



**Final statement of the International Partnership Consultation of EKHN held in Arnoldshain from the 16<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2017**

***“Accept each other as Christ has accepted you  
so that God will be given glory” (Romans 15,7)***

The International Partnership Consultation “Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise – Do our partnerships need continuous reformation?” was held from the 16th through 19th of August, 2017 in Arnoldshain, with the goal of evaluating the partnership relations of EKHN together with all partner churches and to discuss perspectives for the future. 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 Gießen and Wetterau
- **Church of South India (CSI):**  
*East Kerala Diocese* – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Alsfeld, Büdinger Land and Vogelsberg  
*Krishna Godavari Diocese* – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Grünberg, Hungen and Kirchberg
- **Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland (ECAC):**  
Protestant Church in Hessen and Nassau
- **Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB):**  
Protestant Church in Hessen and Nassau
- **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT):**  
*Karagwe Diocese* – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Biedenkopf-Gladenbach and Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Nassauer Land  
*North-western Diocese / Evangelical Academy Ruhija* – Partnership Committee of the Deanery an der Dill
- **Gereja Kristen Protestan Simalungun (GKPS):**  
*GKPS* – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Bad Marienberg and an der Dill
- **Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM):**  
*GMIM* – Partnership Committee of the Church District Rheinhessen
- **Moravian Church in Tanzania (MCT):**  
*Southern Province (MCTSP)* – 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 Vorderer Odenwald
- **Polish Ecumenical Council (PEC):**  
Protestant Church in Hessen and Nassau
- **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 Deanery of the city of Frankfurt and the congregations of Luther and Klein-Linden in the city of Gießen  
*Asante Presbytery* – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Runkel
- **The Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland (ERCP):**  
Protestant Church in Hessen and Nassau

- **United Church of Christ USA (UCC):**  
*New York Conference* – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of the cities of Frankfurt and Wiesbaden
- **Waldensian Church Italy:**  
Protestant Church in Hessen and Nassau

We came together, after decades of intensive partner relationships, to review our partnerships, to look critically at the present state of the partnership relations and to explore ways to strengthen them. We experienced the ecumenical partnership as a gift of God and an indispensable part of being church. We affirmed the objectives and goals of our partnership.

From the very beginning, the direct partner relationships were built bilaterally at the level of deaneries, church districts, presbyteries and on the level of church boards. Despite all changes and challenges, we have committed ourselves to our relationships and consider them important for the Christian witness of our churches.

After the first evaluation process, which took place between 2004 and 2006, we developed new forms to enhance our partnerships:

- Consultations on certain topics like “Blessed are the peacemakers”, “Glory to God and Peace on Earth” and “Pilgrimage for fullness of life”;
- Global Youth Villages and Youth Exchange Programs;
- School and choir partnerships;
- Exchanges on different fields of church work, such as Diaconia;
- Trilateral workshops on migration;
- Regular partnership visits characterised by exchanges on current issues and relevant topics of mutual interest;
- Common Bible Studies and sharing of partnership-worship services;
- Personnel and youth volunteers exchange programs.

During our present consultation in Arnoldshain in August 2017 the representatives of the partner churches and partnership committees have identified the following **strengths of our partnerships**:

- a model of sharing, learning, creating friendships and knowing each other;
- a field of intercultural learning and a manifestation of God’s love in partnership;
- encouraging face-to-face contacts through partnership visits and personnel exchange;
- help in times of crisis and support to people affected by natural disasters or victims of discrimination;
- awareness building through sharing of stories and information, and through lobbying;
- opening our minds through interaction with each other;
- enjoying music and spiritual gifts, and appreciating its variety;
- strengthening identities by discovering similarities in faith expression and structures;
- networking.

The representatives of the partner churches and partnership committees have identified the following **limitations of our partnerships**:

- language problems, ineffective structures and lack of communication;
- the generation gap;
- lack of sharing of responsibility between the leadership and the local congregations;
- dependency on money;
- mismatch of expectations and benefits between partners;

- lack of understanding due to different cultural contexts and church structures;
- not enough exchange of lay leaders and personnel of the church;
- lack of ongoing review.

In a rapidly changing globalized world, we, as churches, have to continue our work for justice, peace, reconciliation and the integrity of creation. We have to respect our different cultural backgrounds and theological convictions, and create spaces where we are able to talk about conflicts openly. We pray for one another, we are concerned for one another and we practice solidarity with one another.

As a result of our common consultation in Arnoldshain in August 2017 we identified our future priorities, and we seek new possibilities to keep our partnerships **alive** and **relevant**.

**We agreed to:**

- encourage the dynamic participation of youth at all levels of partnership, and create a wider network among themselves within the partner churches;
- develop our bilateral into multilateral partner relationships;
- broaden long term exchange programs for young people, experts and church personnel;
- strengthen our communication and share information to the grass root level, especially through the use of social networks, and create a networking platform to share resources of common interest;
- constantly review the role of money in our relations and develop a sharing of resources among more partners;
- consider the impact of all our partnership activities on the integrity of creation;
- share spiritual resources towards deepening our Christian faith and understanding of each other;
- share experiences of interreligious living in peace and harmony and extend Christian hospitality to people of other faiths;
- use our partnerships as a model to overcome nationalism, racism, casteism and other forms of discrimination which affect human dignity;
- encourage our churches to extend concern for migrants and refugees.

For us, the ecumenical partner relationships widen our horizon! So we commit ourselves to make the implications of this visible in the day to day life of our churches.

We all are sisters and brothers in Christ and members of a united mission in solidarity! As representatives of different churches in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America, we will encourage our churches to become part of this fellowship in the body of Christ, to continue our exchanges on faith issues, to respond to global concerns through open forums and to participate in the pilgrimage for justice and peace.

*Arnoldshain 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2017*