

Swedish Bishop Charges Churches to Do the Unthinkable: Accommodate Muslims

The Bishop of Stockholm has called on a church in her diocese to remove Christian symbols in order to make the building more “accessible” for visiting Muslims.

Writing on her official blog, Eva Brunne explains how she has also suggested that the church mark the direction of Mecca to help Muslims pray.

The Seamen’s Church, which is not subject to the Bishop’s direct authority, is located in the dockyards of eastern Stockholm and serves ships arriving in the area.

Brunne, who in 2009 became the world’s first openly lesbian bishop, draws a parallel between her request and the provision of prayer rooms at airports and hospitals.

She also cites an exhortation to welcome strangers, found in Hebrews 13:2, and suggests that not making changes to the building would be “stingy toward people of other faiths.”

But the proposals have attracted strong criticism from local church leaders.

‘Theologically Unthinking’

Father Patrik Pettersson, who works in the same area, labelled her ideas “theologically unthinking,” pointing out that it is misleading to compare a consecrated building with a public prayer room. “I should have thought a bishop would be able to tell the difference,” he said.

Kiki Wetterberg, director of the Seamen's Church, also criticized the suggestion, saying: "I have no problem with Muslim or Hindu sailors coming here and praying. But I believe that we are a Christian church, so we keep the symbols. If I visit a mosque, I do not ask them to take down their symbols. It's my choice to go in there."