

CPCE

COMMUNITY OF PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN EUROPE
Unity in reconciled diversity

focus

The Leuenberg Agreement already witnesses to the “responsibility to promote the ecumenical fellowship of all Christian churches” and the hope of giving “a fresh stimulus to conference and cooperation with churches of other confessions” (Articles 46, 49). In the past the ecumenical orientation came to bear above all in the doctrinal conversations, most clearly in the 1994 study “The Church of Jesus Christ”, which understood itself expressly as “The Contribution of the Reformation towards Ecumenical Dialogue on Church Unity”. The doctrinal conversations on “Scripture, Confession, Church” and “Ministry, Ordination, Episkope” are meant to promote ecumenical understanding. Alongside this the CPCE is carrying on conversations of its own with other confessions, most recently with Orthodox, Anglicans and Baptists. But the doctrinal conversations take a very long time to lead to results. And because of the different partners the inter-confessional conversations usually deal with very specific questions. In addition, individual churches and the confessional world alliances are engaged in dialogue with other confessions. Here it is recognized by many that there is a “Leuenberg model” of church fellowship, but so far this model has not brought forth sufficient fruit within the ecumenical scenery.

As a result of this the CPCE has established a specialist group which as a think tank is meant to help the CPCE to pursue its overall ecumenical strategy, to clarify its model of church fellowship and develop it further. It will also work out drafts for short-term statements on current challenges. The specialist group will work with the Council and the Presidium, which as the elected bodies speak for the CPCE in public. But it will also be able to take up its own themes and establish its own programme of work. So in its way of working it corresponds completely to the specialist group on ethics which has existed for some years and has been a great help in sharpening the socio-ethical profile of the CPCE.

The first members to be appointed are four figures who have long been associated with the CPCE and bring with them both high academic competence and much experience in ecumenical work – in a very great variety of contexts: Prof. Dr. André Birmelé (Strasbourg), Dr. Pawel Gajewski (Florence), Prof. Dr. Friederike Nüssel (Heidelberg), Prof. Dr. Stefan Tobler (Hermannstadt). General Secretary Bishop Dr. Bünker und Study Secretary Prof. Dr. Friedrich will coordinate the group, which will be constituted on 22 und 23 June in Strasbourg (at the invitation of the Institute of the Lutheran World Federation).