

“Good Neighbours” Consortium Receives Martin Luther King Award for its Work with Refugees



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An inter-faith initiative between Islamic Relief Sweden, the Church of Sweden and the Stockholm mosque has been announced as the recipient of this year's prestigious Martin Luther King Award in Sweden.

The Goda Grannar consortium – the Swedish term for Good Neighbours – was praised by the award's jury for bringing faiths together and “inspiring us all to move from words to deeds and promote democratic coexistence.”

The consortium was formed in 2015 after a large influx of refugees arrived in Stockholm from war-affected countries such as Syria. Working with community volunteers, the consortium initially provided nearly 4,000 new arrivals with shelter in churches and the mosque. It has since expanded and now provides a wider range of services for refugees including “language cafés”, guidance on Swedish society and legal advice.

Mohamed Ibrahim, Secretary-General of Islamic Relief Sweden, said: “We are very proud and happy that Goda Grannar is receiving this award. Unfortunately there are strong polarizing forces in the world and in Sweden today, which makes initiatives that show the importance of cooperation across religions all the more critical. We hope to continue this work for a long time to come.”

On announcing the award, the jury said:

“Martin Luther King once said, ‘The ones who love peace have to learn to organize as efficiently as the ones who love war’.

“Among other reasons, it was war that caused a large number of refugees to seek asylum in Sweden in 2015. One group which organised rigorously to provide them with a good reception was Goda Grannar, which emerged in the middle of Stockholm at the initiative of Katarina parish, Stockholm mosque and Islamic Relief Sweden. In a time characterized by increased polarization and less common ground, Goda Grannar stands as a good example of the strength of working together. “Cooperation and trust in each other lead the way to common solidarity and drive for action. The consortium proves that it is possible to come from different backgrounds, and yet respect each other’s culture and religion, and be able to work together for a better society. Our award winner is a role model in welcoming and taking advantage of a wide range of competencies. Community members and professionals are invited to contribute with their special knowledge and skills. “Martin Luther King encouraged us to turn our frustration over injustices into energy to create the world we want to see. The vigorous initiatives of Goda Grannar inspire us all to move from words to actions and promote democratic coexistence. This is an example of using common sense for rigorous planning for peace by actively living the words “together” and “welcome”. The award committee believes that the project shows an intense but low-key constructive force that strengthens humanity and compassion and reduces injustice in the true spirit of Martin Luther King.”

The Martin Luther King Award is awarded by the Equmenia Church, The Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation (SweFOR) and the Christian Council of Sweden. It is awarded in the spirit of Martin Luther King to celebrate his legacy of hope and reconciliation.

More about the award, in

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