



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

Ecclesia semper reformanda

Reform and renewal within the life of European Protestant churches

Final Version 2012

Resolution of the 7th General Assembly of the CPCE, Florence 2012 (2.6)

1. The General Assembly receives the study “Ecclesia semper reformanda” and conveys its thanks to the study group for compiling the report.
2. The General Assembly requests that the member churches take it into consideration in relation to their continuing or future processes of reform.
3. The General Assembly invites the Council to continue the research on how renewal processes work in the churches. This work should build on the work already conducted by the study group, and aim at giving the churches a possibility to share experiences of church renewal.
4. The General Assembly recommends to the Council to establish a small working group which should explore alternative methodologies to continue research on church renewal (e.g. through partnership and exchange, putting an emphasis on sharing experiences and best practices etc.).

Content

Introduction	2
1. Church renewal – impressions and observations	6
1.1 Understandings of ‘church renewal’	6
1.2 Challenges before the churches	8
1.3 Concrete changes	9
1.3.1 Worship	9
1.3.2 Spirituality	10
1.3.3 Education and Evangelism	11
1.3.4 Social work	11
2. Reasons for renewal	12
2.1 The relationship between vision-oriented and problem-oriented approaches	12
2.1.1 Vision-oriented approaches	12
2.1.2 Problem-oriented approaches	13
2.2 Conclusion: God’s call to repentance as the reason for renewal	17
3. Ecclesiology in church renewal processes	19
3.1 Biblical metaphors and types of Protestant ecclesiology	19
3.1.1 Biblical metaphors	19
3.1.2 Ecclesiological concepts within the Reformation traditions	20
3.2 Reassessing the relationship of church and world	23
3.2.1 Observations in the reform documents	23
3.2.2 A constructive reassessment of the relationship between church and world	25
4. Areas of renewal	28
4.1 Structure	28
4.1.1 Description of different church structures	28
4.1.2 Description of different reform processes within the reform documents	31
4.1.3 Concluding observations	34
4.2 Worship and Liturgy	36
4.2.1 Worship needs renewal because it is at the centre of the church	36
4.2.2 Worship needs to change as society/culture changes	36
4.2.3 Common themes in the discussion concerning the reform of liturgy and the renewal of worship	38
4.2.4 Conclusion	43
5. Recommendations	44
Appendix 1: List of the reform documents	45
Appendix 2: List of participants	50
Appendix 3	51

Introduction

Ecclesia semper reformanda is not a 'slogan' originating in the Reformation era.¹ Nevertheless, it is often quoted as one of the principles of the Protestant understanding of the church. In any case, it may be seen as a proper description of the life of Protestant churches in today's Europe. In many countries, churches have launched reform or renewal processes and/ or work on mission statements.

When the Council of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) in 2009 decided to launch a study process on church renewal, it had a twofold intention: one descriptive, the other evaluative. One purpose was to give an account of all the processes that are planned, that are going on or that have been concluded recently. The intention was that each church within the CPCE could connect its own work with the considerations and experiences of the other churches in the community. At first sight it is obvious that problems are often perceived in a similar way, but the solutions are often divergent. At the same time, differing analyses of the problems can lead to the choice of similar reform measures. The descriptive task of this study is to point out commonalities in the starting points as well as in the solutions, but also to acknowledge differences.

Implicit within such descriptive work is an evaluative task. Therefore, the descriptive task is immediately interwoven with analysis and evaluation of the reform processes. Many of these processes name their presuppositions and – within them – their theological foundations. It is obvious that the primary measure of any reform process has to be its own presuppositions. However, with the title *Ecclesia semper reformanda*, the CPCE Council referred to a common understanding of the churches sharing in the legacy of the Reformation. The CPCE member churches basically have a common understanding of the church, its foundation, its shape and its mission which is the basis of the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973² and which was unfolded in the document *The Church of Jesus Christ*, adopted by the General Assembly in 1994.³ Therefore, one of

¹ For the history of the term and its pre-stages cf. Theodor Mahlmann, 'Ecclesia semper reformanda: Eine historische Aufklärung. Neue Bearbeitung', in: *Hermeneutica Sacra. Studien zur Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. T. Johansson/ R. Kolb/ J. A. Steiger, Berlin/New York 2010, p. 381-442.

² Cf. esp. LA 2: "The Church is founded upon Jesus Christ alone. It is he who gathers the Church and sends it forth, by the bestowal of his salvation in preaching and the sacraments."; LA 4: "In standing up for the truth which they saw, the Reformers found themselves drawn together in opposition to the church traditions of that time. They were therefore at one in confessing that the Church's life and doctrine are to be gauged by the original and pure testimony to the Gospel in Scripture."

³ *The Church of Jesus Christ. The Contribution of the Reformation towards Ecumenical Dialogue on Church Unity*, ed. W. Hüffmeier (Leuenberger Texte 1), Frankfurt am Main 1995.

the questions implied by the title concerns the relationship between church and reform and how this shared ecclesiology is mirrored in the reform processes.

The study process started by a request to the member churches to send us their material, i.e. documents on their processes of church renewal. At this point we must acknowledge the limitations of the work. Of the 92 member churches, 25 churches sent one or more reform documents to the CPCE office. (This material was later supplemented by the findings of the group mandated for the task.) Within this sample, there is a considerable overrepresentation of member churches from Western Europe, and from those countries for which it is more immediately possible to provide documents in either English or German.

Together with the request for material, the churches were invited to nominate delegates to the study group. One important condition was that these delegates should not be older than 35 years. The request of the CPCE General Assembly in 2006⁴ and the encouraging experience of the working group of younger ecumenists that produced the document *Stand up for justice*⁵ led the CPCE Council to charge the work on church renewal to representatives of the younger generation.

Many CPCE member churches delegated and supported participants for the study group, and so did some university institutes and cooperating institutions. Also represented were a participating church of CPCE (the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) and a cooperating church body (the German Baptist Union for the European Baptist Federation). In total, about 35 persons were involved in the group, not all, however, participating from the beginning to the end of the study process. Besides one deacon and one social worker, most of the participants were theologians. Some participants were in the final years of their theological studies, others working on their doctoral or post-doctoral qualification in a university context, others again in their first years of pastoral work. The participation rate of men and women was roughly equal.

The process started with a consultation in cooperation with the *Evangelische Akademie zu Berlin* in October 2009. At this first consultation, working groups were established that worked via

⁴ Cf. *Freedom is binding. Final Report of the 6th General Assembly of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe 2006* (http://www.cpce-assembly.eu/media/pdf/Vollversammlung/2006/2006_final_report.pdf), 2.2.2.4.: "Reference was made at the General Assembly to the importance of incorporating the experiences and competences of young theologians and other young church members into the work of the CPCE. Young people should be represented in all spheres of church life. Accordingly, appropriate representation should be given to young people in the spheres of work and bodies of the CPCE."

⁵ The document *Stand up for Justice. Ethical Discernment and Social Commitment of the Protestant Churches in Europe*, written in 2007-2009 and sent to the CPCE member churches for their comments, will be submitted to the CPCE General Assembly 2012 in a revised version.

email exchange and met in 2010 and 2011. In October 2010 a second plenary meeting was held in Elstal, hosted by the German Baptist Union.

An editorial group prepared the document for the third plenary meeting held at Debrecen in October 2011 and hosted by the Reformed Church in Hungary. During this meeting, the final version of the document was discussed and revised by the study group who made final recommendations to the editorial group. This met again in Utrecht in late November 2011 and finalized the ultimate version of the text. Having been approved by the CPCE Council in February 2012, the document is submitted to the Seventh General Assembly of CPCE at Florence in September 2012.

The document consists of four chapters and subsequent recommendations. Although the analysis of the documents provided by the CPCE member churches was its main task, the study group was aware that not all aspects of church renewal can be found in official documents. 'Grassroots' processes can often not be traced in such documents because they normally originate from the highest level of the churches. Therefore, we start with a chapter presenting the results on questionnaire that gives us some insights into what is happening within the member churches represented within the consultation. This chapter gives account of the situation in which renewal processes are taking place, of the wide range of areas they cover and of some of the problems they cause.

Chapter II turns to the official processes started by the churches and asks why they were begun. Giving a detailed overview of the European context with regard to sociological developments, the political context etc. is beyond the scope of this chapter. Such work has been frequently attempted, not least in documents from the CPCE.⁶ The purpose of this chapter is, rather, to determine how member churches perceive the challenges that are motivating renewal processes. This chapter also identifies some fundamental categories that are used within the following chapters, and a guiding interpretative principle.

⁶ All documents adopted at the General Assembly 2006 contain detailed chapters on the context. The document *The Shape and Shaping of Protestant Churches* considers "Europe as a space for the life and shaping" (ch. 3) and lays the focus on the political and economic developments. (The English version is published on the CPCE website: <http://www.leuenberg.eu/daten/File/Upload/doc-7163-2.pdf>.) These are more elaborately dealt with in the document of the CPCE regional group 'South East Europe' *Kirche gestalten, Zukunft gewinnen*, with emphasis on the transformation processes in Central and Eastern Europe (published only in German, in *Gemeinschaft gestalten – Evangelisches Profil in Europa. Texte der 6. Vollversammlung der Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa – Leuenberger Kirchengemeinschaft – in Budapest, 12. – 18. September 2006*, ed. W. Hüffmeier/ M. Friedrich, Frankfurt am Main 2007, p. 76-152, here ch. 1; an English version is available at the CPCE office.) The document *Evangelising*, on the other hand, highlights some aspects of contemporary European culture and asks how they challenge the churches in their missionary activity (cf. *Evangelising – Perspectives for churches in Europe*, ed. M. Bünker/ M. Friedrich, Vienna 2007, p. 15-22; cf. <http://www.leuenberg.eu/sites/default/files/doc-7154-1.pdf>). Last but not least, the document *Stand up for justice* (cf. fn. 5; here ch. 3.2 and 3.3) tried to make an assessment of the context that churches are facing and speaking to.

Chapter III turns to theological reflection. It begins by identifying the ecclesiological pre-suppositions that are explicitly stated within the documents, but it also tries to identify implicit principles. In analysing how the church and the world are related in the documents, this chapter not only identifies a key implicit issue that emerges from the reform documents, but offers a constructive theological account of the relationship between God, the church and the world that might help churches engage with this issue more explicitly.

Chapter IV takes a closer look at two example areas of reform. Structures and worship are of particular interest as both can be regarded as two different ways to begin a reform or renewal process. Nevertheless, both elements are sometimes combined in one process. In both cases, much reflective work and implementation has already been done in many churches. There are other themes that might well have been addressed in this document, such as the reform of education or patterns of ministry. The constraints of time and space mean this document is not seeking to be exhaustive. That church structures and worship have been chosen as case studies is not attempting to make a statement about their relative importance.

The document closes with a set of recommendations to member churches regarding the future of reform and renewal processes within the Protestant churches in Europe. They are offered as possible aids to future reflection on church reform. One obvious conclusion is that church renewal and reform must pay careful attention to the immediate context in which it will happen, and therefore it is impossible to offer any kind of pan-European 'blueprint' for church reform. What this document seeks to do is to stimulate on-going discussion and reflection on the future shape of the church as we live into the future together, and to enable us to learn from one another's experiences.

1. Church renewal – impressions and observations

Reform and renewal is a lived reality within the lives of CPCE member churches. It is not entirely straight forward, however, to define exactly what this is. This chapter seeks to open up the lived reality of reform and renewal, in part through the perspectives of those who have been involved in the writing of this study. Their experiences of their respective churches provide information about concrete activities, structural and liturgical changes etc. which are not always mentioned in official documents. Even more importantly, it tells us about how church members from several different churches and countries view things in their specific and contemporary context. This chapter also benefits from views and insights of churches and countries not represented in the documents which formed the basis of this study.

In 2010 a small survey was conducted among the members of the study group in order to gather information on areas where church renewal can be discerned.⁷ Also, the questionnaire gave respondents the opportunity to formulate understandings of the concept of church renewal and address the biggest challenges they experience in their local churches at present.

1.1 Understandings of ‘church renewal’

Understandings of church renewal obviously vary, and when Protestant churches in Europe address renewal they emphasize different things. Respondents were asked for their own understanding of church renewal⁸ and their answers at large reflect a particular dynamic – which some might call a tension. On one hand there is an emphasis on, and reminder of, the biblical foundations for the understanding of church. On the other hand there is a focus upon the trends and changes in society in large, which, so to speak, impose a response from the church. One respondent formulated this very explicitly:

Church renewal is both something that happens 'to' the church (outside factors: modernization, globalization, secularization etc.) and processes inside the church: changes in the membership and changes in the liturgy, spirituality, and all other practices and activities.

⁷ The questionnaire was sent out to all members of the study group. The respondents represent a wide selection of countries and churches (cf. Appendix 3, Table 1). However, it must be noted that this in no way reflects all member churches of the CPCE.

⁸ Cf. Appendix 3, Table 21.

An awareness of this double focus seems, however, to be a concern among many respondents. In regard to this, renewal is not just an internal initiative, but probably just as much a response to external changes. This also points to an overall concern about how the church can be relevant to people and society today without losing its identity as ‘church’.

1.1 Comments from respondents concerning biblical concepts

Some referred to the biblical foundation of the church not only as the legitimation of renewal but as the very catalyst for it. One saw the Gospel as a constantly renewing factor per se:

Every time people proclaim the Gospel it is new because every moment is unique in time and every person or group is unique. Being able to be new is a value of the church.

Another speaks of church renewal as “reform[ing] the church according to its biblical foundation – less official administration, more lay engagement and creativity”. Church renewal, therefore, seems to be emerging from a desire to return to Christian origins. This might indicate that some are left with a feeling that their church has departed from a biblical foundation.

1.2 Comments from respondents concerning external factors

Most of the statements about renewal concern the identity of the church in the face of obvious external factors:

Church renewal means that the church understands itself as the moving/marching people of God. First and foremost it should have nothing to do with decreasing financial resources or membership, but with the self-understanding of the church.

The claim here is that financial struggles should not be a reason for renewal in itself. It has to be recognized that economic and other external factors are indeed often forcing churches to engage in reform processes. Other respondents make the point that it is very important that church renewal is not solely a practical process of structural change (often due to financial factors). Rather, structural changes have spiritual reasoning and reflection behind them. One respondent says “structure and spirituality go together”, another points out that church renewal is “change of church structures and priorities out of spiritual reasons or out of practical reasons and a spiritual reflection”. In other words spirituality and structure can be seen as two sides of the same ever-changing coin (here: church): “Renewal should be spiritual as well as organizational – or both at the same time”.⁹

⁹ It should be noted that the use of the term ‘spirituality’ throughout this study normally implies the sense of the appropriation of the work of the Holy Spirit, rather than a term that might simply be used of any ‘spiritual’ practice in popular parlance.

Furthermore church renewal is considered to be constant process, or as one respondent put it: “It is a constant process of the church's self-reflection regarding the beliefs and expressing the belief”. Others point to the contextual side to this, that the church needs to be part of “an on-going reformation” explained as “the contextual action and reaction of the church based on the Gospel”. Again we see the stressing of the Scripture as the necessary anchor in reform processes.

Finally it is possible to see a more individually oriented definition of church renewal, related to the calling of every individual to live a Christian life. A Christian way of living is thought of as not just having an impact on church communities (in terms of more loving relationships and new activities); it is also directed towards living a Christian life in a secular society. This is suggestive of a relationship between the theological vision of church renewal and the societal challenges that the church faces, the two issues that we noted some respondents view as in tension with one another.

1.2 Challenges before the churches

When asked for the area most in need of renewal, respondents pointed to several different issues. The common feature, though, is that they apparently do not share the focus of the official documents on the need for structural renewal.

The issues respondents identified point in different directions – varying from the classic theological discussion of how to be “church in the world but not of the world” to more practical issues of “how to be Christian in a non-Christian environment”.

One respondent also pointed to the basic question of “whether the answers the church has to offer still fit the questions of the world”, while others see the engaging and empowering of the laity as being most important. Furthermore, the need to renew worship was mentioned as an important area of renewal, since meaningful worship is one of the arenas in which the church can find its place in society today. Finally religious education, outreach (probably understood as both evangelization and diaconal outreach), and the financial situation was mentioned.

Some respondents perceived the need to engage the challenges of theological division within the internal life of churches and to seek greater unity. To this end, one respondent mentions “the pressure of Evangelical right wing and fundamentalist approaches”, another “polarization – and how to find unity”. There are probably several ways the churches might respond to this challenge. However, a greater focus on ecumenism at local, national and international levels could be an important way of addressing this challenge. The churches can learn from each other and

practice listening to each other with the aim of deeper understanding. This kind of engagement can then become an internal part of a church's life.

All of these statements point in somewhat different directions but at the same time they show a need for renewal in all aspects of church life – calling for *ecclesia semper reformanda*.

1.3 Concrete changes

Where the former paragraphs give insight into how respondents view church renewal and challenges for the church, the next paragraphs will provide an overview of some of the concrete changes which have been made within the churches in the past ten years according to delegates' knowledge. The questionnaire focused on topics which relate to the rest of this document: worship, spirituality, education, social work (*diakonia*) and the involvement of the laity.

1.3.1 Worship

The regular Sunday service has the central position in most churches. A common idea is that all other church activities should point to this weekly event, ideally joining the whole congregation in the same worship. This also means that the criterion for 'success' is often measured in the number of people in the pews Sunday morning. At large, however, church attendance for the Sunday service is fairly low, and in that respect some may conclude that things are looking rather discouraging.¹⁰ However, there is of course much more to say about church life than Sunday morning attendance and many other criteria for 'success'. Therefore the questionnaire sought to examine changes both in the regular Sunday service and capture some of the many 'special' services and other initiatives.

Looking at changes in regular Sunday services the general understanding is that renewal is a reality. Many respondents state that a revised liturgy or a new order of service has been introduced within the past ten years. This might indicate that many churches find their "old" liturgy to be insufficient, irrelevant or strange to the majority of the church members (and people outside the congregation). And maybe it is a natural development towards a more diverse landscape of services and liturgies in a diverse society. Liturgical changes are often associated with new official hymn books and Bible translations, however, these processes are time and money consuming and therefore often come as a result of years of experimental renewal rather than at the beginning of a renewal process. Another common feature in most churches is lay involvement, for

¹⁰ Cf. Grace Davie: *Europe: The Exceptional Case. Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*, London 2002, p. 6.

example, serving communion, reading from the Scriptures and helping with practical issues.¹¹ While these functions are very common, preaching by the laity is not very common and the offering of personal testimony even less so.¹²

Regarding 'special' services a wide offer of services relating to target groups, mostly determined by age, can be ascertained. Very widespread phenomena are church services targeted at young people. This kind of service seems to be taking place in most churches. Family services seem to be a phenomenon on the rise. For now they are not a weekly event in many churches, but many respondents reported that they are taking place in their church as special events. Also, church services (or hymn singing) for babies are taking place in more churches, although the practice is not yet all that widespread. Other targeted services mentioned by respondents included services in foreign languages, services for the army and police, and seeker services.

1.3.2 Spirituality

The questions seeking a simple yes or no answer within the questionnaire focused mostly on practices which are not embedded in church services.¹³

Generally there is an emphasis on the contemplative aspects of spirituality. Taizé prayers were mentioned as a common practice by nearly half of the respondents, and in addition almost the same number refers to it as being present, however, not as common. Surprisingly pilgrimage (traditionally known as a Catholic spiritual exercise) is spread to the same extent, also adding to the contemplative feature. Christian meditation seems to be on the rise (even though only two respondents refer to it as a common practice) as more than half of all the respondents state that it has been taking place in their churches, but not on a regular basis. This is apparently a new (or at least re-introduced) practice.

Responses to the questionnaire mention various movements that have an influence upon church life included the liturgical movement, Willow Creek and other Charismatic/Pentecostal movements. To what extent and in what ways elements from different charismatic movements are being contextualized in the CPCE member churches can only be raised as an open question, but it would probably be worth investigating further.

¹¹ There are exceptions from this common feature. In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark lay involvement in services is almost completely absent.

¹² Cf. Appendix 3, Table 18.

¹³ Cf. Appendix 3, Table 9.

1.3.3 Education and evangelism¹⁴

The most common practices are catechism/dogmatic courses or services, Bible camps and, most commonly, cell groups. The responses also show an increase of the Alpha and Emmaus-courses within the past ten years. Alpha particularly, but also cell groups, are examples of an international trend which is apparently effective across different denominations and countries. The influence of Willow Creek (mentioned above) and different charismatic or Pentecostal movements on spiritual practices seem to follow the same trend.

1.3.4 Social work

Responses show that the traditional social/diaconal functions e.g. feeding the poor and giving comfort to the sick (Matthew 25:35-36) are still taken seriously today by most churches.¹⁵ Soup kitchens and home visits are practiced by almost all of the churches. A number of different support groups for children, adults and couples are also part of the work of many churches.

Debates are conducted in many countries about the relationship between the church and the institutions of charity. Minority churches, for example the Waldensians, particularly concentrate their social work at the congregational level (local level). In mainline churches, like the EKD or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, social work is mostly organized at higher levels.

Besides the classical social activities, like the aforementioned “feeding the poor and giving comfort to the sick”, churches seem to be reacting to cultural plurality and the challenges of increasing immigration, and also to the dissolution of family ties.

It is clear from the results of this questionnaire that reform and renewal are making significant impact on the life of CPCE churches. We move, now, to an examination of some of the motivating factors behind this process.

¹⁴ Cf. Appendix 3, Table 12.

¹⁵ Cf. Appendix 3, Table 16.

2. Reasons for renewal

It has already been noted that there can be an apparent tension between theological motivations for reform and renewal, and pragmatic contextual issues that force the churches to change. This chapter will explore this tension, and suggest that there is a need for a theological understanding of the relatedness of these issues and a need for clarity and honesty on the part of churches as to what is motivating their attempts at reform.

2.1 The relationship between vision-oriented and problem-oriented approaches

The reasons and motivations for church reform and renewal are manifold and vary from context to context. In scrutinizing the reform documents from CPCE member churches, two different approaches towards church reform emerge: one primarily vision-oriented; the other primarily problem-oriented. The dominant perspective of the majority of the documents is problem oriented. It is important to stress that both approaches are interrelated and in need of each other. Thus, both approaches can be found intertwined in almost every document. Vision-oriented approaches tend to begin with a vision for the future of the respective church. Problem-oriented approaches tend, rather, to respond to challenges the churches face.

2.1.1 Vision-oriented approaches

One example of a primarily vision-oriented approach to church reform is the strategy document of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary entitled *The Church of Living Stones – The Strategy of Evangelical Lutheran Renewal*.¹⁶ In referring to 1 Tim 1:18, the starting point of the document is primarily a long-term strategy (*strateuoma*), envisioning the future shape of the church. It does not simply focus on the problems of the present which need tactical and operational solutions. A different example is the document of the United Methodist Church in Switzerland and France.¹⁷ Starting with the question of the mission of the church to the world and society, the document continues with the interpretation of core features of the Methodist tradition citing sermons and teachings from John Wesley. The understanding is that being rooted in one's own tradition might help in facing the future. A third case is the Evangelical Church in Baden, which began with a vision-oriented approach before later moving to a problem-oriented approach in a second stage. In stage one, it published a brochure (*Kirchenkompass*) in order to

¹⁶ Hungary: *Élő kövek egyháza* (2008).

¹⁷ UMC Switzerland/ France: *Mit Christus unterwegs* (2007).

motivate members of local church councils toward church reform asking which biblical vision statements might help the renewal of the church. In stage two, it published a booklet (*Fortführung des Kirchenkompasses*) which seeks to make local churches and local church boards more efficient by prioritizing their work.

Many churches working with this approach begin with a vision of how the church will be by a certain date.¹⁸ In order to reach that goal they create a certain number of targets and often formulate mission statements. Mission statements are regularly taken from the Bible emphasizing a particular aspect of the nature of the church. Various biblical metaphors are used, e.g.: salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13)¹⁹, house of living stones (1Peter 2:5), people of God on the way (Hebrews 13:14) etc. Sometimes these visions are explicitly correlated to questions and challenges raised by contemporary problems faced by the churches. Sometimes the vision is formulated without relating to the empirical issues facing the churches. In these latter approaches an implicit description of the current situation of the church and its contemporary challenges is assumed rather than stated.

2.1.2 Problem-oriented approaches

An example of a predominantly problem-oriented approach to church reform is the Report of the Council of the Evangelical Church of Hesse Electorate-Waldeck.²⁰ It is oriented around questions concerning to the number of pastors needed within a certain area, the inspection and maintenance of church buildings, increasing membership, the qualification of volunteers and the implementation of quality control mechanisms etc.

Problem oriented approaches appear to seek specific solutions to identified issues. As opposed to vision oriented approaches which seek to 'measure' the existing life of the church against a vision, in this approach, the life of the church is measured against what might be understood as 'received' understandings of the life of the church.

By definition problem oriented approaches tend to offer more careful analysis of the reasons why reform is necessary. The analysis of the documents reveals that these can be categorized in two primary ways, internal factors, and external factors.²¹ This is interesting because it corre-

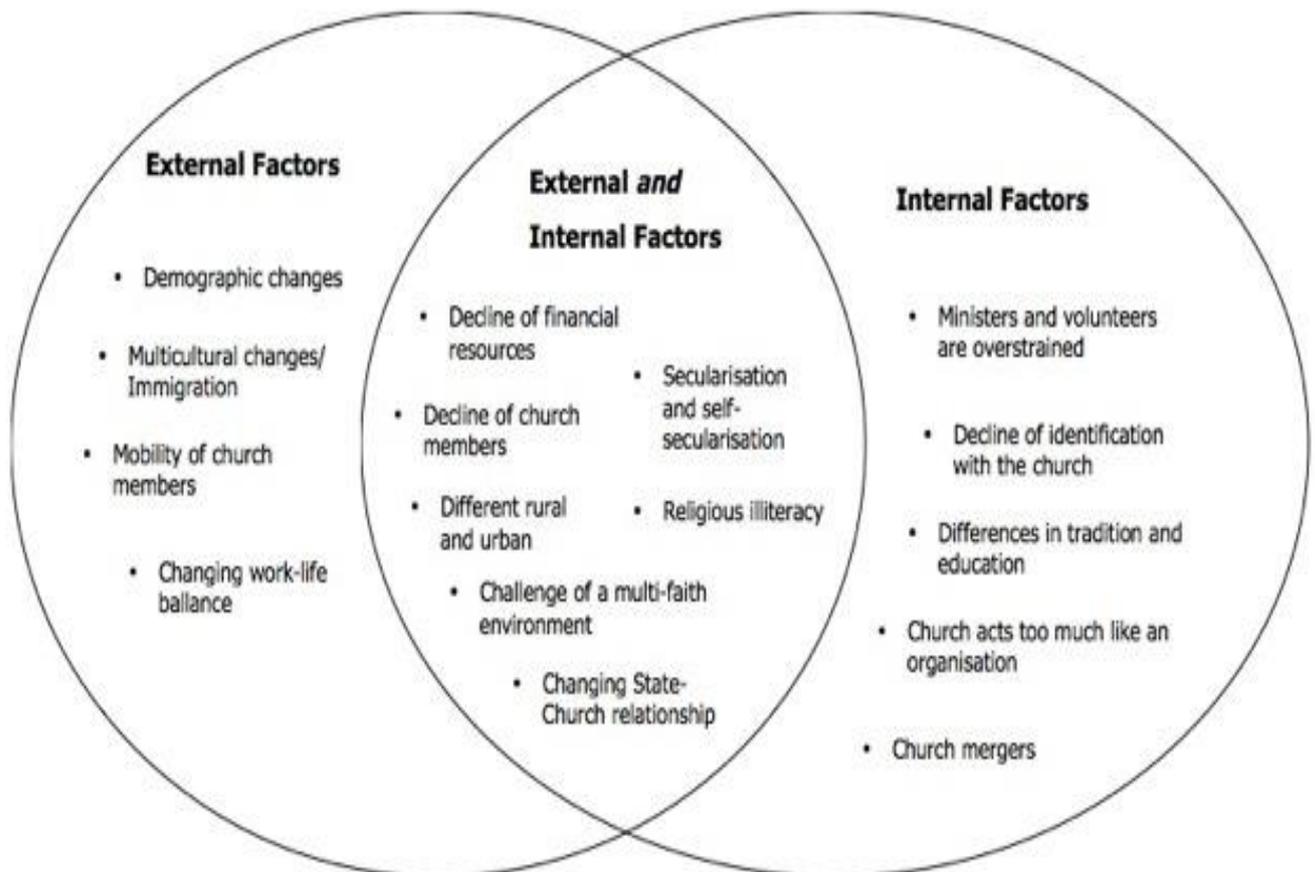
¹⁸ For example 2015: Basel: *Perspektiven 15* (2007); 2020: URC: *Vision 2020* (2009); 2025: EKHN: *Perspektiven 2025. Missionarische Volkskirche* (2009); 2030: EKD: *Kirche der Freiheit* (2006).

¹⁹ Cf. EKBO: *Salz der Erde* (2007); Baden: *Kirchenkompass*, p. 14-5. – For more references see below, ch. 3.1.1.

²⁰ Kurhessen: *Konkretionen. Orientierungen. Perspektiven* (2008).

²¹ Our distinction between internal and external factors for church renewal discerns factors within the church's reach (internal) from those beyond its reach (external). This should not be confounded with the Reformers' distinction between *homo interior* and *homo exterior* which focuses on the relationship of both man and world to God.

lates closely with the perceived tension between theological motivations and pragmatic contextual issues noted in the previous chapter. External factors are shared with other stakeholders within society and other organizations. Internal factors behind church renewal are related more exclusively to the church. Sometimes the distinction is hard to draw because of the way the church is intrinsically of the society within which it is set and as a consequence a third category emerges. The following graphic illustrates the three areas, without being exhaustive.



2.1.2.1 External factors

European societies are going through an enormous time of change in various ways. One significant change is demographic: the percentage of older people is growing which affects the life of the churches.²² One of the results is declining church membership. Another significant social change in Europe is the rise of multiculturalism.²³ As borders between European countries are

²² Cf. EKD: *Kirche der Freiheit* (2006), p. 7; 21-2. Following the trend of the past years, by 2030, the number of the members of the evangelical church would shrink from 26 million (2003) to 17 million church members, i.e. about one third (p. 21).

²³ CoN: *Plan for diakonia* (2007), p. 5: "Globalisation presents a special challenge to diakonia. Cultural and ethnic diversity is a fact of life in Norwegian parishes."

easy to cross our societies become more culturally diverse. This is not yet finding universal expression in the life of local churches but this reality is one of the most significant challenges for the future.²⁴ A third way our societies are transforming concerns greater flexibility in the workplace than was the case a few decades ago. This can be seen in the changing patterns of work-life balance and in the introduction of short-term working contracts and the easy turnover of personnel. This is resulting in the increasing mobility of church members and impacting on volunteer work within the life of congregations.²⁵ Therefore, although church life remains lively in most congregations, many volunteers and church staffs feel overburdened.²⁶ As a consequence, churches need to find ways to lighten the weight of responsibilities people carry, for example in church councils and diaconal work.²⁷

2.1.2.2 External and internal factors

The most visible and pressing issue behind church reform is declining church membership which is closely related to decreasing financial resources.²⁸ The reasons for declining church membership are many, among them the discontinuation of traditions as well as religious illiteracy.²⁹ Another important dimension is changing patterns of church-state relationships which during the last 20 years have shifted in several parts of Europe, especially in Eastern European countries and in Scandinavia. Subsequently, in some parts of Europe there are new relationships emerging between church and state, and in others churches have become more autonomous over their internal affairs. Former state churches are developing new degrees of self-organization over matters such as religious education and finance. Churches of the former East

²⁴ The Waldensian Church is an example: its program *Essere chiese insieme* integrates migration churches to the national church as well as migrant church members to local churches. Since the Waldensian Church is a minority church, the shape of many congregations has changed; in some local churches, Christians with a migrant background are even the majority.

²⁵ Concerning voluntary work in Germany cf. EKBO: *Salz der Erde* (2007), p. 79-100. This document acknowledges the value of voluntary work within the church and states that voluntary work in general is increasing. The consequences for the churches remain somehow unclear; cf. p. 100.

²⁶ Cf. Austria: *Handbuch zum Naßwalder Modell* (2007), p. 9.

²⁷ The Methodist Church in Ireland e.g. shortened the period of responsibility for church councils to a maximum of three years.

²⁸ Cf. EKD: *Kirche der Freiheit* (2006), p. 2. The document's diagnosis is that the financial efficiency will decrease for about 50 %, if the membership shrinks for one third.

²⁹ EKD: *Kirche der Freiheit* (2006), p. 23. – More church external reasons with regard to the situation in Germany have been summarized by Rüdiger Scholz: 'Kontinuität und Krise – stabile Strukturen und gravierende Einschnitte nach 30 Jahren', in: *Kirche in der Vielfalt der Lebensbezüge. Die vierte EKD-Erhebung über Kirchenmitgliedschaft*, ed. W. Huber/ P. Steinacker/ J. Friedrich, Gütersloh 2006, p. 51–88.

bloc are finding their place in open societies without state control. This is reflected in their understanding of membership and commitment.³⁰

Another factor leading to reform is the church being faced with the religious and cultural consequences of migration.³¹ Another significant issue in reform and renewal on the socio-economic level is the increasing difference between rural and urban areas as well as the increasing distinction between, and separation of, distinct social milieus. Such socio-economic factors mean that what may be successful in one context will not necessarily work in another.³²

2.1.2.3 Internal factors

Internal factors often concern the relationship between individual church members and church life. Some churches complain of poor Sunday service attendance. However, at least in Germany, attending church services on a regular basis is not seen as typically Protestant. Not even church members with particular responsibility attend service every Sunday.³³ The Evangelical Church in Berlin – Brandenburg – Silesian Upper Lusatia suggests that the ‘insider-language’ used in many church services is a reason for this. This ‘insider-language’ is not able to address the majority of church members.³⁴

Internal issues calling for reform include those such as the “come here” structure of church work, meaning that church work is still too much based on the expectation that people will come to church.³⁵ Another might be summarized with a phrase coined by Wolfgang Huber (former President of the EKD Council), the “self-secularization” of Protestant churches: the church itself has neglected its particular theological and spiritual voice within society.³⁶

Other internal factors include cases where previous structural reforms left tensions requiring further reform. For example, the Evangelical Church of Westphalia notes that previous structural changes had largely been determined by the need for financial rehabilitation, and failed to address the contemporary crisis of the Protestant church with regard to its image and acceptance.³⁷ It learnt from its previous processes that structural reform must be rooted within the

³⁰ Cf. Estonia: *Entwicklungsplan 2008-2017* (2008), p. 9-10.

³¹ PKN: *Leren leven van de verwondering* (2005), p. 3-4.

³² Cf. EKD: *Gott in der Stadt* (2007); EKD: *Wandeln und gestalten* (2007).

³³ Cf. *Kirche in der Vielfalt der Lebensbezüge* (fn. 29), p. 53 ff.

³⁴ Cf. EKBO: *Salz der Erde* (2007), p. 19.

³⁵ Westphalia: *Church with a Future* (2000), p. 21.

³⁶ Cf. Wolfgang Huber: *Kirche in der Zeitenwende. Gesellschaftlicher Wandel und Erneuerung der Kirche*, Gütersloh 1998, p. 31-36.

³⁷ Westphalia: *Church with a Future* (2000), p. 13.

nature and the mission of the church whilst also taking into account changes within the societal context. Therefore, in 2000 it started its reform process *Church with a Future* by reflecting on the nature, mission and tasks of the church which can be understood as turning to a vision orientated approach. A second stage was to consider the current situation of the church.³⁸

The merger of parishes, congregations and/or churches on local as well as regional or national level often leads to the need for further reform. In many cases³⁹ a lack of differentiation between the various regions and parties involved has caused discontent within the constituencies involved. Consequently, church members' identification with the reorganized church was weakened. In some cases they were left not feeling at home any more in the newly merged/united church requiring yet further reform to address this issue.

Overstrained employees and volunteers are also an internal reason for reform. As an employer the church has a responsibility towards its staff.

2.2 Conclusion: God's call to repentance as the reason for renewal

Noting the distinction between vision and problem oriented approaches we conclude that the majority of reform documents are working mainly with a problem oriented approach, leaving theological reflection on the nature and mission of the church behind, thus narrowing the church to its organizational aspect. The necessary balance between both approaches is frequently lost. The strength of vision-oriented approaches to church reform lies in the possibilities they open up in thinking beyond current problems and challenges.

What seems surprisingly lacking within the documents is a sense of God's call to the church to be renewed. One might use the language here of repentance: turning around once again to face God and respond to God's call. Reform and renewal is not simply a case of responding to pressing contextual challenges, or seeking visions of the future, but listening to the voice of the living God. This calls us to a re-reception of the past life of the church, to question it in the light of the present reality, and to envision the future we are being called into. The need for this can be concretely seen in those examples that have been noted where previous attempts at reform have ultimately turned out to be misguided, and the church has had to address the problems left in their wake. Sometimes, then, repentance has a very specific focus. However, it is also broad in scope, and as such, and when so understood, all reform and renewal of the life of the church is

³⁸ Cf. Westphalia: *Church with a Future* (2000), p. 11-18 and p. 19-28.

³⁹ Cf. EKHN; PKN; EKD (*Kirche der Freiheit*); Reformed and Lutheran churches in France dealing with the merger of both churches which has already taken place in Alsace.

in reality a call to repentance. This understanding is in fact an understanding of what it means to be *semper reformanda*: continually responding anew to God's Word to the church, seeking to reform our life in response to it.

This understanding of the life of repentance of the church, the continuing returning to God, is not a denial of either problem orientated approaches, or vision orientated approaches. Rather it is seeking to offer an understanding whereby the intrinsic relationship of the two can be seen. This leads to the question of the relationship between the nature and shape of the church, and the way the church is called to be within the life of the world. These are the questions of ecclesiology, and it is to this topic that we must now turn to understand how churches are engaging with these wider ecclesiological issues.

3. Ecclesiology in church renewal processes

Chapter III of this study is dedicated to ecclesiology. We have already noted the way in which the internal and external reasons for reform and renewal correlate with the tension between the theological motivations and pragmatic contextual issues that were stated as in tension in chapter one. These categories beg a more fundamental question which is the relationship between God, the church and the world, which itself is a fundamental ecclesiological question. Can one simply separate ‘theological’ issues from ‘worldly’ issues, or is the relationship more complex? The ultimate purpose of this chapter is to offer a constructive reassessment of the relationship between the church and the world; however, we begin by offering an analysis of the explicit and implicit ecclesiological categories at work within the reform documents themselves.

3.1 Biblical metaphors and types of Protestant ecclesiology

3.1.1 Biblical metaphors

The biblical metaphor that is most commonly used in the documents is the ‘Body of Christ’ (1 Cor 12).⁴⁰ It is used in multiple contexts, and interpretations vary greatly. For example, verses 12-27 are used to illustrate the notion of ecclesial membership, both in its legal and in its theological meanings,⁴¹ and to explain the leitmotif of a church that is growing (“*wachsende Kirche*”).⁴² The ‘slogan’ ‘one body, many members’ is also drawn from here.⁴³ It underlines the importance of participation⁴⁴ and fellowship⁴⁵ and expresses the diversity of the members of the human body. This is used, for example, as direct reference point for the new identity of the united Protestant Church in the Netherlands.⁴⁶ Another biblical image encountered frequently is the ‘People of God’.⁴⁷ The metaphor of God’s people refers to the people wandering in the desert⁴⁸,

40 Cf. e.g. CoS: *A Church Without Walls* (2001), p. 15; 19; 25; Estonia: *Entwicklungsplan 2008-2017*, p. 4.

41 Cf. e.g. Italy: *Tesi* (2006), p. 70.

42 Cf. e.g. Austria: *Handbuch zum Naßwalder Modell* (2007), p. 6f. When describing a church that is growing, some documents point out that growth is to be understood not only in a ‘quantitative’ (cf. Acts 5:4; 9:31; 12:24), but also in a ‘qualitative’ sense (cf. Eph 2:19-22; 4:15f) (cf. e.g. Württemberg: *Wachsende Kirche* (2004), 11-2).

43 Cf. e.g. Anhalt: *Perspektiven* (2008), p. 8.

44 Cf. e.g. NELK: *Kirche in Veränderung* (2009), p. 36 (esp. 3d: here, along with Acts 2:44-46; 1 Peter 2).

45 Cf. e.g. CoN: *Gud gir – vi deler* (2009), p. 6; 9.

46 Cf. e.g. PKN: *Leren leven van de verwondering* (2005), p. 7; 12.

47 Cf. e.g. CoS: *A Church Without Walls* (2001), passim.

48 Cf. e.g. Baden: *Kirchenkompass*, p. 8f; EKBO: *Salz der Erde* (2007), p. 5.

'Israel'⁴⁹, and it is connected with the notion of discipleship.⁵⁰ Other descriptions for the church are 'royal priesthood' (1 Peter 2:9), 'God's planting' (1 Cor 3:9), or "a community striving towards the 'heavenly citizenship'" (Phil 3:20)⁵¹. Some documents make use of other New Testament images, such as 'light of the world', 'salt of the earth', or 'house of living stones' to describe the church's nature and mission. Only very few documents refer to Old Testament texts, such as the call of Jeremiah (Jer 1:10) which is used to describe the hidden calling of the church.⁵² Although the majority of documents frequently refer to biblical images when talking about the church, in a few documents no biblical images for the church can be found.⁵³ It is interesting to note the divergent way in which biblical metaphors are used within the reform documents. Frequently they seem to be used pragmatically to either support prior understandings of the church; to express visions of what the church might be, or to describe the shape of the church. Often the full implications of the biblical imagery have not been explored. For example, the key image of the Body of Christ has implications beyond those frequently noted within the documents. Some of these will be explored in the more constructive theological section at the end of this chapter.

3.1.2 Ecclesiological concepts within the Reformation traditions

The majority of the documents do not explicitly state a particular doctrine of the church. However, many refer to CA VII (the proclamation of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments), and in most documents ecclesiology is present implicitly. The church's foundation is seen in the Word, and in the work of Christ.⁵⁴ Thus, the church is living from the Word for the world.⁵⁵ This is often seen as implying the primacy of the local congregation in opposition to centralized ecclesial organizations.⁵⁶ This idea is further supported by the notion of the priesthood of all believers⁵⁷ that leads to support for lay involvement in church reform.⁵⁸

49 CoN: *Gud gir – vi deler* (2009), p. 11.

50 Cf. e.g. CoS: *A Church Without Walls* (2001), esp. p. 45; CoN: *Gud gir – vi deler* (2009), p. 4.

51 Cf. Estonia: *Entwicklungsplan 2008-2017*, p. 4.

52 Cf. CoS: *A Church Without Walls* (2001), no. 3d.

53 Cf. e.g. EKD: *Kirche der Freiheit* (2006); Hannover: *Zukunft gestalten* (2005); CoN: *I Kristus, naer livet* (2008).

54 Cf. e.g. Anhalt: *Perspektiven* (2008), p. 2.

55 Cf. e.g. Anhalt: *Perspektiven* (2008), p. 2.

56 Cf. e.g. CoS: *A Church Without Walls* (2001); URC: *Hearing your views* (2009), that speaks of three organization levels of the church: local churches that are considered to be church in the original sense of meaning, synods and the general assembly. – However, other documents have a double focus on the local parishes and on the regional and churchwide institutions, cf. NELK: *Kirche in Veränderung* (2009), p. 25; 63.

57 Cf. e.g. Hannover: *Zukunft gestalten* (2005), p. 3; 14.

58 Cf. EKBO: *Salz der Erde* (2007), p. 26.

A few documents use the threefold concept of the church developed in *The Church of Jesus Christ* (CPCE): foundation, shape, and mission⁵⁹, and emphasize that the shape of the church should follow the four forms of life stemming from 20th century ecumenical discourse⁶⁰: *leiturgia*, *koinonia*, *martyria*, and *diakonia*. Occasionally, a fifth form of is added: *oikonomia*, meaning ecclesial administration.⁶¹

Although the documents aim at reforming the church, they are still based on foundational classical theological tenets, such as word, sacraments, church as the people of God, etc.⁶² Many reform ideas are in fact attempting to return to Christian origins rather than inventing something totally new.⁶³ The purview of many of the reform suggestions is not narrowly limited to the church but include a vision for the whole of humanity. The church is called to be the community of love and grace which embodies God's ways with the world. At the same time, though, it is stated that the church is not necessary for God's mission within the world.⁶⁴

The examined documents define the church-world relation differently. *Salt of the Earth*, for example, is rooted in the concept of a 'public church'⁶⁵, whereas *Church of Freedom* considers the practice of church membership in a fashion distanced from regular Sunday worship is in itself a valid kind of practicing community with the church.⁶⁶ Depending on their social context, CPCE member churches use different concepts to understand their relationship to society. The Norwegian Church, for example, uses the concept of *Folkekirke*⁶⁷ and emphasizes the juridical and democratic dimensions of the church⁶⁸, whereas the Estonian Evangelical-Lutheran Church (as a minority church in a post-communist society) speaks of an *ecclesia militans*, a church that lives on earth as a struggling church striving for its heavenly citizenship.⁶⁹ Other issues that have ecclesiological implications are the distinction between the church as an object of faith and

59 Cf. e.g. Austria: *Handbuch zum Naßwalder Modell* (2007), p. 7f. There are other documents that follow structuring principles used in ecumenical discourse (cf. Commission on Faith and Order: *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, 2005), e.g. EKBO: *Salz der Erde* (2007), p. 8.

60 Cf. Hans Janßen: 'Über die Herkunft der Trias Martyria – Leiturgia – Diakonia', in *Theologie und Philosophie* 85, 2010, p. 407-413.

61 Cf. e.g. Austria: *Handbuch zum Naßwalder Modell* (2007), p. 11; 24-5; 28.

62 CoN: *Plan for kirkemusikk* (2008).

63 CoN: *Gud gir – vi deler* (2009), p. 5; 7; 9.

64 URC: *Hearing your views* (2009).

65 Cf. EKBO: *Salz der Erde* (2007).

66 Cf. EKD: *Kirche der Freiheit* (2006).

67 CoN: *I Kristus, nær livet* (2008).

68 CoN: *Gud gir – vi deler* (2009), p. 18; 26.

69 Cf. Estonia: *Entwicklungsplan 2008-2017*, p. 4-5.

as an object of experience,⁷⁰ the relation between the invisible, visible and institutional church,⁷¹ or the unity of the church that is understood in diverse ways, one of which being understood as a unity in diversity.⁷²

Generally, the documents show an awareness of standing in the traditions of the Reformation.⁷³ The twofold understanding of the Word proclaimed and the sacraments duly celebrated (CA VII) would appear to be the primary concept of the church for all member churches of the CPCE.⁷⁴ Lutheran churches also sometimes refer to the Smalcald Articles⁷⁵, or to the Small Catechism⁷⁶. Although the documents' focus is on the Word and Sacrament, some emphasize the notion of community referring to the 3rd thesis of the Barmen Declaration.⁷⁷ Among the various types of Reformed ecclesiology, the following are discussed: the Presbyterian understanding of the church emphasizing the freedom of assembly among the local parishes, and the Congregationalist understanding of the church emphasizing the independence of local congregations.⁷⁸ Also, the classical Reformed idea of a three- or fourfold ministry is discussed.⁷⁹ Calvin is quoted rather rarely, once, for example, with reference to his ecclesiological idea of housing pastors together ("*Compagnie des Pasteurs*"). This is seen as introducing an element of monastic life into the protestant church.⁸⁰ Despite these denominational characteristics, some documents also refer to the Leuenberg Agreement, or to the Charta Oecumenica, revealing some ecumenical concern within the reform documents.⁸¹

Some documents, mainly from united churches, only make vague allusions to Calvin or Luther, or do not use confessional types at all.⁸²

70 NELK: *Kirche in Veränderung* (2009), p. 36-7.

71 Italy: *Tesi* (2006), p. 67.

72 PKN: *Leren leven van de verwondering* (2005), p. 7.

73 C.f. e.g. Anhalt: *Perspektiven* (2008), p. 2.

74 Cf. e.g. NELK: *Kirche in Veränderung* (2009); Italy: *Tesi* (2006); Hannover: *Zukunft gestalten* (2005).

75 Cf. e.g. Austria: *Handbuch zum Naßwalder Modell* (2007), p. 7; 18.

76 C.f. e.g. Estonia: *Entwicklungsplan 2008-2017*, p. 4.

77 Westphalia: *Unsere Geschichte* (2004), p. 29; EKD: *Kirche der Freiheit* (2006), p. 33.

78 CoS: *A Church Without Walls* (2001), p. 29; 18-9.

79 Cf. Italy: *Tesi* (2006), p. 69; 76: The three- or fourfold ministry of pastor, elder, deacon (in the study document), or pastor, elder, deacon, teacher (in the theses) is discussed in contrast to the majority church's model of a threefold ministry comprising bishop, elder (priest), deacon.

80 Cf. Italy: *Tesi* (2006), p. 76.

81 Cf. e.g. Anhalt: *Perspektiven* (2008), p. 2.

82 Cf. e.g. PKN: *Leren leven van de verwondering* (2005), p. 5.

3.2 Reassessing the relationship of church and world

3.2.1 Observations in the reform documents

3.2.1.1 The theological and the sociological dimension

Although many documents are well aware of the difference between God's work and the work of the church,⁸³ there is an implicit assumption in the majority of the documents that the church is necessary and essential within the life of the world.⁸⁴ This view has a sociological and a theological aspect within certain embedded assumptions. Sociologically it is presumed that churches offer a social reality within European societies which provides both service and values beyond a narrowly religious function. Theologically, the assumption at work (though not necessarily stated) is that the church is mediating the presence of Christ within the midst of the world. This double aspect of a sociological and a theological view of the church-world relationship seems to emerge from the efforts the reform documents make to apply the ecclesiological hallmarks they draw from biblical metaphors and the Reformers' traditions to the particular situation each church finds itself in.

Obviously many churches that are involved in reform processes feel a lacuna between the claims which the Protestant confessional writings like the Augsburg Confession make for the church on the one hand and their own situation as churches of today on the other hand. This discrepancy not only applies to the historical distance of half a millennium, but also to the range of the ecclesiological assertions the documents deal with.

3.2.1.2 Contextual or counter-cultural?

The reform documents mostly attempt to engage the challenges which congregations and denominational structures face in their everyday lives. This is partly why one does not find explicit reflections on the relationship between the universal church and the world as a whole. The focus is on a local and regional level, and the issue of 'church and world' is mainly dealt with in the framework of late modern society. Following this approach, the world appears on the one hand as the opposite of the church, leading to a vision of the church being counter-cultural, but on the

83 E.g., this distinction opens the *Tesi di discussione* of the Waldensian and Methodist Church in Italy (2006), p. 67: "L'appartenenza a questa Chiesa è legata esclusivamente all'atto di libera elezione di Dio stesso e significa, in sostanza, l'appartenere a Gesù Cristo, capo e fondamento della Chiesa. Tale appartenenza non può essere valutata fino in fondo con criteri legati alla conoscenza umana."

84 Following system theoretical arguments on the function which religion fulfils in and for society, the Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau states in its reform study *Auftrag und Gestalt* that "already the existence of the [Christian] community" was "her first service to the world" and that therefore the church was "some kind of 'an end in itself'" (EKHN: *Auftrag und Gestalt* [1995], 23; 27 ["eine Art 'Selbstzwecklichkeit' der Kirche"]).

other hand as the context, in which the church itself lives, leading the church to contextualize itself within the life of the world.

How different the understanding of the world can be is plain to see from the documents, especially if the distinction between majority (e.g. former state churches in Scandinavia) and minority churches (e.g. in the former Warsaw Treaty countries, but also in the dominantly Roman Catholic south of Europe) is taken into consideration. However, the challenges coming from the world 'outside' of the church itself are similar throughout Europe nowadays. They include a decrease in membership and in membership commitment as well as in public influence. Reform devices in this context often aim at an improved relationship between 'church' and 'world'.

CPCE member churches in Germany, Scotland, France and Switzerland, for example, do not have such monopolistic status as some Nordic churches have, but they still entertain close relationships with the societies they live in. This can be seen in the EKD document *Kirche der Freiheit*. It emphasizes strong ties between the church and society in many ways, for example in demographic, economic, cultural and sociological senses.⁸⁵ Majority churches tend to see themselves inside or in co-operation with society. There is no confrontation between the church and the world but the churches understand themselves as more or less the 'salt of the earth' playing their roles within societies. This is also the case with smaller churches in comparable societal circumstances. For example, the document of the United Methodist Church in Switzerland and France underlines the church's support for any activities which foster networking within society (civil engagement).⁸⁶

It is interesting from an ecclesiological viewpoint that even minority churches in a background of post-communist societies can develop similar ideas. The EELC, for example, looks back on a history in which the Lutheran tradition used to play an important role in the life of the Estonian people. On the other hand, the Soviet rule of the Baltic countries and its forced atheism have almost destroyed this historical heritage. Presently the EELC is clearly a minority church, and describes itself in its Plan of Development 2008–2017 as an *ecclesia militans* with a critical attitude towards post-communist expressions of society and the state. However, the mission of such an

85 The document of the Church of Scotland *A Church without walls* describes changes in its history and church-society-relation: "Partnerships are blossoming around the country as the church in its mission comes alongside the community for the good of everyone. The church has moved from being centre of the community with certain rights in local politics, through a time of being ignored and marginalized, to a time when the church is welcomed as a partner in community welfare, education, health and politics. Partnership and friendship are the models of relationship." (A 3.4., p. 23).

86 „Der Methodismus hat den Glauben immer verstanden sowohl als persönliche Dimension des Herzens als auch als Kraft, welche die Gesellschaft verändert. Daher prägt die Methodisten eine lange Tradition, sich auch in politischen und gesellschaftlichen Fragen und Organisationen zu engagieren." UMC Switzerland/ France: *Mit Christus Unterwegs* (2007), p. 6.

ecclesia militans to bear witness to the Gospel includes various types of involvement with municipalities and state institutions within post-communist Estonian society in the field of charity and education. It is important to notice that here the EELC portrays itself as a reliable partner of the state. There is a clear tension between critical and partnership attitudes regarding engagement with society, which mirrors precisely the theological problem expressed by the terms 'church' and 'world'.⁸⁷

It is noticeable that the reform documents frequently speak of 'society', and yet, theologically speaking, the churches are engaged with the whole of God's creation, and therefore it is more helpful to speak of the 'world'. 'Society' cannot be presumed as a God given sphere of human activity, but rather is a contingent human phenomenon. The world, however, in its totality, is God's gracious creative gift. The following section offers a constructive theological proposal to help churches grapple with the issues involved in understanding their relationship with the world. It seeks to take seriously both the way in which the world is the context of the church, and also the way in which the church is called out of the world to be in a particular relationship with God through the headship of Christ over the church made real in the power of the Holy Spirit.

3.2.2 A constructive reassessment of the relationship between church and world

3.2.2.1 God, the Word, and the church: The notion of repentance

Fundamental to the Reformation traditions is the understanding that the truth of the church resides outside of the church itself; put simply, there is a fundamental difference between Christ and the church. Christ is the head, the church is the body. This is most obvious in the Reformers' conviction that the church is a 'creature of the gospel' (*creatura evangelii*), not the origin of the gospel. This idea was developed as a critique of the notion that the church is itself a continuation of Christ's presence within the world. The Reformers' distinction between Christ and the church is the starting-point of church renewal if the church is to avoid the danger of placing itself in the centre rather than the work of God. Hence, the church is perpetually turning back to the source of its truth in God, as revealed in Christ. Here we see once again the centrality of the idea of repentance.

The documents express the above idea by stating that church renewal is basically God's own work.⁸⁸ The revelation of God's Word of forgiving grace and the human response to this Word through faithfulness and repentance together represent Jesus' fundamental proclamation of the

87 Cf. Estonia: *Entwicklungsplan 2008-2017*, p. 4-5 concerning the notion of *ecclesia militans* next to p. 32-34 on the educational engagement and p. 45 on the public self-portrayal of the EELC.

88 E.g. Austria: *Handbuch zum Naßwalder Modell* (2007), p. 8-9 does so by referring to the concept of *missio Dei*.

gospel as *metanoia*: “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news.” (Mark 1:15) Ecclesiologically speaking, this understanding of repentance is mirrored in the threefold conception of the Word of God.⁸⁹ Revelation is supremely in the Word, Christ; is in the Word, scripture, and is in the Word, the proclamation of the church. The proclamation of the church is rooted in the former two and cannot do without repentance because in repentance it becomes clear that the church is not itself simply identifiable with the Word. The proclamation of the Word within the church takes form in the various activities of witness that the church is called to.

3.2.2.2 God, the world, and the church: The notion of the covenant

The church is not alone in being created through the Word. The world itself is God’s creation. This begins to point to the fact that God is in relationship with the whole world directly, not simply with the church. That God becomes incarnate in the world in the person of Jesus Christ, and that the church confesses Jesus as being fully human and fully divine, means that God is fully engaged with that which is worldly through the humanity of Christ.⁹⁰ This means that one can begin to speak of a triangle that represents the relationship between God, the church (and here one should truly speak of Israel and the church), and the world. God, church and world are all in relationship with one another. This helps us understand how it is that the church is called to be contextualized within the life of the world, and also in a particular relationship with God that simultaneously marks it out from the world.

The church and the world are created and both are sinful. This means that a simple designation of the church as being over and against a sinful and fallen world is unacceptable. A simple ‘church good, world bad’, line of thought is impossible. Both need God’s sacramental grace to be freed from sin. A constructive theological understanding of the relationship between church and world would be of huge benefit to churches attempting to make sense of their mission and shape. This would need to be placed alongside sociological or system theoretical understandings of church and world in a functionally differentiated society.

Is the church the ‘ark of salvation’ outside of which there is no salvation?⁹¹ Or is the church the ‘sign, instrument and foretaste’ of the consummation of the whole of creation?⁹² Dualistic con-

⁸⁹ Cf. Karl Barth: *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I/1, § 4.

⁹⁰ Several documents allude to the Barthian root metaphor of church and society as ‘concentric circles’ (1946 in his study *Christengemeinde und Bürgergemeinde*). One of the most ambitious interpretation of this metaphor can be found in the documents of those renewal processes that stress the significance of mission as an ecclesial effort to concentrate on distanced or ex-church members at the “hedges and highways” (Luke 14:23) of the church (e.g. Evangelical Church of Westphalia in an own publication on baptism and church-leaving).

⁹¹ This expresses a conception of the church which finds early expression in the thought of Cyprian. See: Cyprian: *On*

ceptions of the church are frequently used within the documents of a visible/ invisible nature which leads to the unfortunate assumption that one can distinguish between 'true' and 'false' church members. Rather, a double conception of the relationship of the church to the world is a constructive statement: on the one hand the church is grounded in the world, and on the other it is opposed to the world.

One of the most helpful ways to understand the triangular nature of the relationship between God, church and world is through an understanding of the covenant. The first covenant within the canon of scripture is that which God makes with 'all living flesh' following the great flood. The covenant with Noah and all living creatures means that scripture understands God as being in covenant relationship with the world before God is in covenant relationship with Abraham and through him Israel, or with the church. The covenant with Israel and the church to be the 'people of God' (one of the biblical metaphors discussed above), is, as it were, a covenant within a covenant. The church is called into a particular relationship with God through Christ and the work of the Spirit, whilst still being in fundamental covenant relationship as living creatures through the prior covenant with Noah. Because of that prior covenant, the church is also directly in covenantal relationship with the world.

A covenantal understanding of the relationship of the church with the world allows for the double aspect of the relationship to be explored and developed within the context of church renewal and reform. The church must seek to contextualize itself within the world understanding God to be in fundamental covenantal relationship with the world. Thus, any attempt simply to stand 'against' the world in a sectarian fashion must be resisted. However, the church is simultaneously called out of the world into a particular covenantal relationship with God which is for the sake of the world. This means that the church must never simply seek to contextualize itself to the point that it becomes indistinguishable from the world, and fails to hold a prophetic light to challenge structural sin within the life of the world (and confess its part within the same). Church reform and renewal that attempted to take seriously this theological understanding of the church-world relationship would be strengthened considerably.

the Church: Select Treatises (tr. Allen Brent), New York 2006, p. 156-7.

⁹² Cf. *On the Way to Visible Unity* (The Meissen Common Statement), § 3.

4. Areas of renewal

Having set out something of the range of reform and renewal in chapter one, and reflected on the reasons for renewal and the ecclesiological implications in chapters two and three, we turn now to offer a more detailed account of two specific areas of renewal: structures and worship. These are taken as illustrative examples and function almost as case studies, rather than as a comprehensive survey. Structures and worship serve as two useful examples as both can form the starting point for reform and renewal processes.

4.1 Structure

4.1.1 Description of different church structures

4.1.1.1 Overview on structural levels

Within the reform processes represented in the documents, on the one hand structures of churches are the object of renewal processes whilst on the other hand the structures themselves are part of the processes as they are the framework within which reform happens. It is therefore necessary to examine the structures of particular member churches. To that end we offer an illustrative examination of six different churches and their structures. These six examples of church structures serve to underline the fundamental point that within the Protestant understanding of the church as it is lived within the CPCE there is no one fixed shape to the church. There are a wide range of different structures and principles of polity, all understood as giving true expression to the nature of the church. This fact in and of itself is vital to understanding why a process of perpetual reformation is possible: where the nature and shape of the church are understood to be bound together in a fixed form, structural reform and renewal as is being explored by CPCE member churches would be impossible. The sheer diversity of expressions of the shape of the church also underlines the fact that no one blueprint for reform within the structural life of the church is possible. What is of interest are processes of reform, not pre-determined blueprints. Equally, as has been discussed above, reform and renewal must always be contextually relevant; church structures being at least in part influenced by societal factors. The six churches are:

- 1) The Church of Norway (CoN) as an example of a Lutheran state church,
- 2) The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC) as an example of a former majority church (until 1930),
- 3) The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia (ECAC) as an example of a minority church,

- 4) The Reformed Church of St. Gallen (RCG) as an example of a Reformed cantonal church,
- 5) The Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (EKiR) as an example of a historically United church,
- 6) The Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) as an example of a recently (2004) united church.

In each of these churches, except of the CoN, the general synod functions as the main legislative body on a national level.⁹³ The CoN also has a synod, but it has to share its legislative power with the *Storting* (the parliament of Norway) which has to vote, for example, on the budget of the church.

When comparing the exercise of *episkopé* (oversight) within these six churches, it becomes evident that not every church has the office of bishop. Within churches that do they may have one or several bishops and the function of the office varies.

In the CoN, there is one bishop for each of the eleven dioceses. Since 2012 a twelfth bishop acts as leader of the bishops' meeting. In addition to the bishops' meeting, there is the National Council which is the executive body of the synod. Like the synod, it cannot act completely independently since the State Department of Church Affairs officially holds operational power inside the church.⁹⁴

The ECAC has offices of personal *episkopé* at every level. On the national level, there is the General Bishop who leads the church together with a lay Inspector. Each of the two districts also has a bishop who is also accompanied by an Inspector. The same system can be found in the deaneries which are led by a Dean together with an Inspector.

In the EELC, the Archbishop holds the leadership role. Under him serves one further bishop, while the consistory acts as the administration. The EELC is subdivided into twelve deaneries which are each led by a dean who is subordinate to the Archbishop.

The RCG does not have the office of bishop. The church council holds a major part of the administrative and executive power. The deans who are elected for each church district act as middlemen between the church council (elected by the synod that consists of ordained and non-ordained members) and the ministers and congregations.

⁹³ For the composition of the synods see below.

⁹⁴ Since 2008 major changes have been taking place that aim at loosening the relation of church and state. However, CoN remains constitutionally bound as *Folkekirke* and main parts of its organization and funding remain as they are.

The EKIR also has no bishop, but the President of the synod (*Praeses*) acts simultaneously as the head of the elected council, which governs the church throughout the year.

Since the PKN has a strong Presbyterian tradition, it has neither a bishop nor superintendents. The government of the church is entrusted to 'ecclesial assemblies', i.e. bodies consisting of ministers, elders and deacons.

4.1.1.2 The ministry of the whole people of God within the structures of the church
Many aspects of the internal structure⁹⁵ of the church, especially of the ministry and *episkopé*, have already been discussed in the CPCE document *Ministry – Ordination – Episkopé*.

This chapter gives some insights into the different election processes within the structures of the churches and notes particular characteristics of interest within these processes, as these matters are very closely related to church organization and internal structure.

In general, there are three levels at which election processes run within churches. In election processes within member churches authority is generally exercised in a representative fashion. In some member churches, however, there is more of a direct exercise of authority where, for example, all members might vote for a bishop, or where the whole membership of a local congregation elects the minister. On the first level, all church members are entitled to vote, thus influencing decisions concerning the life of their local congregation, for example the election of ministers, as well as electing or designating representatives who will serve within the bodies of the higher levels (deanery, diocese or district). This second level can also consist of a regional synod or a regional council (Netherlands, Scandinavia). It is characteristic of these levels that they elect candidates or representatives to the higher level of church structure (general or regional synod members, candidates for bishop posts etc). The third level is a general or national synod. Often this highest body elects bishops and other highly influential church representatives.⁹⁶

In examining the lay involvement within the different structures of the above-mentioned member churches, it is obvious that there is always a strong involvement of lay people in decision-making processes through their participation in the election of representatives.

⁹⁵ It has to be pointed out that the names for the representatives and the bodies can differ significantly. This refers to tradition and regional customs in the particular churches.

⁹⁶ Three election levels can be found at the EELC, the RCG, and the EKIR.

Beyond their involvement in the synod, lay people participate in bodies of church leadership. This applies to synodal boards and administrative bodies and church councils at every level of the church structure, both in churches with or without the episcopal office.

Despite the variety of structures that these six churches embody, a common factor between them is the place of lay people within decision making in the life of the churches. This suggests that the reform and renewal processes which these churches have initiated have all been deeply influenced from the start by lay involvement. It would seem that this is intrinsic to Protestant identity.

4.1.2 Description of different reform processes within the reform documents

4.1.2.1 The initiation of reform and renewal processes

Normally, documents were initiated at a certain official level: either by church leaders such as the bishop or the church president, by a church council, or by a synod. That the documents were initiated at these levels makes it hard to discern the influence that concerns at grass-roots levels had at the point of initiation. This does not mean that ideas or insights from local congregations or regional movements were insignificant for initiating certain reforms, but all the documents we dealt with were written and initiated at a churchwide level. An example of such a process is the document *Towards a United Protestant Church*, published by the synods of the Eglise Évangélique Luthérienne de France and of the Eglise Réformée de France in May 2009. This document was written by a steering committee of both churches and deals with a planned merger between the two churches.⁹⁷ Here, one can see that the general ideas were developed within a body of the churches' administration. Local parishes were not involved in initiating this process. In this case one could speak of a top-down decision-making process. The document of the United Methodist Church in Switzerland and France is an example of a bottom-up decision-making process. The working group that wrote this document consisted of church members, laymen, ministers and church leaders.⁹⁸

Within CPCE member churches many different groups are involved in the process of writing reform documents. Each church has working groups that deal with questions concerning how reform processes within their church should take place. Normally many different levels, groups and people in the church can discuss the papers before a final decision is made. As an example, the Synod of the PKN published the document *Learning to live out of wonder*. This docu-

⁹⁷ France: *Towards a United Protestant Church* (2009), p. 1-2.

⁹⁸ Cf. UMC Switzerland/ France: *Mit Christus unterwegs* (2007), p. 1.

ment states at the very beginning that the whole church is asked to discuss the document because the synod knows about the problems of top-down decision-making processes.⁹⁹

If a reform process is started and an official document is published, the final decision is normally made by the synod of the church as its legislative body.

4.1.2.2 The content of structural reforms

It is possible to identify various elements of structural reform:

a) Mergers of churches

Many churches are attempting to fulfil their task more effectively by concentrating their resources. In order to reduce costs and administrative effort on the one hand, and in order to make use of synergies and to guarantee the sustainability of the church on the other, opportunities for cooperation are being sought. Mergers of whole churches, regional church bodies, and congregations are the most significant structural expression of such concentrations of resources. In Europe on all of these three levels (churches, regional church bodies, and congregations) merging processes are observable. The stated hope is that the merged bodies have a bigger influence on media and on society since they represent more church members in a certain territory.¹⁰⁰ However, as noted above, this can also cause unexpected issues where it reduces the sense of identity and belonging that church members have with the church.

b) Cooperation

The merger of church bodies is usually the final stage of a reform process that begins with cooperation. Single congregations which are integrated in an overarching church structure and cooperate on regional levels appear to be one possible model for the future. The Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN), for example, places an emphasis on all forms of networking between congregations.¹⁰¹ A reduction of funding goes along with the development of regional structures which are supposed to encourage joint activities and better cooperation between congregations and church institutions. This counts for the fact that we encounter cooperation on every level of the church: from parishes working together, to the middle level of church life where church bodies form regional associations. Last but not least, cooperation takes place

⁹⁹ PKN: *Leren leven van de verwondering* (2005), p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. EKD: *Kirche der Freiheit* (2006), p. 94-5.

¹⁰¹ Cf. EKHN: *Perspektive 2025. Missionarische Volkskirche* (2009), p. 2.

at the level of CPCE member churches that work together on the basis of denominational or organizational affiliations.

c) Regionalization at a structural middle level of the church

For cooperation between local churches to be meaningfully facilitated requires a structural level of church life beyond the local. An increasing desire to cooperate requires new ways of relating at this 'middle' level of the life of the church. This level then becomes the 'community of communities', and becomes the level at which resources and specialism can be helpfully shared. Given that this level is the community of the communities at the ground level, it is understandable that some churches consider the middle level as dependent on the parish level and therefore deny its status as church in its own right. There are examples in some documents where the middle level is not even a legal entity (Evangelical Church of Anhalt).¹⁰²

d) Specialization, centralization and decentralization

There is another aspect to regionalization which has to do with the issue of centralization and decentralization in the church. A possible structural consequence of a successful cooperation between church bodies, particularly parishes, may be that certain functions of the church are centralized in order to allow for better access to resources throughout the whole middle level. The counter-movement is a certain decentralization which stresses the importance of a worshipping church within each local community. This trend is mirrored in an exemplary way in the structural changes taking place in the PKN: church union between Lutheran and Reformed churches has gone along with the abolition of one of the middle hierarchical levels, the so-called 'provincial synod'.¹⁰³ In this context the local congregations are ascribed particular importance: "The church lives in the local congregation. [...] The congregation is the receiver of the Word. The Word is the origin of the church, the ground under her feet, her greatest joy and certain hope for the future."¹⁰⁴

Decentralization is often for the purposes of encouraging local specialization. There is even an entire set of reform devices aiming at such specialized parishes whose ecclesial work is more focused on the spiritual needs of particular groups of church members, but not on the whole parish. The reform document of the EKIR is an instructive example of the development in the direction of specialization in so far as local parishes are asked to develop their structures indi-

¹⁰² Anhalt: *Perspektiven* (2008), p. 16.

¹⁰³ http://www.protestantchurch.nl/site/uploadedDocs/CHURCH_ORDER%283%29.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ PKN: *Leren leven van de verwondering* (2005), p. 2.

vidually.¹⁰⁵ Parish specialism might revolve around a particular expression of spirituality, such as Taizé, or a particular engagement with the arts and culture. In this context, the surrounding pluralist society is seen as a potential gain for churches that are able to offer certain specialism within a religious marketplace. This practice of emphasizing a spiritual profile for a particular parish is becoming more and more common in church reform, but just as cooperation can end in merger, establishing profile parishes can end in a partial or complete abolition of traditional parish structures.

e) Rural and urban needs

The specialization that is beginning to emerge has a different impact depending on whether an area is rural or urban. While profile parishes can fairly easily develop in the context of a larger city, the implied decrease in traditional parish expressions of church will be hard to bear for rural areas. In the analysed documents one can perceive an awareness of the need to differentiate between rural and urban areas and between different social milieus etc. The lack of these kinds of differentiation was one of the most frequent points of critique expressed by those affected by reforms. Two reasons lie behind this tension: the empirical methods of analysing the contexts of church life and work (which must be the basis of every attempt at reform) need refinement and the fact that the people eventually most affected by reform seem not to have been appropriately involved in developing the reform programmes.

f) Involvement of volunteers

Churches involved in reform processes often attempt to increase the role of volunteers and to offer possibilities for further education and the gaining educational qualifications. The RCG, for example, offers special training for volunteers, while the Evangelical Church in Berlin – Brandenburg – Silesian Upper Lusatia (EKBO) (*Salz der Erde*) emphasizes the importance of the development of missionary competences within staff and volunteers. On-going training as well as caring for and the continuous guidance of volunteers should be a key pastoral task.

4.1.3 Concluding observations

4.1.3.1 Participation in the ecclesia semper reformanda

The fact that the Protestant understanding of the shape of the church is essentially open, coupled with the full representation of the whole people of God within the structures of the member churches of the CPCE, when placed together begin to enable us to understand how it is that

¹⁰⁵ EKIR: *Vom offenen Himmel erzählen* (2006), p. 11.

semper reformanda is essentially an ongoing part of the life of the church. Gathered in council, the people of God seek God's will for their future shape, and acknowledge that their present shape is contingent, and open to change and transformation. This once again returns us to the idea of repentance, the continual turning back to God, which in this instance we see as being the primary activity of the councils of the church as they discern appropriate reform and renewal programmes for their contexts. It is interesting to note that no member church has wanted to reform their structure to the extent of adopting a new fundamental polity; rather they are seeking to reform within their existing policies.

In the particular examples of structural reform and renewal that have been examined, we see some of the outworking of these principles in action. It is interesting to note, however, that they can at times lead in different directions. The most notable in the present situation is, perhaps, a tension between a desire for regionalization and centralization for the purposes of efficiency, coupled with a simultaneous desire for specialization at the local level for the purposes of effective mission with particular target groups. As has been noted, if pushed too far in either direction this can either lead to breaking a fundamental link between church members and their sense of their local church within a particular place, or alternatively to an end to traditional parish structures because so many parishes now are specialized, rather than concentrating on traditional ministry to the whole parish.

4.1.3.2 Ecclesia semper reformanda and the *magnus consensus*

In Protestant ecclesiology this structural openness of the *ecclesia semper reformanda* is usually referred to as *magnus consensus*. One can consider the Augsburg Confession as an early reform document in the history of Protestant churches, and in it we encounter the assertion that the entire understanding of the Protestant church is confessed '*magno consensu*'. This phrase does not denote a numerical understanding of a majority vote, but a structural openness to what the authors of the Confession consent to. The *magnus consensus* therefore denotes a process of mutual agreement achieved by involving both ordained ministers and lay people on all levels of the church in the ecclesial witness to the truth Protestant churches consent to. The notion of consensus therefore expresses openness to God's truth. Consensus means, in this sense, that agreement in the church is brought about by consenting with God's truth. The involvement of church members in the broadest possible fashion and on all levels of the church is the structural implication of the *magnus consensus*.

In the context of CPCE it is important to notice that the *magnus consensus* cannot be restricted to a single church but will necessarily embrace a community of churches. Those churches are rooted in a common understanding of the gospel, but express this in the different shapes of

church life they inhabit. That we seek to live by the *magnus consensus* also begs the question of whether the CPCE churches should be actively seeking this consensus together, and whether a European synod might be one means by which this could be given structural expression.

4.2 Worship and liturgy

Worship is at the heart of the identity of the church and is one of the public expressions of its self-understanding.

The first two parts of this chapter focus on the importance of liturgical renewal for churches today. The leading questions that the member churches are reflecting upon, as emerges from their reform documents are: How can churches revise their liturgies to make them more contemporary and relevant whilst expressing the fundamental elements of the gospel? How do changes within society affect or initiate renewal processes? The third part spells out the commonalities and divergences of the CPCE churches regarding these processes.

4.2.1 Worship needs renewal because it is at the centre of the church

“The whole life of Christians is to be led under the commission to be worship to God. In the narrower sense this is liturgical celebration (*leiturgia*) [...]”.¹⁰⁶ For both the church itself and for the life of every believer *leiturgia*, the service and its liturgy are central. In celebrating *leiturgia* the church is assured of its foundation and mission.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, the renewal processes of the church should have an effect on worship itself. Renewal of worship is possible because worship includes not only the marks of the church (proclaiming the gospel and administering sacraments, CA VII) but also elements subject to change. These elements not only may, but ought to be changed with the passage of time, if they have become unsuited to communicate the Good News. To make worship more outgoing and to promote the church’s missionary impulse calls for work on worship’s inner strength and quality; its grace and splendour. It also calls for holding in high esteem those who engage in the worshipping life of the church, be they lay or ordained.¹⁰⁸

4.2.2 Worship needs to change as society/culture changes

The world we know is changing rapidly and this process of transformation results in alterations in social structures. The church as part of the human community has to be sensitive to societal changes, and responsive to these, especially as society migrates from a close identification with

¹⁰⁶ *The Church of Jesus Christ* (fn. 3), p. 104 (ch. I.3.3.1).

¹⁰⁷ Wolfgang Huber: *Evangelisch im 21. Jahrhundert* (Eröffnungsvortrag für den Zukunftskongress der EKD 2007; http://www.kirche-im-aufbruch.ekd.de/downloads/rv_wittenberg_neu.pdf), p. 8-9.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* Within other documents there is little reference to the sacramental character of worship.

local institutions of religion to a more distanced relationship. It is called to react to these processes of transformation, meaning that every aspect of its mission is implicitly summoned to revision, including its worship.

a) Emphasizes on target-groups

The documents of the churches from Central and Eastern Europe stress the responsibility of the church towards youth following the fall of the communist regime (for example the Reformed Church in Hungary¹⁰⁹ and the EELC¹¹⁰). In most cases this means a fresh start and a special focus on this target group. But the drop in church membership in the last two or three decades calls all European churches to reflect on, and respond to, the problem of how to attract and keep young people within the church¹¹¹. Several churches have adopted renewed worship-oriented programs, the idea being to build up the church through renewed worship. The EELC and the Evangelical Church in Berlin – Brandenburg – Silesian Upper Lusatia (EKBO) point out the importance of the renewal of the liturgical language, so people – including younger generations – can express more clearly their beliefs.¹¹² The communication of the Gospel through the arts (music, theatre, film) should be initiated according to EKvW and EKBO¹¹³, so that believers find relevance for their lives. Believing that a message wrapped in (post)modern cultural packaging is the way to attract people to the church, does not necessarily mean that ministers water down the religious content. The use of popular cultural forms, music styles and other elements of art are not alien to the churches of the Reformation. The documents conclude that people are more likely to feel at ease with these new forms and therefore engage more fully with worship.

b) Emphasizes on occasional offices¹¹⁴

The studied documents describe secularization and pluralism as factors creating new challenges for the church where worship and ministry is concerned. Different religious perspectives are offering alternative patterns of life and new belief systems and this has opened up a broader range of possible ritual acts that might mark moments of transition in life, some secular, others from other religious traditions. Therefore EKvW points out that the quality of church liturgies

¹⁰⁹ Hungary: *Református Válaszok*, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Estonia: *Entwicklungsplan 2008-2017*, p. 30.

¹¹¹ Cf. e.g. URC: *Hearing your views* (2009), p. 26.

¹¹² Estonia: *Entwicklungsplan*, p. 13; EKBO: *Salz der Erde* (2007), p. 13-31.

¹¹³ Westphalia: *Unser Leben* (2004), p. 11; EKBO: *Salz der Erde* (2007), p. 21-2.

¹¹⁴ In the following we are referring only to German texts because there were no texts available from other churches. As far as we can tell from the encounter within the group this emphasis is not limited to Germany.

(ceremonies) must be high so that people will finally decide for them.¹¹⁵ The Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau, for example, wants to focus on church members who mainly use church on specific occasions in their lives (*“Kirche bei Gelegenheit”*), such as baptism, school entry, confirmation, wedding, anniversary, and funeral.¹¹⁶ Consequently some documents stress the importance of Christian advertising campaigns in order to provide good compelling information on what the churches have to offer society.¹¹⁷ In *Kirche der Freiheit* occasional offices are a major focus which leads to the disputed goal: “Further goals include that all members of a Protestant church who die should be given a church funeral, and all children of Protestant parents should be baptized. [...] 100 percent of marriages should be church marriages when both partners are members of a Protestant church [...]”.¹¹⁸ In the controversial discussion about the document this goal has been called ‘brave’, but is also criticized for being ‘naïve’.¹¹⁹

4.2.3 Common themes in the discussion concerning the reform of liturgy and the renewal of worship

The call for liturgical renewal explicitly or implicitly is present in most of the studied documents. Every church deals with the challenge in its wider renewal process at some point. The two most common questions were:

- 1) Should worship become more unified or more diverse?
- 2) What is the role of lay people in worship?

4.2.3.1 More unity – more diversity

One of the most discussed problems in the documents of the CPCE churches is whether renewed worship should be more unified – expressing our unity in Christ – or more diverse and target group oriented. Approaches and opinions differ within the Protestant tradition. The boundaries between approaches which seek to uphold unity within the worshipping experience, and those that seek to encourage diversity of practice are somewhat fluid, and to some extent depend upon the particular liturgical traditions involved. It is possible, therefore, also to speak of a ‘blended approach’ or ‘third way’.

¹¹⁵ Westphalia: *Church with a Future* (2000), p. 14.

¹¹⁶ EKHN: *Perspektive 2025. Prozess zur Entwicklung von Prioritäten* (2007), p. 8.

¹¹⁷ Westphalia: *Gemeinde leiten* (2007), p. 19; 33-4.

¹¹⁸ Beacon 1 in: EKD: *Kirche der Freiheit (English)*.

¹¹⁹ See on the discussion e.g. Michael Welker: ‘Freiheit oder Klassenkirche. Mut und Blindheit im Impulspapier des Rates der EKD’, in *Zeitzeichen* 7, 2006, p. 8-11, esp. p. 10, and Dieter Becker: ‘Die Kirche ist kein Supertanker. Das Impulspapier verordnet der Kirche die falsche Strategie’, in *Zeitzeichen* 7, 2006, p. 12-14.

a) The call for more unity within worship

The call for more unity in worship is emphasized clearly in the documents of the PKN. Behind it lies the experience that although liturgical diversity can be a source of enrichment, it can also provoke tensions, mutual misunderstandings and confusion among congregations. The understanding is that worship needs to have certain recognisability to it wherever one encounters it. Otherwise, believers can easily develop a non-conformist attitude: indifference to fellow members, the refusal of long established elements of worship and loosened commitment to the church. Unity in worship tries to bring about the unity Christ prayed for. This is not about seeking total uniformity within worship, but rather about offering a 'canon' of possibilities that might be set down within a service book or approved forms of liturgy. The Reformed Church in Hungary is planning a new service book. This book is intended to be used by all Hungarian reformed congregations even outside the country. It will be a combination of the three service books already in use and will revisit the liturgical principles of the Reformation striving to find unity in a theoretical-theological foundation. EKBO is preparing new forms of service and the Church of Norway has recently introduced a new liturgy (see below). Their reports show the need to have, and importance of, one generally accepted and used liturgical language. The PKN is working on a new hymnbook comprising traditional and more contemporary material for use in services. In order to be more effective and implement the proposals and remarks of the congregations, the Reformed Church of Hungary, the Church of Norway and the PKN have decided to test the new books of liturgy and let pastors and congregations comment on them before it is finalized.

b) The call for more diversity within worship

Pluralism is a growing challenge for the churches. Segregation into an increasing number of milieus, the experience that many target groups are absent in services, coupled with the theological insight that "the revelation of God in Christ is too great to have merely one shape"¹²⁰ call for diversity in church and in liturgy. Many of the studied documents encourage congregations and pastors to offer target-group oriented services.¹²¹ Some even suggest (e.g. EKIR and EKD) that congregations concentrate on a certain group by offering special programs and services for that particular group. In this case different congregations within the same place could offer different services depending on their target group. For example an EKIR document suggests to have different types of congregations and liturgies in a certain region (like a city), each corresponding to the particular needs and cultures of its attendees, so that you might find, for exam-

¹²⁰ PKN: *Leren leven van de verwondering* (2005), p. 2.

¹²¹ Westphalia: *Unser Leben* (2004), p. 11.

ple, a congregation with an affectionately and attentively designed traditional program, next to a youth culture oriented congregation and a church for the un-churched particularly aimed at addressing those with no background within the church.¹²² The EKHN document *Perspektive 2025* also encourages parishes to offer diverse forms of services and liturgy. There is a vision to install outstanding preaching places in important churches.¹²³ The EKD document *Kirche der Freiheit* points out that a number of “profile parishes” already have been emerging, “offering a specific spiritual, musical, social, cultural, or youth-oriented focus, and attracting people not only from the immediate vicinity, but from throughout entire regions.”¹²⁴

c) *Blended worship – the third way*

There are documents that suggest that the mystery of Christ is so unfathomably rich that it cannot be exhausted by its expression in any single liturgical tradition, consequently traditional and modern liturgical elements can live together in one service in a remarkable complementarity. The question many churches struggle with is how modern liturgical elements can be adapted or blended with more traditional worship that derives from earlier centuries? How can Christ, through the worshipping life of a church, be made manifest to all those people and cultures to which that church is sent and in which it is rooted? A document of the PKN refers to new spiritual impulses and to the enrichment in faith of liturgical worship which is capable of integrating different traditions and the authentic riches of cultures.

The most recent example of a church coping with these questions is the Church of Norway. Its reform process concerning liturgy is presented here more extensively because it provides a helpful example. In 2003 the Church Youth Synod asked for a renewal of worshipping life within the Church of Norway. A proposal for a new order of service for the main Sunday service has been examined by the Church Council and sent to all parishes in the country. The material contains both revised and new liturgical elements for the whole Sunday service, including baptism and the Eucharist. The structure of the service remains set. However, a major objective of the revised material is to provide more choice of liturgical material, in order for local parishes to engage more actively and consciously in shaping the service and to open possibilities of active

¹²² EKIR: *Vom offenen Himmel erzählen*, p. 16.

¹²³ Cf. EKHN: *Perspektive 2025. Prozess zur Entwicklung von Prioritäten* (2007), p. 33: “Ziel muss es sein, dass die EKHN auch weiterhin eine differenzierte Gemeinde- und Gottesdienstpraxis gewährleistet. Überdies ist bis 2025 eine Topographie herausragender Predigtstädten an bedeutenden Kirchen (ca. 20) zu entwickeln.“

¹²⁴ Beacon 2 in: EKD: *Kirche der Freiheit* (English).

participation of parish members who otherwise would remain quite passive (e.g. baptismal families).¹²⁵

It is interesting to note that the desire to promote 'blended' forms of worship can also result in the production of new service and hymn books. Part of the revisions within Norway is the proposal for a new hymnal, which keeps a large part of the old hymnal, but adds a wide range of new material. The new material is a combination of songs and hymns which have already been in use as well as entirely new material. The aim is to provide a wider choice of music and themes for use in the Sunday service.¹²⁶ A new service book is a final part of the revision.

In addition to the chosen congregations, a number of 'reference bodies' have been appointed. Among them is the Council for Ecumenical and International Relations. This is an important matter for the Council, as it wishes to ensure that ecumenical relations are properly considered before the reforms are finalized.

In terms of an understanding of a blended approach, perhaps the Church of Scotland sums it up well: "We need to affirm the significant debts we owe to those who have gone before as well as the energies of those who dream for the future."¹²⁷

d) A common expression of worship within the CPCE

The group of south eastern CPCE churches provides a case study on the continuity and the change of liturgies and services within CPCE churches for the General Assembly in 2012. The writers give many examples of change and suggest that, as the liturgies are very different and cannot be unified all over the CPCE churches.¹²⁸ As a worshipping community of churches united through Word and Sacrament, how can the CPCE best make this reality visible within the worshipping lives of member churches?

4.2.3.2 Liturgy, the laity and ministry

a) General Observations

As the churches confront new challenges and face trends which require a broader pastoral response, the question of lay participation and lay leadership in worship emerges. Almost all of the

¹²⁵ Cf. CoN: *Ordning for hovedgudstjeneste* (2011).

¹²⁶ Cf. CoN: *Gudstjenesteboken 2011*, Chapter "Hellig handling, hellig tid, hellig rom", p. 4.

¹²⁷ CoS: *The Theology of the Church in the Light of 'Church Without Walls'*, p. 4.

¹²⁸ *Eine Bleibe in der Zeit – Evangelischer Gottesdienst in Süd-Mittel-Osteuropa zwischen Bewahrung und Veränderung*, CPCE, 2012.

CPCE churches agree on the objective of getting more lay people to participate in worship for theological and practical reasons. Theologically the church exists as the assembly of believers, who are called to worship God in everyday life and in *leiturgia*. Practically the churches benefit from the involvement of lay people in many ways, as they support and enrich the services and as their participation proves that the church is not an exclusive but an inclusive community.

Therefore participation in general is welcomed, but concerning the level of participation there is still great debate. This level ranges from indirect involvement through music¹²⁹ through different forms of participation (people reading the Scripture, technical support, serving communion and formulating the prayers in the service) to lay leadership (preaching, and presiding at the Eucharist) of worship. The first two forms of lay participation already exist in the churches, but the second form is a new phenomenon for many churches, but with growing significance. It demands the honesty that one of the reasons behind allowing lay people to lead a service can be the lack of ordained ministers, and at the same time it points to the proclamation of the gospel taking place literally among the people. There are questions surrounding what it means to have non-ordained people preaching and presiding, and this leads to the question of whether it would be appropriate to ordain these people, even though they do not have a formal university education in theology.¹³⁰

b) Consequences of lay participation

Besides the general encouragement of all believers to become involved in worship, the documents call for the consequences to be noted for worship itself, for education and for the role of ministry. EKIR suggests new forms of service that do not require ordained ministers at all (e.g. Taizé dialogue-services) and are meant to encourage people to express and share their faith with each other.¹³¹ The Waldensian Church recommends further consideration of new ways to access to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. It acknowledges the classical reformed distinction of pastors, elders, and deacons, but realizes that different forms of ordination are in use. Therefore the churches feel the need to begin a debate on their understanding of authority and ordination. The consequences for the role and the self-understanding of ministers are significant as "Recruiting, training, and supporting volunteers will be one of the most important tasks in the future. Volunteers are indeed not to be seen as helpers or substitutes for professional church

¹²⁹ Church musicians are traditionally involved *directly* in conducting (and planning) the service. To cooperate with them gets increasingly important: music helps to get people involved in the service with all their senses and is especially important to reach younger people. Cf. Westphalia: *Church with a Future* (2000), p. 42.

¹³⁰ On ordination cf. the CPCE doctrinal study *Ministry – Ordination – Episkopé*, ch. II.3.

¹³¹ Cf. EKIR: *Vom offenen Himmel erzählen*, p. 18.

workers, but should be able to carry out their tasks independently.”¹³² The role of ministers therefore changes from ‘conductor’ to ‘coach’: encouraging and training lay people, planning teamwork, solving problems and most importantly, claiming responsibility for the theological foundations.¹³³

4.2.4 Conclusion

How do CPCE churches see the renewal of worship in their context, and what are the most important questions raised by today’s renewal processes? There seem to be three significant issues:

- 1) It is not the task of the church that is changing – that remains: proclaiming Christ -, only the circumstances, the particularities of times alter and in the light of these the church finds it necessary to revise how this message is being delivered. Jesus spoke of the fact that new wine has to be poured into new wine skins (Matthew 9:17).
- 2) Generally, there are three ways in which reform of worship takes place: a call for diversity in liturgy to address different target groups within the church; a call for more unity to enable greater recognisability of the worship of the church; and a call for a blended approach to worship which mixes old and new elements.
- 3) The level and forms of participation of lay people in worship varies among CPCE churches. In churches where there is a growing role for lay people within worship, this may have the consequence that the role of the minister changes from ‘conductor’ to ‘coach’.

¹³² Beacon 4 in: EKD: *Kirche der Freiheit (English)*.

¹³³ Cf. Westphalia: *Pfarrberuf mit Zukunft* (2007), p. 8.

5. Recommendations

- 1) All reform and renewal needs to be understood as the way the church continually returns to God: it is an act of repentance and is always seeking renewal through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) The fundamental conviction of Protestant churches that the gospel does not dictate the shape of the church. The church is continually called to reshape itself in response to the gospel.
- 3) There is a need for churches to be honest about the practical challenges they face in terms of resources and societal context. They need to be willing to engage these directly and not seek to hide them behind the language of 'vision'.
- 4) Theological and pragmatic reasons for reform need not be alternatives, but can be theologically understood as a whole. Church and world are in fundamental relationship in God through the covenant, rather than fundamental tension.
- 5) Structural reform must be aware of the relationship between consolidation for the sake of making better use of resources, and the need to address particular local contexts. The church needs to allow its members to identify with it, whilst also being effective in mission.
- 6) There is a need to continually reengage with the theology of ministry and ordination, as the practical work of ordained ministry shifts in response to new patterns of church life.
- 7) There is a need to hold together received and renewed forms of worship within the life of the churches.

Appendix 1: List of the reform documents

Short title	Church	Title	Publication
Anhalt: <i>Perspektiven</i>	Evangelical Church of Anhalt	Perspektiven für die Arbeit der Evangelischen Landeskirche Anhalts, beschlossen von der Landessynode ... im November 2008 [Perspectives for the Work of the Evangelical Church in Anhalt, decided by the Regional Synod]	http://www.landeskirche-anhalts.de/assets/files/2008-2_perspektivpapier.pdf
Austria: <i>Handbuch zum Naßwalder Modell</i>	Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria	Handbuch zum Naßwalder Modell. Zur Diskussion freigegeben von der Synode A.B. am 30. Oktober 2007 [Manual to the Nasswald Model. Released for discussion at the Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria, October 30, 2007]	http://www.evangel.at/fileadmin/evangel.at/doc_reden/Nasswald_2.pdf
Baden: <i>Fortführung des Kirchenkompasses</i>	Evangelical Church in Baden	Fortführung des Kirchenkompasses. Arbeitshilfe (2009) [Continuation of the Church Compass. Work aide]	http://www.ekiba.de/download/Arbeitshilfe_Weiterarbeit.pdf
Baden: <i>Kirchenkompass</i>	Evangelical Church in Baden	Kirchenkompass [Church Compass]	Published as brochure, without year
Basel: <i>Perspektiven 15</i>	Evangelical Reformed Church of the City of Basel	«Perspektiven 15» der Evangelisch-reformierten Kirche des Kantons Basel-Stadt (2007) [Perspectives 15]	http://www.erk-bs.ch/perspektiven-15
CoN: <i>Gud gir – Vi deler</i>	Church of Norway	Gud gir – Vi Deler. Plan for trosopplaering i Den norske kirke (2010) [God gives – we share. Plan for Christian education in the Church of Norway]	http://www.kirken.no/?event=doLink&famID=38865 http://www.kirken.no/english/doc/engelsk/Plan_trosoppl_Engelsk.pdf
CoN: <i>Gudstjenesteboken</i>	Church of Norway	Gudstjenesteboken 2011 [Service Book 2011]	http://www.kirken.no/?event=downloadFile&FamID=181816
CoN: <i>I Kristus, nær livet</i>	Church of Norway	I Kristus, nær livet – en bekjennende, misjonerende, tjenende og åpen folkekirke. Visjonsdokument for Den norske kirke 2009-2014 (2008) [In Christ, close to the Life – a confessing, evangelising, serving and open folk church. Vision document for the Church of Norway]	http://www.kirken.no/?event=doLink&famID=3200
CoN: <i>Ordning for hovedgudstjeneste</i>	Church of Norway	Ordning for hovedgudstjeneste. Vedtatt av Kirkemøtet 2011 [Order of the main worship. Adopted by the National Synod 2011]	http://www.kirken.no/?event=doLink&famID=178213
CoN: <i>Plan for diakonia</i>	Church of Norway	Plan for diakonia (2007)	http://www.kirken.no/english/engelsk.cfm?artid=10980

CoN: <i>Plan for kirkemusikk</i>	Church of Norway	Plan for kirkemusikk (2008) [Plan for church music]	http://www.kirken.no/?event=doLink&famID=69093
CoS: <i>A Church Without Walls</i>	Church of Scotland	A Church Without Walls - The Report of the Special Commission anent Review and Reform, April 30 th 2001	http://www.kirkearkiv.com/cww.pdf
CoS: <i>The Theology of the Church</i>	Church of Scotland	The Theology of the Church in the Light of 'Church Without Walls'	[internal paper, not published]
EKBO: <i>Salz der Erde</i>	Evangelical Church in Berlin – Brandenburg – Silesian Upper Lusatia	Salz der Erde. Das Perspektivprogramm der EKBO (2007) [Salt of the Earth. The programme of perspectives of the EKBO]	http://www.ekbo.de/Webdesk/documents/premiere_ekbo-inter-net/Brosch%C3%BCren+(Presse-stelle)/Perspektivprogramm.pdf
EKD: <i>Gott in der Stadt</i>	Evangelical Church in Germany	Gott in der Stadt. Perspektiven evangelischer Kirche in der Stadt, EKD-Texte 93 (2007) [God in the city. Perspectives of the Protestant church in the city]	http://www.ekd.de/EKD-Texte/57061.html
EKD: <i>Kirche der Freiheit</i>	Evangelical Church in Germany	Kirche der Freiheit. Perspektiven für die evangelische Kirche im 21. Jahrhundert (2006) [Church of Freedom. 21st century perspectives for the EKD]	http://www.ekd.de/download/kirche-der-freiheit.pdf
EKD: <i>Kirche der Freiheit (English)</i>	Evangelical Church in Germany	Kirche der Freiheit – 21st Century Perspectives for the EKD. Excerpts from the discussion paper, translation: Language Service of the Lutheran World Federation and of the World Council of Churches	Internal paper, not published
EKD: <i>Wandeln und gestalten</i>	Evangelical Church in Germany	Wandeln und gestalten. Missionarische Chancen und Aufgaben der evangelischen Kirche in ländlichen Räumen, EKD-Texte 87 (2007) [Changing and shaping. Missionary opportunities and tasks of the Protestant church in rural areas]	http://www.ekd.de/EKD-Texte/ekd_texte_87_1.html
EKD: <i>Leitung</i>	Evangelical Church in Germany	Leitung und Führung. Dokumentation des Workshops „Leitung und Führung in der Kirche – Orientierung in einem zentralen Handlungsfeld“ (2008) [Governance and guidance. Documentation of the workshop 'Governance and guidance in the church – orientation in a central area of activity]	http://www.kirche-im-aufbruch.ekd.de/images/epd_Dokumentation_2009_Leitung_und_Fuehrung_in_der_Kirche.pdf
EKD: <i>Zukunftswerkstatt</i>	Evangelical Church in Germany	Zukunftswerkstatt Kassel 2009 (epd-Dokumentation 46/2009) [Futuere workshop Kassel 2009]	http://www.kirche-im-aufbruch.ekd.de/images/09-46_EKD-Zukunftswerkstatt_Sonderauflage.pdf
EKHN: <i>Auftrag und Gestalt</i>	Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau	Auftrag und Gestalt. Vom Sparrzwang zur Besserung der Kirche. Theologische Leitvorstellungen für	Frankfurt 1995 [EKHN-Dokumentation 1] ISBN 3-930206-30-7

		Ressourcenkonzentration und Strukturveränderung [Commission and shape From the need to economize to the improvement of the church. Theological guiding principles for the concentrating of resources and the change of structures]	
EKHN: <i>Perspektive 2025. Prozess zur Entwicklung von Prioritäten</i>	Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau	Perspektive 2025 – Prozess zur Entwicklung von Prioritäten und Posterioritäten in der EKHN. Abschlussbericht und Empfehlungen der Kirchenleitung (2007) [Perspective 2025. Process of developing priorities and posteriorities in the EKHN. Final report and recommendations of the Church Council]	http://www.perspektive2025.de/download/synvorl/07_synodenvorlage_2025.pdf
EKHN: <i>Perspektive 2025. Missionarische Volkskirche</i>	Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau	Perspektive 2025. Missionarische Volkskirche auf dem Weg (2009) [Perspective 2025. A missional folk church on its way]	http://www.perspektive2025.de/download/09_04/synodenvorlage.pdf
EKiR: <i>Vom offenen Himmel erzählen</i>	Evangelical Church of the Rhineland	Vom offenen Himmel erzählen. Unterwegs zu einer missionarischen Volkskirche (2006) [Telling about the open heaven. En route towards a missional folk church]	http://www.ekir.de/ekir/dokumente/Vom_offenen_Himmel_erzaehlen.pdf
Estonia: <i>Entwicklungsplan 2008-2017</i>	Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church	Entwicklungsplan 2008-2017 [Plan of Development 2008-2017]	In Estonian and German: http://www.eelk.ee/arengukava.php
France: <i>Towards a United Protestant Church</i>	Reformed Church of France and Evangelical Lutheran Church of France	Towards a United Protestant Church. General guidelines for the planned merger between the two churches (2009)	Internal paper, not published (In French: http://eglise-protestante-unie.fr/IMG/pdf/EELF-ERF_Vers_une_EPUF_Rapport_Synodal_2009.pdf)
Fribourg: <i>Legislaturprogramm 2009-2013</i>	Evangelical Reformed Church of the Canton of Fribourg	Legislaturprogramm 2009–2013 [Programme of the legislation 2009-2013]	http://www.ref-fr.ch/synodalrat
Hannover: <i>Zukunft gestalten</i>	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hannover	Zukunft gestalten - Perspektiven und Prioritäten für das Handeln der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Landeskirche Hannovers (2005) [Building the future - Prospects and priorities in the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hannover]	http://www.kirchenkreis-holzminden-bodenwerder.de/uploads/media/Perspektiv1.pdf
Hungary: <i>Élő kövek egyháza</i>	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary	Élő kövek egyháza. Az evangélikus megújulás stratégiája (2008) [The Church of living stones – The strategy of Evangelical Lutheran renewal]	http://strategia.lutheran.hu/vitainditok/201eelo-kovek-egyhaza201d-az-evangelikus-megujulas-1
Hungary: <i>Református Válaszok</i>	Reformed Church in Hungary	Református Válaszok – Stratégiai alapvetés (2005) [Reformed answers - Strategic plan-	http://www.reformatus.hu/archiv/2005/ref_valaszok.htm

		ning]	
Italy: <i>Tesi</i>	Waldensian Church in Italy	Commissione sinodale ad referendum sull' ecclesiologia: Tesi di discussione (2006) [Commission for the Ecclesiology Referendum: Theses for discussion]	Atti del Sinodo del 2006, Allegato 1 (21/SI/2006), Torre Pellice 2006, S. 67-86
Kurhessen: <i>Reformprozess</i>	Evangelical Church of Hesse Electorate-Waldeck	Reformprozess der Evangelischen Kirche von Kurhessen-Waldeck. Abschlussbericht des Struktur- und Entwicklungsausschusses II mit dem Beschluss der Landessynode (2006)	http://www.ekkw.de/media_ekkw/downloads/ekkw_reformprozess_abschluss.pdf
Kurhessen: <i>Konkretionen. Orientierungen. Perspektiven</i>	Evangelical Church of Hesse Electorate-Waldeck	Konkretionen. Orientierungen. Perspektiven. Schwerpunkte des Reformprozesses in der Evangelischen Kirche von Kurhessen-Waldeck (2008) [Concretizations, orientations, perspectives. Foci of the reform process in the Evangelical Church of Hesse Electorate-Waldeck]	Internal paper, not published
NELK: <i>Kirche in Veränderung</i>	Evangelical Lutheran Church on the Northern Bank of the River Elbe	Kirche in Veränderung. Der Nordelbische Reformprozess 2002 bis 2009. Dokumentation und Auswertung [Church in Change. The reform process in the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the Northern Bank of the River Elbe from 2002 through 2009. Documentation and evaluation]	http://www.reformumsetzung-nordelbien.de/fix/files//%20Doku%20Internetversion.pdf
PKN: <i>Leren leven van de verwondering</i>	Protestant Church in the Netherlands	Leren leven van de verwondering. Visie op het leven en werken van de kerk in haar geheel (2005) [Learning to live out of wonder. Vision of living and working of the church as a whole]	http://www.pkn.nl/site/uploadedDocs/Visie_op_het_leven_en_werken_van_de_kerk.pdf [English: http://www.protestantchurch.nl/site/uploadedDocs/Verwondering_engels(1).pdf]
St. Gallen: <i>Schwerpunktziele</i>	Evangelical Reformed Church of the Canton of St. Gallen	Umsetzung „St. Galler Kirche 2015“ – Leitziele 2009-2015. Schwerpunktziele des Kirchenrates 2009/2010 [Implementing 'Church of St. Gallen 2015' – Guiding goals 2009-2015. Main goals of the Church Council 2009/10]	http://www.ref-sg.ch/anzeige/projekt/200/507/umsetzung_8243st_galler_kirche_20108243_schwerpunktziele_2009_2010_des_kirchenrates_.pdf
UMC Switzerland/ France: <i>Mit Christus unterwegs</i>	United Methodist Church in Switzerland and France	Mit Christus unterwegs. Von Gott bewegt – den Menschen zugewandt (2007) [En route with Christ. Moved by God – facing towards human beings]	http://www.emk-schweiz.ch/uploads/media/20070705_profil_jk07_mit_erlaeuterungen.pdf
URC: <i>Hearing your views</i>	United Reformed Church	Hearing your views (2009)	http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/images/vision2020_booklet_colour.pdf
URC: <i>Vision 2020</i>	United Reformed Church	Vision 2020. Planning for Growth in the URC (2009)	http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/documents/vision2020genlassembly_report
Westphalia: <i>Church with a</i>	Evangelical Church of West-	Church with a Future. Goal-setting for the Evangelical Church of West-	http://www.reformprozess.de/fileadmin/sites/reformprozess/do

<i>Future</i>	phalia	phalia (2000)	kumen- te_reformprozess/church_with _a_future.pdf
Westphalia: <i>Gemeinde leiten</i>	Evangelical Church of West- phalia	Gemeinde leiten. Pfarrberuf mit Zu- kunft. Zur Weiterentwicklung des Pfarrdienstes in Westfalen. Bericht der Kirchenleitung für die Landessynode 2007 [Guiding a parish. Pastoral office with future. With regard to the develop- ment of the pastoral office in West- phalia]	http://www.evangelisch-in-westfa- len.de/fileadmin/ekvw/dokume nte/berichte/bericht_gemeinde _leiten_pfarerberuf_mit_zukunft. pdf
Westphalia: <i>Pfarrberuf mit Zukunft</i>	Evangelical Church of West- phalia	Leitfaden: Pfarrberuf mit Zukunft (2009) [Guideline: Pastoral office with future]	http://www.evangelisch-in-westfa- len.de/fileadmin/ekvw/dokume nte/broschueren/Pfarrberuf_mi t_Zukunft.pdf
Westphalia: <i>Unsere Ges- chichte</i>	Evangelical Church of West- phalia	Unsere Geschichte – Unser Selbstverständnis (2004)	http://www.reformprozess.de/fil eadmin/sites/reformprozess/do kumen- te_reformprozess/Unsere_Ges chi_hte_Internet.pdf
Westphalia: <i>Unser Leben</i>	Evangelical Church of West- phalia	Unser Leben – Unser Glaube – Un- ser Handeln (2004) [Our life – our faith – our acting]	http://www.kirche-mit- zu- kunft.de/fileadmin/sites/reform prozess/dokumente_reformpro zess/UnserLeben.pdf
Württemberg: <i>Dokumenta- tion</i>	Evangelical Church of Würt- temberg	Wachsende Kirche. Dokumentation des Schwerpunkttages der 13. Landessynode am 10. Juli 2004 (Growing church. Documentation of the focus day of the 13. Regional Synod 10 July 2004)	http://www.wachsendekirche.d e/fileadmin/mediapool/einrichtu ngen/E_wachsendekirche/Son derta- gung_Wachsende_Kirche.pdf
Württemberg: <i>Abschlussber- icht</i>	Evangelical Church of Würt- temberg	Wachsende Kirche. Abschlussbericht (2010) (Growing church. Final Report)	http://www.wachsendekirche.d e/fileadmin/mediapool/einrichtu ngen/E_wachsendekirche/Wac hsendeKirche_Abschlussberic ht.pdf

Appendix 2: List of participants

Delegates of member churches and related institutions

Dr. John **Bradbury**, United Reformed Church
Sophia **Döllscher**, Evangelical Church of the Rhineland
Károly **Gáspár**, Reformed Church in Romania
Jan **Gross**, Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches
Timo-Matti **Haapiainen**, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
Miriam **Haar**, Evangelical Church of Württemberg
Dr. Eva **Harasta**, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria
Andrea **Häuser**, Evangelical Church of Westphalia
Paul **Henke**, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hannover
Endre **Iszlai**, Reformed Church in Hungary
William **Jourdan**, Waldensian Church in Italy
Christina **Krause**, Evangelical Federation Württemberg
Turid Skorpe **Lannem**, Church of Norway
Virgil **László**, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary
Eva-Liisa **Luhamets**, Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
Dr. Jergus **Olejar**, Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia
Johannes Philipp van **Oorschot**, University Heidelberg
Dr. Oliver **Pilnei**, Union of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany (Baptists)
Marie **Ramsdal-Thomsen**, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark
Susanne **Richter**, Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau
Annegreth **Schilling**, Evangelical Church in Germany
Desirée **Scholtens**, Protestant Church in the Netherlands
Dr. Monica **Schreiber**, University Marburg
Karolis **Skausmenis**, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania
Dr. Björn **Slenczka**, Evangelical Church of Hesse Electorate-Waldeck
Martin **Steinmüller**, Evangelical Church of the Helvetian Confession in Austria
Dr. Henning **Theißen**, Pomeranian Evangelical Church
Vladimir **Volrab**, Czechoslovak Hussite Church

Members of the CPCE staff

Mario **Fischer**
Prof. Dr. Martin **Friedrich**
Kristina **Herbold Ross**

Appendix 3

Frequency tables from the survey among members of the CPCE study group

Background questions

Table 1: Represented churches divided by country

Country	Number
Austria	1
Czech Republic	1
Denmark	1
Estonia	1
Finland	1
Germany	9
Hungary	2
Lithuania	1
Netherlands	1
Norway	1
Romania	1
Switzerland	1
Total	21

Table 2: Gender and age of respondents

Gender	Number of responses	Average age
Women	8	31 years
Men	12	30.2 years
Total	20	30.5 years

Missing: 1

Changes in the Sunday service

Table 3: Have you noticed changes in regular services in any of the following areas in the past ten years?

Type of change	Yes	No – not to my knowledge	I do not know
New worship liturgy/new order of service	13	6	2
New hymn book (official)	6	13	2
Use of new songs (outside the official hymn book)	12	7	2
New Bible translation	8	11	2

Total number of responses: 21

Table 4: Concrete changes regarding liturgy, hymns, Bible translation etc.

Beamer/projector used for hymn singing or power point presentations to accompany the sermon
Bible translation (official)
Bible translations into modern language (Dutch, Danish, German)
Lay involvement
Music for young people (during the regular service)
New book of casual services (baptism, confirmation, wedding, funerals)

New book of service order/liturgy
New hymn book
New liturgy changing the order of service
New liturgy of saying the Creed together
New liturgy using more hymns
Renewal of The Lord's Prayer into more modern language
Roman Catholic inspired changes: white albas and greater involvement of lay people

Total number of responses: 17

Table 5: Other newly introduced changes in the regular service

Children service as part of the Sunday service
Church coffee (after the Sunday service)
Involvement of lay people in the service
Liturgy of baptism – towards a more modern ecumenical version
Liturgy of the Holy Supper
Order of service to give baptisms a more central position
Redesigning the church room (e.g. turning it 90 degrees)

Total number of responses: 11

Special services

Table 6: Please state if any of the following special church services are taking place in your church and how common they are.

Special service	Yes – and it is very common	Yes – but it is not very common	No – or very uncommon	Do not know	Introduced within the past ten years*
...for babies	4	4	11	2	6 (75 %)
...for young people	12	7	2	0	4 (21 %)
...for families with small children	6	12	3	0	9 (50 %)
...specifically for men or women	0	5	15	1	2 (40 %)

Total number of responses: 21

* Seen in relation to the number of “Yes – and it is very common” and “Yes – but it is not very common”, see percentage in brackets.

Table 7: Other newly introduced special services

Agape – eating together after the Sunday service
Cross confessional service for young people in sport accommodations
Different services aiming at various forms of spirituality
Early Easter Morning service
Greifbar – a type of worship borrowed from the Willow Creek model
Greifbar Plus – worship emphasizing adoration elements and addressing church members with a particularly tight commitment
Heavy Metal/Rock service
Intercession service
Iona
Laymen service
Meditation service
Music services
Night services
Outdoor service

Pop Mass
Seeker service
Service for traditional people
Service in foreign languages
Service in the army and police
Service with new forms of liturgy but keeping the generations together
Silent services
Taizé
Thematic services (e.g. AIDS day prayers)
Worship in cafés or bars – conducted by a former student of theology

Total number of responses: 15

Spirituality

Table 8: Please state if any of the following practices are taking place in your church, and how common they are.

Type of practice	Yes – and it is very common	Yes – but it is not very common	No – or very uncommon	Do not know	Introduced within the past ten years*
Taizé prayers	9	8	4	0	7 (41.1%)
Candle lighting/ Candle globes	5	6	9	1	5 (45.4 %)
Special blessings	4	7	8	2	6 (54.5 %)
Meditation (Christian)	2	13	4	2	10 (66.7 %)
Pilgrimage	10	7	4	0	6 (35.3 %)
Healings	3	5	12	1	4 (50.0 %)
Prayer groups	6	8	5	2	6 (52.9 %)

Total number of responses: 21

* Seen in relation to the number of “Yes – and it is very common” and “Yes – but it is not very common”, see percentage in brackets.

Table 9: Other newly introduced spiritual practices

“Buß und Bettag” – day for prayer and looking for which of our paths that need changing
2 nd -programme services addressing distanced church members
Bible-dramatic methods
Mirjam worship focusing on a gender perspective
Museum services with special attention to works of art
Roman Catholic inspired practices (e.g. last oil)
Service with extended liturgical section for baptism remembrance
Services using texts from literature instead of Scripture
Spiritual exercises according to Ignatius or other monastic traditions
Spiritual guides/companions (Emmaus)
The invisible theatre method
Thomas Mass addressing unbelievers
Women group celebrating Holy Supper

Total number of responses: 10

Table 10: Which of the following groups and/or movements have the greatest influence on the spiritual practices in your church today?

Group or movement	Number and percentage*
Willow Creek (or similar movements)	5 (22.7 %)

Charismatic and/or Pentecostal movements	4 (18.2 %)
Emerging Church	3 (13.6 %)
Ecumenical movements	10 (45.5 %)
Liturgical movements	6 (27.3 %)
House Church movements	1 (4.5 %)
I do not know	4 (18.2 %)

* Each respondent was allowed to choose all the options that applied

Table 11: Other groups and/or movements with great influence on the spiritual practices in your church today

Missional church
No specific spiritual influence
None – in my church it's very much "business as usual"
None – my church is quite "traditional" concerning the "spiritual life"
Taizé
Traditional awakening movements from the 19 th century (Grundtvigianism)

Total number of responses: 8

Teaching and Evangelism

Table 12: Please state if any of the following practices are taking place in your church, and how common they are.

Type of practice	Yes – and it is very common	Yes – but it is not very common	No – or very uncommon	Do not know	Introduced within the past ten years*
Alpha courses	4	8	6	3	8 (66.7 %)
Emmaus courses	1	6	8	6	6 (85.7 %)
Discipleship courses	1	5	9	6	3 (50.0 %)
Testimonial gatherings	1	5	14	1	1 (16.7 %)
Street evangelism	0	4	15	2	1 (25.0 %)
Catechism/ dogmatic courses or services	6	7	7	1	3 (23.1 %)
Bible camps	7	6	7	1	2 (15.4 %)
Church organized cell groups	9	5	5	2	4 (28.6 %)

Total number of responses: 21

* Seen in relation to the number of "Yes – and it is very common" and "Yes – but it is not very common", see percentage in brackets.

Table 13: Is your church involved in church planting?

	Yes	No	I do not know
Is your church engaged in church planting?	7	13	1

Total number of responses: 21

Table 14: Other newly introduced teaching or evangelizing activities

Bible school before Sunday service
Confirmation lessons for grown-ups (adult catechumenates)
Evangelizing week
Street ministry in larger cities

Teaching for parents of “soon to be baptized” children
Thomas masses
Youth festival with workshops, services, bands, discussion and prayer groups

Total number of responses: 13

Table 15: Have you noticed any kinds of new teaching in your church?

A turn towards political and social issues
Blessings of homosexual couples
Conservative turn focusing on Evangelical Alliance
Focus on ecumenical activities
More biblical theology
More cell groups (influence from Willow Creek – first belong then believe)
More events for youth and families
More focus on spirituality (outside the Sunday service)
More positive ecumenism
Official theology is turning more conservative (e.g. resulting in women’s ordination no more being widely accepted)
The ethical view on cloning and genetics (an official document has been issued)
The Eucharist is now open for everyone, especially children
The situation seems to be more polarized than earlier
The younger generation turning more conservative

Total number of responses: 18

Social work

Table 16: Please state if any of the following activities are taking place in your church, and how common they are.

Type of practice	Yes – and it is very common	Yes – but it is not very common	No – or very uncommon	Do not know	Introduced within the past ten years*
Soup kitchen	9	9	3	0	4 (22.2 %)
Visiting service	16	4	1	0	4 (20.0 %)
Grief support groups for children	4	5	9	3	5 (55.6 %)
Grief support groups for adults	6	8	4	3	5 (35.7 %)
Marriage support groups	3	11	6	1	8 (57.1 %)

Total number of responses: 21

* Seen in relation to the number of “Yes – and it is very common” and “Yes – but it is not very common”, see percentage in brackets.

Table 17: Other newly introduced social or diaconal activities

Church run kindergartens
Generations-living-together-project
Visiting prisoners and political refugees
Homework help
Work among women with Islamic culture background
Less groups, more professional counseling
“Die Tafel” – supermarkets giving away or selling very cheap food close to expiry date
Sheltering threatened immigrants
Holistic mission among gypsy people and immigrants

Diaconal ministry (under development)
Oven project – building an oven to feed the poor
Collection of clothes, shoes, etc.

Total number of responses: 15

Organization

Table 18: Please state if any of the following lay involvement takes place in your church today

Type of lay involved practice	Yes – and it is very common	Yes – but it is not very common	No – or very uncommon	Do not know	Introduced within the past ten years*
Serving Communion, Holy Supper, Eucharist, etc.	10	3	7	1	3 (23.1 %)
Reading in the Sunday service	13	6	1	1	6 (31.6 %)
Preaching in the Sunday service	5	9	7	0	5 (35.7 %)
Witnessing during Sunday service	1	4	15	1	2 (40.0 %)
Helping with practical issues for the Sunday service	15	4	1	1	3 (15.8 %)
Leading Bible study groups	8	8	3	2	3 (18.8 %)
Leading the church choir, orchestra, etc.	13	5	2	1	2 (11.1 %)

Total number of responses: 21

* Seen in relation to the number of “Yes – and it is very common” and “Yes – but it is not very common”, see percentage in brackets.

Table 19: Other areas of lay involvement

All practical issues (administration, garden work, information box, etc.)
Any kind of regular gatherings are run by lay people
Assisting senior the senior pastor in the administration work
Comment: lay people are not involved in my church – everyone is paid and educated – makes very little room for engagement
Comment: lay people can get equally ordained in my church, however most services are conducted by pastors
Comment: the lay involvement has always been strong in my church
Everyone with a good idea can get help from the minister to realize it in the service
Helping with offertory
Visiting and/or taking care of ill and elders of the congregation
Work with elders and youth

Total number of responses: 12

Table 20: Which organizational changes has your church experienced within the past ten years?

A new generation of electoral and free congregations with charismatic and/or conservative features are appearing
Changes in the state-church relationship
Less money – less pastors – merging of congregations
Merging of churches
More interaction between lay and clergy – no longer a “one man show”
New structure in the relationship between the autonomous local church and the Organization

New structure of leadership
Pastors with no congregations are appointed to congregations that need a pastor, rather than the congregations getting to make the choice themselves
Tighter working relationships on regional level

Total number of responses: 15

Church renewal

Table 21: What is your understanding of church renewal?

Structure and spirituality go together – if one is missing a real renewal cannot take place or it can even lead to losing church members.
As a member of the reformed church, for me, the possibility of the church to adapt to the needs of its members represents an immanent understanding of church. As church only realizes itself in specific social-historical settings a church which isn't able to "renew" itself has a problem of justification. But renewal doesn't mean to me to try to curry favor with society at all costs, but to take seriously the changes in society.
By reading the Gospel and being aware of this world churches and congregations [get] more aware of what they are called to be and called to do.
Change of church structures and priorities out of spiritual reasons or out of practical reasons and a spiritual reflection.
Church renewal is both something that happens "to" the church (outside factors: modernization, globalization, secularization etc.) and processes inside the church: changes in the members and changes in the liturgy, spirituality and all other practices and activities.
Church renewal is in my opinion to be understood from several views. You can speak about it theologically, but also sociologically, spiritually, organizationally and economically. I prefer a wide definition and see it as a natural response to changes in society. It is an optimistic term and innovative term.
Church renewal means that the church understands itself as the moving/marching people of God. First and foremost it should have nothing to do with decreasing financial resources or membership, but with the self-understanding of the church.
Church renewal means to me an ongoing reformation – the contextual action and reaction of the church based on the Gospel.
Church renewal we understand as an inner spiritual practical and/or theoretical movement inspired by a new or deeper understanding of individual calling or calling for community by a new situation in church or society. Its fruit are: closer relationship and support of the local church, new members, new activities...
Discovering the hidden church anew.
Every time people proclaim the Gospel it is new because every moment is unique in time and every person or group is unique. Being able to be new is a value of the church.
It is a complex notion. It can mean both spiritual renewal and organizational as well. I think that without living spiritual life organizational changes can scratch only the surface of the problems of the church.
It is a constant process of the church's self-reflection regarding the beliefs and expressing the beliefs. To make sure that the church is founded on biblical principles (and not traditions that have come on the way and turned into beliefs, and also that the beliefs have not been influenced by other religions – nowadays in [my country] there's quite a big influence of New Age to Christians) and that the expressions of faith speak to contemporary people.
Some progress, reactions to new challenges in society, but always with reflection [on] Gospel and tradition.
The everlasting necessary re-thinking and change of the church on the foundation of the Bible while keeping tradition in mind in order to invite people to church so they get to know the Gospel and feel supported in their living as Christians (both spiritually and ethically).
Theoretical and structural renewal faithful to the Bible and influenced by the current social changes.
To reform the church according to their biblical foundation – less official administration more lay engagement and creativity.
Usually minor or major changes for example in practices, structures or attitudes. It would be difficult

to call radical changes renewal. Renewal would be spiritual as well as organizational – or both at the same time.
We know there will be less people and less money, people know how it was in the past and that church life can change: how can we manage this change without losing who we are: Christians who believe in the love of God and in a fair and just communion.

Total number of responses: 20

Table 22: In which areas do you think your church is in most need of church renewal?

Co-work with other congregations
Emphasis on ethical issues
Empowering lay people
Engaging people who wish to be engaged
How to be Christian in a non-Christian environment
Liturgy
New perspectives for the church leaders
Outreach
Pastoral care and practice
Religious education
Spirituality
The basic things: masses/services and through them find our place in society
The relationship between church and society – how be church today – church in the world but not of the world
Ways to earn money
Ways to encourage people to live their faith
We have to ask ourselves whether the answers the church has to offer still fit the questions of the world

Total number of responses: 19

Challenges

Table 23: What do you think are the biggest challenges for your church today and in the future?

Communicating a clear message without being discriminating
Decreasing membership numbers
Ethical and moral downfall
Financial problems
Finding a clear outlined profile between the different spiritual and theological currents within our [church]
How to be church in rural areas
How to be church today
How to be present on the religious market
How to become more relevant for non-Christians and society
How to preach the Gospel to people with non-Christian background
Involvement of youth
Merging of churches and congregations
Polarization – how to find unity
Preaching the Gospel in relevant ways for people today
The pressure of the Evangelical right wing and fundamentalist approaches
To be church in the world but at the same time being confronted by the world

Total number of responses: 19