



A final spurt in doctrinal conversations

By the end of the year the outlines of the results of current doctrinal conversations will be ready. Then the churches will be asked to comment on them. By Martin Friedrich.

It is still a good three years until the next General Assembly, but the work on the two doctrinal conversations which the 2006 General Assembly commissioned is nevertheless already entering a decisive phase. The documents should as far as possible have been translated and sent out by the end of the year, so that the churches have enough time to make comments and the texts can further be revised before the 2012 General Assembly.

Ministry, Ordination, Episkopé

In March a doctrinal conversation group made up of 18 delegates from the CPCE churches formed itself in Berlin. On the basis of the preliminary work that a small group had done since 2007, a changed structure was resolved on and further work organized. The group, which works in English, confirmed the Methodist superintendent Harvey Richardson from London as its chair. A redactional group will revise the text until September, so that it can be discussed thoroughly once again at the next doctrinal conversation conference. The questions how episkopé is to be understood and how the personal and social dimensions are to be safeguarded in its exercise still need special discussion. The significance of ordination and its relationship to other forms of commissioning are also disputed. Nevertheless the group is confident that it can present a text that does justice to the diversity within the CPCE churches and nevertheless promotes and deepens fellowship.

Scripture, Confession, Church

In the doctrinal conversation "Scripture, Confession, Church" the group has already gone a step further. At the beginning of April the group met for a final session. The NATO jubilee compelled it to move from Strasbourg to the deaconess house Nonnenweier in the Black Forest, but that did not mean breaking off the work. On the contrary, under the leadership of the chair, Prof. André Birmelé, the perspectives that had been mentioned at the big consultation in September 2008 and the Council

meeting in January were worked into the text. It is now being examined in peace and will be presented to the CPCE Council for handing on to the churches. None of its aims have changed: the document wants to stress once again the abiding importance of the Protestant scriptural principle, which is as far removed from fundamentalism as it is from arbitrariness; it seeks to evaluate the creeds of the early church and the confessions of the time of the Reformation which are important for the church and at the same time enable the CPCE to take the “way of confessing together today”.