

United in Jesus Christ – together for this world

The 2021 assembly of the WCC in Karlsruhe is an ecumenical chance.

Statement by the General Assembly of the Council of Churches in Germany (ACK)

Encouraging ecumenism

In 2021, the assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) will be held for the first time in Germany. The WCC has accepted the invitation of the Evangelical Church in Germany in cooperation with the Council of Churches in Germany (ACK). Together with all our ecumenical partners, we as the ACK want to work to make the assembly a strong and encouraging witness to the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our world. Together with the Third Ecumenical Kirchentag in Frankfurt am Main, which will also take place in 2021, we hope that the assembly will give ecumenism in Europe and Germany a noticeable stimulus and make concrete steps towards the visible unity of our churches.

Meeting challenges

The preparations for the assembly come at a time of manifold challenges: climate change, military conflicts, violations of human rights, poverty and nationalism. The assembly in Karlsruhe will make an important contribution to justice and reconciliation, to unity and peace in our world. The experiences of the host country play an important role here: after the Second World War, the churches in Germany learned from the worldwide ecumenical movement and took steps towards each other. In 1948, the ACK was founded, and the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church joined in 1974. Now 17 churches of various confessions belong to the ACK as full members and 8 churches as guest members. Over the decades, the ACK has succeeded in setting encouraging ecumenical signals with initiatives such as the Ecumenical Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation and the "Do you know who I am?" project.

Learning from experience

In the ACK the different churches work together in a trusting and constructive way. They express the communion, which already exists without ignoring their theological differences. This was demonstrated clearly at the ecumenical celebrations commemorating the anniversary of the Reformation in 2017; in the same way, 500 years of Anabaptism will be commemorated in ecumenical fellowship in 2025. Strong cross-border ties have been formed with the churches in neighbouring countries, especially in France and Switzerland. With the Charta Oecumenica, which was signed on the European level in 2001 and then in 2003 by the churches in Germany, the churches have given themselves a binding foundation for their cooperation.

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18). We thank God that we have grown closer to one another. We are aware of our commitment to form even stronger links in witness and service and to contribute to reconciliation and unity in our world. The WCC assembly offers an especially important opportunity for the churches in Germany to draw even more attention to the great ecumenical diversity in this country.

Giving joint witness

The experiences made in Germany and Europe serve as an example of the way in which people of different nations and opinions, as well as churches from different cultural and theological backgrounds, can live in reconciliation and can grow together into a strong and reliable community by faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ. With its theme "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity", the assembly offers the opportunity to present a convincing witness to the gospel together with the delegates from churches around the world, and to work for peace, unity and reconciliation. In this way, the churches in Europe want to learn from the experiences of other continents.

Continuing on the path to unity

The assembly in Karlsruhe is an important stage on this pilgrimage of justice and peace.

We are hoping for

- concrete steps on the path to visible unity of the Church, which is named in the Charta Oecumenica as the goal of the ecumenical movement,
- an encouraging fresh start for a convincing and missionary church, as well as
- Guidance and encouragement from the gospel for the challenges ahead.

We are looking forward to the assembly in Karlsruhe. The ACK in Germany is glad to bring all its energy into this process. We know that unity is the gift of God. Therefore we ask all member churches of the ACK to support the preparations for the assembly and to accompany them in prayer. "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations." (Psalm 67:1-2)

The General Assembly of the Council of Churches in Germany
Hofgeismar, 4 April 2019