

Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa
(GEKE) – Leuenberger Kirchengemeinschaft –

Communion d'Eglises Protestantes en Europe
– Communion Ecclésiale de Leuenberg – (CEPE)

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
– Leuenberg Church Fellowship –



Joint press release issued by:

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)

Conference of European Churches (CEC)

Fourth Protestant-Orthodox consultation

“Baptism in the Life of Our Churches”

A consultation on the topic “Baptism in the Life of our Churches” took place in Vienna between 30 October and 1 November. The consultation had been organized by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE).

The consultation continued the conversations on the ecumenical importance of the doctrine of the church of Jesus Christ begun in the Orthodox Academy of Crete and then continued in 2004 in Luther’s city of Wittenberg and in 2006 in the Phanar in Istanbul. The co-chairs of the conference were Metropolitan Prof. Gennadios of Sassima (CEC) and Prof. Dr. Michael Beintker (CPCE). The conference was concluded with a joint communiqué.

Here are extracts from the joint communiqué:

“The importance of the topic, namely that baptism is of central importance for the life of the church, was confirmed at the consultation. Both sides once again endorsed the view that baptism with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit cannot be repeated. There is agreement between the two traditions about the nature of baptism. Likewise the view was endorsed that baptism is as a rule administered by ordained persons. The consensus on the essential elements of the celebration of baptism could be worked out more clearly: the creed, the baptismal questions, the renunciation of evil, the commitment to life in accordance with baptism and the word of blessing. The rich diversity of liturgical forms does not separate the churches; it can be an enrichment. There is also unanimity that baptism is to be performed in the presence of the community. The use of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed is appropriate to the common understanding of baptism and to the state of ecumenical dialogue achieved. In both traditions – despite all the differences – it should be noted how baptism, chrismation and eucharist on the one hand and baptism, confirmation and Lord’s Supper belong together. According to the Orthodox view baptism and chrismation find their fulfilment in the eucharist. Both traditions face the task of taking up the significance of baptism and faith in Christian instruction in view of the questions about meaning asked by men and women today and to clarify the message of the gospel.

Both traditions produce good arguments for the reciprocal recognition of baptism. Regardless of all differences that still exist, we recommend that our churches should take steps towards a reciprocal recognition of baptism if this is not yet the case. In

view of the existing differences we are aware that ecclesiological consequences which call for further work are bound up with a fundamental agreement on baptism and its reciprocal recognition. Thus for example the different views about chrismation and confirmation must be brought closer together.”

Note: The press release will also be sent out by the Conference of European Churches (CEC). The whole communiqué is available at www.leuenberg.eu

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At present 105 Protestant churches in Europe (including five South-American churches originating from Europe) belong to the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). Lutheran, Reformed, United and Methodist along with pre-Reformation churches such as Hussites and Czech Brethren grant each other pulpit and table fellowship on the basis of the Leuenberg Agreement of 1973. A 13-member Council carries out ongoing business between two general assemblies, headed by a 3-member Presidium: Revd Thomas Wipf (President), Council President of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches in Bern , Prof. Michael Beintker (Co-President), Director of the Seminary for Reformed Theology at the University in Munster , and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Stephanie Dietrich (Co-President), Diakonhjemmet University College Oslo. The Secretariat, which operates under the direction of the Council, is housed in the Severin-Schreiber-Gasse 3, A-1180 Vienna, office@leuenberg.eu, tel. +43.1.4791523.900, fax .580. Its director is Bishop Prof. Dr. Michael Bünker. The CPCE press officer is Dipl.theol. Thomas Flügge (Bern), tel. +41.31.3702502, t.fluegge@leuenberg.eu.