

**6<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the  
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)  
– Leuenberg Church Fellowship –  
12 – 18 September 2006**

**FINAL REPORT**

**Freedom is binding**



Adopted by the General Assembly on 18 September 2006

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. General**

“Strengthening Community – The Profile of Protestantism in Europe” was the theme of the 6th General Assembly of the “Community of Protestant Churches in Europe – Leuenberg Fellowship” (CPCE), which took place in Budapest from 12 to 18 September 2006. Its location was the Károli Gáspár Reformed University (Ráday College). The Reformed, Lutheran and Methodist churches in Hungary had issued the invitation to the Hungarian capital, and more than 200 delegates and guests accepted it. In the jubilee year of the 1956 revolution in Hungary the retired State President of Hungary, Prof. Dr. Ferenc Mádl, opened the General Assembly with an address describing the Hungarian perspective on the growing together of the peoples and nations of Europe. The reception in the Hungarian Parliament by Dr. Katalin Szili, the President of the Parliament, was also an expression of the good relations between the Hungarian state and the churches.

That the CPCE is essentially a worshipping fellowship was expressed in the services and devotions and in the visits to churches on the Sunday. The opening service, with a shared celebration of the eucharist and a sermon by the Presiding Bishop of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Prof. Dr. Gusztáv Bölcskei, took place in the Main Lutheran Church on Deák Tér. The Presiding Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Hungary, János Itzész, preached at the closing service – with the induction of the new Council and the new General Secretary – in the Reformed Church on Kálvin Tér. On the Sunday the delegates and guests took part in worship in more than 40 Methodist, Lutheran, and Reformed services in Budapest and surrounding areas. The introduction of a new multi-lingual hymnbook “Colours of Grace”, which had been presented to the delegates at the General Assembly, also served to deepen fellowship in worship.

The General Assembly is delighted that since the General Assembly in Belfast the following churches have joined the CPCE:

- the Evangelical Church in the Principality of Liechtenstein
- the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia (Ukraine)

### **1.2. Work in Budapest**

The report of the Presidium was received with acclaim. Work within the CPCE, which has been done at many levels, is grounded in worshipping fellowship, is deepened in further theological work, and is leading to reflection on a more binding structure. Alongside the quest for a more binding character internally there is also a desire to strengthen the capacity for work outside the Community. Only as the Protestant churches are seen to work in common do they have a greater chance of being heard by the European public. Delegates said that in many respects the report pointed to the future.

The keynote speech by Bishop Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Huber, President of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, was along similar lines: he remarked that a self-confident CPCE represented an important contribution to the development of Europe and to the ecumenical movement. In fellowship with the Christian churches it bears witness to and lives out an understanding of freedom which leads to responsibility. Huber sees the present characterized by deep dissension over the picture of human beings. Here individuals must be seen and protected in their uniqueness in the light of the gospel, but at the same time unbridled individualism must be avoided. It is part of the profile of the Protestant church to be responsible for the freedom of the baptized in faith. In this spirit dissent has to be endured and a new consensus has constantly to be sought – as life in ‘reconciled diversity’.

The report by the retiring Secretary Dr. Wilhelm Hüffmeier looked back on the time since the last General Assembly in Belfast in 2001, but also gave a personal assessment of his nineteen years in the service of the CPCE. What supports the Protestant churches and the Protestant Church fellowship is and remains for him a reason for joy: the gospel, preaching and administration of the sacraments in accordance with the gospel, and the Reformation confessions. In this perspective a relaxed view can be taken of the historical developments of the Church, and this perspective also opens up space to look at a future form of the Church. The increased acceptance of the Leuenberg Agreement is a cause of joy for him. But alongside the joy there is also sorrow, when fear of the collaboration of the churches becomes an obstacle to ecumenical relations. However, it has been possible to overcome these fears. There are enough signals of this from different churches within the CPCE – a reason for hope as the Secretary retires.

An important part of the work was done in workshops, some of which provided various stimuli for the further work of the CPCE. The workshops concerned themselves with current fields of work and challenges for the CPCE: politics and Protestant churches; Protestant theology and training in Europe; young ecumenists in the CPCE; CPCE work in the regions; reconciliation in Europe (“Healing of Memories”).

In intensive discussions of the drafts produced (the results of doctrinal conversations, project outlines, statutes and papers on structure) the work of recent years was received by the General Assembly and new perspectives were developed for the future.

## **2. Doctrinal conversations and studies**

### **2.1. Completed doctrinal conversations and studies**

The 5th General Assembly in Belfast underlined the central importance of theological work and commissioned doctrinal conversations on two themes. The first version of both studies was completed in 2005 and a second version (revised on the basis of comments from the churches) was discussed by the General Assembly.

#### **2.1.1. Evangelizing – Protestant Perspectives for Churches in Europe**

The theological, contextual and practical aspects of the theme “The Missionary Task of the Churches in Europe” were investigated by a doctrinal conversation group with an international membership. The General Assembly discussed the result of their work, which was presented under the title “Evangelizing – Protestant Perspectives for Churches in Europe”.

#### **The General Assembly**

- **receives and adopts the text of the study group “Evangelizing: Protestant Perspectives for the Churches in Europe” with gratitude. It accepts it and makes it its own;**
- **asks that the text and the translations be reexamined on the basis of the minutes of the working groups before publication;**
- **recommends to the member churches of the CPCE that they should examine their own practices of evangelizing on the basis of this text and strengthen and develop them further;**
- **asks its member churches – in the spirit of the Charta Oecumenica - before the implementation of projects of evangelization to inform and consult with one another and other churches on local, regional and national levels;**

- asks member churches to make their evangelizing projects available to other churches on the CPCE web page;
- agrees to give an account of the reception of the project study in each responsible church body of the member churches at its next General Assembly;
- asks the Council to initiate the formation of a group to accompany this process. This group will be mandated
  - to provide guidelines which suggest how the project study may be worked on in church groups and congregations of the member churches.
  - to promote the networking of evangelizing projects in the light of the project study.

### **2.1.2. The Shape and Shaping of Protestant Churches in a Changing Europe**

The General Assembly was presented with two pieces of work on this theme. The doctrinal conversation group convened by the Executive Committee summed up its work in the study “The Shape and Shaping of Protestant Churches in a Changing Europe”. The South East Central Europe Regional Group formulated its contribution in the document “Shaping the Church, Gaining the Future”. Both groups investigated the relationship between the foundation and the shape of the Church with reference to the study “The Church of Jesus Christ” (1994) to see whether and how far the processes of transformation of Europe have an effect on the shape of the churches and especially on the shape of the CPCE itself.

#### **The General Assembly**

- thanks the doctrinal conversation group for the elaboration of the project study “The Shape and Shaping of Protestant Churches in a Changing Europe”;
- receives it with gratitude and approval;
- welcomes the broad discussion of the study in the member churches and is grateful for the differentiated comments; their evaluation was taken into account in the final version;
- asks that the text be revised before publication on the basis of the minutes of the working groups.
- thanks the South East Central Europe Regional Group for its comprehensive study “Shaping the Church, Gaining the Future”, and asks the Council to forward it to its member churches with commendation.

#### **The General Assembly underlines:**

**“The reflections on the criteria for shaping the CPCE, its ecumenical dynamics and its significance in the process of European unity and integration allow only one conclusion about its future work: it has to make greater and more convincing use of its possibilities in all these dimensions than it is doing at present” (Project study p.22)**

Starting from this conviction, the General Assembly resolves to take further steps to strengthen the structures and bonds within the CPCE (see Chapter 4).

## **2.2. Resolutions and proposals for future doctrinal conversations and projects**

### **2.2.1. Doctrinal conversations**

Discussions at the 6th General Assembly of the CPCE in Budapest have made it clear that theological work, which Wilhelm Hüffmeier has called the “backbone of... Protestant church fellowship”, will also play a central role in the future.

**The General Assembly resolves to give priority to two themes for doctrinal conversations:**

### **2.2.1.1. Ministry, Ordination and Episkopé**

The understanding of ministry, ordination and spiritual leadership of the church (episkopé) is one of the core questions in ecumenical conversation. This applies not only in dialogue with non-Protestant churches but also – as is shown for example by the debate over the ordination of women – within the CPCE. That is why LA 39 calls ministry and ordination a theme on which further work must be done. The Neuendettelsau theses (1982/86), the Tampere Theses (1986) and the study “The Church of Jesus Christ” (1994) are important stages on the way to consensus (The Church of Jesus Christ 2.5.1.1), but at the same time show the need for more comprehensive further work. The results of international dialogues (especially between the LWF and the WARC) need to be noted here.

**The General Assembly recommends to the Council that it should initiate the forming of a doctrinal conversation group “The Protestant Understanding of Ministry, Ordination and Episkopé”.**

The aim of the doctrinal conversation group is to deepen and develop the consensus that has been achieved. Here not only the fundamental understanding of the ministry of public preaching in the face of contemporary challenges but also the compatibility of the different shapes of episkopé will be examined, taking account of the results of dialogues in which the CPCE churches have participated, for example the Meissen Agreement, the Porvoo and Reuilly Common Statements.

### **2.2.1.2. Scripture, Confession, Church**

The themes which are already mentioned as themes for further work in the Leuenberg Agreement itself also include “hermeneutical questions concerning the understanding of Scripture, confession of faith, and Church” (LA 39). At present these questions are taking on new significance in the face of various uncertainties: first, in young churches and movements (Pentecostal churches, charismatic movements) there is often a fundamentalist or literal understanding of scripture; secondly, the understanding and significance of the confessions in our churches are defined in different ways. But both the understanding of scripture and the understanding of the confessions are fundamental to the self-understanding of our churches and our Church Fellowship.

**The General Assembly recommends to the Council that it should initiate the forming of a doctrinal conversation group “Scripture – Confession – Church.”**

It is the aim of the doctrinal conversation group to elaborate a text which considers from a Protestant perspective the understanding of scripture, the hermeneutic of confessions and the relationship between the message and the being of the Church. The text will serve to clarify the ecclesial identity of the CPCE and its positioning in dialogues with other churches.

A further theme which the General Assembly thinks it desirable to work on is concerned with social challenges.

### **2.2.1.3. New challenges in social justice for the Protestant churches**

The 2001 General Assembly resolved to work out “the specifically Protestant presuppositions and criteria for the formation of ethical judgments in theological doctrinal conversations”. Such clarification is necessary, first because the Leuenberg Agreement always emphasizes the unity of the witness and service of the churches and also the church fellowship, but secondly, also because the CPCE or its organs have already made statements in the recent past on current ethical questions (cf. Presidium report 4.1). Here collaboration is to be sought with the confessional world alliances (the Lutheran World Federation [LWF], the World Alliance of Reformed Churches [WARC] and the Methodist World Council). The relationship between reconciliation and justice needs to be thematized in an appropriate way.

**The General Assembly recommends that the Council seek appropriate ways and means to work on the theme “New Challenges in Social Justice for the Protestant Churches”.**

### **2.2.2. Projects**

Over and above the doctrinal conversation groups in the strict sense, the work effectively done on projects especially in the period between 2001 and 2006 is to be continued and developed further.

#### **2.2.2.1. Work in social ethics**

The 5th General Assembly of the CPCE in Belfast formulated the task of putting the Leuenberg Church Fellowship in the position of “giving a clear Protestant witness in current and important questions of politics, society and the ecumene, with a more distinctive profile and more promptly than previously, and especially building up the presence of the Protestant churches at a European level”. The General Assembly welcomes the fact that in past years it has succeeded in a sustained strengthening of the profile of the CPCE in this area. Here the professional competence of the CPCE group of experts on ethical questions and the close dovetailing of CPCE work on social ethics with the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) have guaranteed on the one hand the representation of a “Protestant voice in Europe” and on the other a consolidated stand of the churches over against the political institutions in Europe. The diaspora and minority situation of many member churches is a special characteristic of the CPCE. But it is also true that the “large” churches represent their interests more credibly when this happens in the framework of fellowship with the other churches. Whenever possible, the churches in Europe should speak with a common voice. In so doing they fulfil the obligation that they entered into by signing the *Charta Oecumenica*.

#### **The General Assembly**

- **reaffirms the guidelines of the last General Assembly for the work of the Protestant churches of Europe in the field of political, social and economic themes;**
- **recommends to the CPCE member churches that they should coordinate their activities more strongly and utilize the resources made available through the cooperation of the CPCE with the office of the Church and Society Commission of the CEC in Brussels;**
- **asks the member churches to participate in the debates on the future of Europe and the European Union (and its Constitution).**

The consultation of the Conference of Churches on the Rhine and the CPCE on the challenges of flight and migration carried out with the support of the Evangelical Church in Baden in 2004 was a successful illustration of a process of formation of judgments on social ethics.

**The General Assembly welcomes the Liebfrauenberg Declaration of 12 May 2004 as the groundbreaking result of the consultation on the challenges of flight and migration which continues to be relevant. It recommends that the CPCE continue to cooperate with the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) on these questions and supporting its competent work in this field.**

#### **2.2.2.2. Training for the ordained ministry**

The Belfast General Assembly stimulated continuing work on questions of education and training. Taking up this stimulus, a consultation was held in Berlin from 20 to 23 September 2003 on the theme “Training for the Ordained Ministry in the Leuenberg Church Fellowship”; this indicated that a comprehensive understanding of the principles and ways of training pastors in the CPCE member churches is desirable. In addition the Bologna Process presents a wealth of specific individual questions.

**The General Assembly mandates the Council to initiate the formation of a project group “Training for the Ordained Ministry in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe”.**

The radical change in the understanding and image of the ministry in the member churches, along with the missionary challenges, should also be noted in the study. Co-ordination with the doctrinal conversation group on Ministry, Ordination and Episkopé needs to be guaranteed.

#### **2.2.2.3. Protestantism and education**

The Reformation was always bound up with a programme of comprehensive education, and the Reformation churches still understand themselves as vehicles of education. This also applies in respect of the European Union’s initiatives in education. Here the Protestant churches should establish a focal point and make clear the sense in which the gospel is not only educational material but also implies a task of education and a claim to it. It is important that education in a European context should have a stand-point in faith. That will mean introducing into the European debate on education these orientations: freedom in responsibility, the Christian image of human beings and the common good.

**The General Assembly asks the Council to make it possible for the theme “Protestantism and Education” to be elaborated in networking with educational bodies in the CPCE churches and the national and European educational institutions (such as the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School and the International Association for Christian Education).**

It is the aim of the project group to build awareness about the educational potential of the Protestant churches, to describe education in faith as a future way for the churches and to sketch out the Protestant contribution to future European work on education.

#### **2.2.2.4. The involvement of young people**

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.

**The General Assembly asks the Council**

- **to ensure that younger people participate in the work of the CPCE;**
- **to set up a working party for the preparation of a CPCE youth consultation and to seek to work with the existing ecumenical youth organizations (WSCF, EYCE, youth work of the confessional world bodies).**
- **to support the networking of younger theologians within the CPCE. In doing so, new methods of co-operation and work should be explored.**
- **to take the opportunities which exist at national church conventions (e.g. the German Protestant Kirchentag) or international ecumenical events (e.g. the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu in 2007) to discuss youth themes.**

#### **2.2.2.5. Worship**

“The CPCE is above all a worshipping fellowship” (Presidium report 1). For this reason, in recent years the CPCE has had a stronger focus on liturgical work. It is a permanent task to keep worship in contact and interaction with the different worlds in which people live. This task is being achieved with commitment in many Protestant churches. It is important to develop criteria for necessary changes without neglecting the confessional profile and local

traditions as characteristics which establish identity. Churches in South East and Eastern Europe (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary) offer themselves as case studies for liturgical reform because such reforms are taking place in these places at present.

**The General Assembly recommends to the Council that the CPCE should participate in a research project “Protestant Worship in South East and Eastern Europe between Preservation and Change”. The South East Central Europe Regional Group is requested to consider whether it wishes to continue to work on this theme.**

#### **2.2.2.6. Inter-religious relations**

It has become evident within the framework of the discussions of two working groups that questions of the definition of the relationship between mission and dialogue need theological clarification both in internal Christian contexts and in the encounter with other religions, especially Islam. The work of the CPCE on these questions so far, especially in “The Church of Jesus Christ” and “Church in Israel”, offers important points of contact for this.

**The General Assembly asks the Council to ensure that the determination of the relationship of mission and dialogue, not only in relations between Christians, but also with regard to other religions, especially Islam, is dealt with. Here co-ordination with the WCC, CEC and the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC) should be ensured.**

**The General Assembly mandates the Council to set priorities for these projects, examine their practicability and give a mandate in accordance with available resources. Where similar themes are already being dealt with, care needs to be taken to avoid duplication of work.**

### **3. Ecumenical collaboration**

#### **3.1. Talks leading to the CPCE membership**

The churches of the CPCE act “as part of their responsibility to promote the ecumenical fellowship of all Christian churches” (LA 46). The Budapest Assembly affirms its commitment to this aim and notes with gratitude that the ecumenical approach of the Agreement both within Protestantism and also in fellowship with churches of other confessional traditions is a viable model for the future which constantly opens up new possibilities. It underlines the readiness of the CPCE to introduce the service of reconciliation into the worldwide ecumene and thus to promote unity in reconciled difference. The General Assembly gratefully notes that after agreements in the USA, churches in the Middle East have applied the ecumenical methodology of the Leuenberg Agreement in the “Declaration of Amman” issued in January 2006. This development outside Europe points to a growing binding fellowship of churches of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions. This is also visible in the new phase of dialogue between the LWF and the WARC which began recently, in which the CPCE model serves as a background.

**The General Assembly asks the Council to continue to hold talks with the churches of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions in Europe which have not yet signed the Leuenberg Agreement.**

#### **3.2. Dialogue with the Baptists**

Stimulated by the Belfast General Assembly, the CPCE dialogue with the European Baptist Federation continued between 2002 and 2004. The resulting document, “The Beginning of the Christian Life and the Nature of the Church”, was presented to the General Assembly by the

presidents of the delegations. The document makes proposals which could open up a new relationship between churches of the CPCE and the Baptists, especially by a convergence in the understanding and practice of baptism. This encourages the member churches to broaden the existing possibility of collaboration.

#### **The General Assembly**

- **receives the results of the dialogue between the CPCE and the European Baptist Federation with gratitude;**
- **instructs the Council to evaluate the positions of member churches and against this background to prepare proposals for closer co-operation;**
- **asks the Council to continue to invite representatives of the Baptist churches to take part in doctrinal conversations with guest status;**
- **encourages the member churches, at local and national levels, to carry on or intensify the dialogue with the Baptists**

### **3.3. Dialogue with the Anglicans**

As mandated by the Belfast General Assembly, various consultations with the Anglican churches in Europe have taken place in recent years. The aim of these encounters was to evaluate the fellowship in word and sacrament already achieved between Anglican, Reformed, Lutheran and Methodist churches in many European countries (the Meissen, Reuilly and Porvoo Declarations and the Anglican Methodist Covenant in Great Britain). Many CPCE churches are involved in these agreements. Already in Belfast the wish was expressed that an agreement should be achieved at a pan-European level between the Anglican and CPCE churches. So far it has not proved possible to achieve this aim.

#### **The General Assembly**

- **asks the Council to continue the dialogue with the Anglican Churches in Europe.**
- **asks the Council to conduct talks on ministry, ordination and episkopé with particular regard to the dialogue with the Anglican churches.**
- **authorizes the Council also to invite the Anglican churches to send participating guests to the doctrinal conversation groups in which relevant themes are being discussed.**

### **3.4. Dialogue with the Orthodox churches**

The General Assembly welcomes the consultations that took place in 2002-2006 between the CPCE and representatives of the Orthodox churches in the framework of the CEC, which concerned themselves with ecclesiological questions and with baptism. In the conversation, the central importance of the eucharist for church fellowship was emphasized by both sides; however, so far it has not proved possible for the Orthodox churches to recognize the Protestant churches because of their ecclesiology.

**The General Assembly asks the Council to continue the dialogue with the Orthodox churches.**

### **3.5. Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church**

No official dialogue is taking place between the CPCE and the Roman Catholic Church, but at the local level almost all CPCE churches are in close relationship with it; many are taking part in conversations within the framework of the confessional world bodies. It is decisive for the CPCE churches that the compatibility of the Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue, the Reformed/Roman Catholic dialogue and the Methodist/Roman Catholic dialogue should be constantly examined.

**The General Assembly asks the Council to seek appropriate forms for a dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church in accordance with the CPCE ecumenical model.**

### **3.6. Evaluation of the dialogues**

The General Assembly recognizes the need for a continuous evaluation of the various dialogues in which the CPCE is involved in two respects: first, the consequences of the dialogues for possible steps towards a deepened fellowship in witness and service have to be evaluated, and secondly, they have to be related to the dialogues of their member churches and the dialogues of the confessional world bodies with which the member churches of the CPCE are bound up.

**The General Assembly asks**

- **the Council to arrange an evaluation of the dialogues;**
- **the churches of the CPCE, the WCC, the CEC and confessional world bodies to collaborate in the systematic evaluation of the CPCE dialogues.**

### **3.7. Collaboration with the Conference of European Churches (CEC)**

The General Assembly values the steps taken so far towards a clarification of tasks between the CPCE and the CEC and the collaboration achieved since the Belfast General Assembly. The CPCE and the CEC know that they are committed to common aims. Since Belfast the collaboration has intensified and deepened in many respects. As well as the consultations with the Orthodox churches on the question of ecclesiology and the work of Revd Dr. Dieter Heidtmann as CPCE representative in the CEC office in Brussels there has been fruitful collaboration over the conference on bioethics in Strasbourg in November 2003. Regular consultations are taking place between officers of the CEC and CPCE. The General Assembly is grateful for this close collaboration.

**The General Assembly**

- **reaffirms the resolutions on mutual support and furthering of relationship with the directing bodies of the CEC;**
- **asks the Council to intensify the collaboration with the CEC on issues of social ethics and European political questions.**

One element of collaboration with the CEC and beyond, aimed at contributing to wider ecumenism in the sense of the Charta Oecumenica, is the project "Healing of Memories" between Christian churches in Romania. This project has been implemented since October 2004 under the overall direction of the CPCE and combines work of reconciliation with scholarly reflection. It is based on interdisciplinary research into the ecclesiological, cultural, political and ethnic foundations of conflicts. Healing of Memories is meant to make possible the acceptance, in the processes of dialogue, of the perspectives and faith-worlds of those who think differently. All the Christian churches of Romania, historically bound together in the CPCE, CEC and CCEE, are involved in this project, aimed at taking the way of reconciliation in a context of conflictual co-existence. After the Third Ecumenical Assembly in 2007 in Sibiu/Romania the project will be made the responsibility of the CEC.

**The General Assembly**

- **expressly welcomes the project "Healing of Memories";**
- **recommends the formation of a small working group to examine the first results and publications, support and financing of further work;**
- **welcomes the prospect of a further development of this form of reconciliation work in other regions as well;**
- **in such cases asks for support and cooperation from the CPCE churches of these regions.**

**The General Assembly instructs the Council to give priority to the ecumenical projects, especially the interconfessional dialogues, to examine their viability and to commission them on the basis of the resources available.**

## **4. Strengthening commitment and structures**

### **4.1. Introduction**

Protestant churches are learning afresh to introduce the witness of the freedom which comes from the gospel into the questions of the shape and shaping of their churches and the Community, and in so doing to venture more togetherness. The church fellowship realized in the CPCE should therefore be strengthened internally by deepening the common understanding of the gospel, and at the same time become manifest externally in respect of common witness and common service in the world and to the world (cf. LA 29). This is taking place first by doctrinal conversations, consultations and comparable forms of work, by public relations, and by exchange programmes, and secondly by the further development of the structural and legal shape of the CPCE, not least in order to heighten the transparency and efficiency of its decision-making processes. This development is a good basis on which the CPCE can make its special profile more clearly visible and introduce itself as a Protestant voice into the ecumenical movement and the discussion on European, social, religious and political questions. Without renouncing previous principles – to keep the structural and legal shape of the CPCE as basic as possible for the sake of flexibility and not to curtail the competences of the member churches - the CPCE should be strengthened institutionally in this way.

### **4.2. Forms of working**

#### **4.2.1 Principle**

The CPCE is a fellowship of witness and service. Here one of its strengths is the formation of a network between churches. Therefore more importance has to be given to the principle of reciprocal consultation.

#### **The General Assembly**

- **asks the CPCE member churches to seek reciprocal consultation whenever they are preparing decisions related to doctrinal and confessional questions;**
- **recommends that exchanges among the member churches should be strengthened through invitations to synods and committees, and also through visits and participation in visitations.**

#### **4.2.2. Doctrinal conversations**

In doctrinal conversations the Community verifies its foundation, old and new differences are worked through, and new perspectives are gained for the Community. It is therefore of decisive significance that the results of the doctrinal conversations are accepted by the Church leaders of the member churches and integrated into the theological work of the member churches. The basic insights contained in them should flow into the life of the Community, above all through preaching, liturgy and educational work. The reception of the results of doctrinal conversations must become a task of binding freedom.

#### **The General Assembly instructs the Council**

- **to evaluate and reflect:**
  - **on current practice, especially with regard to gender balance and youth participation;**

- on working methods with a view to developing an appropriate methodology for tackling each topic;
- on the reception of the doctrinal conversations.
- to ensure, in preparing and implementing doctrinal conversations, that the member churches are involved, beyond church leadership level.

#### 4.2.3. Forums and consultations

Forums on current ethical or political questions and consultations on special or regional themes, both by the CPCE and individual member churches, are an expression of the liveliness of the churches. Reciprocal information, exchanges, passing on the results to other member churches and the networking of projects serve the Community of Protestant Churches.

#### The General Assembly

- notes with gratitude that the instrument of consultations, as created at the last General Assembly, has already been used (cf. the Liebfrauenberg Consultation – see 2.2.2.1 above);
- recommends the further development of this instrument for understanding and opinion-forming among the member churches, in order to bring together the diversity of voices of European Protestantism and to work out shared positions as far as possible;
- emphasizes the need to clarify when consultations within CPCE are appropriate and when collaboration with other ecumenical partners is pertinent;
- regards the forums and consultations as an appropriate instrument for working on current themes, such as:
  - the European process of integration as a challenge to the orientation of the Protestant churches towards the nation state and its effects on legal state-church relationships
  - the dominance of the economic dimension in many spheres of life and its significance for the organisational development and order of the church
  - breaks in tradition and new religious movements beyond institutional ties as challenges to the churches
  - Protestant identity and pluralism
  - the relationship of the church agencies of the member churches (welfare and social work, missionary work, inter-church aid, diaspora work, functional agencies like work with women and men) to the CPCE

#### 4.2.4. Public relations and networking

The General Assembly agreed that strengthening the Protestant voice means in the first place that the *gospel* must be given a voice in Europe. Because the churches of the CPCE understand themselves as an instrument in God's mission, the General Assembly underlines the central role of public relations for the perception of the CPCE and its goals and concerns. It values the instruments developed so far, such as press releases and the Internet presence, and supports the building up of exchanges through documentations and interactions among the member churches on the Internet.

The General Assembly is especially interested that the foundation and the life of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe should also be known at the level of the communities. Therefore it advises member churches which have not yet done this to print the Leuenberg Agreement in their hymnbooks or in another appropriate place.

**The General Assembly asks the Council to re-examine the Belfast recommendation of a regular "Leuenberg Sunday" and if need be to initiate appropriate steps.**

#### **4.2.5. Exchange programmes**

Those taking part in the General Assembly saw with their own eyes how enriching the experience of fellowship and the exchange of experiences and ideas can be. They heard of many examples of encounter between Christians from the most different contexts which have already been tried out. In acknowledging the value of such exchanges beyond national, linguistic and confessional frontiers the General Assembly encourages the churches of the CPCE to engage in exchange programmes, e.g. for church members, students, pastors and church musicians. It acknowledges as special examples the conferences for church members from the CPCE in the framework of the Berlin Bible Weeks held by the Union of Protestant Churches and the Centro Melantone in Rome supported by the individual member churches of the CPCE. The General Assembly supports ideas for an encounter conference for young people (see 2.2.2.4 above).

**The General Assembly asks the Council to examine the possibilities for a European Kirchentag and/or to further the European dimension of national church congresses and in so doing to seek to make arrangements with the organisers of such events. The experiences of the “Six-Country-Kirchentag” (Austria, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany), the “Bodenseekirchentag”, and similar events should be taken into account.**

### **4.3. Structures of the Community**

#### **4.3.1. Statute**

**The General Assembly has resolved on a statute in order to fix in written form the legal status quo of the CPCE and to facilitate future possibilities for legal development of the CPCE (see Appendix 1).**

This describes the nature, foundation, legal status and organs of the CPCE and contains information about its office, the General Secretariat and budget.

#### **4.3.2. Rules of procedure**

The discussions of the General Assembly show that many would like a further development of the structures of the CPCE or a more precise ordering and description of the tasks of the organs of the CPCE.

**The General Assembly mandates the Council to elaborate the rules of procedure envisaged in the statute.**

#### **4.3.3. Further development**

The General Assembly discussed the possible structural changes and precisions in respect of the further development of the CPCE. Independently of the imminent approval of these rules of procedure it agreed on resolutions on the following questions.

#### **4.3.4. General Assembly**

The General Assembly emphasizes that the further development of structures and the binding nature of the General Assembly is a matter of central importance.

**The General Assembly recommends that the Council explore the following measures:**

- a smaller number of delegates, examination of the number of mandates,
- working towards gender justice,
- evaluation and further development of meeting methods.

**The General Assembly asks the member churches to**

- strengthen the bond between delegates and the churches which send them
- commit themselves to discuss and receive the results.

#### 4.3.5. Council and Presidium

##### The General Assembly

- **endorses the responsibility of the Council for ongoing work between the General Assemblies, for supervision of the office, and for co-ordination with projects of other interchurch bodies;**
- **emphasizes the significance of the Presidium for public awareness of the CPCE and for representing the CPCE in external relations;**
- **recommends that the Council should explore whether in the future the Presidium should be elected by the Council in the context of the General Assembly, and should be confirmed by the General Assembly.**

#### 4.3.6. Regional groups

In the reports and in a workshop the General Assembly acknowledged the regional collaboration between the member churches.

The General Assembly gratefully notes the commitment of the churches in the regional groups of the CPCE, the South East Central Europe Group and the North West Europe Group. It also acknowledges the work of the Conference of the Churches on the Rhine and confirms the CCR intention to bring its fellowship as a commitment into the CPCE. It is delighted at the reports of the collaboration of the CPCE churches on the Rio de la Plata and encourages them to strengthen their co-operation, and if possible also include other Protestant churches of the South American continent.

##### The General Assembly notes

- **Regional co-operation within CPCE is an important level of realizing church fellowship.**
- **The member churches of the CPCE are encouraged to participate in the work of regional groups where possible.**
- **The regional groups of CPCE work autonomously in their respective regional areas of responsibility. They finance their work themselves.**
- **The work of the regional groups is accepted by the CPCE as an integral or representative part of the work of the CPCE when a clear mutual understanding with the Council has been reached in time, based on a written agreement. The Council will then see to all further communications.**

The General Assembly also gratefully notes the proposals for founding new regional groups and asks the churches concerned to develop their initiatives further, taking note of the framework established above.

Alongside these regional groups there are further regional co-operative fellowships of member churches of the CPCE, for example CEPPLÉ (Conférence des Eglises Protestantes des Pays Latins d'Europe), the Danube Church Conference, etc.

**The General Assembly mandates the Council and the Office of the CPCE to initiate conversations with CEPPLÉ and others on the basis of what has been formulated above on the further development of the regional structure of CPCE in the respective region.**

As well as the regional alliances there are networks (organizations, conferences, etc.) in Europe where representatives of the churches and/or experts working in a specific area of Church work meet regularly. The churches concerned, the CPCE itself and the networks referred to could be served if they gained recognition as CPCE status from the CPCE.

##### The General Assembly requests

- the Office to produce (and continually update) a Europe-wide list of organizations close to the churches and to offer it to the churches and other interested parties on the Leuenberg Website.
- the Council to contact such organizations when appropriate, and to formulate clear criteria for recognition.

#### **4.3.7. Consultations of church leaders**

##### **The General Assembly**

- welcomes the possibility of organizing consultations of church leaders. These should be consultative, i.e. they should be convened on occasions when mutual commitment and public awareness of the member churches has to be strengthened;
- in this context requests the Council to clarify the mandate of participants, the composition and financial arrangements for such consultations, and to clarify possible cooperation with the LWF, the WARC, the European Methodist Council or the CEC.

#### **4.3.8. Finance and organization**

##### **The General Assembly**

- expresses its thanks to the member churches, especially to the Union of Evangelical Churches (UEK), for their generous and long-standing support of the work of CPCE, both in terms of personnel and financially;
- resolves to work out criteria for contributions of the member churches. The Council is instructed to initiate a “financial project group” and is authorized to introduce this form of financing in consultation with the member churches;
- takes note and agrees that from 1 January 2007 the CPCE Secretariat will move from Berlin to Vienna. It expresses its thanks to the Evangelical Churches of Austria of the Augsburg and Helvetic Confessions for hospitality at their Head Office.

**Appendix 1**

**Statute**  
**of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)**  
**– Leuenberg Church Fellowship –**

## §1

## The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe

- (I) The Reformation churches in Europe which assent to the Agreement of Reformation Churches in Europe declare and realize church fellowship between one another. These churches form the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe – Leuenberg Church Fellowship – (CPCE). The CPCE serves to bring about the church fellowship which is described in Section IV.2 of the Agreement of Reformation Churches in Europe, especially by the common realization of witness and service and further theological work.
- (II) Further churches can enter this church fellowship by special arrangement on the basis of the Agreement of Reformation Churches in Europe

## §2

## The legal status of the CPCE

- (I) The Community of Protestant Churches in Europe is a corporation in church law.
- (II) According to secular law the CPCE can organize itself in accordance with the legal precepts of the state as a person in law in whom the organs of this community have their seat.
- (III) The CPCE as a rule makes use of the official assistance of one of its signatory churches in the state in which the Community has its seat.

## §3

## Organs

- (I) Organs of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe are the General Assembly, the Council and the Presidium.
- (II) As a rule the General Assembly of the CPCE meets every six years. Up to two delegates of each signatory church belong to it. The General Assembly determines the guidelines for the work of the CPCE, especially for that of the Council. The General Assembly gives itself rules of procedure.
- (III) The Council is elected by the General Assembly. It has 13 members and a corresponding number of representative members. Appropriate note is to be taken of the confessional and regional division of the CPCE in the election of the Council. Members

who leave are replaced by co-opted members. The Council has the special task of promoting church fellowship on the basis of the Agreement of Reformation Churches in Europe and the resolutions of the General Assemblies and preparing new resolutions. The Council gives itself rules of procedure.

- (IV) The Council is constituted during the General Assembly and chooses from its midst a Presidium which consists of three Presidents, one of whom is an executive member. The Presidents represent the CPCE to the outside world. They are responsible to the Council. The Council's period of office ends when the Council elected by the next General Assembly has constituted itself.

#### §4

##### Office, General Secretary

- (I) The work of the General Assembly and the Council is supported by an office. The office works on the instructions of the General Assembly and the Council.
- (II) The office is under the direction of the General Secretary. He or she is accountable to the General Assembly and the Council. The Council issues rules of procedure for the office. The office can make use of the official help of one of its signatory churches.

#### §5

##### Budget

The budget of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe is financed by contributions from all the signatory churches and by donations. The budget is as a rule made for a financial year and its income and expenditure must balance. The budget is decided by the Council. The CPCE makes use of the official help of one of its signatory churches for auditing.

#### §6

##### Final regulation

In so far as no competences of the General Assembly are affected, the Council can issue guidelines and individual instructions for the work of the CPCE.

## Appendix 2: Elections: Council, Presidium, General Secretary

In accordance with the statute that has been resolved on, the General Assembly elects a 'Council', which will take over the functions of the former Executive Committee. It will consist of 13 persons:

- a) Bishop Dezső Zoltán Adorjáni (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania)
- b) Prof. Dr. Michael Beintker (Evangelical Church in Germany)
- c) Revd Dr. Peter Bukowski (Reformed Alliance, Germany)
- d) Revd François Clavairoly (Reformed Church in France)
- e) Revd Dr. Stephanie Dietrich (Church of Norway)
- f) Consistory Councillor Piotr Gaš (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland)
- g) President Dr. Friedrich Hauschildt (United Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Germany)
- h) Synod President Revd Jan Gerd Heetderks (Protestant Church in the Netherlands)
- i) Revd Fleur Houston (United Reformed Church in Great Britain)
- j) Deputy Church President Cordelia Kopsch (Evangelical Church in Hessen and Nassau)
- k) Superintendent Lothar Pöll (United Methodist Church of Central-Southern Europe)
- l) Dr. Klára Tarr (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary)
- m) Council President Revd Thomas Wipf (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches)

In addition a representative has been chosen for each member of the Council:

- a) Dr. Jindrich Halama (Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren / Herrnhuter Community of Brethren)
- b) Oberkirchenrätin Antje Heider-Rottwilm (Evangelical Church in Germany)
- c) Revd Susanne Kayser (Bremen Evangelical Church)
- d) Prof. Dr. Fulvio Ferrario (Waldensian Church in Italy)
- e) Theological Secretary Jan Nilsson (Church of Denmark)
- f) Revd Thomas Andreas Pöder (Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church)
- g) Landesbischof Frank Otfried July (Evangelical Church in Württemberg)
- h) Church President Dr. Guy Liagre (United Protestant Church in Belgium)
- i) Revd Dr. John McPake (Church of Scotland)
- j) Oberkirchenrätin Doris Damke (Evangelical Church of Westphalia)
- k) Superintendent Canon Harvey Richardson (Methodist Church in Great Britain)
- l) Revd Pál Erdélyi (Reformed Church in Slovakia)
- m) Revd Dr. Martin Hirzel (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches)

The Council constituted itself on 17 September 2006 and elected Council President Revd Thomas Wipf as Executive President and Prof. Dr. Michael Beintker and Revd Dr. Stephanie Dietrich as Co-Presidents. It also elected Oberkirchenrat Hon.Prof. Dr. Michael Bünker (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria) as the new General Secretary who will take office on 1 January 2007.