



Saksbehandler: Beate Fagerli

Saksdokumenter:

- "A Time to Live and a Time to Die"
- Rapport nr. 12/2011 **Stephanie Dietrich**
Rapport fra møte i Assembly Planning Committee i
Roma/Firenze 24.-27.3.2011
- Church of Norway's Response to the CPCE Doctrinal Discussion on Scripture -
Confession – Church
Referanse: MKR 02/11 (CPCE)
- Church of Norway's Response to the CPCE Doctrinal Discussion on Ministry -
Ordination – Episkopé
Referanse: MKR 12/11 og MKR/AU 05/11

Saker i de økumeniske organisasjonene

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)

Sammendrag

Vedlagt følger brev fra CPCE med henvisning til et dokument om livets slutt ("A Time to Live and a Time to Die"). Dette er utarbeidet av en gruppe personer med etisk ekspertise oppnevnt av CPCE der bl.a. Ulla Schmidt fra Stiftelsen Kirkeforskning/Teologisk fakultet har deltatt.

Det henvises her til nettsiden hvor dere kan finne dette dokumentet, nemlig www.atimetolive.eu.

Stephanie Dietrich har skrevet en rapport fra forberedelsesmøte til CPCEs generalforsamling. Se for øvrig sak MKR 32/11: Nominering av representanter fra Dnk til CPCEs generalforsamling 2012.

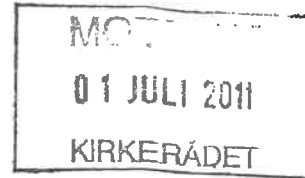
De to høringssvarene har tidligere vært behandlet i MKR i tillegg til i Teologisk nemnd, og den endelige versjonen av disse sendes til deres informasjon.

Forslag til vedtak

Følgende saker tas til orientering:

1. Dokumentet "A Time to Live and a Time to Die"
2. Rapport fra møte i Assembly Planning Committee i Roma/Firenze 24.-27.3.2011
3. Church of Norway's Response to the CPCE Doctrinal Discussion on Scripture - Confession – Church
4. Church of Norway's Response to the CPCE Doctrinal Discussion on Ministry - Ordination – Episkopé

Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa (GEKE)
Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)
Communion d'Eglises Protestantes en Europe (CEPE)



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To all CPCE-Member Churches
and participating Churches of the CPCE

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Wien, 2011, June 16

Az: GEKE 03
Bei Beantwortung bitte angeben

Bischof Dr. Michael Bünker

A Time to Live and a Time to Die

Dear Madame,
Dear Sir,

The group of experts on ethics, mandated by the Council of CPCE, has made a research over the last years on the topic of ethical questions at the end of life. Their paper was discussed thoroughly by the Council. It was revised during a consultation in February, to which all member churches of CPCE were invited. We are very glad to present you now the English documentation of this work.

Common conviction is the esteem of the dignity of every single person and in the pursuit to take notice of each individual situation for the sake of a good care. On this base all comments of protestant churches in the different European countries were acknowledged not without taking each context into consideration.

We would like to thank all authors of the booklet "A time to live and a time to die" for their contribution. We are convinced that this booklet can give orientation how to deal with this sensitive topic within your church.

You will find further material at the website www.atimetolive.eu.
There the booklet also can be ordered. A German and a French translation will be available end of August.

With best wishes and cordially greetings from the CPCE office in Vienna
Yours

Bischof Dr. Michael Bünker
General Secretary

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Rapport fra møte i Assembly Planning Committee i Roma/Firenze 24.-27.3.2011

v/ Stephanie Dietrich

Bakgrunn:

2012 er det CPCEs neste generalforsamling i Firenze Jeg er medlem av Assembly Planning Committee fra presidiets side. Denne gangen møttes vi i både Roma og Firenze, sammen med representanter fra begge de lokale CPCE-medlemskirkene.

I Italia er det to CPCE-medlemskirker som er vertskap for generalforsamlingen: Waldenserkirken og ELCI, den tyske lutherske kirken. Begge er forholdsvis små minoritetskirker, og begge har sine utfordringer: Waldenserkirken har hatt en enorm tilstrømning av afrikanske migranter med ulik konfesjonell bakgrunn. I tillegg til sin migrasjonsbakgrunn og de medfølgende kulturelle utfordringer, har mange en forholdsvis karismatisk og fundamentalistisk bakgrunn, ifølge kollegene ved fakultetet i Roma. Waldenserkirken er et kirkesamfunn med stor vektlegging av kvalitativ høyverdig og akademisk teologisk utdanning, samt har en lang tradisjon for å være forholdsvis radikal teologisk og med et stort sosialetisk engasjement i samfunnet. På mange måter er deres arbeid i forhold til *migrasjonsspørsmålet* noe av det mest interessante når man arrangerer generalforsamlingen i en italiensk kontekst.

ELCI har en selvforståelse som en italiensk luthersk kirke, men oppfattes nok av mange (ikke minst av waldenserne) som en utenlandskirke til Den tyske evangeliske kirken, EKD. Deres arbeidsspråk og gudstjenestespråk er stort sett tysk, og mange av ELCIs prester er sendt fra de tyske kirkene, som utenlandsprester. Samtidig har ELCI også en selvforståelse av å være italiensk, og lever i dette spenningsfeltet mellom å være en "enklave" av EKD og en selvstendig italiensk, luthersk kirke. ELCI, som "tysk luthersk kirke", er bare i liten grad berørt av utfordringene som følger med den store migrasjonen fra Afrika til Italia.

Mens waldenserne har en tydelig reformert selvforståelse, er ELCI veldig bevisst på sin lutherske identitet. Begge kirkesamfunn er nå utfordret til å samarbeide om planleggingen av generalforsamlingen.

Innhold i møtet

Mye av møtet dreide seg om planleggingen av gruppearbeidet under generalforsamlingen. Gruppene skal både arbeide med evalueringen av arbeidet som har skjedd, ta stilling til dokumentene fra læresamtalene, samt arbeide med prosjektene for den neste seksårsperioden. I tillegg til dette arbeidet hadde vi formelle møter med både kirkeledelse og sekretariat i waldenserkirken og i ELCI, både i Roma og i Firenze, om planleggingen av generalforsamlingen, samt en besiktigelse av konferanselokalitetene (et nedlagt romersk-katolsk kloster i Firenze).

Det er forholdsvis kostbart å arrangere en generalforsamling i Italia, og vår komité bruker derfor også en god del tid på kostnadsstyring og detaljplanlegging. I Firenze besøkte vi selve

konferansestedet samt hovedkirken til waldenserne, som er den eneste protestantiske kirken i Firenze som kan romme hele generalforsamlingen til gudstjeneste.

Det er i det hele tatt en utfordring at to så små kirker som ikke er veldig vant med å samarbeide tett, får såpass mange praktiske oppgaver å ivareta. CPCE-sekretariatet i Wien støtter det lokale planleggingsteamet så langt som mulig, men mye arbeid gjenstår før generalforsamlingen kan finne sted i 2012, som forhåpentligvis vil bli en god opplevelse, også for deltakerne fra Den norske kirke.

Når det gjelder den italienske og romersk-katolske konteksten, vil det være svært ønskelig at delegasjonen fra Dnk synliggjør noe av bredden i norsk kirkeliv, og gjerne også inkluderer en kvinnelig biskop fra Den norske kirke, som vil gi et viktig tegn på tenkningen omkring kirkeledelse i en av CPCEs største medlemskirker.

Stephanie Dietrich, 28.3.2011



CHURCH OF NORWAY

National Council, Council on Ecumenical and International
Relations, Sami Church Council

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
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Date: 26.05.2011

Our ref: 11/149-13 BfA

Your ref:

Church of Norway's Response to the CPCE Doctrinal Discussion on Scripture - Confession - Church

Introduction

With this, Church of Norway wishes to express its gratitude to the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe for initiating a process on the themes of Scripture – Confession – Church. We particularly want to thank both working groups who have committed time and energy into the writing process, and the CPCE secretariat for arranging the large consultation in 2008, and for providing support to the process.

Process

The Council on Ecumenical and International Relations in Church of Norway discussed the document before sending it to further work in the Theological Commission. The Theological Commission has treated the document in two meetings before sending a draft proposal back to the Council for finalisation.

Vice President of the CPCE, Revd Dr Stephanie Dietrich, is a member of the Theological Commission and has provided insights into the process. A member of the Theological Commission, Revd Dr Idar Kjølsvik, participated in the larger consultation of church representatives in Berlin 2008. So did the secretary for the Commission, Ms Beate Fagerli.

General comments

The consultation in 2008 provided a good starting point for discussion. At the time, the consultation could not agree on a common text, thus the original document was sent back to be reworked. The first version of the reworked document was shared with the CPCE Council in January 2009, and once again sent back for revision. We wish to point this process out, precisely to commend it! It has been an important revision process, and we believe the current document to be a better document for a constructive discussion on Scripture, Confession and Church within the member churches.

Although there are still issues of some controversy to be pointed out, the document also brings with it statements we believe to be important for churches in Europe to say together at this time and age.

In general we find that the paragraphs on Scripture to a large extent are to be recommended, as we believe it possible for a wide range of churches to agree on a well structured description of Scriptural use in our churches. We do, however, wish to question some of the reflections on hermeneutics, and we find elements regarding the confessions of the Church more difficult to recognise. The last paragraphs of the document regarding the Church are found to be more controversial, and we question whether this part should belong to the document at all.

The contents of our discussions will be described thematically, related to the three overall themes; Scripture – Confession – Church, before a final conclusion.

To the Introductory part

We find it crucial that the dialogue with other Christian traditions is presented in this chapter. It may, however, be a little misleading to refer to a fundamentalist interpretation the way it is being done in line 33 ff, page 2. It seems too easy to name certain Christian traditions as fundamentalist and then draw the conclusion that this often leads to legalism contradictory to the gospel. Likewise, we also find that the paragraph on dialogue with Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches suggests that these churches only build on tradition in understanding e.g. the ordained ministry. This is not the case, as Scripture remains normative for these churches, also in their understanding of ministry. We agree that there are differences among the churches in the understanding of the role of tradition as normative. This should, however, be clarified with more accurate descriptions of the different understandings of the role of tradition. As it now stands, it may mislead the reader to think that tradition in these churches per definition has a normative role beyond the witness of Scripture (cf. line 13).

In point 3), the question of magisterium is brought up. Is there a magisterium (*German: lehrstuhl*) in evangelical churches? It is not quite clear whether the question refers to the responsibility of oversight and doctrinal authority within each church, or whether it refers to the possibility of a magisterium with an authoritative role for a community of Protestant churches.

In a reformed tradition the magisterium would normally be connected to the congregation, in a Roman Catholic tradition it belongs to the episcopate. This is not the case for most Lutheran churches. For Church of Norway neither of these options would be easily compatible with the combined structure of a Synod and a Bishops' Conference. Even if the Synod is the final instance for binding doctrinal decisions, it cannot be understood as the magisterium per se. Within the concept of a synod there is a certain liberty of authority, which allows interpretation by the individual conscience. This freedom of every Christian person is an important part of Protestant heritage, although it does not imply any binding doctrinal authority. We therefore believe further reflections are needed on a church's responsibility to interpret Scriptures in a binding way, and whether this needs to end up being named a magisterium.

If the question of a magisterium refers to a doctrinal authority for a fellowship of churches, suggesting synodal structures for the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and a binding commitment to common "magisterial" statements (page 14), the question will be dealt with later in this document.

Scripture

In the first chapter we recognise a traditional understanding of the hermeneutics of Scripture. We find that chapters 2 – 5, dealing with Scripture, scriptural principles and hermeneutics contain useful insights. In the following we name a few points to which we would like further clarification.

In dealing with the question of hermeneutics, there seems to be a discrepancy between the understanding of revelation, and the understanding of the original intention of the Scripture. The question of God's revelation, as dealt with in chapter 2, seems to be based on a Barthian understanding of revelation. This leaves little reflection around God's revelation through creation. The question is how and whether a Barthian understanding of revelation can be combined with chapter 5, dealing with the interpretation of the Bible, and finding the original intentions of the texts (Page 8, ll. 7 – 13)? How does the document explain the discrepancy between "The word that bears witness to itself" and the hermeneutical rules that are decisive for the interpretation of Scripture?

We recognise the attempt to apply a historic-critical method for interpretation of the Scripture. But certain historical stories do not transfer to our own time. The model for interpretation presented in the document still seeks to establish the historical meaning of the texts. But, is it possible to establish a pre-historic hermeneutical intention of the texts? How, and to what extent the historical meaning of the texts can be found, could be explored further. In part, we are pointing to an increased complexity when dealing with scriptural interpretation. Today, this relates for instance to the interpretation of Scripture from a secular context, as well as interpretation from a more internal, and sometimes fundamentalist, church context. The result is that the tension between the intentions of the author on one side, and the empirical dimension on the other side, remains unclear. Which is the guiding principle for interpretation, - the intention of the author, or the intention of God? A dialogical approach to interpretation could be of help for the churches when encountering a critical secularist interpretation, or when answering to a fundamentalist Scriptural interpretation.

We find that the relation between the old and the new covenant and its influence on the interpretation of texts is not sufficiently discussed. A differentiation between the Old and the New testaments lack in the document. Reflections on the hermeneutical model, which already exists within the double scriptural canon, could be clarifying. In this context the paragraphs on law and Gospel are important and could be further explained.

It is however also suggested that ethical criticism may be applied. But it is not quite clear how far the document is willing to apply ethical criticism. If the paragraph on page 10, point 3, ll. 6 – 15, suggests that ethical criticism of the texts can be applied if the text itself can be interpreted as oppressive, it is a controversial statement and would need further discussion.

We would follow further discussion on the interpretation of scripture with great interest, and hope that the questions and proposals above may be of use.

Confession

Chapters 6 and 7 deal with the confession(s) of the Church. In these chapters we miss a more in-depth description of what the confessions represent, particularly since

they have different roles and significance within different churches. In that sense the document does not provide a sufficient understanding of what a confession is.

Chapter 7 is titled "The authority of the Confessions of the Church". A Lutheran understanding of confession claims that it is *norma normata*. Although deriving from *norma normans*, the Scripture itself, it is still a binding norm for the Church. It is therefore insufficient to refer to confessions as "...rather a matter of stating the witness of Scripture anew under a new challenge" (page 12, ll. 1 – 8). We do understand the confessions of the reformation to be written in a given historic context, and as a reaction to false teaching. As such, the confessions themselves are historical documents that need interpretation. But the need for interpretation is connected to their own interpretative function with regards to Scripture, since it is only in this regard they have a normative function. This does not mean, however, that confessions are to be considered normative only for a limited period of time. And it is also not to be understood as an invitation to rewrite, or write new, confessions. From a Lutheran point of view, the confessions are of a more permanent, binding nature, and is thus to be regarded as normative. We believe these differing understandings of the confessions and their status within the Protestant churches in Europe represent a complexity, which it may be helpful to explore further in the document.

There are a number of useful points made regarding the common call of the churches to witness and confession, confession of faith through liturgy, proclamation, diakonia and fellowship. We wholeheartedly commend the paragraphs on the importance of ecumenical doctrinal talks with regards to a changed understanding of the historic condemnations, and with regards to the Christian calling to common confession of the apostolic faith. It is, however, necessary to explain the role and nature of the confessions further in order to deal with an understanding of the Church, since a Lutheran understanding of the Church is also bound by its confessions.

Church

In our understanding, the main difficulties of the document lie in the understanding of Church and church fellowship. Firstly, a proposal to move towards more binding structures of the CPCE, through establishing a common Protestant synod in Europe, would be contradictory to Church of Norway's explanations for signing the Leuenberg Agreement. The main reason for this was that we do not find it ecumenically sound in a broader ecumenical context, to which we are also committed. We already find that the Leuenberg Agreement itself, and the on-going dialogue and cooperation of Protestant churches in Europe, is highly useful and an important witness to the unity of the churches.

A consolidation of Protestantism in Europe through synodical structures would not only be a challenge in relation to the structure of the Church of Norway itself, it would also be a concrete challenge to the understanding of what a church fellowship is, and what constitutes church fellowship. If Protestantism is regarded as a constitutive element for church fellowship, it will represent an opposition to already existing ecumenical structures and established ecumenical dialogue in a broader ecumenical reality. In this context the CPCE document "The Church of Jesus Christ" was understood to be a binding document for the churches themselves, without being exclusive in its nature.

If "reconciled diversity" is to be understood as a very broad ecumenical model for church fellowship, one may see the need to further ecumenical cooperation among

Protestant churches into more binding structures. But, if these binding structures are to be understood as political means for Protestantism within a wider ecumenical context, this may mean a dangerous polarisation of ecumenical dialogue, and for some Protestant churches in Europe it may create difficulties in their already established church relations.

We do recognise that member churches in CPCE differ from one another when it comes to the concrete local situation, size, ecumenical climate, social and political setting etc. We particularly recognise the difficulty of minority churches living under pressure in a continuously changing Europe. In this situation CPCE is already centrally placed to face great ecumenical challenges. We doubt that a synodical structure for the Protestant churches in Europe would be a good model to face these challenges. Although it may be a democratic model, a synod would create greater distance between the churches, and between majority and minority churches. We believe CPCE as a fellowship of churches should continue to provide space for creative ecumenical collaboration on local, regional and European levels. As such, we already understand CPCE as a binding church fellowship to which we are committed.

We believe that a discussion around synodical structures would need far more work regarding the understanding of Church and church fellowship. We would therefore strongly recommend that this issue be left out of the document entirely and treated separately.

Conclusions


Based on the above comments and reflections we would like to recommend that document be reworked according to the following:

1. That the use of the document as a study document in churches and congregations be reflected through language and structure. This may be done through linguistic reworking and possible guidelines and questions for further studying.
2. That the paragraphs on the interpretation and hermeneutics of Scripture be extended and revised along with the suggestions from the churches.
3. That the chapters concerning the understanding of the Confessions of the Churches be reworked, and that the different understanding of confessions be presented more in depth.
4. That the paragraphs concerning the understanding of Church and church fellowship be thoroughly reworked particularly with regards to the understanding of what constitutes the Church, its relation to confessions, the understanding of church fellowship and its relation to a broader ecumenical reality.
5. That the proposal of Protestant synodical structures in Europe be left out of the document and treated elsewhere.

We hope that these considerations may be useful for the continued process, and we will be happy to clarify any questions or contribute further in any way to the process.

With gratitude for all the work put into the process, giving churches an opportunity and an ecumenical platform for further ecclesiological and doctrinal studies, we express our sincere thanks to the community of Protestant Churches in Europe!

Kind regards



Revd Kjetil Aano
Moderator
Council on Ecumenical and International
Relations



Berit Hagen Agøy
General secretary
Council on Ecumenical and International
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CHURCH OF NORWAY

National Council, Council on Ecumenical and International
Relations, Sami Church Council

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
- Leuenberg Church Fellowship –
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Church of Norway's Response to the CPCE Doctrinal Discussion on Ministry - Ordination - Episkopé

May 2011

Introduction

Church of Norway deeply appreciates the initiative taken by the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe to take forward the unresolved questions of ministry and ministries in the church which has followed the CPCE since “The Church of Jesus Christ” was adopted in 1994. Since that time a number of confessional and bilateral discussions have taken place, locally, regionally and globally. We note that a number of these, raising important challenges for the current process, have been considered and referred to in the document. We particularly appreciate the attention given to the processes in the Lutheran World Federation and the Porvoo Communion of Churches, since Church of Norway is actively involved in both of these. Finally, we would like to convey our gratitude to the secretariat and the working group for all the work done to put together the document, and for giving Church of Norway an opportunity to appoint a member of the working group.

The following response is based on discussions and a drafting process within the Theological Commission. The Bishops' Conference has been informed throughout the process, and the final draft approved by the Council on Ecumenical and International relations.

Response to the document

In our Responses” we are asked to comment on the question whether the document offers “a basis to present a common Protestant understanding of Ministerial Office to churches of other confessions”. In our opinion the document represents a remarkable convergence in the questions it covers. As such it is an important contribution to the community and cooperation between the Protestant churches.

At the same time there are issues that are still unclear or have not found a sufficient solution. In its present form the document should not be understood as the final result of this process, but rather as a basis for continued reflections and discussions.

What makes the questions discussed in the document especially complicated is the fact that these questions are discussed not only within the CPCE, but also within the member churches themselves. This applies also to The Church of Norway, where questions regarding ministry, ordination and episkopé have been continuously discussed for 50 years. Since the 1970's there has been a consecration liturgy for catechists and deacons, since the 1990's also for cantors (organists). This liturgy has in Norwegian been called "vigsling", and the same term is used to denote the ordination (Norw.: "ordinasjon") of ministers¹ and the commissioning of bishops. A core question in the debate has been whether the "vigsling" of catechists, deacons and cantors should be understood as ordination in a theologically qualified sense, and whether these ministries should be understood as part of the "ordained ministry" of the church.

In the last years the discussion has especially been focused on the understanding of the ministry of the deacon. An important influence in this process has been the discussion with the Anglican churches through the Porvoo agreement, as well as the advocacy for the threefold model of ministry in the BEM document. The question has been discussed in statements both from the Bishops' Conference and the General Synod of Church of Norway in 2004 and 2010/2011. A central question has been the understanding of the relation between the ministry of the deacon and the ministry of word and sacrament. Should it be understood as an aspect of this ministry, as an independent ordained ministry or as a lay (i.e. non-ordained) ministry?

In order to clarify this question, it is necessary to have a clear definition of ordination and of ordained ministry. This question does not seem to be solved in a satisfactory way in the CPCE document. On the one hand the concept is defined in a general way, able to include different ministries: "Ordination is an official action by the church, which recognises a person's call to a specific ministry and confirms it with prayer within the assembled congregation" (par. 56). Used in such a way it would be possible to understand the ministry of the deacon (or possibly other ministries as well) as an ordained ministry, without necessarily understanding it as an expression of the ministry with word and sacrament.

On the other hand "ordination in a basic sense" is understood "as referring to the commissioning for the ministry of word and sacrament" (par. 60). According to the document, "the decisive factor must be whether or not the service in question is a ministry of word and sacraments" (par. 63). Used in such a way the concept is reserved for the ministry of the pastor/priest. An implication of this is that churches that ordain elders rather should understand this as commissioning (par. 49). The position of the document towards ordination of deacons is in this context rather unclear, as the practice of ordaining deacons in some churches is noted but not criticised (par. 62). The document also says to the question of whether to ordain deacons or not is a matter where diversity is possible (par. 50). At the same time the document clearly understands the ministry of *diakonia* as a distinct ministry, different from the ministry of word and sacrament (par. 36).

¹ The Norwegian term used to denote the ministry with word and sacrament is "prest". It is sometimes translated into English as priest, sometimes as pastor or minister. In this document we will follow the terminology in the CPCE document, talking mainly about "ministers".

We agree with the document that the ministry with word and sacrament (as described in article V in the Augsburg Confession) should in any case be regarded as an ordained ministry, and that those who serve in this ministry should go through an act of ordination. However, in the ecumenical debate it is still an open question whether the concept of ordination should be reserved for ordination to the ministry of word and sacrament. This ambiguity is reflected in the unclear definition of the concept of ordination in the document (see above). A strict reservation of the term for the ministry of the pastor/priest would also make the relation to churches (e.g. some Lutheran churches) that understand ministries other than the ministry of the pastor/priest as ordained ministry. This would include an understanding of the ministry of the deacon as ordained ministry. Given a more inclusive understanding of the concept we do not see sufficient theological reasons for encouraging churches that practice ordination of elders to end this practice.

A general weakness in the document is the sparse attention given to the ministry of the deacon. In par 36 it is said that the ministry of word and sacraments, the ministry of *diakonia* and the ministry of episkopé are indispensable for the life and order of the church. However, in the document most attention is given to the ministry of word and sacraments and the ministry of episkopé. This is in our opinion a serious shortcoming in the document.

Not only is the ministry of the deacon sparsely treated in the document, not much of substance is said about other ministries in the church. In par. 34–35 it is mentioned that all Christians are called to participate in God, not only bearers of certain ordained ministries. In a document on ministry that is expected to serve the churches for the future, we would have expected more attention on this theme. A sound theology of ministry has to give thorough attention to the ministry of all Christians (sometimes referred to as “lay ministry”). There are theological reasons for this, and the church cannot fulfil its mission without the active involvement of non-ordained Christians in its work. A theology of ordained ministry needs a solid foundation in a theology of the ministry of all Christians. The incomplete attention to other ministries than ordained ministries is also expressed in the lack of clarity and definition in the use of the concept “commissioning”. It is clear that it means something “less” than ordination, but the more specific meaning is not clarified.

We agree with the document that public preaching and administration of the sacraments belong together as the main responsibility of the ordained minister (par. 59). The Church of Norway has a long tradition of lay preaching, which we see as a blessing. Even if preaching may also be done by others than the minister, the minister should be responsible that the preaching is in accordance with the gospel.

Although the administration of the sacraments is the responsibility of the minister, their effect is not constituted by ordination as such. In the Church of Norway the bishops may commission non-ordained persons for a limited period of time, in a limited geographical area, and under the responsibility of an ordained minister, to administer the sacraments. This is applied both to theological students as part of their training, as well in other situation with a lack of ordained ministers. Also deacons celebrate the Eucharist when visiting the sick and dying as part of their diaconal ministry. The Church of Norway does not see any theologically compelling reason to change this practice, as the commissioning by the bishop in these cases secures the “rite vocatus” of CA XIV.

An important question for the theme of ministry and ordination is the question of mutual recognition of ministries. The document rightly states that the diversity regarding church order between churches is legitimate, as no uniform church order and structure of ministry can be derived from the New Testament (par. 44 and 47). In our opinion this must also be applied to the question of the "order of ministries" (par 35), meaning that churches may mutually recognize each other, even if they order and understand the pattern of their ministries differently, including which ministries they understand as ordained ministries. The most important issue is whether churches are able to recognize each other's ministries with word and sacraments, as well as their ministries of episkopé. Churches should also strive for a common understanding of diaconal ministry. We do not see it as a problem that certain churches have certain ordained or non-ordained ministries that are not found in all other churches (e.g. the ministry as catechist in the Church of Norway). This perspective also includes churches outside of Europe.

Concerning 2.4 Access to the Ministries: The Church of Norway celebrates the 50th anniversary of the ordination of its first female minister in 2011. We support the equal access to ordained ministry for both women and men.

We appreciate the general approach to the understanding of episcopate as it is presented in the document. Church of Norway has underlined its understanding of episcopate and episcopacy when signing the Leuenberg agreement in 1999.²

"4. Against the background of the ecumenical agreements into which we have entered, it has become clear to us that both the meaning and the structuring of ecumenical church fellowship will vary according to context. In all our churches there are forms of pastoral oversight ("episkopé"). Such a function is necessary in all churches. The concrete structure and understanding of such a ministry of oversight may, however, vary.

In the Porvoo agreement, the Church of Norway has stated, together with the other Porvoo signatory churches, that fellowship in word and sacrament is made explicit through the ministry of oversight which is exercised by the pastoral ministry in the church and by the ministry of bishops on whom the ministry of oversight is bestowed in a particular way. Together, these are an outward sign of church unity.

Both through ecumenical dialogue and through our own church history we have learned to value this tradition. The role of the episcopal ministry in the Church of Norway has facilitated the achievement of church fellowship with Anglican churches. This does not for us preclude recognition of other churches which do not have an episcopal ministry, or the possibility of full church fellowship with such churches."

In the line of the arguments presented on behalf of Church of Norway earlier, we can clearly see that the document presented by the CPCE both underlines the necessity of episcopate in all member churches and the recognition that some of its member churches organize the ministry of episcopate as a personal ministry, (exercised by bishops or

² Signatory's Protocol by the Church of Norway on the Signing of The Agreement between Reformation Churches in Europe (Leuenberg Agreement). Adopted by the Church of Norway General Synod on 19 November 1999 (<http://www.kirken.no/english/engelsk.cfm?artid=5895>)

church presidents), that are commissioned or ordained to such a ministry. Also the understanding of ordination in this context should be discussed: Does installation to become e.g. a bishop require a separate ordination? Concerning this discussion, the document could be more explicit concerning a protestant understanding of these issues.

We find the LWF Statement on Episcopal Ministry (1997) a useful contribution in order to deepen the understanding of episcopate for the mission of the church. The LWF document underlines that the task of the ministry of oversight is to serve the church and thereby serve the purpose of caring for the life of a whole community. It also underlines that oversight never is a merely administrative and institutional matter, but is always personal. This personal character cannot be separated from its collegial and communal aspect (§§47-49.)

The document also underlines that there is “a need for the Lutheran churches to develop a broader common understanding of how Episcopal ministry points to the diaconal dimensions of the apostolic tradition and also of how the personal, collegial and communal dimensions of episcopate take shape in practice.” (§ 61) On these issues, the CPCE document should be further broadened.

Regarding concluding recommendations:

Concerning 1: We support a critical examination of the understanding of ministries within the CPCE churches. This need is reflected in ongoing processes and discussions also within the Church of Norway.

Concerning 2: It is important for the churches to work on their patterns of ministry in a comparative perspective. At the same time it is possible to compare and recognize single ministries without necessarily having identical patterns of ministry.

Concerning 3: We agree that churches should ordain those responsible for the service of public preaching and the administration of the sacraments. However, this does not exclude the commissioning of others in situations of lack of ordained ministers.

Concerning 4: We agree with the necessity to consider the doctrine and practice of ordination, which also includes a clarification of the concept itself; whether it is exclusively linked to the ministry of word and sacrament or not.

Concerning 5: We support a further study on the diaconate, including its position in relation to ordination.

Concerning 6: We support the understanding of the ministry of episkopé as a shared responsibility, while we especially want to underline the personal elements of episkopé as decisive for our own church tradition.

Concerning 7: We strongly endorse this recommendation.

Concerning 8: We agree that the CPCE model of unity in reconciled diversity can be made fruitful for the understanding for the variety of ministries and patterns of ministry among the churches.

We hope that these proposals and considerations can be taken into account in the revision process, and may be of help in preparing for the General Assembly's discussion on the topic in 2012. We will be glad to assist with further clarifications, if

this would be helpful. Finally, again we wish to express our gratitude for the efforts put into an important and necessary reflection process among the Protestant churches in Europe on the ministry and ministries of the church.

Yours sincerely,



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