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Communion d'Eglises Protestantes en Europe (CEPE)

Anchor in Time

Protestant Worship in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe between Conservation and Change

A study based on case studies

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CPCE – South East Europe Group
on behalf of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe

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1. Worship – Realisation of the manifold grace of God (1. Peter 4, 10)

Millions of Christians attend church worship services every Sunday in Protestant churches throughout Europe. Communities with very different characteristics, full-time and volunteer staff, cantors and pastors, demonstrate great commitment and love in their organisation of worship. Often shaped by traditions dating back centuries, worship is celebrated every week. Sermons and prayers are lifted up in all the languages of Europe, communion is taken in accordance with various liturgies, hymns are sung in different styles, from huge cathedrals to tiny village churches – spreading the Good News of the Gospel.

There is a wide variety of worship services to suit different occasions, to be celebrated in different locations: from church worship services to weddings or funerals, worship on the radio, television or internet, worship services on the occasion of major public events, but also in the wake of disasters, worship in schools or in homes for the elderly. The wealth of worship services taking place in the midst of our everyday lives is so vast as to be almost beyond our comprehension, and yet it continues to surprise us.

The wealth of liturgical practice is encouraging, both as a gift and as a responsibility. Worship characterises churches, it sustains people. The present study gratefully appreciates this experience and aims to examine this wealth. The final goal is to link the worship experiences of individual churches in each regional group, whilst recognising the diversity within the commonalities. In this way, our worship community can grow across national, linguistic and denominational boundaries.

1.1 Worship in Changing Times – Commission of the 6th General Assembly of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE)

The 5th General Assembly of the Leuenberg Church Fellowship held in Belfast in 2001 expressed the wish for stronger integration among the churches involved also in terms of Spiritual growth, and at the 6th General Assembly in Budapest in September 2006, the Presidium emphasised that the Council of Protestant Churches in Europe “is above all a worshipping fellowship” which finds its expression in the regular celebration of worship¹. In the final report, the Budapest General Assembly suggests therefore, to deal in more detail in a project with the theme of worship: “It is a permanent task to keep worship in contact and interaction with the different worlds in which people live. This task is being achieved with commitment in many Protestant

¹ Report of the Presidium – General Assembly Budapest 2006, Strengthening Community – The Profile of Protestantism in Europe, p. 1.

churches. It is important to develop criteria for necessary changes without neglecting the confessional profile and local traditions as characteristics which establish identity"².

The Council has addressed the concerns of the General Assembly by commissioning the South East Europe Group with a project on the subject of "Worship in Changing Times". The regional group presents its findings in this study. It is based on concrete examples from churches within the regional group, focusing on regional and sectarian differences, whilst also seeking to focus on common challenges faced by churches outside of the region.

1.2 Opening Question and Goal of the Study

The CPCE is a worshipping community based on a pulpit and altar fellowship. This applies to the South East Europe Group in particular. Celebrating joint worship has been an essential element of the community since its founding, especially during the difficult Cold War period. It is also important to note that churches within the regional group are diaspora churches, or rather churches with minority status. For these churches in particular, worship is an essential, sometimes the sole form of communication and identification, both internally and externally. Through encounters and meetings, the churches in the region recognise and experience the wealth of worship services again and again. An important topic is dialogue on diversity and recognising things that bind us above and beyond our own borders; this was raised repeatedly at meetings even before work started on this study following the General Assembly in Budapest in 2006. Commissioning this study in Budapest added a new work perspective: to recognise the new challenges to the common life of worship, which have been forced upon us once again as a result of the rapid social changes in recent decades. Specific questions which were concerns of ours are listed here:

- 1) The events of 1989 ushered in major changes for church and society in Europe alike. What impact have these processes had on the common life of worship of the churches in the regional group?
- 2) In Western churches, individualisation and pluralisation influence worship culture. To what extent are comparable developments to be found in the former Eastern Bloc
- 3) Europe is "growing together". People from different language backgrounds, traditions, or cultural circles are living side by side. How should the churches of the regional group respond to these challenges in their worship services?

² 6th General Assembly of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) – Leuenberg Church Fellowship – 12.-18.9.2006 in Budapest, FINAL REPORT, Freedom is binding, pp. 8-9

- 4) Many of the churches within the regional group are in an extreme minority situation. What impact does this have on the development of worship?
- 5) The churches within the regional group view Sunday worship as a central pillar of church identity. How is this claim lived out in reality?
- 6) In the Leuenberg Agreement, the CPCE has laid out a common theological basis. What criteria can be obtained from this with regard to the development of worship?

1.3 Method and Structure of the Study

This study was the result of several years of exchanging experiences within the CPCE South East Europe Group. The case studies and examples are based on delegates' written appraisals regarding developments in worship within their churches. Significant examples were selected and edited for the purpose of this study. The reference to the experience of the common life of worship characterises the style of the study. It is not surprising, therefore that so much of the study is dedicated to case studies and indeed, a whole section is given over to them. Moreover, other parts of the study refer not only to case studies; the argumentation is predominantly experience-oriented.

The case studies in section 2 contain significant examples of the transformation of the culture of worship, drawn from the experience of churches within the regional group. It is the task of later sections of the study to define this transformation more precisely and to identify key areas of the changes, to discover the opportunities as well as the difficulties in this process and to find those things that bind us. The social context and perceived patterns of change are presented in section 3 and placed in relation to a theological orientation in section 4. Following presentation of the social context and the theological guiding perspectives, the next section is concerned with the celebration of worship practices as reflected in their living diversity (Section 5). The evolution of worship in a changing society is considered in section 6. Section 7, entitled 'insights and perspectives', lays out conclusions, as well as formulating impulses for further work.

1.4 Anchor in Time

The title "Anchor in Time" was chosen because it expresses a basic tension which is necessary in worship; between change and continuity, transformation and essence, time and eternity.

Worship is a place of constancy, a place which stays the same because it is where we encounter our eternal God. It is an anchorage, a shelter, a refuge from the vicissitudes of life; it offers us security and a home. It also provides individuals with guidance, enabling them to shape their lives – an integral part of the issues of the day which links the generations, past, present and future. This place is not an island, standing out erratically from the flow of time; rather it is an-

chored within its time by virtue of its composition. For God's Word is of the time and takes its shape. The phrase "Anchor in Time" takes on the meaning of an admonishment, an encouragement or even a challenge; to take changing references to time seriously, to allow times of change, which people must necessarily experience and sometimes endure, to take shape. Since God's Word speaks in the time, the form of worship must change with the times. Contemporary worship takes a form that lies somewhere between modernisation and preservation. In this way, it performs the service of God to his congregation and the response of the community to their particular situation. In transformation and as a temporal process, worship can enable the encounter with the Eternal. At the same time, there is the eschatological hope that in the face of changing and passing time, this anchorage foretells of the anchorage beyond all time, an anchorage for all eternity.

2. Worship in times of change – significant examples from churches within the regional group

2.1 Migration as a Challenge for Worship - Italy

Unione delle chiese valdesi e metodiste

Recent decades have seen streams of migrants arriving in Italy from Africa, including several hundred thousand Protestant Christians. Although only a fraction of these people can be found in the historic Waldensian and Methodist churches, where they have discovered their spiritual home (numerous ethnic free churches have been set up in the meantime), some Waldensian communities have changed dramatically. In northeastern Italy and in major cities (such as Milan, Rome or Palermo) in particular, the arrival of Protestant migrants has caused congregations to grow rapidly. In many small diaspora communities, the migrants now constitute the majority, while locals have become a minority in their own church.

Take the Waldensian congregation in Brescia for example. The church has a tradition dating back 150 years, and yet the congregation consisted of just a few local families. In the past 15 years, the wave of immigration has led to almost explosive growth. The number of parishioners has multiplied many times over. About 80 per cent are now young families from Ghana and other predominantly African countries, from Methodist backgrounds above all, but also from the Presbyterian tradition.

This presents an enormous challenge to the identity of a religious minority in the midst of Italian society with its strong Roman Catholic influence; a community which has for centuries consciously taken on the role of a Protestant diaspora church, and has now become a minority

within its own house. In small traditional communities, thousands of Protestant immigrants, with their specific faith traditions, their cultural roots and respective theological contexts, are putting life within the church community, its structures, organisation and even its worship to the test.

Congregations have reacted in a variety of ways to this challenge:

- 1) Some play host to other congregations or groups in their own church buildings, however each group celebrates its own worship and is organised independently. There may be contact and exchanges between the two groups on occasion, but this is not the primary objective of this coexistence.
- 2) In other places, locals and migrants have joined together to form a single community, offering various forms of worship service to take into account the respective traditions, cultures and languages. Cohesion of the various groups is a concern in such communities. From time to time, joint worship services take place with this precisely concern in mind.
- 3) The attempt to bring local and migrant groups together in a community and to live this out every Sunday in a worship service has been undertaken by just a few congregations. It represents, however a benchmark model of integration for a living worship community. This model is the one which goes furthest in the sense of integration and will be considered in more detail here.

Such joint worship services between different cultures present challenges, such as on the one hand, the need to protect the identity of locally-born parishioners, creating a worship service which can be placed within the Waldensian tradition, whilst on the other hand, making room which will appeal to migrants to enable them to feel “at home” in the joint worship service. In order to create such conditions, the worship service must be multilingual. Although worship in Brescia is mainly held in Italian and follows the order of service of the Waldensian Church, but the central proclamation of the Word; in other words, Bible readings and the sermon are offered in Italian and English. It is the pastor’s responsibility to address the English-speaking majority directly during the sermon, as well as the greeting and blessing, invitation to communion, and so on. Since several of the first generation migrants speak only the traditional Ghanaian language of Twi, a supplementary bible study on the sermon text takes place after worship in Twi.

On the one hand, worship songs are selected from the congregational repertoire (preserving tradition), including multilingual songs which have long been in use. On the other hand, songs from each tradition are rehearsed and performed. Practical assistance comes in the form of a bilingual songbook, which was introduced several years ago and is used regularly. The songs are accompanied not only by the organ, but also with traditional African percussion and rhythm

instruments. The new joint worship service incorporates liturgical elements of African origin (such as dance).

Spiritual leaders and personalities from migrant groups want to actively participate in worship; Ghanaian charisma and gifts should be incorporated. To this end, the Waldensian Church has offered an intercultural training course since 2008. Designed to appeal to preachers from mixed communities, it aims to involve spiritual leaders from immigrant groups, future lay preachers (both local and migrant) and pastors (as tutors) in a common, cross-cultural learning process. Although this constitutes a major challenge for communities, in the same way as cultural differences, such as a different approach to time (personal time, as well as that of others, the time for God), it appears as though only organisational issues such as the length of worship or the sermon, the starting time of the service, punctuality, etc. conceal significant conflict potential.

The Protestant churches in Italy have endeavoured to develop joint projects and strategies for the various integration models. At the level of the "Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy", the Working Group "Essere Chiesa Insieme" (ECI) was formed in 2003, which translated means "Being One Church Together". The group supports congregations in the challenges of migration and integration.

In the future, even more flexible worship service models should be developed, in which a different weighting of the liturgical elements and the various "styles of preaching" can be practiced in order to do justice to differing expectations. A change in the different forms of worship would be a possibility, although it remains to be seen whether these would then be viewed as common property.

If joint worship services, involving locals and migrants in a multicultural community, are successful, creating an atmosphere in which differences are seen to enrich and are practised together, then this success offers a socially-critical and prophetic sign, both in contemporary Italy and in Europe as a whole, a sign against racism and exclusion, as well as a valuable contribution towards achieving successful integration.

2.2 A Comparison of Methodist Worship Services in the East and the West

United Methodist Church (UMC) in Germany, Austria and Serbia

The United Methodist Church (UMC) is not written into national or regional church structures; as a church organisation therefore, it forms a bridge between East and West. Nevertheless in the three countries of Germany, Austria and Serbia, the UMC lives in very different contexts. Not only the East-West comparison needs to be taken into consideration, but also the religious con-

text (Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox environment) has a clear impact on the arrangement and development of the worship service.

In the United Methodist Church in all three countries, prayers are generally spoken freely. Congregational singing is greatly valued. The creed is spoken as a rule only during communion or during worship services for special occasions. There is a separate children's programme in most communities. Even as children take part in the first section of the worship service, they subsequently leave to attend Sunday school. Yet the Methodist Church does not have a cross-border, mandatory, traditional order of service. Rather, a main country-specific form of worship has developed in each country, created with specific reference in line with or in opposition to forms of worship from their own environment. Worship in Austria is devised in a way which demonstrates clear orientation towards Lutheran and/or Roman Catholic order of service. In Serbia, however, worship has more of a Free Church character, although in the planning of morning worship, greater emphasis is consciously placed on liturgical elements.

As in the order of service, the periscope order also exhibits a certain orientation to practises originating in the surrounding environment. In Germany, the choice of text is left to the individual pastor. Many are based on the periscope order of the Protestant Church. A recent series of sermons, based on a particular theme or a specific book in the Bible, plays a leading role in some individual communities, particularly younger ones. Austria takes its lead from the worldwide Methodist Church, using the "Revised Common Lectionary", which is the same for all churches in the English-speaking tradition, and – as far as the Gospel is concerned – is also in accordance with the Catholic order of service (equivalent to a three-year cycle, focusing on one single synoptic gospel at a time). In Serbia, the choice of reading and sermon texts is usually elective.

Communal singing is a vital aspect of worship. There is a familiar saying that "Methodism was born in song". A new hymn book was introduced in 2002 in German-speaking countries which also attracted great ecumenical attention. It replaced the hymn book of 1969, which had omitted largely forgotten traditional Methodist hymns and had included instead reformatory, post-reformatory and pietistic songs. The new hymnal has a clear Methodist profile that is already reflected in its arrangement. It is based on the Apostles' Creed. Many songs have their roots in the English-speaking world and have been newly translated into German, including 22 songs by Charles Wesley and other Methodist songwriters. A point was made of including a varied repertoire from different traditions (Iona, Taizé, church conferences, etc.). The hymnal is particularly noted for its international character. It includes songs not only from Europe, but also from Africa, Latin America, New Zealand, the Caribbean and China. Some songs have been

printed in several languages. Modern issues have taken into consideration, too. Naturally, the hymnal also contains the common German-language treasury of Protestant songs and a variety of ecumenical songs. 99 of the 167 titles are familiar. A long-held tradition of Methodist hymnals has been retained: almost all of the songs are printed in a four-part choral arrangement.

This hymnal has met with a high degree of acceptance and is used by practically all German-speaking United Methodist congregations, as well as some non-Methodists. In Austria, it has also been recognised as an official school book and is used in religious education.

In non German-speaking countries, such as Serbia for example, traditional hymn books containing a Protestant repertoire in the vernacular are in general use. It is not feasible to translate and print new song books in the Methodist tradition for this small linguistic enclave. Several modern songs (partly of a charismatic nature) are already being used in worship services.

Traditional forms of worship have hardly changed in the last 20 years. However, freedom in implementing these forms of worship has increased considerably in all three countries. As a result, liturgical interest has grown amongst pastors in Germany and Austria. However, there is also a tendency to dispense with liturgical elements to a large extent and to "compere" an up-to-date worship service. These days, the extent to which worship is "customer friendly" is a question of far greater importance.

In Serbia, individual pastors are working to shake off the widely-held impression that young people cannot be reached through traditional worship forms by including elements of worship and joy through modern songs. There is a growing need to look beyond traditional worship services to appeal to target groups that would not routinely attend Sunday worship.

The involvement of laity in the church has grown. They are increasingly important, arranging participating in worship. They participate as liturgists or (bible) readers, assist with communion, and even preach with appropriate training and education. In all three countries, many worship services are arranged wholly by laypersons.

For the past 20 years, communion has been celebrated in Austria on all major holidays and as a rule, on the first Sunday of the month. Children of all ages are welcome. In Germany, a similar routine has developed in the last 20 years. Previously, the Lord's Supper was celebrated just 4 to 6 times a year. In Serbia, communion is celebrated rather infrequently; 5 to 6 times a year. Children may only take communion following confirmation (at approximately 13 years of age). The designed liturgy is usually used for communion. In Germany and Austria, there is a choice of four different liturgies (from traditional to modern) printed in the hymnal. Three communion

liturgies are in use in Serbia. There has been an increase in the variety of communion liturgy over the last 20 years.

2.3 Worship in the City

The changes in inner cities areas have led to the necessity of creating new concepts for worship spaces and worship services. Examples from Switzerland and Germany, as well as from Austria and Romania, reveal developments in major cities.

2.3.1 Worship as a Counterpoint to City Life - Switzerland

Inner cities are becoming visibly depopulated. For shrinking congregations, church buildings often represent a financial burden. Conversely, space within the city is becoming increasingly scarce; public spaces are being privatised, sacred spaces are migrating to banks, shopping malls and sports stadiums. For churches, this means that in addition to parochial structures, non-parochial structures are developing such as airport, shopping, city or station churches. The church must carve out a place and an audience for itself within this new structure. It faces a diverse range of secular offerings in an enormously competitive situation.

Inner city churches open to the public profit from their central location and are sought out in pursuit of spiritual needs. City churches are places of remembrance and hope; they form part of the conscience and the certainty of a city.

They are witnesses to the unavailable within the available, the eternal within the transitory. Within this alienation, worship takes place in the middle of the hustle and bustle of everyday life, in the middle of the demolition of traditions.

Sunday worship is proving to be ill-timed due to leisure activities in the city. Worship services at other times in the week are increasingly filling the gap. Greater attention is paid to churches if they can offer a prophetic program as an alternative to city life: hospitality versus anonymity, silence versus noise and bustle, truth and simplicity versus commercialism. Church can also be attractive, where and when it does not define the setting, but rather is associated with programmes in the city to which it relates (circuses, festivals, trade fairs, schools, sport and cultural events ...).

City churches seek to adapt their profiles according to milieu, target groups and languages: healing and benediction worship services, family / generational churches, experimental worship services, church with a multi-religious orientation, integrative worship services for migrants, religious services with a particular emphasis on spirituality, traditional Sunday worship services, cultural worship services, event worship services, religious services for people with high intellectual and musical demands, etc. By opening up church spaces and providing a wide variety of

worship, religious and spiritual practices, the Sunday morning worship service is losing its monopolistic position. Individual or communal spiritual experiences in diverse daily and weekly rhythms are taking its place.

The worshipers in a city come from different cultures, have different needs, intentions and wishes. Studies in the area of religion show a clear trend towards seeking the company of like-minded people: Those who like natural yodelling want to celebrate the same tone of worship with one another. However, there is an increasing need to share common biographical experiences in worship, with respect to alienation or thresholds: Parents who have lost children, those living with the AIDS virus, etc. The inculturation of urban piety or spirituality is reflected in the fact that personal needs (inner peace with God, baptism of a child, etc) and merging cultural intentions (beautiful music, spatial experience, windows) blend to create a mood and atmosphere. Worship is experienced as a complete initiation; the concert in a city church becomes is a religious experience.

As city churches were once built for the entire city population; during the Reformation, they were functionalized for the peace of the Christian congregation assembled within, as well as for the Christian city waiting in peace and discipline during the worship service. Nowadays, this typical reformed functionality could be interpreted as an innovative way of preserving the “*treuga dei*” or God’s peace, as an asylum and refuge within the hustle and bustle of city life, in order to observe prayers which go beyond confessional barriers and perhaps even transcend religion ones. In this way, city churches would become pioneers of a new kind of church, together with inter-faith “rooms of silence” in newly created places of urban mobility and areas of high population density.

2.3.2 National and Cultural Identity in Worship - Romania

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania

The main Sunday worship service constitutes the high point of community life for the city congregation in Bucharest. It is the culmination of confessional identity and ethnic consciousness. In this sense, the worship service becomes more and more important since it is not merely a worship ritual but also a means of cultivating community spirit. In a large city, each worship event has a personal component for the minority population. People from different backgrounds come together, meet, exchange ideas and network. Consequently, worship provides a sense of belonging, even a sense of home in areas characterised by extreme diaspora. In this way, worship becomes a meeting point. It is not rare for worship to define individual spirituality and differentiation from other confessions. The congregation in Bucharest comprises a wide social spectrum.

Seated together in worship services are people from different age groups, different professions, opinions, languages and cultures. As a consequence, each worship service is a real challenge for all parties involved. As a German-speaking worship service in Bucharest, it attracts an international audience, as well as transitory visitors. A fundamental feature of the community is that - within the traditional framework – it is open to new liturgical forms. New songs, prayers and readings in modern German, various forms of the main prayers, dialogue sermons, etc., can be practiced here. A city church is open to all possible forms of worship, such as youth and family services, as well as musical-vespers and ecumenical prayer services. However, these are neither a substitute, nor an alternative to the traditional Sunday worship service.

Music plays a leading role. The church boasts a choir (Martin Luther Choir) as well as a Baroque Ensemble. There are also two historic organs. Regular concert performances are organised concerts which attract a wide audience. These people are not primarily church-goers, but music lovers. In this way, the Lutheran Church is an important cultural magnet in Bucharest. Worship itself however is not really perceived as a cultural offering. It stands out as both sacred and unique and cannot be included ranked amongst the series of German cultural activities. Those who attend worship, attend for the sake of their soul, not to foster their culture.

The worship language is German. This is both affirmation and identity. It is however increasingly the case that German is not spoken by everyone. Therefore there is a need for alternatives. In Bucharest, there are a variety of spiritual events on offer in Romanian: There is Morning Prayer every Monday and on the first Sunday of the month either a Bible reading or a prayer is read in Romanian. A summary of the sermon is usually available at all worship services. The liturgies for special occasions are partly or fully available in both languages. These have raised great interest. Special worship services such as the Easter Vigil, Christmas Vespers, confirmation and ecumenical prayer services are also requested.

2.3.3 International Congregations in the Metropolis - Austria

The English-speaking United Methodist congregation in Vienna is a typical example of an international city community [www.esumc.at]. People from around 40 countries attend worship services; a third of the congregation is black. There are refugees, students, business people, migrants, embassy and UN staff, as well as tourists. Some are only briefly in Vienna, while others stay for several years. Excluding tourists, the average length of stay is around three years. The average age is fairly low; many families with children attend. Consequently, there is also a very ambitious Sunday school programme which takes place parallel to worship and offers activities for six different age groups. There are virtually no senior citizens. Most return to their native country at retirement age at the latest. The people don't just come from different countries and

cultures – English is not even the mother tongue for many – they also come from different confessions. In international congregations, confession doesn't seem to play a significant role. The style of worship, the quality of the programme available for children and young people, accessibility and personal relationships are of greater significance. Hence, the style of worship changes frequently so as to satisfy as many parishioners as possible. As a rule, traditional Sunday worship is offered on the first Sunday of the month, with organ music and a classical choir. There is a contemporary worship the following Sunday with modern songs and free arrangement. A gospel choir performs. An African style worship service takes place on the third Sunday with songs from an African choir accompanied on the drums. Korean and Chinese Christians arrange worship services from time to time. Worshipping according to a particular style by turns rather attempting to mix styles and traditions has proven successful. Only about half of those attending worship have a Methodist background. The others come from Presbyterian churches or Protestant Free Churches. There are a small number of Catholics.

Sunday worship doesn't start until 11.15 am. Afterwards many stay to eat a simple lunch together. Most people bring a dish ("pot luck"), which is then shared. Young people or some parents with children also spend the afternoon together. Since the fluctuation of worshippers is relatively high and only a small proportion of church members remain in contact with the congregation over longer periods of time, there is little historical awareness. The community mainly lives in the here and now, but does it with great vitality and colour.

2.3.4 Congregations of Passersby and City Churches – Germany and Switzerland

Large city churches have particular challenges to face. In Nuremberg, there are several large historic churches located within a relatively small area in the inner city. Although countless people work within the parish - in banks, administrative offices, in major department stores and exclusive boutiques - hardly any people actually live in urban centres. When the Sunday morning worship service takes place - unlike during the week - the city is deserted. The rhythm of the city, with many events taking place on a Saturday evening in particular, precludes a morning service. As a consequence, the worship community on a Sunday is small, unless a special church music worship programme or other event draws people into the church.

In Zurich too, only a small community congregates for worship in the city church. It is largely an anonymous group with new faces appearing and disappearing regularly; a community with a large percentage of "ailing" people, in psychologically, socially or financially precarious situations. Each worship service goes back to square one; you can never count on people having attended the previous service when elaborating on a theme in a series of sermons. It is impossible to develop anything, to build up or teach the community. This has an impact on the singing.

The songs are new every Sunday. Rehearsing a song of the month is almost impossible. As a result, the singing and active participation in the worship service are often poor.

In Nuremberg, there are daily opportunities to attend a short devotional service, which is usually based upon a very simple basic pattern of organ music, a reading, a brief sermon, a song, a prayer and a blessing, and which it takes just 15 minutes. The number of participants varies greatly - sometimes a small crowd of just 15 people sit scattered around the church. In the pre-Christmas period however, more than a hundred people may celebrate worship together. On Thursdays, the devotional service is complemented by a communion worship service, at 6.30 pm. The opening section of the liturgy has been shortened and there is only a brief sermon. The focus is on (the spoken) communion liturgy. As with the devotional services, worshippers mainly consist of random passersby. Few people come with the intention of attending this worship service in particular.

City churches come in many different variations, depending on local circumstances. Nevertheless, we find them in all major cities in Germany and Switzerland. A common feature is that they are open on weekdays, with available personnel. This enables people to find a space in the middle of the city during the week in which encounters are possible, and where a person can find time for personal contemplation. With reflection, meditation, church tours, exhibitions, concerts and other events, the City church is aiming to create a platform for the entire city, to enable dialogue on the different ways of searching for meaning within our lives. In this way, the church wants to raise topics which would not otherwise be discussed within our society.

The range of worship services and other events in the city is enormous. However city churches position themselves within the urban framework of supply and demand with confidence. Alongside temples to consumption and muses, representational buildings of political power, city churches appear as places of worship for the unavailability of man: man is man, precisely because he does not belong to himself, but to God, who makes all men brothers and sisters.

During the week, there is a constant flow of people who are out and about in the inner cities; from shoppers, to working men and women, and tourists. These people, who pass by the churches on weekdays - and visit them in search of peace and quiet or as tourists, do not belong to the Sunday congregation as a rule. Rather, they may be described as a fellowship of "passersby", as a community of people who stop by, step in and stay for a few minutes - whether to admire works of art or to pray. Several hundred Protestant churches in Bavaria are open on a daily basis: for day guests as well as for church members, for those with cultural and historical interests, as well as for those seeking peace and quiet within the hustle and bustle of

everyday life. City churches aim to create inviting spiritual spaces for these people, whilst also becoming more accessible as places of manifold encounter between God and man.

There are guests and / or prayer-books in many churches, in which visitors can leave a comment. These books prove that many people hold their own very personal "small" worship service – through prayer and intercession, even though they may not number among regular potential visitors to the main worship services. The extent to which actual worship characteristics can be seen in the "small services" of chance or intentional church visitors in the middle of their daily routine depends on the worship socialisation and experience of the individual, as well as the way in which the church interior and arrangement is able to guide and stimulate people. A candle wall with unobtrusive suggestions for forming individual prayers or church guides, who encourage the perception of the "image sermon" are possible building blocks. Spiritual music and a range of church-based teaching may also play a role.

2.4 Micro-Congregations in the Diaspora

2.4.1 Remaining Protestant Congregations - Romania

The (Bucharest) Diaspora includes six small communities that are geographically removed from one another. These include an average of about 15 community members, most of whom lack knowledge of the German language. The worship service often takes place with considerable difficulty. It must be improvised or sections left out because there is no worship programme in the Romanian language. Many sections of the liturgy need to be translated; the sung liturgy is omitted. However as the Lutheran church has always been German-speaking, it is hard to experience Lutheran identity in the Romanian translations. Except for a modest bilingual song-book, hymns in the Romanian language are not available.

Bilingual worship services take place in four of the six diaspora communities. The section of proclamation (bible reading, creed, sermon and main prayer) is held in Romanian, while the rest of the liturgy is in German. The pastor is the sole actor throughout the worship service. The poor level of community participation in worship events is particularly burdensome. The congregation has withdrawn involuntarily as a result of the irregularity of worship services. People no longer know the order of service, the responses and the songs. As a result, only one diminished worship service is possible. Since the classical order of service cannot be celebrated, alternative forms must be sought. The simple order of service is tried and tested and presents no serious liturgical effort. The order consists of: hymn – Invocation of the Trinity (Votum) - Psalm prayer and Gloria Patri - hymn – bible readings and creed - hymn - sermon - the Lord's Prayer and a blessing - hymn.

Many of members of the congregation are unfamiliar with the order of service, rendering it incomprehensible to them. It is perceived as a relic from times gone by. Added to this is the fact that in many cases, worship is no longer celebrated in the churches' own building, which may have been rented out to an Orthodox community or simply torn down.

Worship services are held so rarely that the congregations simply do not receive adequate parochial care. Worship alone is insufficient to meet the religious needs of these widely scattered parishioners. At the same time, pastors are given the impression that congregations do not expect more than worship services. They are grateful when the pastor visits and are content with that alone. This gives pastors the unsatisfactory impression that they are nothing more than religious service providers.

As the Lutheran traditions have faded, many parishioners have adopted elements of the majority confession. This is evident for example in the timid sign of the cross, kissing the pastor's hand or fasting before taking communion.

2.4.2 Re-established Micro-congregations - Ukraine

During the Stalinist era (from the 30s) and afterwards, the Lutheran churches were persecuted, oppressed and finally broken up, as were many other confessions. Church buildings were destroyed or confiscated; thousands of church members killed, deported or imprisoned simply because they were of German origin or devout.

Following independence, the Ukraine passed a liberal law on religion. Communities were re-established and registered. Thus, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine (GELCU) was revived. Small groups of ethnic Germans organised themselves, tried not to attract attention, but rather keep to themselves. In the nineties and the first decade of this century, a large number of people of ethnic German origin took advantage of the opportunity to immigrate to Germany.

Of 35 congregations in the GELCU, seven have fewer than 20 parishioners. They have 16 pastors, which had led to the majority of worship services being celebrated by trainees. These people act in a voluntary capacity and have differing levels of qualification: some are lectors and hold reading worship services; only very few are qualified to write their own sermons. As a consequence, the GELCU distributes reading sermons every Sunday, which are written by the pastors.

Given the long history of persecution, there is little knowledge about traditions, Lutheran worship, the bible, the creed or hymns. Parishioners need regularly reminding of the liturgical sequence of the main worship service, as well as regular practice. The "Russian-German hymnal"

currently in use contains about 100 songs and offers a very limited wealth of possibilities, both in music and content; however even this is not exploited everywhere. Some communities are lacking anyone with any musical knowledge and so their repertoire is limited to five to ten hymns.

Not all communities have their own meeting rooms, let alone flats or houses. Some congregations meet for worship in the private apartment of the community leader; some are hosted by the local German cultural society. Others must pay high rents in order to hold worship services in libraries or hotels. The possibilities for building community or worship life are severely restricted where congregations have no recourse to their own premises. The communities are always dependent on the consent of their host and cannot adapt the spaces to suit their own worship needs. Meeting rooms change frequently and so need to find new spaces suitable for worship regularly arises. In places where the assistance of partners (in Germany) made it possible to acquire separate rooms, houses or churches, the attraction of the community - and the number of members – increased significantly. However for the church leadership, this begs the question how much sense is there in making such investments and can the costs be justified in the face of such a small number of church members?

The older parishioners are very attached to the use of German for the liturgical parts of worship and for old hymns, despite the fact they themselves are hardly native speakers anymore. Younger people – when they attend worship at all - speak the local language. Communities can only grow if they succeed in appealing to people in their native tongue.

The situation is very difficult for the small GELCU congregations. Not all of them will survive; some be forced to merge. Some will survive and grow, providing that infrastructure and community commitment contributes to an inviting atmosphere. The Sunday worship service, mostly followed by tea or coffee, will remain the central focus of fellowship – Sunday is the day when people have time to meet, Sunday worship is the reason for doing so.

It is important to have a reliable place to meet and a form of worship service, which is practiced in a familiar way and which raises questions and concerns, such as the hopes of our time.

3. Societal contexts in times of change

The case studies described here provide insight into the life and worship practice of the member churches belonging to the South East Europe Regional Group. In an area which has changed more than any other in Europe over the past 20 years, churches are seeking responses to these changes, trying to be close to the people through their worship services, while responding to the changed circumstances without relinquishing their own identity.

3.1 Changes in Europe in Recent Decades

Many contextual changes in Central Europe are directly linked with the collapse of the Iron Curtain. The resulting developments varied greatly from country to country however. This study cannot go into great detail; nevertheless, it is important to differentiate between the transition countries, which later joined the EU, the countries which were part of the former Soviet Union, and Western countries.

3.1.1 Development in the Transition Countries

In Central and Eastern Europe following an initial crisis, the social and political changes led to an unexpectedly strong rise in the almost limitless possibilities for the new EU member states, particularly for the younger generation, who were sufficiently flexible to react to the changes and were positioned close enough to the centres of the transformation.

At the same time, this development created great tensions and divergent processes within societies, which had become homogenised by measures implemented under the socialist system. The changes in the economic and social systems signified a considerable social decline for most of the people dependent on state provision. All transition countries experienced "tremendous deterioration in welfare indicators" and had to "tackle growing poverty and inequality".³ The gaping divide between rich and poor, but also the worsening disparity between urban and rural areas, led to migration to the cities, with its associated loss of tradition and focus on economic survival. The new political structure, but above all the economic structure, which was believed to be unavoidable, led to certain disillusionment in the second decade following the fall of the Iron Curtain and shortly before EU-accession. The often only superficially implemented reforms in the individual countries were regarded critically. As a result, an election more or less always brought about a change of government in these countries. The economic and financial crisis since 2008 has demonstrated the dark side of the system of global market economy to these people, who view themselves as victims of the change in the system.

3.1.2 Russia – a World Power Redefines Itself

Russia and the countries of the former Soviet Union had to endure a much more severe economic crisis than the new EU countries, which above all brought about a loss of meaning and value due to the collapse of their system. For a short time, it seemed as though the former world

³ Linda Cook, *Post-Communist Welfare States. Reform politics in Russia and Eastern Europe*, 2007, p. 4ff; quoted in Martin Brand, *Social Policy in Eastern Europe - Towards a Global Perspective*, 145, in: working papers and materials - Research Centre for East Europe, Bremen, no. 109: State or private? Actors and processes between states and societies in Eastern Europe. Contributions for the 18th Conference of Young Experts on Eastern Europe

power might bow out of the global political stage altogether. While Russia regained political standing during the economic boom of the late 90s, countries like the Ukraine have not recovered their political significance to this day. In the large disparity between rich and poor, urban and rural populations, the church is often the only hope and brings meaning to the disadvantaged.

3.1.3 Western Countries

In the last two decades, Western European Countries have by and large profited as a result of the transformation in Europe; their systems required few adjustments. Nevertheless, the contexts have changed here too. Within Germany, there was a migratory movement from east to west, and the addition of ethnic German immigrants, from Russia and Romania in particular, led to significant changes in the composition of the population. Considerable social tensions arose as a by-product of integration.

At the same time, the role of the churches in society has changed. As before, the churches "assume responsibility for social cohesion [...]. For the life of the individual means church membership [...] a desirable living environment." However, this church function "with regard to the individual, as well as the society, has weakened".⁴ Between the accelerated pace of everyday life and the growing need for individualisation, worship can only access church members to a limited extent. Waning traditions, a wide variety of recreational and other spiritual offers, individualisation and increasing mobility preclude the development of deeper feelings of belonging within churches communities.

Accordingly, various different efforts have been made to reform worship in these three macro-regions. These changes can be seen more clearly against the background of social development: While in Germany, churches and communities sought ways of attracting modern people to attend worship services through greater member orientation, worship services in the East were often islands of stability and peace within the crisis and the churches were active providing people with close crisis support.

3.2 Church in Times of Change

3.2.1 The Role of the Churches in the Fall of the Iron Curtain

Even though the small Protestant minority churches were scarcely able to play a major role in the political changes, in many cases they advocated a non-violent regime change. Many church

⁴ Weltsichten Kirchenbindung Lebensstile. (Worldviews, Church Affiliation Lifestyles). Fourth EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany) survey on church membership, 2003, p. 7.

members were involved in opposition movements and in some cases, preserved the interests of their society within the new governments. At the same time, churches offered stability and continuity at a time of great uncertainty. Systematically oppressed under the preceding regimes, churches hoped that the religious freedoms of the new system would strengthen them in their work in particular. The hope that increased interest shown in churches in the period immediately following the fall of the Iron Curtain would continue in the long term and lead to rapidly growing membership did not materialise. Nevertheless, churches are often able to defend their standpoint with regard to ethical discussions within society.

3.2.2 Churches in the New States

The situation amongst churches in the new transition countries is far from uniform. In some countries, the Protestant minority churches played an important role; for example in the constitutional debate. Churches were represented on ethics committees to a much greater extent than could have been expected based on their share of the population (e.g. in Poland). The reason for this public interest was, if nothing else, the good relationships between minority churches and Western churches. In fact, a great openness prevailed in relations with churches, particularly amongst governments which had superseded Communist systems in the decade immediately following reunification, as long as the question of EU accession of the transition countries remained unresolved.⁵

3.2.3 Dealing with the Past

In reappraising the situation under totalitarian systems, it became clear that churches and their employees would themselves need to be subjected to a critical review. Churches, such as those in the Czech Republic or Hungary, which took the initiative to establish committees in order to deal with their past did not suffer a loss of confidence as a result, but rather gained recognition of the fact that they had not evaded the issue.

⁵. Moreover, the same was observed in the Ukraine. The Orange Revolution, temporarily allied with a greater Western orientation, led to greater interest in Protestant churches, which all have their roots in the West. However, there was too little time for the new appreciation to be of any real use to churches. In addition, micro-churches had little capacity to have any effect on society through the implementation of large projects. Making provision for the scattered communities mostly absorbed all of the available resources.

3.3 Impact of Changes on Community Life and Worship Services in Central and Eastern Europe

3.3.1 Consequences of Diminishing National-homogenous Structures for Church Communities in CEE

The systematic destruction of national identity in the Soviet Union, resettlements and evictions, new borders drawn up without regard to nationality (Hungary, Romania), and migration on a large scale (emigration such as from Russia and Transylvania, and immigration of new groups) all combined to change Europe significantly in the previous century. Closed national-homogeneous settlements have become multi-ethnic regions. As a consequence of migration, residual local communities are left considerably weakened and disorganised. Protestant churches are finding themselves in an extreme position of diaspora. Under these circumstances, it can sometimes become very difficult to celebrate religious services in rural areas regularly. The worship services that are celebrated have the primary function of providing a home and refuge for those remaining in the country, as well as strengthening their national and religious identity.

3.3.2 Consequences of Labour- and Rural Migration for Church Communities

The opening of the labour market and consequential - mainly economic - globalisation have caused mainly young people and their families from the poorer countries in the EU to leave their home communities for long periods of time. What is more, better living conditions in cities have brought about an exodus from disadvantaged regions. This speeds up the aging process, which is already in progress, resulting in a loss of vitality within the local communities. Churches find themselves entrusted with the special task of strengthening the remaining, frequently elderly, congregation members through the use of appropriate liturgical forms, in order to strengthen the community and provide a feeling of security. At the same time, worship should create greater space for intercessory prayers, through which community members are able to “cast” their anxieties on God (1 Peter 5:7) concerning those who have left, whilst strengthening their familial and existential solidarity.

3.3.3 Challenges for Church Communities following the Changes in Solidarity with the Losers and the Vulnerable

In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, many people lost social and economic status as a consequence of the upheavals and changes in the system in the last two decades. Since the Gospel directs churches to stand in solidarity primarily with the losers and the vulnerable, they have a social mission. This is to bring together church and people, particularly those who are not primarily influenced by the traditions of worship, and yet who expect and want to rediscover the

social competence of the church in all church manifestations - in worship services, and especially in the sermon.

At the same time, the tensions between rich and poor are growing as a result of the social and economic changes. This state of affairs means that the importance of worship is increasing – worship with communion, in particular - as a fellowship of solidarity. The rapid changes provoke uncertainties amongst congregation members (particularly those belonging to older and middle generations), rendering each change a threat. In churches and worship services, these people seek security and orientation. Worship can offer both; through familiar forms of worship tradition and through prophetic preaching above all.

3.3.4 Church Communities Offer Migrants a New Home

Restricted employment opportunities and low wages in home countries have impelled many people to seek advancement in other countries. In their new worlds, migrants first discover that they are foreigners. Where the process of integration successfully provides a sense of "belonging", it creates a space in which you no longer have to explain yourself. Moreover, immigrants or foreigners convey differing national experiences which change both the host society and the church. It is not only the "strangers" who adapt. New traditions and cultures infiltrate through coexistence. This can lead to fears of identity loss and to conflicts within local communities.

Those who have migrated are exposed to the danger of losing touch with their roots and traditions. Host communities should enable new members to strengthen links with roots and traditions by offering special worship services to individuals and groups of common origin, or by incorporating elements from their native communities into worship services. At the same time, the sermon should root all Christians in Christ, strengthen their sense of "abiding in him" (John 15:4) and as such, enable them to be "anchored in time".

3.4 Post-modern Milieu Orientation

Empirical studies in Germany paint a picture of a society drifting apart according to milieu and would have us believe that churches play a role in just a few of these milieu. According to this interpretation, society is a conglomerate of groups that are largely self-contained and have little to do with one another. The Sinus Study, commissioned in Germany on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, reached "the particularly sobering realisation that the church is really only effectively rooted in three out of ten social milieus, which profile as textbook cases: the Conservatives, the tradition-conscious and the middle classes. Certainly, the church seems to have lost

touch with future social trend-milieu such as experimentalists, post-materialists or modern performers.”⁶ In 2003, the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany) commissioned a membership study which looked at the correlation between lifestyles and types of membership. The method, aim and target group of the survey vary from the approach of the Sinus Study. What is clear from both studies however is that church attachment is for the most part expressed by older church members. Conversely as a social and cultural space, "the church seems to be [...] as far removed as possible from the lifestyles of younger people. The central aspect of the distance does not seem to stem from the different aesthetic preferences alone, but rather, more profoundly, concerns the level of social interpretation.”⁷

The question whether and if so how churches can reach out to people in this society pervades numerous concepts of church and community building. A look at the average churchgoer seems to confirm the conclusions of the studies on milieu, predicting marginalisation of the churches in the coming decades. All the same, this approach contradicts the growing need for church support during periods of transition in people’s personal lives and most particularly, in crisis situations and disasters. At such times, churches also reach out to those who would describe themselves as non church-affiliated. The Sunday worship service needs to be a celebration for parishioners and yet, we must ask ourselves which people it reaches, and whether a change of form and a liturgical reform might arouse greater larger interest. Examples of the integration of migrants oppose the sharp delineation of milieu and could offer an indication that binding forces could be awakened despite society’s divergence. Churches could play an important role because their anchorage is outside of the milieu framework and their mission is to all people.

In the context of studies on milieu and membership surveys, clarification is necessary to determine whether national minorities in Central and Eastern Europe want to see and understand themselves as a self-contained milieu, or whether minorities represent a micro-society within society, to be divided in turn between various milieus. A strong identification with a specific (national and confessional) minority renders the former more likely.

3.5 The Self-image of the Post-modern (Wo)Man

Together with political changes, crises and greater individual freedoms, the anthropological dimensions, which influence the arrangement of worship, have changed, too. Participants’ expect-

⁶ Christian Bauer, *Gott im Milieu? Ein zweiter Blick auf die Sinus-Milieu-Studie (God in Milieu? A second look at the Sinus-Milieu Study)*, in: *DIAKONIA* 39 (2008), 123-129, p. 124.

⁷ *Weltsichten Kirchenbindung Lebensstile. (Worldviews, Church Affiliation Lifestyles)*. Fourth EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany) survey on church membership, 2003, p. 68.

tations are developing in very different directions. In their worship services, churches aim to cater to varying expectations. At the same time, churches' must be critical with regard to both the self-image and claims of post-modernism, from a theological perspective as well as from the position of critically reflecting on their own actions.

3.5.1 The Trend towards Individualisation and the Need for Fellowship

We are seeing greater mobility and increasing individualisation in our societies. Thanks to increased mobility, international communities and churches in the towns / cities have become temporary communities, characterised by a high turnover and a lack of continuity. Individualisation has brought about a decline in binding relationships within society and churches. The time when the Sunday worship service was a fixed point in the week is long past, and the rhythm of the different generations and various milieus are hardly ever synchronised. In return, we have a wealth of new opportunities. People might find time while they are shopping or during the week to visit an inner city church to sit and grant themselves to a few minutes of peace. The possibility of a prayer or short worship service is accepted with pleasure providing there is no assumption of regular attendance and the requisite time remains within certain limits.

What is also becoming clear through the case studies is that the search for fellowship, even fellowship between diverse groups of people, is a key concern of worship and its participants. The need for fellowship with people speaking the same language or in a similar situation prevails within international communities, compensating for confessional differences. In the ethnic minority churches, in Romania for example, worship serves as a fellowship experience, reassuring each participant of his/her own identity; while in the micro-congregations of the Ukraine, it is often associated with communal meals and celebrations in an almost familial atmosphere.

3.5.2 The Need for Spirituality and Celebration

People visiting city churches while shopping or in their lunch break are a small but significant indication of the growing desire for spirituality. On our spiritual quest, the church is only one of many possible locations, however it can – exploiting the advantage of church buildings located in the inner cities - release this yearning and facilitate spiritual experiences: Corners with candles, prayer walls, silent spaces or music often constitute a suitable setting which people, taking a break from their daily routine, are searching for. Moreover, there is the question of how churches are able or indeed choose to open up their spaces and spiritual wealth to meet these needs.

Special celebratory worship services consistently enjoy great popularity in many churches. While the number of people attending Sunday morning worship has decreased, attendance at

festivities is once again on the rise. The church is perceived as a positive framework for celebrations, for festivals within the annual cycle, as well as for those within the family circle, such as baptisms, weddings and other celebrations. In Transylvanian during special celebratory worship services, visitors expect the church to present an especially festive liturgy according to the traditional order of service. In churches in Germany, congregations nowadays assume that visitors to special celebratory worship services at Christmas or Easter feel only a rudimentary "sense of belonging" within the order of service and expect above all a coherent festive framework or an especially arranged celebration.

The increasing need for spirituality and celebration provides the churches with points of contact, while at the same time presenting them with the challenge of preserving their Proper (Proprium) in the face of differing expectations. Special celebratory worship services should be viewed by the churches as the "right time" (2 Timothy 4:2) for evangelism.

4. Theology and Worship

4.1 Communicative Fellowship

Worship is a gift from God. Believers experience liberating comfort, stabilising strength and direction for their lives. With grateful thanks, they know they are linked in fellowship with Christian communities throughout the world and through time. Communities wish to make this rich gift from God accessible to as many people as possible, the coming generation in particular.

In the current social processes of change, many congregations struggle with worship arrangement as a result. Waves of immigration, migration, extreme minority situations and many other factors present complex challenges for the conservation and development of worship life. Sometimes serious conflicts arise as a result. Through fellowship and exchange, churches within the regional group encourage each other to overcome these challenges constructively and in reliance on the Holy Spirit. The churches of the regional group will find the common basis for formative action in their faith in the Triune God, who encounters and delivers his people in worship.

The changes in church attendance, which can be described in terms of sociology of religion, have also motivated intensified reflection on the subject of worship within the field of academic theology. Important results can be summarised with the keywords "narrative performativity" and "communicative fellowship". The practical-theological research focuses on the question of what kind of activity is worship activity. In this case, the terms "representational activities" and "communicative activities" play a decisive role. The following deliberations do not aim to contribute to

these scientific discussions, but rather express the common fundamental theological understanding of worship amongst churches within the regional group.

4.2 Worship as Encounter and Fellowship

God encounters people in worship in such a way that they respond to him and live in fellowship with one another.

4.2.1 God Encounters People through Proclamation, Baptism and Communion

God reveals himself to (wo)man as the God of love, who reconciled the world to Himself through Christ for the forgiveness of sins. In this, He demonstrates that He is the hope for a fulfilled life through the gift of the Holy Spirit. So God calls us to live as the light of the world and salt of the earth.

God wants people to have experience in all human dimensions: spiritual, sensual, physical and social. This is achieved in worship through proclamation, baptism and communion.

God encounters through His Word in the form of human proclamation. The proclamation of people must serve the purpose of the divine Word, through which God wants to speak with each individual in their specific situation. Thus, the task of proclamation entails speaking in an easily understandable manner, which is most appropriate for those, who are gathered together in worship. People should be able to experience the divine assurance of the forgiveness of sins in all of its transforming power as comprehensively as possible. This is why the aesthetic dimension of worship (church building, church music) is an integral part of the preaching mission.

The Triune God encounters (wo)man in baptism and communion. Baptism is performed with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It signifies that Jesus Christ accepts the person, who is prey to sin and death, into His community of salvation, that (s)he may become a new creature. In the name of the Holy Spirit, He calls him / her into his church and to a life of faith, daily repentance and discipleship. (Leuenberg Concord II.2.a) Through communion, the risen Jesus Christ gives His body and blood, granted to all according to His word in the form of bread and wine. He thereby forgives us our sins and liberates us to a new life in faith (Leuenberg Concord II.2.b). God's liberating promise must serve as the basis for all aspects of baptism and communion.

God wants all people to encounter Him as the loving God. Consequently, it is necessary for worship to be open and inviting to all.

4.2.2 God Encounters People so that They Respond with Thanks, Praise and Faith.

During worship, God addresses people who respond by trusting in His commitment and confiding in Him. Thus, people do not remain spectators, but instead become singing and speaking, silent and gesturing worship participants. People fashion their response in the form of thanks and praise, as creed and prayer. They solicit and seek God; they are silent and share their concerns with God; they rejoice in God and His great deeds within His fellowship of believers. Since God speaks to each (wo)man, He also hears the individual responses of each person.

As God calls people to be the light of the world and salt of the earth, the response cannot be not confined to worship, but instead must refer to existence as a whole. Throughout their everyday lives, family and professional work as well as cultural lives, people put Christian worship into effect in the world. Above and beyond their private lives, Christians work in politics, together with others, committed to a just, peaceful and ecologically responsible society. They raise their voices for the poor, the vulnerable and those in need, and attend to them in the diaconal tradition. They set the standard for the absolute dignity of every human being. Christians know that all of their social actions are their grateful response to God's transforming grace.

4.2.3 God Encounters People so that They May Be United in Fellowship.

In worship, God encounters each individual, by speaking with them and delivering them, forgiving them their sins and revealing Himself in eternal fellowship, together with Him and with others. The fellowship of God's children is expressed through shared listening and silence, singing and prayer, faith and celebration of communion. The gift of fellowship enables us to enjoy an open, honest and kind encounter with one another. This divine gift of fellowship is reflected in the freedom of individuals to contribute their special gifts and experiences, as well as relating to the special gifts and experiences of others. Thus, fellowship is the experience of the Body of Christ and is brought to life within the congregation.

By means of the fellowship of worship, the Triune God calls people to rise above divisive cultural, linguistic and social barriers. These obstacles are not however removed. Rather, the people concerned are empowered to gain new understanding of differences within Christ's Fellowship, which is shaped with these in mind.

The living God unites believers in one Holy Christian and apostolic Church. All worship makes reference to this unity because God works through His Word in the Holy Spirit throughout all worship services. This position should be expressed in an appropriate manner within worship. This can happen through a declaration of commitment to the *una sancta ecclesia* (one Holy Church) and through intercessory prayers for other churches.

4.3 Worship as Binding Centre of Community Life

The churches within the South East Europe regional group commonly believe that worship is the central point of community life, the focal point of the congregation and the base form of church. It is nevertheless quite obvious that only a very small part of the community come together for worship on Sundays; that alternative services bring together people from specific groups and diverse milieus; and that worship addresses people beyond our parish or denominational boundaries. If however the celebration of worship is not merely a matter of a large one-off congregational event, but rather a place of encounter with God, whose concerns reach beyond the celebration of worship, daily life and the ethical dimension of our actions, then worship holds a special position as the central point of community life and manifests itself as the centre of the church. Worship community und church unity must be closely linked at this juncture.

Such fellowship acquires its own theological meaning with regard to worship when we consider the fact that the faith of the individual requires the commitment of the community of faith so as not to become heretical through isolation.

5. The Celebration of Worship in the Churches of the Regional Group

This chapter focuses on the celebration of worship within the churches and congregations of the regional group. At the outset, it should be noted that the characterisation of worship as a celebration or festival is undisputed. It seems as though a kind of basic understanding of worship events has developed, which rises above confessional, linguistic and national boundaries. The arrangement of worship demonstrates many differences; theological and religious aspects play as much of a role as different contexts (minority situation, East-West affiliation etc). In all churches however, there is an increased concern for the arrangement of worship services, which is reflected in the many liturgical reform processes of the last two decades.

The following section is concerned with celebration of worship, primarily Sunday worship services, in which worship takes shape through the diversity of forms, through particular emphasis or allocation of individual elements.

5.1 Worship: Christian Communities' Celebration

Worship, in the name of the Triune God, is a celebration which is shared with the congregation on the Sabbath, the Creator's day of rest, on Easter morning, the Feast of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the celebration of the birth of the Church at Pentecost with the outpouring of the inspiring Holy Spirit of God. During the worship service, the fellowship of the celebrating community finds visible expression. At the same time, the celebration of worship – particularly

when it remains within a traditional framework – is characterised by the significance of the encounter of sinful man with Almighty God, the liberation of the forgiveness of sins and the exhortation to a life lived in responsibility before God.

Worship reforms are concerned to emphasise the character of the celebration and fellowship. Worship services intentionally incorporate symbols to create fellowship (passing the peace, receiving communion in a circle around the altar) and include worship elements in which the community can play an active role (songs, responses). Everyone should feel as though they were being personally addressed in worship, ideally in their own language and tradition. In Bavarian communities in recent decades, emphasis has been deliberately placed on awareness of fellowship in order to strengthen the worshipping community. Many places have welcoming services for newcomers. At the end of the worship service, the pastor takes leave of each visitor personally and then the congregation is often invited to drink tea or coffee. The latter however mostly only reaches a small number of the core congregation.

The small diaspora communities in Central and Eastern Europe often have good fellowship structures. People know and greet one another prior to worship, and come together again afterwards. In Central and Eastern Europe, not only the worship service takes longer, but also there is more time for post-worship fellowship than in Germany for example. For intermittent church visitors, the fellowship of the Sunday worship service is certainly important as a shared point of orientation. Few attach much importance to interaction during the worship service and to dialogue and shared food and drink following worship.⁸

The serious nature of worship and the celebratory character of fellowship may not be played off against one another. Rather, the various reforms seek to anchor fellowship and festivity within worship through new developments in the liturgy and distinctive forms.

5.2 Word and Sacrament in Protestant Worship

Worship services with or without communion carry equal weight by virtue of the two basic forms of worship in use in the Protestant church - as mass or as service of the Word, an Upper German (oberdeutsche) form. Nevertheless, the majority of worship services are celebrated as Service of the Word. A broad trend towards more frequent celebration of communion amongst the churches in the regional group is becoming apparent. Above and beyond the differences which

⁸ Hanns Kerner, *Der Gottesdienst, Wahrnehmungen aus einer neuen empirischen Untersuchung unter evangelisch Getauften in Bayern* (The Worship Service, Perceptions from a New Empirical Study of Baptised Protestants in Bavaria), ed. Gottesdienstinstitut der Evang.-Luth. Kirche in Bayern (Worship Institute of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria), p. 18f.

might be expected between Reformed, Methodist and Lutheran traditions, regional differences are also evident but these seem to be gradually disappearing.

5.2.1 The Word in Protestant Worship

5.2.1.1 The Sermon

The description of the worship service as a dramaturgical event in the middle of the proclamation and renewal of the Word (Protestant Reformed Church in Switzerland) reflects the central importance of preaching. At the same time, it becomes clear that hymns, readings and liturgical elements do not merely serve to create an external framework, but rather constitute an integral part of the phenomenon of the proclamation of the Word. The renewal of the Word transpires in the sermon, as an interpretation and explanation of a biblical text, or as a testimony of faith experiences. Reading sermons enjoy a long tradition in countries in which theological education was insufficient or even impossible during the communist era. In communities in Russia, the sermons of Rev. Carl Blum from the late 19th century are read from time to time, even today. Elsewhere, reading sermons are the exception, unless no pastor is available to lead worship.

In Reformed and Methodist congregations, more time is generally allocated to the sermon than in Lutheran worship services, in which liturgy, hymns and readings play a great role. In Central and Eastern Europe, the fact that worship services generally take somewhat longer is more often than not attributable to a detailed sermon.

The sermon almost always takes the form of a monologue, delivered by the pastor from the pulpit or lectern. Although - especially in larger churches - other forms of preaching are familiar (such as the dialogue sermon), they are only used on special occasions or in alternative services. A central concern of the preacher is to gauge the language of the congregation effectively. The language of the people must be spoken (where necessary, a bilingual proclamation), it should be grounded in social realities and relate to the people being addressed. Theological vocabulary (grace, parousia ...) must be repeatedly explained. The language of the congregation however varies according to the different churches. In places where worship serves to strengthen the specific identity of a national minority, the language of the sermon is traditionally oriented, as opposed to places where young parishioners are being addressed. The example of reading sermons in the Brethren tradition of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia demonstrates particularly clearly how a sermon can be subject to traditional language and yet this is still felt to be appropriate. It is consistent with the German still spoken by the old church members, but barely appeals to the middle and younger generations any longer.

The content of the sermon is usually based on the interpretation of a biblical text. In the Lutheran Church, text selection is usually specified. In Central and Eastern Europe, set sermon texts are more readily accepted than in Germany. In Reformed and Methodist congregations, there is no fixed schedule for sermon texts. Various media are increasingly being used as the starting point for the sermon. Religious images or hymns for devotions or special worship services are used readily. In addition, traditional texts such as confessions of faith sometimes form the basis for textual interpretation.

5.2.1.2 Bible Readings and the Pericope Order

Almost all churches know additional readings from Gospel, Epistolary or Old Testament texts in worship. Although Reformed and Methodist churches enjoy great freedom in the selection of texts, Lutheran churches mostly take the old ecclesiastical (altkirchliche) pericope order as a point of reference, which specifies Gospel and Epistolary readings for each church festival throughout the church year. In Bavaria and other German regional churches, the order has grown to include sermon texts, which makes six series in total. Hungary has introduced a three series order. It can be frequently observed that Reformed churches find a pericope order helpful and they focus on the one most commonly used within the region. To a certain extent, Zwingli's 'lectio continua' (continuous reading) approach is used, for example. The focus on common sermon texts plays an important role ecumenically, reaching beyond confessional barriers.

The most commonly used Bible translation in the German Lutheran churches is the Luther translation, but as in other Protestant churches are also other translations in common use. Rather than using a traditional Orthodox translation, minority churches in Orthodox countries (e.g. Romania) use a more modern local language translation in their worship services.

5.2.2 Celebration of Communion

5.2.2.1 Frequency of Communion

Many member churches have the tradition of celebrating communion just a few times a year; in many cases, it is separate from the main worship service in a special confessional and communion worship, celebrated in a small circle of those who have prepared themselves for it. The reforms of liturgy and worship will highlight the Eucharistic character of all confessions of Protestant church and recommend that congregations celebrate Holy Communion with the whole worshipping community on a regular basis. Although the service of the Word remains the most common form, the practice of celebrating communion on a monthly basis and on special holidays has in the meantime been adopted by many churches in the regional group.

5.2.2.2 Communion and Confession

An East-West comparison across the denominations gives the impression that nowadays in practise, communion and confession are often more closely connected in the minority churches in Central and South Eastern Europe than in churches in Germany, Austria or Switzerland.

In the Evangelical Churches of the Augsburg Confession in Transylvania, a worship service of confession takes place on Saturday evening before the celebration of Holy Communion during the Sunday morning worship service. The Hungarian-speaking Reformed church used to practise the tradition of holding a service of penance prior to the communion worship service. These days following the Words of Institution, a general confession and absolution, such as the creed, is included in communion liturgy. After sharing bread and wine, the pastor makes a short speech, urging the congregation to live a life in faith. The Ukrainian Lutheran Church has essentially adopted the Bavarian order of worship, but as a rule includes confession and absolution in the communion worship, following the confession of sin (Confiteor). The Orthodox tradition of personally preparing for Holy Communion by fasting prior to worship is still occasionally observed in this region.

5.2.2.3 Communion with Children

Children participate in communion in some churches, too. The example of the Methodist Church reveals a clear difference between congregations in the East and the West. Although it is not usually the case that children take communion in Serbia, it is available in Germany and Austria. In places where the celebration of communion is closely associated with the confession of sins, communion is generally only available following confirmation. The practice of majority confessions (e.g. unrestricted admission of children to Holy Communion in the Orthodox Church) has had no significant impact on Protestant Churches.

For the Czech Brethren, the special significance of communion in both forms was the reason for introducing communion for children, although only following instruction and preparation of the children. The same is expected in Bavaria – in places where communion for children has been adopted by the parish council - but from the parents, which entails in practice the religious socialisation of the parents.

5.3 Liturgical Arrangement of Worship

Whether a worship service is felt to be a "home" depends largely on its liturgical arrangement. Worshippers are very sensitive to perceived changes. Common liturgical traditions hold communities and churches together and conversely, separation from other denominations ensue with the different liturgical worship arrangements in mind. Liturgical arrangement means in this sense

the entire worship event involving prayers, readings, proclamation, hymns and musical arrangement, the worship space and liturgical vestments, but also the gestures and movements of the participants.

With regard to liturgical traditions and changes within the various denominations of the CPCE, there are significant differences, not least because the commitment to liturgical orders of service has greater priority in the Lutheran tradition, for example, than in other churches. Nevertheless, some overarching tendencies can be established, which indicate common challenges for the arrangement and development of liturgical worship.

5.3.1 Liturgical Reforms in a Changing Society

Within the South East Europe regional group, many churches have implemented liturgical reforms in the years since the collapse of the Iron Curtain. Various similarities can be determined between the development of churches in former communist countries on the one hand, and churches in what was once "the West" on the other.

The churches of the VELKD (United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany) and the UEK (Union of Protestant Churches in Germany) were and still are facing the challenge of making worship services more open and attractive to people in this day and age,⁹ thereby encouraging people back into worship despite declining church attendance figures. "There were many attempts in past decades (prior to 1999) to make church more vibrant." They all pursued the vested interest of promoting increased engagement of the congregation and being more responsive to it. Encouraging modern people using modern language and music was only partially successful in terms of church attendance. Introduced in 1999, the Protestant Book of Worship offers the insight that both "the familiar commonplace and the archaic" are necessary in worship and it is precisely this interaction which makes parishioners, as well as chance visitors, feel at home.¹⁰

The liturgical life of churches behind the Iron Curtain was not controlled by the regimes; it was however subjected to close observation. No major changes or reforms of liturgy were implemented. On the other hand, the local communities had a relatively free hand as far as liturgical arrangement was concerned. Innovative liturgical impulses from outside were appreciated and taken on board locally; in this manner, developments in liturgy varied even within a small church.

⁹ Evangelisches Gottesdienstbuch (Protestant Book of Worship). Agenda for the Union of Protestant Churches and United Evangelical Lutheran Church, both of Germany, ed. by the church leadership of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany, 3rd edition, Berlin 2003, p. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Following the socio-political transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, the churches were faced with a huge opportunity; the chance to open up within society, to advertise publicly and to reach out to young people. Although the pressure on churches continued to decrease, it did not set in motion the considerable increase in interest for church and worship services which had been anticipated.

In the rapidly changing societies in Central and Eastern Europe, it became apparent, somewhat later than in Germany, that a worship service reform should be considered in order to appeal to young people, families and outsiders. A liturgical reform looked to revise and modernise the existing agenda¹¹ whilst keeping in mind new fields of work (e.g. in Protestant schools) in which the new liturgical material might be needed.¹² The western development was not simply repeated. The reform initiative was very much considered to be "part of the official worship service renewal in Europe"¹³. Partnership and networks within Europe ensured that the experiences of other churches were included and positive impulses could be drawn from these examples. The marked tradition consciousness in Central and Eastern Europe and the importance of national language in the national minority churches was a factor in ensuring that the goal of the reforms became rather the standardisation of worship practices and simply a reflection on liturgical forms in each individual confession.

5.3.2 Return to Old Liturgical Forms

The liturgical movements in the first half of the twentieth century had a profound impact on many Lutheran Churches in the regional group, despite the fact that they have only begun to influence agendas in recent years. In Transylvania and Hungary, there has been a return to the traditions of hourly prayers and Gregorian chant of the Michaelsbruderschaft (Evangelical Brotherhood of St. Michael). Also in Bavaria, the liturgical building blocks were revised with this influence in mind. Even a liturgical initiative of the Protestant Czech Brethren revived this tradition and included it as an aesthetic aspect of the worship service. A growing openness to aesthetic issues and liturgical forms of worship is evident in Switzerland, too.

There is increasing interest in elements from the early church and medieval traditions (e.g. Gregorian chants, singing of psalms and prayers, surplices and vestments), as well as candles and icons and not just in Lutheran churches, but also in Reformed churches, too. Elements from

¹¹ Karoly Hafenscher, *Evangelischer Gottesdienst – Liturgisches Buch (Protestant Worship – Book of Liturgy)*, in: *Texte aus der VELKD (Texts from the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany) No. 153/2010*, p. 33.

¹² Karoly Hafenscher, *Evangelischer Gottesdienst – Liturgisches Buch (Protestant Worship – Book of Liturgy)*, in: *Texte aus der VELKD (Texts from the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany) No. 153/2010*, p. 33.

¹³ *Ibid.*

various historical periods and diverse traditions are being used in the decoration of interiors (Orthodox icons). It is necessary to defend the inclusion of such elements over and over again against the general suspicion that these bring catholicising tendencies into Protestant churches.¹⁴ Their inclusion may lead to churches being accused of sacrificing focus on the sermon in favour of aesthetically arranged worship services. The aim of the reforms is to encourage people to react holistically with all their senses, without losing the focus on the Word.

5.3.3 Standardisation of Liturgical Character

Reforms have been carried out in many churches, in the last twenty years in particular, but some were even implemented before the fall of the Iron Curtain (in Evangelical Churches of the Augsburg Confession in Transylvania in 1987). There was great interest in the standardisation of the various practises, which had become very diverse in some communities.

In the Reformed churches, the liturgical reforms have brought about a reemphasis on the worship service as an entirety, in which hymns and prayers do not merely act as a framework for the proclamation within the sermon, but are sum parts of the whole. Ensuring that the individual parts harmonise to create a complete work requires careful preparation and fine tuning. These reforms are not binding, but are intended as suggestions, collections of materials, which should provide assistance, facilitate the understanding of the worship service as a whole, and fully accommodate its tension and vibrancy.

The idea of standardising liturgy within individual churches has led to the more recent development of liturgical reforms in small churches, which had previously integrated impulses from partner churches into the arrangement of their own worship services. Examples of these can be found in various different regions (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy, German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine). Communities in the Ukraine, having close ties with Germany and lacking home-grown traditions, were glad of suggestions from Germany, which they were able to directly implement in congregations of German descent only a short time after the collapse of communism. Various agendas from different regional churches in Germany, as well as some from free churches were made available as a sort of material collection, and these were used according to the bias of whoever was responsible locally. As the individual church plantings grew together as one church and the need to offer worship services in the local language increased (see below), a liturgical Commission was set up, primarily to revise the agendas in consultation with the conference of pastors. The result was an agenda, which incorporated ele-

¹⁴ Karoly Hafenscher, *Evangelischer Gottesdienst – Liturgisches Buch* (Protestant Worship – Book of Liturgy), in: *Texte aus der VELKD* (Texts from the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany) No. 153/2010, p. 37

ments from diverse liturgical traditions - from Germany and from the ELKRAS (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Central Asia), as well as including aspects borrowed from other religions (Orthodoxy) - within the same worship service. In Italy, pastors sent by the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany) transplanted their respective national church traditions and their influence characterised congregations. The introduction of the Protestant book of worship enabled Italian congregations within the ELKI (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy) to standardise.

5.3.4 Language and Liturgy

Many of the Protestant churches in Eastern Europe developed as national minority churches due to migration or shifting of national borders, and continue to maintain their liturgy and agenda in their language and tradition as a matter of course. At least seven churches in the regional group, as well as some Hungarian-speaking communities in Slovakia, speak a language in their worship services which differs from the language of the country. Living separately in a foreign language environment requires both isolationist and conservationist tendencies. This linguistic conservation may result in the retention of old liturgical traditions which have long since been abandoned in the country of origin.

The transition to a service in the local language is a long process, initiated on the whole for reasons of proselytism. It often begins with liturgies for special occasions which worshippers are unable to follow in the worship language (Transylvania). In some of the GELCU congregations, all worship services are currently bilingual. Mostly, however, worship services in Russia and Ukraine are held in the local language. The question of language gains weight and momentum with the passing of a generation within the parish; namely, the younger generation is increasingly rooted in the local language. Worship services in the Carpathian Basin are still held mainly in the minority language. However, the national language is gradually prevailing only where the minority community is too small. The United Methodist Church (UMC) in Serbia celebrates its worship services in three languages: Serbian, Slovak and Hungarian.

Language and liturgical forms are not independent of the content they convey. The relationship between language and culture has been emphasised repeatedly. This is even truer of cases where there is a need to integrate foreign-language immigrants from another culture and a different religious background, such as in the Waldensian Churches in Italy. Acquiring the language of the migrants and at the same time their liturgy presents an opportunity to incorporate Pentecostal elements that alter the worship service and form the basis for new theological insights.

The new pocket agenda of the Reformed churches in German-speaking Switzerland has reviewed the language of liturgy itself. It is written using language which is theologically well thought-out, condensed and contemporary.

5.4 Song and Music in Protestant Worship

5.4.1 Church Music – The Sound of the Gospel

Whether Geneva Psalter, Lutheran song of praise or Methodist repertoire – church music is an integral part of the worship service and the church for Protestants from all denominations. Music, in the form of congregational choir and organ music, is one of the hallmarks of Protestant worship and is an essential part of community life – in Bavaria, approximately a third of all congregational groups which gather on a regular basis meet for the purpose of singing and playing music.¹⁵ In Romania, organ music and the Protestant choral groups are essential components of denominational identification. As a result, churches place great emphasis on the maintenance of their hymns. In 14 of 15 responses from the churches within the regional group, reference was made to the introduction of new songs and revisions of hymnals in connection with developments within worship. Church choirs and organ concerts reach a large and interested audience.

5.4.2 Congregational Singing in the Worship Service

Singing together as a congregation is inseparable from Reformation traditions in the church, and to this day remains an important element of the integration and activation of worshippers. Congregational singing empowers everyone to active participation in worship services; without it, only listening would be the only option. Singing is a way of integrating emotion in worship. Where successful, singing during the worship service creates a holistic worship experience and at the same time, a marked and palpable fellowship becomes evident among participants. Practise, direction and accompaniment are increasingly necessary to ensure that congregational singing is successful. This is usually achieved thanks to the accompaniment of an organist. In small diaspora communities without any feasible musical direction, the options for active congregational participation fall rapidly. In Transylvanian micro-congregations, the church is seeking to find suitable forms of liturgy, as congregational singing is no longer viable in some places.

Through song lyrics and a choice of words which would not normally be uttered with such ease, parishioners verbalise praise and lament, confession and faith as a group and as if self-evident.

¹⁵ Michael Martin, Hat der Mensch Töne – Die Bedeutung der Kirchenmusik für die Kirche, in Festschrift zum 100jährigen Jubiläum des Verbandes Evangelischer Kirchenmusikerinnen und Kirchenmusiker in Bayern e.V., (Striking a chord - The importance of church music for the church, in the commemorative publication marking the 100th anniversary of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians in Bavaria) p. (1)

At the same time, faith is handed down in hymns, leaving a lasting impression which characterises daily life. It becomes the subject for discussion outside of the worship service when a tune gets caught in someone's head and wants to be sung. In this sense, music is a gift of God (*donum dei*), spreading the joy and casting out the devil (Luther, *About music*, 1530)

5.4.3 The Repertoire of Congregations

In churches in Central and Eastern Europe, there are many examples of hymns dating from the Reformation which are still in use. However, younger people do not always readily adopt songs from the classical repertoire, nor do such songs necessarily resonate in everyday life. Younger pastors - with a great deal of respect for the tradition of these church chorales – understand the need for newer songs with catchy melodies.

Most hymnal revisions begin here; they aim to provide an even mixture of traditional hymns and modern Christian songs so as to do justice to both requirements. Taizé songs, as well as other songs of a pietistic and charismatic nature find their niche in the new hymnals. In the Ukraine, for example, modern songs with guitar accompaniment are regularly incorporated into the main worship service by child and youth choirs, and have now become well established amongst older worshippers. How well these songs are received, however, depends very much on how they are first presented and rehearsed.

Hymns in other languages are of particular importance in multilingual communities or congregations with migrants. In Waldensian worship services, both traditional hymns in different languages as well as songs from the Ghanaian minority are rehearsed and sung. They represent an important element promoting a sense of “belonging” within the worship service. However, this requires a certain amount of willingness amongst the locals to forgo part of their tradition.

In addition to the organ, these songs are performed on new instruments, such as guitars or drums. There are many congregations in Bavaria which have in brass choirs; these generally provide choral accompaniment at celebratory worship services or where no organ is available (open-air worship services). African percussion instruments have become a constituent part of integration worship services in some Waldensian congregations, furnishing them with a unique character.

Community of Protestant Churches in Europe hymnal, entitled „Colors of Grace“, is more frequently used in multilingual congregations. There are common multilingual song books in Lutheran congregations in the Czech Republic, Poland, as well as Transylvania, for example.

5.4.4 Choirs and Concerts – Cultural Events or Opportunity to Proselytise?

Choirs are an integral part of community life in many churches. Notwithstanding the fact that in small congregations, the fellowship aspect often takes precedence over the quality of singing. Many traditional choirs have shrunk in size, have a high average age and limit their performances to the worship service. In contrast, project choirs – short-term choirs – are encouraging the intake of young voices. The same applies to gospel choirs, which appeal mainly to the 35 - 55 age group. Such choral concerts in the church appeal to people far beyond community boundaries.

Concerts present opportunities for proselytising in many churches in Central and Eastern Europe. The pastor may introduce the concert with a greeting or a devotional and concludes with a prayer and a blessing. Other churches prefer to keep cultural and congregational events separate; nevertheless, a church choir singing at a “cultural event” still promotes the congregation. In the larger cities in particular, congregations are aware of the great opportunity that church music presents. It can be used to increase the neighbourhood profile of the church and facilitate the collection of donations and revenue for the congregation. For the audience, the lyrical content represents proclamation in the form of song; in the great passions, for example. More than a few listeners have opened up to faith as a result of hearing the passions.

5.4.5 Training and Assuring the Quality of Church Music

The question of quality assurance is not an insignificant one with regard to voluntary, untrained church musicians, especially when music is seen as a chance to proselytise, as has been asserted in Poland, for example. Music is a magnet for people who would otherwise rarely find their way into churches and congregations. Consequently, the Waldensian and Methodist churches in Italy are financing the musical training of organists and are also planning a school for "musical facilitators" in order to achieve a higher level of liturgical concord between church musicians and pastors. Smaller churches in Serbia and Russia are dependent on home-grown musical talent; people who have acquired their musical qualifications by themselves.

In Hungary, church music is performed by part-time musicians above all. The task of ensuring the musical quality falls within the jurisdiction of a central institution supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church. In this way, any training has a direct effect on church music work at grassroots level.

In some Swiss dioceses, popular music is being promoted through church music training programmes, especially created for this purpose.

5.5 The Aesthetics of Worship: Time and Space

According to the Protestant view, there are no sacred spaces and no sacred times. Nevertheless, the celebration of worship is not random, not even when it comes to the questions of time and space for worship. Of course, the time and the duration of the worship service may be determined by local conditions and opportunities. Moreover, greater emphasis may be placed on the value of worship in diaspora churches and the percentage of visitors may be higher than in German communities – services frequently last slightly longer, particularly in places which are multilingual. The Sunday worship service is without question the fundamental form of worship – this is closely linked with the preservation and understanding of Sunday as work free time. Neither time nor place is irrelevant in this context. This is reflected for instance in the great efforts made by churches in the construction and maintenance of "their" church buildings or in their endeavours to arrangement the worship space in such a way as to render it more than just functional, not infrequently festive. It would seem to be the case that time and space are not exactly freely available for worship services. The commitment arises not merely from tradition, but from the worship service event itself. This requires time and space, an arrangement in time and space, an aesthetic arrangement that corresponds to the internal event. Here, essential elements from the cultural milieu (dramaturgy and production, public speaking and role perception, presence and performance) are enlisted as means of worship arrangement. Worship as a celebration with a message is a complex event with its own spiritual logic and dynamics, however a sideways glance at these criteria from the cultural sector can enable this logic and dynamism to be perceived more easily and tailor the arrangement responsibly. There is strong evidence that a church in which light is subject-matter, which should be light for the world, must also close pay attention to the physical lighting conditions. And there's no reason why a Church of the Word should not ensure that the rhetorical word is rehearsed and understood acoustically, to ensure it finds its voice and is heard.

5.6 Direction and Participation

Many churches, particularly smaller congregations, describe the worship service as a "one-man show" in which the pastor acts alone; nevertheless many regret this. The active participation of the congregation is one of the hallmarks of Protestant worship. This can only be put into practice where visitors to worship are familiar with the liturgy.

Increased congregational participation implies the involvement of laity in readings, prayers and in the direction of the worship service. In many churches, lay preachers and lectors undertake leadership roles during worship and may sometimes be assigned to the administration of sacraments. The many diverse rules and descriptions are confusing in this context. Outlining com-

mon rules for the directional tasks of the laity in the church could go a long way towards avoiding confusion within congregations and between ecumenical partners.

Based on its historical experience of "secret Protestantism", the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria emphasises the role of the laity, on an equal footing with theologically trained pastors. The reality of its pronounced diaspora situation means that lay lectors are much needed in congregations, which frequently minister to far flung preaching stations. The scope of their assignment is different. Some of them merely read out sermons provided for them but others are authorised to compose their own sermons, and even to lead communion.

The persecution of the churches in Russia and the liquidation of many full-time parishes led to great dependence on lay brothers and sisters for a long time. However, this was always seen as an emergency measure, only if pastoral leadership was not on hand. Even today in numerous rural communities, lay lectors and preachers lead worship. Communion may only be celebrated when an ordained pastor arrives.

Church musicians, vergers and sexton, those assisting with communion, people reading announcements or prayers – many people actively participate in worship and are decisive in ensuring its success. Occasionally, there is also a worship team that takes joint responsibility for the Sunday worship service.

5.7 Growing Together: Conclusion

Looking at various aspects of worship, we can see that on the one hand, differences in the context of practice dominate to a greater extent than denominational differences; whilst on the other hand, looking at the developments and changes, it becomes clear that worship services in Central and Eastern Europe and in Germany, Switzerland and Austria are becoming more alike. Without neglecting the necessary differentiations, the Regional Group has established that with regard to liturgical reform, the question of leadership of worship and communion practises, trends in church music and in the system of biblical readings, the similarities tend to predominate and churches in the East and West are drawing closer together. In German-speaking churches, there is a growing realisation that following years of experimenting with progressive main worship services, participants actually prefer the safety of familiar procedures and words. In the churches in Central and Eastern Europe, there is a growing need for standardisation of worship services within the individual churches.

It is also clear from this analysis however that the diverse situations of the churches within the regional group render the idea of a single shared order of service impossible. The services

within the CPCE live by the principle of reconciled diversity. A common CPCE liturgy would not do justice to the variety amongst the member churches. Rather, it reflects the nature of the CPCE that there are multiple arrangement options for worship services, which are recognised by all member churches and can be celebrated together.

6. New Worship Services for a Changing Society

For several decades, churches in Germany and German-speaking regions have been looking to find answers to the question of decreasing Sunday worship attendance. To this end, worship services have been developed which are better adapted to a specific audience or are offered at different times of the day or week. Furthermore, smaller liturgical forms make greater use of the reduced time available within life's rhythm and offer people support in their lives through church offices, or rather worship on special occasions. Worship services on public or social occasions are becoming increasingly important, especially in the case of disasters and accidents. The challenge is to ensure the involvement of our society as a whole and raise the question of ecumenical or multiconfessional cooperation.

Such services were not possible for churches under Communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe. Today, however, churches have a new role in society and have to deal with requests for services in the community. Worship services designed to appeal to specific target groups are also offered, providing there are sufficient human resources available. However, there are far fewer options available to small minority churches than to Western churches, regarding these new forms of worship, which reflect changes in society.

6.1 Alternative Worship Services

Although attendance at Sunday worship services continues to decrease throughout the congregation, the choice of alternative worship (alternative worship programme) is on the increase. There is great variety – different influences, forms, characters and extent to which the worship service is anchored within the congregation – which is almost impossible to portray or measure in its entirety. In Germany, a tendency has developed towards forms of worship which have arisen from political and ethical interests (political prayer vigil) or which have rediscovered festivity (celebration of communion); both alternatives have become part of the mainstream in the meantime. Worship for specific target groups (children, youth, women, professionals, motorcyclists, etc.) have become integral to the community programme. This new momentum with regard to alternative worship is nowadays fuelled by demand for certain spiritual styles (praise and worship services), movements (Willow Creek, St Thomas Mass / Tuomasmessu) and spiritual worship services, which are gladly adopted from other denominations (Taizé devotionals).

These services maintain their own styles of music and don't usually require organ accompaniment. Initiators of these services often come from a group within the congregation, which encourages new forms due to a certain level of dissatisfaction with Sunday morning worship. An interest in proselytism is often connected with these new worship forms; alternative worship services often go further than traditional Sunday morning worship towards meeting the needs of young people or those alienated from the church. Such initiatives are mostly supported by pastors. Alternative worship services are often held at the weekend in the evening (Friday or Sunday), and do not usually take place on a weekly basis, but once a month or at even greater intervals.

One characteristic of alternative worship is that it is led by a team which is not dominated by the pastor. A common trait of these dedicated team members is their keen interest in actively participating in the organisation of worship. The majority of them originate from the core community. A study in Bavaria has shown that alternative worship services mostly attract those who already "belong" within the congregation.¹⁶ Non-churchgoers must overcome greater inhibitions; the level of congregational participation at alternative worship services is much higher and those attending are expected to contribute far more, for instance composing and reciting their own intercessory prayers. Unlike in traditional worship, it is often unclear what is expected of non-churchgoers. In this sense, alternative worship is more likely to provide space for the faith and spiritual style of specific groups within the congregation. They illustrate and enliven community life, often attracting regional attention above and beyond congregational boundaries, and in this way greater bonds are forged between communities. However, their focus on a theme, style or a target group means they do not offer a structural alternative to Sunday morning worship, even though this has been their aim to date.

In churches in the Carpathian Basin and minority churches in Central and Eastern Europe, alternative worship services include specially designed celebratory worship on church holidays, at Harvest Festival, for confirmation and in particular, targeting specific groups such as youth and families, for example. The celebration of Women's World Day of Prayer is widespread. Other alternative worship forms such as Taizé devotionals or St Thomas Mass are celebrated occasionally. It is noticeable, however, that other spiritual styles have hardly merited their own alternative services. The extreme diaspora situation of many congregations and their size are cer-

¹⁶ Hanns Kerner, *Der Gottesdienst, Wahrnehmungen aus einer neuen empirischen Untersuchung unter evangelisch Getauften in Bayern*, (The Worship Service, Perceptions from a New Empirical Study of Baptised Protestants in Bavaria), ed. Gottesdienstinstitut der Evang.-Luth. Kirche in Bayern (Worship Institute of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria), p. 18f.

tainly reasons for this. In places where pastors have trouble holding regular Sunday worship services, there are few opportunities for alternative programmes. Admittedly, the burden of alternative worship preparation can be spread across many shoulders, nevertheless pastors need to be on hand to offer assistance and attend the service itself. In a diaspora situation - not only in Central and Eastern Europe – there is often little leeway for such an additional task. Furthermore, churches in Central and Eastern Europe first began to hold their worship services in freedom a little over two decades ago. As already described, the majority of churches have implemented reforms of the liturgy and hymnal. The exodus from the main worship service has not been felt as strongly as in the West. It must also be taken into account that national minorities place greater emphasis on living according to traditions. In a minority situation, the hallmark of evangelical spirituality is the traditional celebration of worship. New forms are unable to express the self-image of the individual in the same way.

Some alternative worship forms have arisen through the influence of international congregations. The focus of such worship is the community of like-minded people. A variety of worship forms appeals to many different visitors and enables participation in diverse foreign traditions, as is the case in the international Methodist congregation in Vienna.

It has moreover become clear from feedback from the churches within the regional group that ways are being sought to reduce the dominance of the pastor in church and promote greater active involvement of the congregation in arrangement, in the introduction of new songs and in strengthening the community. In Central and Eastern Europe, it is evident that the fundamental purpose of alternative worship services can be realised within Sunday worship, too, thereby removing the pressure to establish alternative worship services.

6.2 Small Worship Forms

Changes in the rhythms of our lives mean that shortened worship forms are gaining in importance. Inner-city congregations have adapted to the fact that visitors arrive by chance and only stay in the church for a short time. For these people, there are midday prayers and evening devotionals, lasting no longer than 15 minutes. Passersby are invited to enter by means of posters or the sound of church bells. There is no obligation. Nevertheless, these short worship forms reach people who do not number amongst regular churchgoers. Such devotionals and prayers are a reaction to a spiritual need, offering not just space in which to experience spirituality (open churches), but also providing an impulse in content and thus, a direction for the spiritual experience.

There are many open churches in Central and Eastern Europe, which invite you to enter and in which a range of spiritual possibilities take place. The target group seems to be more closely

connected with the congregation itself and visitors usually have more time to spare. Thus, forms of weekday worship are more common for chance passers.

6.3 The Course of Life in Worship Services

6.3.1 Worship on Special Occasions as Opportunity to Proselytise

Baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial mean that the church is present at moments in our lives when we cross a threshold. Even people who do not otherwise attend worship request worship services on these special occasions. Churches in Central and Eastern Europe report that they dedicate particular attention to these special worship tasks in their agendas (Poland). The situation of the individual should be included and addressed in worship (Romania). Through worship on special occasions, churches representing national minorities are open to multilingual worship in the majority language. The proselytising character of worship services on special occasions, which are often attended by many non-churchgoers and those alienated from the church, is seen as a key opportunity for community building.

6.3.2 Integrating Worship on Special Occasions within the Congregation

At the same time, worship on special occasions retains a bond with the main worship service. Baptisms are becoming more and more integrated within main worship, indeed the whole community is involved in the celebration itself and the admission of the child as a member of the congregation is the central focus. Weddings and funerals are anchored in the consciousness of the congregation through intercessory prayers. In small communities in the Ukraine, a large number of the congregation offer the grieving relatives their support in the mourning rites, the funeral, the night vigil beside the coffin before the funeral, and also the - few - weddings are celebrated together with the congregation.

6.3.3 Catching Up on Special Occasions in the Former Soviet Union

Here, as in other socialist countries, there is still felt to be the need to catch up in the area of worship for special occasions. Occasionally, adults who were not baptised as infants are received into the church and baptised with great encouragement from the congregation. In the Russian sphere of influence even in times of persecution, baptisms of children of German descent were often secretly performed by older women (men as leaders of the communities has been deported) or even were solicited from Evangelicals within the Orthodox Church after the late 70s. However, confirmation classes and confirmations have only been possible for the last twenty years. Even today, many adult parishioners can be found attending confirmation classes in the Ukraine and Russia. Confirmations are often special celebratory worship services, in

which the Protestant profile of the church becomes clearly visible and the congregation takes an especially active part.

During the communist era, church weddings were almost impossible. As a result, many married couples from the “core community” are nowadays requesting a "retrospective" marriage ceremony and blessing - usually in the context of a wedding anniversary. These special events are conducted less in familial circles and more in the centre of the congregation.

6.3.4 Integrating the Individual

The celebration of special occasions is ingrained in pastoral conversations, which are responsive to each individual situation and look to include these in worship. This means that pastoral accompaniment prior to a special occasion may be demanding and time-consuming. It nevertheless enables people to be reached on a personal level at times when they cross a threshold in their lives.

Particularly in Western churches, individualisation and the event culture have changed traditional worship on special occasions – particularly in areas where families more and more frequently approach the community with requests for special arrangements (with respect to the place of celebration and in view of texts, songs and rituals, especially at weddings). In the sense that the aim of worship to be close to us as a guide in our everyday lives, there is the need to weigh up such special requests and consider whether they are consistent with the concerns of the service. This also applies to the growing interest in possible professional documentation of the special occasion, which can distract from the proclamation and blessing. In Germany, many communities are asked to refrain from filming and photography during the worship service itself.

6.3.5 Worship for More Special Occasions

Church support for wedding anniversaries and family celebrations (birthdays) is usually provided by means of pastoral home visits or visits by other community members. Worship services are occasionally held on such occasions in Bavaria. Such requests are generally made by those who feel particularly close to the congregation and are usually referred to the pastor directly. They demonstrate the desire for worship accompaniment within a wider sphere and offer a special opportunity for worship support throughout the course of life. In Western churches, these services are mainly focused within the family circle. Where such occasions are celebrated in the churches of Central and Eastern Europe, the close relationship between congregation and family is usually visible by virtue of the strength of community involvement. In smaller communities in Central and Eastern Europe, those celebrating birthdays receive congratulations in public during the main worship service and they are remembered during the intercessory prayers.

In Germany, taking leave of retiring church employees in a worship service is a model which is raising more and more interest amongst parishioners at the end of their working careers. This and other similar occasions offer numerous opportunities for churches to support people crossing particular thresholds in the course of their lives; a time when they are particularly responsive to rituals. Such supportive worship services occur more frequently as part of the main worship service in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe than in the German churches.

6.4 Worship on Social Occasions

Church is in the public sphere. This is due to the fact that spreading the Gospel is a public affair; one of the fundamentals of the Reformation. While Protestant churches in Germany, Austria and Switzerland have long since attained permanent places in society, the churches in Eastern Europe had little chance of social participation for a long time and only after the political transformation were they able to attract considerable public attention by virtue of being non regime-conformist organisations. In Poland, the government invited the Protestant Church to participate in the ethical debate on an equal footing with the Catholic Church. For churches, the system change brought about new possibilities to appeal to the public and vice versa, for the public to show interest in church participation. Protestant churches in Southern Europe benefit from the acceptance of the Roman Catholic Church and are usually invited to participate at social events where they can introduce their Propers. In some cases, this is also true of countries with an Orthodox majority. Here, however, Protestant churches are usually very small and their participation at social occasions is barely visible.

6.4.1 Church Cooperation with State or Public Institutions

Although pastoral care for the military and in prisons, as well as ministry in state schools, hospitals and homes for the elderly are seen as integral to the church's mission in Germany, churches have a very different role in Central and Eastern Europe. Protestant religious education has not been commonly adopted in state schools in any of these countries. Even in places where it was introduced at the request of a certain number of Protestants, worship services scarcely play a role in state schools. To date, worship services marking the beginning and end of the school year have been offered in a congregational context instead.

Protestant pastoral care for the military has been established in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia; in Romania, Protestant pastoral care in prisons was introduced, too. In many small Protestant churches, individual pastoral visits and occasional worship services are undertaken in state institutions. Such ministries were unimaginable prior to the fall of the Iron Curtain and have become well-established in the meantime, with churches often working in close cooperation with partners from Western churches.

6.4.2 Church Support for Civil Society

Expectations of spiritual guidance and worship services at civil society events, inaugurations of public buildings and so on are still quite rare in Central and Eastern Europe. To date, Protestant representatives, together with those from Catholic or Orthodox churches have found themselves faced with implicit expectations of consecrating secular buildings or emergency vehicles. Churches in Central and Eastern Europe have generally taken a more cautious approach to celebrating worship services at such events.

In contrast, national holidays play an important role, especially for churches of national minorities. On the anniversary of the deportation of ethnic Germans to the Crimea, worship services are held in the Russian Federation and the Ukraine – as well as for Russian-German emigrants now living in Germany. The Lutheran and Reformed Hungarian churches in Transylvania mark their national days of remembrance, too. Here, the Hungarian national flag is flown and the Hungarian national anthem sung during celebratory worship services. As a rule, these services are usually held in the home church. Worship services are rarely held elsewhere (such as marquees, etc.). These are generally reserved for ecumenical cooperation instead.

Although Germany's National Holiday barely meets with any response within churches, there are special days of remembrance, such as 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and opening of the borders, which are widely celebrated and commemorated in services of thanksgiving and remembrance.

6.4.3 Worship following Disasters

Churches play an important role following disasters (natural disasters, plane crashes, closure of large companies and mass layoffs, etc). Confronted with senseless destruction and the deaths of many people, churches are required to stand in solidarity with people grieving and help those in despair to seek answers. In Bavaria and other federal states in Germany in the last two decades, a comprehensive network of pastors for emergencies has been established, which should not only minister to the families of the victims, but also provide pastoral care for members of the emergency services following disasters. As a rule, representatives from politics and society usually participate in ecumenical worship services following major disasters.

The small minority churches in Central and Eastern Europe commemorate such disasters in congregational worship or they join with the majority confession in worship.

6.4.4 Services that Churches Offer in Society

The range of services which churches offer in society begin with inner-city churches which are perceived as cultural monuments, and in which churches provide a range of worship services.

This range of services becomes clearer however, when removed from church spaces and celebrated as worship services in the public sphere.

Together with German partner churches, the Protestant churches in Hungary have set up German-language holiday pastoral care for tourists at Lake Balaton. The aim is to reach people in their leisure time through worship services. Pastors from the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany) are sent to Hungary for several weeks during the holiday season. In Hungary, there is concern that the denominational Proper remains visible. There is a prevalence of offers inviting German tourists into the churches, as opposed to celebrating worship at camping sites and holiday resorts.

Services that churches provide within society may include the Stations of the Cross in the city with a worship service to conclude, an exhibition in the church with a devotional or worship services in public places. For churches in Central and Eastern Europe, such events present vital opportunities to proselytise and they also offer the chance of raising public awareness of the church as an event organiser. The inauguration of the famous national monument St. Paul's Church in Odessa (Ukraine) drew an audience ten times the usual size of the congregation and these people took part in events in and around the church. The small Protestant congregation stood in the public eye for several days.

Churches take their societal responsibilities seriously with regard to the forms of celebratory worship in society already mentioned. Minority churches often contribute to a surprising extent in this respect, taking their relative size into account. Presenting their Protestant Proper to full advantage is of vital importance to them. The arrangement of services in society must take into account the intention to address numerous people, many of whom do not “belong” with regard to traditional church forms, and so there is a need to find forms which have been moulded and thereby enable greater expression.

6.4.5 Ecumenical and Multiconfessional Events

Disasters affect many people of different confessions and faiths. Festivals are celebrated by the society as a whole. Peace, justice and the integrity of creation are common issues which the various religions endorse together. As part of society, Protestant churches are called to make a contribution to such occasions and such topics. Indeed, it is a task of Protestant churches to send signs of reconciliation into the society, rather than signs of division, as part of the tension between the preservation of their own identity and the need to cooperation with other confessions or faiths as part of society as a whole. While the question of ecumenical work among denominations presents few difficulties in Germany or in other countries of the regional group, the thought of multiconfessional cooperation meets with reservations in many churches in Central

and Eastern Europe. To a certain extent, there are positive working relationships with the Jewish communities locally. Even so, the points of contact are minimal. Since hardly any services offered by churches are available in state schools, the necessity for mixed events does not arise not to the same extent as in Germany and Switzerland. In places where as much as 20 per cent of the population are of foreign origin, signalling a willingness to engage in dialogue, also with people from a Muslim background, is an important sign of reconciliation. This presupposes the openness of the dialogue partner.

6.5 Professionalising Worship

Worship is not a theatre performance, and yet there is a valid need to create a space in which God acts and (wo)man can open up. At the same time, worship faces competition and must defend its space against a variety of cultural activities, not to mention perfectly staged media offerings. The Protestant church in Switzerland has asked cultural experts from outside the church milieu to assess the competitiveness of their worship services. This outside view should be used to improve the quality of worship and enable it to meet the quality demands of media-trained contemporaries. Despite all the criticism of individual factors such as acoustics, light or even movement incorporated into worship, this study reached the conclusion that worship does not need to be more contemporary but rather more 'Protestant'. This is not 'Protestant' in the sense of historical greatness, rather it is a constant reflection on an essence and its implementation using contemporary measures (*semper reformanda* or always being reformed).

6.6 Worship in the Media

Worship in the media (radio devotionals, morning service, broadcasts of worship services and television worship, both live and recorded) are special services which churches have been offering for quite a long time. There are changes evident, in Central and Eastern Europe above all:

Before the collapse of the Iron Curtain, Christian programmes were mainly broadcast with the assistance of the international services from Western countries, such as the BBC, Voice of America, radio stations like Radio Free Europe or Radio Liberty. Moreover, international missionary agencies and radio missions broadcast from the West. Following the fall of the Iron Curtain, the churches took over this task themselves by and large. They gained access to public radio broadcasting and founded Christian radio stations, partly in cooperation with other churches. In some countries, the major denominations now have fixed broadcasting times on public radio stations, depending on the size of the church (Hungary, Poland and Romania). They are responsible for their own programme design, but receive technical support and advice from the station. Programmes focus on the broadcast of worship services.

Worship services on television are media events, which are staged and recorded with great effort, and usually with full pews. They provide opportunities for people who are unable to attend a worship service on Sunday and they also constitute a 'flagship' for the church. Minority churches are restricted by the large effort required for this medium.

The use of the internet as a cost-effective means of presenting the church has increased considerably. Special internet worship services have been set up, especially for young people.

6.7 Worship and Society. Conclusion

The proclamation of the Word of God is a public event; every worship service has its share in this public communication of the gospel. This is primarily true of Sunday worship services. They stand in a societal context. However, recent decades have shown that new forms of worship are necessary to spread the gospel in these times of change in society, in both individual and collective processes. In the meantime, an almost overwhelming wealth of new forms of worship has developed.

These new worship services provide good opportunities for congregations to exert greater influence in society. In Central and Eastern Europe, worship services held by various churches in the media are of particular interest. Churches in this region have invested a lot of strength and have proven themselves in this field. However, it was also a sobering experience to discover that although during the times of political transformation, churches gained special significance as places of trust and freedom, they were nevertheless unable to attract more people to membership. It seems possible that churches condense individual and collective-biographical-social processes in and with worship services, enabling them to celebrate worship as a service to and for society. All the same, the long-term retention of members constitutes a considerable challenge.

7. Anchor in Time – Insights and Perspectives

7.1 Worship - Between Basic Form and Reform

For the churches of the South East Europe regional group, worship remains the central focus of the community and its existence as church. The celebration of worship on Sunday plays a key role. It constitutes the basic model, which has inspired the development of many other forms of worship service. These represent a supplement to Sunday worship. Nevertheless, Sunday worship remains the primary need of the congregation, not only in the diaspora, where church work focuses on the most essential needs of the church, but everywhere.

The fundamental meaning of church for congregation and church alike is reflected in the enormous diversity and vitality of worship: From devotional at home to radio sermons, from praise and worship of a small group in the church to overflowing worship services on the occasion of church festivals. The church is becoming more and more important at intersections in the lives of the individual, the community and the society. Sunday worship is one such intersection, gathering people together between everyday life and Sunday.

Besides the fundamental importance of the worship service, which is realised in the diversity of its forms, there is another element which has shaped worship practices within the regional group of churches in recent decades: The endeavour to reform the worship service. This represents the first step towards developing new forms more appropriate to our time which appeal to people of our time. The next step is about ensuring that the fundamental worship form is manifest in the new forms.

7.2 Development in Worship in Churches in the Regional Group

In a region characterised by rapid and fundamental changes in recent decades worship services have also changed within the various churches. Some features of this change, which has always involved certain tensions, are named here in no particular order.

7.2.1 Protestant Wealth and New Questions

Intercommunication amongst churches in the regional group on the subject of development within worship and the shared celebration of worship services show an immense variety of forms of worship. One of the formative experiences was that diverse forms of worship are not in competition with one another; rather, they are part of the wealth of Protestant churches. Such wealth of worship forms can supplement the worship of each denomination. And it is possible to celebrate interconfessional worship together - as a fully-fledged celebration of God's presence. Churches of the regional group experience this wealth through different nationalities, cultures and traditions celebrating worship together. This joint affirmation of the different forms of worship can be understood as an expression of the growing community in reconciled diversity. In this unity, the search for new and appropriate forms of worship is our shared task, the undertaking of which may enable individual churches to find the answers they are seeking.

7.2.2 Diversity and New Commitment – Agenda Reforms and Alternative Worship Services

Following the reunification of Europe, the necessity of examining outdated worship traditions and - within the respective churches - to unify and standardise came almost simultaneously in many churches. Reform agendas are not merely proof of a church conceding to changing times.

In point of fact, analysis of the status quo reveals on the one hand, the immense wealth of developments in worship, demonstrating and expressing the vitality within the congregations. Moreover, reforms also show that churches are seeking ways of binding and committing within the multitude of possibilities. This was often found in the revival of liturgical traditions and characteristic forms that ensure a stable basic worship form. The best forms of worship are refined from liturgical popularity and traditional solidification, all of the differences within the regional group nevertheless leading to remarkable convergences and in the discovery of common roots, we free up opportunities for making ecumenical interconnections.

7.2.3 Protestant Worship and Ecumenical Solidarity

Protestant worship is rooted in the traditions of Christian worship; traditions which are common to other church worship services, including Roman Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant. The mobility of people and the influence of the modern media, as well as the reality of coexistence with other churches and religions lead to ideas and traditions in the area of worship being compared and exchanged. This constitutes an enrichment of Protestant worship – particular in a liturgical or musical sense. At the same time together with church music and the participation of the congregation, the Word of God is the central point of both forms of worship in the Protestant church – the service of the Word and communion, which are both striking forms. Hence, the Protestant Church can present its worship practise with assurance in ecumenical dialogue.

7.2.4 Worship in Community and Society

It is also important to observe that worship services are increasingly viewed in the context of society. Indeed, every community worship service is a public event and therefore, a part of society. Moreover in the context of society, its developments and upheavals, worship services are increasingly requested and perceived by churches. In society, they refer to the unavailable and the responsibility of man before God. At the same time, churches in Central and Eastern Europe have regained a role in society, which had long been denied to them.

7.2.5 Worship: Comparing East and West

It is interesting to observe that there are great similarities in the confessional families in the East and West, but that there are also cross-confessional similarities that churches in the West have in common and are shared by those in the East. All this and more becomes obvious with reference to the relations of the respective churches to nation, state and people. It is clear that the communist era has shaped experiential spaces, for example in the case of civil societies, which are unlike those influenced by the West. Generally speaking, there is a more liberal way of thinking in the West (which aims not lose the familiar, unifying elements through great openness to

forms and structures) and a rather conservative way of thinking in the churches of Eastern Europe (which are dealing with the new challenges of social and political freedom). Ensuring the inclusion of such backgrounds and influences in the dialogue between the churches in the regional group, and also within the CPCE, promotes mutual understanding for and within the community of churches in the West and the East.

7.2.6 Worship for the Individual and the Fellowship

Worship provides a space for individuals and a variety of possibilities for individuals to find themselves together with their experiences of God and their understanding of tradition, language and culture. In places where different groups of natives and migrants from different nationalities come together, there must be sufficient opportunities for identification for everyone in order to make shared worship possible. Language, hymns and liturgical tradition are important starting points for identification.

7.2.7 Renewal of Community and Church from the Viewpoint of Worship

The celebration of worship represents a fundamental dimension of the church, which needs to be appreciated theologically more than was previously the case. Although the church is connected in many ways with theological reflection on word and sacrament, on office and community, on liturgy and music, closely linked with congregation and church – it is nevertheless theological reflection which brings these experiences together and interprets them. It is the ecclesiastic dimension of worship which needs to be taken into greater consideration: The nature of the church reveals itself through the celebration of worship. This does not mean narrowing the church to worship services alone. Indeed, worship is an integral part of a network of community activities and also indicates a spiritual act of worship in everyday life. The arrangement of worship must take community development into consideration - and vice-versa.

7.3 Criteria for Designing Change Processes within the Church Worship Culture

Worship practice within the church is changing. In order to ensure that this change is designed and supported in a responsible manner, theological reflection and reasoning are necessary, above and beyond the perception of various influencing factors. The inclusion of the following viewpoints may prove helpful. The criteria given below may act as a guide. These are not intended to constitute guidelines for successful worship, and should be read and applied with the assumption that all efforts to arrange worship should preserve its gift-like character and thus preserve the freedom to appeal to God's people - and do this by arranging responsible worship in freedom.

- 1) God is present in the gift of worship and so, acts in every worship service in freedom, is sustaining and revelatory in the basic knowledge and fundamental experience of the Christian community. God speaks, reconciles and creates fellowship. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the liberating power of God's promise can be experienced, that reconciliation is promoted and that fellowship between God and (wo)man and between people is assigned sufficient space.
- 2) The Gospel of Jesus Christ, in which the Word of God is revealed, addresses all people. It follows therefore that within worship, God's Word must be accessible for as many people as possible. It is essential to remember that worship may gather a community of people from diverse nationalities, language and cultural backgrounds together in a single service.
- 3) The encounter between God and the individual opens up space within the worshipping community and requires space to enable individual expression, as well as shared forms. The necessity of ensuring space for individual freedom, as well as communal elements should be included in worship, in which God is manifest.
- 4) Worship is dialogical event. It is necessary to ensure that the community can respond to God's address. The responses require space and forms within the worship event: silence, prayer, hymns, creed and more. In the sense that church should be "appealing", attention must be paid to aesthetic design. The beauty of the worship service should also shine through.
- 5) The word of God takes people seriously in their everyday reality. The proclamation has the task of broadcasting the message of the Gospel within people's daily lives. For this reason, appropriate forms of communication must be considered with hermeneutic sensitivity, to ensure that the claim and assurance of God's Word reaches people in their actual life situations.
- 6) The celebration of Sunday worship transcends the event itself; its message has prophetic force, affecting our everyday lives. Worship strengthens the congregation in faith to the gospel and invites both individual and the community to reshape everyday life and to seek new horizons through the encounter with God. The integrative power of worship paves the way towards an open and more integrative community. It is also necessary to ensure that worship provides sources of strength and perspectives for community awareness and shaping everyday reality. It is this everyday power in worship which shapes the life of the individual, as well as the community.

- 7) Worship of the Christian community mirrors the unity of the church. Therefore, each individual worship celebration must draw on the unity of the church, without merging into a unitary form.

7.4 Implications and Impulses for Further Development

7.4.1 Worship as the Central Focus of Exchange and Encounter

The CPCE thrives on the liturgical diversity of its member churches. In order to tap this wealth, there is the need for encounter and exchange, which must be anchored not just inside the regional groups, but beyond to the member churches at grassroots level. Within the framework of existing relationships, pastors, church musicians and lay lectors, as well as other contributors should be encouraged to encounter the diversity of worship traditions. In relations between member churches, the shared celebration of worship should remain a central component of encounters.

7.4.2 Liturgical Suggestions for Shared Worship

It is not the position of the CPCE, following the principle of unity in reconciled diversity, to strive for liturgical unity for its member churches. It is helpful however, when proposals are developed for liturgical worship that CPCE member churches can celebrate them together. These need to allow for sufficient opportunities for identification amongst all participating denominations and traditions.

The South East Europe regional group considers exchange with regard to worship service development and the collection of experiences among the member churches to be most important. This entails appropriate tools to enable better comprehension and communication of Protestant worship between preservation and change. One possibility could be the development of the CPCE website as an information forum, which is linked with the worship competence centres of the member churches. The Protestant church in Europe does not gain by means of a unified liturgy, but by pooling the experience of member churches.

7.4.3 Worship and Education

Worship is not an educational programme. Rather, it is becoming increasingly clear that the fundamental knowledge of what Christianity is, even the basic understanding of and for worship, is disappearing. It is of vital importance for the future of worship practise, not to merely win people over to new and old forms of worship and facilitate people gaining experience. It will also be important to give them an understanding of worship, which enables them to reflect on their worship experiences and integrate them into their lives.

APPENDIX 1: THE CHURCHES OF THE SOUTH EAST EUROPE REGIONAL GROUP:

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania
Biserica Evanghélíca C.A. din Romania
Evangelische Kirche AB in Rumänien

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania
Biserica Evanghélíca Lutherana din Romania
Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Rumänien

Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren
Ceskobratrská Církev Evangelická
Evangelische Kirche der Böhmischen Brüder

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy
Chiesa Evangelica Luterana in Italia
Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Italien

Waldensian Evangelical Church
Chiesa Evangelica Valdese
Evangelische Kirche der Waldenser

German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine (Member of ELCROS)
Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in der Ukraine (Mitglied der ELKRAS)

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovenia
Evangelicanska Cerkev A.V.v Republiki Sloveniji
Evangelisch- Lutherische Kirche AB in Slowenien

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria
Evangelische Kirche AB in Österreich

Evangelical Church of the Palatinate
Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz

Evangelical Church of the Helvetic Confession
Evangelische Kirche HB in Österreich

Evangelical Church in the Principality of Liechtenstein
Evangelische Kirche im Fürstentum Liechtenstein

Evangelical Church of Baden
Evangelische Landeskirche in Baden

Evangelical Church of Württemberg
Evangelische Landeskirche Württemberg

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria
Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Bayern

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and the Other States (ELCROS)
Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Russland und anderen Staaten (ELKRAS)

United Methodist Church in Central and Southern Europe, represented by Austria
Evangelisch-Methodistische Kirche Mittel- und Südeuropa, vertreten durch Österreich

Evangelical Reformed Church
Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche

Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the Slovak Republic
Evangelická Církev Augsburgského Vyznania na Slovensku
Evangelische Kirche AB in der Slowakischen Republik

Reformed Christian Church of Serbia
Szerbiai Református Keresztyén Egyház
Reformierte Christliche Kirche in Serbien

Reformed Church in Transcarpathia
Kárpátaljai Református Egyház
Reformierte Kirche in Transkarpatien

The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland
Kościół Ewangelicko-Augsburski w RP
Evangelische Kirche AB in Polen

Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Hungary
Magyarországi Evangélikus Egyház
Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Ungarn

Reformed Church in Hungary
Magyarországi Református Egyház
Reformierte Kirche in Ungarn

Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia
Reformovaná Kresť. Cirkv na Slovensku
Reformierte Christliche Kirche in der Slowakei

Reformed Church in Romania
Romániai Református Egyház
Reformierte Kirche in Rumänien Siebenbürgen

Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches
Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund

Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession
Slezká Cirkv Evangelická A.V
Schlesische Evangelische Kirche AB in der Tschechischen Republik

Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Serbia
Slovenská Evanjelika A.V. Cirkv v Srbija
Slowakische Evangelische Kirche AB in Serbien