

Youth statement – Sami Church Days 2025

We, the Sámi youth at Sami Church Days 2025, represent three of the four parts of Sápmi. We are praying for our siblings on the Russian side and wish they could be here with us.

To all the churches in the North, South, East, and West: All Sámi people are one, and even though we have different languages, we are equal to all other people, just like God made us.

We would deeply appreciate being able to be ourselves in every church, no matter where it is. This means being respected through access to hymns and the Bible in our languages, being allowed to use joik more in church, and having people in the church who can read everything in Sámi, just as in Norwegian. We believe this would help build a better relationship between the people and the church.

All of Sápmi appreciates Trefoldighetskirken for opening its arms to us and supporting us during the Fosen demonstrations in Oslo, as well as throughout the trials involving activists fighting for human rights. We hope that the church will continue to support us in future fights for human rights.

Our culture is intertwined with the land. The land is an essential part of our culture, and there can be no separation between land rights and cultural rights. Therefore, the Church of Sweden needs to take a lead in responsible forestry with respect for Indigenous rights, the climate and biodiversity. The reconciliation process is still new and fragile, and contributing to deforestation may cause irreversible damage to the relationship between church and the Sámi.

We want to point out that not all Sámi are Lutheran. On the Finnish side of Sápmi, we have Skolt Sámi who are mostly Orthodox. In the Orthodox church in Finland, we recognize a problem of inequality that does not allow women to be priests nor deacons. As Metropolitan Ambrosius has mentioned recently, the time is right to take the next step by ordaining the first woman deacon in the Orthodox Church of Finland. This has been allowed in other churches for a long time already, and it is an embarrassment that it has taken so long for us to reach this discussion. As the body of Christ, we should all be seen as equal and therefore equality should be more visible in every part of the church. (1 Cor 12:12-26).

We are happy to see Bible translations into different Sámi languages, for instance the Lule and Southern Sámi Bible and hymn translations. However, we want to emphasize that all Sámi languages are equally important, and more work is needed. We still see a need for complete Bible translations in all Sámi languages. Regarding Skolt Sámi, we are sad that it is taking such a long time to translate the Bible.

Sápmi is borderless, therefore we need a borderless church. The churches in Norway, Sweden and Finland affect each other, and they need to work together for a more united church in Sápmi. We urge you all to collaborate.

In the process of truth and reconciliation, there is a thin line between anger and bitterness. Reconciliation and rebuilding trust are not always the same as forgiving and forgetting. We are still angry at the church's discrimination against the Sámi people and the way it contributed to the colonization of Sápmi. This still affects Sámi youth today. However, we refuse to become bitter. We need to find ways to move forward, not only for the sake of the church, but for ourselves, the Sámi people. We want to lead with joy, pride, strength, and resilience. Moving forward does not mean forgetting the past.

We want:

- More joik and hymn singing in Sámi languages
- The church to continue supporting our human rights
- Responsible forestry
- Equality in our churches
- Bible translations in every Sámi language
- More collaboration across borders
- The church to acknowledge and hear us

As it says 1 Timothy: «Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young».
(1 Tim 4:12a)

Don't discard our voices. We are taking our space!