

Joint Statement

The second International Partnership Consultation was held from 16th till 18th of February 2009 in Arnoldshain subsequent to the official installing of Rev. Dr. Volker Jung as Church President of EKHN. The theme of the consultation was: “Blessed are the peacemakers!’ - The contribution of our Churches towards the growth of peace”.

The heads from the following partner churches and representatives of partnership committees in the EKHN were present:

- **Church of North India (CNI):**
Amritsar Diocese – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Gießen and Wetterau
- **Church of South India (CSI):**
East Kerala Diocese – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Alsfeld, Büdingen, Nidda and Vogelsberg;
Krishna Godavari Diocese – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Grünberg, Hungen and Kirchberg;
- **Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (EKBB)**
Ceskobratrská Církev Evangelická
- **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT):**
Karagwe Diocese – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Biedenkopf, Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Gladenbach and Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Selters;
North-western Diocese / Evangelical Academy Ruhija – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Herborn;
- **Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Poland (EAKwP)**
Kościół Ewangelicko-Augsburski w Polsce
- **Evangelical Reformed Church in the Republic of Poland (ERKwP)**
Kościół Ewangelicko-Reformowany w Polsce
- **Gereja Kristen Protestan Simalungun (GKPS):**
GKPS – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Bad Marienberg;
- **Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM)** – Partnership Committee of the Church District Rheinhessen;
- **Moravian Church Tanzania (MCT):**
Southern Province – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Bergstrasse;
- **Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA):**
MCSA – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Darmstadt-Stadt and Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Reinheim;
- **Polish Ecumenical Council (PÖR)**
Polska Rada Ekumeniczna
- **Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK):**
Presbytery Gwangju – Partnership Committee of the Church District Rhein-Main;

- **Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG):**
Asante Presbytery – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Runkel;
Northern Presbytery – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of the city of Frankfurt and the congregations of Luther and Klein-Linden in the city of Gießen.
- **United Church of Christ USA (UCC):**
New York Conference – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Frankfurt-Höchst and Wiesbaden.

The consultation was held under the presence of Church President Dr. Volker Jung, his deputy Rev. Cordelia Kopsch and the former Church President Prof. Dr. Peter Steinacker together with representatives of the Church Board, the Leading Spiritual Council, the Church Administration, the Chamber for Mission and Ecumenism, the Centre for Ecumenical Work of EKHN and members of the different partnership committees. After thorough deliberations and careful consideration the following observations and recommendations were made.

1. Since the decisions in EKHN to establish direct partnership relations with churches in Africa, America, Asia and Europe there has been deep relations growing on the institutional level as well as on personal level. From the beginning the direct partner relations were built on both sides on the level of congregations, parishes, deaneries, church districts or presbyteries, institutions and the youth. During the last years also the relations on the level of Church Boards could be developed. All these levels till today guarantee our relationships which we should retain for the future. Despite all personnel changes and all crises, our relationships are still important for the ecumenical witness of our churches.
2. After 25 years or more of partnership the main focus of our 2nd common International Partnership Consultation was
 - to concentrate on one of the central messages of Jesus Christ: “Blessed are the peacemakers”,
 - to share our different experiences about what endangers peace in our respective societies and how these are interconnected,
 - to talk about our thoughts and visions regarding peace and human security,
 - to discuss the contributions of our Churches towards the growth of peace.
 - our participation in the “Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010” of the World Council of Churches and the inspirations and recognitions we got out of that.
3. The participants agreed upon the following fundamental theological positions:
 - peace in its holistic understanding (Shalom) is a gift of God to all human beings. Christians are living in it and giving witness in word and deed;
 - who wants to have peace has to work for peace;
 - peace is only lasting if it is connected with law, justice and integrity of creation.

Therefore we agree with the fundamental message of the “Peace Memorandum” of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD): living out of the peace of God means taking care of peace! A priority task of the Churches is to stand up for just peace in personal, social and political areas.
4. In all cultural, political and social differences of our societies we confess that creating peace is still a big challenge. We are confronted with different ways of how peace is destroyed and we discover that sometimes we are the cause and the victims.
 - through the abuse and exploitation of God’s gift of nature, environments and vital resources which may deplete in the near future;

- through gender injustice;
 - through violence in our homes (on the one side between husband and wife - mainly men against women - and on the other side between parents and children);
 - through poverty and hunger;
 - through the unjust distribution of properties, belongings and goods and the growing gap between poverty and wealth;
 - through unjust international trade relations;
 - through violation against the human rights;
 - through religious and cultural intolerance;
 - through conflicts between different communities;
 - through national and international terrorism;
 - through the ongoing growth of the international arms trade as it is newly shown in the Military Equipment Export Report 2008 of the German Joint Conference Church and Development (GKKE);
 - through the weakness of our Churches in holding up our Christian values.
5. Despite all the cultural, political and social differences of our societies we have a common mission as Christian Churches to give an answer to these challenges. We commit ourselves to
- ecological sustainability (reduction of the consumption of resources, their efficient use and the promotion of alternative energies);
 - reflect our teachings, liturgy and church practice regarding gender roles;
 - struggle against hunger and poverty and to go on in our engagement for a just and sustainable development as well as for just rules for global trade and a legal control of financial flows and multinational enterprises;
 - extend our interfaith practice and dialogues;
 - to discover and enhance human values by creating hospitable atmosphere to strangers and migrants;
 - develop peace creating programmes (for example non violent conflict resolution programmes) and struggle for reconciliation;
 - use all our influence in our respective societies to advocate for peace keeping, the world wide reduction of military equipment and against any kind of invasion, to stand up for atomic weapon free zones and to support a partnership for confidence;
 - protect the freedom for a conscientious decision of each and every individual regarding military service;
 - reaffirm and confess peace in our church life;
 - educate people of all ages to act peacefully;
 - respond to inspirations of the Decade to Overcome Violence;
 - to consider within the churches in how far the curricula for pastoral education reflect the issues mentioned above.

Therefore we must always challenge ourselves and the churches we serve to assure that our thinking and actions are rooted in just peace and the integrity of creation.

6. We know that every partnership has its own concerns and emphasises. Without ignoring this we ask the Partnership Groups to put the focus on the following concerns which have been identified during the consultation as a common challenge for the ongoing journey of our partnerships in the context of the theme of our 2nd International Partnership Consultation:
 - to examine and to plan common programmes serving God's peace and the integrity of God's creation;
 - to regularly share our experiences about what endangers and destroys peace in our respective local contexts and how preventive actions could be supported; therefore we recommend to establish an information network and to appoint one responsible person in each partnership context;
 - to mutually share experience regarding programmes helping to promote or to keep peace in the context of interfaith, intercultural, social or political conflicts;
 - to integrate peace building programmes into the regular exchange programmes;
7. As the Churches represented in this International Partnership Consultation are members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) we all take up the concerns of the 2001-2010 Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) in different ways in our church life. The WCC's 9th assembly decided in February 2006 that the Decade would end with an International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) which will be held in Kingston, Jamaica from 16th till 25th of May 2011. At the end of the convocation the members will be asked to give an ecumenical declaration on 'just peace'. All of us are asked to write our own "peace declaration" as a contribution to this declaration. Therefore we encourage our respective partnership committees to step into this process and to write their own common "peace declaration". These declarations should be sent to the WCC right in time in order to be considered in the ecumenical declaration on 'just peace'.
8. We acknowledge the planning of our partner church EKHN to celebrate the end of the DOV in a public peace festival at the end of 2010. We encourage EKHN to open up the festival for international participation and to give the partner churches a chance to participate. We are willing to contribute our own experiences.

We are convinced that our relationships are an important part of the world wide ecumenical movement struggling for unity, peace, justice and the integrity of God's creation. Coming from different cultural, economic, political, social and denominational backgrounds, we can help each other to understand God's grace and message of peace and reconciliation in our own context.

"If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it." (1. Corinthians 12:26) We confirm that in our relationship we will always keep and protect this unity and support each other in solidarity. As Christians all around the world we live with the certainty: "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9).

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*For further information please contact Centre for Ecumenical Work, Rev. Detlev Knoche, director
(Phone: 0049-[0]69-97651834; e-mail: detlev.knoche@zoe-ekhn.de)*