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We strongly believe that this magnifies the visible communion between the Protestant churches in Europe and helps fulfil their shared responsibility towards unity between churches and throughout Europe as a whole.

The CPCE lives as a church communion in Europe and strives to intensify this. It realises unity in reconciled diversity and thus contributes to ecumenism and coexistence in Europe. Through the CPCE, the churches express the common voice of Protestantism within it and beyond.

In signing the Leuenberg Agreement in 1973, the Protestant churches in Europe overcame centuries of division. Henceforth they would recognise one another as churches, jointly celebrate the Lord's Supper, work together on theological and ethical issues and commit to acting communally wherever possible. Ever since then, church communion has been realised in the form of unity in reconciled diversity, an arrangement intended to serve as a model for ecumenical relations and coexistence in wider society.

The aims and specific initiatives presented here have been determined by the Council of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe on the basis of resolutions passed by the General Assembly. This brochure outlines the strategic direction adopted by the CPCE and provides an overview of the work it plans to conduct until the next General Assembly in 2024. The aims and objectives follow on from previous work processes and stem from experiences in realising church communion on the basis of the Leuenberg Agreement.



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

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*"Be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4: 2b-6)*



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**Aims 2020–2024**

# Being church together

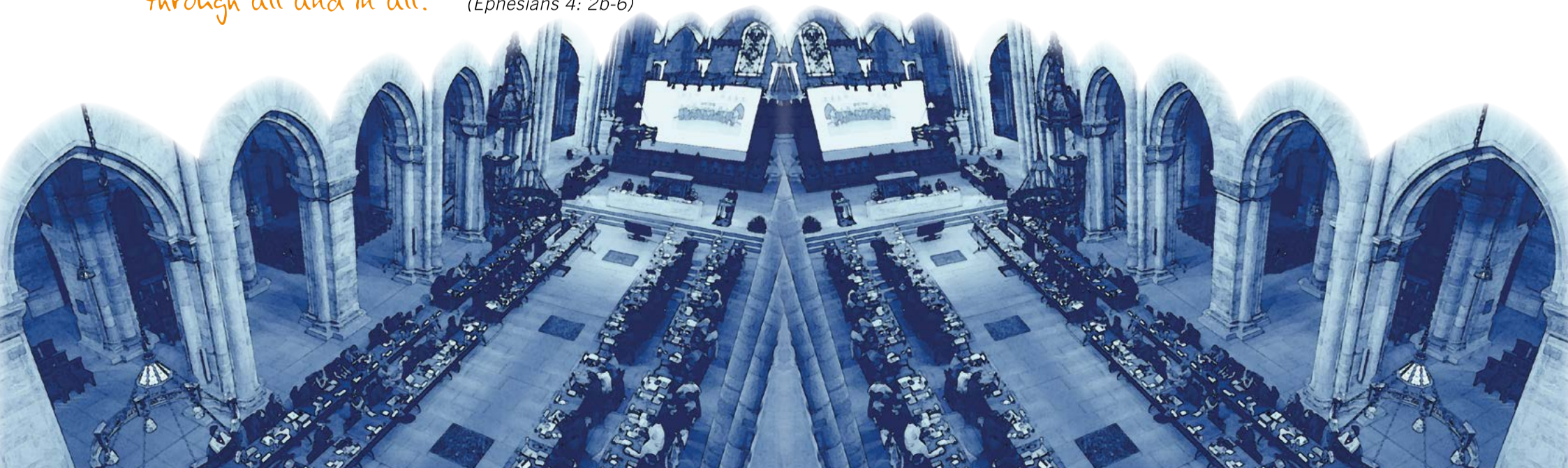
In the sense intended in this Agreement, church fellowship means that, on the basis of the consensus they have reached in their understanding of the Gospel, churches with different confessional positions accord each other fellowship in word and sacrament and strive for the fullest possible co-operation in witness and service to the world.

*(Leuenberg Agreement 29)*

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## Aim 1: The Protestant churches deepen their church communion.

“It is in the life of the churches and congregations that church fellowship becomes a reality. Believing in the unifying power of the Holy Spirit, they bear their witness and perform their service together, and strive to deepen and strengthen the fellowship they have found together.” (Leuenberg Agreement 35)

### Objective 1

**The CPCE will intensify its churches' relationships within their regions and throughout Europe.**

Church communion enables communication between local and regional churches. The CPCE aspires to each member church belonging to a regional group. The heads of the regional groups liaise on a regular basis.

The Council of the CPCE will promote the deepening of church communion in between General Assemblies. The Council takes appropriate account of the denominational and regional structure of CPCE.

### Objective 2

**The CPCE will clarify the rights and responsibilities of member churches within the church communion.**

The CPCE will determine the consequences that stem from the Leuenberg Agreement and the doctrinal conversations conducted thus far for the churches' life together within the church communion and will suggest ways that member churches might put them into practice. The ordinances of the CPCE will ensure that member churches can get actively involved in the work of the CPCE. The CPCE will actively encourage member churches to offer staffing and financial support for its work. The CPCE will monitor how member churches receive the results of the CPCE's work and support them in this process.

### Objective 3

**The CPCE will conduct consultations on liturgy and publish liturgical resources for special occasions.**

Liturgy consultations will suggest ways that church communion can be made visible in worship. The mutual recognition of ministry is reinforced by incorporating reference to the CPCE into the ordination rites of member churches. The CPCE also exercises its responsibility for Europe through acts of worship to mark special occasions such as remembrance days, European political events, or disasters.

### Objective 4

**The CPCE will promote educational exchange between member churches.**

The CPCE wants to create added value for all through cooperation in the field of education. It will organise continuing education opportunities for pastors that are open to all churches. The CPCE will support exchange between member churches in educational issues, particularly with regard to religious education at the European Schools. The CPCE will be advised on these matters by the Advisory Board on Education.

### Objective 5

**The CPCE will involve young people in its work processes.**

The CPCE will appoint a reference group of young theologians who will shadow the CPCE's study processes in regular conferences. It will collaborate with the Centro Melantone in Rome and the Centre for Protestant Theology and Encounter with Orthodoxy (ZETO) in Sibiu to promote Protestant theological studies in the Catholic and Orthodox context.

### Objective 6

**The CPCE will act to provide a network for protagonists instigating change in the member churches.**

The CPCE will invite women entering church leadership to attend a networking meeting. European-level gatherings of synod members will be continued. The CPCE will accompany processes of church renewal that address new forms of church (e.g. mixed economy of church) and reflect upon these ecclesiologically.

## Aim 2: The Protestant churches promote Church unity.

“In establishing and realizing church fellowship among themselves, the participating churches do so as part of their responsibility to promote the ecumenical fellowship of all Christian churches.” (Leuenberg Agreement 46)

### Objective 1

**The CPCE will intensify church communion through theological work.**

The CPCE will conduct doctrinal conversations, study processes and theological consultations, e.g. on Christian Talk of God. The subjects of the doctrinal conversations and study processes will be decided by the General Assembly. The General Assembly will adopt the results of the doctrinal conversations and will recommend that member churches take them on board.

### Objective 2

**The CPCE will promote church communion with additional churches.**

The CPCE practises a model of church communion that is open towards other churches that share the same understanding of the Gospel. Therefore the CPCE will continue to conduct discussions with various Protestant churches, particularly in northern Europe, but also with those that have arisen from migration to Europe. Exploratory talks will be conducted by the Advisory Board on Migration and Church Communion.

### Objective 3

**The CPCE will intensify its engagement with the Fellowship of Middle-East Evangelical Churches.**

The CPCE will tend its relationships with church fellowships that have comparable understandings of unity in other parts of the world. It will engage with the aim of mutual learning, e.g. through reciprocal invitations to join study processes, and support other fellowships in witness and service in the world. The CPCE will facilitate church aid projects in the region covered by the FMEEC.

### Objective 4

**The CPCE will feed its model of unity into ecumenical dialogues.**

The CPCE represents unity in reconciled diversity. It will carry this model of unity and more than 45 years' experience of living in church communion into its ecumenical relations. Equally, the results of the doctrinal conversations form the basis of the CPCE's ecumenical dialogues.

### Objective 5

**The CPCE will conduct a formal dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church.**

The CPCE will continue existing ecumenical discussions (e.g. with Baptist churches). It will examine the scope for new dialogues based on the recommendations of its Advisory Board on Ecumenical Issues. It will conduct a dialogue with the Pontifical Council on Promoting Christian Unity on the understanding of church and church communion.

### Objective 6

**The CPCE will continue dialogue with the Anglican churches in Europe.**

The CPCE will pursue the aim, in so doing, of concluding an agreement between the Anglican churches in Europe and the CPCE that includes the fellowship in word and sacrament as already achieved between individual churches of the CPCE and Anglican churches and will expand this to European level.

## Aim 3: The Protestant churches serve society.

“The preaching of the churches gains credibility in the world when they give a united witness to the Gospel. The Gospel liberates and links together the churches for common service. In that this is a service of love, it focuses on human distress and seeks to remove the causes of that distress. The struggle for justice and peace in the world increasingly requires that the churches accept a common responsibility.” (Leuenberg Agreement 36)

### Objective 1

**The CPCE will support its member churches in articulating a public position on social developments.**

The CPCE will conduct consultations and study processes in which member churches establish their common stance on social developments in the European context. In so doing, the CPCE will help member churches to raise the voice of Protestantism in their particular contexts.

### Objective 2

**The CPCE will advocate an ethically responsible Europe in a global world.**

The CPCE compiles standpoints and guides on socio-ethical and European political issues that concern the general public. The Advisory Board on Ethical Issues advises the CPCE on identifying and tackling these issues. A guide will be compiled on the subject of “Sexuality and Gender”.

### Objective 3

**The CPCE will represent Protestant positions in the European institutions.**

The CPCE will express the common voice of Protestantism in Europe and develop ways of aligning this with the member churches. It will maintain contact with the European institutions. It will cooperate with ecumenical partner organisations in this regard. It will submit common Protestant positions to the European institutions in the appropriate manner and organise the resources required to do so.

### Objective 4

**Throughout its regions the CPCE will promote the churches contributing to European cohesion.**

The CPCE's regional groups will clarify the responsibilities the churches carry for social and cultural cohesion in their region and within Europe. It will strengthen the churches in standing together regardless of political differences in their societies. The regional groups will address the subject of “Democracy” within their particular context. The results of the work of the regional groups will flow into the common work of the CPCE.

### Objective 5

**The CPCE will highlight the contribution that churches make to society in rural areas.**

The CPCE will publicise its “Theology of Diaspora” and encourage member churches to incorporate it appropriately into society. The CPCE will conduct a study process that investigates the contribution made by churches in rural areas. It will help the member churches develop concepts that safeguard church life in rural areas and improve the quality of rural life.

### Objective 6

**The CPCE will support aid projects run by its member churches.**

The CPCE will be committed to promoting reciprocal aid between churches. The CPCE will assist exemplarily with church welfare projects in Europe related to the themes that the CPCE works on. For three years, it will focus particularly on church aid projects targeting “Euro-orphans” in this regard. It will organise the required funds and appoints the Gustav Adolf Foundation to conduct this activity.