



Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Northern Germany

Ecumenical Movement in Northelbia – Building Sustainable Partnerships

DOCUMENTATION



Dear reader,

this is the translation of a documentation, which was published in November 2011 in German. In June 2012 the Northelbian Evangelical Lutheran Church, which organized the qualification process, merged with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mecklenburg and the Pomeranian Evangelical Church to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany. For that reason we have changed the information on the publisher and the imprint as well as the cover of the English version of this documentation. Apart from these changes, content and layout of the German and English version of the booklet are identical.

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Preface

„Building sustainable partnerships“ was the motto, which brought together many people in a qualification process for Northelbian partnerships. The aim was to involve as many members of partnership groups as possible in the reorientation process for partnership work in the Northelbian Church.

About 200 parishes in Northelbia have long-term partnership relations with parishes or institutions in Africa, India, South America, Papua New Guinea or the Middle East. There are also many other parishes with contacts to Lutheran parishes in the Baltic States, Russia, Great Britain or the Netherlands. These partnership groups work together with their partners to try to develop their ecumenical relationships.

In the last few years, people involved in these groups have often talked about their wish for a reorientation and clarity about future perspectives for partnership work. How can we involve young people in these groups? How can we pass on the knowledge gained in 30 years experience of partnership work? How can we develop the working relationship between volunteers and full-time church workers? When money is involved, the partnership relationships become even more complicated.

There is much knowledge and experience in these groups but there are no easy answers. Are there new ways of creating partnership relationships, which may be more attractive to people who are not yet involved in our circles? Ecumenical, intercultural and developmental learning is not an automatic process, so how can we support this learning process?

The qualification process was planned and accompanied by a project team, which consisted of people from the Ecumenical Desks in Northelbia, the Church Development Services, the Women's Desk of the Northelbian Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Northelbian Mission Centre. It was a new experience to bring all these different perspectives together in intense discussions and exchanges of ideas about partnership work. The project team, which started this qualification process, did not have any ready answers. The aim was not to impart knowledge, but to create a space for working groups to consider together important elements that can support partnership relations and help to make them successful. We wanted to get the process of working together going and then support the groups in their deliberations. An important part of this process was the exchange of ideas starting to come about between different people involved in partnership work.

In August 2010, we held the opening event of the qualification process with about 150 participants. There we organized ourselves into six working groups under the following headings: Understanding of Partnership, Shaping of Partnership, Learning in Partnership, Project Standards, Networking, New Forms of Partnership. Each group had two group leaders and had access to experts who gave input. Interim results were presented during a workshop.

Perspectives

One of the highlights of this process was the meetings and the exchange of ideas with delegates from Northelbian partner churches at the Partnership Consultation held in June 2011. The delegates were chosen because they were coordinators for “Church and Parish Partnership Work” in their respective churches. For three days, the delegates discussed the interim results with the members of the working groups and tested the results. These discussions were used by the working groups to continue their reflections and were then worked into the final results.

We have developed this documentation to show the different elements that were integrated into the qualification process. We focus on two points: the Partnership Consultation and the results from the working groups. We hope that by reading these examples, reflections, voices, feedback and personal impressions you will get an idea of this vibrant work in process. Our international guests were also integrated into the process and their voices were heard. We have also included sermons and devotions held during the process as they are another inspiring aspect of vibrant partnership.

We are aware that although this working group phase is completed, many questions remain unanswered and we still face many challenges. In November 2011, we closed this working group phase with a final event. Our plan is to develop a partnership manual in the near future. At church district level, we will continue to work on key aspects of partnership work. We can feel an atmosphere of optimism, and new activities are being planned. By publishing this documentation we hope to enable you to gain an insight into some of the ideas and exchanges that came about during this qualification process and which will continue after the closing event in November 2011.



Martin Krieg and Dr. Mirjam Freytag



Opening event on the 28th of August 2010 in Neumünster

After Dean Jürgen Bollmann had officially opened the Qualification Process there was a presentation on the history and experience of ecumenical partnerships. Then the concepts, subjects and working methods of the qualification process were presented, and the participants formed the working groups that were to spend the following months discussing different aspects of future partnership work. As members of many different partnership groups participated in this, the groups were able to bring together diverse aspects and experiences. The invitation for the opening event had stated the following goals: “On the basis of this qualification process we want to develop a new profile for ecumenical partnerships in our church. Coming together and discussing different aspects and experiences and involving both volunteers and full-time church workers we want to develop new standards for partnership work.”



„One, two, three ... Opening ... On our way“



Group work during the opening event

People are standing in a circle, their heads close together and their arms stretched out. The circle of hands looks like a window to heaven. On the left there is a bit of open space, it seems to be a call to me and I feel like joining the circle – becoming part of the circle, getting involved, experiencing how people in Northelbia can build sustainable partnerships and also view a bit of heaven, experiencing how blessed we are in and through our more than 200 partnership groups.

This picture of the circle of hands was on the invitation for the opening event, which took place on the 28th of August in Neumünster. The invitation was sent out to church workers and dignitaries but also especially to the many volunteers who with a lot of idealism, creativity and involvement keep the partnerships in their parishes going. And many of them came. Stephanie Geßner (NMZ) said after the opening event: „I was very curious to see how many would follow our invitation to come to Neumünster and how they would react to the qualification process. When I saw how quickly the room was filling up, how positively people were interacting and how expectant people seemed, I thought that this would be the first step of a fruitful process.“

As chairperson of the NMZ Board, Dean Jürgen Bollmann welcomed the more than 120 participants. Then there was a presentation by the group „Steife Brise“ (“Strong Breezes”), an improvisation theatre production involving the participants in the presentation. “The theatre production was very funny and presented us with a mirror in which we were able to see our partnership work from new angles.” (Stephanie Geßner).

“On our way to ecumenical partnerships – learning together, challenging each other, and shaping the future” was the title of Frauke Bürger’s presentation. She has been the Dean of Studies in Wuppertal at the Centre for Mission and Leadership Studies of the United Evangelical Mission for 19 years. Using the historical development of the word “partnership”, she gave an historical input and also gave the participants a lot to think about, using examples from partnership work and pointed citations. We will share with you some of the highlights of her speech here:

“Nowhere in the field of church work or in the field of those who are engaged in One-World activities are there so many intense meetings between North and South that are long-lasting and based on commitment as those in the partnerships between parishes and church districts.” This citation from Lothar Bauerochse is an ovation for the commitment of the participants. Without partnership work at the parish level our worldwide ecumenical partnership could not have developed in this way. This is a reason for pride. With these encouraging words, Frauke Bürgers began her historic review of the way the word “partnership”, which had no biblical or religious meaning, began to be used in ecumenical circles. She discussed important stations such as the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh in 1910. The Indian theologian Azariah demanded partnership with his famous citation with which he thanked the mission churches for all they had done and still said,

„... We also want love. Give us your friendship.“

Even though the word was only used in the 20th century in church circles, partnership has always been an important element in church, because living in harmony and partnership with other churches and parishes is central to being a church and not just an agreement between autonomous churches. This can be seen in the third article of our profession of faith (communion of saints). In 1947 at the World Mission Conference in Whitby there was the feeling of a new beginning and spirit, and for the first time there was a detailed discussion of partnership. Themes of discussion were partnership in personnel exchange, financial issues and goals of partnership. “Real partnership consists of the grace of acceptance as well as the grace of giving”. The goal for partnership is to paint a picture of the body of Christ (1. Corinthians 12, 12-27).

We are all very diverse, but we need each other in our diversity. We are all equally important and meet each other at eye-level. We are partners who meet equally and embrace our differences as we have the same Mission, because we are “members of God’s Mission community”. This was the basis for the examples Frauke Bürgers used to show us how partnership can be a learning field and how we can be changed and renewed through our contact with our partners. This happens especially when we meet in our spiritual life (reading the bible together, working on theological issues, praying for each other, etc.). This is very challenging and we need to be sensitive regarding our cultural differences.



Dr. Miirjam Freytag presents the concept



Frauke Bürgers gives her presentation





Tobias Jäger in conversation with Rita Bruvers

In 1961 at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches things developed further, when a statement was issued speaking of partnership as a “fully compulsive community”. This means that giver and taker of gifts are receiving God’s gifts and they are responsible for the way these gifts are used before the world, before God and before their partners. To fulfil this it is important that the partners see the financing of projects as a small step on the way towards a more just world and a small re-distribution of God-given gifts in a world with unjustly distributed resources. Part of this is the loudly proclaimed message that we want justice and a fight for a more just distribution of economic resources.

Regarding partnership along a historical timeline, Frauke Bürgers asked some important questions: “How can we share faith, spiritual life, resources, power (decision-making) and our visions as members of one global world? How can we develop new forms of partnership and bring these to our grassroots level and to our parishes? What will change when new people become part of our partnership groups?”

The input was intended to enable the participants to work on developing sustainable partnerships. It was very stimulating to hear the citations and examples, and the presentation was followed by some very lively discussions. After the presentation of the following Qualification Process the working groups for the different subjects were presented and formed and the work for the following months was planned. Six groups were formed and participants were invited to choose in which group they would like to participate. It was a wonderful opening event and a good start on the road to a qualification of partnership work.

Tobias Jäger



Musical contribution to the programme by Thorsten Pachnicke

THEMES OF THE WORKING GROUPS

Working Group 1 Understanding of Partnership

- Theology
- Development
- Education
- History

Working Group 2 Shaping of Partnership

- Scope of shaping
- Indicators of success and stumbling blocks
- Development of themes and projects
- Power and impact of money

Working Group 3 Learning in Partnership

- Intercultural learning
- Ecumenical learning
- Development-oriented learning
- Education projects

Working Group 4 Project Standards

- Manual for projects
- Minimal standards for projects
- Avoiding corruption
- Review of funding criteria
- Examples of successful projects

Working Group 5 Networking

- Overview of partnership groups
- Clarifications of responsibilities
- Networking in the North Church

Working Group 6 New Forms of Partnership

- Variety of partnerships
 - Dialogue partnerships
 - School partnerships
 - Trade partnerships
 - Development partnerships
- Distinction from other forms of cooperation
- Criteria for future partnerships
- Creation of new forms of partnerships

Workshop on the 12th of February 2011 in Neumünster

After the different working groups had held several meetings where various aspects of partnership work were considered and interim results were developed, a workshop enabled people to present their interim results and to discuss them with a larger number of participants and get some feedback on the way things were evolving. These interim results were also sent out to the delegates responsible for partnership work in our partner churches and they were asked for comments. The goal of this wide involvement of people in the discussion process was to find important aspects that support successful partnership work.



Stephanie Geßner and Klaus Träger

Overview of the results of the working groups

Working Group 1: Understanding of Partnership

At our first meeting the group established that almost all the participants' understanding of partnership had its roots in their own biographies and had been formed by things they themselves had experienced, sometimes even when they were children. This realisation formed the basis for us to work on criteria for an understanding of partnership that is as far as possible orientated towards overriding objectives.

At our second meeting Dr. Klaus Schäfer introduced us to the history of ecumenical partnership work, starting from the Mission Conference in Whitby/Canada, where thanks to the intervention of the so called "young churches" the division of the world into "Christian" and "non-Christian" countries was abandoned. The first time the term partnership was used, was in the motto of this conference „Partnership in Obedience" and in 1971 it resulted in the first actual partnership relationship involving a congregation in Hanover. Our next meeting will be concerned with the „risks and side-effects" of partnership relations before we try to formulate possible aims for partnership work.

Working Group 2: Shaping Partnerships

There is a certain magic in every new beginning: at the beginning we come into personal contact with people, whom we have so far never encountered and who live under conditions that we have never realised in such clarity before. And yet something has begun ... and something has got us and others moving.

Looking at the map of the world links us into almost every continent: Brazil, Latvia, Papua New Guinea, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Israel ... And it brings faces, people and encounters into our mind's eye.

Organising every day and filling it: what are steps to success: what contributes to realising partnership in our daily lives and doing it well?





Wiebke Heller



Mark Seeland

Visits and encounters on both sides are absolutely necessary and essential. Experiencing the partner's life for ourselves is indispensable. Keeping contact between visits and communicating with each other (in some cases very difficult). What role does the transfer of money play and how transparent is the accounting? "Partnership" – "at eye-level" – "as brothers and sisters" ... are these just meaningless phrases or are they the reality of a living partnership?

Information for the congregations, the church districts, the general public. Holding out in times of conflict / experiencing and surviving crises / consciously bringing a partnership to an end in a meaningful way. In personal encounters we also experience our limitations in language, culture and even in religion and theology. What factors lead to difficulties, failures, and crises? Too few shoulders to carry the work on our side – changing people in responsibility / changing pastors on the side of our partners – language barriers, cultural differences – gender equality for men and women – too high expectations – too much German thoroughness, German speed – "creative ways of dealing with development funds" – assistance when it becomes necessary to bring an ecumenical partnership to an end.

Working Group 3: Learning in Partnerships

Working group 3 has so far met four times. The following questions and subjects were so far discussed: What does learning mean for me? What do I want to learn in the partnership? How do I want to learn in the partnership? What supports learning? What hinders learning? According to neurobiologists learning has a lot to do with the images we have inside us. They are formed by our culture and environment and very difficult to change. How then can learning succeed in a partnership? It is important to recognise how different our "inner images" and prerequisites for learning are (power, money, gender etc) and to start to talk about them.

Learning happens mainly in encounter with one another. How do we encounter each other? Who is allowed to travel? How do we present our own situation at home to the others when we visit them? How do we take care of the partnership between visits? Do we also support South-South encounters? How can we achieve partnership "at eye-level"? How much racism is to be found hidden in our language, even in partnership work? ("We have a kindergarten down there.")

A particularly intensive area of encounter is our spirituality, our faith. What experiences do we share in our partnership, what links us together? How do we deal with disconcerting experiences – for example a very different, very personalised understanding of sin, church discipline, criticism of the "spiritual condition" of our congregations? For the remaining work ahead of us, it is important that we should bring all this together, and also the question of what we should put into a handbook. To what extent can our personal experiences help others to qualify themselves better for this work?

Working Group 4: Project Standards

A partnership does not need projects. Projects can be an addition to partnership. They should be a sign and an expression of sharing with each other. Through joint project work – in which financial questions play a role – a business relationship comes into being alongside the relationship of trust.

A partnership is something for the long term. A project always has a clearly defined beginning and a clearly defined end. It has an aim, which describes what should be achieved. As a rule, partnership projects are development projects. The aim of development projects is to empower poor, underprivileged and oppressed people so

that they can improve their own situation on their own and take on responsibility for it. The success of larger projects depends entirely on the planning and management of the project. It is necessary therefore to offer training programmes and supervision in order to be able to use modern methods of project planning and project management.

Besides development projects there are other forms of support offered within the framework of partnerships; for example, budget subsidies, continuous finance for charitable measures or grants towards church building funds. Here different standards are required. It could be helpful to put the question: how do we further self-responsibility and reduce dependency?

Working Group 5: Networking

A summary of our results so far:

- A digital database of partnerships should be established, which should be available on the internet page: www.einewelt-info.de.
- Which institutions exist in the North Church in the field of ecumenical relations? A list in the form of a database would be useful (who is responsible for what; where can I apply for what kind of support or subsidy?).
- Networking with the partner churches Pomerania and Mecklenburg is already possible (see above database). The partnerships of these churches will enrich our own Northelbian ecumenical relations.
- Under the heading "qualification", it is important to clarify the structures and who is responsible for what. A contribution to more clarity would be to do away with double-structures; it is necessary to have slim effective structures.



Group discussion

Working Group 6: New Forms of Partnership

At the beginning of the first meeting of working group 6 the participants reflected on their own motives for their partnership work. Here we established that a personal motive such as one's own interest in foreign countries and cultures was clearly in the foreground.

In a next step, we discussed more closely a definition of partnership, in order to use it as a basis for the development of different forms of partnership, besides our own personal motivation. In a third and so far last step, the "fields of activity" of partnership work were related to our motivation and our definition. While doing this we arrived at essential questions: in how far must we separate off other forms of relationships, for example "sponsorships" from partnership work. In how far can church partnership work be described as being part of our "discipleship as followers of Jesus Christ"? A discussion on the aims of partnership work showed that "encounter" is presumably the most essential characteristic of partnership. In our future meetings our working group will attempt to define more clearly, what we have found out with relation to different forms of partnership.

Remarks and Comments on the Working Group Reports

In order to include the partner churches in other parts of the world in the reflection process on the shaping of partnerships in future they received the interim reports of the working groups and were asked to comment on these reports. Here we publish four comments from partner churches.



MAURO B. DE SOUZA, BRAZIL

Having carefully read the reports provided by the six working groups, I would like to offer a few comments and remarks.

1. General Comments

- This is really good work. Congratulations! The groups worked really hard and their achievements are very accurate. The content of the reports cover virtually everything to be considered regarding partnership – the question for us is how to make all that become a reality.
- The papers touch on very delicate issues, such as accountability and transparency, in a very positive and profound way.
- Partnership brings people and organizations together who for some reason, have met and concluded to have enough assumptions in common to walk together. Is it possible for one partner to say to the counterpart “we’ll walk with you, but don’t ask us to change the way we think”? Or does partnership also require the partners to be open to the “risk” of having to change ways of thinking and acting?
- Key words/expressions of the papers: God’s one, just, ecumenical world – hospitality – authenticity – responsibility – transparency – accountability – openness – communication – sustainability – gender justice – networking – equality – volunteering.

2. Particular Remarks

- Working group 3: Learning in Partnership. Section 1, Learning in General – regarding the issue of inner images, how open are we to new images (of God, of Jesus, of church structure, of ministries, of gender roles, etc.)? Sharing successful experiences (e.g. work with youth, or the work of the women) is a form of exchanging knowledge and learning in partnership).
- Working group 5: Networking. This is a real challenge. While some of us still do not have the means to network (information, communication instruments, time), most of us do have them. However, it seems that we still prefer to work alone. We are too careful about our good ideas, methods, schemes ... we do not want to share them. But we need to remember that we belong to the one single church of Jesus Christ. Everything we do should be done to the glory of God so that God’s Kingdom may come.

LOVELAND MAKUNDI, TANZANIA

Objective of the forum is to develop a new Northelbian policy of ecumenical partnership, to meet the needs and requirements of both sides to gain a new level of partnership.

Introduction

Partnership is an agreement between two parties (individual people of the same or different sex, groups of individuals, organizations, countries). It is mutual understanding between two different parties. Ecumenical partnership is the partnership, which breaks all kind of boundaries and answers to the call of Jesus that we shall be one as himself and God are one.

Understanding of partnership

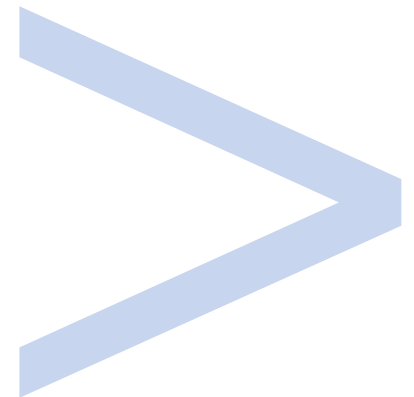
The understanding of partnership shall fall under the following suggestions:

1. Sharing of our gifts;
2. Sharing of our talents and life style;
3. Exchange of ideas;
4. Sharing of our ups and downs;
5. Sharing of our culture;
6. Sharing of our faith in Jesus name.

The understanding of partnership in the Church of Tanzania and particularly of the Northern Diocese East Kilimanjaro District is very well known, as our church has long experience of partnership with Germany since 1893 during the time of Rev Emil Müller, 1894 Gerhard Althaus (East Kilimanjaro) and 1896 Robert Fassman (Old Moshi), they all came to our area for missionary work. These missionaries were welcomed by our then chiefs like Rindi, Shangali, and Kwimbere, all are from Eastern and Northern part of Kilimanjaro Region, where I am coming from. So we from the Northern Diocese can note the signs of partnership with Germany so far back. If someone would like to understand church partnership between Tanzania and Germany, he or she can look back to the 18th century.

The understanding of partnership nowadays looks like one-way traffic in one side, and on the other side looks like a two-way traffic. For example in case of visits, both sides are visiting each other. Germany partners are visiting Tanzania and we are also visiting Germany, this is two-way traffic. But now follows a question: Who pays for the tickets? Who actually bear the costs? In the cases of projects establishment, is there any project from South to North? And how many from North to South? This all brings the sense of one-way traffic type of partnership.

When we from East Kilimanjaro District of Northern Diocese are invited to Germany, our partner pays for everything like tickets, food, accommodation, transport, insurance etc. It is surprising, when they come to us. They also pay almost everything for themselves. This is not fair and not healthy for the partnerships. There are things, we can contribute. We can provide for example free accommodation, food, and pay other small costs. One-way traffic in partnership is not fair. Fair partnership is the one, whereby all parties contain the element of donor and recipient. All should be donors and recipients. St Paul wrote: "It's better to give than to receive." I say in addition: It's better to give and it's better to receive, also it is costly to receive without giving.



Shaping of the partnership

The partnership should not be built on material things like projects, money etc. Let projects be fruits or outcome of partnership. By making material things the basis or foundation of partnership, we start its end at the very beginning of it. Fellowship, communication, praying together, cultural sharing to me is the basis of partnership and not only projects and funds transferring.

For a long time, partnership has been built on visiting each other and supporting projects. I acknowledge this, as it has raised the quality of life of our church. We can shape our partnership by adding some steps, which will bring a new kind of partnership, which focuses on equality of needs and wishes of both sides. For example, the African partner may contribute even a small part to each activity. For example, giving reports of income and expenditures on the projects supported by the German partner, contributing to the environment protection strategies, advising on the strategies, which will attract more people to attend Sunday services, which are better attended now in the South than in the North. We can also shape partnerships by opening new types of partnerships of individuals with some kind of management of the Partnership Desk.

I hope for example, that if one family, which does not attend church services in Germany, gets a partner in Africa, who attends the service, after one or two years of visiting each other, the partner in Germany may be persuaded to act like his or her partner in Africa. So let's create a partnership of individuals at the ordinary level of life but under management of the Partnership Desk. Let's avoid shaping the partnership on the basis of one being a donor and the other part remaining as recipient. Let's all be donors and recipients.

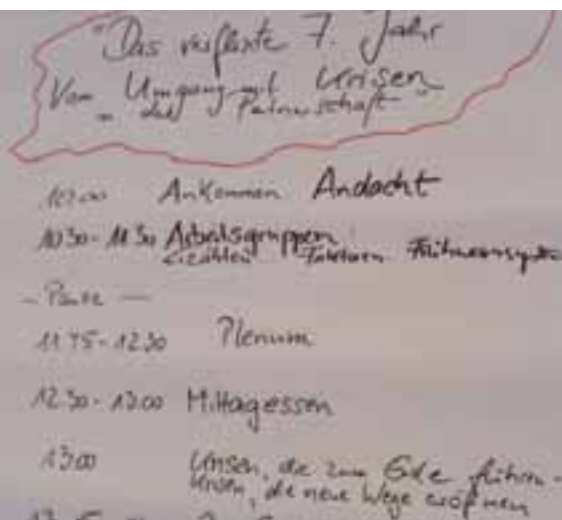
Learning in partnership

We have one world, and we are in different places. As we are in one world in different places and different situations, let's make partnership to a tool to bring us together from our places to meet at one place of learning from each other. Most of the partners make visits, and this is very good.

Partnership can help to break down our historical backgrounds, I mean bad historical memories. This will enhance the understanding and learning from other cultures. We have so much to learn from our cultures. For example, the culture of greeting everybody you meet, even if you don't know him or her. Other cultures don't have room for it. In my village of almost 35,000 indigenous people for example, we know almost each other person, I have visited almost half of their houses. How often do you visit your neighbours, and how many do you know?

I hope we can start a kind of partnership in this very first step. We can also learn to attend Sunday services and church services. In my parish, for example, 500 to 600 congregants attend the Sunday service each Sunday, do you think you might have something to learn here? We can learn how women are given chances to share life and contribute their ideas equally before men. I think we from the South have to learn from the North.

"Generally, the learning process in partnerships comes through everyday experience and life which will be enhanced by visits, writing letters and e-mails, conducting different projects, etc. All this may be learnt through partnerships. Partnership is ecumenical learning community. In this point global church is the very community." (Dr Klaus Schäfer in Leipzig) To enhance strong and sustainable partnership and to develop a learning concept in partnership we should include the young people (I mean teenagers), to take part. In my church for example for three years now we have received six volunteers from Germany in the project called WELT WÄRTS. They came in groups of two each year and stayed in our church for almost one year. (I thank you NMZ and



Programme of Group Work



Presentation by Working Group 2

your government for making this possible). These young girls learnt a lot and we learnt a lot from them. I argue to look for some possibilities of our young Tanzanians to come here for the same project if possible. I conclude this point by saying; let's make learning be one important point in building partnership. We have so much to learn from Germany and you have so much to learn from Africa/Tanzania

Project standards

In partnership, we can establish different projects. Let me say that all projects have to show ecumenical spirit. In my church, we have deacon project, in which volunteers from Germany are serving. In this project, we serve all denominations and all religions like Muslims. I like this and I want to convince you to acknowledge this kind of projects. I acknowledge having projects in partnership, but let them not be the backbone of partnership. We can set project standards based on an ecumenical spirit. Project standards must reflect on a memorandum of understanding of the concerned companionship. Partnership without a memorandum of understanding is a running car without driver. Projects standards may and must have:

1. Project write-ups;
2. Authorization by both parties and by responsible persons;
3. Reporting progress;
4. Financial reports (income and expenditure);
5. Evaluation of the project (check-up value for money);
6. Sustainability (project standards must be set in such a way that it will run on its own);
7. Budgets (projects have to be set in reasonable plan and must be the size of the partner);
8. Transparency statement including auditing;
9. Accountability.

Networking

As partnerships are developed and growing daily, it is a good idea that we partners establish a network. This will provide a chance to change ideas and to learn from each other on different issues. Partners must communicate. Partnership without communication is no partnership. Communication/networking is the lifeblood of the partnership. Sign of a lively partnership is communication. In communication, there should be frequently communication of daily activities. Communication shall be in the right place, right time, right person to the right issues.

New forms of partnership

We can develop partnership to other sectors and other groups as new forms of partnership. For example, teenager's partnership, choir partnership, individual persons partnership, retired person's partnership, pastors partnership, church elders partnership, ex-prisoners partnership.



**LUKE NZIOKI MWOLOLO,
KENYA**

“We are because you are” is well reciprocated in mutual partnerships. Christian associations are divine in their essence and mission for define purposes to humanity. We share the same derivation – Gods’ idea “Imago dei”- made a reality in creation and bestowed with responsibilities (Gen.1:28). We are all commissioned to live as commons “have unity and be together in unity powered by God’s Love” (Jesus prayer for us and it pleases God – Jn. 17:21 and Ps. 133:1). Finally, we are destined to eternity through a divine assurance. (Jn.3:16). Partnership is a receive-give relationship.

Significance of our partnership

- Accompanying each other in God's mission in the great commission to propagate the gospel in a more concrete and holistic manner – serving God and humanity.
- A platform or a bridge of learning through communicating – listening and understanding each other for positive advocacy.
- Sharing our values and versatile human resources (talents, expertise and energies) and financial support to in fill the gaps.
- An engagement to pursue God-given ideas in “creating” our world and improving our both ever wanting situations.
- Arenas to successfully meet the needs of each other in our complex settings thus creating chances for increased outputs and impacts – “Better together and working together in unity makes a heavy load lighter.”
- It's an association of being with each other where we find ourselves less critical, more full of faith and with a vision for the future thus bringing out the best in all of us.
- Opening doors of opportunities and widening both our scope of exposure for further action/research.
- A process of learning to appreciate each others’ cultures/lifestyle especially in the exchange programs.
- It's a possible investment connection that fortifies lives with the right friendship. “A friend in need is a friend indeed.”
- It's an empowering tool in creating a network of relationships based on “self-interests” rather than selfless or selfish welfares across board.

Problems and Challenges of Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC)

- Nationally, due to lack of rainfall, we have experienced severe drought, consecutive famine and loss of livestock. A situation still on-going to date.
- Increased prices of food products and fuel have affected mainly the low-income people who are unable to pay for kerosene for cooking or high fares for transport. The cost of one liter of paraffin is equivalent to one dollar which is a one day income for the majority.
- How to develop an elaborated strategy on climatic change adaptation in order to mainstream it in our KELC work in areas where we operate?
- The above challenges cause low income to KELC due to reduced offerings in the hunger stricken areas, thus the church end up in operating at a shortfall.
- The aftermath negative effect of HIV/AIDS in the country. There are numerous support groups and women leagues that support orphans and vulnerable children - OVCs who hardly have anybody to accompany them in supporting their initiative in kind or cash.
- An ailing General Secretary and lack of a Director of Dept. of Christian Education since mid of 2010 resulted to a drop in structural administrative and mission work/Christian education work respectively thus affecting the smooth running and performance of the church.
- An infiltrative, ineffective governance system and bad politics that allows social evils such as corruption to continue has delayed justice to our unattended court cases.
- Unattended court cases on litigation, conveyance and securing church assets due to lack of proper documentation and legal matters on regulatory matters in conformity to the government policies.
- Particularly in the church we have no corporate strategic plan that clearly postulates our programs for funding purposes. Thus we have insufficient funds to cater for the smooth running of our programs, projects and manpower.
- Non-accountability and irresponsible workforce. People with interest and good intention in promising themselves better life but lack commitment, response to their abilities and passion. The monitoring and follow-up systems are not elaborated.

- Insufficient manpower in service that limits a proper staff empowerment. Thus forming a deficit of resources in terms of personnel and materials.
- The support of students in education from poor families still remains a challenge due to limited funds for the sponsorship for secondary education kit.
- Lack of livelihood support initiatives where the root causes of the suffering majority are addressed irretrievably.
- Constitutional crisis, which is not at par with the current KELC structures in place.

The challenges that KELC is dealing with and will deal with in the near future

- Through the KELC think tank, we are in the process to establish a concrete corporate strategic plan with well defined programs.
- Provision of water for domestic and commercial use in order to boost and improve livelihoods.
- Strategizing the way to support students from poor families in education.
- With the Deputy General Secretary and the Legal Officer in office since October 2010 and February this year respectively, we are settling the structural, administrative and court cases which have been posing challenges for a long time and complying with all legal matters as required by the state/labor decrees.
- Strategizing on how to outreach the unreached "mission areas" with the saving tides of the gospel and through the mission of serving and healing "Diaconia".
- Improving the performance level of KELC workforce through staff appraisal, setting standards in performance contracts and monitoring.
- Address staff empowerment and motivation programs in spear-heading capacity building in workshops, seminars, trainings and accompaniment.
- Revisit and review the church constitution to accommodate the structural changes that the church has undergone over the recent past years especially the introduction and operation of districts.

Expectation from our partnership / Mutual aims for our partnership.

According to our KELC partnership policy, KELC expects a strong partnership with NMZ, which aims at respecting the following five core values;

- Attentively listening to each other: One cannot speak about something he/she hasn't heard well.
- Being open to understanding one another: You can only talk, ask or respond to a question after failure to understand or understanding it.
- Communicating to strengthen each other: Information is powerful and a mutual relationship is fueled by effective communication.
- Daring to Share with each other: Sharing both the human resources and financial equitably and our common faith/values empowers and builds unity.
- Excelling in advocating on behalf of each other: Positive advocacy is respecting each other's human dignity and a blessing to both equals in a partnership relationship.

Conclusion

We are all called to be God's followers, stewards, servants and sons. Let us all be compassionate to each other and demolish walls of our prejudices, stereotypes, assumptions, imaginations, expectations. Alternatively lets us all join hands together in building more and strong bridges of mutual partnerships through listening in understanding each other. May the word of God be light where we stand and a spotlight to guide us in the pilgrimage to our destiny (Ps.119:105).



GUGU SHELEMBE, SOUTH AFRICA

What is your opinion on the importance of partnership?

- Partnership is important in that it offers partners a space for mutual learning.
- It challenges partners to think out of their confinements.
- It also offers a space of demystifying certain beliefs that could be held by one part about the other. It becomes easier to understand one another's point of view if there is a space for engagement and interaction.
- Partnership for me is a space to explore, discover and celebrate diversity and also to look for ways to unite in diversity as well as the ability to face human challenges in a single strengthened voice.

What problems or challenges have you and your church been facing during the last years?

- Climate change is one of the major issues faced not only by the church but also by communities at large because for subsistence, we heavily rely on agricultural practices and in the rural communities. We do not have running water. We depend on the rain. There have been either floods, which swept away all the vegetables, or there has been drought so that there has been no water for watering and livestock die on daily basis of thirst.
- In the context of poverty, gender based violence and HIV/AIDS the church is challenged to find solutions to deal with these issues in the communities.
- Service delivery protests around the country which have destroyed infrastructure and this hits the communities hard that we serve as the church.

What challenges will you and your church deal with in the near future?

- Educating our communities about caring for the environment is crucial for the church in the near future. This will be done through Bible studies on Eco Justice and other related theologies. These Bible studies will be at the level of clergy and ordinary church and community members.
- Challenging religious leaders to engage more with social issues and deepening the understanding of spirituality as well as right based development approach. Religious leaders will be encouraged to write pastoral letters denouncing stigma attached to HIV/AIDS infected and affected people.
- To empower the marginalised community groups so that they are able to reclaim their dignity in the communities. This will be done through skills development focusing on the human rights approach.

**What do you and your church expect from your partnership with the NMZ?
What are your mutual aims for our partnership in the future?**

- Some of the issues are still new for us and our communities therefore we would like to have more support from our NMZ partners in a form of information sharing and skills development and exchange.
- Exchange learning and exposure visits will also help us advance our course and enhance our capacity.
- Exchange some Bible studies and updates about our achievements and challenges.
- Observe important ecumenical prayer and special services and special events commemoration days.

PARTNER CHURCHES OF THE NORTHELBIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH:

EUROPE

- Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELK)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of European Russia, deaneries of St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad
- Russian Orthodox Church, diocese of St. Petersburg
- Church of England, dioceses of Ely and Durham
- Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Evangelical Lutheran synod and congregations

MIDDLE EAST

- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)

LATIN AMERICA

- EL SALVADOR**
- Lutheran Church of El Salvador (ILS)
- BRAZIL**
- Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB)

EL SALVADOR

San Salvador

NICARAGUA

Managua

BRAZIL

São Paulo

URUGUAY

Porto Alegre

ARGENTINIA

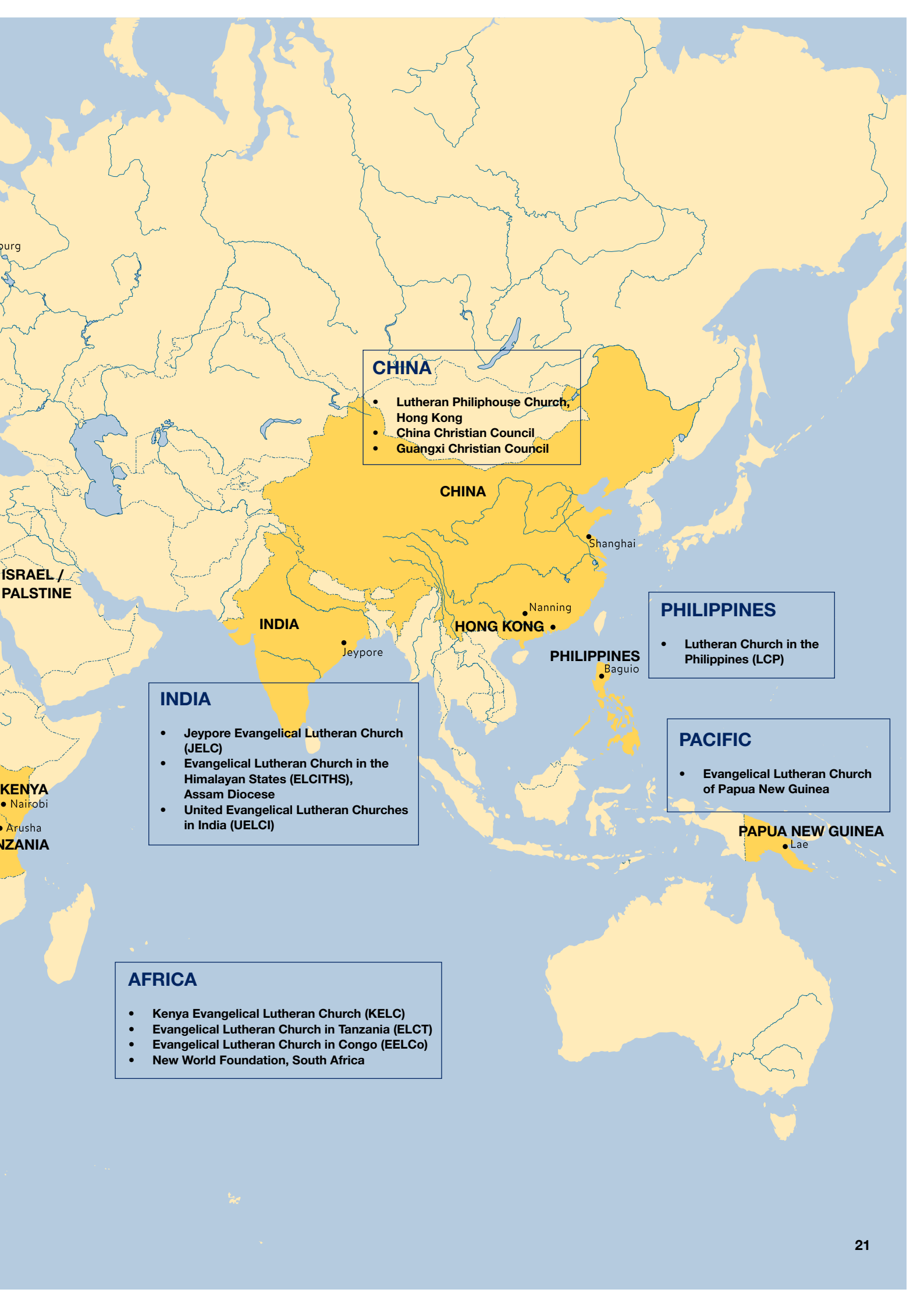
DEM. REP. CONGO

TANZANIA

Lubumbashi

Pretoria

SOUTH AFRICA



- CHINA**
- Lutheran Philipouse Church, Hong Kong
 - China Christian Council
 - Guangxi Christian Council

- INDIA**
- Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC)
 - Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Himalayan States (ELCITHS), Assam Diocese
 - United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India (UELCI)

- PHILIPPINES**
- Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP)

- PACIFIC**
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea

- AFRICA**
- Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC)
 - Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)
 - Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo (EELCo)
 - New World Foundation, South Africa

burg

ISRAEL / PALSTINE

KENYA
• Nairobi
Arusha
TZANIA

CHINA

INDIA

Jeypore

HONG KONG

Nanning

Shanghai

PHILIPPINES

Baguio

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Lae



Geographical positioning of delegates

PROGRAMME OF THE CONSULTATION

Sunday 26th June 2011

- 10:00 Opening Worship
- 12:00 Lunch
- 13:00 „World Tour“
- 14:30 Blessing and departure
- 18:00 Dinner
- 19:30 Introductions and convivial conclusion of the day

Monday 27th June 2011

- 09:15 Devotion
- 09:30 Welcome and presentation of the programme
- 09:45 Sequence and content of the consultation process
- 11:00 An insight into the Northelbian Partnership Qualification Process
- 12:30 Lunch and Break
- 15:00 Feedback of the guests
- 18:30 Festive evening with representatives of the Northelbian Church and the NMZ

Tuesday 28th June 2011

- 09:00 Devotion
- 09:30 Meeting with members of the six working groups, Discussion in working groups
- 12:30 Lunch and Break
- 14:00 Continuation of the discussion in working groups
- 16:00 Summary of results in separate groups
- 18:00 Dinner
- 19:00 Contributions from partner churches
- 20:00 Dancing
- 21:00 Open End

Wednesday 29th June 2011

- 08:00 Breakfast
- 09:00 Devotion
- 09:30 Presentations of the results
- 12:30 Lunch and Break
- 17:00 Closing Ecumenical Worship, St. Jacobi Church, Buffet and musical programme

Consultation

The International Partnership Consultation was a further highlight of the qualification process for partnership work. The main goal was to involve our international partners in the process and to integrate their point of view. Together with the regional desks of the Northelbian Mission Centre we invited 14 guests from our partner churches, who are all working as coordinators for partnership work in their churches. During the Partnership Consultation the delegates had many opportunities to meet with the members of the working groups and to enter into discussion about the interim results. Their feedback was then incorporated after the consultation. At the same time relationships and exchange between the partners was intensified through the possibility of meeting in this form.

The delegates received written information about the project “Ecumenism in Northelbia – shaping sustainable partnerships” to help them to prepare for the consultation. They also received the interim results of the six working groups in May 2011. Before the consultation started, the delegates visited different Northelbian partnership groups and were informed about the subjects of the Qualification Process by members of the working groups. This intense preparation was a good basis for the discussions during the Partnership Consultation.

The opening of the Partnership Consultation was integrated into the Mission Festival of the Northelbian Mission Centre in Breklum, the “Jahresfest”, in cooperation with the Regional Centre West Coast. The delegates were integrated in the programme of the Festival. The official opening of the Partnership Consultation took place during the service held by Dean Jürgen Bollmann in the church in Breklum on Sunday the 26th of June 2011.

The consultation then continued from the 27th to the 29th of June in the „Haus am Schüberg“ in Ammersbek near Hamburg. Members of the six working groups spent these days together with the delegates from the partner churches. There was a lot of discussion between all the delegates as well as with the German partners regarding ideas and visions for future partnership work.

The delegates and members of the six working groups discussed some subjects more intensely. The ecumenical delegates took part by alternating in the different working group meetings. In this intense dialogue, they were able to give their ideas and their prepared comments and to discuss consequences and perspectives for the future of partnership relations.

The results were presented to the whole group at the end of the Partnership Consultation and comments were heard and the results were written down.

A joint service in the St. Jacobi church in Hamburg followed by a meal and a cultural presentation closed the International Partnership Consultation. Mrs. Ulrike Hillmann, the Vice-President of the Northelbian Synod, gave a word of greeting from the Northelbian Church to the delegates and their respective churches.

Thus you are no longer aliens in a foreign land

Sermon by Dean Jürgen Bollmann on June 26, 2011,
Breklum-Church opening the Partnership Consultation

Ephesians 2, 17-22

So Christ came and proclaimed the good news: peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both alike have access to the Father in the one spirit. Thus you are no longer aliens in a foreign land, but fellow-citizens with God's people, members of God's household. You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the corner-stone. In him the whole building is bonded together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built with all the others into a spiritual dwelling for God.



Grace be with us and the peace from God our Father and our Brother and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

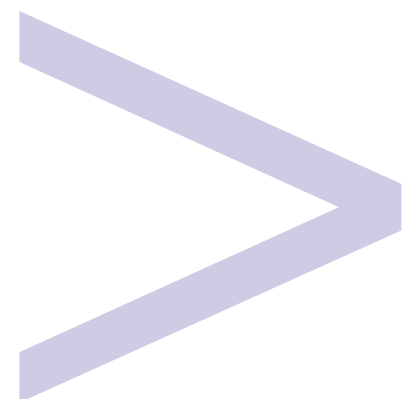
Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

This is why we are here today: Christ proclaimed the good news; all people in the world should live in peace. And everybody has access to our heavenly father through him. The one spirit, the Holy Ghost, has taken rule over the hearts and brains. There is no longer need for war, no longer violent conflicts since mankind can imagine living together in God's household as sisters and brothers, children of the father, who is mother for us at the same time. Those who can imagine this will no longer repeat the saying that all people are aliens, nearly everywhere. Those who can imagine this will repeat that we are fellow-citizens with God's people everywhere in the world. We belong together. Our aim is Christ Jesus who brought enduring peace to us.

So we are together in the church of Breklum, black and white, speaking so many languages and dialects, having so many different ideas how life can be in line with what we believe. The people of Breklum and those of other villages and cities in northern Germany, the people of India, Africa, Papua New Guinea, Latin America, Europe – we have come together for worship and to celebrate the holy communion. As long as we understand ourselves as fellow-citizens of God's house, we will discuss our problems in absence of any violence, trying to understand each other even when we are convinced that there is only one truth in the issue we talk about. We belong to God's family. Therefore, we know that there is only one truth: God's love, which includes all people, which makes all of us fellow-citizens of the saints and housemates of God. For us Christians this truth has a name: Jesus Christ. He taught us to call God our father and to look on the neighbours as sisters and brothers.

What does it mean for our partnership? What does it mean for the way we share our insights, our interests and understandings of the gospel? Can we really take part in the life of the others even when we visit each other? Such questions await our answers whenever we are living together with others in our village, our city, our country, our one world.

Wherever people come together they will organize an agenda. Who will dominate, who will determine the agenda? Those who are in possession of wealth, knowledge, and other means to make life comfortable? Or will those who declare themselves as poor, exploited, and victims dominate morally? And what about the differences due to cultural dependence? How can we develop a situation of mutual acceptance and understanding when we work, pray and talk together? Are we able to live the project of inclusion in our respective societies and in a global world?



Dear brothers and sisters, there are so many unanswered questions. And I think we can easily continue the list. When we come together, we should be aware of them. And we should know that everyone of us has her or his own standing in the face of God. God, our father and mother at the same time, is looking upon every single person from his perspective of love. Shouldn't we remember that also that person with whom we are in conflict is a beloved child of our common father? God's love unites us across all ethnic, cultural, sexual, and personal borders. It will not equalize one another. It will throw light upon the specific person with whom I am dealing at this moment. This moment will be important, whether we can place confidence in each other or not.

In the partnership between our churches, it will be necessary to build up strong relations between single persons who stand for the institution they belong to. Confidence among us comes into being first of all through personal encounters. The more persons come into contact with persons from the other house, family, parish, church, people, the more they can develop a partnership that is based on mutual understanding. There is at least a greater chance to build up a house of confidence, where the occupants get to know from one another

- what they like and what they do not like,
- what is their understanding of life and their believe,
- how they describe their relation to God and other people,
- how they act in situations of danger and emergency,
- how they celebrate feasts, and
- how they struggle to come up to their daily needs.

Those of us who have lived in partnership for many years will agree that the sun of joyfulness is not always shining bright. Clouds of misunderstandings and distrust, jealousy and differences in interest can darken our meetings. It will be necessary then still to hold the contact, to hold on in prayer for each other, to ask others for help and mediation. As we are still living together as members in God's household, there is no other possibility than to hold the line, to keep confidence in the power of the Holy Ghost who will lead us through the dark clouds towards heaven to an understanding of each other in the light of love.

Today we start our International Partnership Consultation. We are thankful to God that we have the opportunity for this meeting over some days. We will give each other insight into what we believe and think and feel. We will meet each other with open eyes and ears. Together we will praise the Lord. We will try to look at each other from God's perspective. We will hear anew the good news that Jesus Christ proclaimed: peace to everyone. And God in his grace will give us the experience of the joyfulness of his children.

Amen.



Mauro Souza like all other delegates brought soil from his home country for the consultation.



Soil from Papua New Guinea, brought by Kinim Siloi



Ecumenical Holy Communion

Welcome to the Consultation by Dr. Klaus Schäfer, Director of the Centre for Global Ministries and Ecumenical Relations

A hearty welcome to the International Partnership Consultation!

“Partnership” is a term that was introduced into the vocabulary of the ecumenical movement already a long time ago. When first adopted during the meeting of the Council for World Mission and Evangelism at Whitby in 1947 it signalled a paradigm shift in the relations of European and North American churches to the then so-called “Young(er) Churches” in the global South. The notion and impression of guardianship, paternal protection or even supremacy and dependency was supposed to be replaced by a sense of mutual respect, openness and trust to one another and a shared commitment to the common cause of participating together in God’s mission.

Since then the vision of partnership has invigorated Christians and other people around the world. We all, who participated in this movement and were engaged in ecumenical partnerships in one way or another, have over the years been enriched and challenged, stimulated and thrilled through the encounters with different people who then became our friends. Even though we have at stages – this also is part of the experience in ecumenical partnerships – become frustrated, and perhaps were at times even led to the fringes of despair about the difficulties of communication, mutual understanding or occurring conflicts within our partnership, or with the situation of world poverty and misery around us. Yet we have never lost sight of the significance that this experience of a living partnership across borders of language, culture and socio-economic conditions has for the life of our churches as well as for the individuals concerned.

We are glad that we have a strong partnership movement in our Northelbian Evangelical-Lutheran Church. And we are happy to have the opportunity to reflect afresh on the meaning and scope, on the experience and guidelines for partnership. A lot of work has already been done in different working groups. Now it is time to bring the results and suggestions together and discuss them in this international setting of our consultation. And we are glad that you and your churches responded so positively to our invitation to recapture together again the vision of what ecumenical partnership means for all of us!

We welcome each and every one of you! And we wish you – and all of us – a stimulating time: a time of evaluation and serious reflection, a time of open and frank discussions and last but not least a time of joy and celebration. And this not only for our individual benefit as participants, but also for the well-being of the churches around the world that we represent!

May God bless our deliberations!



Dr. Klaus Schäfer



The team of moderators for the consultation



Erasto Mwaipopo

Consultation

“We want to listen to one another more attentively”

Statements of Delegates to the Partnership Consultation



“We hope for a long lasting partnership with NMZ and the North Elbian Church. We wish to go on our journey of faith together with our partners and raise our voices against injustice and oppression together.”

ANGELIOUS MICHAEL
Partnership Coordinator and Youth Programme Coordinator, Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC)



“We expect the continuing commitment of our partners in the NMZ to the ecumenical process and we aim to extend the number of local church contacts and to develop other ways in which church members in our two countries can share their experiences and their expertise.”

JOHN BEER
Archdeacon of Cambridge and Chairman of the Northelbe Committee in the Diocese of Ely, Church of England



“I hope that our partnership will never be based on material things like the funding of projects or money. These things should be the fruits of a partnership but not its basis.”

LOVELAND MAKUNDI
General Secretary of the East Kilimanjaro District, Northern Diocese of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)



“We want to listen to one another more attentively, to really grasp the problems of the other. One cannot speak about something one hasn't heard well. Such a communication will strengthen all of us.”

LUKE NZIOKI MWOLOLO
Deputy General Secretary of the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC)



“Because of the inequality of wealth, sometime small organizations or churches can receive financial, material aid from big organizations or churches. But money or aid should not take the first position. Because partnership should be understood as equality too.”

JEAN-CLAUDE MASUMBUKO LEYA
National Coordinator for Partnership of the Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne au Congo (EELCo)



“It becomes easier to understand one another's point of view if there is space for engagement and interaction. Partnership for me is a space to explore, discover and celebrate diversity and also looking for ways to unite in diversity as well as the ability to face human challenges with a single strengthened voice.”

GUGU SHELEMBE
Regional Manager Kwa Zulu-Natal Christian Council, Ladysmith, RSA



“Partnership means that God becomes alive and tangible in many individual contacts and in the different and multi-layered cultural conditions and the many languages of the world. Through the sharing of our faith we build God's church all over the world.”

KINIM SILOI
Director for Interchurch & Ecumenism, Church Partnership Coordinator, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea



“Partnership enriches and enlightens the life and work of the partners. It empowers and gives credibility to the Christian testimony in the world. It makes it possible to learn together about the big challenges faced by the partners (burning issues, urban mission, sustainability, climate change, etc.)”

MAURO SOUZA
Secretary for Comunitarian Services, Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil



"Partnership is a place to meet in community. My experience is that all who participate in a partnership will grow. People get to know cultures, issues and contexts of others different from their own – and thus very different realities. It is important for me that we search jointly for ways to build the Kingdom of God and to make many hopes to become true."

NORMA CASTILLO
Director of the Sister Parish Programme, Lutheran Church of El Salvador (ILS)



"First of all, I expect true partnership and not dominion and control. Secondly, not only financial support, but moral support too. Thirdly, honesty, transparency, and equality. And finally, to take into consideration the difficult situation we are living in due to the occupation."

ASHRAF TANNOUS
Vicar in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)



"Partnership brings together people of different traditions, smoothes the way for a better understanding of Christians of different cultures, removes prejudices against people who think and behave differently. Partnership enriches, because it provides us all the time with new ideas we get from our partners, adjust these ideas to our situation and put them into practice. Thus real friendship grows over long distances."

RITA BRUVERS
Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL)



"By informing one another about the developments and events in our churches and by conversations about theological and other issues important for both partners we hope to share something with our counterparts that are enriching them and thus contribute to our partnership."

ARHO TUHKRU
Secretary for Public and Foreign Relations of the Estonian Evangelical-Lutheran Church (EELC), Pastor of the Deanery of Tallinn

"I hope that in future not only pastors and church officials will meet but that it will be possible for church members to meet as well. I would welcome it, if young volunteers could come to our planned training centre as part of an exchange programme and work there in social service programmes."

CONGLIAN WANG
President of Guangxi Christian Council

STATEMENT OF CONGLIAN WANG, PRESIDENT OF GUANGXI CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

” *I like to speak of friendship when we talk of our relationship with foreign churches. It is like in a family: it is good to be together, to know of each other, to pray for each other and, where it makes sense, also to cooperate. In such a friendship, not everything has to be put in letters of intent and agreements. After all, we don't do this in private relationships either. Within the scope of such a friendship, I attach particular importance to exchange between grassroots Christians as well as young people. Perhaps in the future, we will be able to do this through volunteer exchange programmes.*

I would like to raise a second point. Partner churches should not receive too much money from abroad; otherwise they will become dependent and will never be truly financially independent. In my home province Anhui, where congregations have little contact with churches abroad, I found churches to be less caught in dependence from abroad, unlike churches in Guangxi with their many contacts in wealthy Hong Kong. If a congregation in Anhui faces repairs in their church, they don't look for support from abroad the way some churches in Guangxi do.

“

„The time for cuddling is over“

Personal impressions from leaders of the working groups

ELISABETH HARTMANN-RUNGE

Impulses

Real partnership can only be worked out together, and this requires a lot of communication. Modern media help us to communicate quickly (SMS, e-mails) and to ask questions or clarify issues. But we also need patience and creativity to work with people who do not have easy access to these media. Real exchange is the most precious thing we can experience and it was wonderful to experience the way the delegates from different partner churches entered into contact. We from Northelbia had already spent much time and thought on these issues and had already made some steps towards defining partnership work for ourselves. I want to take seriously the comments and questions from some delegates on how open the resulting papers really are and whether we from Northelbia have been trying to define the next steps for partnership work without our partners. The consultation was very short to enter into a true dialogue with the delegates.

Surprises

I did not really experience any surprises. I was impressed by the clear statements from younger delegates about the independent work done in their own churches on development and poverty reduction. Sensitive issues like postcolonial dependency, thankfulness for support from the “mother churches”, but also the worry about a never-ending dependency were raised. These issues are part of our global world and will remain challenging especially if we look at the way our government is approaching some of these issues.

The discussion about the necessity for church to be political and the different opinions on what political activities are possible in our church is also very difficult. This is a controversy that we have not been able to solve in our own country and it is mirrored in the international discussions. We were only able to briefly discuss a few aspects of these subjects. Positions from El Salvador and Latvia for example were very far from each other, which is understandable if you look at their different church and mission histories.

Lessons learnt

In a playful approach to the subject of joys and difficulties in partnership work we used stones as a symbol. Symbols are always ambiguous and have several meanings. For us Germans, stones are often seen negatively as stones in our way, obstacles, worries in our hearts and souls. Our partners often used the stones in their hands as symbols for Christ as the foundation we build our faith on, as the cornerstone, which keeps us together.

A Tanzanian delegate said during his stay: „At the next consultation let us not speak about partnership, let us speak about Mission in Germany.“

ROLF MARTIN

The time for cuddling is over. Our partners understand partnership as a modern partnership where controversial issues can be openly discussed. We have different expectations regarding our wish for politeness ... but we need to talk openly and clearly – paternal and maternal friendliness is no longer appropriate. When developing the standards we discovered that our partners are sometimes stricter and less compromising than we dare to be. I found it very interesting that the partners



Elisabeth Hartmann-Runge in a group discussion during the opening event



Rolf Martin in conversation with Gugu Shelembe

are sometimes stricter and less compromising than we dare to be. I found it very interesting that the partners experience the “Weltwärts Programm” (which they generally welcome) as a one-way street if it is only young people from the North who spend a year as a volunteer in the South. Young people from the South could also work in Kindergartens, orphanages or homes for handicapped people. This was something that I think is worth considering.

HENNING HALVER

Impulses

Even though the delegates had received the interim results of the different working groups beforehand (which is also a risk because a written document easily gives the impression that everything is finished even though it was only supposed to be interim results from the first third of the qualification process), there was not enough time for open discussion, questions and listening to the opinions of our partners. Maybe it was not clear enough to our partners that we in Northelbia are at the beginning of a reflection process. It was a beginning and a good one. I hope there will be more opportunities to continue in an exchange process with the international delegates.

“If you want to feel sorry for a middle European man, you have to watch him dancing” was what an African delegate once said at an international church consultation several years ago. This sentence resonated for me, but I won’t tell any more tales about the dancing lesson on the last evening of the Partnership Consultation.

Surprises

I was surprised and shocked when a woman delegate spoke loudly and clearly and apparently with rational arguments from her point of view against the ordination of women. I would have expected it from the men, but the fact that it was a woman speaking really surprised me.

Apparently not everyone is of the opinion that Christians live in the world and by definition must act politically and have to take a position regarding social and economical questions and questions of equality (even if only by staying silent).

And it is possible! One evening outside on the terrace several Germans sat next to one of the international delegates – and everybody spoke English. Another time there was a translation from English into the mother tongue and then that person answered in German – a wild and wonderful mixture of languages showing a determined will to enter into communication and understand each other.

Experiences

Wow! It was impressive to watch the translators work hard during the three days – competent, good and difficult translations of very challenging subjects and discussions. The translators made it possible for the delegates to share their experiences and opinions. That was really hard work and very well done. A big thank you goes to all the translators!

It was a good and intense experience of all the different countries, people and backgrounds in the devotions and services – to bring everything to God, to sing and pray together.



Henning Halver (l.) and Klaus Träger

„Hide and Seek“

Sermon delivered by Rev. Mauro Souza at Haus am Schüberg, on June 29th 2011



Mauro Souza

One of the best parts of my childhood was when my friends and I were playing hide and seek.

You know that game, don't you?

One kid closes his or her eyes and counts while the others hide. Then, the one who counted needs to search and find the others who hid. The first one to be found will be the next to seek. And so on. I loved to play that game!

It is a pity that adults are not allowed to play that anymore ... I believe I was very good at that game. I actually think I was one of the best players in my block. Man, I could really play it! My hiding places were difficult to find: they were funny and dangerous. I would hide on the treetops; I would hide under parked cars; I would hide on the roof of the houses; etc. I would hide in difficult places to find.

To be good at hide and seek felt nice. Among the kids, it gave a lot of status. On the other hand, to be good at hide and seek was bad, because nobody wanted to play with me. The play, the round, would just take too long. Remember: we could only start a new round when everyone was found. It felt good to get out of my hiding place 10, 15, 20 minutes into the game and shout: "Nobody found me! Nobody found me!" But there was a very bad feeling also: the feeling of not being found. The feeling to be left alone: "What if everyone goes home?"

The trick, then, was to show yourself on purpose. To make a little sound or noise or movement in order to be found. The danger was not to be found. The risk was not being found.

There is a place in the gospel according to Luke where Jesus talks a lot about lost things and found things. I will read a bit from Luke 15, verses 11-32.

11 Jesus continued: There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. 13 Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no-one gave him anything. 17 When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' 20 So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. 21 The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. 25 Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he

came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 ,Your brother has come,' he replied, ,and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' 28 The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, ,Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 31 ,My son,' the father said, ,you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

Imagine the situation! The guy thought his life was bad and boring. He goes to his dad and asks for his part of the money. Then he goes away. He spends his money in everything he was not supposed to. Then, in trouble, he decides to go back and ask his dad to accept him, not as his son anymore, but as a worker, as an employee. "Dad, I have sinned. Let me stay here with you." He was still far away when his dad saw him. The old man was so happy to see him that he ran toward him, and hugged him and kissed him, gave him sandals and a ring and a robe and ordered a huge feast.

So far, so good. Reconciliation, acceptance, forgiveness ... all those nice things we like to hear about. But then there was the older brother; the older brother felt bad, he felt really bad. When he realized his little brother, that tramp, that lazy brother got a feast from his dad ... "What about me, dad? I stayed here with you; I stayed here working for you all these years. Didn't get anything, not even a chicken to roast with my friends. How come, dad?"

"My son" – answers his dad – "you have always been with me. What is mine is yours. But this brother of yours, he was dead and now he is back to life. He was lost and has been found. He was lost and now he is found."

Dear brothers and sisters:

The father found his lost son. God has also found us. God has found us, in many different ways; in ways more numerous than it is possible to name. God has found each and every one of us. And maybe, just maybe: The center of the work you do is to empower people to know they are found by God. Maybe, the most important part of the work we do is to empower people to know and feel they have been found by God.

May God, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit ... may God grant us all the faith, the power, and the creativity to work hard so that more and more people may know and feel they have been found by God.

Amen.



Christa Hunzinger and Norma Castillo

“Your people will be my people and your God my God”

Devotion by Rev. Gugu Shelembe, South Africa,
on June 28th 2011



11 But Naomi said, “Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? 12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons — 13 would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD’s hand has turned against me!” 14 At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. 15 “Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.” 16 But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.” 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. 19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. (Rut 1:11-19)

We see in this text Ruth making a decision to go with Naomi her mother-in-law despite their cultural and religious differences and even the generational gap that existed between them. Despite the economic hardships and tragedies, that they had experienced together, they develop a very close relationship or partnership, which is underpinned by general concern each for the other.

The beginning of this partnership is marked by open discussions and choices that are clearly tabled before both Ruth and Orpah. No one tells Ruth what to do but she makes this noble decision to hold on to Naomi even when there are no personal gains involved.

Ruth in this case had no legal or cultural responsibility to Naomi, no one could have blamed her for remaining with her own people as Orpah had done.

It was her noble decision based on love and the experience of the beauty of Naomi's God and the desire to know Naomi's people that encouraged her to hold on. It was also a noble decision that Orpah based on her own consideration of a number of things, which I want to believe she did.

The goodness of Naomi's God is evident in Ruth's own confession when she said your God will be my God. The experience she had with Naomi's God made her to take this conscious decision to hold on no matter what. Ruth understood the meaning of her father in law's name Elimelech that means My God is King. She experienced the goodness of God through the love from this family who despite what they could have been in their country, they were prepared to go out and embrace other people and share with them the love of their God. Their faith is very inclusive in nature. Even those marginalised people are embraced in their partnership and in their faith. The two women synergistically enhanced one another's ability to demonstrate a greater love for the Lord and people. Their partnership allowed each to grow in their capacity to love the Lord through greater service. It also interesting to note that in their partnership Naomi does not boast about the advantages of who she is when she is with her own people. She ensured that she introduced Ruth to those who might open up better opportunities for her.

Naomi and Ruth's partnership showed everyone how God could produce unity through diversity. The two women were from different cultural backgrounds, but they worked in superb harmony to demonstrate how the Spirit blends diverse backgrounds through love.

I am certain that their partnership maintained a humble, truthful and respectable partnership throughout their entire lives hence Ruth is part of the lineage of Jesus.

Ruth's decision often challenges us as to what forms our partnerships? What determines them? Is it the love of God and the love we have for one another?

Mother Teresa once said:

*You can do what I can not do
I can do what you can not do
Together we can do great things.*

May God help us to commit ourselves to this process of Partnership Consultation as we gather our thoughts around the subject of partnership and the meaning of it.

Amen.

Results from the working groups

The following texts represent the results from the six working groups. The interim results were presented during the Partnership Consultation and discussed and changed during this exchange of ideas with the delegates. The working groups then incorporated the results and changed the texts after the consultation.



Constituting meeting of the working group 1

WORKING GROUP 1: “UNDERSTANDING OF PARTNERSHIP”

Discovering our own way of thinking and acting and reflecting on it in order to reach a clearly formulated understanding of partnership for all participants

This was the heading under which the working group 1 began its work.

Results:

Almost all participant's understanding of partnership has been influenced by what they have experienced and encountered in their lives, sometimes going right back to childhood.

(Examples: Born in 1939 and grew up in Java / French occupation zone [after the Second World War] and first contacts with French people of African origin / very close contact with Sinti and Roma in childhood / experience as a young adult in India / the misery and poverty of being a refugee after the Second World War.) Curiosity, the desire for more justice in the world, and in particular an interest in intercultural, theological and spiritual exchange of ideas with their partners were the reasons given for the participant's own involvement in partnership work.

Our experience in encounters with a foreign culture determines our own concepts of what a successful partnership is or should be. At one of our meetings, the Director of the NMZ, Dr Klaus Schäfer, introduced us to the history of ecumenical partnership work, starting with the Mission Conference in 1947 in Whitby/Canada, where thanks to the intervention of the "young churches" the division between "Christian" and "Non-Christian" countries was lifted. The first time the term partnership was used was in the motto of this conference „Partnership in Obedience“. In 1971 in Germany, it resulted in the first actual partnership relationship involving a Hanover congregation.

The working group 1 agrees with Klaus Schäfer that there are five basic principles for every inter-church partnership:

1. Partnership is an expression of living ecumenism.
2. Partnership is living Koinonia/Christian fellowship.
3. Partnership comes alive when both sides give and receive.
4. Partnerships need to discuss various agendas with each other.
5. Partnerships are communities of learning that work together on issues of culture, development and ecumenism.

An inter-church partnership must reflect not only on theological-spiritual topics but also on development policies towards a just ecumenical world. To achieve this they should follow the basic principles named above. In practice, this involves personal encounters between the partners that go beyond communication via post, telephone and internet. Programmes for visits in both directions should be standard practice in all partnership relationships.

A successful partnership relationship on this basis leads to: (examples are not in any special order of priority)

- people extending their horizons and recognizing themselves in the mirror that "others" hold up to them;
- a breaking down of fixed images of others, prejudices and racism; therefore working for peace and understanding;
- promoting a just ecumenical world;
- a globalized church as opposed to economic globalization;
- taking on responsibility for our "distant neighbours";
- a strengthening of faith, sharing church fellowship together;
- an open theological discourse so necessary in the ecumenical world;
- changes in one's own society and church.

Inter-church partnerships are based on the understanding that the partners are equal in every way and in openness and intercultural tolerance face up to difficult challenges such as:

- cross-cultural communication;
- dealing with finances;
- sharing theology.

In Workshop 1 of the Partnership Consultation the participants placed particular importance on the following points:

1. The partners are at present experiencing a development in their partnership relations with the Northelbian Church: from development of the economically weaker partner churches towards more partnership and equality in the work we do together. Partnership requires transparency and must serve the common good. Partnership Guidelines are helpful to achieve this – on both sides! Partnership presumes that both sides feel responsible for each other.
2. Partnership requires intercultural and spiritual sensitivity and demands tolerance. Both partners should be open for the cultural influence from each other. The partners should have the freedom to learn from each other and to teach each other, however this should not mean that anyone should be forced to give up their cultural identity.
3. Criminal activities can destroy a partnership in the same way as lack of communication. A partnership may be ended and in the same way, it is acceptable to develop new forms of partnership. Money can destroy a partnership: an unhindered flow of money brings problems and conflicts.
4. Partnership is an opportunity to allow the Body of Christ to grow and an opportunity to understand better the history of the church on both sides.

MEMBERS OF WORKING GROUP 1

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Rudolf Görner
Susanne Görner
Sabine Haft
Helmut Hoffmann
Margreth Hormann
Frank-Michael Wessel
Joachim Wöbke
Katja Zornig

Leaders of the Working Group

Tanja Neubüser
Klaus-Michael Täger

REACTIONS OF WORKING GROUP 1 TO THE PARTNERSHIP CONSULTATION

From the perspective of the working group 1 the consultation led to more openness and frankness on the question of a mutual partnership understanding. Especially during the second (afternoon) meeting with the delegates questions about conditions, which may lead to the termination of a partnership, were discussed openly. Examples include not only a lack of sensitivity within the cultural exchange but also cultural boundaries that cannot be overcome and may finally lead to the termination of the relationship. Other risks mentioned were the „dominance of money“ in a partnership and a lack of communication. Overall, the open consideration of the possible failure of a partnership was felt to be a relief: Partnerships are allowed to be „terminable“ instead of „everlasting“. This is also reflected in the final version of the results of working group 1.

Klaus Täger

Constituting meeting of the working group 2



MEMBERS OF WORKING GROUP 2

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Dorothea Fiedler
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Ruth Gänßler-Rehse
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Wolfram Goebel
Sandra-Diana Gradert
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Ursula Hauser
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Astrid Huhn
Edgar Huhn
Hedda Knuth
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Gisela Reiniger
Edeltrudis Rudolph
Gerhard Thimm
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Frau Wortmann
Elke Wrage

Leaders of the working group

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WORKING GROUP 2 „SHAPING OF PARTNERSHIP“

Ecumenical partnerships are established, organized and brought to life by people of different countries, cultures and living conditions on the basis of the Christian faith. God calls us as human beings to be God's co-workers at and in creation and relates us one with the other. Within ecumenical partnerships person to person relations are regarded as especially precious. For us as well as for our partners the first time of coming together is always of very special value and significance (“the stories of ‘How it all began’”).

We regard as a special gift and task that we – as one of the many colours among God's people in the world – are allowed to be connected with other Christians and other people.

We remembered God's encouragement and challenge by reading the story of the baptism of Jesus. As God called Jesus of Nazareth as son and special representative, so we also are called through our baptism to accept God's encouragement with faith and to take up the challenge to think, live and act according to God's will. As people among people we are placed in the life of the one world and as God's daughters and sons we are called to follow God's commandments. By this we – Christians in the East and West, in the South and North – are connected with each other in ecumenical partnerships and take part in living and expressing our faith, and in the every-day-life and Sunday-life of our partners. We experience the world as it at present; shaped and organized by human beings, markets and existing powers. We take an interest in the realities that affect us all in different ways; economically, ecologically, politically, culturally and religiously. In many ways ecumenical partnerships are simply governed by the rules of the game that we as human beings have set for living together on earth. And whether we are successful or we fail, we should be aware that often enough these rules of the game separate us and divide us instead of bringing us together.

Partnership work means working for human rights. It also means putting the question ‘How can we do our utmost to help create a more just world?’ We – through the connections with our partners – will be vigilant and watch closely the developments in our globalised world and their effects on different societies. As partners, we must recognise the contexts and see how their effects are interrelated and where we, as citizens of the one world, should exert our influence.

We take an interest in each other and – in exchanging ideas and mutual encounters – identify similar challenges and problems (e.g. conditions of education, health care, living conditions of elderly people, future perspectives for children and young people, processes of impoverishment, escape and migration).

Being connected and interrelated with other protagonists within the church and working with different non-church groups and in other contexts is important in order to be able to analyse the situation better and get new ideas for action and so better reach the general public.

By sharing our faith we can assure each other that God's covenant for us and with us is stronger than all our attempts at binding ourselves together – in spite of all that separates and segregates us.

Based on these convictions the study group exchanged ideas on the following issues and came up with the positions that follow:

1. In ecumenical partnerships proved to be good:

- Mutual visits on a regular basis, coming together person to person, exchange in-between (via letter, telephone calls, faxes or e-mail).
- When the relevance of written agreements is assessed differently, the mutual expectations should be clarified, talked about and – if necessary – agreed upon anew.
- The common spiritual dimension and spiritual life should be taken very seriously. Partnership services, bible studies during the mutual visits and intercession should be part of the partnership. This is also necessary in order to involve our congregation(s) and keep them informed.
- How to deal with money (as one example and suggestion): Offerings are laid down on the altar and are taken from the altar. By this we understand our giving and receiving as sharing in the sight of God.
- It is good and helps to improve our understanding of each other when we identify common areas in our lives and discover them together (for example kitchen – subject area, nutrition). It's the same when we discover, explore, work out and discuss subject areas such as refugees, poverty and wealth. Workshops and excursions help to give concrete impressions and offer time for reflecting together and sharing impressions.

2. It becomes difficult:

- if money is involved without sufficient reflection on the consequences;
- if communication becomes difficult. Do we really understand each other?
- if church life and spirituality are understood in a different way and lived out differently;
- if there is a change in the persons who keep contact and are the main source of communication;
- if there is not an open discussion on who is going to be chosen for the visiting team.

3. We would wish:

- that the respective and common realities of life should be clearly considered and talked about – for example: the world economy, climate change, political realities, pretended or actual cultural terms and conditions...;
- that ecumenical relations become part of the every-day life of individuals, congregations and our churches as a constitutional matter of course.

4. Our ideas and suggestions for living partnerships:

- partnership days on a regular basis focussing on certain issues;
- partnership Sunday services coordinated together between the partners and held parallel;
- a clear understanding of the ecumenical dimension of the church at all levels.

REACTIONS OF WORKING GROUP 2 TO THE PARTNERSHIP CONSULTATION

The working group „Shaping of Partnership“ in the Northelbian PQ-Process met again on 7th October 2011 for a 5th meeting and reflected among other things on the Partnership Consultation in June 2011. We reminded each other of how we had experienced the consultation and evaluated what it meant for the interim results of our working group. Here is a summary and evaluation of what we established:

The Partnership Consultation was a good opportunity for the interim findings of the different working groups in the PQ process to be “read” by the international partners and commented on. We would have liked to have been able to make use of the presence of the people responsible for partnership work from so many different partner churches and countries to a greater extent. It was only possible under the circumstances to hear the very different and sometimes contradictory positions of the international delegates; however a more intensive discussion with them would, in our opinion, have been good for us all as members of the world Christian Church, and even things that could have “made us unsure” could also have enabled us to make more progress. We would have liked to have had the opportunity to get to know better the individual people from such different countries.

It was perhaps not really understood by the (German) participants in the PQ working groups just what a chance this opportunity offered us for encounter and exchange of ideas with the international delegates. It perhaps should have been made clearer to us that we as the German ecumenical partners were not expected to present almost complete papers, but rather to ask for reactions, answers, criticisms and corrections to these papers. There did not seem to be either time or opportunity for this, as the delegates of the Partnership Consultation had little opportunity to first get to know each others positions and backgrounds.

To sum up: a challenging opportunity, that was not sufficiently recognised and used for its exceptional value: but which gave very important new impetus.

Participants in working group 2 in the PQ process (Henning Halver for the group)



Constituting meeting of the working group 3

WORKING GROUP 3 “LEARNING IN PARTNERSHIP”

A. STATEMENTS

The statements served as a basis for the discussion in both meetings of the working group 3 on the Partnership Consultation. They were revised in the meetings and issues were added. The changes and additions made in the Partnership Consultation are printed in italics.

- a) *The basic condition for partnership is the wish to learn. The basic condition for learning is the willingness to openness and reflection and dialogue.*
- b) *Learning includes mistakes. Mistakes are an opportunity to learn from them. The partners need to be informed about mistakes in a friendly way to maintain the dignity of one another.*
- c) Specific for learning in partnership is the willingness to intercultural encounter, *sharing of every day-life and exchange on different topics:*
 - Spiritual-theological topics;
 - development issues (fair trade, globalisation);
 - *justice, human and cultural rights (advocacy work);*
 - social and ecological topics;
 - *migration and refugees and contact to migrant churches in one's own society;*
 - other ways of living and worldviews which fascinate and (sometimes at the same time) create alienation;
 - ecumenism and spirituality.
- d) The learning process happens between people in personal communication (talks, mails), in encounters (travels, visits) and also *through reading of newspapers, literature, theological and biblical reflection and declarations. Communication is like “lifeblood” in the partnership. Mutual and sustainable communication needs people who take on responsibility for this on both sides, for example a committee with a chairperson who is not the pastor.*
- e) The encounter with the partners creates an awareness of development and global issues and connections. That leads to self-reflection and to a commitment to initiatives for more justice.
- f) *Help without communication and reflection with the people concerned corrupts the process of learning. Help needs to be a fruit of the partnership.*
- g) *Learning does not necessarily mean to approve the other culture or way of living, but at least to accept the differences. It is difficult to answer the question where the limits of acceptance are and where protest against an inhuman culture and way of living becomes necessary.*

B. OVERVIEW OF THE DISCUSSED TOPICS

(with additions coming from the consultation)

1. Learning in General

Learning takes place at different levels: cognitive, emotional, spiritual, with all senses. There is a learning of facts, getting to know ways of behaviour, widening one's own horizon through experiences, through interest towards other people and things, especially foreign people and things. Language abilities are important for learning together, but also games, music, praying or cooking together. Learning always also means to practise.

Learning about others is at the same time learning about me – in getting to know others I recognize my own specific characteristics. Learning changes my behaviour, my own views and forms of living. Learning includes mistakes. Mistakes are an opportunity to learn from them. The partners need to be informed about mistakes in a friendly way to maintain the dignity of one another.

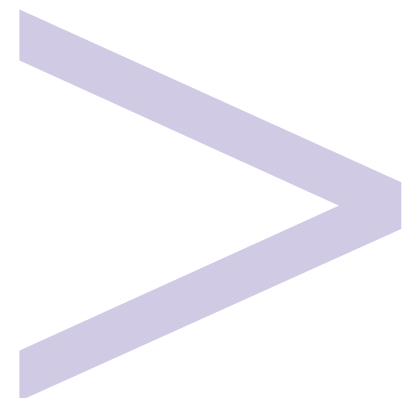
Neurobiological research has found out that learning is much connected with inner images. These images are shaped by our culture and environment. It takes efforts to change them. It is important to recognize the different “inner images” and pre-conditions for learning (power, money, gender etc.). The paramount image is important: Perceiving is possible! It is worthwhile. Learning is supported by confidence and mutual respect, by openness towards others, enjoying new things and an open way of dealing with prejudices. Learning is hindered by insistence on one's own view, narrow-mindedness, fear of conflicts, pressure as well as poverty, hunger and language problems.

2. Learning in Partnerships

The basic condition for partnership is the wish to learn. By learning in partnerships one looks beyond one's own church tower, is open towards strange food, dances, singing and praying. One accepts different cultures and in this recognises one's own limits of acceptance. The question is when a culture or way of living is no longer acceptable but contradicts Christian ethics or human rights and thereby discussions about the differences or even protest against it become necessary.

Learning in church partnerships is also an exchange in faith, a realisation: In all our differences we are one church, one body of Christ. Celebrating worship together and praying for each other is part of this learning. This learning makes us realise: We are one world. My way of living has an impact on the situation of the partners. I have to look where I have to change my way of living to help the partners – when parishes start to buy fair trade products or participate in campaigns, they might support the partners better than by direct financial support. Learning reduces our own eurocentrism.

This partnership should be on eye to eye level: telling each other about our own life and faith, about family, every day life and parish life. Interest in the other is necessary on both sides, it cannot be one-sided only. It helps if partners do something together and support is not a one-way street. It is important to look on a common aim, to look into the bible together, to celebrate and pray together. Partnership is not possible without communication. The learning process happens between people in personal communication (talks, mails), in encounters (travels, visits) and also through reading of newspapers, literature, theological and biblical reflection and declarations. Communication is like “lifeblood” in the partnership. Mutual and sustainable communication needs people who take over responsibility for this on both sides, for example a committee with a chairperson who is not the pastor.



REACTION TO THE CONSULTATION BY WORKING GROUP 3

The participants of working group 3 experienced the Partnership Consultation as a very intensive time. We really experienced encounters between different nations and different cultures in these three days. In the discussions on our working paper we received confirmation of many of our ideas. There were no contradictions to our paper but many constructive additions that we were able to work directly into it during the two sessions. One question however remains; in how far the partners were able to respond adequately in three days to papers that had been developed in a one-year process.

Christa Hunzinger

3. Learning in meeting each other

Partnership becomes alive through personal encounter. A trip to the partner country helps to widen the horizon and has to be prepared carefully concerning contents as well as language. Openness for new and also strange people and things is an important pre-condition: First I need to realise, hear, see, smell, feel; secondly we can talk about it. Possible difficulties should be communicated to the partners before the visit (e.g. vegetarians in a country where meat is a symbol of great hospitality). It helps to share in the every day life of a family. We can see things of our everyday life, which we take for granted, in a new light (e.g. electricity, tap water), we can reflect on our own standards in a new way.

Visits from the partner country should not create fears concerning hospitality. We should not feel ashamed to offer small rooms. We should reflect carefully how we can present ourselves. Our partners should get the chance to get to know every day life here and should see those things, which are normal for us, e.g. that we can drink tap water, but have to pay for water and waste water. We should also use public transport. There should be time for the church as well as for the non-church context and for extraordinary things, and also for the exchange on spiritual-theological, social, environmental and developmental topics. Questions of justice, human and cultural rights as well as issues of migration and refugees should be discussed. The contact to migrant churches in one's own society and in the country of the partners also belongs to the exchange. We have to lay open our finances: Who pays what? What about pocket-money, what do I get for it? Even in our society, we cannot afford everything. The time between visits can be bridged through letters, telephone calls, mails, facebook, although this does not replace visiting each other. We can show our inner closeness by integrating customs of our partners, which we like into our own situation. Partnership songs and partnership worships can remind us of our partners. The faith of our partners helps our congregations as brave examples of living faith.

4. Learning in Spirituality

Experiences in faith and spirituality are an important field of learning in partnerships. They bring a deeper knowledge of each other and also let us realise what is strange to us or even disconcerting. At the same time, faith is the common foundation, which connects us. In our faith we are equal, there is no hierarchy. Together we stand before God with empty hands.

Concerning spirituality there are experiences, which make us happy and others, which disconcert us. Experiences, which made people, happy are for example spontaneous prayers and praise at a picnic (while the Germans were more concerned about the food) or spontaneous Evening Prayers of pupils of a boarding school. The natural way of expressing one's faith in every day life without any shame can infect others. Singing and making music together brings people together. Spirituality is inspiring when it is authentic. Then one can feel joy even up to the fingertips.

On the other hand, some experiences remain strange: the idea of a punishing God, which one can find for example in the practise of church discipline, which existed in earlier times in our context as well, or the frequent talk about sin in worship. In partner churches, we experience a stronger emphasis on individual sin/responsibility, less the view on social and political sin/responsibility. By meeting in partnerships global topics come more into focus and into our own field of vision (e.g. climate change, water, agriculture).

We discussed a letter of a Tanzanian woman she wrote after her visit to Germany. It caused many questions: How is it about faith in Germany? How serious is faith for you in every day life? Is there a need for a Christian mission to Germany – starting from Africa? The letter caused a very controversial discussion in our group – from reactions like “This letter is a gift” to “That makes me furious, you are not better your-

self” and “There is another view of the world in which there is little chance of change: Europe is already lost. As we have our own images, so have they”.

5. Fascination and Foreignness in Partnerships

There are many experiences of fascination and foreignness in partnerships. Sometimes it is good just to realise this, to enjoy the positive things or to stand the difficult bits, sometimes it is good to question them. Sometimes it is important to bear conflicts, to be open for them, also to live with the frustration and to have much patience. It is important not to stop the communication. Often one learns best in difficult situations.

Our understanding of terms is shaped by our context. For example, people in Western Europe do not necessarily define the term tolerance in the same way as people in Eastern Europe, Latin America or China. In this aspect also it is important to listen to each other and to explain our understanding of words. Sometimes people describe very different facts with the same term.

Open questions remain in dealing with Aids, homosexuality, gender issues (the understanding of the different roles) and the recognition of female pastors. How can we deal with the Dodoma Declaration? How with violence against women, children, pupils? How about different understandings of education? How about the understanding of magic powers? When are acceptance and silence not the right reactions, but discussion or even protest?

It is good to show each other also the problematic areas during our visits and not to hide them (e.g. old people’s homes in Germany/Aids problems in strongly affected countries).

6. „Helping“ in Partnership

It is also worthwhile to think about the issue of „help“ in a partnership. Under which circumstances can “help” create good results, when does it do more harm, makes/ holds people dependent and reinforces inequality? We reflected on sentences like “The opposite of good is well-meant”, “Helping hinders partnership at eye to eye level” and an example from the Philippines: “We do not want you to remain here and ‘help’. We want you to return to your country and change society there. That helps us much more!” Help without communication and reflection with the people concerned corrupts the process of learning. Help needs to be a fruit of the partnership.

C. IDEA OF THE WORKING GROUP 3 TAKING UP AN IDEA OF WORKING GROUP 5

The working group 3 supports an ecumenical Prayer Cycle with all the partner churches of the “Nordkirche” for the beginning of the “Nordkirche” at Pentecost 2012. Each week a partner church is presented and described and people are invited to pray for them in their services. The Prayer Cycle will be given to all parishes in a printed and a digital edition.

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Constituting meeting of the working group 4



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WORKING GROUP 4 “PROJECT STANDARDS”

Preliminary Remarks

Development projects, budget subsidies, church building projects and long-term charitable support (e.g. free school meals, support for Aids orphans etc.) play a large role in many church partnerships.

In the past, these various measures were usually known as project partnerships. But it is important to differentiate here. The standards that we will name were put together for development-aid projects.

For projects that support church structures and for charitable projects in this context it is important to develop another catalogue of standards, however the working group “project standards” has so far not tackled this. Nevertheless the group sees that it is necessary for an understanding to be reached on common standards for such projects.

Projects are not a necessary part of partnership. Partnerships can strengthen the sense of community between partners without projects. However, projects can provide something extra in a partnership. They are a visible sign and expression of sharing with each other. A partnership can be long-term. A project always has a clearly defined beginning and a clearly defined end. It has a goal, which describes what should be achieved.

The aim of development projects is to empower those underprivileged and oppressed so that they can improve their own living situation by themselves and under their own responsibility. (Who empowers whom? Does this perspective unbalance partnership? Does this perspective create a sense of those who are already “empowered”, have power over those others? Rev. Gugu Shelembe) This means that it is very important for all projects to be developed by both partners in a joint process and with the participation of the target group.

Joint projects – in which financial questions play a role – mean that besides the relationship of trust the partners also enter into a business relationship. Any business relationship requires transparency and accountability for its success.

For the success of any project it is absolutely necessary that functioning ways of communication and reporting be agreed on beforehand and regularly maintained. The success of larger projects depends mainly on the planning and supervision of the project. It can sometimes be helpful for those involved and those responsible to take courses that qualify them for project work.

Projects support a mutual learning partnership. Learning partnerships sharpen the participants own view of local situations and teach them to look at them in the context of their own entanglement in the causes of global injustice. Successful projects strengthen the sense of community.

Standards for SMALL development projects

Requirements:

- There is tested and functioning communication between and within the partnership groups.
- Both groups have clarified their own goals for themselves and with each other in advance.
- The target groups have been included in the discussions (clarification of what is needed) when developing these goals and later when developing the project.

Development of a project idea:

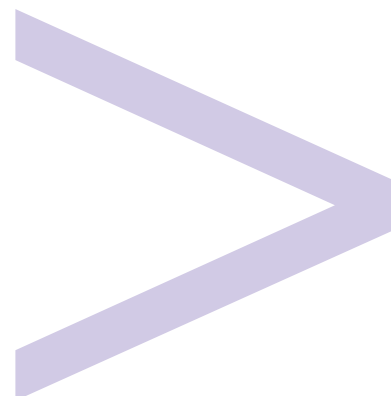
- There are clearly defined project goals.
- The project is to support and strengthen the GROUPS not to profit individual persons.
- “Empowering people to help themselves” (Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe) is at the centre of all development projects.
- Ideas are generated in a joint discussion process. Basically they come from the partners, who are experts in their own countries.

Project planning:

- A project description must be worked out together containing a plan for the measures to be taken, a time plan, a costing and finance plan. There should be a plan how the financing of the project can be guaranteed after the end of the project-phase.
- Development projects must define the length of time between starting and finishing. The partners receiving the money should accept, that the financing of the project is determined for only a certain period of time ... (e.g. 3 years) ... Interim reports are necessary ...
- It is a pre-requisite that the partners each make their own contribution (e.g. 30% in PNG). It must be clearly defined in the application forms (voluntary work, making land available, providing cash funds etc.). Also the financing contribution of other partners has to be part of the finance plan.

Project implementation:

- After the planning is completed and before the work begins, a written agreement must be formulated containing the costing and finance plan, cost estimates and the agreed reporting system (e.g., there could be a monitoring and evaluation tool, which is going to serve as a kind of checklist, which is developed and understood by both partners, Rev. Gugu Shelembe). In this context, rules must also be laid down concerning the rendering of accounts and the payment in instalments.
- The project agreement should then be signed by as many committee members or members of the partnership groups on both sides as possible. And the agreement should be made known in both partner situations to as many people as possible, especially aiming at the target groups. But as soon as money is part of the agreement, the topic money should be dealt with very, very carefully – because money can easily become a cause of severe conflicts. (People can be financially illiterate, Rev. Gugu Shelembe).
- Each side then names one person as the person responsible on their side. (Careful, perhaps it is better to say “two or three persons as a responsible team” or it also might be good to say the responsible persons are changing annually, Rev. Gugu Shelembe).
- The practical implementation is carried out with local resources if these are available.
- The responsibility for and the ownership of the project is shared and carried by many people.



Further standards that should be taken into consideration as far as possible:

- Sustainability (in this case it means that the project continues to exist on its own after the project phase) should be taken into consideration from the beginning.
- Gender justice should be taken into consideration from the beginning.
- The project is open for further partners and “neighbours”. There are structures in place that make this possible.
- An evaluation on both sides is part of the project.
- There should be a basic empowerment and educational programs for the partnership groups in order to learn the basic skills of running projects and filling in the application form for projects.
- The application should – if possible – be approved by the district councils in the partnering countries.

REACTIONS OF WORKING GROUP 4 TO THE CONSULTATION

The aim of the working group Project Standards was quite clear: a good partnership does not necessarily require projects. However if projects are carried out together with the partners certain standards should be applied to them, for example they should help to develop the community, support women and empower underprivileged groups.

At our first meeting Andrea Schirmer-Müller, secretary for the partnership project funds for the EED, demonstrated the standards required within this work very clearly to us. In addition, Eva Sodeik-Zecha gave us a good impression of the way Bread for the World works. The main words that we learnt in this context were planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Taking this as a basis, we then worked on our own standards. In another step, we looked more carefully at the obstacles that can endanger the success of a project. Whilst doing this we realised that the standards we had formulated with such enthusiasm were rather too euphoric. After a long discussion, it became clear to us that some of the criteria we had set were simply not practicable in our small church congregation or church district projects. We looked again at our standards and considered for a long time, which standards were desirable and which were essential. A small sub-group had discussed intensely the subject of corruption with Volker Schauer (Africa Secretary of the NMZ) and presented their findings to us. We learnt that this subject should be spoken about together with our partners right from the beginning when planning projects. We then incorporated the suggestions of this group into our standards. After all these adjustments it appeared to us that the standards we had set could be well used for the development of partnership projects in our church districts.

The first results of our work we discussed point by point with the partners during the Partnership Consultation, whereby it was very impressive for us that our discussion partners, particularly those from the South, applied considerably more strict standards than we had done.

At the same time however it became clear to us that the delegates as full-time staff close to their own church leadership reacted differently to the people we experienced in our church partnerships. The suggestions of the delegates and the results of this discussion process were also incorporated into our standards.

After our intensive concern with development projects the question remained what about diaconal projects and other forms of grants and support within the framework of partnerships? We tried to examine in how far the development project standards could be applied to diaconal projects, for example the support of aids orphans or support for church building measures? We were quite surprised how many of our criteria were valid in these fields in the same way as in the others. It is our expressed wish that standards should be written down for these kinds of projects also and we are planning to work in this direction in the coming year.

Brigitta Seidel and Heidi Stölken



Constituting meeting of the working group 5

WORKING GROUP 5 “PROJECT STANDARDS”

In Corinthians 12,12ff. the words of the Apostle Paul talk about the church as the body of Christ, which makes clear to us that we are only church together. It is therefore important for us to think and to act together, especially as regards our relations with our ecumenical partners. This finds expression in our partnership relationships. Networking is a characteristic of the one church. Gospel and prayer are basic forms of networking.

The situation in the Northelbian Church

We have a large range of partnerships of various kinds with partners in different countries – congregation partnerships, group partnerships, church district partnerships and also school partnerships. However at present there is little tendency to networking between them. There are various networks throughout Germany specifically for one country or region of the world. But we wish for a stronger network within the Northelbian Church among the various people responsible for ecumenical work, and we wish to avoid duplication of tasks.

We also wish for our partners to take an active interest in promoting more networking (linking and working together) in their own context. In the next step, we also wish our partners getting involved, but this doesn't mean that we want to impose it on our partners.

Church in the North

In 2012 the three regional churches of Northelbia, Mecklenburg and Pommerania will merge to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North Germany. This will lead to big structural changes in Northelbia and the ecumenical spectrum will be considerably extended with five new partner countries. It will be necessary to start new networking initiatives in this context.

What is the point of networking?

People both here and elsewhere gain a lot from partnerships. What do they gain?

1. Networking enriches, strengthens and optimizes partnership groups.

For example:

- exchange of ideas,
 - exchange of personal contacts,
 - advice in conflict situations helps to solving difficulties,
 - motivating the young generation by using modern means of communication;
2. Networking promotes reliability;
 3. Networking creates transparency: motivation for donors, visible contradictions, role of money;
 4. Networking lightens the load, avoiding duplication of work;

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5. Networking furthers the learning process (problem of language, understanding and definition);
6. Networking = action based (advocacy, lobbying, campaigns, women's networks).

Who practices networking?

1. Networking of partnership groups
 - a. according to country,
 - b. not according to country,
 - c. based on challenges, emergencies (famines, drought etc.), campaigns;
2. Networking of full and part-time staff in partnership work;
3. Networking with partnership groups and staff in the Mecklenburg and Pomeranian churches;
4. Regional networking of partnership groups: South-South; North-North, East-East;
5. Networking on certain topics;
6. Common themes of prayer (intercession) in partner-churches;
7. Communicative networking through analysis of communication structures.

REACTIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP 5 TO THE CONSULTATION

Our lively and highly motivated working group met five times to work intensively on the subject of "Networking". In the centre of our discussions was the joint vision of a database for partnerships, which like a digital network could link the specific partnership groups and as an information portal encourage them to exchange ideas and work together. The main focus of this network was first of all the idea to link the partnership groups of the North Church with each other, both those working in the same specific countries and those with a more general approach. The consultation with the delegates of our partner churches once more opened up the international aspect of this database. Together we discussed the chances and limitations of digital networking. Social networks such as Facebook or Twitter offer new possibilities, however at least in Northelbia only very few of those involved in partnership work possess the necessary know-how to use these media effectively. In comparison our Indian and Brazilian partners already practice digital networking of their congregations and church districts, but also experience the limitations of this: digital networking can never be a substitute for personal partnership encounters! Together we agreed to set up an international partnership database, which should be available to all registered users. The implementation must be done in close cooperation with the Partnership Department and the Church Development Service of the NMZ.

Martin Krieg

How can we link up with each other? – One instrument is a database

Already existing:

India: already creating profiles of parishes (internet-based);

Brazil: Parishes already connected through internet.

What can a database offer?

It can make structures visible.

A database could list all forms of partnerships (in the Northelbian Church: congregations, projects etc) as well as all organizations (in the Northelbian Church: NMZ, Bread for the World ... etc.). It would be worthwhile trying to get the partnerships and organizations of our partners reflected here in the same way.

Worldwide access

The database could be read from any computer with internet connection throughout the world. In each of the partner countries, the person responsible would have the possibility to enter changes, make new entries etc. The data would be collected together in one database, the overall administration rights would be with the NMZ. They would also "administer" possibilities of access (low level database).

Creating transparency

The exchange of ideas and information and linking them together promotes openness in the partnership group's dealings with each other, makes a contribution towards preventing corruption, helps to concentrate resources, and also to formulate common aims and put them into practice. Transparency is an international standard.

A database cannot replace personal encounters. Personal encounters are still at the heart of partnership. Problem: lack of resources (lack of money, time, personnel)

Some more points:

- Networking: INTRA-Church (parish level/interdenominational); INTER-Church (beyond church: Governments, NGOs, International organisations like NMZ, Bread for the World etc., emergency-based networking);
- Capacity building/digital inclusion as task of the churches (empowering marginalized communities by enabling them get access to information).

WORKING GROUP 6 “NEW FORMS OF PARTNERSHIP”

Forms of Partnership

1. Assumptions:

1. *Partnership as a form of relationship:*

We must realize that the word “partnership” has different connotations in different cultures. However, the two essential characteristics of partnership are that it is voluntary and that the partners are equal. These characteristics set the framework in which the partnership relationship can proceed gradually.

It is important to establish that “partnership” is a specific form of relationship of its own that, at least in an analytical and conceptual sense, must be differentiated from other forms of relationships (“sponsorship” or “development cooperation”).

2. *The central element and aims of the partnership:*

The central element of partnership is meeting each other. The dominant characteristic of this is communication. Such meetings offer the opportunity to learn to look at one’s own reality and a strange reality in a new way. The aim is to develop cross-cultural competence. Such development of cross-cultural competence is a learning and educational process, which demands its own training and continual reflection on what is happening during the whole process. In the same way, it is seen to be essential that the meetings should have relevance back in each person’s own cultural setting.

2. 2. Forms of partnership: the plane of activity for partnerships

1. *The basis for all forms of partnership:*

Fundamental for the development of any concrete partnership is the (project) subject matter and the target group.

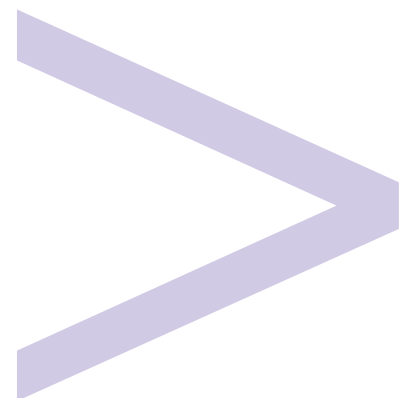
- a. **Subject matter:** The subject matter of church partnerships is oriented towards discussions on questions of faith and on the joint responsibility for the One World. In our opinion, partnership with congregations of migrants in Germany is also possible and could then take up the problematic subjects of integration and migration.
- b. **Target groups:** The wish to initiate a partnership can stem from a group. On the other hand, a group that did not exist before may come together for a partnership project. The term “target group” used here describes those involved in the partnership.

2. *Forms of partnership:*

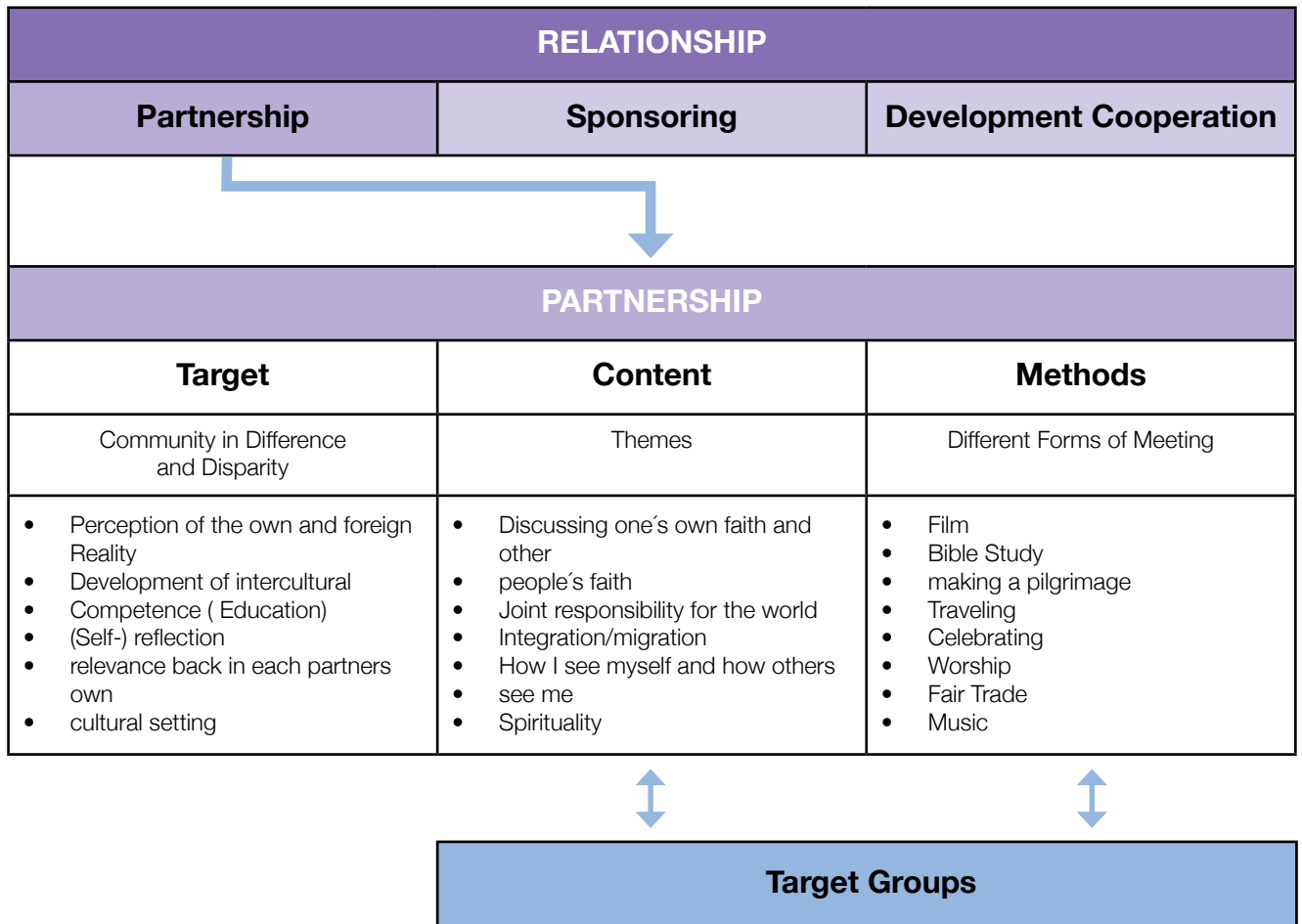
The methods suggested here are only to be understood as examples. The idea of such methods is to help to structure partnership meetings. It is therefore important to choose methods that suit the target group and the subject matter. Here there are hardly any limits set to the creativity of the partners and the participating groups. It is also important when planning the meeting that there is enough free time left for informal personal encounters and conversations.



Lothar Schäfer and Friedrich Degenhardt



¹ The working group has not dealt with other forms of relationships (sponsorships and development cooperation) which are more related to distribution justice. These relationships are characterized by inequality and by other central elements like “aid”.



EXAMPLES OF FORMS OF PARTNERSHIP	
<p>Project of the Church District partnership Hamburg-West/Südholstein and congregations in Pietermaritzburg (South Africa)</p> <p>A group of black and white South Africans from the partner congregations in Pietermaritzburg set off together with their German partners. Ten men from South Africa and ten men from the German church district make a pilgrimage walk following in the steps of Martin Luther from Eisleben to Wittenberg. They choose a speed, which allows them time to get to know each other and to talk to each other. The partners meet at eye level. This makes it possible to reduce differences and to strengthen what they have in common. The partners seek for common roots (identity) and walk along Luther’s Way in order to learn more about the Reformer and to experience the places where he lived and worked.</p>	<p>Subject matter: common roots (discovering Luther)</p> <p>Target group: men</p> <p>Method: making a pilgrimage</p>

<p>Project of the Fischbek church congregation, the Ghanaian Community, the local comprehensive school and the Ecumenical Desk of the Church District Hamburg-East and the private church school Bechem (Ghana)</p> <p>The Fischbek congregation enters into a partnership with the private church school Bechem/Ghana. The Ghanaian contact person in Hamburg is Pastor Clement Bonsu (Ecumenical Desk Hamburg-East). A comprehensive school in Fischbek and the Ghanaian congregation in Hamburg also participate. The project intends to promote intercultural exchange through the school partnership (arranged through the church) and to make a contribution to Global Learning. Several things are achieved by the inclusion of the Ghanaian congregation: it is a contribution towards the topic of „structuring migration“ in cooperation with German congregations and institutions; it is an intercultural exchange at Hamburg level; and it can strengthen the migrants to support projects in their homeland.</p>	<p>Subject matter: Intercultural exchange migration</p> <p>target group : pupils/young people migrants</p> <p>Method: School partnership</p>
<p>Project of the Ecumenical Desk of the Hamburg-West/Südholstein Church District, Grammar School Altona (Hamburg) and the cocoa cooperative COOPROAGRO (Dominican Republic)</p> <p>In 2003 the pupil's company „Fairchoc“ was founded in cooperation with the Grammar School Altona and the Ecumenical Desk „Weitblick“. The company markets fair-traded cocoa products using cocoa from the cooperative COOPROAGRO, and it also promotes Fair Trade. In 2004 a „trade partnership“ came into being. In the meantime there have been two meetings in the Dominican Republic and two meetings in Germany, where the living, working and production conditions of the producers and consumers were studied. Using the product cocoa as their example they have examined the conditions of the world economy and its consequences, and investigated new forms of trade relations through Fair Trade.</p>	<p>Subject matter: Fair Trade</p> <p>Target Group: schoolchildren/young people</p> <p>Method: Pupil's company</p>
<p>Project of the Women's Desk of the NEC and the Dithmarschen Church District with the Ev.-luth. Church in Russia and Other States (ELKRAS)</p> <p>Triggered by a congress in 2005, an encounter-partnership between German and Russian women developed that still exists today. Its aim is to get to know and understand each other's different cultures. For many years now women from Germany and from Russia have met and meet alternatively in their home countries, sharing with each other the reality of their daily lives, holding seminars (e.g. „Violence in the Family“), going on excursions, celebrating services. The main focus of the seminars is to discuss together the current situations of the participants with reference to texts from the Bible. Learning to understand each other and sharing common experiences deepens our contacts with people from a foreign world.</p>	<p>Subject matter: Getting to know how women in other places live (Topics: Violence in the family etc.)</p> <p>Target group: women</p> <p>Method: Seminars, services, excursions, celebrations</p>



Constituting meeting of the working group 6

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Leaders of the working group

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REACTIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP 6 TO THE CONSULTATION

The aim of our considerations on forms of partnership was to obtain more clarity about our own understanding of partnership and the way it can be realised.

Within the consultation process, our partners pointed out to us how important to them the spiritual dimension of partnership is. We gladly take up this point and agree with them.

Partnerships are marked by giving and receiving and this must occur in a constant exchange. We point out that the transfer of material goods especially brings with it the danger of inequality.

The members of working group 6 thank the partners from the other countries, the delegates of the consultation for their critical appreciation of the results of our working group.

Partnership in a Biblical Perspective: Encouragement, Caution and Solidarity

Concluding devotion by Dr. Klaus Schäfer
at the end of the consultation

Dear friends,

As we have gathered here in the chapel we have almost come to the close of our Partnership Consultation. We have experienced a few very intensive days of reflection on the meaning of partnership and on chances to deepen the relations that have grown between us over recent years.

Partnership – that was the central focus of all our deliberations. This term is not really a Biblical word, and yet, it has in an astonishing way in the last three or four decades influenced the language and also the life of our churches, here in Germany as well as in other parts of the world.

We all know that the term “partnership” was introduced into our ecclesial language by the World Mission Conference 1947 in Whitby, Canada, where one spoke of “partnership in obedience” as a new model of relationship between the older and younger or – as one still said in those days – the sending and receiving churches. It is interesting to note, however, that this phrase and particularly the term “partnership” was not picked up in the German context until the early nineteen seventies. While the German translation of the documents from Whitby avoided the term “partnership” and rather used words like “sisters and brothers” or phrases such as “cooperation” etc., it was only in the Seventies that the word “partnership” received attention. In those days the term then became a very prominent slogan in order to rethink – as it was then felt – the more paternalistic models of describing the relationship between older and younger churches to each other. I remember that in those days the German Missionary Council in a campaign for a new image of what the “mission” of the church means for today put up advertisements in German newspapers and journals with slogans such as: “World mission – Today we are partners!” or: “Missionaries Go Home: Today we are Partners”.

During the last few days, we have again focused and reflected on the very term “partnership” and its implications. In order at the end of our consultation to highlight at least a few essential elements of what partnership in a Biblical perspective could mean, my attention was drawn to the Church Calendar. Today we celebrate the day of the apostles “St. Peter and St. Paul”, and it may be interesting to look at these two partners in mission.

Peter and Paul were two of the great figures of the early church. They were very different persons, coming from very different backgrounds: The former was originally a simple fisherman, the latter was a well-educated, Greek-speaking person. Their roots were in different cultures, and they also represented different expressions of the Christian community: The Christians from a Jewish background, embedded in Hebrew and Jewish traditions, and the Gentile Christians deeply rooted in the world of Hellenism. Both of them were men with strong personalities. They both were messengers of the Gospel of Christ, but even though they were somehow partners in mission they were sometimes also in severe conflict with one another.

I would like to look a little closer at a situation where the partnership of churches – the partnership between Paul and the congregations founded by him and his co-workers on the one hand and the church in Jerusalem or the Christians from a Jewish background, represented by Peter and others on the other hand – had come under severe strain. I am sure we all are aware of the conflict that arose in the church in Antioch about the issue of the necessity of circumcision for Gentile Christians.



Dr. Klaus Schäfer

The controversy led to the so-called Apostles Council at Jerusalem – and still later to the harsh controversy between Paul and Peter on the issue of table fellowship of Gentile and Jewish Christians. Paul reports on this situation, the background, the proceedings and the results of this important meeting of the early Christian community in Gal. 2:1-10.

Let me share a few observations derived from this famous Biblical passage. I do so hoping that we can learn something from it for our own partnership relations.

1. Partnership in crisis

Let us first ask what actually happened in Antioch. Indeed, the partnership of Christian communities from different cultural backgrounds faced a deep and severe crisis. The unity of the church was at stake, the trust between Christians from different cultural backgrounds was threatened, it had even been lost. Paul uses harsh words: There were people, fellow-Christians of Jewish origin, “who slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus”. Paul calls these opponents “false brethren”; their aim was, according to him, to bring his congregations “into bondage”. Paul was not sure whether this attitude that he scourged bitterly and polemically was backed by the apostles in Jerusalem. But he states that there had occurred a serious gap in communication, even a breakdown of communication, a loss of mutual trust and respect.

This was not at all an easy matter. There were serious theological issues at stake. The opponents on both sides had very different perceptions of the gospel and the consequences of the Gospel for the life and lifestyle of Christians. At stake was the role of circumcision, the obedience to the Law of Moses, the issue of freedom, of justification by faith alone, of the understanding of sin, of ritual purity and the allowance to share meals together. At stake were theological issues, religious and cultural boundaries, and not least also power-relations between different churches. Was the church in Jerusalem with the “pillars”, as Paul calls them somewhat ironically, the “mother church”, exhibiting authority and superiority over the churches from Gentile background, or were the churches of people of different cultural origins equal members in the one body of Christ?

I am glad that we today in our partnership are not confronted with such fundamental issues of division, mistrust, breaking apart from each other. In our consultation, we did not encounter such deeply disturbing and destructive themes, even though – and I would like to make this explicit – we also encountered different opinions, different interpretations, and different perceptions of what the gospel and the implications of the gospel mean to us. I recall only such items as the role of the church in the realm of politics and public life, the question of the ordination of women, the interpretation of human sexuality. All these concerns relate to theological differences. They hopefully will not threaten our partnership, but they are real and need to be addressed and discussed.



2. Holding a Partnership Consultation

What did Paul do when this critical situation occurred? – Paul went to Jerusalem with the aim of talking to the Jerusalem authorities about the gospel that he preached among the Gentiles: “I went ... up to Jerusalem ... and I laid before them ... the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain.” The circumstances of the proceedings in Jerusalem don’t need to concern us here. But important to note is what was, in Paul’s view, at stake. Of course, at stake was his own reputation and authority as messenger of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But at stake was also the unity of the church, as the results of the meeting show. In the church a new reality of a human community has appeared in the world; it is, as Paul says in Gal. 3:26-28 a community of equals, a community in Jesus Christ where “there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female”. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in the church which is called into being through the gospel, there is embodied a vision of a new humanity; The church, therefore, is a sign to the world – a sign of an alternative community. The christian community, the church of equals is, in modern language but quite in accordance with the aspirations and dreams of the Hellenistic age in which Paul lived, a sign to the world – a sign and symbol of an alternative globalization, quite different from the pax Romana which is built on power, strength, hegemonial attitude, threat and even suppression. Since God, as Paul says, “shows no partiality”, it should be clear that people should not exhibit partiality either in erecting boundaries and hindrances to Gentile Christians. They rather should be accepted and respected as children of God, united with Jesus Christ and with the fellow-Christians in Jerusalem. It was therefore for the sake of the gospel and its implications – the vision of the unity of the church – that Paul went to Jerusalem to see the “pillars” of the Jerusalem church.

3. “Giving the right hand of fellowship”

How did they then proceed in Jerusalem? They – Paul and his companions and the Jerusalem Christians – told each other the story of their respective faith journeys; they shared their experience with the gospel and told one another what responses different people had made to the message of the gospel. The result was mutual recognition on the basis of hearing what the grace of God had achieved among the Gentiles: “and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John ... gave me the right hand of fellowship ...”



Collecting the results of group work

Here we are led to a very interesting term. This gesture of giving one another “the right hand of fellowship” refers to the establishment of some kind of formal agreement. What we have here is a contract, a memorandum of understanding. The Greek term being used here and translated with “fellowship” reads “koinonia” whose original meaning would be rendered in English as “sharing” – “sharing in something” or “sharing of something”, being part of and also giving part of. It really is an equivalent of “partnership”, for the “koinonos” in Greek is usually the “partner”, often the “business partner”. We could therefore also translate: giving one another “the right hand of partnership”.

However, it is very important to note that the term “koinonia” has, especially in the writings of St. Paul, a deep theological foundation and meaning. The term might have been derived from the realm of business relations and human companionship. But in St. Paul’s application it has become a fundamental explanation for the reality of the Christian community. Christians do not “share” in a common business relationship, in a project partnership; they do not even just share in a common human cause such as solidarity for the poor, the eradication of poverty etc. Christians “share” a common faith in Jesus Christ, they “share”, as Paul says in 1. Cor. 10,16f., in the Lord’s Supper, and the “sharing” in the body and blood of Christ unites Christians in one body, the body of Christ.

The term “koinonia” – sharing in something that unites the persons who share in it in fellowship – thus leads us to a commemoration on the very foundation of our partnership. We are partners because we share a common faith, we are sisters and brothers because we take part together in Holy Communion, we share a common Christian vision and we are travelling together towards the kingdom of God. Partnership – or here: “koinonia”, “communio” – is a deeply ecclesial term: It refers to the reality of the church and to the ecumenical horizon, which reminds us that each church and each local congregation is only a province of the worldwide church.

4. What were the implications of the fellowship?

New Testament scholars are not quite clear on the implications of this fellowship, newly acknowledged in Jerusalem. Was it an expression of unity or was it not rather a separation or at least a division? Was it a division of labor, a division of mission territory, a division along ethnic or cultural lines in view of the target groups for mission work?

It is not really easy to say, for it was a little of both. It was indeed a division of labor. Each group should go and serve the Lord according to its specific calling. But the division of labour was necessary only because of the cultural heritage and barriers, not because of disunity in the understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The result was an agreement on two cooperating but independent missionary efforts.

Without going deeper into an explanation or speculation of the possible implications of this “historic compromise”, as it was called, I would like to apply it directly to our consultation and our partnership relations. We have been together here in the Northelbian Church and pondered about our partnership. We have shared with one another stories of our faith and our journey with the gospel. We have shared our expectations of one another, and our aspirations for a deepening of our partnership. Mutual trust, so I hope, has grown once again and afresh: we recognise one another in faith. Now, as we are about to depart and go back to our respective churches we continue with our mission. Each one of us has been entrusted, in our specific context and the circumstances of our ministry amongst our people, with a slightly different mission; each church, in its particular historical and geographical setting, is faced with different challenges. But the consultation has, so I hope, enriched us, strengthened us and challenged us. And thus we have, once again, grown closer together. We are united in the one calling – to serve the people in the name of God! We are one in the Christian faith, but we have different tasks ahead. We have seen that we need each other and that we can learn from one another – and all that is good and wonderful! We have given one another “the right hand of fellowship”. And united in fellowship we move out from here and move on in different directions. And we know, as Paul and Peter and all the apostles and pillars knew, that God’s grace is with us and will guide us and strengthen us.


5. Encouragement, caution and solidarity

The story of the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem and the acknowledgement of a “fellowship” of equals is certainly encouraging to us. However, there are still two concluding remarks I want to make on this Biblical text in relation to the understanding of partnership. I can only just mention them without going into too much detail:

The first remark is a note of caution. If we read the letter to the Galatians further and look at the incident in Antioch (Gal. 2:11ff.), where Paul reports about a split between Peter and himself, we learn that one consultation alone does not solve all the open questions. The agreement reached in Jerusalem was apparently very fragile, for it seems that the partners in mission – Peter and Paul and the others – did not fully understand one another or the implications that each one associated with his perception of the gospel. In consequence, we should be aware that our sharing of the gospel, the exploration of the meaning of partnership, our different perceptions and our sense of unity must continue to be cultivated, communicated and shared. A consultation is an important feature in partnership, but even more important is to keep in touch, continue to ponder and reflect together, in small groups, in our congregational partnerships and also at the level of our churches. This is not to say that partnership is a feeble thing, but it is to remind us that partnership needs continuous growth and development, on the basis of respect and trust.



Building groups with the help of puzzles



Interesting is then, secondly, that one substantial aspect of the partnership agreement between Paul and Peter relates to the matter of material support: “only they would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do”. Was this meant simply as a philanthropic gesture? Was this understood as a kind of a church tax or even a tribute for the “mother church” in Jerusalem, in analogy to the temple tax of Jewish tradition? Did one think of some kind of exchange so that financial assistance was rendered on the part of the Gentile Christians in exchange for spiritual gifts, which they had received from the Jewish community? (cf. Rom. 15,26ff.) Are the “poor” predominantly economically poor and oppressed people or is this rather an expression of a dignified spiritual status, similar to the “anawim”; the poor as the “pious” people in Old Testament-Jewish tradition?

Without going into further discussion of these questions, we should keep in mind that partnership or fellowship in the view of the early church also has a material dimension. It is quite certain that the economic and social conditions in Judea were less fortunate than in other Hellenistic cities of Greece and Asia Minor. What is implied here is, in my view, a voluntary solidarity by the relatively wealthy new Gentile churches with their brethren in less fortunate situations. The collection, which Paul indeed was very eager to raise, is then once again a sign of a renewed human society in which people care for one another. It is no surprise, therefore, that the term “koinonia” in Paul’s letters also occurs in connection to the collection he raises among the Gentile Christians for the church in Jerusalem Cf. 2. Cor. 8:14 where the RSV translates: The churches of Macedonia were “begging us earnestly for the favour of taking part (ten koinonian) in the relief of the saints”; and 2. Cor. 9:13 where it is translated that Christians through their “service ... and by the generosity of your contribution (tes koinonias) for them and for all others” glorify God.

The issue of material support, the role of money and sharing of resources has been one of the big and also controversial issues in our partnership relations. There are, of course, many critical things, which we can say about it. However, from this early partnership agreement between Paul and Peter we should at the end be reminded that spiritual and material dimensions cannot be separated in Biblical perspective. However we define it and whatever standards we apply, we should in the end be aware that the calling into partnership relations also has an effect on our lifestyle, our purses, our money and our resources. Partnership, as we try to develop and live it, is a contribution towards solidarity and justice in the world.

I am sure that much more could be said about partnership. I do hope that our consultation and also this little meditation have provided us with lots of new ideas, inspiration – and also challenges.

When we now depart to our own churches we will, hopefully, take with us a renewed commitment to the unity of the church, to the meaning of partnership, and to the mission we all are called to – in different places, in different circumstances, and yet united in the Lord Jesus Christ!

AMEN.

Feedback by Delegates of the Consultation

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Just a word of thanks to all of you for the nice time, we have been together in the just ended International Partnership Consultation. It was such a learning experience in listening to understand the parameters of a sustainable partnership.

Although the time was so limited, I was happy to have one on one with many of you. You are such important and crucial associate persons in the entire process of connecting others to the world you live and beyond.

Thanks keep connected, Kind regards, Luke Mwololo, Kenya

Friends in Christ,

A word of thanks for the meaningful and life-changing consultation on partnership.

Wish you all God's blessings.

Mauro Souza, Brazil

Dear friends,

Thank you all so much for a very, very beautiful meeting!

Yours, Arho Tuhkru, Estonia

Greetings!

I want to thank you for giving me wonderful experiences being part of the International Partnership Consultation. I had a great time.

Angelious Michael, India

My Dear Ones

I hope that this email will find you in a good health enjoying your summer vacations if you have. And I would like take this opportunity to thank you all for your warm hospitality and care. And I leave you with the blessings of God, and asking you please don't forget us in your prayers

*with love and respect
Ashraf K. Tannous*

Dear friends, I join in saying - thanks a lot!

Rita Bruvers, Latvia

Dear Stephanie and Martin,

Thanks a lot for the list with email addresses. I hope it is be a very helpful reference document for all of us. Besides, I can still remember the good moments we have spent during the Consultation. May God bless you.

*Jean-Claude
Masumbuko Leya, Congo*

Calvary Greetings, hoping we are all fine. I am and have safely arrived home.

Thank you very much everyone one for all your contributions in enriching my life in one way or the other. I am a better person than before I met all of you. You have each made partnership so real for me.

Thank you Stephanie and the NMZ team for believing in us. Thank you for the pictures as well. They refresh our memories so much.

Wishing all of us God's blessing as we continue serving the Kingdom for which we are called to serve.

*Yours in Christ service
Rev Gugu Shelembe, South Africa*

Fruits of Hope

Sermon by Rev. Gugu Shelembe, South Africa,
on June 29th 2011 in St. Jacobi, Hamburg



Mauro Souza and Gugu Shelembe

6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. 10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:6-11)

Dear Friends and Partners,

I greet you all in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. It is my honour and privilege to stand in front of you and share with you what is in my heart as I reflected on this scripture.

Paul uses a powerful image of himself sowing the seeds, Apollo watering the seeds and God making the seeds to grow. This is meant to convey the message of unity between himself, Apollo and God. Their cooperation in this process is crucial. We see in this image a powerful companionship, interdependence of the three; that is God, Paul and Apollo. Their partnership is directed to the end result of the seed, which is the harvest. The value attached to the seed has crafted this divine unity, which exists to ensure the reaping is worth the effort.

Planting a seed is more like laying a good foundation for a strong building. The building in this case means the church. The seed in this case means the word of God. It may also mean good works.

The kind of partnership that is displayed in this text tends to encourage us in the process to unite to ignore our differences and focus on those aspects that promote our unity.

1. The gap that existed between Paul and Apollo is almost non-existent in that although Apollo learnt from Paul, Paul puts that behind him and he works with him as though they have always been colleagues. There are no traces of the teacher-learner gap. All their efforts are directed to the seed.
2. Paul before his conversion was persecuting the church, but after his conversion God is not ashamed to call him His fellow worker which then deepens the same value in Paul when dealing with Apollo.
3. The Holy God is not ashamed to call people who have a history like that of Paul as his co-workers. God's work does not end here; He ensures that He is fully involved in the processes, that He has a clear role to play in the support of processes such as making the seed grow that has been planted by Paul and watered by Apollo.
4. In this partnership all of them have a clear role to play, without which the seed cannot grow to the next stage, and in the end this labour will be rewarded.
5. All these roles of planting, watering and growing are crucial for harvest to take place.



Word of greeting given by Ulrike Hillmann,
Vice-Chairperson of the Northelbian Synod

It is worth noting that each of them is faithful in the stage they are responsible for, because if they are not, the chain of co-workmanship gets broken and this may delay the time for harvest, thus greatly affecting those dependant on such a process. It is interesting to note that the stages of this seed are dependant on each other. If no planting is done, there is no need to water. If no watering is done, there is no need to plant.

This interdependence speaks of the nature of the church of Jesus Christ and the analogy of one body and its many members and how they complement each other as given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:12.

Paul tells us in verse 7 that no-one makes the seed grow except God. Neither Paul with his education nor Apollo with his lessons from Paul could do it alone. In Psalm 37:5 the Bible says "Commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him and He will do it for you" This challenges the higher order of faith and the complete trust in God and fellow members in the body of Christ. Faithfulness in the roles and responsibilities entrusted to us is a prerequisite for the growth of the seed.

This challenges all of us as members of but one body that we need each other for the church to successfully play its role in the world.

In verse 1 Corinthians 3:10 Paul stresses the fact that whether it is in planting the seed or in laying the foundation, the success thereof entirely depends on the grace of God. It humbles us to learn that whatever we do, the success thereof is not by our might, power or wisdom but by the grace and grace alone. We cannot take the credit for our achievements because Christ made the biggest sacrifice thereof. We are given an opportunity to be involved in building firm foundations and planting the seeds that will bear fruits of hope for all of us.

Therefore this text calls us as the co-workers with God to also become co-workers with one another, even with those who are marginalised, who have no voice even in their own development. May God help us through His son Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit to strive to fulfil Jesus' prayer as it is found in John 17. "That we may be one".

May God bless us all. Amen

* My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20-23)



The sprouting seed





Results of the Partnership Consultation

At the end of the consultation, the following results had been obtained:



Rita Bruvers and Jens Haverland

- The results of the discussions and meetings of the working groups were documented in the final papers.
- Together the partners saw the necessity for preparing standards and guidelines for partnership work. It is the only way to solve problems, for example in the funding of projects and the creation of sustainable forms of partnership. The guidelines in use in some partner churches should be incorporated.
- The challenges posed by ecumenical partnership work are perceived differently. Northelbian partnership groups ask questions about the continuation of their work and the transfer of responsibility between generations. They also focus on current issues like corruption and the handling of same-sex partnerships (Dodoma Declaration), which worry them. The ecumenical partners see Christian Mission as the centre of the work and that is the basis from which they start the discussions. There is a clear theological difference of understanding partnership in the field.
- The ecumenical partners demanded more participation in the partnership qualification process. The participants agreed that international partnership coordinators need to network to improve communication, the exchange of ideas and joint learning processes.

Dr. Mirjam Freytag and Martin Krieg

Feedback from volunteers

WALTRAUD SACHAU

I took part in the PQ process because my parish in Elmshorn has a partnership with the parish Taveta in Kenya. This is a new partnership, which only started in May 2010. I decided to participate because I am responsible for the partnership work in my parish. I chose the working group 3 – Learning in Partnership. I want to learn from the situations that others have experienced and I want to know which mistakes to avoid. I will be travelling to Kenya in October 2011 and I hope to be better prepared and to take some new skills with me.

Many different people have taken part in our working group and they have contributed their experience. We were able to gather many valuable ideas and we had very intense discussions.

I felt that I gained a lot from these discussions because our parish has only just begun its partnership work. I was able to see the great interest that people had in discussing partnership work. I was very disappointed that I was unable to take part in the workshop on the 12th of February.

I think that the Partnership Consultation was one of the highlights of the process, because we were able to talk to the international delegates about the interim results of the working groups and were able to alter them to incorporate new ideas brought in by the partners. This enabled us to get many different views on some of the subjects.

I was impressed by the many different forms of partnership, which exist in Northelbia. If these exchanges lead to a partnership manual, then we will have created a good tool for future volunteers working in partnership groups.

A big “thank you” goes from me to our group leaders Christa Hunziger and Gudrun Bötting. The work was very intense and great fun. I am excited about the results of the other working groups and about a new manual.

SUSANNE AND RUDOLF GÖRNER

We did not experience the closing event of the consultation in Ammersbek quite as positively as you did. Maybe we had too high expectations – not of the invited partners, but of the organisation of the event. It was a nice meeting, but not enough as a result for the qualification process.

What did the partners demand?

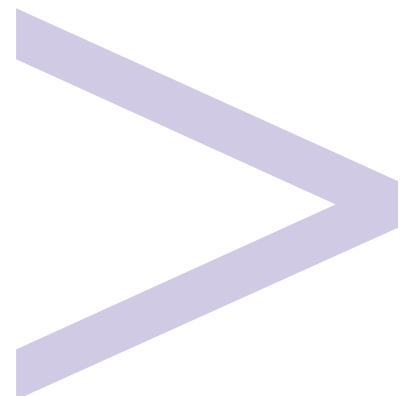
How can we understand their opinions?

What background did they have, how can their background help us understand their opinions?

What were their opinions?

What was said and what did we hear or want to hear?

(Excerpt from an e-mail to the partnership desk of the NMZ on the 19th of September 2011)



BIRGITTA HENRICH

In August 2010 I accompanied someone to the opening event of the Partnership Qualification Process in Neumünster. I had not thought about the subject very much beforehand, so that I did not know what to expect. When I was on my way home, I was really happy that I had participated in this event. I was impressed by the process, which lasted over a whole year, and by the many promising subjects. I found it important to realize that the wish for exchange came from the grassroots and that experts from the different institutions planned and organized it. Everybody was invited to participate and to choose how much they were able to get involved. This was a great basis for an involvement, because there was no pressure. It was possible to be a part of one of the working groups, which was a wonderful challenge for me. I participated in the working group "Learning in Partnership". I appreciated the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with other experienced volunteers. I always looked forward to the meetings and left them richer.

In February, there was a workshop in Neumünster, where some interim results were presented, so that it was possible to get an idea about where the other working groups were heading.

My personal highlight was the moment when Gudrun Bölting rang me and asked me whether I wanted to represent our working group at the Partnership Consultation. I was thrilled, especially as Loveland Makundi was the delegate from our partner parish in Tanzania. It was wonderful to experience this great variety of backgrounds and community. I was especially interested in the different opinions on money, help and spirituality. Spirituality is the biggest central issue for our partners. Money can be one of the fruits of partnership and only together can we help each other, otherwise it is better to encourage the other party to help themselves. These experiences are part of me and my partnership work now. In November, we will hold the closing event and after that, the results will be written down and presented. However, I feel that the process needs to continue after November.

My hope is that this process leads us to regularly stop and reflect on our partnership work. I hope we will continually monitor and evaluate whether we have reached our goals and maybe change our goals and means if the results don't match our expectations. "If you don't know where you want to go, you should not be surprised if you end up somewhere else entirely."

Thank you very much!

Interview with Martin Krieg

What happens after the PQ-Process?

With the qualification process for partnership work, we wanted to create a new form of partnership work and guiding principles for the North Church as well as defining models of partnership and new guidelines. The qualification process as it stands now has only reached this aim in a few defined areas. But in the process many volunteers and church workers got involved and entered into exchange with each other and new forms of participation opened up for them. A second step after the qualification process will involve writing down and agreeing on partnership guidelines and entering into exchange on their contents with our international partners.

What will partnership work look like in 20 years?

I experience a great wealth of partnership relations in many different forms at parish and church district level, a wonderful, international Christian movement of faith and solidarity that has continued over the last 30 years. This movement has replaced the mission and prayer circles in many parishes and moved partnership work into the context of developmental political engagement.

In the last few years, we have realized that responsibility is not being handed over to the next generation without conflicts. This is happening in many historically grown partnership groups. The younger generation has many other interests and different ideas and does not willingly take over the responsibility and work needed to keep a partnership group going. In many parishes, this has even led to partnerships being terminated because there is no one there to carry them on.

My impression is that partnership work as we know it now will change radically in the next few years. There is a trend away from long-term relationships towards short-term projects with a special subject. There is a stronger focus on intercultural and spiritual exchanges. Political involvement in development issues is being handed over to regional church relief organisations.

What have you personally learnt from the PQ Process?

The Partnership Qualification Process was jointly organised and held by the Church Development Service, the Northelbian Mission Centre, the Ecumenical Desks and the Women's Desk of the Northelbian Evangelical Lutheran Church. This was a first in Northelbia for such a joint long-term project and shows a new ecumenical spirit. If these players can continue to work together in this cooperative and constructive way, new possibilities will open up for ecumenical work and thoughts in Northelbia.



Interview with Julia Lersch



What happens after the PQ-Process?

I believe that the real process is only just beginning. In the different working groups, at the consultation and in other meetings we have made people aware of the subject. Now it is time to incorporate the new concepts into our work and to inform more people about our results. After a set time it would be important to review this process and ask ourselves: Where are we now? What has changed? What would we like to keep and what have we not been able to implement?

What will partnership work look like in 20 years?

My vision is that in 20 years we will no longer need the phrase “at eye-level” because we will have learnt through the qualification process and its implementation that partnership needs us to connect at all levels. There will be different forms of exchange between North and South, North and North, East and West, etc., which will take place focusing on different issues and maybe even between more than two partners. There will be much exchange between volunteers and full time church workers about the difficulties and challenges they are facing and possible solutions.

What have you personally learnt from the PQ Process?

I have learnt that such a process takes a long time. We cannot know at the beginning where we will end up. We need to stop and evaluate where we are and what open and hidden expectations are motivating and guiding us. The consultation was very important for me. I met experts from all over the world who had a lot of experience of partnership work. I am still networking with some of them and am able to learn from their experiences. That is a great help for me, as I am still new to this field.



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The members of the Steering Group of Department IV of the Church Office of the Northelbian Church and the Board of NMZ were invited to a Festive Evening on Monday. On Tuesday all members of working groups were invited to participate in the Consultation.

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