



We are above all interested in the practice of faith

The Methodist Church in Great Britain visits the CPCE Office in Vienna. By Jochen Kramm with a commentary by Colin Ride.

The members of the British delegation already felt a slight regret at not having entered the Euro-zone when they paid their first restaurant bill in Vienna. But even the weak pound against the euro did not prevent the Methodist Church in Great Britain from sending an official delegation for the first time on a European inaugural visit. Thus came about the first visit of the British Methodist Church to the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe since it had entered the Church Community in 1995 by signing the Leuenberg Agreement. The delegation was led by Colin Ride (Europe Secretary). Other members were Christine Elliott (foreign relations), Karen Burke (publicity) and Ken Howcroft (ecumenical representative).

In Vienna the delegation spent an afternoon with the United Methodist Church in Austria. Superintendent Lothar Pöll accompanied the group to the English-speaking congregation of the Viennese Methodist community. General Secretary Dr. Michael Bünker led the group through the inner city, to point out to them the traces of Protestant history in Vienna.

The central topic of conversation was the question of the importance of church fellowship within Europe. The Methodist delegation described how its worldwide branches had developed from the history of the Methodist Church in Great Britain. It is difficult to define what role a geographically demarcated church community plays within this network of relationships, but the relationships, for example, to the American Methodist Church are more diverse than to some churches of the Leuenberg Church Fellowship. Furthermore by virtue of its tradition the Methodist Church is interested above all in the practice of faith. Michael Bünker emphasized that this orientation of the Methodist Church on social questions was the basis of the work of the Commission for Church and Society in the Conference of European Churches. The CPCE primarily dealt with doctrinal questions. Therefore more work needs to be done on how the Methodist Church can play an active part in the Church Fellowship. The discussion about the attitude of some British churches to the working programme of the Commission for Church and Society showed that the British churches still have their own view of European church institutions. They expect these not to act in their place but to enable them to act themselves and meet their needs.

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Colin Ride, Europe Secretary of the Methodist Church:

“We bring a different Church experience to CPCE as we were not a church born out of the Reformation, but born out of the Evangelical revival of the 18th century revival in Britain. We are not organized on ethnic lines and we open up a new understanding of ‘being the church catholic’. We bring the ability to talk to many traditions, social holiness and an understanding of connexionalism. Within CPCE we are committed to taking part in the various study groups. The Leuenberg texts help us with church relations in Britain.”