No ecumenical movement behind closed doors!

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We Are Church: No ecumenical movement behind closed doors!

The Third European Ecumenical Assembly from 15-18 February 2007 in Lutherstadt-Wittenberg

The reform movement *We Are Church* welcomes that the reformative heritage of the Christian Church will be in the spotlight at this Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Wittenberg, Germany (the city of Martin Luther) on the way to Sibiu. This is very important for the Roman-Catholic Church, too.

At the same time the Catholic reform movement is very sorry that **almost all participants of this Assembly are official representatives/authorities of the churches and clerical organizations who have been chosen and delegated by the Catholic Bishops' conferences, the Council of the German Protestant Church (Rat der Evangelischen Kirche Deutschland) and other clerical authorities.** That's the main difference of this actual Assembly to former ones in 1989 in Basel/Switzerland and 1997 in Graz/Austria, inspired by the con-ciliar process for or JPIC (justice, peace, and the integrity of creation), whose participants represented the „voice of the people in the pews“ in numbers.

Eva-Maria Kiklas (Dresden), member of the German team of We Are Church and member of the steering committee of the first Ecumenical Church Congress 2003 in Berlin, explains: „It's a pity that the clerical authorities have tried to control the drive and swing of the ecumenical basic movement. But it should not be allowed that ecumenical questions will be discussed only behind closed doors. The ecumenical process is too important to be exclusively in the hands of chosen representatives who have been delegated by clerical authori-ties.“

Christians expect of the European churches to work more intensively for a visual and recognizable unity of the church of Jesus Christ if they want to represent God's Kingdom in our world. This applies especially for:

- the ecumenical credo of 381, which should become a liturgical part of the churches,
- adequate, qualified intermediate steps on the way to full eucharistic hospitality, and
- due overcoming of all those questions regarding the official duty and the understanding of Christ's church, questions, which still are separating the existing churches.
  (These issues have been formulated at the German congress in Loccum, December 2006, organized by the Council of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK), attended by deputies of „We are Church“.)

The reconciliation between confessions and religions is a brick, if not a corner stone, of eminent importance for the process of Europe’s due growing together. The European churches have committed themselves on that path-leading „Charta Oecumenica“. On this basis the reform movement *We are Church* is urgently asking the churches' administrations and managements to translate the vision of Christ's one church into visible symbols and public church policy. No doubts, that theologically well founded vision has been claimed since long by the great majority of the people, the members of His church.

When starting (in January 2006) the process preparing the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly – EEA3 – the *International Movement We are Church* has expressed its desire and request, to make a subject matter the rela-tions between the churches on all „levels“ – administration as well as basis. It is the church's people who strongly have formed the modern ecumenical movement, often against official refusal. Examples for this basis movement maybe found in the women’s “World Day of Prayer“ (first Friday in March) which started already in

1884 – in our days the greatest ecumenical lay initiative – and in the first Ecumenical Church Congress in Berlin 2003, promoted by lay organisations.

Indeed, these facts are standing in diametric contrast to official proclamations of some bishops, that the unity can not be organized „bottom up“ but has to descend „top down“.

Translation: Maria Conlan / Christoph Rinneberg

For further information about the EEA3 please see: www.wir-sind-kirche.de/?id=383

If you are interested in competent partners for interviews **please contact us as soon as possible:**

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