



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

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Continuing education for the ordained ministry in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe

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Contents

- Introduction3
- 1. The status quo.....4
- 2. Basic principles.....6
 - 2.1. Continuing education as a process that accompanies and sustains a profession.....6
 - 2.2. Continuing education compared with training7
 - 2.3. Pastors' identity and dimensions of pastors' continuing education.....8
 - 2.4. Aims.....9
 - 2.4.1. Developing strengths and intensifying reflection upon practice 9
 - 2.4.2. Reflection and reassurance..... 10
 - 2.4.3. Development of specializations 10
 - 2.5. Encouraging a thirst for learning..... 11
- 3. Guidelines for continuing education11

26	3.1.	The basic understanding of education.....	11
27	3.2.	Aims of continuing education.....	13
28	3.3.	Criteria for good practice in continuing education	13
29	3.4.	Organizational structure	14
30	3.5.	Education process.....	15
31	3.6.	Results.....	16
32	3.7.	Forms of continuing education for ordained ministers.....	16
33	3.8.	The importance of academic theology for continuing education	
34		18	
35	3.9.	Didactics and methods	19
36	3.10.	Digitization and e-Learning in continuing education	20
37	4.	Recommendations for theological continuing education in the CPCE	
38		21	
39	4.1.	Expanding theological competence and developing professional	
40		strengths	21
41	4.2.	Framework for theological continuing education.....	21
42	4.3.	The value of informal spheres of learning and encounters	21
43	4.4.	Principle of solidarity and sponsorships.....	22
44	4.5.	Collaboration and networking amongst pastors	22
45	4.6.	Parallel academic research, quality management and evaluation	
46		22	
47	4.7.	Concrete measures.....	22
48		Appendix: Contributors to this study process.....	25
49			
50			

51 Introduction

52 The history of this document dates back to the 6th General Assembly of
 53 the CPCE in Budapest in 2006. The General Assembly instructed the
 54 Council of the CPCE to convene a project group on the subject of “Train-
 55 ing for ordained office in the Community of Protestant Churches in Eu-
 56 rope”, which would be responsible for compiling a corresponding report.
 57 The document¹ that emerged from a multi-stage process involving the
 58 member churches was presented to the 7th General Assembly of the
 59 CPCE for resolution in Florence in 2012. It was very well received there.
 60 The General Assembly deemed the document a directional contribution
 61 “for a common understanding of good theological training” and recom-
 62 mended that the member churches use it as a reference for training re-
 63 form.²

64 Furthermore, the 7th General Assembly was in favour of implementing the
 65 recommendations outlined in the conclusion.³ These addressed the con-
 66 tinuing education of pastors in particular. In light of current challenges,
 67 this area was identified as needing “a didactical conception and signifi-
 68 cant intensification”.⁴ The report stated that in the realm of the CPCE
 69 there are good opportunities for developing international exchange pro-
 70 grammes for continuing education and for setting up international pasto-
 71 ral colleges and multilateral continuing education partnerships.⁵ Further-
 72 more, “appropriate instruments should be created for coordination and
 73 consultation. With regard to the needs of specialized further education –
 74 for example for leadership in church and diaconal work – forms of offer
 75 should be developed in which several churches in a region can partici-
 76 pate.”⁶

77 Accordingly, ongoing work has focused on continuing education for pas-
 78 tors in recent years. The Council of the CPCE instigated another project

¹ Training for the ordained ministry in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe. In: Michael Bünker, Martin Friedrich (Ed.): Amt, Ordination, Episkopé und theologische Ausbildung / Ministry, ordination, episkopé and theological education, Leipzig 2013 (= Leuenberg Texts 13), pp. 223–256.

² As above, p. 223.

³ See: *ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 253.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

79 group on the subject. This group started off by preparing and holding a
 80 consultation in Strasbourg that was attended by 42 representatives of
 81 Protestant churches from thirteen European countries in November 2015
 82 to discuss challenges, organizational forms, programmes and major is-
 83 sues in continuing education for pastors, to share experiences and to de-
 84 velop key aspects for continuing education. The results and conclusions
 85 from the Strasbourg consultation have been incorporated into this report.
 86 Apart from this, the project group was able to refer to the statements con-
 87 tained in the document passed in Florence in 2012, which addressed
 88 continuing education for pastors within the overall context of theological
 89 training.⁷ In this respect, part 2 must be considered as adopting and
 90 building upon the fundamental statements contained in the 2012 docu-
 91 ment accepted by the General Assembly.

92 [Later there will be reference here to the feedback received from the CPCE
 93 churches and their consideration of the document.]

94 The structure and elements of this work also reflect the 2012 document.
 95 Following a description of the *status quo*, the *basic principles* of continu-
 96 ing education are laid down. In turn, the *guidelines* are intended to out-
 97 line elements of a common understanding of what constitutes good con-
 98 tinuing education. The *recommendations* contain important suggestions
 99 and emphasize the opportunities for collaboration between the CPCE's
 100 member churches when it comes to continuing education for pastors
 101 these days in Europe.

102 **1. The status quo**

103 Practising a career competently requires continuing education – without
 104 continuing education it is impossible to do so. This principle applies to
 105 every profession in society nowadays. Pastors are no exception. On the
 106 contrary: They face demands that were unknown to earlier generations.
 107 Many people do not understand the traditions of Christian faith. Pastors
 108 must be capable of speaking and imparting information in a secular envi-
 109 ronment and be able to translate the Gospel into the living environments
 110 of strangers to the church. They need to make their parochial efforts invit-
 111 ing and attractive. Demands are placed on their personal credibility, and
 112 at the same time they have to demonstrate style and professionalism in
 113 the mainly media-driven public arena. The successful probation of the
 114 knowledge, insights and abilities they acquired during their academic and
 115 church training bears a direct relation on the way they develop their pro-
 116 fessional skills.

⁷ Ibid. pp. 244–248.

117 The continuing education landscape in the member churches of the
118 CPCE is characterized by wide diversity. The challenges that are faced in
119 continuing education are similar, though. Demographic trends are result-
120 ing in dwindling financial and human resources. The processes of social
121 change are linked to contradictory expectations from pastors. Further
122 challenges arise from the increasing pluralization of the environment,
123 changing religious and ideological contexts, the dissipation of ties to the
124 church and the formative power of Christian traditions, and ultimately the
125 speed of the transformation processes. The latter is experienced even
126 more acutely in the countries that were under Communist rule until 1989.
127 The pastors there have faced a growing volume of duties in recent years
128 that they were formerly unaccustomed to, e.g. the scope for working in
129 public education, the media or welfare.

130 These factors all lead to increased and more diverse requirements in
131 terms of training and continuing education. In the Protestant churches of
132 Europe, training and continuing education are increasingly viewed as in-
133 terrelated in function, the basic tenets of which will be elaborated here-
134 with.

135 Continuing education for ordained ministers has played a major role in
136 the Protestant churches ever since the Reformation. Besides the home
137 study that was expected from all pastors, actual institutes of continuing
138 education soon developed in the form of ministers' conferences and as-
139 sociations. Theological faculties and later the newly created preachers'
140 seminaries also assumed roles in continuing education. As part of the
141 general process of professionalization and differentiation, many churches
142 established special facilities for continuing education during the 20th cen-
143 tury – some independent, others linked to institutes for theological train-
144 ing.

145 Nowadays, continuing education in the Protestant churches of Europe is
146 structured in different ways. In most churches, continuing education for
147 pastors is governed by regulations. In some churches, regular participa-
148 tion in continuing education measures is compulsory, particularly during
149 the initial years in office. A number of churches have introduced a points
150 system for courses. This means that pastors in some churches have to
151 complete certain courses during their early years in office that are re-
152 quired, along with a "pastors' exam", for a permanent position.

153 In the larger churches, there are institutes or officers responsible for fur-
154 ther vocational training and continuing education, which offer a wide
155 range of courses and one-off events, which offer a wide range of courses
156 and one-off events. Some churches run this kind of facility jointly (e.g. in
157 France and Switzerland), and in other countries (e.g. the Netherlands
158 and Norway) the theological faculties are also involved in continuing ed-

159 ucation. Although the smaller churches have less resource for continuing
 160 education at their disposal, they are also able to develop a diverse pro-
 161 gramme by means of regional and international collaboration. Besides
 162 this, pastors are given time off duty and are funded to attend continuing
 163 education courses run by providers other than the church.

164 The CPCE member churches' strategies for pastors' continuing educa-
 165 tion are very varied. This reflects the churches' theological foundations
 166 and their different ecclesiological perspectives – such as the where the
 167 perception of the church lies between institution and organization, or its
 168 approach to challenges within the church and society. All the same, there
 169 is basic consensus as to what constitutes good practice in pastors' con-
 170 tinuing education.

171 **2. Basic principles**

172 2.1. Continuing education as a process that accompanies and 173 sustains a profession

174 The member churches of the CPCE have faith in their ordained ministers
 175 to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed, in public and
 176 imbued with their own personal talents, on behalf of and according to the
 177 mission of the Church. At the same time, they expect ordained ministers
 178 to carry on deepening the theological competence⁸ they acquired during
 179 their training and their personal attributes in the light of the practical pro-
 180 fessional experience they gain and to independently carry the responsi-
 181 bility associated with the ministry. This includes the willingness and ability
 182 to process their experiences in a self-critical manner, to recognize their
 183 own strengths and talents, but also to perceive and work on their weak-
 184 nesses and risk factors. Ordained ministers are supposed to maintain,
 185 deepen and expand their theological competence by means of inde-
 186 pendent study, combined with colleagues' and perhaps professional ad-
 187 vice, and by making use of the special continuing education programme
 188 offered by the churches.

189 In turn, the Churches are obliged to provide appropriate advice and con-
 190 tinuing education for ordained ministers in order to help them to refresh
 191 and build upon their theological competence and personal attributes, to
 192 reflect upon social transformation processes from a theological perspec-
 193 tive and to adopt new courses of action for themselves and the parishes
 194 and integrate these into the church as a whole and their activities. Just as

⁸ This fundamental concept is elucidated in *Training for the ordained ministry in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe* (see above, note 1), pp. 230, 234f, 241f and 245.

195 a willingness to participate in continuing education forms an integral part
 196 of ordained ministers' professional lives and their duties of service, it is
 197 equally an integral part of the church's mission to facilitate this and pro-
 198 vide good opportunities for continuing education.

199 2.2. Continuing education compared with training

200 In order to participate in continuing education in the member churches of
 201 the CPCE, pastors must have completed theological training, in which
 202 they accrued the knowledge, insights and skills that make up the theolog-
 203 ical competence required for the ministry. This training forms part of a
 204 person's overall educational journey in theological competence and
 205 forms an internal unit, an ambitious process of a person's growth and
 206 increasing maturity, which can also include crises and disruptions. The
 207 overall context of these personal educational journeys also determines
 208 their continuing education.

209 The special feature of *theological training* is its aim to establish the *ele-*
 210 *mentary form* of theological competence, which lies in the acquisition of
 211 its key knowledge, insights and skills. It seeks to provide the pastors in
 212 training with a basis from which they can devise their professional activi-
 213 ties, reflect upon them, evaluate them, amend them and repeatedly con-
 214 textualize them tangibly against the Gospel. Theological competence
 215 should be perceived as the solid foundation for the various facets of pas-
 216 toral duties (particularly worship, education, pastoral care, developing
 217 and leading a congregation, as well as the welfare, missionary and ecu-
 218 menical aspects).

219 *Pastors' continuing education* assumes this teaching and accumulation
 220 process has already occurred and can therefore not simply be viewed as
 221 a continuation and update of their training. Rather, it is intended to deep-
 222 en the previously acquired theological competence based on the experi-
 223 ence they have gathered under real church conditions. Pastors learn to
 224 perceive the abilities and skills they have already acquired as the funda-
 225 mental basis for properly appreciating the responsibility they have been
 226 awarded in the constantly changing and diverging situations in European
 227 societies. The continuing education measures offered to pastors should
 228 encourage them to happily embrace the service they have assumed in
 229 relation to the core components of theological competence – theological
 230 knowledge, personally acquired insight into the truth of the Gospel and
 231 acquired methodological skills. They should learn how to combine pro-
 232 fessional prowess with alert contemporaneity and ecumenical open-
 233 mindedness and to understand the many different and changing circum-
 234 stances in which they meet people as chances to communicate the Gos-
 235 pel. Continuing education helps ordained ministers to identify and use

236 the power inherent in theological competence to succeed in passing on
 237 the Gospel in vague, confusing and changing practical situations. At the
 238 same time, it should enhance the ordained ministers' ability to motivate
 239 congregation members to share testimony of their faith.

240 2.3. Pastors' identity and dimensions of pastors' continuing edu- 241 cation

242 Pastors' continuing education helps them to understand and further de-
 243 velop their own identity. This is the only way the ministry can be per-
 244 formed and that ministers can cement their own *pastoral identity*.

245 Pastoral identity is forged in an ongoing process. It is not a finite process
 246 and takes the form of personal development oriented around the minis-
 247 ter's ecclesiastic mission in intellectual, faith-related, communicative and
 248 practical life terms. Pastoral identity is the key condition for performing
 249 service in the ministry with regard to the mission of the Christian congrega-
 250 tion, someone's own faith and their life experience in a way that makes
 251 the relationship with the Gospel apparent and tangible to other people. It
 252 is the task of pastors' continuing education to support and facilitate this
 253 process.

254 Four dimensions of pastors' continuing education⁹ can be distinguished:

255 [1.] *Personal dimension*: In order that pastors can communicate the Gos-
 256 pel in a way that is personally authentic and inspires confidence under
 257 circumstances presenting diverse, confusing personal and social com-
 258 munication, pastors' continuing education should help develop their per-
 259 sonal development. It opens up possibilities and space for recognizing
 260 their own strengths and weaknesses and for reflecting upon, examining
 261 and working on their own lifestyles and practices (health, time manage-
 262 ment, balance between work and private life, career and family, etc.).

263 [2.] *Theological dimension*: In order that pastors can handle the extreme-
 264 ly diverse, plural and complex relationships in church and society and the
 265 confusing, non-standardizable personal and social life circumstances in a
 266 theologically responsible manner, pastors' continuing education seeks to
 267 assist with deepening their theological competence in relation to their ex-
 268 periences and to facilitate their further development. Working on Biblical
 269 topics and texts and on key issues of faith and its ethos illustrates the

⁹ The following points are attributable to Detlef Dieckmann in: Vertiefung und Diversität, Überlegungen zu einem didaktischen Konzept pastoraler Fortbildung unter Berücksichtigung ihrer internationalen Reichweite ("Deepening and diversity – thoughts on a didactic concept of pastors' continuing education considering its international scope", manuscript, Strasbourg, 19 Nov. 2015).

270 liberating potential of theological understanding, strengthens hermeneu-
 271 tic sensitivity, counters a lack of words and ideas and thus makes pastors
 272 aware of the power of orientation supplied by theological competence.

273 [3.] *Spiritual dimension*: Pastors have made preaching the Gospel their
 274 life profession. They promote the liberating, consoling, assurance-giving
 275 power of the Gospel in the various fields of their service. They can only
 276 be capable of this if they allow themselves to be liberated, consoled and
 277 reassured by the Gospel. In this sense, they are always the first ad-
 278 dressees of the message they deliver. Continuing education should pro-
 279 vide the space for this experience – space for prayer, space for listening,
 280 space for meditation, space for Bible study, space for praising God and
 281 for praying for the Holy Spirit.

282 [4.] *Functional dimension*: In order that pastors can perform the church's
 283 mission appropriate to each situation, they require reliable personal skills
 284 in various fields, such as cybernetics, management, promoting voluntary
 285 activities, mission and inter-religious and intercultural dialogue. All this
 286 calls for an appropriate continuing education programme.

287 The four dimensions of pastoral identity must always be viewed in close
 288 correlation. The order in which they come is fluid – different emphases
 289 can be set, and the individual dimensions can be given a different
 290 weighting in the design of continuing education programmes. However,
 291 no continuing education programme can omit any one of these dimen-
 292 sions.

293 2.4. Aims

294 Three complementary objectives apply to the thematic and curricular de-
 295 sign of continuing education: 1. Developing strengths and intensifying
 296 reflection upon practice; 2. revisiting the relation between theological
 297 competence, spiritual life and personal identity and gaining reassurance
 298 therein; 3. developing specializations.

299 The dimensions of pastors' continuing education run perpendicular to
 300 and right through these objectives and are linked with them to differing
 301 degrees of intensity. The dimensions that dominate are the personal and
 302 theological in number 1, the theological and spiritual in number 2 and the
 303 functional in number 3.

304 2.4.1. *Developing strengths and intensifying reflection upon practice*

305 Pastors are being particularly challenged by current processes of
 306 change. New missionary tasks, the necessary alignment of church work
 307 to suit local circumstances and considerably increased qualitative expect-
 308 ations from pastoral work call for new plans of action and working meth-

309 ods, new ways of organizing church work and of enabling members of
 310 the congregation to show voluntary commitment in the direction of the
 311 priesthood of all believers. Continuing education helps pastors to identify
 312 their own strengths that correspond to the task in hand, to develop these
 313 and incorporate them in the work for which they are jointly responsible.

314 Tried-and-tested and contemporary methods for specifically developing
 315 strengths, intensifying reflection upon practice and extending collabora-
 316 tion include: peer reinforcement and advice, visitations, contemporary
 317 forms of personal development and professional advice.

318 *2.4.2. Reflection and reassurance*

319 Besides developing their own strengths and acquiring special knowledge
 320 and skills, reflection and reassurance of the relation between theological
 321 competence and personal piety remain a defining element of their identi-
 322 ty, both individually and for the community of ordained ministers. A sum
 323 of individual elements of competence alone does not make ordained min-
 324 isters capable of performing the church's mission under the current cir-
 325 cumstances. As vital as the development of individual abilities is, they
 326 can only unfold in ordained ministry if they are imparted together with a
 327 quality of life that manages to link theological competence with a way of
 328 conducting life that produces a specific form of identity.

329 In this context, on the one hand, continuing education programmes serve
 330 the acquisition of new skills and the deepening of existing ones and the
 331 examination, further development and cementing of fundamental insights
 332 into the truth of the Gospel faced with scientific developments, changes
 333 and conflicts in European societies and developments relating to reli-
 334 gions and ideologies in Europe.

335 On the other hand, by providing times of quiet, contemplation and spir-
 336 itual exercises and seminaries for personal consideration of lives led,
 337 these opportunities serve the clarification of pastors' current professional
 338 and personal situation and reassurance of their mission.

339 *2.4.3. Development of specializations*

340 In order to take on new challenges and perform the tasks these involve, it
 341 is also the purpose of continuing education to develop programmes for
 342 acquiring knowledge and skills for special activities. These include:

- 343 • The continuing education required for offering special services
 344 (e.g. hospital chaplaincy, prison chaplaincy, military chaplaincy,
 345 school service, welfare work);
- 346 • Preparation for community work that presents special challenges
 347 (e.g. youth churches, inner-city churches, "culture churches");

- 348 • Preparation for particular leadership duties and continuing educa-
349 tion for managers;
- 350 • Continuing education for teams of staff.

351 2.5. Encouraging a thirst for learning

352 Good continuing education starts with pleasure in one's own vocation
353 and ordination. It encourages and inspires, opens up and leads people
354 along a path away from rigid procedural actions, offers new ideas, un-
355 leashes new creativity and strengthens the conviction of one's vocational
356 calling to serve in the church and the community. An essential element
357 lies in revisiting Biblical sources, communal worship of God in life and the
358 discussion of spiritual issues in the company of other ordained ministers.
359 Continuing education can promote and expand personal resources and
360 resilience in the face of increasing professional strains. There is some-
361 thing liberating about discussing productive experiences, on the one
362 hand, and tribulations, on the other. It can be helpful to involve partici-
363 pants in planning and conducting continuing education. There should be
364 sufficient time and space in the continuing education events themselves
365 for spontaneous discussion.

366 Continuing education is not restricted to dedicated events for this pur-
367 pose. It provides motivation for continuing individual work – for further
368 reading and trying out new ideas. It inspires independent learning and
369 autonomous intellectual exploration of important questions and subjects.
370 It creates a thirst for gaining new insights. Time invested this way reaps
371 major dividends.

372 **3. Guidelines for continuing education**

373 3.1. The basic understanding of education¹⁰

374 By supporting universal educational processes at all levels and with all
375 members of staff, the member churches of the CPCE make it clear that
376 they permanently measure the form of their organization and their ordi-
377 nances against the Gospel and consider these changeable. They trust in
378 the fact that precisely the diversity within the CPCE enables every church
379 to bring its own interpretations and conceptions into contact with those of
380 the others in order to work constructively on both elements that confirm
381 as well as those that cause friction in the community. The CPCE's under-

¹⁰ The German term "Bildung" in the original text is not directly translatable into many other languages. The word "formation" in English and French has a different meaning.

382 standing of church communion encompasses teaching and learning. In
383 this respect, it is also an educational fellowship.

384 Educational processes depend not only on designing and attending edu-
385 cational events, but also occur beyond all methodical and organizational
386 pragmatic parameters in many ways – in inter-personal contact, in en-
387 counteracting regional traditions, in exchanging decisive experiences, in
388 spiritual life, in independent learning, in music, in aesthetics and many
389 other ways that expand people’s horizons. Thus educational processes
390 in the church communion occur not only in addition to church practice but
391 also form an integral part of church life.

392 From a Protestant perspective, at least five dimensions need bearing in
393 mind:

394 1. *Education is both a gain and an event.* People accept education as a
395 means of deepening their knowledge and broadening their courses of
396 action. One might also say that no person is fixed in just one “image” or
397 “form” but that people can always become free of their limitations and
398 predefinitions. Education is also a means of communicating the Gospel.

399 2. *Education is a subjective process of accumulation and change.* Self-
400 education forms a major part of a person’s education. Education involves
401 both educating oneself and being educated. It is not the sum of objective-
402 ly learnable expertise or skills, but rather affects people’s inner attitude,
403 personal conduct in life and their identity in special ways.

404 3. *Education is a socially imparted process.* People gain education in so-
405 cial contexts; they learn with or from others, for or about others, about the
406 living and the dead, from the experiences of others, their cultures and
407 insights, in family contact, in a certain environment or precisely from
408 those who are alien to them. Education requires a willingness to change
409 perspective and be objective, and to learn, experience and share new
410 things.

411 4. *Education encompasses more than knowledge and skills.* Education is
412 an infinite process that encompasses far more than the acquisition of
413 knowledge and skills. It requires a willingness to be astonished. Educa-
414 tion expands people’s personal horizons – the quest for the meaning of
415 life goes beyond the quest for the meaning of one’s own life.

416 5. *Education is participating in tradition and history,* where time and
417 space are transcended, on the one hand, but on the other are precisely
418 marked out as an impermeable frontier.

419 3.2. Aims of continuing education

420 Under the aspect that education is a subjective process of accumulation
 421 and change, the specific aims of continuing education (see above: 3.2.4.)
 422 can be outlined once again. When the member churches of the CPCE
 423 plan, conduct and evaluate continuing education measures, they do this
 424 so that:

- 425 • In connection with intensive reflection upon practice, pastors can
 426 develop their strengths and identify and work on their weakness-
 427 es and risk factors;
- 428 • Their pastoral identity is strengthened and they experience reas-
 429 surance;
- 430 • Pastors can train in the specializations required to complete their
 431 tasks;
- 432 • The ongoing dialectics of knowledge and ability are fostered.

433 No exclusive pastoral aims of continuing education should be set in rela-
 434 tion to this. In fact, the aims designated by the terms “strengths”, “reas-
 435 surance”, “specialization” and “dialectics of knowledge and ability” ap-
 436 ply to everyone who works officially or voluntarily for the Church. In par-
 437 ticular, voluntary workers should be assisted in the fields in which they
 438 assume responsibility, e.g. in leading the congregation, in ministry, in
 439 children and young people, in welfare efforts or in pastoral care. Doing
 440 something for and with others in the church and experiencing this as a
 441 personal gain has positive effects on the motivation and ability to self-
 442 assuredly determine one’s own life and professional circumstances. One
 443 of the most important pastoral tasks lies in getting people to work for the
 444 church and congregation and supporting them in this role. Pastors are
 445 expected to competently perform this demanding leadership role and be
 446 given the necessary support for the tasks this involves in the form of con-
 447 tinuing education.

448 3.3. Criteria for good practice in continuing education

449 As education is not simply the sum or product of learnable individual
 450 components, the quality of continuing education can neither be prede-
 451 fined nor measured as the result of multiple individual qualities. From the
 452 point of view of participants in continuing education events, the quality is
 453 determined by the degree to which their expectations correspond with the
 454 benefit they gain. It is a matter of communication between those who ar-
 455 range, provide and design the continuing education formats and those
 456 who make use of these continuing education measures or associate cer-
 457 tain aims with them.

458 In addition, theological education lies within a multifaceted internal and
 459 external frame of reference. The internal framework of reference for ex-
 460 ample includes the different theological disciplines, methods and herme-
 461 neutics. The external framework of reference concerns the understanding
 462 of theology as teaching and science, its relationship to the church and
 463 religion and its function in communicating faith. The church's educational
 464 organization therefore has to be viewed from a holistic perspective, which
 465 primarily encompasses three levels: a) the organizational structure, b)
 466 the education process, and c) the results.

467 3.4. Organizational structure

468 The structures and material and human resources with which continuing
 469 education is organized in the member churches of the CPCE are regulat-
 470 ed in different ways, as are the aims they pursue therewith. High-quality
 471 resources, the size of organization or degree of institutional differentiation
 472 do not automatically guarantee high quality per se. What counts is how
 473 the educational facilities position themselves in their environment so that
 474 they can tailor their educational mission to suit the needs of the workers
 475 in the church.

476 Open communications at organizational level have an extremely pro-
 477 found effect on the quality. The more clearly aware church education
 478 providers are of their organizational possibilities, the better they know
 479 their church and social frameworks and the more closely they focus on
 480 the continuing education requirements of their target group, the better
 481 they will manage to cultivate a good educational culture with the means
 482 at their disposal.

483 A process of dialogue addressing this subject within the CPCE could fo-
 484 cus on the following key questions for the individual church education
 485 facilities:

- 486 • What concrete tasks does church educational work pur-
 487 sue, and how are these communicated (church ordinanc-
 488 es, role models, concepts)?
- 489 • What material and human resources are available for con-
 490 ducting continuing education (staff, facilities, collaboration,
 491 funding)? How are the staff involved in continuing educa-
 492 tion trained for their roles?
- 493 • How are the programmes and offers for the respective tar-
 494 get groups compiled, carried out and evaluated? How is
 495 the target group involved in this?

496 When considering these questions, the member churches of the CPCE
 497 should pay particular attention to the value of their collaborative efforts in
 498 continuing education, how these are incorporated within the organization,
 499 and what initiatives are developed to implement them.

500 3.5. Education process

501 The education process lies at the heart of the churches' continuing edu-
 502 cation work. It is the task of the educational organization to support and
 503 enable this and the task of the students themselves to form the process.
 504 For this reason, standardized procedures or instruments for monitoring
 505 education only make sense if the educational institutions' targets can be
 506 clearly defined and linked to parameters that render these processes ex-
 507 aminable and controllable. But even then it remains true that applying
 508 what has been learned to church practice can hardly be controlled, as
 509 those who initiate the education processes remain separate from the stu-
 510 dents. However, in order to provide constructive support for education
 511 processes, it is possible and important to exert influence on the following
 512 factors:

- 513 • The subject matter of a continuing education measure is present-
 514 ed in a professional, methodical and didactically competent
 515 manner and is coherent with the participants' respective contin-
 516 uing education requirements.
- 517 • The churches' continuing education programmes also provide a
 518 spiritual form of realizing church fellowship for a given period of
 519 time. It has proved to be the case that the experience is made
 520 all the more intensive and conducive according to the diversity
 521 of the people gathered in the group. The process should not on-
 522 ly be supported by the continuing education programme in the
 523 realm of the CPCE but also by providing adequate space for
 524 contemplation and prayer during this kind of event.
- 525 • The way a continuing education measure is run and presented is
 526 shaped by respect for and consideration of participants' needs.
- 527 • Other, external factors that support the education process include
 528 a good venue, adequate technical facilities, media and materi-
 529 als, administrative and planning support, and information for the
 530 target group concerning the elements of the programme.

531 Trust is a vital factor at all levels of education. Opting to take part in an
 532 education process requires an element of trust in advance of the event
 533 with regard to the people, the facilities and the settings from and in which
 534 people want to learn something.

535 3.6. Results

536 With regard to the immediately preceding point, sometimes the results of
 537 an education process differ greatly from what was expected and planned.
 538 In any case, there is the benefit of liberation from former limitations, a
 539 departure from accustomed familiarities and the experience that getting
 540 educated (“Gebildetwerden“) stems only partially from what one can
 541 achieve oneself.

542 In a broader sense, this also applies to the continuing education institu-
 543 tion as a “learning organization“. In order to be strategically well-
 544 equipped, it is important to determine the relationship between the in-
 545 vested resources (*input*) and the result (*output/outcome*). Even if the
 546 question of learning outcomes ultimately cannot be answered objectively,
 547 but only subjectively by those who are learning, the perceptions of the
 548 participants, managers and the teachers, where appropriate, can be set
 549 against one another in a way that allows quality criteria to be developed
 550 for planning continuing education and for sharing experiences between
 551 different facilities, for example. In order to ascertain relevant evaluation
 552 criteria for recording results, the aims must be stated (“What is meant to
 553 be achieved?“). Only then are the results (“What has been achieved?“)
 554 really meaningful. It should also be asked what effects the continuing ed-
 555 ucation has within and across congregations. Conversely, it should also
 556 be asked how the changes instigated by the continuing education then
 557 affect the continuing education institution and its programme.

558 Many procedures are on hand for evaluating results. Regular, ongoing,
 559 qualitative procedures (i.e. ways of enabling participants to give personal
 560 feedback) during a continuing education course help provide orientation
 561 for managers and the presenters. Qualitative and/or quantitative proce-
 562 dures (e.g. questionnaires) are important at the end of a measure.

563 3.7. Forms of continuing education for ordained ministers

564 The following legend is offered to facilitate comparison between the dif-
 565 ferent formats, terminology and reference systems pertaining to continu-
 566 ing education in Europe.

567 A. *Training/Schulungen*

568 Verpflichtende Veranstaltungen zur beruflichen Qualifizierung
 569 *Compulsory events/measures for professional qualification*

570 B. *Professional studies/further education /* 571 *Weiterbildungsveranstaltungen*

572 Mittel- oder langfristige Maßnahmen (auch akademisch) mit einem zer-
573 tifizierten Abschluss

574 Medium or long-term (incl. academic) measures leading to certified pro-
575 fessional qualification

576 *C. Continuing education / Fortbildungsveranstaltung*

577 Kurz- oder mittelfristige Bildungsformate ohne zertifizierten Abschluss mit
578 dem Ziel, die beruflichen Kompetenzen zu erhalten und zu erweitern,
579 sowie die pastorale Identität weiterzuentwickeln.

580 *Short- or medium-term measures for professional education, aiming to*
581 *maintain and enhance professional expertise and support the develop-*
582 *ment of pastoral identity*

583 *D. Pastoral conventions or colloquys*

584 Regelmäßiges Gespräch, Austausch und Beratung der Ordinierten un-
585 tereinander mit dem Ziel der gemeinsamen theologischen Fortbildung,
586 der geistlichen Unterstützung und der Identifikation relevanter Fortbild-
587 ungsinhalte oder -projekte für die pastorale Praxis.
588 *Regular discussions, exchange and advice amongst/between ordained*
589 *ministers with the aim of common theological continuing education, spir-*
590 *itual support and identifying relevant subject matter or projects for contin-*
591 *uing education for pastoral practice.*

592 *E. Coaching / counselling / mentoring / supervision*

593 Unterschiedliche qualifizierte Formen und Methoden berufsbezogener
594 Beratung mit dem Ziel persönlicher, aufgaben- und anforderungsbe-
595 zogener Reflexion.

596 *Different qualified forms and methods of institutional counselling reflect-*
597 *ing on profession-related tasks and demands.*

598 *F. Study leave / Study periods / Contact courses*

599 Eine längere (bezahlte) Freistellung aus den beruflichen Zusammen-
600 hängen in Kombination mit einer der oben genannten Formen, zum
601 (akademischen) (Selbst-) Studium, Salutogenese, Erholung, Prophylaxe.

602 *A longer (paid) time out in combination with one of the above-mentioned*
603 *forms, for (academic) (independent) study, salutogenesis, recreation and*
604 *prophylaxis.*

605 In part, these variations are differently combinable, interchangeable, are
 606 limited to specific categories of profession, or are organised in the educa-
 607 tional culture of the different countries in modified forms or in collabora-
 608 tion with other education providers (universities or academies).

609 3.8. The importance of academic theology for continuing educa- 610 tion

611 Academic theology – above all, when it assumes an interdisciplinary ori-
 612 entation – creates a helpful and critical distances to one’s own immedia-
 613 cy. It considers all levels of pastoral practice in a methodical, scientific
 614 manner and from this critical self-examination can open up access to
 615 new courses of action.

616 Within continuing education, academic theology cannot be ascribed the
 617 limited function of simply ensuring its academic credentials, but has its
 618 own interest in dialogue with those actively in the service of proclamation
 619 as a means of subjecting its own theory to practical interrogation. Con-
 620 versely, pastors have the chance to not only participate in theological
 621 debates but also influence them. A sabbatical at a theological faculty
 622 provides a good opportunity for this.

623 Deepening pastors’ theological competence is a lifelong education pro-
 624 cess in itself, which from familiarity with Scripture, the symbols and rituals
 625 of Christian tradition enables themselves and others to interpret life by
 626 translating between tradition and the present. In the face of increasing
 627 secularization on the one hand and the fundamentalist reduction of reli-
 628 gion on the other, this expertise in translating and interpreting is more
 629 important than ever. As they accrue professional experience, pastors be-
 630 come able to integrate their own experiences into this theological process
 631 of reflection and thus expand their skills in orientating themselves and
 632 taking action from the foundation of Christian faith.

633 The Reformation perspective views learning from Scripture as an indis-
 634 pensable, fundamental task. This renders academic work on the Bible
 635 particularly important. Further intersections with pastoral fields of action
 636 emerge with respect to practical theology (liturgy, pastoral care, cyber-
 637 netics, church theory, education, welfare) and systematic theology (here
 638 in particular the exploration of key theological treatises, their historic and
 639 cultural contexts and the formation of the appropriate discerning and dis-
 640 cursive abilities for dealing with challenges relating to the church, ethics,
 641 science and society, including ecumenism, criticism of religion and inter-
 642 religious dialogue).

643 3.9. Didactics and methods

644 Adult education in which the didactics are focused on the self-led acquisition
645 of expertise and knowledge supports the theologically gained insight
646 that human beings themselves – *coram deo* – are the subjects of educa-
647 tional activity exempt from their own activity.

648 Here, didactics in the strictest sense relate to all questions of mediation
649 between subject matter and people. Methods are systematic procedures
650 that mentally or emotionally facilitate educational processes in individuals
651 or groups, enable people to communicate with one another and stimulate
652 them to acquire new knowledge and to expand their courses of action.

653 The following aspects are important for the didactic expertise of anyone
654 involved in planning, conducting and evaluating continuing education:¹¹

- 655 • Didactic action

656 Participant orientation, tolerance of ambiguity and interpersonal skills (not
657 only forging good relations, but also the ability to maintain them even in
658 difficult situations), own readiness for continuing education

- 659 • Didactic awareness of potential issues

660 The ability to distinguish between the person and the leadership role, to
661 identify obstacles to the learning process and one's own part in this; sen-
662 sitivity for challenges in the learning process related to people's biog-
663 raphy, socio-cultural and religious situation

- 664 • Didactic knowledge

665 Knowledge of inroads into adult pedagogy, the related theological issues
666 (above all, the underlying concept of education and view of humanity)
667 and the interplay of the relevant professional and personal circumstances
668 of learning motives

- 669 • Didactic expertise

670 Solid knowledge and skills in applying methods, techniques and evalua-
671 tions

672 Pastors' continuing education that brings together different churches and
673 countries also calls for particular intercultural expertise. Continuing edu-
674 cation officers must be able to identify "critical interaction situations"
675 (Alexander Thomas) in cultural encounters and to handle stereotypes
676 and prejudices in learning contexts in a constructive manner. It would be

¹¹ According to Horst Siebert: *Didaktisches Handeln in der Erwachsenenbildung: Didaktik aus konstruktivistischer Sicht* ("Didactic action in adult education: didactics from a constructivist perspective"). 7th edition, Augsburg: 2012 (1996).

677 appropriate to develop and conduct train-the-trainer continuing education
678 models in and for the CPCE's educational work.

679 3.10. Digitization and e-Learning in continuing education

680 "Digitization" is a truncated description of the current digital revolution,
681 i.e. of the way our way of life is being fundamentally changed by digital
682 technology. The resulting changes in the use of digital media in continu-
683 ing education are summarized under the term "e-Learning". These in-
684 clude many different forms (computer-based or web-based learning,
685 blended learning as a hybrid of e-Learning and traditional face-to-face
686 forms, MOOCs [massive open online courses] and serious games). Be-
687 sides the general and well-known risks related to these technologies (da-
688 ta security), discussions currently focus on identifying the fields and con-
689 ditions in which the use of e-Learning is proven to be appropriate and
690 beneficial.

691 The appeal of blended learning, in particular, lies in the way it "focuses
692 on the entire learning process of the individual student and thus no long-
693 er perceives learning as a series of detached, discrete events, but as a
694 continuous process. The transparency of teaching processes is in-
695 creased, and this enables the student to perform further-reaching, inde-
696 pendently organized and managed learning activities."¹² Further ad-
697 vantages include international continuing education events and pro-
698 grammes and better compatibility with family responsibilities.

699 The obstacles to implementing blended learning more broadly clearly lie
700 in the high technical, financial and personnel outlay for developing and
701 maintaining the appropriate programmes.

702 All the same, more intensive inclusion of elements involving procedures
703 and techniques linked to e-Learning (video conferencing, use of cloud
704 services for teaching and learning material, fast data connections) is in-
705 creasingly becoming the norm even in conventional continuing education
706 settings.

¹² See Ulrich Iberer: Vom E-Learning zum Blended Learning: Aktuelle Entwick-
lung und didaktische Chancen virtueller Lehr- und Lernformen. ("From e-
Learning to blended learning: current developments and didactic opportunities in
virtual forms of teaching and learning.") In: TheoWeb 9/2010, p. 20.
<http://www.theo-web.de/zeitschrift/ausgabe-2010-01/04.pdf>

707 **4. Recommendations for theological continuing**
 708 **education in the CPCE**

709 4.1. Expanding theological competence and developing profes-
 710 sional strengths

711 The changes to society at a global and European level have clear effects
 712 on the demands and profile of the pastoral profession. Joint continuing
 713 education in the realm of the CPCE provides the chance to learn how
 714 similar issues and challenges are encountered and addressed in other
 715 countries and churches. Regional and national diversity represents an
 716 enrichment for those participating in continuing education. Their own per-
 717 ception, theological knowledge and core pastoral competence are ques-
 718 tioned and expanded by getting to know other world views and theolo-
 719 gies and through exchange with people from other cultural and religious
 720 settings. Continuing education in the realm of the CPCE seeks to serve
 721 this aim.

722 4.2. Framework for theological continuing education

723 Continuing education requires adequate time and space. Besides brief
 724 formats (one-day events), more extended courses (from one to two
 725 weeks) in theological education would be desirable. From time to time
 726 (every 6-10 years), the churches should enable their pastors to take sab-
 727 baticals lasting several months, which could also be completed at the
 728 training and continuing education facilities run by other CPCE member
 729 churches.

730 4.3. The value of informal spheres of learning and encounters

731 International and inter-church continuing education should provide excit-
 732 ing new ideas and allow adequate time for working on them, e.g. in guid-
 733 ed group discussions with planned free time and breaks. It is important
 734 not only that the leaders and participants communicate, but that the par-
 735 ticipants get to talk to each other, too. Thus the chosen methods should
 736 ensure equal opportunities for getting actively involved. The ideal com-
 737 position of such events would mix countries and languages and include
 738 both men and women, which is something that should be encouraged
 739 and aimed for. Heterogeneity increases the didactic and methodical de-
 740 mands; but it is precisely this that creates the added value in international
 741 inter-church continuing education.

742 4.4. Principle of solidarity and sponsorships

743 All of the CPCE's continuing education activities should be planned and
 744 conducted according to the principle of solidarity. The respective financial
 745 and organizational resources (e.g. 2-5 % of all spending on continuing
 746 education) should be deployed in a way that offers mutual support and
 747 opens up access to educational activities to others for discussion and
 748 learning from and with one another and thus enriching the entire experi-
 749 ence. Churches with greater potential in this respect are particularly en-
 750 couraged to act as a platform for international projects and to sponsor
 751 partnership arrangements.

752 4.5. Collaboration and networking amongst pastors

753 The complexity of the challenges requires pastors to collaborate with one
 754 another more intensively and to encourage voluntary and salaried church
 755 officers to work together more. Continuing education can help them to
 756 achieve this. So it would make sense, wherever possible, for representa-
 757 tives from different fields of work and perhaps also volunteers to partici-
 758 pate in such continuing education measures. This encourages and tests
 759 the potential for collaboration in a special way.

760 If pastors conduct joint explorations at a local level together with other
 761 professions and volunteers from different churches on a specific theme
 762 (e.g. rural ministry, urban ministry, with specific age groups, in specific
 763 environments), this will reveal new perspectives and approaches to find-
 764 ing solutions.

765 4.6. Parallel academic research, quality management and evalu- 766 ation

767 International continuing education measures should be further distin-
 768 guished with parallel academic research. Empirical research into adult
 769 pedagogy (regarding evaluation and quality management), and particu-
 770 larly with regard to intercultural education, is desperately needed. The
 771 fruits of international continuing education should be researched in close
 772 contact with theological faculties, universities and adult education, and a
 773 grant should be offered to this effect.

774 4.7. Concrete measures

775 4.7.1. *Annual summer college*

776 Every year, a European summer college, similar to a European pastoral
 777 college, should take place. Each should be prepared and organized by
 778 one of the CPCE's member churches with input from representatives of

779 further CPCE member churches. An inaugural summer college is due to
 780 take place in 2018 to mark the 45th anniversary of the Leuenberg
 781 Agreement at the invitation of the Federation of Swiss Protestant
 782 Churches (FEPS).

783 Experience from previously conducted international continuing education
 784 has shown it is likely that new partnerships between churches and con-
 785 tinuing education facilities within the CPCE will emerge and existing part-
 786 nerships intensify, which will invigorate the communion within the CPCE.
 787 Shared practices create experiences that at the end of a fairly long pro-
 788 cess should be combinable to produce core principles for good theologi-
 789 cal continuing education. This will develop theological continuing educa-
 790 tion further and improve mutual recognition of continuing education within
 791 the CPCE.

792 *4.7.2. Internet platform on the CPCE's website*

793 An internet platform is to be set up on the CPCE's website for ascertain-
 794 ing the status quo, recording existing collaborative efforts and encourag-
 795 ing further networking of continuing education activities and practitioners
 796 in order to

- 797 • Publicize continuing education measures and issue invitations to
 798 specific events;
- 799 • Develop topics, share resources and working practices, and dis-
 800 cuss aids;
- 801 • Exchange advice and the contact details of speakers and experts;
- 802 • Facilitate sharing experiences between students and teachers;
- 803 • Provide access to the outcomes of education processes;
- 804 • Aid the exchange of academic and practical findings; and
- 805 • to raise the CPCE's profile as an educational fellowship of Refor-
 806 mation churches in inter-religious, cultural and socio-political dia-
 807 logue contexts.

808 *4.7.3. e-Learning / blended learning*

809 Nothing can replace the direct contact between people in continuing ed-
 810 ucation. But elements of e-Learning and blended learning should com-
 811 plement existing formats, as they offer a simple way of opening up ac-
 812 cess to theological continuing education for people in specific circum-
 813 stances (raising families) or from churches with little scope for continuing
 814 education. It would be desirable to run a pilot project for a number of
 815 years for establishing e-Learning modules step-by-step. The experiences

816 of the Methodist Church can be drawn upon with regard to developing
817 this format. It should be examined whether any suitable modules of this
818 course could be offered to pastors in other churches.

819 4.7.4. *International mobility*

820 Leading on from *Training for the ordained ministry in the Community of*
821 *Protestant Churches in Europe*, programmes are recommended that
822 “enable the temporary exchange of ministers and ensure the greatest
823 possible enrichment of the experiences and perspectives of the ex-
824 change partners.”¹³ A temporary visit can grow into the desire to move
825 long-term from one church to the other. A temporary – and most certainly
826 long-term – exchange of pastors within the CPCE presents considerable
827 challenges to the host church. On the one hand, the new arrivals need
828 integrating well, but on the other hand, they should inject their own previ-
829 ous experiences to good effect. This requires customized continuing ed-
830 ucation measures to offer basic orientation in the “history, law and liturgy
831 of the particular church” (ibid.) and to enable the guests to act confidently
832 within the respective culture. “In this connexion thought must also be giv-
833 en to the recognition of qualifications and degrees acquired outside the
834 CPCE.” (ibid.)

835

¹³ Cf. note 1, p. 253.

836 **Appendix: Contributors to this study process**

837

838 A. Participants at the consultation in Strasbourg, 12–15 November
839 2015

840 Revd. Dr. Jacques-Antoine von Allmen (Federation of Swiss Protestant
841 Churches)

842 Educator Mika Aspinen (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland)

843 SCC Ingrid Bachler (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in
844 Austria)

845 Prof. Michael Beintker (Evangelical Church in Germany – EKD)

846 Theology student Maximilian Bode (EKD)

847 Revd. Dr. James Coleman (United Reformed Church)

848 Private lecturer Dr. Detlef Dieckmann (United Evangelical Lutheran
849 Church of Germany – VELKD), speaker

850 Revd. Karol Dlugosz (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in
851 Poland)

852 Prof. Sándor Fazakas (Reformed Church in Hungary)

853 Rev. Dr. David Field (United Methodist Church in Southern-Central Eu-
854 rope)

855 Rt. Revd. Peter Fischer-Møller (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Den-
856 mark)

857 Prof. Martin Friedrich (CPCE)

858 Dr. Didier Halter (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches)

859 Revd. Dr. Andreas Heieck (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches)

860 Prof. Beate Hofmann (Wuppertal Church University), speaker

861 Revd. Wiltrud Holzmüller (Regional Church of Lippe)

862 Henk Hogendoorn (Protestant Church in the Netherlands)

863 SCC Karl Ludwig Ihmels (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony)

864 Revd. Eszter Kalit (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania)

865 Revd. Kerstin Kask (Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church)

866 SCC Prof. Hildrun Kessler (Evangelical Church in Germany – EKD)

867 Director Kari Kopperi (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland)

- 868 School Dean Herbert Kumpf (Evangelical Church in Baden)
- 869 Dr. Manacnuc Mathias Lichtenfeld (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ba-
870 varia)
- 871 SCC Dr. theol. Holger Ludwig (Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau)
- 872 Revd. Peter Martins (Evangelical Church in Berlin–Brandenburg–Silesian
873 Oberlausitz)
- 874 Revd. Markus Merz (CPCE)
- 875 Revd. Dr. Hans Vium Mikkelsen (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Den-
876 mark)
- 877 Prof. Hallvard Mosdøl (Church of Norway)
- 878 CC Bettina Mühlig (Evangelical Church in Central Germany)
- 879 SCC Gottfried Müller (Evangelical Church of Palatinate)
- 880 Pastor Paul Philipps (Evangelical Church in Northern Germany)
- 881 Dr. Steffen Schramm (Evangelical Church of Palatinate)
- 882 Private lecturer Dr. Regina Sommer (Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-
883 Waldeck)
- 884 Prof. Lajos Szabó (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary)
- 885 Revd. Dr. Christof Theilemann (Evangelical Church in Berlin–
886 Brandenburg–Silesian Oberlausitz)
- 887 Pasteure Esther Wieland-Maret (Eglise Unie Protestante de France)
- 888 Dr. L. Theo Witkamp (Protestant Church in the Netherlands)
- 889 SRCC Michael Wöller (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hannover)
- 890
- 891 B. Members of the editorial group in 2016
- 892 Prof. Michael Beintker (Evangelical Church in Germany – EKD)
- 893 Prof. Martin Friedrich (CPCE)
- 894 SCC Karl Ludwig Ihmels (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony)
- 895 SCC Prof. Hildrun Kessler (Evangelical Church in Germany – EKD)
- 896 Revd. Peter Martins (Evangelical Church in Berlin–Brandenburg–Silesian
897 Oberlausitz)
- 898 Revd. Markus Merz (CPCE)

- 899 Revd. Dr. Hans Vium Mikkelsen (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Den-
900 mark)
- 901 Private lecturer Dr. Regina Sommer (Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-
902 Waldeck)
- 903 Prof. Lajos Szabó (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary)
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- 907
- 908