Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I’m sending you greetings from the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau, wishing you a blessed Pentecost. “That they all may be one” (John 17:21).

On the occasion of Pentecost this vision unites Christians all over the world, transcending confessional and theological barriers. Some changes have taken place in the ecumenical structure of our church. Last year the Rev. Walter Schneider left the Department of Ecumenical Affairs to serve as pastor in one of the parishes in Darmstadt. This task of the officer for ecumenical matters in the church administration will in future be handled by the head of the Center for Ecumenical Affairs. In the past year we repeatedly pondered over the consequences of climate change. In connection with this problem we also addressed the question of what’s just in climate policy. We are well aware that we here in Germany – due to our lifestyle – are in no small way responsible for global warming. For this church the results constitute a real damper. The signal “Turn to Life” was left out. Yet, for many Christians climate protection is a crucial touchstone for responsible and sustainable action.

Is the future a matter of concern? Climate is not the only issue. Many areas of life need sustainable development: public life, economics, agriculture, trade, finance, environmental policy, education. “Sustainability” is urgently needed, so that we do not lose sight of our guiding principles: Peace, Justice, and the Integrity of God’s Creation.

The Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN) is in concurrence with such demands. Hence, a synod resolution states: “It is our firm conviction that His Creation is entrusted to us and that life is a godsend. That means that we cannot act like omnipotent masters, much rather we are committed to act in accordance with the responsibility we have for the preservation of what has been entrusted to us. In politics and society, as well as in the church, ecological, social, and global aspects cannot be seen in isolation. Nor should these activities be played off against each other. This is stressed by Dr. Vöker Jung, President of the EKHN. He states that we must have an understanding of what is meant by ‘Sustainability’, so that we have social and economic criteria as guiding principles in the economic decision-making processes. This may promote a concept of economics, which is not fixated on short-term interests and on making a ‘fast buck’, but reckons instead with long-term developments that provide all of us with a better quality of life.”

The EKHN strives to translate these demands into concrete action. We envision that parishes and church-owned facilities will buy their energy in future from public utility companies, which produce electricity from renewable resources. Last year, for example, the EKHN Retreat Center for Youth “Kloster Hoechst” (“Hochest Monastery”) decided to switch to green electricity, thus reducing its carbon dioxide emissions by 80 to 90 metric tons per year. In the year 2010 four million Euros will go into the EKHN environmental fund for energy-saving construction projects. That will finance a five-year program for energetic insulation of buildings and conversion of the local power plant.

One example more: Together with other Protestant and Catholic churches in South-West Germany and Luxembourg, the EKHN互相请求 the public to join the “Car Fasting” campaign. Here people are requested to leave their cars in the garage during Lenten season and walk instead or use public transportation. This small sacrifice is meant as a personal contribution to climate protection and healthy living. It encourages individuals to adopt consciously an eco-friendly lifestyle.

Sustainability also plays a role in the financial affairs of the EKHN. Its reserve funds are administered according to strict ethical investment criteria. No money is invested into shady schemes, nor into stocks and bonds of enterprises, having to do with the manufacture or distribution of arms or alcohol which make profit from child labor. The EKHN is unconcerned on this issue: the involvement in sustainable developments must be intensified. Only in this way can we shoulder worldwide responsibility today.

Yours in Christ,

news letter

Twelfth edition / Pentecost 2010

Sustainable Germany in a Globalized World

UN-Award for the Protestant Academies

The Protestant Academy Arnoldshain belongs to a network, consisting of ten protestant academies in Germany. In the last couple of years these have repeatedly held conferences devoted to issues of Sustainability. Hence, in March 2010, the network received official recognition for being involved in a UN project of this decade. This award was administered by the National Committee of the UN-Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

Among other things the academies discuss the meaning of Germany’s international responsibility and how politics, economics and society can be organized for the sake of a sustainable future. How can citizens intervene in social processes in a meaningful way and how can they themselves conduct sustainability-oriented lives? In the latter case a concept of development and sustainable economic management is strived for, which will not jeopardize the quality of life of our children and grand-children.

Other conferences deal with human rights, international justice and with the possibility of sustainable growth vis-à-vis a globalized financial system. The academies also include social justice, basic social care for all human beings, as well as questions, having to do with the theology of creation and with ethics.

Council was affected most drastically by the new regulations: it was dissolved and instead all provosts are now members of the church governing board.

Since March 1 Matthias Schmidt is the new Provost in Oberhessen. As part of his duties he has to provide spiritual leadership for the church district north of Frankfurt. He is the man in charge of 10 deaneries and spiritual counselor to about 300 male and female ministers. He takes a leading function in the violations of parishes and other facilities in the district. Aside from that he stays in close touch with the partner churches. His term of office lasts 6 years.

The central committee of the Conference of European Churches (KEK) – a union of 125 churches in Europe – elected in December 2009 in Geneva the Reverend Cordelia Kopsch, deputy of the EKHN Church President, to become vice president of the KEK. It is the task of the KEK to promote a socially united Europe, which respects human rights, furthers environmental protection, and knows and cultivates its religious traditions.

The church synod of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN) had ratified at the last conference in February with an overwhelming majority a new church constitution. Now the constitution is in keeping with modifications of the last couple of decades and with actual requirements. The individual parish, which is the cornerstone of our church, preserves its crucial function. The time honored Leading Spiritual

Having the Future in Mind

Decisions Should Aim for “Sustainable Yield”

Before the December 2009 UN-Global Climate Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, many had hoped for an international agreement to enforce climate protection. After all, what is at stake, is the survival of mankind. Would the world’s most powerful heads of state be able to work together on implementing a sustainable climate policy? Disappointment after the conference was boundless: on the one hand, the Copenhagen Accord mentions the reduction of global warming by two degrees Centigrade, on the other, it does not provide states with feasible approaches to achieve this goal.

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A Practical Contribution to the Preservation of God’s Creation

and Nassau (EKHN). This fund provides generous support for ecological and energy-saving alterations on buildings which belong to the church. The Rev. Bühler contacted the church administration, which then got in contact with a woman archi

A lot of people are talking about the church’s responsibility for the preservation of God’s Creation – the congregation of Usingen-Eschbach has acted instead. The parsonage, built in 1966, was insul

Get Rid of Energy Gobblers!

Willy Becker is environmental advisor. For him and his “journeymen’s piece” in the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN) the preservation of God’s creation is a genuine concern. They provide advice and assistance to church congrega
tions and ecclesiastical facilities when the problem has to do with environmental protection. “Among other things we take a close look at the paper consumption of parish accommodations, i.e. we check whether recycled paper is used and whether both sides are printed on,” says Becker who has been volunteering in the Deanery of Frankfurt-Höchst as environmental advisor for years now. Qualifying training as environmental advisor takes three years and reaches completion with a practical project, which the candidate chooses himself. The advisory service of the church administration provides support to parishes when environmental protection is the issue: concepts of waste disposal, construction and renovation, acquisition of office ma

Interview with Heinz-Thomas Striegler

As a major church, the church has the obligation to build up reserve funds. Seeing that you are the Chief Finan
cial Officer of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN), how have you invested these reserve funds?

First of all, like all responsible investors we must take into consideration the so called magic investment triangle, i.e. security, rate of return, and liquidity. Of course, being the church, we try to invest our reserve funds in accordance with our ecclesiastical mission. To meet the requirements of security, return on investment, and liquidity, we have to manage our investments by using a model of precisely defined components. That means, we pay a attention to number of investment portfolios. Each investment portfolio is composed of a defined percentage of the total investment. We have also been involved in the so called Engagement-Approach, i.e. we transfer the share voting rights to a professional financial advisor. By such means it is possible to bundle voting rights. That gives us the strength to enter into constructive corporate dialogs to pursue our interests at annual shareholders’ meetings.

Since the year 2000 the EKHN follows socio-ethical investment guidelines. Among other things the church is not allowed to invest in companies which ignore international labor protection regulations etc. Furthermore, the church prefers to invest in companies which promote sustainability research, etc. In the course of the operation all environmental-related data are collected, starting with how many square meters ecclesiastical buil

dings occupy the ink cartridges of the copying machine. In the meantime Becker has been promoted to the illustrious position of Environmental Examiner. He is the first one to hold this position in the regional church. Now the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau can train and accredit its own environmental auditors and issue certificates to parishes which meet the environmental standards of the European Union.

The “Green Rooster”

The “Green Canticle” or the “Green Rooster” symbolizes the method of environmental management, which is adopted in church parishes, in conference centers and admini

biodiversity convention, should not be touched. We also exclude countries that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol. In other words, we can achieve our stated goals to a certain degree, if we stick to well-founded investment restrictions.

What does advice the EKHN accept regarding ethical and environmental matters?

Like others, we are making use of professional investment advisors, who are reputed to do good research, who have at their disposal a big data base, and who can analyze and control a compre
hensive portfolio with attention to the required criteria. They also provide regu
lar consultation on portfolio optimization. In the last couple of years considerable progress has been made in this field.

The “Green Rooster” to achieve continuous improvement in environmental protection by means of competent jurisdiction and well-regulated procedures. By partici
pating, congregations can reduce their energy and water consumption by 30 percent.

The Synod of the EKHN has charged the administration, which in turn got in contact with a woman archit

The services of the environmental advisor have been profitable for the congregation: in the Kindergarten new windows with insulation were installed and the amount of waste has been reduced already. A lighting engineer who was con
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