



Remain in time

Europe's Protestants and the rediscovery of worship. By Hans Jürgen Luibl.

At the centre of European Protestantism: worship – that is a good description of the theme of the South East Europe Group of the CPCE. The aim is to develop the importance of worship for individual faith, the building up of the community and society in post-modern Europe. First of all one can note that worship is not an outdated model. On the contrary, it is being rediscovered in the political upheavals of the time, the change after 1989, the crises of society, the new beginnings of the church and the many attempts at individual spirituality. Here it changes in its form and importance – not always without conflicts.

An essential point of the change is the discovery and shaping of the liturgy. The Protestant church is a church of the word, but the word also works in the form of the liturgy. However, particularly, say, for minority churches in a Roman Catholic environment this can lead to questions of their own theological identity, which is tied to forms of worship that have grown up. Another point is the stronger participation of the so-called laity in the shaping of worship and the more intensive participation of the congregation. Alongside this inner-church perspective, worship is understood more clearly as an open offer or a missionary task in a plural society. It cannot be regarded in isolation, but must become fruitful in social developments and the quest for religious reassurance. A home and a challenge: Protestant worship develops in this tension. This twofold function is also evident in the working title of the regional group's study: Remain in time. Worship offers first a remaining in time, beyond all changes. At the same time it is a challenge to remain in time to do justice to the challenges and changes by serving God. This identifies the decisive point over and above all strategic considerations and questions of liturgical form: worship is a place where God can be recognized and detected as being in action.

The study by the regional group is to be presented to the General Assembly of the CPCE in Florence in 2012. This will fulfil a commission from the General Assembly of the CPCE in Budapest in 2006. In Budapest it again became evident that the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe, the Protestant fellowship of pulpit and eucharist, is essentially a worshipping community. The ambitious goal of the study is to describe what worship means for being a Protestant church in a changing Europe.