



INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP CONSULTATION HELD AT THE CENTRE FOR ECUMENICAL
WORK OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN HESSE AND NASSAU

3RD TILL 5TH OF SEPTEMBER 2004

Joint Statement

The first International Partnership Consultation was held from 3rd till 5th of September 2004 in Frankfurt within the scope of evaluating the direct partnership relations of EKHN with churches in Africa and Asia. Delegates from the following partner churches and partnership committees in the EKHN were present:

- **Church of North India (CNI):**
Amritsar Diocese – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Büdingen, Gießen und Wetterau
- **Church of South India (CSI):**
East Kerala Diocese – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Alsfeld, Nidda and Vogelsberg;
Krishna Godavari Diocese – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Grünberg, Hungen and Kirchberg;
- **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT):**
Karagwe Diocese – Partnership Committee of the Denary of Biedenkopf, Partnership Committee of the Denary of Gladenbach and Partnership Committee of the Denary of Selters;
North-western Diocese / Evangelical Academy Ruhija – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Herborn;
- **Gereja Kristen Protestan Simalungun (GKPS):**
GKPS – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Bad Marienberg;
- **Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM):**
GMIM – Partnership Committee of the Church District Rheinhessen;
- **Moravian Church Tanzania (MCT):**
Southern Province – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Bergstrasse-Mitte;
- **Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA):**
MCSA – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Darmstadt-Stadt and Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Reinheim;
- **Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK):**
Presbytery Gwangju – Partnership Committee of the Church District Rhein-Main;
- **Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG):**
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.

The consultation was held together with representatives of the Church Board, the Church Administration, the Board and Advisory Commission for Mission and Ecumene and the Centre for Ecumenical Work of EKHN. After thorough deliberations and careful consideration the following observations and recommendations were made.

1. After 20 years or more of partnership the main focus of the consultation was to share the experiences of the past, to look critically at the present situation and to work out suggestions for

developing our relationships in the future. We acknowledge that we have grown together. At the same time globalization poses many new challenges for all of us particularly its dividing effects to which we ought to respond with a common strategy.

2. Since 1985 when the church board of EKHN took the decision to establish direct partner relations with churches in Africa and Asia with whom EKHN was already linked through the mission societies EMS (Association of Churches and Missions in South Western Germany, Stuttgart) and UIM (United in Mission, Wuppertal), there has been deep relations growing on the institutional level as well as on personal level. However, we agree that for the future our partnership relations should be linked and in co-operation with the mission societies, the World Council of Churches and the regional ecumenical bodies so as to be able to tap the expertise and vast resources that these bodies have acquired over the years.
3. From the beginning the direct partner relations were built on both sides on the level of deaneries, church districts or presbyteries. This level is till today the guarantor of our relationship. We have observed that persons who have been engaged in partnership work have changed on both sides. Despite all personal changes and all crisis's, our relationships are still important for the ecumenical witness of our churches.
4. After a long journey we confirm that the aims as they were formulated in the beginning of our relationships are still relevant:
"The aim of ecumenical partnership is to create 'Eucharistic community' among congregations and church districts in the EKHN and congregations and church districts of partner churches overseas. Ecumenical partnership is:
 - a holistic relationship in which both partners participate fully in sharing with one another what they have and what they lack, what burdens them and what enriches them;
 - a relationship between equal partners and partners with equal rights;
 - a long-term process of the partners growing together in faith, love and hope, which have their foundation and aim in Jesus Christ.Ecumenical partnership will prove itself:
 - in mutual participation in witness and service of the churches,
 - in sharing with one another,
 - in suffering and struggling together for the life of all in a just, participatory and sustainable society."¹
5. The evaluation process shows it very clearly: despite all problems and ups and downs in the past, we can look up to more positive and constructive ways in our relationships in the future. Therefore, we commit ourselves to stand for the aims of our relationships and to encourage our church leaders on the different levels to integrate the partnership matters in daily church life.
6. The vibrancy of our relationships and new suggestions are coming out of partnership visits and personal exchange programs, projects and seminars on themes of common concern and celebration of Partnership Sundays. During the consultation we discussed in depth these main emphasises in our relationships and agreed to the following points and some related suggestions as central parts of our further relationships:
 - Partnership visits
 - careful selection of delegates

¹ Ecumenical Partnership. A working paper of the Center for Mission and Ecumenical Relations and the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau, Frankfurt 1985, page 3.

- careful preparations
 - evaluation after the visit
 - reports within a year in English
 - Personnel exchange programs
 - Developing a network and a deeper and closer cooperation between the partner churches of EKHN and thinking about appropriate ways and structures to promote multi-partite companion relationships.
 - Youth exchange programs
 - Ecumenical Learning and Solidarity
 - Projects and education on development awareness
 - accountability and reporting
 - honesty and transparency
 - Celebration of Partnership Sundays
 - a common liturgy (every alternate year the partner church will be responsible for the theme or topic and the drawing up of the liturgy)
 - it should be for both partners on the same Sunday
 - regular intercessions for one another
 - Sustainable communication on all levels (especially developing a common web side)
 - Ecumenical team visits on a theme related to most important issues and challenges
7. We know that every relationship has her 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 basis for the ongoing journey of our partnerships:
- the mission of the church;
 - the impact of globalization;
 - the inter-religious dialogue and peace building initiatives;
 - the self understanding of church in changing societies;
 - a better understanding and acceptance of different value systems and cultural differences.
8. 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, economical, political, social and denominational backgrounds, we can help each other to understand God's grace and message of 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. Corinthian 12:26) We confirm that in our relationships we will always keep and protect this unity and support each other in solidarity. As Christians all around the world we live with the hope that the demand of Jesus Christ once more will be fulfilled: "That they all may be one" (John 17:21).

Frankfurt, 5th of September 2004

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