiness* for my project. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 390-393)

## Ethics

The ethics of a research project concerns whether it is right to conduct the project and also in which way it is right to execute it. It has been important to reflect upon this in order to avoid negative consequences for the respondents and other implicated parties.

When I initiated the research on how SAINT and its partners understand their mission work directed at the North Korean people and what impact they envision, the first important issue was to ensure that the research in all its phases did not imply a negative effect on the work of these.

A part of taking care of the informants' safety and the integrity of their work was to make sure that I gained informed consent from them when I asked them to participate. I wrote an information sheet which the informants have been presented with and gained written consents from them in return. As a part of this process I have applied for and gained permission from NSD<sup>10</sup> for my research project. In general, I have been careful to keep the raw data out of sight of others than myself. Also in the writing phase I have been careful not to share my data – even with my supervisor – until this was cleared with the interview respondents.

As my research has focused on SAINT and its partners' work directed at North Korea, this frame would have made it easy to guess who most of the included individuals were even if I had not mentioned them by name. Due to this I have then chosen – with the respondents consent - to openly present the names of the organizations and people involved. Because of this openness and in combination with the safety issues involved when working towards North Korea, it has been necessary and right to let the interview respondents review the quotes I have selected for my thesis. This also gave them a chance to object to material that could harm the work or imply security risks.

The interview respondent from Whitestone is an exception from the process described above in two ways: First of all, I have chosen not to use the real name of the founder of Whitestone because of the special risks involved due to the organization's work inside North Korea and because SAINT does not mention him by name at its website. Hence, I have chosen to refer to him as Mr. Kim – because Kim is the most common family name in Korea. Secondly, as I have been unable to reach Mr. Kim for several months for confirmation of the quotes I selected from the interview he granted me, I have excluded this material from my thesis. Nevertheless, as Whitestone is described as partner in the work directed at North Koreans on SAINT's website, I have assessed that it is still important for the consistency of my thesis to include information about the organization. The sole source of my information about Whitestone is then the SAINT

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<sup>10</sup> NSD is the Norwegian Centre for Research Data: <http://www.nsd.uib.no/>

website. This means that there is very little information about this organization available for my thesis.

Concerning ethical considerations in conducting participant observation, I chose to be open about my research when I visited HHK: As I was introduced by SAINT to the director of HHK, Tim A. Peters (Peters) in connection with my research project, he knew the purpose of my visit from the beginning. Also, when I attended the Catacomb meetings, he and I explained to the other participants why I was there. In the few observation notes I have included in my data report, I have not mentioned any other participants than Peters by name and I have excluded information that would make it possible to identify individuals. Due to these concerns I will claim that the risk of having disturbed the privacy of people in the proximity of the project is minimal. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 135-146)

### **Sampling**

The sampling of my research project includes a case, participants and contexts. I have already argued for my choice of case and why I chose a case-study for my research project. The way I have argued for this choice shows that my sampling style has been *purposive*: I have chosen it strategically based on which case was most relevant for my area of interest combined with a degree of *convenience sampling* in the sense that the access to SAINT has been a factor. Also, the sampling has been convenience sampling in the sense that apart from SAINT, which partners I could access depended on who SAINT provided me with contact to. Another way to categorize my case sampling could be as *typical case sampling* because it has exemplified how an organization perceives and works within the area of my choice. However, it could additionally be argued that the sampling type has been *critical case sampling* – for there are only so many cases (organizations and partners) that work with a focus on North Korea; and even fewer that are connected to Norway. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 416-428)

My choice of context has already been touched upon: I chose an organization in Norway that works with mission directed at North Koreans through partners located in North and South Korea. I have argued that my reason for this choice of context was partly due to my interest in

the human conditions in North Korea and partly because I wanted to draw attention to how Christians in Norway can support the efforts of improving these conditions. Hence, in addition to Norway and North Korea, South Korea has become a third geographical context for my research.

When sampling the participants for interviews and observation within my case, this can be argued to have been in the style of *generic purposive sampling*: I knew from the beginning that I believed five interview respondents were what I needed and how to get in touch with them. My sampling of participants can perhaps most accurately be described as *criterion sampling*: I chose the key informants in the organizations who could provide most relevant insight into how the work is understood and which effect of their work is envisioned. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 416-428)

## Research methods

As it is customary in qualitative research I have made use of interviewing. Also, I have supplemented my data findings with a limited measure of participant observation and document analysis. In what follows I will account for and discuss how I have made use of the three methods.

### Interviews

I chose interviews as my primary method of data collection because this was the most direct way to gain insight into how the organizations understand their work and what impact they envision. Also, through the use of interviews understanding the meaning of past events in the organizations' relationship to the work in North Korea could be included. The focus of my research has been quite clear. This made it possible through interviewing to get to the point of the insights I wanted to achieve. For these reasons interviewing has been the most important part of my data sampling method. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 494-496)

I have chosen to conduct individual interviews of key informants as opposed to group interviews. The reason for this is partly that the informants live on two different continents and partly that using focus group interviews involves the risk that some will not openly express their

individual views – for example because the group might wish to appear to be in consensus. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 501-504). I have been conducting semi-structured interviews because - based on my research question – I knew what type of information I was looking for. Using semi-structured interviews also underlined the relevance of individual interviews because the need for solid answers to the ten questions of my interview guide would make groups interviews unrealistically time consuming. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 469-472)

In total I have conducted five interviews: Two of them in Norway and three in Korea. In Norway I have interviewed the General Secretary of SAINT, Hans Aage Gravaas and the Head of SAINT's Human Rights Department, Ed Brown. These two have had a lot to do with SAINT's work in North Korea. In South Korea I interviewed the Christian activist, founder and director of HHK, Tim A. Peters. Also, I was granted an interview with C. K. Park who is a partner of both SAINT and HHK. In addition, I interviewed the founder of Whitestone. However, for reasons already accounted for, I have been unable to include this material in my thesis. The hypothetical situation in which I could have used the data from my interview of Whitestone would have strengthened the data foundation of my thesis. However for a research project of this size, the material I have gathered has proven to provide sufficient data to discuss and conclude on my research question.

In my transcription of the interviews I did not include a full phonetic method as I assessed that this would be irrelevant for the purpose of my interviews. Instead I applied the dictionary spelling of the words. However, when the respondents used contractions or their grammar was influenced by accent, I wrote down the quotes as said. Generally in my writing I have leaned on the standard of APA6. (APA, 2010)

### **Participant observation**

I have argued that interviewing was my primary method of data collection. Still, participant observation has contributed with information about issues that I or the informants would not have thought of talking about during the interviews. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 493-494). Throughout my period of data collection the only one of SAINT's partners who had arranged events of



interest for participant observation was HHK with its Catacomb meetings. I was able to attend two of these. The meaning and content of them are explained in the data report. A lot of the work of SAINT's partners is either necessary to conduct in secrecy due to security risks or consist of desk work of little relevance for participant observation. The latter was also the case with SAINT in Norway.

My style of participant observation was to take part in the Catacomb meeting as any other participant. Only I was conscious not to interfere too much in the discussions taking place as I did not wish to affect the content and atmosphere of the meetings. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 433-447). Based on my observations I have produced field notes that were mainly descriptive, but also included initial analytic thoughts. At the meetings I had to limit myself to make jotted notes that I later the same or the coming day expanded into full field notes. Although I in this way produced a good amount of data, I have for my data report chosen to limit my presentation of this, as the data achieved through interviewing in many cases was more to the point. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 447-452; 462-464)

### **Document analysis**

As a third method for triangulation, I have chosen to collect data for document analysis. This data has only been a supplementary method as most was achieved through interviews. Concretely, I have chosen only to include material from the websites of SAINT and HHK as websites in English about the current work of Whitestone and C. K. Park were unfortunately not available. Had the scope of my thesis been greater I could have included more document data about SAINT and HHK as these are mentioned in - and authors of - a good portion of books and articles. Some of these sources are included in the discussion. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 543-561)

### **Data analysis**

Once my data was collected I initiated the data analysis phase. I categorized my data into three groups based on the three sub-questions. From there I analyzed the interview transcripts, my document findings and my observation notes. For this process I chose thematic analysis and it showed useful to look for repetitions, similarities and difference in the data about the

organizations. I also looked for common themes and priorities within these. This process has supported my emphasis in the data report to make a presentation based on the understandings of SAINT and its partners rather than on my own understanding or that of the theory. (Bryman, 2012, pp. 578-581)

After the initial analysis on the basis of the data in itself I conducted a comparison and discussion against my theory chapter. In sum, making use of the research strategy, the research design and the methods I have accounted for in this chapter has created the basis for my providing an answer to the research question.

# Data Report

## Scope and structure

The purpose of this chapter is to report my empirical findings on SAINT and its partners. In a later chapter I will then discuss what insights the data provides in the backdrop of my theoretical selection with regards to my research question. The goal of this data report is to communicate SAINT and its partners' self-understanding in order to avoid attributing approaches to the work of SAINT and its partners that they do not identify with. To put it differently, attempting to grasp their work based on their own perspectives is what is ethically responsible. However, in order to analyze my findings later in the thesis I will interpret and comment on my data findings while I present them.

I will report my findings on SAINT, HHK, Whitestone and C. K. Park and for each of these organize my report after the three sub-questions of my thesis: I will look into their motivational basis, then their hopes and expectations for outcomes and finally their missiological perspectives. When analyzing the motivational basis and the hopes and expectations, the themes are to a high extent intertwined. This is unsurprising since the reasons for being engaged in a project is unavoidably connected to the outcomes that are expected and hoped for. Also the missiological perspectives are naturally interrelated with the motivational basis and the hopes and expectations for the work. Still, to ease my later discussions I will separate my findings into these three categories.

My report is based on data sampling through documents, interviews and participant observation. The sources of my document findings are the websites of SAINT and HHK. SAINT's website includes some information of the work of HHK and Whitestone. I have been unable to locate websites in English that are initiated by and depicting the current work of Whitestone

and C. K. Park<sup>11</sup> (Park). In the case of Park I will briefly include a leaflet he has been involved in publishing.

The inclusion of documents is limited and the purpose of it is simply to illuminate the work of SAINT and its partners from an additional angle. In other words, my primary data source is my interviews of SAINT and its partners HHK and Park<sup>12</sup>. Like mentioned in the introduction, I am prevented from including data achieved through my interview with the founder of Whitestone. As I was able to attend two Catacomb meetings arranged by HHK, I will include some remarks of observations from these. However, because the interviews for the most part contribute with clearer information than the observation notes, I have limited my use of the latter. Due to this I have chosen to include the observation notes in the form of comments when they relate to issues in my interview findings. Before I move on to reporting, I will introduce the settings of the interviews.

## **The settings of the interviews**

### **SAINT**

The interview data about SAINT is based on my interviews of General Secretary of SAINT, Hans Aage Gravaas (Gravaas) and the Head of SAINT's Human Rights Department, Ed Brown (Brown).

I met with Gravaas and Brown in SAINT's office in Oslo, October 2015. The appointments about the interviews were established through email and phone. First, I interviewed Gravaas in his office. He disposed over exactly one hour before he had another appointment and as the interview was expected to be of an hour's duration, this premise made the interview situation slightly tense and the last couple of questions could perhaps have been elaborated on further, had we had the time. After the interview with Gravaas I continued by interviewing Brown in his office. Brown seemed very interested in the topics and allowed the interview to be extended to about one and a half hour.

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<sup>11</sup> Park's business card referred to his current work on the website: [www.북한인권.kr](http://www.북한인권.kr) ("North Korean Human rights" website [2016])

<sup>12</sup> My interview guide is to be found in the appendix.

## **HHK**

Visiting HHK in Seoul, South Korea, I was granted an interview with the Christian activist, founder and director of Helping Hands Korea (HHK), Tim A. Peters (Peters). He is a United States citizen who has settled down in Korea and is married to a South Korean woman. I met with Peters near the Samgakji metro station in the room where HHK invites for “Catacomb meetings” every Tuesday. Gravaas from SAINT had assisted me in connecting to Peters and the granting of an interview was established through emailing. At the time of the interview I had met Peters only once at a Sunday Service that he had invited for in the same venue the previous Sunday. Peters had reserved time for the interview on a Tuesday afternoon before a Catacomb meeting. We were alone, but were occasionally interrupted by loud voices of people walking by or talking on the phone outside the thin windows of the venue.

## **C. K. Park**

Peters from HHK assisted me in getting in touch with C. K. Park (Park) who is a partner of both SAINT and HHK. I met with Park at Saejeol metro station in Seoul, South Korea. From there we walked to where NKDB has its office. It shares facilities with a church for North Korean defectors named 아침의교회<sup>13</sup>. We sat down in the front office for the interview and were alone and undisturbed during most of the interview. Only at one point a young boy walked in and stayed in the office for a while speaking on his phone.

## **Distinguishing person and organization**

When I in the beginning of each interview presented the purpose of my research, one of the things I emphasized was that in addition to possible official answers from the respondents as representatives of organizations, I was also interested in their personal opinions and thoughts. My purpose with this emphasis was to gain a deeper level of insight than what could be found on the organizations’ websites; and I believe this was achieved. What on the other hand may have become a little less clear because of this introduction is when each person is speaking for himself and when he is expressing a general organizational policy. When I report from the few situations in which this distinction was clear, I will comment on this below. However, in most

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<sup>13</sup> “The Church of Morning”. My own translation.

cases there was not much focus on this distinction during my interviews. That being said, the people I interviewed were all either founders or having management positions in their organizations. Because of this, it is fair to assume that there is a high degree of overlap between the organizations' and the respondents' stances on the issues.

## Findings about SAINT

I will start by reporting my findings about SAINT as SAINT is the pivot organization of my thesis.

### SAINT's motivational basis

#### Document findings

The most obvious place to search for the motivational basis of SAINT's work is perhaps in its name which contains a reference to the first Christian martyr, Stefanus. On SAINT's website (2012) it is expressed that this name obligates and challenges SAINT to be a merciful witness of Christ and point to an eschatological future in which God establishes justice. Also, the name is interpreted by SAINT to imply daring to stand out from the crowd and speaking the truth even when this means struggle. (SAINT's website 2012, *Et troverdig sannhetsvitne*)

When we turn to SAINT's more specific motivation for its work in North Korea, we can gain some information about this from the time of the publishing of UN's Report of the Commission of Inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. (UN OHCHR COI, 2014). SAINT is a member of The Religious Liberty partnership and in response to the COI report they issued a statement about their concern for North Korea. The response included a commitment for its members and a calling to the international community to raise awareness about and to act on the situation in North Korea. (RLP, 2014). In connection with this statement, SAINT's website issued the following comment about SAINT's obligation to act and about the urgency of the matter:

It is important that the well-documented report and the recommendations from UN's Commission of Inquiry are not just kept in a drawer in the UN to collect dust. The horrible

violations of human rights that are described in this report have been going on for too long. It is time for action now! (SAINT's website, 2012, *Engasjert for Nord-Korea*)<sup>14</sup>

These statements show that part of SAINT's motivation is its duty to participate promptly in the efforts against human rights violations in North Korea.

### **Interview findings**

When I asked about Gravaas' motivation for the work directed at the North Korean people, his first emphasis was on the experience that SAINT's work help changing the lives of people to the better: "To see that someone – groups or individuals – have a better life; that is a vision big enough for me." As we can deduce from the quote the motivation of improving people's life would be a sufficient reason to act according to Gravaas. He however mentions as a second motivational factor the importance of helping people prepare for the changes they will face when the North Korean system collapses:

But at the same time we need to be optimistic: We need to think that this is a temporary phenomenon. (...) We grew up with the Soviet Union, the big lion in the East. It was totally scary. (...) When I was rather young, the Soviet Union collapsed (...) and it was changed! (...) And I think (...) the same (...) would happen with (...) North Korea as well: so the preparation for change.

As we can see, Gravaas predicts the fall of the North Korean system due to the historical fall of the Soviet and thus argues for the need of preparing the North Koreans for change. Gravaas added a third element of motivation when asked about what makes the work that SAINT does important. His answer was probed by his visit at SAINT's partner in North Korea and the impression the meeting with the North Korean people made on him:

To walk around in the Northern villages of North Korea together with our partner and to see small children and their parents and others; see their faces as their children are receiving food... That's something very special! Very special! There's a lot of communication going on!

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<sup>14</sup> My own translation.

In this quote we see how the reactions that Gravaas experienced in the meetings with help-receivers inside North Korea have made a great impression on him. The experience seems to be an inner picture that Gravaas carries with him as a part of his personal motivation for the work. Later in the interview when asked about what makes the work important he elaborated that he interpreted the help receivers' reactions as an expression of them feeling seen and perceiving SAINT to be a friend.

Brown responded to the question about motivational basis by dividing the answer into SAINT's motivation and his own personal motivation. He explained that as a mission and human rights organization there needs to be both a Christian mission potential and problems with human rights abuses like persecution of Christians in order for SAINT to get involved:

Here we looked at North Korea because from our perspective there's a huge need. From a mission's point of view: Back in the 20s and 30s, Pyongyang – the capital of North Korea – was looked at as the Jerusalem of Southeast Asia. (...) How can we contribute to it becoming a new Jerusalem again? And from a human rights perspective: Obviously, when you have a regime that (...) to such a large degree oppresses its people, that makes laws that forbid you to use the term "God in Heaven" for instance or to read the Bible. That has a very serious religious freedom aspect to it. So for us from *that* point of view it's (...) a country that's worthy of our attention.

This way, Brown argued that SAINT's motivation for being engaged in work for North Koreans is their need for help, SAINT's passion for religious freedom and the wish to see Christian revival. When turning to Brown's personal motivation, he said: "This is one of the worst places in the world to be a human being. As Christians we (...) should be doing something about it if we have the opportunity to." In this way Brown both expressed a motivational basis in the gravity of the North Korean situation and in a Christian calling to engage in compassionate actions. Then, answering the question about what makes the work important, he elaborated:

As a Christian organization and as a (...) Christian I'm motivated by the idea that God created us in his image. And therefore every human being *does* have inherent dignity and worth. And that we have a call to work (...) for those who don't experience that dignity and that worth.



As we can see, Brown again pointed to a Christian calling as a motivational basis and additionally to a belief in human worth and dignity as a factor. While evaluating what makes the work important, he explained that personally during his life he has felt a calling to raise a prophetic voice against and to act on injustices.

## **SAINT's hopes and expectations for the outcomes of its work**

### **Document findings**

On SAINT's website it is not written directly what the hopes and expectations for the outcomes of the work directed at North Korea are. However, the goals of providing humanitarian aid and working for freedom of religion or belief can be deduced from what I understand as SAINT's mission statement:

Our motto is: "Together for the persecuted." We provide support, care, and practical help for churches and individuals who are persecuted or oppressed because of their religious beliefs. Through focusing on incidents where freedom of belief is violated, we try to put pressure on the authorities in countries where such violations are taking place.

By lobbying the Norwegian government to address these issues, and by challenging individuals to write letters of appeal, we advocate on behalf of those who have had their religious rights violated. (SAINT'S website, 2012, *Om oss – English*)

In addition to establishing the goals of providing humanitarian aid and working for freedom of religion or belief, this quote shows that SAINT's approach encompasses practical help to people in need as well as political advocacy for religious rights.

### **Interview findings**

In the data findings, SAINT's hopes and expectations seem to firstly encompass what effects Gravaas and Brown already see in the form of North Koreans' curiosity and their taking responsibility. Secondly the findings include some future goals in the form of ensuring the people's survival, their having dignified lives as well as freedom. Thirdly, the data signifies SAINT's perspective on the ideal future of North Korea in which human rights flourish.

## Curiosity and responsibility

Included in the motivational basis were some elements that point to expectations for SAINT's work: Gravaas expressed that providing the North Koreans with food and attention serves a purpose in itself. He also pointed to that their work makes people wonder why SAINT and its partners are helping them - which can prompt them to become curious about Christianity. Brown pointed to the latter when he explained about their partner HHK's work in China near the North Korean border:

People will come and they'll ask the ones who are really helping them: "Why do you do this?" And they'll respond, you know: "Because of God's love". Many of them are curious and we know of cases where people said: "This is something we've never heard of. The word for God in Heaven is forbidden in our country. And we've heard that Christians are *bad* people; that they are part of the imperialist movement - and you are showing us something different."

Brown's point seems to be that the practical way SAINT and its partners bear witness about God's love has an effect: The intrinsic testimony about God's love is not just *hoped* to reach North Koreans; it *has* been received by some and as Brown continues, we see that some recipients of the help have even taken action to spread the message of the Gospel:

"(...) We need to take this message back to our people." And then they will go back across the border with this new message and people will then memorize parts of the Bible or smuggle with them Bibles to go back.<sup>15</sup>

## Survival, dignified lives and freedom

Asked about the expected outcomes of SAINT's work, Gravaas objected with the point that human behavior cannot be predicted. However, in connection with explaining the importance of SAINT's work, he expressed a hope that SAINT's partners' presence can trigger questions in the

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<sup>15</sup> Upon occasion after the interview, Peters from HHK commented that if a refugee believer feels strongly compelled to return to North Korea to share his/her new faith then they from HHK's side respect that initiative, although they warn the person that there are very real risks and dangers involved. Peters also underlined, that they in HHK do not urge or press refugee believers to go back into dangerous environments.

population that will work towards change. He added that the presence can inspire the people to take action against the current situation: “Mostly, the long-lasting changes start from the inside; (...) from an understanding that things can be different.” It can be deduced from this that SAINT and its partner’s work can inspire to change by providing contact to the outside world. In line with the motivation for the work, Gravaas also mentioned the goal and understanding that SAINT and its partners’ “deeds”, “love” and “compassion” can serve as strong communicators about God’s love. When asked about goals for SAINT’s work, Brown expressed some sub-goals by pointing to ensuring the survival and dignity for the North Korean people through the partnership with Whitestone:

How can we help the North Korean people to survive and (...) experience human dignity and human worth? The (...) rolls for school children and soy milk for school children are helping to live a dignified life so they’re (...) not going to bed hungry every night. For me that’s a motivating factor and it’s a goal in itself: they will experience a life that’s worth living.

What the quote expresses is that contributing to the North Korean people having food and dignified lives is a goal as well as a motivational factor. Brown emphasized that freedom is the main goal: “The overall goal is that people will be able to live free lives and be able to choose as they will.” For him freedom is so important because he believes it to be a premise for a “life worth living”.

#### Human rights flourishing

When asked about the hopes for the outcomes if anything was be possible, Gravaas promptly answered by pointing to securing freedom for the people: “I would like to see freedom of speech, freedom of conscious, freedom of belief, freedom of gathering, freedom of trade. Such things I would like to see.” In the quote we can see that Gravaas includes religious freedom as well as other freedoms that are connected to the concept of human rights. Brown similarly spoke of freedom of religion or belief as a goal for the future: “I envision a society where people are free to practice, to have the faith they want to have, to change it if they want to and practice it peacefully. Either alone, together with others, privately or publically.” In other words,

both Gravaas and Brown expressed the hope that SAINT's work on the long run can contribute to a situation in which freedom of religion or belief as well as other human rights are flourishing. Gravaas continued by predicting that the North Korean regime will eventually fall resulting in reunification with South Korea and that the people will then still need assistance to reconstruct and reach equal rights for all. Thus he expressed that SAINT is committed to provide assistance on a long-term basis. In the interview Brown used the North Korean regime's self-description as a hope for the future: "I'd like to think and hope that at some point North Korea will become what it claims to be now: 'Paradise on Earth' for the people who live there."

One final issue raised by Gravaas deserves to be included here: From the beginning of the interview while explaining about the scope of SAINT's work, he expressed a vision for South Koreans to take responsibility for North Koreans both in the sense of helping North Korean refugees integrate in South Korea and of proclaiming the Gospel to them: "What would happen if these South Koreans came out of their bubbles and tried to witness to their North Korean neighbors? I think that would be the greatest revolution we have ever seen!" As we can see, Gravaas spoke with great expectations of the outcomes in case more South Koreans take responsibility for the North Korean situation.

## **SAINT's missiological perspective**

### **Document findings**

On SAINT's website it is clarified that the organization on the one hand works with mission and on the other hand with human rights. The foundation of SAINT's work on well-known Christian confessions is established:

The Stefanus Alliance has its starting point in Jesus' Great Commission that obligates the Christian church to go to all nations. The organization builds upon the Bible, the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds and the Lausanne Covenant. (...) The work is based on evangelical and

ecumenical grounds and is carried by Christians from various denominations.

(SAINT's website, 2012, *Misjon*)<sup>16</sup>

From the quote we learn that SAINT is interdenominationally oriented and that it among others is based on the Bible and the Nicene creeds which are documents that must be said to be widely recognized in Christian connection. SAINT's understanding of the Great Commission as being about both words and actions is elaborated on in SAINT's Articles of Association: "The Stefanus Alliance gets its mandate from the Biblical message about mission and from Jesus' commandment to the Christian Church to bring the Gospel to all nations in words and actions." (SAINT, 2014, *Statutter*, p. 3)<sup>17</sup>. The phrasing "in words and actions" shows that SAINT generally understands mission as encompassing proclamation as well as practical assistance. That this practical angle includes a holistic aim becomes clear in the purpose description of SAINT: "The Stefanus Alliance will provide practical care for the whole person." (SAINT, 2014, *Statutter*, p. 3)<sup>18</sup>. In SAINT's Articles of Association about the international mission work it is further emphasized that SAINT wishes to reach the unreached as well as provide practical aid and to generally work for religious freedom with reference to § 18 in UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This includes the understanding that SAINT has a special calling to help persecuted Christians. (SAINT, 2014, *Statutter*, p. 2). In sum, SAINT's missiological perspective encompasses proclamation as well as a dimension of practical care – in addition to its emphasis on working for human rights.

### **Interview findings**

To draw out SAINT's missiological perspective I will start with Gravaas and Brown's answers to my question about what the term "mission" mean to them. Gravaas pointed to how it is both used in a Christian and a secular sense, but when focusing on the Christian use he defined this as being the "hands and legs of the Christian churches" and "the task for the Christian Church". He elaborated that in his understanding mission consists of both "words and deeds". He also

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<sup>16</sup> My own translation.

<sup>17</sup> My own translation.

<sup>18</sup> My own translation.

used the phrasing “proclamation and diaconia”. Gravaas emphasized that these two are “interconnected” and “integrated”. When I asked him about the meaning of mission in North Korea he specified that mission in that context has the form of “Christian presence” defining it as representing “(...) God’s body by being at the place as Christians”. During the interview Gravaas repeatedly spoke about mission in North Korea as “pre-evangelism”. He used this term in the sense that Christians can be present and show the surroundings that there is a reason why they are different. The result of this is then that Christians can affect the people around them by: “...opening their hearts and making them ready for the Gospel”.

Brown’s definition of mission was to some extent similar to Gravaas’ in that he included proclamation as well as a practical dimension. While accounting for the scope of SAINT’s work in the beginning of the interview, he explained that when it comes to North Korea, SAINT’s partners have chosen to focus on the diaconal part of what mission is: “It’s not explicit sharing or witnessing, but it’s ‘being a witness’ type of work.” In this way he distinguished between proclamation and practical assistance in mission work and pointed to the latter for their engagement in North Korea. Brown emphasized that in his opinion mission work should be seen as separate from the human rights work that SAINT conducts - even though he believes mission and human rights work to be equally important. In connection with my question about what makes the work important, Brown expressed the experience that he personally felt called to work on the human rights side. An interesting element in Gravaas’ and Brown’s missiological perspectives is the understanding that their work has a political dimension. As the former phrased it: “Whatever we do has a political dimension” In the discussion chapter I shall return to how this can be understood.

Even though both Gravaas and Brown defined mission as including proclamation they also both expressed that this is not something SAINT is focusing on in North Korea because it is too dangerous. However their partner HHK includes proclamation work directed at North Korean refugees outside of North Korea. Since Gravaas and Brown both emphasized that their work

directed at North Koreans encompasses practical assistance and human rights advocacy I will now elaborate on the data findings within these categories.

#### Witnessing about God's love by helping North Koreans

This category covers the practical assistance to the North Korean people that SAINT is engaged in; both to refugees in China and those still living in North Korea. Several times Gravaas spoke of the "needs" of the people. Sometimes he phrased it as providing for the people's "felt and real needs" and other times for their "basic needs". He added that needs will change as society changes and so SAINT has to adapt its work accordingly. By this he could be implying that at some point it may be possible to have fellowship and share the Gospel with the North Koreans. Gravaas mentioned that practical help to North Koreans budget-wise has a higher priority than advocacy for human rights.

#### Human rights work

The other category of SAINT's work is about human rights. Both Gravaas and Brown often spoke of this in terms of "advocacy". They emphasized freedom of religion or belief, but at the same time pointed to this right's being dependent on other human rights like freedom of speech. Brown described how the human rights work that SAINT conducts inside North Korea is normally indirect or a byproduct. He exemplified this by explaining that helping people getting fed is a goal in itself, but at the same time having access to food is a basic human right.

#### Partnerships with local partners

Another theme in the interviews concerning SAINT's missiological perspective is its view on partnerships. Gravaas and Brown both established that a special approach they have chosen in SAINT is not to use emissaries. Instead they work through local partners. They unanimously stated that they prefer this approach. Gravaas argued that this contextualizes the work as opposed to forcing a Norwegian perspective on a completely different setting. He also spoke of a high degree of trust between SAINT and its partners. Brown added that SAINT treats its partners with respect and that these are trusted with decisions concerning approach and ethical

dilemmas. Brown explained that due to SAINT's dialogue with their partners in many countries, SAINT's representatives can contribute to the cooperation with a large degree of experience with how mission and human rights work can be conducted. Brown additionally described the relationship with the partners as similar to that of a family and pointed out that with an approach in which local partners are used instead of emissaries, the potential power inequality which can be an issue between mission organizations and help receivers is decreased.

Both Gravaas and Brown mentioned the geographical distance to its partners in the work for the North Korean people as a challenge and pointed to the experience that communication through emails can be a slow process. A specific challenge when it comes to North Korea is also that SAINT cannot send in ambassadors from the grassroots in Norway. Instead SAINT is dependent on in other ways to receive information and "stories" that can engage the Norwegian grassroots in supporting the work directed at North Koreans.

### **Summary of the findings about SAINT**

SAINT's motivational basis can be said to consist of three categories of arguments: First, the North Korean people is within the scope of SAINT's target group; secondly that there is a Christian duty and calling to take care of the North Korean people - because of their inherent worth and dignity and because they live under such difficult circumstances and thirdly, that SAINT expect positive outcomes from their work.

Regarding hopes and expectations for the outcomes of SAINT's work, I found the belief that it can improve the life quality of the North Korean help-receivers and that the work carries a testimony about God's love. It is expected that the presence of SAINT's partners can trigger two types of questions in the recipients that can trigger change: One about why SAINT are helping them which can make them curious about God and another about what the outside world is like; this can inspire them to create change from within as well as prepare for when the regime falls. Gravaas hopes that the South Korean people will step up and start taking responsibility for its North Korean neighbors. Ideally, Gravaas and Brown envision a future in North Korea in which human rights are flourishing.



SAINT's missiological perspective includes a definition of mission that consists of two things: Proclamation of the Gospel on the one side and practical assistance and help to encounter people as whole beings on the other. Brown preferred to separate the understanding of mission and human rights work. Gravaas did not make this distinction. SAINT works through local partners and described the partnerships as characterized by respect and trust.

## Findings about HHK

HHK is one of the two partners in the work directed at the North Korean people that are mentioned on SAINT's website. Here I will present the data findings about HHK's motivational basis, hopes and expectations as well as missiological perspective.

### HHK's motivational basis

#### Document findings

The work of HHK is on its website explained as being based on a motivation in Jesus' example to care "(...) for the poor, sick, downtrodden and oppressed". (HHK's website, 2016: *Confronting the NK crisis*). This example is elaborated on in HHK's mission statement's establishing that HHK's work exists: "(...) in response to Jesus Christ's call to love, serve, relieve suffering and set the exploited free." (HHK's website, 2016, *Who We Are*). In short, HHK's website expresses a motivational basis consisting of a calling to care for people who are poor, in pain or in need of freedom.

#### Interview findings

During the interview Peters spoke repeatedly of the motivational basis on God's unconditional love. The first time was when he in the beginning of the interview explained about HHK's activities:

The help that we are giving is part of our belief that God loves them in an unconditional way. (...) You know as the Apostle Paul said: "The love of Christ compels me, the love of God urges me onto show his love to others."

In the quote we see the emphasis on communicating God's unconditional love and that God's love implies a calling. Peters then added that the work of HHK has an overt Christian motivational basis: "We are not apologetic about the fact that we are Christians. In other words we (...) clearly explain that our actions are motivated by the love of Jesus Christ." To phrase it differently, in the work of HHK, God's love is expressed in words as well as actions. Peters continued by expressing hope that this motivation will have impact on the North Korean help-receivers: "At least they will hopefully remember it and that will be an influence in their life; at least a memory." Later when asking about HHK's goals it became clearer what influence Peters referred to: "I do feel that they ultimately also need to know that somebody Up There loves them. You know, somebody loves them." This shows Peters' emphasis on the people's need for God's love as well as practical assistance. In addition to the motivational basis that Peters has in the love of God, it seems that Peters' "heart for people" is a factor. Attending the Sunday services and the Catacomb meetings my impression was that Peters met everyone who showed up – friends or new acquaintances – with genuine interest, humility and generosity. I interpreted this as signifying that part of Peters' motivational basis is his general interest and care for people.

When I started asking questions about motivation, Peters added humanitarian and human rights concerns to the primary motivation of love:

Humanitarian would be second in terms of trying to meet the needs of the entire person. (...)  
And then the third one would probably be concern for the human rights of a people who have been almost completely denied those human rights.

From this quote we also learn that Peters includes a holistic perspective on people's needs in his humanitarian focus.

In order to probe Peters to elaborate on his motivational basis I asked about what makes the work important and he responded by pointing to the serious nature of the problems in North Korea:

The need is so great and what we know about conditions inside North Korea is so gravely serious. (...) Let alone being a Christian, let alone being a humanitarian - but just to have self-respect, how (...) can we not address a situation as egregious as we find inside North Korea? So, to me that makes it important.

Peters spoke of the serious situation in North Korea and the urge to act on it in even stronger terms while I was inquiring into HHK's goals:

You could almost read that sense of fear and alienation and deprivation that they felt on so many levels. (...) I've worked in a lot of areas in different countries, (...) but (...) it was thundering at me with the North Koreans. It was like this, *this* is a desperate situation!

Peters also commented that only few people and organizations have initiated work in North Korea because the conditions are so difficult; and that this fact makes the work even more important.

## **HHK's hopes and expectations for the outcomes of its work**

### **Document findings**

The mission statement of HHK begins with committing to provide holistic assistance to North Koreans: "HHK is an organization committed to actively responding to the plight of oppressed North Koreans by alleviating physical, social, political and spiritual needs through partnership with like-minded individuals". (HHK's website, 2016, *Who We Are*). The quote indicates that HHK's goals encompass meeting human needs at an individual as well as at group and societal level. Partnerships are also emphasized.

Here it is relevant to mention how the purpose of the Catacomb meetings, that I will elaborate on in the interview findings, according to HHK's website is to raise awareness about North Korea as well as praying for it. (HHK's website, 2016, *How to help*)

## **Interview findings**

Presenting the findings about HHK's hopes and expectations for the outcomes of its work, central themes in the interview have proved to be the provision of holistic assistance, encouraging taking responsibility and some visions for the ideal outcome of the work.

### Providing holistic assistance

What is clearly and repeatedly presented as a goal for HHK – as we also saw on HHK's website – is to provide North Koreans with holistic help and to stop their pain;

(...) to meet the needs of the whole person of the North Korea population so many of whom have been deprived and so many of whom have been injured physically, emotionally, psychologically. To bring (...) the balm of healing (...) to the people that seem to need it so desperately. (...) To stop the pain in every sense of the word: (...) The sense of isolation, alienation, the sense of worth.

As we can see from the quote, Peters emphasized bringing healing and stopping the pain in all areas of the North Koreans' lives. He continued to include a concern for their existentialistic pain: "They must have this desperate feeling of like: What's this all about, and what does this all mean? And there are such wonderfully powerful answers to that." I have interpreted this quote as pointing to spiritual needs that can be met by grasping God's love.

To this holistic approach Peters added that when HHK helps North Koreans escape to safe countries like South Korea, this provides them with choices for the first time in their lives. Speaking of providing North Koreans with choices can surely be interpreted as connected to a goal of more freedom and an improved human rights situation for the North Koreans.

While Peters expressed hope of being a testimony about God's love to the North Koreans, he was clear about the fact that often HHK acts as an invisible influence and also that people respond very differently to the assistance:

People respond along a whole continuum to us. If they even know about us. If they hear that it's a foreign organization (...) some of them may think: "Okay this is an American organization that wants us to be like this or such and so". You know. It wouldn't surprise me that some may interpret it that way. Others may look at it (...) strictly as a humanitarian organization.

In other words, Peters recognizes that even though some help receivers understand that there is a God who loves them, others respond with suspicion. Just like it is different how North Korean help-receivers respond to HHK's work, also political actors in South Korea react very differently to HHK. Peters explained that some right-wing conservatives consider him a North Korean sympathizer while some on the left-wing perceive him as a "Bible-pounding Christian who's only helping the North Koreans because I wanna make new converts". Although Peters described the South Korean society as having a tendency to superficial labelling, he expressed gratitude for the support and tolerance that he also experiences:

But on the other hand there are so many wonderful people who appreciate what we do and are helpful and I must say that I'm very grateful because the [South Korean] government has been very tolerant and has been very respectful of my work.

#### Encouraging taking responsibility

Besides the goal to help North Koreans in a holistic way and through this demonstrating God's love, Peters also expressed hope that the work of HHK would inspire both North and South Koreans to take responsibility to work for change: He spoke of encouraging North Koreans in China to share with others the love and help they have received. Also in the beginning of the interview he was speaking of how to avoid a situation in which North Koreans receive the Christian message at a superficial level. The approach he described was to encourage the help-receivers to take responsibility and help other North Korean refugees. Peters connected this responsibility to discipleship and to developing Christian maturity. In addition to Peters' wish to see North Koreans take responsibility, he also spoke of his hope that the Catacomb meetings can help inspire South Koreans to start acting on the North Korean situation:

The Catacombs meeting that we have every Tuesday is my attempt to open up the conversation about helping North Koreans: What the problems are, sensitizing people in South Korea as well as expatriates. And once we're in a kind of forum to not only talk about what are the problems, what are the difficulties and raise awareness, but what are practical ways to help? (...) Even if people aren't gonna be connected to what we do, we might connect them to somebody else.

In short the quote expresses that Peters want the Catacomb meetings to function as a catalyzer for action on the North Korean situation. When I first attended a Catacomb meeting, Peters explained that the meetings are a way to show solidarity with the North Korean people. On the two occasions I attended these meetings eight to nine people participated; these included writers, researchers and people who are engaged in work for North Koreans.

When I during the interview asked about the societal influence on HHK's work, Peters made a remark that out of the donations that HHK receive, very little is from South Koreans. He added:

I'm frankly disappointed that most [South Korean] churches are far more interested in building a bigger church building and having a bigger program or sending missionaries to Africa and (...) these very exotic destinations instead of – in my view – stopping and considering that there's a desperately needy mission field right 50 miles from here.

In this way Peters clearly expressed a hope that HHK's Catacomb meetings will encourage South Koreans – and especially Christians - to take responsibility for the North Korean situation.

When I first arrived to the venue of the Catacomb meetings I was surprised to see that in spite of the "Catacomb" label the meetings were held over ground. The venue was simply a small room right inside a glass door facing a narrow, decentralized shopping street. The attribute "Catacomb" refers to the underground burial systems in Rome used by the early Christian church; also for Mass. The Christians' use of the Catacombs was not kept secret, but the location implied low public attention. In my experience, HHK's Catacomb gatherings seemed like network meetings where different interests and resources were shared and contact information exchanged.

Since I was surprised that only one or two handful of people attended the Catacomb meetings I participated in; and due to the fact that HHK do not advertise actively for the Catacomb meeting in any other sense than an open inviting on the website, I asked Peters how this approach was connected to the goal of using the Catacomb meetings to raise awareness about the North Korean situation. He laughingly answered:

Obviously we're not going to be raising awareness in a huge mass multitude of people in this small space, so. Practically speaking, if I gather 150 people: Where am I gonna put them in here? (...) I guess I'm not so much looking for individuals who want their ears tickled with new information about North Korea, but gradually I am more interested in individuals who are a bit more serious about it and (...) are looking not only to find out new information, but they are (...) also interested to find out what they can do about that. (...) People manage to find us somehow.

In the quote above Peters emphasized quality over quantity: The Catacomb meetings are not about having a lot of people chatting about problems, but about being in dialogue with people who are interested in acting on the problems for the North Korean people.

Visions for the ideal outcome

When I asked Peters about what he envisions as the outcome of HHK's work, he returned to what has been the core theme: Expressing God's love and for the North Korean people to grasp it:

I would envision (...) that they would see us (...) not just as a humanitarian organization, but hopefully that we are in (...) one shape or form an instrument of the love of God. That that would somehow register with them. (...) That would be the grand prize, right? That would be (...) winning the lottery: That ultimately they realized that: Oh, oh, that's because GOD loves me! (...) If that was clear to them (...) I could be at peace.

In the beginning of the interview – asking if HHK is working with peace building - Peters spoke about a long term vision of the effect of HHK's work: To support the development towards peace building and reunification of the two Koreas:

In my opinion reunification is happening one life at a time. (...) We know there is this terrible pain of almost a million or more families that were divided back in 1950, but (...) the whole peninsula has this psychic wound which is the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, so I *do* believe that we are building peace by bringing people to be re-united with their families, (...) but I also think that by helping a regular stream of North Koreans come to South Korea it is preparing South Korea for the possibility of eventual reunification.

The quote shows how Peters believes that HHK's work helps preparing for reunification through its refugee assistance. He added to this that the meetings between North and South Koreans that the work results in help neutralizing the prejudices created by many years of propaganda on both sides. In his responses Peter indicated that to him "peace building" is tantamount to working towards reunification of the two Koreas.

## **HHK's missiological perspective**

### **Document findings**

As we saw in HHK's mission statement and what provides some insights as to its missiological perspective is the fact that HHK understands mission as addressing physical and political needs as well as the spiritual need to hear the Gospel. This is confirmed on a subpage that elaborates on the approach towards the spiritual need:

It is our belief and operating principle that spiritual hope, faith and direction are of equal importance to physical sustenance. Each refugee in our shelters receives a Bible and an introduction to the Christian faith. Acceptance is a personal matter.

(HHK's website, 2016, *Confronting the NK crisis*)

This quote shows that HHK emphasizes including evangelism in its work. Meanwhile North Koreans are free to respond as they choose to the message of the Gospel.

### **Interview findings**

The missiological ideas that emerged from the interview with Peters are first of all how he defines mission, then secondly about his view on the relation between evangelization, humanitarian work as well as work for human rights and peace building. Thirdly, I will present



his idea about preventing “rice-Christianism” and finally about how he sees the partnership with SAINT.

### Defining mission

Towards the end of the interview I asked Peters what the term “mission” means to him. He answered by pointing to delivering the message about God’s love in a tangible way:

“Mission” means the Christian message, delivered to those who don’t know it in a - I would say - in an incarnate way, in a way that is understandable, and is meaningful and is not purely intellectual. (...) They can find food, they can find warm, dry clothing and encouragement and safety for example. (...) It’s (...) a message that (...) can be experienced in a tangible way and in a meaningful way, but still carries the love of God and the promises of God.

In this way Peters defined mission as expressing the love of God through practical help and also in words. When I then asked what mission meant with regards to the North Korean people, Peters maintained his general view of mission, but added that their deprivations and needs makes mission work even more meaningful to them:

Well, I would say that insofar as the things that they have been deprived of: the freedom, so the human rights etc. To that degree, that they have been denied those things, it would mean more to them, I think. The fullness of the love of God in the mission would (...) answer those questions of: (...) “Isn’t there more to life than what we’re doing every day?”

In addition to expressing that mission means more to North Koreans, the quote also points to the existentialistic value of showing God’s love; there is more to life than the current reality. In order to elaborate on Peters’ understanding, I asked him about the theological approach of HHK. He then spoke of the importance of the Great Commandment and commented that he regards the North Koreans as an unreached people. On the basis of this he emphasized his understanding of mission as something that should start in the neighborhood of where Christians live:

If you look at Acts 1:8: (...) “you shall be a witness to me in Jerusalem, and all Judea and in Samaria, and *then* to the uttermost part of the Earth”. (...) Often times the Korean churches say: “Well, *after* reunification, we’re gonna flood back here and then all flood into North Korea etc”. But I said: “(...) Maybe the South Koreans can’t go *inside* North Korea right now, but they can go to China”. “Oh, that’s dangerous”. “Yes, that’s dangerous; (...) it’s difficult, dangerous and dirty, BUT somebody has to do it and who (...) has the language ability and the cultural sensitivities to *do this?*”

In other words, Peters’ interpretation of this Bible verse in Acts is that every Christian group has a responsibility to go to the people closest to them and share the Gospel before they continue to others. He acknowledged the risks involved, but maintained that South Koreans carry a special responsibility for the North Korean people.

Evangelization, humanitarian work, human rights and peace building

Peters explained that budget-wise the emphasis in HHK’s work is on projects in China and other humanitarian efforts. He also noted that throughout all of the humanitarian work there is a thread of evangelization – since he envisions their humanitarian work as communicating the Christian message in a tangible way. Also there is a thread of human rights here in the sense that HHK’s work implies relief of hunger, torture and - as the following quote points to - provides choices for the North Koreans:

These people are voting the only way they can by voting with their feet to leave. So I feel that it’s very intrinsically helping them with their human rights by assisting them to leave China. Because until they leave China they are not free either. Because the Chinese will send them back if they catch them; without any interview or any determination about refugee status etc.

The provision of choices through HHK’s refugee assistance is thus connected to human rights work. As presented earlier, Peters additionally understood the refugee assistance as contributing to peace building between the two Koreas.

### Preventing “rice-Christianism”

While I during the interview was inquiring into the role of evangelism, Peters informed me that their partners in China with the main contact with North Koreans are mostly Christian and share the Gospel on their own initiative. What he in this connection spoke keenly about was his encouraging the partners to treat North Koreans equally regardless of how they receive the message of the Gospel. He argued that failing to take this into account would imply the risk of outcomes in “rice-Christians”; which refers to people who superficially take on the label “Christians” because of the prospect of receiving more help - for example in the form of rice. During the interview he explained that this could be prevented by being “non-selective”, “even-handed”, “un-partial” and “non-coercive” when helping people. On the other hand he also emphasized discipling the North Koreans who chose to receive the Gospel into maturity and taking responsibility; as mentioned in the earlier paragraph about encouraging taking responsibility.

### Working with partners

When I asked about how the geographical and cultural distance affects the cooperation with SAINT, Peters expressed that this is not a big issue for him because of internet based communication and visits both ways. Instead what he stressed was the significance of trust in their cooperation about work that he labelled “unorthodox”:

I greatly appreciate the high level of trust that exists between Stefanus and ourselves so I never feel that Stefanus is looking over our shoulders and questioning what we are doing. There is a high level of trust and that is highly beneficial. (...) Because the work that we do is very unorthodox: It is unlike a lot of humanitarian - or even mission work - in the sense that we have to do it under the radar in China. (...) So, some organizations would be uncomfortable with that; (...) But I am deeply appreciative that Stefanus seems to understand.

The quote shows how the special circumstances of working with North Koreans require a certain level of understanding and trust in a partnership - and that Peters have experienced that this is achieved in the partnership with SAINT. Later in the interview when I was asking about

the political and societal influence on HHK's work, Peters again spoke of the high level of secrecy. He explained that due to secrecy concerns it is hard to produce evidence and results that can be shown to potential fund contributors. However, he went on to explain his grateful astonishment that the cooperation with SAINT was established through contacting him and not as a result of him campaigning; which he had not experienced before in mission work.

Related to the secrecy of HHK's work is the limited concrete information that can be found about its work. Although reporting data findings mainly involves presenting what was said and found, it can also be interesting what was not found: There is no mentioning on the website of a board, of employees or any named partners to whom work is delegated. When I asked Peters about this in the end of the interview, he explained that he could not provide me with information about this due to the necessary secrecy of HHK's work; to openly inform about this could put the involved partners at risk.

### **Summary of the findings about HHK**

HHK's work can be said to be based first and foremost on a Christian motivation; a calling to share God's unconditional love with the North Korean people who is in a desperate situation. The second part of Peters' motivation consisted of a holistic humanitarian concern. Supporting this is his general compassion for people in need. Thirdly, a motivational factor for HHK consists in Peters' burden for the human rights situation in North Korea.

Concerning HHK's hopes and expectations for the outcomes of its work I must first point to the central theme that was also an issue in the motivational basis: For HHK to be a concrete testimony about God's love. HHK wishes to provide holistic aid at the individual, group and societal levels. Another goal is to encourage both North and South Koreans to take responsibility for the North Korean situation. Finally, a goal for HHK is, through the Underground Railroad, to take part in peace-building between the Koreas and thus prepare for reunification.

About the missiological perspective of HHK, mission is understood as passing on the Christian message in a tangible way. HHK operates with an understanding of mission that encompasses meeting spiritual and existential needs by witnessing in words about God’s love as well as tangible humanitarian aid. Also influencing the political and societal levels and advocacy for the human rights of the North Korean people are emphasized. To Peters “mission” means the same everywhere although he believes that mission activities may mean more to North Koreans because of their great needs. According to Peters, mission should have its offset in the neighborhood of where Christians live. Accordingly, he believes that South Koreans carry a special responsibility for North Korea; this he continuously hopes to see effectuated by South Korean churches. Throughout the work, HHK encompasses evangelization, a human rights focus as well as a side-effect of peace building that prepares for reunification of the two Koreas. HHK emphasizes encouraging both North and South Koreans to take responsibility and testify to the love of Christ. HHK works through partnerships with SAINT and others and these partnerships are carried by trust, regular interaction and mutual understanding.

## Findings about Whitestone

### Whitestone’s motivational basis

#### Document findings

On SAINT’s website there is a short presentation of the work of Whitestone. In this Mr. Kim’s motivational basis in God’s love for the North Korean people shows through the following quote:

“My North Korean friends wonder what drives us to travel from China and to continue this work. They know that it is not easy and we face many challenges. But we need to show them the love of God by being here with them.”<sup>19</sup> (SAINT’s website, 2012, *Noe godt i Nord-Korea?*)

Based on this quote, Whitestone appears to be motivated by the belief that being present will demonstrate God’s love to the North Korean people. Looking at another quote from SAINT’s

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<sup>19</sup> My own translation.

website, Mr. Kim's own love for the North Korean people is also seen as a factor as it is stated that Mr. Kim "(...) has a big heart for the North Korean people"<sup>20</sup>. (SAINT's website, 2012, *Stefanusalliansen i Nord-Korea*). Perhaps the love for the North Korean people that Mr. Kim feels has been awakened through the calling of God that he experienced after his retirement to attend to their needs. Or perhaps it has developed through the contact with the North Korean people. Either way, God's love and Mr. Kim's own love are central in the motivational basis according to the available data. Another part of Whitestone's motivational basis can be argued to be his belief and experience that the work has an effect: "You will see that it makes a difference; that there is hope"<sup>21</sup> Mr. Kim explained with a smile to SAINT's representative who was visiting Whitestone. (SAINT's website, 2012, *Noe godt i Nord-Korea?*)

## **Whitestone's hopes and expectations for the outcomes of its work**

### **Document findings**

On SAINT's website, the goal of Whitestone is described as a combination of increased food production and improved farming: "The goal is to increase the production of food significantly and at the same time make the farming environmental-friendly and sustainable."<sup>22</sup> (SAINT's website, 2012, *Stefanusalliansen i Nord-Korea*). These are very practical, measurable goals. Mr. Kim is quoted for a more intangible long-term goal of achieving the people's trust and pointing to God: "Quietly and carefully we can point to Him who carries us and drives us to act. One day the country will be open. By then we must have gained their trust. Otherwise they will not believe us."<sup>23</sup> (SAINT's website, 2012, *Noe godt i Nord-Korea?*). It appears as though this quote indicates that the work of Whitestone, in some respects, is believed to have the potential to prepare the hearts of the people for the message of Gospel.

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<sup>20</sup> My own translation.

<sup>21</sup> My own translation.

<sup>22</sup> My own translation.

<sup>23</sup> My own translation.

## Whitestones's missiological perspective

### Document findings

We get a hint about the missiological perspective of Whitestone through the following quote by Mr. Kim about the importance of a Christian presence in North Korea: “I am continuously reminded of how important the Christian presence in North Korea is.”<sup>24</sup> (SAINT’s website, 2012, *Noe godt I Nord-Korea?*). According to Mr. Kim, being in North Korea and expressing God’s love in a practical way is significant in itself. This can be understood in such a way that he sees the practical assistance of Whitestone as important even though it is not possible, at the current time, to supplement actions with communicating God’s love in words. This also means that Mr. Kim believes that there will come a time when North Korea no longer will be as closed as it is today.

### Summary of the findings about Whitestone

Based on the available data, the motivational basis of Whitestone can be argued to be the love of God, Mr. Kim’s own love for the North Korean people and the belief that the work makes a difference.

About hopes and expectations for the outcomes of the work, the main goals for Whitestone are increased food production and sustainable development of the farming. Demonstrating God’s love in this practical way can be interpreted as part of a long-term goal of preparing the people to hear the Gospel when it in the future becomes possible to share it with them.

The missiological perspective of Whitestone can be interpreted in such a way that the practical assistance it provides to the North Korean people is understood as having value in itself even without sharing the Gospel in words.

## Findings about the work of Park

The last partner of SAINT that I will present in this chapter is Park. Park cooperates with both SAINT and HHK.

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<sup>24</sup> My own translation.

## Park's motivational basis

### Interview findings

Park provided information about his motivational basis from the beginning of the interview.

While explaining why he started his work directed at the North Korean human rights situation he expressed that he had been: "...alarmed by serious nature of the problems. (...) I thought at that time that world did not know anything about North Korea". He confirmed these elements of his motivational basis throughout the interview; the graveness of the North Korean situation and his experience that many people do not know about the human rights abuses there.

Particularly, it disturbed him to see the South Koreans' indifference:

Over the years I was working with foreign workers: I slowly sensed that - among the international workers - there was a kind of hidden (...) reflection; that you South Koreans don't care about the situation: Why should we foreigners pick up the gun or take the burden only? (...) I realized the South Korean indifference to this, you know, horrendous suffering of their own brothers and sisters. Why? What's wrong with them?

Later, when I asked about his motivation, Park expressed that he felt different than other people and Christians in South Korea in the way that he could not help caring about the North Koreans:

My church members and a pastor; they were all very happy. And I was terribly bothered and it was, you know, really hard life for me (...) that so many people - innocent people; are suffering underground and they are being tortured. (...) Other people were just happy. "Go to church every Sunday" and: "hallelujah" and "I'm happy".

In the quote we see that in addition to Park's astonishment over the indifference of the South Koreans, he is critical towards the South Korean Christians' focus on their own happiness. When I asked about what he believed was the difference between him and the people who did not care, he referred to having a genuine Christian faith: "Maybe Christian faith and Bible." This is perhaps a puzzling answer when said after having spoken of his fellow church members' indifference, but I will elaborate on Park's view on Christianity along with his missiological



perspective. Pain for the people and passion for the truth about the North Korean situation were themes that Park repeatedly returned to in the interview: “I have pain for not being able to tell the paper the reality. I have a great pain for not being able to tell my church congregation that: ‘you are wrong’ [not to act on the North Korean situation]”. The quote above was part of Park’s answer to my question about what makes his work important. However, his first remarks on this issue pointed to his sense of obligation:

I don’t think what I am doing is important. (...) I’m not a great guy; I don’t have any great power. But there is obligation of what I should be doing; even though this may mean very small action of moving this stone from here to here. Then I’ll do this.

In this humble response, Park emphasized his obligation to do whatever he can in order to support change for the North Korean people. One final issue about Park’s motivational basis that I wish to include is how Park’s own history relates to his care for the North Korean people. In the end of the interview Park informed me that he was born in North Korea and fled with his family as a child because his father was a Christian minister. He however underlined that this background has nothing to do with his motivational basis for his work.

## **Park’s hopes and expectations for the outcomes of his work**

### **Interview findings**

Reporting the interview findings about Park’s hopes and expectations for the outcomes of his work, I will show how these first of all encompass what he has already achieved by documenting the human rights violations in North Korea. Secondly, I will report about his current project, The Third Way. Finally, I will report on his visions for the future that aim at awareness in the South and freedom in the North.

#### Documenting the human rights violations

While Park in the beginning of the interview explained how he got involved in human rights work directed at North Korea, he told me that his first ambition had been to change the fact that the testimonies about the situation in North Korea were only written in Korean and that

they were not accessible in a collected form. In order to reach the international community with information about the North Korean situation, he founded the North Korean Database Center (NKDB). Here authorities, researchers and students could collect information at academic level about the human rights abuses in North Korea. Park added that the work of NKDB had significantly eased the work of the United Nations (UN's) Commission of Inquiry (COI) that was established to research the human rights situation of North Korea. He explained that while it normally takes three to four years for the UN to publish this type of report, due to the data from NKDB, it was done in just 10 month<sup>25</sup>. Park expressed his contentedness with this outcome of the NKDB: "So there I feel very happy, that the hard work we carried out for over 10 years was such help for them. (...) I felt my primary objective has been achieved". The quote informs us that Park's primary goal of providing available information about the North Korean situation to the international community was achieved through the NKDB. Park was Chairman of the Board of Directors in NKDB until he recently resigned and reduced his involvement to an honorable membership. In this way he is able to do advocacy work directed at politicians without NKDB getting involved in conflicts.

### The Third Way

When I asked Park about his current work for the North Korean people, he explained that he wants to raise awareness and involvement in South Korea. He has named this project The Third Way. The name refers to his aspiration to make South Koreans aware that there is an alternative to two common positions that he sees in the South Korean society; one of which ignores the human rights violations and one that is held by organizations which consist of people who used to support human rights violations in the name of anti-communism. Due to what seem to be political reasons this last group now condemns human rights violations in North Korea. Park explained that because of these people's pasts others do not respect them when they speak against the current human rights violations. With the Third Way Park hopes to:

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<sup>25</sup> The fact that NKDB's work has been included in the report of the Commission of Inquiry is confirmed in the report of the detailed findings (UNHRC, 2014) which the main report (UN OHCHR COI, 2014) refers to.

(...) alarm South Korean citizens to stand up and do something (...). And it is actually your brothers and sisters and parents who are under such horrendous reality, violation of human rights and also crimes against humanity. It is reality! (...) This has *nothing* to do with anti-communism propaganda!

Park explained that the news media in South Korea do not want to listen to The Third Way so instead he tries to reach the South Koreans through online podcasts. Another current project for Park is a book series about the prison camps of North Korea. So far he has managed to raise funds to write and publish one of the books he has planned for. (Kim, 2012)

Awareness in the South – freedom in the North

While Park was answering the question about what makes his work important, he added some comments about future hopes: “I have huge dreams and activities planned (...). God willing, God will provide me with funds to carry on.” In this way, Park pointed to that ultimately it is up to God how much work he can go through with. About concrete hopes he mentioned that to impact the North Korean situation through the medias: “Active public media campaign and media activities, training people; (...) take up strong position that the North Korean human rights is a neutral - it’s a non-political agenda.” Here we can see that Park hopes to help people distinguish between political agendas and the need to work against human rights abuses.

Park’s primary goal on the long term is not about reunification of the two Koreas although he repeatedly mentioned this as a hope as well. His primary vision - and his aspiration for the work’s impact on the North Korean situation - is for the North Korean people to stand up for themselves and finally to see freedom and democracy as well as ending human rights violations. He expressed this as the dream of: “North Koreans awakened! And they start to fight for their own rights. And so, you know, eventually, North Korean people become free. (...) And no longer human rights violations!”

As part of his answer to the question about what he envisions for his work directed at the North Korean people, Park included that he wishes to spread more political information in North

Korea so that they – in line with the quote above – start to stand up for themselves and fight for the people to be in power. Some leaflets that he has formerly been involved in spreading – and that he showed me during the interview - were picturing how poor North Korea is in comparison with its neighboring countries:



Leaflet used with consent from Park

On the backside of the leaflet was a longer text that is too elaborate to include here. Park expressed a hope to be able to distribute more of this kind of information in North Korea in the future.

In addition to awakening the North Korean people, he is aiming at the South Koreans as well: “My main effort now is to awaken South Korean citizens to reality and to act.” In this quote Park’s current primary goal about getting South Koreans involved in the North Korean situation is expressed.

## Park's missiological perspective

### Interview findings

When looking into how Park positions himself towards mission work, three themes emerged from the data: Firstly about his relationship to South Korean Christianity; secondly about his principle about action instead of evangelization; and thirdly, a theme about how he relates to partnerships.

#### Mission and the conflict with South Korean Christianity

When entering Park's missiological perspective it is important to start with underlining that Park does not see his work as mission; he is a human rights worker and rather than having a missiological perspective it would be more accurate to say that he distances himself from the concept of mission: "So when you say "mission" to me (...) it's an expansion of church; number of churches or whatever. Nothing else, I mean, has nothing to do with the wish of God. All religions want to expand." This being said; for the sake of this thesis it is still interesting to look into how Park positions himself towards the concept of mission and the schism between mission and the work that he is conducting. So, when I asked about what mission in connection with the North Korean people meant to him, he spoke of it as tantamount to evangelization and described this as irrelevant and corrupt:

[It is](...) to cheat ordinary Christians and extract donations from them. (...) I mean, the house is on fire! (...) A boy is drowning! It is no time for evangelization! Somebody is bleeding. We have to stop bleeding! It has nothing to do with evangelization. And somebody, you know, who don't want to do anything; for them: "Evangelization! God! Hallelujah!" It's a falsehood, it is cheating! (...) South Korean Christians demand (...) tithes. (...) That is why South Korean churches are so rich and so corrupt.

As we can see, to Park mission is a concept about religious proselytizing and a way for churches to make more money and so it is not something he connects with his work. Especially, when asking about how Park thinks of mission work directed at North Korea, he emphasized how unimportant this is because the human rights abuses are so urgent to attend to.

Asking Park about whether there are any elements of peace building in his work, he responded by expressing loneliness in his efforts: “No, not at all. I find myself the only guy in the wilderness.” The quote both informs us that Park does not include a focus on peace building in his work and also that he experiences that very few are interested in participating in his efforts.

#### Action instead of evangelization

When accounting for the work he has been doing for the North Korean people, Park expressed that evangelization can play a secondary role. Again using the metaphor of the drowning boy, he however emphasized that evangelization is not something that is important to him:

Evangelization itself I don't think is very important. (...) There is no time for evangelization! It is an emergency situation! You run into the water and, you know, save the boy. (...) Then you can tell them about God or whatever.

From this we can deduct that Park is not against evangelization as such, but that he sees it as secondary to the emergency situation he finds the North Koreans to be in. Also he expressed that he believes evangelization is an excuse for the South Korean Christians to be lazy and go to church instead of focusing on the reality in North Korea and acting on it. As opposed to church disciplines, Park emphasized engagement in human rights advocacy. Right from the beginning of the interview, he described the human rights abuses in North Korea as crimes against humanity as well as against God.

Even though Park is extremely critical towards the South Korean Church, he expressed that he is a Christian and that Christian faith is actually why he is acting on the suffering of his North Korean family. Park explained how Jesus is an example that the church should learn from:

Jesus Christ would have never been executed if he were like are Christians all over today. So, his (...) death on the cross is such an arrogant message for us that: You should be part of reality in your lifetime. Yes, we have socially, politically, economically often problems: “I have answer to those problems, so you must act to meet change!”

From this we can see that the way Park interprets the biblical message is that Jesus is an example of daring to speak and act against the societal circumstances although the price was his life. Park continued by sarcastically lifting up the UN as more Godly than the South Korean church:

Christianity never tells you about action. Now UN taking that action. You know, UN has past so many international conventions. (...) They are God's world. I believe that, you know, God visited us in 20<sup>th</sup> century in the form of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That's my faith. (...) I'm so often bothered to say: "I'm a Christian". So, I often say my belief or my religion is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In this way Park communicated that true Christianity must include a willingness to go against the political system and to act – like the UN does - instead of just going to church.

Another interesting element in Park's approach to the work is how he emphasized that ultimately the work is God's responsibility:

I'm a small potato; I'm doing just what I can. (...) God willing, God will provide me with funds to carry on. And, if that is not forthcoming, then in a way it is not my responsibility, it is the responsibility of God. (...) God may have other plan. (...) I mean, it is not my choice. It is God's concern and God's job.

Like expressed in Park's motivational basis, in this way we see that Park has a humble view on his own importance and that he places the responsibility of the work with God.

#### Park's partnerships

During the interview, I inquired into Park's cooperation with SAINT and Peters. He responded by expressing that he has found the way SAINT supports and involves him in its activities very inspirational. Further he explained that without SAINT's help the first book of his book series would never have been published. When I asked about how the distance affects the

cooperation with SAINT, Park's focus was on how encouraging it is to him that people so far away are supporting him:

I consider Stefanus Alliance my partner. And the fact that they are far away; they are genuine people with a genuine interest in the suffering of other people and they are trying to help me whenever they can. It is a great encouragement. (...) I don't get any financial assistance right now, but that is not important, but the fact that somebody's there (...) who are (...) on the same side with me morally. That's a great, great encouragement.

As we can see in the quote Park greatly appreciated the received moral support. He continued by emphasizing the importance of hope; that it can mean survival when people are in a desperate situation; and that the support of SAINT gives him hope because it shows him that he is not alone. About the cooperation with HHK, Park explained that formerly he and Peters did field work together in the border areas of North Korea establishing the Underground Railroad and he commented that Peters fully understands his work. Park planned these escape routes for North Korean refugees because he felt obligated to help them after collecting their testimonies of the human rights violations in North Korea. Helping North Koreans escape from China is a work that others have continued and he is only occasionally involved in this now.

### **Summary of the findings about Park**

In sum, Park's motivational basis is the obligation and the pain he feels for the North Korean people due to their suffering and the violation of their human rights. He connects this motivation to his concept of genuine Christian faith.

About the hopes and expectations for the outcomes of the work, Park's hope for his current work is to see both North Koreans and South Koreans "awakened": The South Koreans in that they should realize that the human rights abuses in North Korea are real and start acting on the situation; North Koreans in such a way that they start to stand up for themselves and ultimately achieve freedom, democracy and end human rights violations. Reunification is a secondary goal to Park.



Concerning Park's missiological perspective, he considers "mission" irrelevant to his work. He is particularly critical towards the concept of evangelism directed at the North Korean people as he believes this to be a corrupt business of lazy South Korean Christians. To Park what matters is to intervene in the emergency situation of human rights violations in North Korea. Even though Park in strong words calls for Christians to act, he emphasized that in the end what happens is God's responsibility. Park expressed gratitude for the partnerships with SAINT and HHK; partnerships he described as characterized by understanding and willingness to act. Also, the partnership with SAINT encourages him to hold on and to not lose hope.



## Discussions

### Scope and structure

In this chapter I will discuss issues central to my thesis. The chapter is structured after the three sub-questions. I have chosen to do this although the motivational basis, the hopes and expectations in addition to the missiological perspectives are closely interrelated and in spite of the fact that the structure of the theory does not fit with this division. Still, to keep the structure as simple as possible while discussing the data on the basis of missiological theory, I have chosen to keep that of the three sub-questions. In addition, I have divided the discussions into relevant themes based on my data findings. For each of these I will compare my findings about SAINT with those about its partners. I will then discuss my findings with the theory and when relevant include other perspectives.

I have chosen to save the conclusions on the three sub-questions to the conclusion chapter and restrain myself to make a short summary for each of the three parts in this chapter. My discussions will show that the motivational basis of SAINT and its partners is well in line with each other and the theory. However, when moving on to the concrete hopes and expectations and the missiological perspectives some differences will show.

### Motivational basis

Within the motivational basis of SAINT and its partners, central themes are God's love and people's inherent worth and dignity. Also the issues of calling and duty as well as motivation based on the gravity of the North Korean situation will be discussed.

### God's love

A common starting point in the motivational basis for SAINT and its partners is God's love. The representatives of SAINT spoke of God's love as something that is intrinsic in the acts of helping and assisting. Peters from HHK spoke of sharing God's love "in an unconditional way". In the work of Whitestone the love of God is expressed to the North Korean people through the presence of the organization. Park did not speak directly of love, but he did express his

frustration that South Koreans did not care. In this way he emphasized the importance of *caring*; which can be argued to be similar to loving; even if it is not as strong an expression.

Drawing upon the theory, according to the idea of *Missio Dei*, mission work is ultimately God's work and Ahonen underlines that the concept should be understood on the basis of God's love. (Ahonen, 2000 p. 43). *Mission in Context* (2004) concurs by explaining that God, being the Creator, loves his creation. (LWF, 2004, pp. 24-25). We also saw that Kirk spoke of this love in the way that he emphasized that mission should be based on indiscriminate love. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 209-210). This line of thought fits well with the way Peters expressed that HHK emphasized conducting mission work and sharing God's love in an unconditional way. In short, SAINT and its partners are in agreement with Kirk and *Mission in Context* (2004) about the stance that God's love should be and is core in the motivational basis for mission work.

### **Inherent worth & dignity**

On different occasions SAINT referred to the inherent worth and dignity - which all human beings have due to their being created in God's image - as connected to the calling to care for the North Korean people. Also Peters from HHK signified human worth when he was describing the humanitarian situation in North Korea. To Peters promoting human worth is one of the goals of the work and so the motivational factor of North Koreans having intrinsic worth is implied. From the sides of Whitestone and Park human worth and dignity were not mentioned directly.

As we saw in the theory chapter, both Kirk and *Mission in Context* (2004) opt for the idea that every human being is created in God's image and thus have intrinsic worth and dignity. This motivational basis for mission work is connected to the importance of working for justice. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 97-108; LWF, 2004, pp. 24-25). In Kirk's case human value and dignity is central to mission in the way of Jesus. This includes creating life through physical, psychological and social wellbeing. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 52-55). In other words, to Kirk the idea is connected to having a holistic approach in mission work and as we have seen, the holistic approach is emphasized by both SAINT and HHK.

Kirk draws in a perhaps puzzling point when he states that even people who do not label themselves as Christians take part in God's mission as a result of their being created in God's image. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 33-37). The meaning of this may become clearer when related to practice: When Gravaas spoke of his wish for South Koreans to take responsibility for North Korean refugees, he was not outspoken about that these South Koreans need to be Christians. Also Park is not targeting only Christians in his project to create awareness and willingness to act on the North Korean situation. In other words, the calling to participate in God's actions of compassion and reacting on injustice is not "Christians only". The proclamation part of mission work is a different matter though. In short, a motivational basis in human worth and dignity is included in the perspectives of SAINT and HHK and could be implied for Whitestone and Park also. When believing that all human beings are created in God's image it can be argued that they are all prone to take part in God's acts of justice and compassion.

### **Calling & duty**

Both SAINT and HHK mentioned Christian *calling* as a fundamental motivational basis for the work. Brown spoke of a more personal calling to fight injustice. Mr. Kim spoke of being driven by God which can be seen as parallel to the idea of calling. In addition to speaking of a calling to help the North Koreans, SAINT's representatives spoke even stronger about this in the terms of *duty*. Even though Peters from HHK did not use the term duty, the emphasis was the same in that he spoke of it as unthinkable not to act on the North Korean situation as a Christian, a humanitarian and even just as a person to keep a sense of self-respect. Park referred to having a genuine Christian faith as a similar motivational factor. He also spoke of an *obligation* to help; which can be said to be synonymous to duty. He added that it is important for him to do what he can although he considers his own efforts insignificant. Another way the idea about a calling and a duty from God is emphasized is through the frustration of Park as he finds that the South Korean church has not been willing to act in the way of God on the sufferings in North Korea.

Drawing upon the theory, Kirk spoke of the calling in overall terms describing mission as being what the church is sent to do. (Kirk, 1999, p. 24). *Mission in Context* (2004) describes a general

calling to the church - as well as more specific callings to individuals. (LWF, 2004, p. 44). SAINT and its partners' conceptualization of their work being based on duty and a calling from God and thus to be of service to God can be understood as parallel to Kirk's idea of mission work being the church taking part in what God is about in this world. (Kirk, 1999, p. 32). In these notions on God's calling there is consensus between my findings and theory concerning the belief that God has called the Christian church as a whole to be a part of His mission in the world and to act against human suffering. In addition to this, some people working within mission express a more concrete calling to take on specific tasks; like Brown's calling to act against injustice.

### **The gravity of the North Korean situation**

SAINT, HHK and Park all emphasized the terrible conditions, the injustices and lack of human rights in North Korea as related to their motivational basis. Gravaas spoke of how the meetings with the receivers of help have made a great impression on him. Peters from HHK added to the issue of the great need in North Korea how he experienced very few people and organizations being engaged in relieving and changing the situation. Park spoke of pain for the North Korean people and of making the truth known about the terrible situation as the core of his motivation. In the data about Whitestone the gravity of the North Korean situation is not mentioned.

Adding the backdrop of the theory, Kirk writes about the ideal of the church to place itself in the midst of human suffering to help and sympathize with people in need. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 205-225). If this ideal is the measure, only Whitestone has fulfilled it as this is the only organization that is mainly working inside North Korea. SAINT, HHK and Park on the other hand have sympathized and helped, but have not placed themselves in the center of the country's suffering. In *Mission in Context* (2004) the ideal is less demanding: Connected to the idea of God as Redeemer is that the church in mission should identify and be solidary with the sufferings of others. (LWF, 2004, pp. 23-27). In this understanding SAINT and its partners are all living up to the ideal. However, instead of measuring mission workers on the basis of these ideas, it seems more relevant to return to the idea of calling: People as well as organizations have different tasks and roles and to say that every Christian should go to the center of suffering is unlikely to be ideal. Rather the

situation could be regarded in the way that as Whitestone is working inside North Korea, the church is actually there and represented. Perhaps more people could be present there as well. But there is also legitimacy in the church helping from other locations. In short, SAINT and most of its partners point to the gravity of the North Korean situation as a part of their motivational basis.

### **Summary of the motivational basis**

Through my discussion I have assessed that the motivational basis of SAINT and its partners first of all is God's love. Related to this is believing that all human beings are created in God's image and thus have inherent worth and dignity which is the second component of the motivational basis. Thirdly, SAINT and its partners in different terms all expressed a motivational basis in a God-given calling and duty to intervene. A final element in the motivational basis of SAINT and its partners is the understanding of the gravity of the situation in North Korea. These elements of the motivational basis are all backed by the theory.

### **Hopes & expectations**

I have identified some hopes and expectations for the work that are central and intersect the data about SAINT and its partners. These first of all encompass communicating of God's love. Secondly, it includes improving the quality of life and thirdly improving the human rights situation. Other central hopes and expectations are directed at encouraging Koreans to take responsibility as well as working for peace building and preparation for reunification. I will discuss these topics below.

### **Communicating the love of God**

In line with the consensus for SAINT and its partners to have a central motivational basis in God's love, communicating God's love is a pivot hope and goal for the work of SAINT, HHK and Whitestone. This implies being a testimony of God's love and the vision for the North Koreans to grasp the significance of this love. One could claim that inevitably related to expressing the love of Christ is also the sharing of the Gospel as this can be seen as the ultimate story of God's rescue mission to save humanity. To the representatives of SAINT, preaching the Gospel is not a

main goal as this is very difficult in North Korea. Instead the focus is on showing God's love through practical assistance and in that way to do "pre-evangelism" as Gravaas phrased it. From SAINT's side it is not discouraged to share the Gospel. It is however left up to its partners to decide if and when it is appropriate to do proclamation work. Connected to this issue is SAINT's dream of seeing South Koreans take responsibility for the North Koreans – also in terms of sharing the Gospel.

To Peters from HHK being a concrete testimony of God's love is also a central hope and goal; Peters even spoke of the prospect of North Koreans understanding that God loves them as "winning the lottery". About the work with refugees from North Korea, he explained that these are presented with the Gospel as a natural part of the work because spiritual care is part of the holistic aid to the refugees. We saw in the data report how Peters experienced that people responded very differently to this holistic help; some understand that there is a God who loves them; others respond with suspicion.

Concerning expressing the love of God, this aim was also clear in the findings about Whitestone. When connecting the statements of Mr. Kim about the motivation and goals for Whitestone, we can see that expressing the love of God through the help provided for the North Koreans is central to him. In this way he is in line with SAINT and HHK. Concerning the sharing of the Gospel, Mr. Kim's emphasis seems to be in line with SAINT's idea of pre-evangelism as Mr. Kim spoke of pointing to God and of preparing the people to trust them when the country becomes more open. This can be interpreted as a wish to be able to share the Gospel with the North Korean people in the future.

In contrast to SAINT's other partners, to Park the goal of the North Koreans taking in the love of God was not expressed. Rather his emphasis was on outliving Christian faith by intervening in the life threatening situations and to ensure the survival and improved lives for the North Korean people. Particularly the element of evangelism he saw as a direct hindrance to the important rescue work that should be done for the North Korean people.



In short, it is an overall goal for SAINT and its partners to express the love of God. These are however not in complete consensus about whether it is important for the people to grasp this love and if the expression of God's love should encompass proclamation or solely practical assistance. We shall return to discuss this issue against the theory when we get to the missiological perspectives of SAINT and its partners.

One aspect of communication God's love that goes beyond the above mentioned discussion is Whitestone's emphasis on improving the farming and on community development. This type of support can be understood in connection with a general aim at empowerment in mission work as this helps the local community gain economic strength. On a long-term basis this helps the local people to become less dependent on help from outside. In *Mission in Context* (2004) it is expressed that an empowering focus is important when working for justice and it is connected to people's dignity in regaining control over their lives. (LWF, 2004, pp. 32-36). In this way, Mr. Kim's work can be understood as empowering.

### **Improving the quality of life**

In different ways SAINT and its partners all have as a central goal to improve the quality of life for the North Korean people. SAINT's representatives spoke of this in the terms of helping the people get better lives; dignified lives and lives that are worth living. Brown even spoke of his hope that North Korea would actually become the Paradise on Earth that its leaders have claimed it to be<sup>26</sup>. Peters from HHK phrased improving the quality of life as stopping the pain at every level and letting the North Korean people experience a sense of worth. During the interviews increasing the quality of life was often connected to the principle of providing holistic help as the people have needs at many levels: HHK elaborated the idea of working holistically as meeting the needs of people physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. To HHK the goal was additionally to provide holistic help at the individual as well as at group and societal levels. Perhaps the list should also include a family level, as Peters repeatedly spoke of his pain for divided families due to the division of Korea.

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<sup>26</sup> This position by the North Korean leaders is confirmed in Fure et al. 2014, p. 62.

Indirectly also Whitestone expressed a hope of improving the quality of life for the North Korean people, even though this goal was not found directly in the data. My argument for claiming this is that Whitestone works for improving the food production and also provide food for school children; and a basic element of life quality is to have food. Also Park can be argued to have emphasized improving the quality of life for the North Koreans in that he spoke of how the South Koreans live good and happy lives and about his pain for North Koreans living under human rights violations and without freedoms.

Working on improving the quality of life as a part of mission work is well in line with how Kirk emphasizes that mission work cannot and should not be separated from the secular sphere and that it must engage in societal problems and help creating preferential options for the poor. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 111-117; 205-225). HHK, Whitestone and Park can be said to be engaged in this type of work although in quite different ways: HHK by helping North Koreans escape and in this way providing them with choices for the first time in their lives. Whitestone creates options for the poor in the sense that it works for increasing the food production and empowering the community development. Park raises awareness about the living conditions for the North Koreans and encourages South Koreans and the international society to act on the situation.

Both Kirk and *Mission in Context* (2004) describe mission in terms of interpreting or anticipating God's Kingdom and one of the practical implications of this is to be of service for people in need. (LWF, 2004, p. 7; Kirk, 1999, pp. 29-30). Kirk has the idea of creating life as a part of doing mission in the way of Jesus. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 52-55). Park's approach can be associated to this as he argues for Christians' responsibility to take part in the current reality and act to achieve change. Whitestone's and Park's ways of working for change are not the same: Whereas Whitestone works with emphasis on meeting the needs for food and community development, Park works for political change and advocates against acute as well as long term human rights violations. HHK places itself in both categories as it works with humanitarian aid as well as human rights advocacy.

In short, SAINT's partners can be said to be in line with each other and with the theoretical claims that mission work should be conducted in a way that anticipates the Kingdom of God; which includes engaging in societal problems and creating preferential options for the poor.

### **Improving the human rights situation**

Improving the human rights situation for North Koreans is a central issue and goal to SAINT and its partners. As SAINT is a human rights organization this emphasis is in no way surprising. To be precise; for SAINT improving the human rights situation of North Korea is not only a hope, it is the overall vision: That North Korea eventually will be a place in which human rights are flourishing. SAINT emphasized the right to food as a basic human right that must be secured before attending to other human rights. This seems logical in the sense that food is a basic need that if not provided for will cause people to die - in which case more freedoms or rights have no practical significance. Even though human rights are not mentioned directly in the information about Whitestone, the organization works for an improved human rights situation in the sense that it provides better conditions for having the basic right to food maintained. Besides through providing for food and safety, SAINT works for improved human rights through advocacy.

To HHK improving the human rights situation for North Koreans is mainly expressed as providing them with choices by helping them leave their country. In an earlier mentioned interview by NKnet (2013), Peters elaborated on this goal of an improved human rights situation:

I would very much like to see some meaningful breakthrough in regards to the individual citizens of North Korea being freed and feeling relief from oppression. I don't know whether that will be from the outside and they are refugees, or the situation changes from within North Korea itself. It is my dream that they can feel for the first time. (Kim, 2013)

As the quote shows, the freedom of the North Korean people is important to Peters; whether this can be achieved from the inside or if the people will have to become refugees in order to achieve freedom. Another aspect of the human rights improvement that Peters emphasized was that it is important to keep the efforts free of political labels:

I am very passionate about separating the North Korean Human Rights movement from the political prism through which NGOs are viewed. Whether the angle is conservative, progressive, radical, or left-wing, these types of divisions are totally irrelevant. The NGO community should not be evaluated by political overlay. This applies to South Korea in particular. This kind of labeling is not helpful and blocks cooperation. (Kim, 2013)

In the quote Peters expressed that political labelling is a hindrance to the efforts of improving the human rights situation in North Korea. The point seems to be that improving the human rights situation should be important to everyone in spite of political disagreements. This stance is also central in Park's hopes for his work for the North Korean people and is the very reason why he named his current project The Third Way; that the efforts of improving the human rights situation and ultimately achieving freedom and democracy in North Korea are not efficient when being connected to political stances. Park's point is that there has to be a third way of approach; a non-political one. Perhaps this line of thought of the struggle for improving the human rights situation to be unpolitical is surprising when then Gravaas from SAINT (in connection with accounting for the scope of their work) stated that all that they do as an organization has a political dimension. On the other hand the meaning of this seems to be that on one hand they are attempting to influence politicians to work for improved human rights and on the other hand that politicians can naturally have an interest in the work of NGOs directed at North Koreans, as this can affect the relationship to the neighboring countries; most essentially to South Korea and China. In this sense the work of SAINT is political without the human rights becoming monopolized by a specific political wing. In the information about Whitestone a political stance is not mentioned.

Bringing in the theory, both Kirk and *Mission in Context* (2004) mention the duty for the church to be a prophetic voice against injustice. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 111-117; LWF, 2004, p. 52). Another way to phrase being a prophetic voice is to speak of advocacy and in addition to SAINT, Park's work is also focused on advocating against human right violations. As we saw, Whitestone contribute to improving the human rights situation in another way by attending to the basic

right to food. The work of HHK covers all these areas in addition to its efforts for freedom in assisting North Korean refugees' escape from China to other countries.

In short, the human rights issue is central in the way SAINT and its partners hope and expect to impact the situation of the North Korean people; whether through advocacy in raising a prophetic voice or through practical efforts. We shall return to further discussions on the issue of the role of human rights work in mission in the section about missiological perspectives.

### **Encouraging taking responsibility**

Encouraging Koreans to take responsibility for the North Korean situation is a central theme in the data findings. Gravaas from SAINT expressed a hope that the South Koreans would take on responsibility for North Koreans: Evangelizing and providing practical assistance for North Korean refugees. However it was not clear how SAINT was contributing to encouraging the South Koreans to take on this responsibility. But then of course it can be argued that SAINT is indirectly involved as it works through its partners. It is a goal for HHK to inspire and assist Koreans in the responsibility for North Koreans among others by discipling North Korean refugees and by inviting South Koreans for the Catacomb meetings. Peters expressed that South Korean Christians have a special responsibility for the North Koreans as they are the closest neighbors and as it can be argued that they are also the closest people in a cultural sense. Although Peters has a goal of sharing the Gospel, in the interview with me he underlined that people are free to decide how to respond to and eventually act on the Gospel. Still, Peters hopes to see the fruit of his work of discipling North Koreans so that they take on a responsibility for others. In *Freedom of Belief and Christian Mission* (2015), Peters tells about Mr. Le: A North Korean defector who became a Christian after leaving North Korea and who is now passionate in sending balloons with Christian pamphlets into North Korea. According to Peters, Mr. Le told his story about that as he became a Christian he understood how different the Christian message is to how it is presented in North Korea: That it is about a love and truth that sets people free. (Peters, 2015, p. 308). The anecdote indicates that some defectors *do* receive the Gospel and act on it in order to share it with more people.

To Park encouraging South Koreans to take responsibility is core to his current efforts. However in contrast to Peters, he sees the emphasis on evangelism as a hindrance to really help North Koreans. To Park, speaking of evangelism, the Bible and going to church is an excuse for the South Korean Christians not to act on the emergency situation in the North. It can be argued that it could be possible to help improving the situation for North Koreans as well as doing evangelism and attending church. However, Park's point seems to be that due to a focus on inner spirituality and church disciplines, South Koreans tend to ignore the physical reality of the desperate situation inside North Korea. Also he criticized how South Korean churches prioritize raising a lot of money to spend on bigger churches and on efforts to gain more converts as opposed to attending to the basic needs of their neighbors in the North. To use a scale metaphor, Park's efforts constitute weight on the side that emphasis the concrete physical and psychological situation of North Korea. Perhaps Park places this weight to contribute to balance against the tendency for South Koreans to put all the weight on the aftermath of human life and – he claimed - also on their own current happiness. Park did not deny that evangelism can play a role, but underlined that it is not important to him and that it implies hypocrisy as long as the humanitarian and human rights situations are not addressed. To Mr. Kim from Whitestone, encouraging others to take responsibility was not addressed in the data.

In the paragraph above we saw how Peters expressed that South Koreans have a special responsibility for North Koreans. This was based on his understanding that mission work should start in the neighborhood of where Christians live and then expand to areas further and further away until the entire world is reached. This perspective is well in line with Kirk's belief that the local Christian community is called to do mission starting right where it is located. (Kirk, 1999, p. 24). Kirk also elaborates that there has been a tendency by local Western churches to regard their local and regional activities "church", whereas activities outside of the Western countries have been considered "mission". This way of thinking implies a Western arrogance. Another point of Kirk's is that what the church does everywhere should be its God given mission; as opposed to dividing into church and mission. Thirdly, he argues for the idea that being a testimony locally and regionally is at least as much a part of the Christian calling as that of

travelling far away to share the Gospel. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 78; 184-204). Transferring these points to the Korean setting, the admonition is about the South Korean tendency that Peters mentioned to send missionaries to places far away while disregarding North Korea. Also, Kirk's warning of arrogance seems relevant to the South Korean setting within which Christianity has spread and gained influence in a sensational way that has resulted in a tendency among South Korean churches to regard their model of Christianity and mission exclusive and ideal for expansion. (Kim & Kim, 2015 p. 276). Thus, it can be argued that there is a risk that South Korea takes over the former Western tendency to impose their own culture - and not simply share the Christian message – in contexts where this is not beneficial. This last point seems relevant in the event that South Korean churches to a higher extent start taking responsibility for mission work in North Korea. The point being that even though North and South Korea have a shared cultural background, the division and the development during the last 60 years have taken them far apart in such a way that South Korean life style should not necessarily be implemented in North Korea as a part of South Korean mission work.

We saw that HHK included a focus on discipling North Korean refugees to take responsibility. This is in line with what Kirk writes about inviting the target group of mission work to respond to the message. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 60-62). Kirk's emphasis seems to be the aspiration of people surrendering their lives to Christ and the course of action that comes from this. Peters' phrasing of discipling North Koreans seems to fit with this understanding. Not that either of them count social engagement as unimportant, but the order of this thinking can be argued to be that first the North Koreans need to lay their lives in Christ's hands and as a result they will act on their faith by attending to the spiritual or practical needs of others. An interesting difference that appears from this is that Whitestone seems to be more in line with *Mission in Context* (2004) due to its empowering focus of engaging the help-receivers (which was accounted for earlier); and Peters more in line with Kirk's understanding of that responsibility starts with surrendering to Christ.

For SAINT, included in the emphasis on encouraging the North Koreans to take responsibility is the understanding that triggering questions can lead to change from the inside of the country and in this way encourage North Koreans as well as South Koreans to take action.

In short we have seen that SAINT and most of its partners have common goals about encouraging North Koreans and South Koreans to act on the North Korean situation and that this emphasis is supported in various ways in the theory.

### **Peace building & preparation for reunification**

Related to the issue of taking responsibility is the need to raise awareness: If South Koreans do not realize the gravity of the situation in North Korea, they will not intervene. Raising awareness inside North Korea can also play an important role in triggering change – as we shall return to. Additionally, raising awareness is relevant for peace building based on the correlation that the mutual knowledge of and the encounters between South and North Koreans – in Peters’ words – help overcome prejudices and so prepare the Koreans for reunification.

My data findings show that preparing for reunification is a hope for all of SAINT and its partners, although their stances towards reunification are different: Brown did not mention reunification, but the other representative of SAINT, Gravaas, expressed it as an inevitable future event. To HHK, Whitestone and Park reunification can be understood as a goal, although secondary to other hopes and expectations.

According to SAINT reunification in itself is not a goal as such, but rather a future event as the result of the fall of the North Korean regime which – according to Gravaas – will inevitably come. In order to prepare for this, the representatives of SAINT expressed the importance of foreign organizations like SAINT and its partners being present in North Korea. This is important because the contact with foreigners among other things triggers questions in North Koreans about the outside world and thus about how life can be different.

SAINT did not emphasize peace building as such. However, Peters from HHK had some input on the connection between this and reunification. According to this, HHK works for peace building



through the Underground Railroad in the sense that bringing North Koreans to South Korea – even one at the time – increases the interaction and hence the understanding between the two groups of people. In this way their work prepares for reunification. Now at least in the interview, Peters did not speak of reunification as a goal as such. Still he spoke indirectly of a hope for reunification in that he expressed concern for the many Korean families that have been split due to the division into North and South. In contrary to reunification not being expressed as a goal explicitly, Peters defined preparing Koreans from both sides of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel for reunification as a hoped outcome of his work. As formerly mentioned parts of the practical measures to work for this goal are the Catacomb meetings as well as the Underground Railroad.

In the data about Whitestone peace building and reunification are not mentioned directly. However, Mr. Kim did express the expectation that one day North Korea will become more open and that it is important to gain the trust of the North Koreans before then. Implied by this - and in line with SAINT and HHK - is an expectation to prepare for reunification. The way Whitestone works on preparing for reunification is by being present and thus connecting to the outside world. As mentioned it may be implied that Whitestone's presence is also hoped to function as pre-evangelism.

Park expressed reunification as a secondary goal to that of freedom and human rights; but still as a goal. On the issue of peace building however, Park's view was quite different from that of HHK as the latter expressed peace building as an aspect of the work. On the other hand Park's perspective on peace building is similar to that of SAINT and Whitestone in the plain sense that it is not expressed as a focus.

From the perspective of SAINT we saw a focus on working for interaction between North Korea and the international society. Gravaas spoke of how North Koreans meeting foreigners can trigger questions about that life and society can be different. The visits of and input from outside can inspire change from within the country. Bringing in the theory, Kirk touches upon

the importance of the local setting interacting with the international society in connection with warning that churches can adapt too much to a specific cultural setting if not interacting with and standing accountable to an international setting. The ideal that Kirk describes is a form of *inculturation* that implies churches always assessing their cultural setting critically and only adapting to the elements that are not contradicting Christian faith. The point is that in this process, for the local church to get impulses from and stand accountable to an international Christian setting is necessary for this inculturation. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 89-94). What we can learn from the perspective of SAINT in the backdrop of Kirk is that there in general is a greater risk for a people, a church or a culture to develop in a bigoted way if not challenged and stimulated with impulses from outside. For Christianity not to be misinterpreted and for the North Korean society to take a constructive path of development, the impulses from outside are important and – one could argue - terribly overdue.

The topic of reunification is not addressed in the theory as this is not specifically aiming at North Korea. However, peace building and reconciliation which are both related to reunification are treated. In *Mission in Context* (2004) we saw that a premise for reconciliation is liberation and that these two concepts are closely connected. (LWF, 2004, pp. 32-36). This idea contributes to understanding how reconciliation and reunification are related: For Koreans to be reconciled, they must be free to engage with each other. The idea of the necessity of interaction echoes in the way Peters regards the effects of peace building in his work: He explained how encounters between North Koreans and South Koreans help overcome prejudices and so prepares for reunification. The way these encounters are established is through the Underground Railroad through which HHK assists North Korean refugees in fleeing from China.

With the clue from Peters about overcoming prejudices, Kirk's perspective on peace building now becomes relevant: According to his understanding the causes for violence (as violence can be seen as opposite to peace) is key. One of these causes is that lack of dialogue between two groups can lead to these creating enemy pictures of each other. Kirk elaborates that nationalist states have a tendency to antagonize others and in addition often especially to react to Western

states – and Christianity - as these are seen as related to bad values and an aggressive economy. Indeed in nationalist states, Kirk ads, becoming a Christian can be regarded as betrayal and disloyalty. Kirk also mentions that violence can be triggered by “violence suffered” which refers to the event of victims becoming victimizers. In addition a general want for power can be the cause of violence. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 78-81; 154-161). Transferring these ideas to the North Korean setting, we see how the lack of dialogue between North and South Koreans is working against prospects of reunification and that the enemy pictures (that are nurtured by propaganda on both sides) contribute to keeping the people apart. In North Korea confessing to Christianity is punished harshly and from an internal perspective this is the logical reaction as Christianity calls for submission to God and each other and as such contradicts the Juche idea of superiority and self-sufficiency. (Fure et al. 2014, pp. 50-51). In other words by limiting the influence of Christianity and in general of people from the outside, the efforts of the leaders to maintain power and cultural stability are believed to be eased<sup>27</sup>. Also, it should not be underestimated that the North Korean people carry a grudge against the USA for the deaths during the Korean War: North Korea suffered more than 600,000 military casualties and as much as 3 million civilian casualties! It is hardly an overstatement to call this a civilian massacre. (Keum, 2008, pp. 112-115). Based on this, North Korea could be interpreted as a victim state that has risen to be a threatening nuclear power and a victimizer of its own people. (Kim et al. 2008, pp. 112-115). There is no doubt that dialogue and reconciliation is needed to change this situation and so SAINT and its partners’ approach to increasing the interaction with people from the outside and from the international society - and hence to trigger peace building and ultimately change - can be deemed to be very relevant. If a constructive dialogue is reached, it can contribute to building trust between people from both sides, as we saw in the emphasis of Mr. Kim. Kirk is supportive of this approach as he underlines that building trust is essential to peace building. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 154-161).

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<sup>27</sup> In contrary to this, statistical analysis shows that it rather is governmental restrictions on religion that create internal conflicts than the level of religions activities (SAINT, 2015, p. 8)

To bring in another perspective I will refer to some points provided by Kim Hyun-Sik. In 2008 he wrote the article *Reflections on North Korea: The psychological Foundation of the North Korean Regime and Its Governing Philosophy*. (Kim, Hyun-Sik, pp. 22-26). The article is peer-reviewed by the scholar Ben Torrey (Torrey, 2008, pp. 20-22). I am bringing some of Kim's points into the discussion as they contribute with interesting viewpoints to the issues of peace building and reconciliation. According to Torrey, Kim's article is based on intimate knowledge about mission directed at North Korea and it provides insight about the religious psychology of the country. Upon reading it I noticed how the article is occasionally naïve and obstinate in ways that lower the credibility of the content slightly. Examples are how Kim depicts missionaries as providing North Koreans with aid out of "pure love" or how he claims that the North Korean regime's original plan with inviting missionaries into the country was having them contribute to the spreading of the Juche ideology to the rest of the world. On the other hand, Kim's article does gain a vast amount of credibility through the extensive experience Kim has with the North Korean society.

Kim presents the idea that a religious approach to reconciliation may be the most peaceful; based on the argument that most North Koreans confessed as Christians in the period leading up to the Korean War. In a sense this line of thought is in agreement with Peters' stance that Christian mission work consisting of assisting North Korean refugees to South Korea is part of peace building that helps preparing for reunification. In this way Peters' perspective includes the understanding that Christian intervention can contribute to reunification. On the other hand, for Kim to include the agenda of converting the North Korean population to Christianity seems to bring a manipulative element into the work. If the aim of reaching reunification is connected directly with bringing individuals to Christian faith, Kim's idea of "pure love" seems polluted by this agenda of converting people in order to gain reunification. The problem of this approach is the mix of agendas: Is reunification a method to gain converts, or are converts a way to gain reunification? Either way, and even if both agendas are meant lovingly, seeing conversions and reunification as inter-related can put extensive pressure on converts in an ethically questionable way and this can result in an unfortunate mixture of concerns for

people's spirituality and the political situation. In other words, inviting North Koreans to become Christians should be separated from other agendas.

The discussion about how Christianity can contribute to peace and reconciliation between the two Koreas started already together with the Korean War in 1950. The World Council of Churches issued the controversial "Toronto Statement" encouraging UN to step in with a police action to stop what was described as North Korean aggression. The American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr contributed to the statement and supported this stance of a political and military solution. A comment to this is that Park can be said to be in line with the Toronto Statement in that he spoke of the interference of UN in the North Korean situation as Godly actions. In contrary to this the Czechoslovakian theologian Josef L. Hromádka opted for an approach in which Christians engage in dialogue for peace. (Keum, 2008, pp. 115-127). The question about whether Christians should support that an end in peace can justify the means of violent methods is however beyond the scope of this thesis. The same goes for discussing all Christian approaches to peace and reconciliation. Instead it can be said in short that preparing for reunification is a central goal for SAINT as well as its partners. Their main method is to increase the interaction between North Koreans and South Koreans - and the international society. Preparing for reconciliation can be supported by efforts for peace building; however the idea of achieving reconciliation through converting to Christianity is not recommendable.

### **Summary of the hopes and expectations**

Overall, my data findings and theory are in accordance also when it comes to the hopes and expectations for the outcomes of the work for SAINT and its partners. However SAINT and its partners are not always in internal correlation. Central is the hope and aim to express God's love for the North Koreans; although SAINT and its partners have different perspectives on the necessity to include evangelism. A second goal for SAINT and its partners is to improve the quality of life for the North Korean population and a third is improving the human rights situation in North Korea. SAINT and its partners all emphasized taking care of basic needs like food first. For some, the work includes advocacy work; raising a prophetic voice. Also the human

rights efforts encompass helping North Koreans to flee from China. A fourth goal I have identified as central is to engage Koreans in general to act on the North Korean situation. In relation to this, Kirk contributes with what can be transferred into an admonition to South Korean Christians not to be arrogant in their approach and against imposing South Korean culture as a component of evangelism. Also, in comparison with the theory, I have argued that HHK is more in line with Kirk and that Whitestone is more in accordance with *Mission in Context* (2004) when it comes to the idea of how Koreans should take responsibility. As a final goal in the data about SAINT and its partners I have pointed to preparing for reunification between North and South Korea. Reconciliation can be seen as related to peace building, but only HHK connects this to its work; even though it can be argued that SAINT and Whitestone also participate in peace building through working in a way that builds trust. Kirk contributes with relating peace building to understanding the causes of violence.

## Missiological perspectives

Based on the data findings, I have assessed that three themes are central to discuss within the missiological perspectives of SAINT and its partners. First of all I will discuss the balance between words and action. Secondly, I have found the relationship between mission and human rights to be central. The last theme I will discuss is that of working through partnerships.

### Words & Action

A central theme in the missiological perspectives of SAINT and its partners is whether words and action should both be included in mission work. It is a part of SAINT and HHK's general understanding of mission that both words and action should be included. At the current time, SAINT and its partners are in agreement that inside North Korea proclamation should not or cannot be part of their work. A main reason for this is the lack of religious freedom and the harsh persecution of Christians which implies that proclamation activities would cause great dangers for the people involved. However, SAINT commented that the needs of the North Korean people will change over time and so SAINT and its partners will have to adjust their work accordingly. Implied by this was that at some point in the future it could become possible to

share the Gospel with the North Korean people. However in the work with North Korean refugees outside of North Korea, meeting their spiritual needs by proclaiming the Gospel is also a natural part of HHK's current work. Concerning this we saw that Peters underlined the importance of working against "rice-Christianism" by being "even-handed" and "non-coercive". Of relevance to the issue of being non-coercive is what Peters said when he was interviewed by a Danish newspaper in 2009. He explained that it is important not to push the North Koreans to believe in the Christian message:

When we meet them they do not always understand why we want to help them and they respond to us very differently. We explain to them that it is first of all God who drives us, but we do not push them. We have to understand that they come from an extremely rigid faith system in which the leaders are what people believe in. They neither can nor should just replace this with another [faith system] at once. (...) They are almost hypnotized by all the new things they encounter and we must not exploit that.<sup>28</sup> (Telling & Nielsen, 2009)

The quote shows that in Peters' understanding even though it is important to share the Gospel in words, it is equally important to let the North Korean refugees take the time they need to assess this belief against what they come from and ultimately to decide for themselves what they want to believe. The importance of working non-coercively was not a theme in the findings about SAINT. However, in *Freedom of Belief & Christian Mission* (2015), Gravaas expressed the view that even though there have been cases in church history in which Christians have gained converts through means of pressure, he points to that the church has a responsibility to reach out to the unreached and that past mistakes must not shut up Christians about the Gospel. (Gravaas, 2015, p. 419)

Returning to the issue of proclaiming the Gospel, in the case of Whitestone, there is no mentioning of the role of proclamation. Rather, Mr. Kim's emphasis seems to be on the Christian presence and the empowering practical help that Whitestone supply the North Korean people with. We shall include the stance of Park shortly.

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<sup>28</sup> My own translation.

Peters from HHK spoke of the practical side of the mission work as tangible humanitarian aid – primarily directed at North Koreans who have fled their country - and also emphasized that advocacy for human rights is part of the work. Transcending all of HHK’s work, Peters explained that there are threads of evangelization and peace building. As earlier mentioned, in Peters’ understanding, mission work should have its offset in the neighborhood of where Christians live which is why he believes that South Koreans have a special responsibility to act on the North Korean situation.

One of the things we should notice from the discussions above is that there are some differences in the way HHK and Whitestone see and conduct mission work. This is especially the case in the way HHK emphasized that proclamation and attending to North Koreans’ spiritual needs should be included, whereas Whitestone’s emphasis was on a Christian presence and on providing practical and empowering help. These differences should be seen in the backdrop of the fact that Whitestone works inside North Korea and HHK primarily works with refugees and advocacy outside of North Korea. Because of this geographical difference, even though the two organizations phrase what mission is in different ways, these do not seem to imply any direct contradictions. However the picture changes when we include Park’s mission view in the discussion: To Park the concept of mission is irrelevant to his work. He sees mission work as proselytizing and as a corrupt excuse used by South Korea Christians to avoid acting on the aggravating situation in North Korea. In other words, to him mission is tantamount to evangelism – and he sees evangelism as irrelevant and obstructive.

In the data findings about SAINT and HHK and in the theory the general rule is that the testimony of God’s love and hence God’s mission should be expressed in words as well as action. The testimony in words is not emphasized in Whitestone’s current work and Park only sees evangelism as an excuse for not acting. The data findings about SAINT, HHK and Park indicate consensus with the theory about the idea that the practical manifestations of God’s mission include work for justice as well as acts to compassionately meet the needs of people. (LWF, 2004, pp. 23-27; Kirk, 1999, pp. 52-55). As an exception from this consensus, Brown did



not see work for justice and human rights as a part of mission activities as such although he did express that this form of action should be included in the responsibilities of Christians.

Within the theoretical material, even though Kirk and *Mission in Context* (2004) are in overall agreement about the interdependency of words and action in mission work, *Mission in Context* (2004) exempts situations in which people are particularly vulnerable or where it is impossible to proclaim the Gospel so that the actions must speak of God's love as a silent testimony. (LWF, 2004, p. 37-38; 46). These reservations can be argued to be in play in the North Korean setting: Inside North Korea it is impossible to do proclamation work; at least in the sense that it is very dangerous both for the proclaiming part and for the listener. This is the situation under which Whitestone is working and in which the emphasis in the work is the presence and the practical assistance. When North Koreans flee to South Korea it can also be argued that they are in the type of vulnerable situation that *Mission in Context* (2004) mentions and so that there is a risk of manipulation into conversion. This is the type of situation about which Peters spoke of the importance of not pushing, of being non-coercive and of working against rice-Christianism. In contrary to *Mission in Context* (2004), both Gravaas from SAINT and Kirk argue that past mistakes and risks of manipulation must not be a reason to neglect proclamation of the Gospel. Kirk argues that words are needed to avoid misunderstandings and also that the church has no right to not evangelize as this is God's way of salvation. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 205-225). Gravaas added that the church is responsible for reaching the unreached.

As we learned in the theory chapter, earlier in history there was a tendency to see service and work for justice as a consequence of mission and not as mission work in itself. Now the balance has moved so that diaconal work is often central in the work of mission organizations. (Taber, 2000 pp. 34-35; Ahonen, 2000, p. 229). The disagreement between the Lausanne movement and the World Council of Churches since the end of WWII is perhaps the most well-known example of the conflict concerning the right balance between proclamation and service: Summing up the conflict in very few words, the World Council of Churches sees proclamation as equal to that of service and practical assistance to people in need, whereas the Lausanne

Movement believes that the world church has failed its central task of bringing the Gospel to all of the world and due to this it points to proclamation as the central element of mission. (Ahonen, 2000 pp. 231-234). As SAINT identifies with the Lausanne movement – and due to Gravaas’s belief in the church’ obligation to reach the unreached - SAINT must be assumed to share its stance with the Lausanne movement in this dispute. On the other hand, in my interview with Gravaas he spoke of how mission work in North Korea must take the form of pre-evangelism so that by attending to the basic needs of North Koreans their hearts will be opened up to later hear and receive the message of the Gospel. In this way we see that according to Gravaas the North Korean situation is a special case in which the general rule of both proclaiming in words and action does not apply at present. It is possible that Kirk has not taken the unique North Korean setting into consideration when expressing his general ideal to always include proclamation in mission work. If he actually did consider this type of situation his stance would mean that proclamation of the Gospel should be done in spite of the risk of both the mission worker and the receiver to be arrested, excessively punished and perhaps executed as a result. It is possible that this would in fact be Kirk’s stance as he additionally expresses that the church should bear witness about Christ to the point of martyrdom. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 52-55; 145-147).

Following this discussion, it can be argued that the big question is what future events are expected: If greater openness of North Korea and reunification with South Korea is imminent then laying aside the direct proclamation for later; and for now setting with the model of pre-evangelism in compassionate actions can be argued to be prudent. On the other hand, if reunification lies way ahead in the future perhaps it should be seen as the church’s duty to share the Gospel in North Korea already now in spite of the risks that this would involve. As the division of Korea has been going on for more than 60 years now and that there are no unambiguous signs that this will change in the near future, perhaps Christians *do* have a duty to evangelize inside North Korea – also at the present time. But then we in fact also see examples of this happening: Mr. Le sending in pamphlets by balloon; North Koreans becoming Christian and returning to tell their people about the Gospel. The impression that many North Korean

refugees become Christian is supported by a small survey conducted in 2008 showing that as many as 66 % out of a group of 444 who had then settled down in South Korea had become Christian after leaving North Korea. (Kim & Kim, 2015, p. 268). Returning to the discussion, perhaps the last piece of the puzzle is found by returning to the idea of calling: Yes, proclamation work must be done, but it is not the only factor and compassionate actions can serve a purpose in itself (pointing to the worth and dignity of every human being) as well as functioning as pre-evangelism. In this understanding all the types of efforts that SAINT and its partners do are part of what God is about in this world and people involved in mission work can have different tasks and callings that all serve as a testimony of God's love. Also, it should be remembered that mission ultimately is God's mission and - in Park's words - in the end the work depends on God's blessing. The difficult balance can then be summed up to be on the one hand to accept that mission workers have different roles and that God holds the final responsibility and on the other hand that the church *does* hold a responsibility to (in Kirk's words) be a living interpreting of the anticipation of God's Kingdom. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 29-30)

In order to challenge the way in which the roles within mission work of proclamation, humanitarian aid and work for human rights have been discussed so far, I will now include in the discussion some perspectives by Jung Jin-Heon who has written an article about Christian mission work. (Jung, 2013, pp. 147-165). Jung's intent is a criticism of the way in which missionaries operate in China in the border area to North Korea. His main points are that the way human rights are interpreted and communicated by these is problematic and also that the issue of conversion to Christianity is a process or – he would say – a project with unfortunate implications. Jung argues that when North Korean refugees come to China they have no other choice than to receive the help of the Christian missionaries who provide them with food, shelter, safety and company. He adds that even though conversion is not required, the fact that the missionaries supply humanitarian aid makes the relationship to the refugees asymmetrical and so he believes that the refugees have no other choice than to convert. Against Jung's claims, it seems fair to argue that the fact that missionaries are providing the North Korean refugees with basic help is an entirely positive thing especially since they – as Jung includes –

have no other offers of help. As we have seen in the data findings as well as in the theory, there are some risks in providing humanitarian help and at the same time preaching the Gospel. The precaution of expressing that there are no conditions attached to the help is essential. Also being even-handed (in the words of Peters) so that the way refugees are treated does not depend on whether they convert must be deemed important. On the other hand - as Gravaas and Kirk agreed – Christians do have an obligation to preach the Gospel as this is the way of God’s mission. Or it can be argued like Peters did, that preaching the Gospel is about attending to the refugees’ spiritual needs and so including this is part of a holistic approach in the help provided. Still, what is important to extract from the criticisms of Jung are the risks involved if the unconditionality of the help is not fully expressed. Also, implied by Jung’s criticism is the importance of being aware of and communicating the risks of conversion to the refugees; as neither the Chinese or - if the refugees are sent back - the North Korean governments respond friendly to conversion to Christianity.

As a final stop in the discussion of mission work in words and action, we shall return to some points from Kim Hyun-Sik’s article *Reflections on North Korea* (2008). In this, he expresses a clear goal of evangelizing the North Korean population as well as providing them with unconditional humanitarian aid. Kim adds that the help that the missionaries provide changes the North Koreans’ attitude towards Christians and contributes to their belief in a loving God. Kim Hyun-Sik’s contribution to the discussion brings us back to the initial idea that mission work ideally should encompass testimonies about God in words as well as in action. Also, through this very compact point he presents the idea that we also saw in the data about SAINT and Whitestone about pre-evangelism by claiming that the loving actions of Christians can prepare the North Koreans for believing in a loving God.

In short, SAINT and its partners are not in agreement in their missiological perspectives of what mission is and should encompass. Some argue that at current evangelism should mainly be included in the form of pre-evangelism. However, when evangelism is included in mission work it has been high-lighted that it is important to emphasize conversion as voluntary.

## **Mission & human rights work**

To SAINT and its partners the work includes a focus on human rights. Brown from SAINT was the only of the organization representatives who expressed an understanding of advocacy for human rights as separate from mission work as such. Both Brown and Gravaas emphasized freedom of religion or belief as central to their specific work and saw this as closely connected to other freedoms and human rights. Gravaas' point of view on whether human rights advocacy is part of mission work did not appear clearly in my data findings. However, in *Freedom of Belief & Christian Mission* (2015) Gravaas emphasizes a close connection between mission work and freedom of religion or belief: "I am convinced that we can both carry out mission and secure everybody's right to freedom of religion" (Gravaas, 2015, p. 415). The connection between mission work and human rights becomes even clearer later in this text: "The battle for religious freedom must be considered a central element in the holistic mission of the Christian church. It belongs to its social responsibility and *diakonia*." (Gravaas' emphasis; Gravaas, 2015, p. 427). As we can see, Gravaas considers the fight for religious freedom a part of diaconal mission work.

Continuing with exploring how the relationship between mission and human rights is understood, to HHK advocacy is simply listed as a part of the practical assistance that they provide the North Koreans with. In the work of Whitestone we only saw human rights work in effect indirectly, as the emphasis was providing for the basic need of food and in that way to also see to the North Korean people's basic human rights. In the case of Park, human rights violations are seen as a crime against God and the information and advocacy work - challenging South Koreans and the world community to act on the human rights situation in North Korea - is the core of his work.

A specific challenge that SAINT and its partners face in the human rights work for North Korea is that of the human rights work being labelled in South Korea as belonging to specific political wings and agendas. Bringing Kirk into the discussion, the idea of human rights work in mission is challenged by another aspect of the political setting of a secular society: Kirk regards the idea of universal and natural rights a secular idea and describes what could be called a self-destruction

mechanism as part of the concept: His point is that the idea of human value without the reference to a higher power leaves the value and hence the rights of people up to each state. (Kirk, 2006, pp. 11-25). This perspective can be argued to be supported by the reality within North Korea in which individual human life seems to be estimated as having little value and – perhaps as a result of this – the level of human rights is appalling. On the other hand, when focusing on Christian workers who believe that every human being is created in God’s image, it is hard to argue that there is something wrong with working for an increased level of justice and life quality for people - through the principles that are described as human rights. However, Kirk’s point seems to be of a different sort in that he speaks of freedom as a gift of grace and of becoming what human beings were created to be rather than aiming at a diffuse concept of freedom without any goal or direction. If true freedom is seen as receiving the Gospel and living in community with God, the implication is that the emphasis in mission work should be on the proclamation of the Gospel. However, again it is hard to see that there has to be a contradiction in working for “Christian” freedom and other freedoms. To use Park’s words, in order to have the possibility to tell people about (the freedom in) God, first the people need to survive. And so in spite of Kirk’s perspective, I will argue that working for universal human rights is possible and even a natural part of mission work. This is especially the case because of the belief in the inherent worth and dignity of human beings due to their being created in God’s image. This foundation makes their survival and living conditions important and relevant to address. In short, there is no need to see a contradiction between emphasizing human rights and in working for spiritual freedom through Christ. Indeed if not having access to the human right, freedom of religion or belief, then what Kirk defines as true freedom is not accessible. In *Diakonia in Context* (2009) this position is supported as it is argued that working for rights, citizenship and democracy is a part of mission work. (LWF, 2009, pp. 61-62). A linked discussion is about whether fighting for human rights is meaningful outside of the Christian faith. I am not arguing that it is not; rather I am leaving that discussion up to others as it goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

Including Jung (2013, pp. 147-165) once more, he criticizes the way religious freedom is presented to the refugees and argues that the communicated understanding is that religious freedom is only meaningful to the extent that it is considered tantamount to converting to Christianity. If assuming for a moment that this understanding is in fact expressed by missionaries, it actually seems to be well in line with Kirk's idea that freedom (for example of religion) is only valuable when having some valuable to choose; referring to the true freedom in God's gift of grace. (Kirk, 2006, p. 23). Now, one thing is that Kirk's idea may be valid from an existentialistic point of view in the sense that choice of religion or faith matters to a meaningful life. But another thing is that if teaching refugees that the human right of religious freedom is tantamount to converting to Christianity, then the core in the concept of freedom is lost as the choice becomes forced and so is no freedom at all. Later in the article Jung adds a criticism of missionaries' tendency to put religious pressure on North Korean women, who have been sold as wives to Chinese men, to stay even when these relationships are abusive. Simultaneously, he hints that these women are living under worse conditions and more pressure than what they experienced within North Korea. This last point is undermined by Jung himself, as he earlier in the article describes how the North Korean refugees come to China in search for food and jobs – and so obviously the conditions in North Korea are generally worse for the refugees there than in China. However, if missionaries are in fact putting pressure on North Korean women to stay in abusive relationships with Chinese men, then these missionaries are working against the human rights' situation of these women. I earlier argued that there need not be any contradiction in including human rights efforts in mission work. However, if the model that Jung presents is in effect then there definitely is a contradiction. In response to this I will argue that the emphasis must still be on providing the North Korean refugees with help unconditionally and non-coercively. If the missionaries impose moral burdens on women that contradict their human rights then the work becomes coercive and conditional. Hence, the importance of the missionaries teaching truthfully about human rights and the implications of religious freedom should be implemented.

In short, SAINT and its partners all include efforts for improving the human rights situation for North Koreans. Including a human rights aspect in mission work is supported by *Mission in Context* (2004), but challenged by Kirk and Jung.

## **Partnerships**

Part of SAINT and its partners' missiological perspectives are also how they regard partnerships. From SAINT's point of view Gravaas pointed to that working through partners has the advantage of it being locals who on the basis of their contextualized knowledge can assess the situation instead of SAINT forcing a Norwegian perspective into a setting in which it would not fit. SAINT's main contributions into the partnerships are funds and a large amount of knowledge about how mission work and human rights efforts are conducted in different parts of the world. In my interview with Brown he explained that while the work is framed by dialogue and mutual agreement, their partners are often entrusted with decisions about the practical approach and ethical dilemmas. The approaches of Gravaas and Brown demonstrate that SAINT's relationships to its partners are characterized with respect and trust. From the perspective of SAINT some challenges in working through partnerships are first of all that the communication (often through emailing) can be slow and that because SAINT does not have its own emissaries it can be harder to collect testimonies about the work that can engage the grassroots in Norway.

Much in line with SAINT, Peters described the partnership as carried by trust, regular interaction and mutual understanding. About the mutual understanding he especially appreciated that SAINT has recognized that the work of HHK claims a high level of secrecy due to what he on another occasion labels the "unique challenges" (Peters, 2015, p. 304) in the work with North Koreans. Surely he is thereby referring to the necessary secrecy of the work. The data about Whitestone does not include how it relates to the partnerships with SAINT. Like for Peters, mutual understanding is also a feature of the partnership with SAINT and HHK that Park pointed to. Park added that besides the possibility for SAINT to contribute with financial support the moral support is of equal importance. In this way Park has felt it as a great encouragement that someone as far away as SAINT backs the work that he does.



According to *Mission in Context* (2004), partnerships in mission are matters of course as mission is not only a local responsibility; it is a responsibility for the global church. (LWF, 2004, p. 44). A very central word in the data findings about what characterizes the partnerships between SAINT and its partners is that of *trust*. Mutual trust seems essential for the cooperation and functions as a foundation for the partnerships. It is understandable how this is especially important in work that is directed at North Koreans as such work - in Peters' words – implies a high level of secrecy. According to Kirk, partnerships are natural to include in mission work as the Christian message involves love and fellowship and so without outliving this in cooperation with others locally and globally, the message would lose credibility. Implied by the Christian message of fellowship is how genuine interest in each other should be a feature of partnerships. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 184-204). This interest seems to be present in the partnerships between SAINT and its partners as we for example saw in how Park experienced that someone as far away as Norway shares his pain and provides moral support. This last example can also be argued to be an expression of SAINT and its partners *sharing in suffering* – which is mentioned by Kirk. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 190-191)

Respect in the partnership is among others expressed in the way SAINT appreciate the local partners' contextualized knowledge and in the way approaches and ethical assessments are left up to the partners to decide. Acknowledging these strengths in SAINT's partners can be said to contribute to the ideal of equality that both Kirk and *Mission in Context* (2004) point to. (LWF, 2004, p. 45; Kirk, 1999, pp. 184-204). The partners are equal in that even though SAINT is providing money, its partners contribute with other elements like contextualized knowledge and social status. Focusing on these examples of how SAINT and its partners engage in partnerships, it can be argued that they work in line with the interdependency that Kirk describes as the ideal. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 191-192). As opposed to this, it is more questionable whether the ideal of accompaniment that *Mission in Context* (2004) describes is in effect; (LWF, 2004, p. 45) as SAINT and its partners are not sharing all of their resources with each other. At least SAINT is ultimately in control of how its funds are distributed. Disregarding the financial part of the partnerships, SAINT can be said to be in accompaniment with its partners in that

they share a common travel of faith and due to the different assets that SAINT and its partners are contributing with.

According to Kirk, in order to form a partnership, some level of agreeing must be in place. On the other hand he opts for the stance that denominational and cultural differences do not make partnerships impossible. (Kirk, 1999, p. 202). In line with this, one of the features of the partnership with SAINT that both Peters and Park mentioned is mutual understanding. The fact that their understanding of the situation and each other is in tune supports the cooperation. Also regular interaction is mentioned in the data findings as an important element of the partnerships. Even though the communication can be slow and indirect – often through emailing – it is prioritized and this strengthens the cooperation. The regular interaction also involves visits in Norway or at the locations of the projects so that direct contact is included. This feature of the partnerships can be related to Kirk's and *Mission in Context's* (2004) emphasis on the importance of both sending and receiving people in a partnership. (Kirk, 1999, pp. 193-194; LWF, 2004, p. 45). When including this point in the discussion it is central to notice that SAINT does not send emissaries like many other mission organizations. Rather, it works through local partners and so this idea of sending and receiving missionaries must be re-interpreted to the context of SAINT and its partners. On the basis of this understanding SAINT and its partners do seem to fulfill the spirit of the ideal of sending and receiving in the way that SAINT on the one side and its partners on the other are occasionally visiting each other.

In short, SAINT and its partners are internally in agreement in their missiological perspectives on partnerships. They can also be argued to be close to fully in accordance with the theory.

### **Summary of the missiological perspectives**

Based on my data findings I have discussed how SAINT and its partners in their missiological perspectives relate to the balance between words and action, the role of human rights in mission work and to partnerships. Concerning the balance between words and actions, SAINT and its partners' stances vary in that Park does not believe that evangelism – or mission for that matter – should be included in the work; which can be argued to be in line with Jung. SAINT and

Whitestone point to pre-evangelism at the current time whereas HHK includes evangelism in its work. Jung has contributed with important points about risks of mixing humanitarian work and evangelism.

About the role of human rights in mission work, SAINT and its partners all include work that aims at improving the human rights situation in North Korea. This includes practical efforts to cover basic needs and in that way to secure basic human rights. Also, advocacy and provision of choices through refugee assistance are included. Kirk challenges the idea of including a human rights aspect in mission and Jung criticizes missionaries for abusing the idea of freedom of religion or belief.

Concerning partnerships, SAINT and its partners' missiological perspective on this is described with the words respect, trust, mutual understanding, genuine interest and regular interaction. The way SAINT and its partners work through partnerships can be argued to be close to fully in accordance with the theoretical concepts of interdependency and accompaniment.



## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to explore mission work in a contemporary societal setting. My curiosity was triggered by a professional interest in the role of religion in society. Within this area I have chosen to focus on how Christian organizations can relate to societal challenges in the form of humanitarian crisis, human rights violations and conflicts. Because of my interest and area of study within religion and society in a global perspective, I have selected a missiological approach on the backdrop of social science as the frame of the thesis. Due to my personal interest in organizational work as well as in the Korean setting, I have chosen to conduct research in the form of a case-study of the mission work Stefanus Alliance International (SAINT) together with its partners have directed at the North Korean people. Hence the research question of my thesis has been:

**How do SAINT and its partners understand their mission work directed at the North Korean people and what impact do they envision?**

In order to provide an answer to this question I assessed it useful to formulate the following sub-questions:

- 1) What is the motivational basis of SAINT and its partners' work aimed at the North Korean people?**
- 2) What are SAINT and its partners' hopes and expectations for the outcomes of their mission work directed at the North Korean people?**
- 3) What are the missiological perspectives of SAINT and its partners?**

I have chosen these sub-questions because the motivational basis, the hopes and expectations as well as the missiological perspectives shed light on how mission work is understood and what impact is envisioned; and so answering these questions creates the necessary basis for answering the research question.

SAINT has assisted me in the realization of this project by contributing to my data collection and providing me with contact to main partners in their work directed at the North Korean people. As a result of this I have been collecting data about SAINT as well as its partners HHK, Whitestone and Park.

My methodological approach has been to sample data in Norway and South Korea in the fall of 2015; primarily through interviews, but to a smaller extent also in the form of document analysis and participant observation. I have conducted five interview; two of which have been with representatives of SAINT at its office in Oslo: The General Secretary, Hans Aage Gravaas (Gravaas) and Head of the Human Rights Department, Ed Brown (Brown). The third interview was with the Christian activist; founder and director of HHK, Tim A. Peters (Peters). The fourth interview was conducted with the founder of Whitestone; an interview I have unfortunately been unable to use in the thesis due to the loss of contact with the respondent (Mr. Kim). The last interview was with C. K. Park (Park), founder of The Third Way and originator of the North Korean Database Center (NKDB). The last three interviews were conducted in Seoul, South Korea. After collecting the data I conducted a thematic analysis and presented my findings in the data report.

I have selected Andrew J. Kirk's *What is Mission?* (1999) and the document *Mission in Context* (2004) by the Lutheran World Federation as the theoretical backdrop for my thesis. In the theory chapter I discussed these perspectives against each other with the occasional assistance of supplementary scholars. Then with an offset in the topics that I deemed central in the data findings, I discussed these against the theory in my discussion chapter. In central discussions I have drawn in extra material for the sake of depth and to illuminate the issues from more angles. As a result of these preceding chapters, I will now conclude on my sub-questions and then on my research-question:

### **Motivational basis**

My first sub-question was: What is the motivational basis of SAINT and its partners' work aimed at the North Korean people?

Based on my research, the most central element of an answer to this is God's love. SAINT and its partners' motivational basis in God's love is supported by the theoretical texts which emphasize that mission work should indeed be based on God's love and by the understanding that when Christians conduct mission work they are ultimately participating in God's mission: *Missio Dei*.

A second part of the answer is that the belief in human worth and dignity due to having been created in God's image is part of SAINT and its partners' motivational basis. This belief is only expressed directly in the findings about SAINT and HHK although there is reason to assume that Whitestone and Park would concur. Also this motivational basis is backed by the theory which connects it to the idea that mission work should include holistic aid aiming at the physical, psychological and social needs as well as work for justice.

On the basis of my research, the third piece in answering this question is SAINT and its partners' experience of a calling and duty from God to take part in the work. Also this idea is in line with the theory through which it is elaborated that there are two types of callings: A general calling for all Christians to take part in what God is about in the world and a more specific calling to individuals and - we can add - organizations to perform specific tasks.

A final element in answering the questions is that SAINT and its partners have a motivational basis in their concern for the great need and the human rights violations in North Korea. This motivational basis has been expressed clearly by SAINT, HHK and Park and all of SAINT and its partners have engaged in changing this situation from the angles that they each – as individuals and organizations – have felt called to work from.

As we can see, SAINT and its partners have not expressed conflicts in the motivational basis for their work directed at the North Korean people and we also see no disagreement when comparing with the theory.

### **Hopes & expectations**

My second sub-question was: What are SAINT and its partners' hopes and expectations for the outcomes of their mission work directed at the North Korean people?

Although SAINT and its partners also in this respect are in accordance in many aspects, I have found variation in what hopes and expectations they have for their work. My research into the matter has shown that one of the primary expectations of the work is that it will express the love of God to the North Korean people. This was stated by SAINT, HHK and Whitestone who also in different ways included a hope for the people to grasp this love. Park did not speak of expressing God's love as such, but what he did emphasize was that showing care through action is the only way to be a true Christian. Thus, in a sense SAINT and all of its partners agree on the hope and expectation of expressing God's love – at least through action.

My research has shown that a second effect that is expected of the work is that it of improving the quality of life for the North Korean people; through efforts at individual, family, group and societal levels. SAINT and its partners all agree on this even though they have phrased it in different ways.

A third hope for SAINT and its partners is to improve the human rights situation for the North Korean people. SAINT, HHK and Park intent to impact this through advocacy which in the words of SAINT and HHK as well as Kirk and *Mission in Context* (2004) was referred to as raising a prophetic voice for justice. Whitestone did not express improving the human rights situation as a directly hoped effect of the work. Still, in practice Whitestone contributes to improving the human rights situation (along with HHK) through providing for food and other necessities. HHK additionally expects to improve the human rights conditions for North Koreans by providing them with the freedom of choice; through assisting them in escaping from China to South Korea or other countries.

A fourth hoped outcome of the work of SAINT and its partners is for it to impact all Koreans to take responsibility for the North Korean situation. To SAINT, HHK and Park a central goal is to raise awareness among South Koreans and to encourage them to take responsibility for the needs of the North Koreans. In addition, SAINT expects that the presence of its partners and increased contact with the outside world can inspire the North Koreans to create change from



within. Also Park hopes that the North Korean people will stand up for themselves and change the situation. Whitestone did not mention a hope of encouraging Koreans to take responsibility, but except for that there is consensus about this hope for the outcomes of the work.

As a final hope and expectation, SAINT and its partners aim at preparing the North Korean people for reunification with South Korea. In the efforts for this, increasing the mutual knowledge between the two Koreas through interaction has been emphasized as important in order to achieve the outcomes of peace building and reconciliation processes. Kirk's idea of inculturation and his emphasis on understanding the reasons for (past) violence provide inputs for these processes. In contrary to this, when it comes to Kim Hyun-Sik's idea of achieving reconciliation through converting North Korean to Christianity, I have argued against this as it would imply a mix of agendas and ethical problems.

The hope to communicate God's love can be seen as an overall aim for SAINT and its partners. SAINT's partners have different perspectives on what role evangelism plays in this; however they all – in each of their way - work for the outcome of improving the quality of life and the human rights situation for the North Koreans. In addition SAINT, HHK and Park work for getting more Koreans engaged in the process of change for the North Korean people.

### **Missiological perspectives**

My third and final sub-question was: What are the missiological perspectives of SAINT and its partners?

Answering this on the basis of my research encompasses how SAINT and its partners look at the role of evangelism, human rights work and partnerships in mission work. First it can be concluded in short that their perspectives are not identical in the way they understand the roles of evangelism, humanitarian aid and human rights efforts in their work. Gravaas from SAINT was mainly in tune with Kirk – and the Lausanne Movement – in that evangelism must not be excluded from mission work. However he argued that North Korea is a special case in which pre-evangelism is what is currently possible. Both SAINT and HHK expressed that in general mission

should include both evangelism and diaconal work. The data about Whitestone was in line with SAINT's pre-evangelism approach. Park did not see his work as mission and accused the focus on evangelism of being a direct hindrance in stopping the crimes against God - which was one of the ways he described the human rights violations in North Korea. Brown was the only data contributor who distinguished human rights efforts from mission work; while emphasizing both. Whitestone did not mention a human rights focus, but Gravaas, Peters and Park – in line with the theory - all saw this as a natural part of their work. When combining evangelism and humanitarian aid we saw how HHK was attentive to the risks of manipulation, coercion and “rice-Christianism”. We also saw that this was believed to be prevented by providing aid unconditionally and by clearly expressing the risks of converting.

About the third element of the missiological perspective, SAINT and its partners understand their partnership as something that is based on respect, trust, genuine interest in each other, mutual understanding and regular interaction. This is in line with Kirk's ideal of interdependency and to a great extent in line with *Mission in Context's* (2004) ideal of accompaniment. The concurrency is supported by the fact that SAINT contributes into the partnerships with funds and a broad general knowledge about mission work; then the partners on the other hand contribute with contextualized knowledge as well as local social status.

### **SAINT and its partners' mission & the envisioned impact**

Having responded to the sub-questions of the thesis we are ready for the grand finale of answering the research question: How do SAINT and its partners understand their mission work directed at the North Korean people and what impact do they envision?

SAINT and its partners understand their mission work as based on a motivational basis in God's love, a belief in human worth and dignity, the experience of God's calling and due to the terrible humanitarian and human rights situation in North Korea. Also, they understand their work as characterized by working well together – in spite of some differences in their approaches - through partnerships based on respect, trust, genuine interest in each other, mutual understanding and support. Additionally, I have argued that SAINT and its partners – in

accordance with each of their callings – are part of God’s mission - of Missio Dei – for the North Korean people.

The short answer to what impact SAINT and its partners envision is: Contributing to impacting the situation for the North Korean people in such a way that they experience God’s love and that their life quality and human rights are enhanced. A side-effect of the process towards this would be reunification with South Korea. Approaches adapted by SAINT and its partners to contribute to this end encompass humanitarian aid, Christian presence, proclamation work, advocacy work, encouraging both South and North Koreans to take action as well as working for peace and reconciliation.

Central to how SAINT and its partners understand their mission work and the impact they envision is exactly how God’s love should be expressed. In this aspect SAINT and its partners are not completely in agreement. This became evident in the discussion about whether a holistic approach implies including a verbal expression through evangelism and what the balance between words and actions should be. Particularly Park does not identify with the overall concept of mission which he regards tantamount to corrupt proselytizing. SAINT and its partners’ stances towards envisioning the North Koreans becoming Christian through evangelism vary from not finding it relevant (Park), to a current model of pre-evangelism (SAINT and Whitestone) and finally to including proclamation as a natural part of the work (HHK). In spite of SAINT’s model of pre-evangelism, it has left it up to its partners to decide whether and when expressing God’s love should imply evangelism. In connection with this Gravaas commented that due to the future development the needs will change and so SAINT and its partners will have to adjust their efforts accordingly. This could imply that at a later stage evangelism should be included directly in the work. HHK envisions that the work communicates God’s love in words as well as action and in a non-coercive and unconditional way and so will let the North Koreans understand that God loves them. To Whitestone and Park rather than evangelism, the emphasis is on impacting the North Koreans’ through loving actions. This discrepancy between SAINT’s partners in how they envision to impact the people through God’s

love seems to be based on the fact that Whitestone works inside North Korea where evangelism it is not allowed. However, in the case of Park the lack of concurrency is not based on the different working conditions but on his view that the outcome that matters is providing emergency aid and the vision of securing the survival of the North Korean people.

Another central topic of my research, implying an answer as to which impact is envisioned, is that of preparing the Korean people for future reunification. It is worth noticing that reunification in itself is not expressed as a primary goal in any of the data findings. Rather, my analysis of the data has found the expectation that reunification will inevitably happen and this is the main reason for the vision of impacting the North Korean situation in such a way that it is ready for reunification. That being said, reunification is still a secondary or indirect goal in the cases of HHK and Park.

Concerning the envisioned impact on the human rights situation for the North Korean people, I have argued that aiming at such an outcome of the work is a viable approach. Only it is important that mission workers teach North Koreans about human rights; that they do this neutrally without the agenda of converting and in avoidance of moral manipulation.

HHK expressed as “winning the lottery” the vision of seeing the North Korean people grasp that God loves them. Similar to this, Whitestone aimed at being present in North Korea and gaining the trust of the people. It is possible to interpret Whitestone’s approach in such a way that the vision is to prepare the way for the North Koreans to believe the message of the Gospel in the future when the degree of openness in North Korea will allow sharing it. The impact that Park envisioned being part of was a future in which North Koreans rise to establish democracy and human rights in their country. Finally, SAINT’s representatives expressed as the big vision a future situation with human rights flourishing so that North Korea will become the Paradise on Earth that it already claims to be.

## Outlook

Wrapping up the thesis I will present my reflections on what is new about my research and what it can be used for. Also, I will add a sub-chapter with suggestions for further research.

First, what is new about my research is that it presents how SAINT as a Norwegian mission organization relates to partnerships, how it together with its partners in the work for the North Korean people understands its mission and envisions the impact of this. I believe this has not been done before.

Regarding what my research can be used for, in the method chapter I wrote that I believed to have gained catalytic authenticity. What is meant by this is first of all that the result of the thesis can provide some input to other organizations or individuals who wish to engage in mission work or perhaps even to make a difference in regards to the North Korean situation. One of the interesting aspects of the way SAINT works is the fact that it does not send emissaries, but instead works through local partners. Advantages of this model are that the partners have contextualized knowledge and thus are better equipped to assess and engage in the issues at hand; and that instead of a Norwegian organization forcing its perspective into a setting in which that would not fit, the local perspective is maintained. The work of local partners does however not make an organization like SAINT excessive as it can contribute with economic and moral support as well as with a large amount of knowledge, from its global work, about how mission work and human rights efforts can be conducted. As the findings show, it is not necessary to agree on all goals or in every aspect of what mission work should be. Rather, respect, trust, genuine interest in each other, a mutual understanding and regular interaction seems to be a mixture that makes partnerships fruitful. SAINT's model of working through local partners can be said to balance the aspects of the local and the global in a preferable way, and although the work method that includes emissaries has other advantages, working through local partners may be the mission model of the future.

Another value of this thesis is the presentation of the perspective by Peters that mission work should start in the neighborhood of where Christians are living; and for South Korean Christians this implies taking responsibility for North Koreans. This point could prompt Christians in general to consider if we are taking responsibility for the people in our neighborhoods and how we can take care of their needs holistically. For those of us currently living in Europe we are also prompted to scrutinize whether we are attending to the needs of the refugees who at present come in so great numbers from Syria and other countries to our very neighborhoods to seek safety and better lives.

The findings of my thesis can additionally function as inspiration for others in mission in that it shows that working in a combination of evangelism, humanitarian work and human rights efforts is possible! For individuals, groups or organizations who specifically wish to participate in changing the situation of North Korea, my analysis of SAINT and its partners' understandings and visions can catalyze contemplation about what tasks God has called them to - as individuals or organizations. Also they may find my analysis helpful in considering what their motives and goals are; what God has put on their hearts.

A second way in which the thesis can be said to supply catalytic authenticity is in that it has provided input to the ongoing work of SAINT and its partners. What could be interesting is first of all for SAINT and its partners to see a systematical comparison of the nuances in their approaches. Secondly some input is provided through the discussion of the data findings against missiological theory and the articles about mission work. One of the central discussions in my thesis has been about the balance between evangelism and diaconal efforts like humanitarian aid and human rights work in Christian mission. My case-study focusing on North Korea has been an optimal setting for exploring this topic because it is the country in the world that heads the list of persecution of Christians and so the risks for evangelistic mission workers and converts are evident. Due to this, the question about whether evangelism should always be included in mission work is challenged to the full. Kirk has contributed to this discussion by claiming that Christians have an obligation to share the Gospel even to the point of martyrdom.

The implication of this would be for SAINT to consider if its concept of pre-evangelism suffices or if other initiatives are needed simultaneously. However I must once again point to the concept of calling, as it is different what Christians are called to do and so SAINT can be justified in choosing the approach of pre-evangelism. Another input that my thesis offers to the ongoing work of SAINT and its partners is the emphasis on peace building in relation to their goal of preparing for reunification. Out of SAINT and its partners, only HHK included perspectives on peace building in the understanding of the work. It could be argued that a greater focus on peace building would be beneficial for SAINT and its partners in their aim at preparing the Koreans for reunification. In this regard the point made by Kirk about understanding the causes of violence can prove helpful as it may be important to comply with the point of view that the isolative and violent approach of the North Korean regime in part can be explained by violence suffered during the Korean War and earlier violations of the people's freedom.

Even though my thesis has focused on North Korea, some of the findings are also relevant for other settings. Returning to the discussion of the balance between evangelism and diaconal efforts, mission work aiming at other geographical settings that mainly focuses on diaconal efforts may be prompted to evaluate if their reasons for down-scaling their evangelistic endeavors are justified; as they in any case have more freedom to include this than what is the case in work directed at North Korea.

### **Further research**

Suggesting further research possibilities in continuance of my thesis, I would first of all point out that it would be interesting to expand the scope of my research to more Christian organizations that focus their work on the North Korean people. A tension I noticed in my sources was that SAINT, HHK and Park expressed that not many work with what they do in regards to North Koreans and that they especially long to see more South Koreans involved. In contrary to this, both the articles of Jung (2013) and Kim Hyun-Sik (2008) claim that many and also South Korean Christians are engaged in work directed at North Koreans. Whether many are involved or not is

a relative question, but quantitative as well as qualitative studies could illuminate the scope and aims of the current work further.

Another angle that it would be interesting to explore would be that of peace building aiming at improving the relationship between North Korea and South Korea as well as with the rest of the international society. This could be a study of what has been done and of what has worked with the aim of suggesting further efforts that could speed up the process of reconciliation in consideration of the North Korean people who continue to suffer from the implications of isolation. Suggestions about what to do have of course been offered from many sides; however as the situation is not resolved, it is an area that continues to be in need of further exploration.



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# Appendix

## Interview guide 2015

- 1) What work does your organization do for the North Korean people?
- 2) We have talked about .... What other elements are parts of your work? And what parts are the main parts of your work?
- 3) How does the geographical and cultural distance between Norway and South Korea affect your inter-organizational co-operation about the work for the North Korean people?
- 4) What is your motivation for the work you do for the North Korean people?
- 5) What makes the work important?
- 6) What is the main goal of your work for the North Korean people?
- 7) How do you envision that your organization's mission work impacts the North Korean people?
- 8) How do the political and societal surroundings affect the impact of your work?
- 9) What is your theological approach to the work for the North Korean people?
- 10) What does the term "mission" mean to you?