



WTS Graduate Seeks to Comfort the Troubled and Trouble the Comfortable



REV. SUNNIVA GYLVER
WARTBURG SEMINARY
STUDENT 1994-1995

Rev. Sunniva Gylver studied at Wartburg Seminary in 1994-1995 as an exchange student from the seminary in Norway, Det teologisk Menighetsfakultet. The experience was transformational and shaped many facets of her 18 year ministry in Oslo, Norway. Now, she is working towards her PhD exploring the relationship between social capital and parish development in an inner city context.

Comfort the troubled and trouble the comfortable. She said, "This was really memorable for me because Jesus did both, he comforted people but he also challenged them, in a good way." This slogan is something Gylver learned during her time at Wartburg. "At Wartburg I heard a pastoral perspective, 'you can't only love God, you have to love the people and society as well.' I understood then that the church could be a powerful prophetic voice that speaks up to the injustices of the world and 'troubles the comfortable' by challenging people."

While serving in ministry, Gylver has led congregations located in inner-city Oslo where the global population creates diversity of culture and faith. Mosques and other houses of worship greatly outnumbered those of Christian tradition. She believed that she and members of her congregation needed to relate to and explore their context. Members of a nearby mosque and members of her congregation began walking together.

Literally. They walked together by participating in a volunteer neighborhood watch program that involved adult volunteers patrolling the streets. Gylver said knowingly, "It is much easier to talk when you're walking than when you are sitting down looking at each other face to face. So, we began walking and conversing."

These conversations ultimately resulted in an openness that has led to a long lasting relationship of sharing faith traditions with one another. Gylver was the first woman to speak at a Norwegian mosque. She said, "Sometimes it is easier to cross boundaries with groups from the other first because we think we have to agree all the time. You can practice with another faith because you know you aren't going to agree on anything."

Gylver credits interfaith dialog with helping her be more understanding but also strengthening her own faith. She said, "By learning about another's faith there have been a few things that I feel I would have missed in terms of my own faith if I hadn't had the opportunity for meaningful interfaith dialog."

Gylver shared that studying at Wartburg was life changing and transforming. When asked to name what had made the most significant impact on her ministry today, she answered, “The attention to being in worship every day. I think that is really important. The key for the church is to seek Jesus Christ all the time and really be clear about that which we center ourselves on, not the boundaries. The boundaries don’t really matter that much and sometimes create a sense of ‘we’ and ‘they’. The real way to build community in the church is to build it on a sacramental center, the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, and then move outward from there.”

Scan this QR code with a QR code reader on your mobile device to watch a video interview of Sunniva Gylver.



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