



## Moving forward together

### Closing Statement of the Second European Synod Meeting Budapest 2015, January 30-February 1

Delegates from 49 Protestant Synods in 23 European countries met from 30<sup>th</sup> January to 1<sup>st</sup> February in Budapest, Hungary. The meeting was arranged by the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). We are grateful to the Protestant Churches in Hungary and the Evangelical Church of Rhineland, Germany, for their generous hospitality.

The theme of the meeting was the influence of Protestantism in Europe in the present and in the future. We rejoiced in the fact that the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century was more than a movement for renewal of the Church. It was a new beginning for societies all over Europe, in politics and social life, in art and culture, in education and in the economy. On the way to the Reformation Jubilee in 2017 we considered the contribution Protestant churches can make to the shaping of Europe's future.

In our discussions we heard that the influence of the Protestant churches in Europe depends on whether they live as a majority or a minority in their countries. Our experience was that the wide diversity of churches enriches our communion. In a situation where churches are declining in size and influence it is more important than ever that we stand closely together.

**As delegates of the Synods and governing conferences of Protestant churches we commit to:**

- **Passing the faith on**

Our task is to preach the Gospel in word and deed, to promote Christian values to all, including the poor and the powerful.

The churches should work together to find new ways to reach non-church people. We need inclusive language and new ways of communication. Music and art are important tools for reaching out.

Young people are one of our greatest resources – now and for the future! We encourage the Synods to ensure the inclusion of young people in all areas of church life.

Education is an important way to pass on the faith – in families, congregations and educational institutions. In our understanding, education means supporting people to live responsible lives before God and their neighbours. God's Word is coming to the people and will create change. The Synods have a special responsibility for passing on faith to coming generations. We recommend strengthening international networking on that issue. Together we are better equipped to develop new ideas and to share best practice and resources.

- **Dialogue**

We encourage the Synods to provide forums for dialogue with other faiths on shared concerns such as the promotion of peace and the welcoming of refugees.

We see an important task of CPCE as strengthening the common voice of the Protestant churches in Europe to the European institutions.

- **Faith in action**

The Gospel compels us to work for human dignity, peace, justice and the integrity of creation. We have to name the wounds of the world. We call the Synods to raise issues of injustice and to influence politics. We commit ourselves to strengthening our engagement and working for a better society for all. Therefore we wish to share examples of successful projects and learn from the practice of others.

We recommend that our Synods should ensure that financial decisions reflect our values. We are accountable for all areas of our work. Synods should set standards for sustainability in our care for society.

We ask CPCE to organize a meeting of treasurers of Protestant minority churches.

We realize that our Synods and decision-making bodies consist mainly of people of privilege. We ask the Synods to review their working processes in order to enable marginalized people to participate actively in the leadership of the churches.

We encourage the Synods to build on the work that CPCE has done on end of life issues.

- **Communion of churches**

We recommend continuing the regular meetings of delegates of the Synods as an important tool to strengthen communion among Protestant churches. We ask the CPCE Council to recognize that this is a meeting of democratically elected representatives of the churches and not only of individuals.

We encourage CPCE to include lay people formally in their structures and their activities in order to foster the communion of churches at all levels.

The next meeting of the Protestant Synods in Europe will take place in 2017 in Switzerland. We thank the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches for their generous invitation and are looking forward to the encounter. We encourage CPCE to invite youth delegates to the next meeting.

In the meantime we commit ourselves to reporting back to our Synods the message of this meeting. We encourage Synods to invite representatives of other churches to share their experiences.

We support the idea of a first European "Kirchentag".

At our meeting we were concerned to hear about the difficult situation of the churches in Ukraine and in the Middle East as illustrations of the challenges facing Christians in many parts of the world. In our meeting we studied together 1 Cor 12,26. "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together." We ask for the prayers and support of member churches. We all hope that soon we can rejoice together in justice and peace.

Budapest, 1st February 2015

*Please note the conclusions of the working groups of the Meeting in the annex.*