

Bad Driburg Agreement 2013

Preamble

In continuity with the prior German-ELCRN partnership consultations in Gut Holmecke 1985, Swakopmund 1990, Haus Friede 1998 and Swakopmund 2006 we, the delegates to the Bad Driburg consultation appreciate the work done and commit ourselves to the following renewed agreement:

1. PARTNERSHIP

1.1. When we use the term "Partnership", we want to express the following:

- God has created all of us equal in His great love;
- through Christ we recognise our guilt and misunderstandings, and Christ helps us to forgive and reconcile;
- the Spirit of God places us anew into the worldwide communion of saints, and sets us free to serve God's people in our respective societies and nations.

From there we discover each other, and our eyes are opened to others, to the riches of the Church of Christ in the whole world, and to her sufferings and needs.

1.2. The word partnership is not a traditional term in our Christian doctrine and might have arisen from coincidental historical developments and relations, or from certain trends and fashions in discussions on ecumenical and development affairs. Yet, our partnership relations and project work have an outstanding position. They are rooted in a shared history which was fruitful and painful. They cannot be altered at random and cannot be denied or forgotten. Our relationship is a concrete expression of the worldwide sister- and brotherhood in Christ.

It is God who governs history beyond our understanding. God has brought us together in the spirit of committed ecclesiastical communion.

1.3. We take mutual critical questions seriously. We are confident that the difficulties and burdens of the partnership can be discussed in a spirit of mutual respect, honesty and transparency.

1.4. We commit ourselves to the following:

1.4.1. Within the framework of the existing circuit partnerships, congregations are encouraged to take up partnerships on their own level. Church Councils and decision-making bodies on all levels are involved in the process.

1.4.2. To develop partnership contacts between kindergartens, hostels, schools, institutions, youth groups and choirs of ELCRN and her partners. Congregational councils, circuit councils and the heads of the concerned institutions are involved in the development of partnership relations.

1.4.3. To establish partnership committees on institution, circuit and congregation level, is the responsibility of the parish, circuit and church councils. Partnership committees have to report to these bodies on a regular basis. (cf. Appendix A "Communication Structures"). Lay persons are encouraged to lead partnership committees.

The ELCRN will employ a partnership coordinator who will work together with the regional UEM Partnership Contact Person to ensure the facilitation and coordination of the partnerships and projects of the ELCRN.

The German Partnership Groups will continue working together with the responsible person/s in the ecumenical structure of their churches.

1.4.4. To align/set up our own specific partnership agreements according to the "Partnership Guidelines for UEM" within the next 5 years in order to strengthen the work and communication as a basis for a better partnership and spiritual life. After a certain period an evaluation shall take place. (See Appendix B "Working Groups")

- 1.4.5. To share information about life and work in congregations, institutions and circuits, as well as about burning issues in our societies.
- 1.4.6. To exchange prayer concerns, especially for mission in Namibia and Germany;
- 1.4.7. To involve congregations and churches from all parts of the world, who have official relationships with the ELCRN and/or her partners (such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands).
- 1.4.8. The partners appreciate the continued effort towards the process of unification of the three Lutheran Churches in Namibia and commit themselves to assist jointly in the process, particularly with regard to the revision of existing contracts.
- 1.4.9. Official language of communication should be English.

2. UNITED IN GOD'S MISSION

- 2.1. In our partnership together we proclaim Jesus Christ to be the Lord and Saviour of all people and meet the present-day missionary challenges. In a world torn apart, we commit ourselves to remain members of the one Body of Christ, and therefore
- grow together into a worshipping, learning and serving community;
 - share gifts, insights and responsibilities;
 - call all people to repentance and new life;
 - bear witness to the Kingdom of God in striving for justice, peace and the integrity of creation (of Art. 2 of the Constitution of UEM).

We are together in the community of United Evangelical Mission (UEM), a Communion of Churches on three Continents. We notice the possibilities of this community for our partnership relation (multilateral partnerships, advocacy, exchange programs, financial assistance).

- 2.2. Our churches are places of trust, refuge and help. As living letters of Christ we raise our prophetic voices in our societies.

We identify ourselves through the prophetic witness in word and deed with the rights of the poor, the oppressed, the refugees and those, whose human rights are violated, and speak out for their rights. We encourage and educate people for self-confidence, awareness-building and self-reliance.

The churches commit themselves, in particular, to prevent and work against the spread of HIV and AIDS and for poverty eradication (e.g. the Basic Income Grant – BIG) and land reform.

The churches face the challenges of climate change, want to share their ideas of solutions and encourage each other to change our behaviour, to preserve our environment and to work for climate justice.

- 2.3. We learn to handle the questions arising from the encounter of gospel and cultures with high sensibility and respect. The aim of intercultural learning is to find a deeper understanding and respect of "the other one".
- 2.4. We see sharing of the missionary task as a challenge to the churches involved in partnership. To enable this sharing, burning issues should be identified and exchanged. We share visions and experiences of our mission. Opportunities for all, especially for young people, to take part in mission work of partner churches should be provided.

3. SHARING

Sharing, in all its patterns, belongs to the essence of partnership. What we are, and what we have, does not come from our own strength, but is a gift from God. This results in mutual participation and communication, and sharing is an expression of life in Christ.

Such sharing includes the whole person, in whatever situation we find ourselves.

The communion which has been founded by Christ, makes us share in each other's material possessions and in the needs of individuals and of respective churches and societies.

Sharing has its roots in the unity which Christ gave to the Church. Partnership and practical sharing have to start with this clear confession. This results in spiritual fellowship which is not separable from material, administrative, political, financial, personal, personnel, or other aspects.

It is our task and challenge to create awareness towards self-sustainable attitudes and conditions. In order to support this process we must encourage and strengthen each other in empowerment, responsibility and ownership. The partners have to realize their own abundance and needs and have to share these with one another. The partners will give each other a deep inside view of their churches in order to identify their own challenges and the measures how to respond to them and to look for the assistance needed.

3.1. Communication

Information should be shared by personal encounters, letters, electronic media or other forms of communication, such as the UEM website. Websites should be regularly updated. (cf. Appendix A "Communication Structures")

3.2. Personal Contacts, Visits, Visitations and Delegations

Personal contacts, visits, visitations and delegations are derived from Jesus, through whom God Himself has visited us. In personal encounters mutual acceptance can be experienced, as Christ has accepted us.

Both pastors and lay co-workers, women and men, should be involved in these visits, and all parties should receive thorough preparation.

Visitors should see all sides of the life of the Church, and should not communicate only with the pastors.

Visits help to get another perspective of one's own situation. Therefore we need time for evaluation and for discussion of common issues. Visits shall be jointly prepared in good time.

Mutual visitations are an expression of mutual assistance in church leadership.

The respective partners should contribute towards costs of visits and visitations according to their abilities.

3.3. Exchange of Personnel

In the spirit of sharing, we maintain exchange of personnel which is not limited to pastors. For such a programme, an agreement on the job description, coverage of the costs for housing, medical care and salaries, is to be worked out. Personnel shall be recruited in mutual consultation, as stipulated in UEM guidelines. Such programmes will be facilitated with the help of UEM.

Our common instrument for short-time exchange for young people is the UEM Volunteers Programme.

We will encourage the exchange of young theologians and students of theology.

3.4. Sharing in Financial Terms

Out of our confession that we are one in Christ, follows the common participation in material goods and shortcomings.

Needs and possibilities always affect all members of a body equally. Those who have greater financial potential at present do not have a greater right in decision-making or in interference.

The act of giving something away is easier than genuine sharing. In this respect we may have to go through some conflicts, but that must not divide us.

One of the aims of our partnership is to reach financial self-reliance of ELCRN, as manifested in the Bishop's Office Development Committee (BODC) initiative, which also inspires the ecumenical partners.

3.5. Participation in Spiritual Life

Mutual participation in spiritual life should be stressed. Common celebration of services and sharing in the sacraments, as well as sharing in hymns, common prayers with lists of intercessions (several times a year, vice versa) express the unity of the Church.

Such participation can be experienced in personal encounters, but also through various kinds of media correspondence, reports and newsletters of the partners, and commonly planned worship services.

All partners are encouraged to celebrate a common Partnership-Sunday of all UEM-churches on Trinity Sunday.

Joint Biblical and theological reflection is essential within the partnerships.

4. FINANCIAL COOPERATION

4.1. We live under unjust economic conditions. The division between rich and poor is a distressing reality between North and South and also visible within our respective societies. Therefore our financial cooperation is an expression of solidarity.

4.2. This cooperation is manifested, among others, through project assistance, by a Solidarity Fund which will be established by the end of 2013.

All German partnership groups as well as the German churches, UEM and ELCRN commit themselves to fund this mechanism within their means. Details are explained in Appendix C "Terms of Reference Solidarity Fund".

On ELCRN side a governing board is responsible for approval of projects and the respective distribution of money. Project applications to the Solidarity Fund can be made by congregations and parishes via the circuits, by the circuits and by institutions and programmes of the ELCRN. Applications need a budget proposal (according to UEM application/reporting formats). Projects should contribute towards self-sustainability. Programmatic activities can be supported and, in extraordinary cases, also infrastructural projects, if it is a prerequisite for programmatic activities. Within a period of 3 years the contributions to the applying circuits, institutions and programmes should be nearly fair and equal.

A system of planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME) according to international standards (e.g. UEM Code of Conduct for Transparency and against Corruption → Guidelines for the Treasurers/Heads of Finance Departments) has to be introduced and trainings should be offered for all involved. This PME measures will provide transparency on all levels.

4.3. Apart from the annual contributions to the Solidarity Fund partnership groups may transfer bridging amounts of up to €7,000.- per year, per partner circuit/partner institution (flow of money see UEM guidelines for the Treasurers/Heads of Finance Departments + Terms of Reference "Bilateral Money Transfer" Appendix D).

If there are partnership relations between congregations (including hostels and kindergartens) within a partnership of a circuit then any money flow between them is included in the above mentioned amount of up to €7,000.-; if the relationship exists without a connection to the respective circuits they may transfer a bridging amount of up to €1,000.-.

The circuits and institutions shall acknowledge receipt of the money immediately and report to the partners via the partnership coordinator on the use of the funds within 6 months after receipt of the funds. All bodies concerned within ELCRN, German churches and UEM should receive copies of the correspondence (see Appendix B "Communication Structure").

- 4.4. The support of ELCAP needs to be guaranteed by the partners through UEM. In addition direct support of the work of ELCAP in partner regions and beyond is possible. This special support shall not exceed the annual amount of €2,500.- and has to be channelled through the National ELCAP office to the Regional Offices (with notification to ELCRN Finance Director and UEM). Project proposals by the regional offices must be submitted to the ELCAP Coordinator; reports are sent to the partners via the ELCAP Coordinator.
- 4.5. In light of the self-sustainability concept partners aim to phase out any additional support (cf. 4.3. and 4.4.) over the next 5 years. The amount of bilateral transfers gradually decreases by about €1,500,- (4.3.) and €500,- for ELCAP (4.4.) per year.
- 4.6. Financial transfers of the partners have to be channelled through UEM and the ELCRN Head Office (see Appendix D Terms of Reference "Bilateral Money Transfer").
- 4.7. All decisions within the framework of the partner relationship should consider and guarantee the inner structure and unity of the churches concerned.
- 4.8. Our bilateral partnership shall not affect the contributions of all partners to UEM.

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