

The Way to Life

On the Emergence of a Northern Regional Group. By Jochen Kramm.

"Hebron" lies in Denmark. It is a former mission hotel belonging today to an international hotel chain. The remains of the old red-light district around the Copenhagen train station which was probably the original target of the hotel's missionary work are still in the immediate vicinity. The Council for International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran National Church of Denmark had sent invitations there for the CPCE consultation: Worship in the Middle of Life. "The Leuenberg Community of Churches as a Community of Worship" was the initial idea in calling together member and participating churches from the British Isles and the Baltic to Northern Germany for a consultation.

Lines of development appeared there which are to be found in all the churches. Under the influence of a general religious pluralism in society a differentiation of protestant services is taking place. First of all, attendance at the Sunday service as the "main service" is declining, while special group services and services for particular occasions are increasing. The emphasis, secondly, is shifting from the sermon to the Eucharist. Thirdly there is an increasing involvement of non-ordained persons in the leading of worship. Fourthly and finally, protestant services are striving to integrate more experiencing through the senses.

The group visited the *Vor Frue Kirke* in the Old Town of Copenhagen to experience there the inner-city church conception of "The Night of the Church". The "Cathedral" with its harmonious classicist design radiates a special splendour at night. At the altar Christ welcomes with outstretched arms. The open church is accessible to a visiting public which can shape for itself its stay and activity within according to time and need. Particularly appreciated are the opportunities to light candles and leave concerns for prayer. At the heart of the night stood a Eucharistic celebration. So the visit there proved to be a practical demonstration of what had previously been discussed theoretically.

The General Secretary introduced the history and responsibilities of regional groups within the CPCE. He closed with a request to the delegates present to discuss the establishment of a fourth regional group. On the basis of the preceding consultation the participants were soon agreed that a cross-border exchange of experience is valuable. It was then agreed to establish a network embracing the churches from the British Isles through Scandinavia and the Baltic down to the North German churches. They want to meet again in a year's time.

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