



Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE)
Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
Communion d'Eglises Protestantes en Europe (CEPE)

CPCE-GEKE-CEPE, Severin-Schreiber-Gasse 3, 1180 Vienna, Austria

To the churches of the
Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches

Advent 2023

Dear sisters and brothers in the churches of the Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches

We are grateful that we have been connected for many years and that we are walking a common path that helps us to understand each other better and share our concerns and needs. We greatly appreciate what we have learnt from you over the years. As a Protestant church communion, you are geographically and theologically closest to us.

We regret that the conference in Beirut in October had to be cancelled. We would have liked to get to know the situation on the ground better there and intensify relations with the member churches of the FMEEC beyond the Presidency and the General Secretary. So, we would like to write to you in these difficult times for the Holy Land and the whole Middle East and assure you that we are thinking of you and praying for you.

*See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.
Isaiah 60:2 (NIV)*

In darkest times of history, the prophet Isaiah proclaims again and again the coming of the light. He carries a message of hope. As Christians we see fulfilment of this prophetic message in Jesus Christ, who came to this world as a child born in Bethlehem, a man, who walked through the lands, meeting men, women, and children, who was crucified and is risen from the dead, making visible the great glory of God.

When we look to Jesus' birth, we see that it was embedded in a complex historical context. According to scripture he was born under adverse conditions in an occupied country, his life was in danger and his parents had to flee their home country with him. This is a destiny that many people share even today.

**Presidium and
General Secretary**

Vienna, 21. December 2023

Az: GEKE 4410

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In these days of Advent 2023, our thoughts turn again to the places of God's history with God's people – the land of Abraham and the Land of Jesus from Nazareth. We are filled with sadness reading the words of Isaiah as those describing the current situation in this very special part of the world – the Land of the patriarchs, prophets and apostles. We see how *darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples*. We hear the screaming of the scared, the crying of the mourning, and the silence of those losing their hope.

With all of them we share the message of hope proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah:
The Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

In these days of Advent, we join the generations and generations who have awaited the Prince of Peace. We hope for peace and reconciliation for the whole world. We stand with all men and women of good will in the whole region of Middle East independent of their nationality, religion or political views in the hope for a soon end of the terror, the war and state of threats. We stand with all people struggling in this time of darkness and violence for respecting the human rights – especially those of women and children. We stand with all the peacemakers in their endeavours for peace in the Middle East and in the whole world.

Our thoughts and prayers go especially to our sisters and brothers living in the Communion of the Fellowship of the Middle East Evangelical Churches. We want to ensure you of our connectedness and furthermore active empathy, sharing with you the same hope and faith in Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of Peace. We will do our best to make sure that your fate as Christians in the Middle East will not to be overlooked and would like to offer our support to ensure that your experiences and thoughts are also heard in Europe. In our Advent letter we asked the CPCE member churches to remember the Christians in the Middle East and to continue to pray for the people in the Middle East. We pray for an end of violence, that a time of reconstruction can soon begin, giving people new perspectives on life and that God will grant the grace of reconciliation and justice between people. We believe that our present and our future are in God's hands.

May Christ's light, that is stronger than any darkness of our times, shine in the Land of God's Promises and in the whole world.

Gloria in Excelsis – Pax Hominibus!

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Prof. Dr Miriam Rose
President

The Revd. Marcin Brzoska
President

The Revd. Dr Mario Fischer
General Secretary