



**Arkivsak:** 17/04041-23

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## **Nytt fra den verdensvide kirke – Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)**

### **Sammendrag**

17.-19. oktober avholdt CPCE styremøte i Cambridge, UK. Se vedlagte brev til medlemskirkene og uttalelsen "Church communion in divisive times" for mer informasjon.

Som det fremkommer av nyhetsbrevet, innebærer noe av oppfølgingsarbeidet fra generalforsamlingen i Basel at den engelske oversettelsen av GEKE endres fra *Community* til *Communion* of Protestant Churches in Europe. Ifølge CPCE er dette strengt tatt ikke en navneendring, men en endring av den engelske oversettelsen. Medlemskirker bes om å si fra hvis de har motforestillinger mot dette. Se for øvrig eget vedlegg med „Reflections upon the change of the English name.“

De som er med i utvalg/arbeidsgrupper i CPCE fra Dnk pr dags dato er følgende:

- Tron Fagermoen: Vara for Ulla Schmidt til CPCE-rådet, og medlem i arbeidsgruppa som jobber med forståelsen av hva det vil si å være med i et kirkefelleskap som CPCE.
- Stephanie Dietrich: Medlem av CPCEs Board for Ecumenism

Dnk vil være vertskap for neste rådsmøte i CPCE. Det arrangeres i Oslo 26.-27. juni 2020.

### **Forslag til vedtak**

Mellomkirkelig råd tar saken til orientering.



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

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

To all of the CPCE's member churches  
and participating churches

via email

### **Member churches' newsletter, November 2019**

Dear sisters and brothers,

The Council of the CPCE convened for a working session in Cambridge from 17 to 19 October 2019. Reports were presented on ongoing work processes, resolutions were passed on submitted draft concepts, and additional members were appointed to work processes and the advisory boards. Work also continued on the strategy. One key point of the meeting was to engage both with our sisters and brothers of the CPCE's member churches in Great Britain and with representatives of the Anglican Churches.

These joint discussions led to the Council issuing a statement regarding aggressive separatist tendencies in Europe and the Brexit debate.

### **Statement by the Council of the CPCE**

Under the heading of "Church communion in divisive times", the leading body of the CPCE emphasises the importance of churches holding together as borders and divisions are being created between states. The Council recalls eras of separation in Europe, laments the political culture and hostile language that is inciting divisions, and encourages clear commitment to engaging with other people and beliefs in the spirit of faith, hope and love.

The statement is attached as an appendix to this letter. It would be marvellous if you could endeavour to spread the word and have the text translated into your own native language.

### **General Secretary**

Vienna, 19. November 2019

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## Work processes

The working groups on “Christian Speech of God” and “Sexuality and Gender” have now gone into action.

The CPCE’s Dialogue with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity will commence between small official delegations in early 2020, focussing on ecclesiological issues.

The South-East Europe group has made a start on the difficult topic of “Democracy as a Challenge for Churches and Society”. The next meeting is planned for June 2020 in Wrocław, Poland, where the topic is to be examined in the Polish / eastern Europe context, based on experiences in this region.

## Change of name: C(Community -> Communion)PCE (English only)

As you know, the 2018 General Assembly requested the Council “to engage in a process to alter the English name “Community of Protestant Churches in Europe” to “Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe” (Final Report 2.1.6).

The Council would like to address this without long protraction. It assumes that this is not actually a change of name, as such, but rather a correction of the English translation of the name, as the German and French terms were “Gemeinschaft” and “communion” from the start. It therefore counts on the member churches’ approval. Please let us know if you support this correction, or – more importantly – if you have any objections, by 1 April 2020. Especially those churches using the English language are invited to voice their considerations. Since the Council intends to complete the process at its next meeting in June 2010, it will deem any lack of response a vote in favour.

## Publications following the General Assembly in Basle

The following publications were successfully completed during 2019:

- Report of proceedings from the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, Basle 2018.
- Study document: “Plurality of Religions”
- Study document: “Theology of Diaspora”
- Doctrinal conversation results: “Church Communion”

Each member church is entitled to a cost-free full package containing all four documents. To avoiding wastage (undeliverable consignments and return postage), we ask you to ensure you cite a contact person and proper postal address (**No** P.O. boxes, as this is a parcel!) – thank you! Packages can be ordered by simply emailing the head office ([sekretariat@leuenberg.eu](mailto:sekretariat@leuenberg.eu)), while further copies can be ordered online at [www.leuenberg.eu](http://www.leuenberg.eu).



## **Centre for Protestant Theology and Encounter with Orthodoxy (ZETO) in Sibiu, Romania**

The Council of the CPCE has resolved to collaborate with the Centre for Protestant Theology and Encounter with Orthodoxy (ZETO) in Sibiu, Romania. The aim is to develop a centre of competence for Protestant theology in an Orthodox environment in a similar way to that which has emerged in conjunction with the Centro Melantone in Rome in recent years, in a Catholic environment. ZETO offers the “ecumenical semester” of the Institute for Ecumenical Research, German or classical language studies, and a degree programme in Protestant Theology taught in German. In future, consultations are also to be conducted there for the CPCE’s churches in Orthodox countries. The aim of this venture is to strengthen the contextual theology of the diaspora churches in the Orthodox environment.

### **SAVE THE DATE**

#### **Summer Academy for Pastors on “Church in rural areas” on the Liebfrauenberg, France, 23–26 August 2020**

The format for offering further training for pastors resolved by the General Assembly in Basle will initially be organised by the Conference of Rhine Churches (CRC) regional group for summer 2020. Please pass the attached letter of invitation on to your church’s personnel office and nominate participants from your church.

### **SAVE THE DATE**

#### **“Desire to lead” – networking event for women, 1–2 October 2020 in Vienna**

The Council also resolved that a networking event should be held for women ministers who either already have roles in church leadership or come into consideration for such. This two-day meeting is also intended to encourage women to share their experiences and help motivate one another. There is a need for women in the Protestant churches of Europe to also become more visible in church leadership roles and assume responsibilities. Senior women ministers from various member churches have already confirmed they will take part.

The CPCE feels duty-bound to pay special attention to this subject.

In the next few weeks, you will receive a letter, which we would kindly ask you to forward to the personnel office in your church with the aim of nominating any women ministers in your church who hold positions of leadership or might come into consideration for such roles. The letter will also provide information about the precise programme/topics and details of how to register for the event.



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### **Reference group of young theologians in the CPCE, autumn2020**

The Council resolved to appoint a reference group of young theologians that will meet annually for conferences to conduct theological work to accompany the CPCE's ongoing study processes. The first such meeting will take place in autumn 2020.

Member churches will shortly be asked to propose theologians up to the age of 32 who are prepared to continue working in the reference group for a number of years. The group should have 18 to 25 members.

### **Staffing at the head office**

The member of staff responsible for church relations will change in January, after Pastor Kathrin Nothacker returns to her church in Württemberg at the end of the year. Her successor as Officer for Church relations will be a new member of staff in the head office – Dr Oliver Engelhardt from the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren.

We would greatly appreciate your assistance in forwarding the information contained in this newsletter to the relevant people in your own church. Please also let us know if the contact details for your church need updating.

Warm regards,

Dr Mario Fischer  
General Secretary

#### Appendix 1:

Statement on "Church communion in divisive times"

#### Appendix 2:

Summer Academy for Pastors about "Church in rural areas"

#### Appendix 3:

Reflections upon the change of the English name



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## Church communion in divisive times

*Right now, three things remain: faith, hope and love.  
But the greatest of these is love.  
(1 Corinthians 13:13)*

Gathering for its Council session in Cambridge, the leading body of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe emphasises how important it is for churches to hold together as borders and divisions are being created between states.

Thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ending of the communist regimes of central and eastern Europe, the Council recalls that that the Iron Curtain starkly divided the continent. In 1973, the year that the Protestant churches declared Church Fellowship after centuries of schism, the links between East and West were few and far between.

Having grown together through almost 50 years of communion, and standing alongside our sisters and brothers in other Christian traditions, we resist the rise of hatred and divisiveness within and between nations and societies. It is the mission of Christ's Church to spread His Gospel and in His name we strive to live in peace and freedom on this continent. In so doing we witness to the reality that unity in diversity remains possible.

We lament the emergence of an increasingly divided and divisive political culture, and the use of antagonistic language and policies to deliberately stoke division. The Gospel proclaims that Jesus Christ comes to us full of grace and truth. We call upon all people to seek after truth in public discourse, and to respond with grace to those with whom they disagree.

The Council of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe proclaims:

Our **faith** is in Jesus Christ as the foundation of our church communion. We celebrate worship together across all national, linguistic, cultural and confessional boundaries. In this worship, we also ask God to grant all governing leaders the wisdom to reach decisions that give priority to peace in Europe and justice for all people.

Christians live in the **hope** of God's kingdom. This hope leads us to advocate unity between different people, histories and beliefs here and now, in our countries, churches and communities. It enables us to accept our existing and lasting differences in the knowledge that we are all children of God.

Christ's **love** calls us to act together wherever most urgently required – in caring for the poorest and most vulnerable in society, in treating refugees humanely and in respecting God's creation.

**Faith, hope and love** sustain our unity in diversity as a church communion in divisive times.

*The Council of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe*

*Cambridge, October 2019*



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## Reflections upon the change of the English name

In its decision to put forward the proposal to complete the process of changing the English name as soon as possible, the Council was led by the following reasons:

1. The discussions in 2002/2003 which led to the renaming of the “Leuenberg Church Fellowship” to the “Community of Protestant Churches in Europe” were conducted in German. When it was clear that the “Leuenberger Kirchengemeinschaft” should become the “Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa” and that “Communion d’Eglises Protestantes en Europe” would be the French equivalent, it was only left to decide the English equivalent. The term “fellowship” was deemed to have more of the connotation of non-binding conviviality. “Community” was favoured over “communion” mostly because of the scope for confusion with its usage in “Holy Communion”, but this was not subject to much discussion.
2. The doctrinal conversation on “Church Communion”, working from 2013, came to the conclusion that neither “church fellowship” (as used in the English version of the Leuenberg Agreement) nor “community” correctly reflects the theological significance of the ecumenical model of CPCE. Therefore “church communion” was used as the English equivalent for “Kirchengemeinschaft”, and § 46 on terminology was included in the text ensuing from the doctrinal conversation: “To avoid misunderstandings and establish harmony with international ecumenical linguistic usage, the term “church communion” was to be given preference in future.”
3. When the Council asked the member churches for their responses to the text in summer 2016, it included in the accompanying guiding questions one asking for the opinion about a change of the English title from the “Community of Protestant Churches in Europe” to the “Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe”. There were both approvals and objections, whereas the majority of the churches responded that the decision could only be welcomed if the native English-speaking churches were also to support it. Thus the Council decided that there was not enough support to yet submit the matter as a proposal to the General Assembly.
4. At the General Assembly, however, some delegates in the English-language working group for the document on “Church Communion” emphasised the importance of changing the name. In particular, the representatives of anglophone churches broadly agreed that the term “Community” in the English name should be replaced with “Communion”. The only reason for the General Assembly not immediately passing this as a resolution was that the issue had not been placed on the agenda in advance. The objections that had been raised by some churches were also recalled, but none of the delegates adopted them. Therefore the GA passed the resolution 2.1.6 quoted above with the commission to the Council.
5. The Council was of the firm opinion that it might resolve to change the name, as mandated by the General Assembly, of its own volition. As the General Assembly’s decision explicitly cites a process, however, it suggests preceding any such resolution with additional steps. Further theological or linguistic reflections do not seem necessary, since not the result of the process, but only the steps within the process can be discussed.
6. Therefore the Council members resolved to reassure themselves once more of the member churches’ agreement. The Council is of the firm opinion that the GA’s resolution strongly insists upon this, but nevertheless it wants to give those churches which still might have concerns the opportunity to express them.