Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I’m sending you greetings from the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN), wishing you a blessed Pentecost. “They were all with one accord in one place.” (Acts 2:1) On the occasion of Pentecost this vision unites Christians all over the world, transcending confessional and theological barriers.

Very different themes preoccupied us within the ecumenical movement during the past year. The end of the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV), which had been sponsored by the Ecumenical Council of Churches, motivated us to hold international consultations. We discussed with representatives of the Fellowship of Protestant Churches in Europe our understanding of ecclesial community. The nationwide 53rd operation “Brot für den Welt” ("Bread for the World") was launched on the first Sunday of Advent in one of our churches. In order that a wide public becomes aware of all issues related to this program, we are interested in spreading the word of God in an up-to-date way. Close contact and well organized cooperation within the EKHN. They provide support for church administrations in Darmstadt is of central importance in the communication department it organizes seminars devoted to the study of violence and ways and means to disrupt the vicious circle. In the synod, concerning new concepts communications and journalism are important task areas. For this very reason all churches have offered a wide range of media products. Their declared aim is to stimulate interest and to inform the public. The EKHN has developed a tight network of communication-offices and media products, own production, and cooperation with public media. Presently there is an intense debate in the synod, concerning new concepts of communication efforts. Part of the EKHN net of communication is, for instance, the “Evangelische Sonntags-Zeitung” (Protestant Sunday News). This traditional communication on paper is a church weekly. Additionally the internet site www.ekhn.de is prepared in the EKHN Media Center in Darmstadt. The editorial offices of “ekdh”, the news service of the Protestant Church, are located in the same building. A related enterprise is “pak”, Privatfunkagentur (Private Radio Agency); it prepares broadcasts for private radio stations.

The Protestant Church in Hesse in Nassau (EKHN) has the mission statement: “We say to make sure that the projected image in the media casts its spell on womankind. He charged his disciples with spreading the word: “Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15) To fulfill this mission, the EKHN has developed a tight network of communication-offices and media products, own production, and cooperation with public media. Presently there is an intense debate in the synod, concerning new concepts of communication efforts. Part of the EKHN net of communication is, for instance, the “Evangelische Sonntags-Zeitung” (Protestant Sunday News). This traditional communication on paper is a church weekly. Additionally the internet site www.ekhn.de is prepared in the EKHN Media Center in Darmstadt. The editorial offices of “ekdh”, the news service of the Protestant Church, are located in the same building. A related enterprise is “pak”, Privatfunkagentur (Private Radio Agency); it prepares broadcasts for private radio stations.

The communication department in the church administration in Darmstadt is of central importance in the communication net of the EKHN. Here as press officer the Rev. Stephan Krebs supplies newspapers and press agencies with official church statements on current issues. The communication department is also responsible for communication within the church. It keeps congregations and parishes informed up-to-date. Flyers, handouts and posters are produced. In addition it organizes special communication projects. Head of the department is the Rev. Dr. Joachim Schmidt. He stresses that communication efforts of the Protestant Church must also reach people, in whose day to day life the church plays no important role. He says: “The outlook of the people is determined up to 80% by the media, not by personal experience. For this very reason the church is in need of high quality communication. It has to find a mode of expression, which will complement the word of God as much as possible. For the Gospel of Jesus Christ applies to all people.”

Regional communication offices are also well established within the EKHN. They provide support for church districts and parishes and see to it that public appearances take place in an appropriate and convincing way. Close contact and well organized cooperation with staff members of the public and private media is a must. Work for the EKHN in this field is left to trained professionals: Journalists who are familiar with the EKHN and pastors experienced in communications. They are to make sure that the projected image in the media the church society will be professional, reputable and up-to-date. All church communications aim to improve the public acceptance of the Protestant Church, bolstering trust in the institution. The mission statement is: “We say to make sure that the projected image in the media the church society will be professional, reputable and up-to-date. All church communications aim to improve the public acceptance of the Protestant Church, bolstering trust in the institution. The mission statement is: “We say to make sure that the projected image in the media the church society will be professional, reputable and up-to-date. All church communications aim to improve the public acceptance of the Protestant Church, bolstering trust in the institution. The mission statement is: “We say to make sure that the projected image in the media the church society will be professional, reputable and up-to-date. All church communications aim to improve the public acceptance of the Protestant Church, bolstering trust in the institution. The mission statement is: “We say to make sure that the projected image in the media the church society will be professional, reputable and up-to-date. All church communications aim to improve the public acceptance of the Protestant Church, bolstering trust in the institution. The mission statement is: “We say to make sure that the projected image in...”
The Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN) doesn’t lock itself into its four walls, much rather it goes out, in order to establish contact with the public. Doing so, it opens new approaches to the good tidings of the Gospel and takes a stance on social issues.

The person entrusted with innovative projects in the EKHN is Wolfgang H. Weinrich. He and his team of coworkers were responsible for arranging the Church of Roses and the Church of Light. During the hubbub of the biggest folk festival in Hesse he was inspired by the motto “Lebens-Art” (the art of living) to change church environments into wonderful spiritual oases. The “Church of Roses”, for example, was decorated with about 6,000 beautiful fragrant roses. It attracted thousands of people; the church became a crowd puller.

Other women and men of the church also projected themselves into wonderful spiritual oases. For example, the Church of Light was the scene to present the theme of Advent.

The region to present the theme of Advent. “Himmlisch nah” (“heavenly close”). In it life day. There is, for instance, the event “Sunday is for contemplation, regeneration and for family and friends getting together.”

On the “heavenly close” stage one can hear groups of Gospel choirs, as well as musicians from all over the world. Every one can get the “heavenly close” song text on a max-postcard or will be handed a small card with blessed words. One can nibble on chocolate bishops. And anyone who is thirsty can drink a “hot Mexican”. Living up to the motto “Fair Gifts”, the church only sells products obtained by means of fair trade.

Moreover, the church also sets boundaries for the economy. In connection with this the efforts of the Bergstrasse church district is worth mentioning. It agitates for the observance of Sunday as a day of rest. Protestants plead that businesses remain closed on the Lord’s day, so that people have time for themselves and their families. Very many people participated in the “My Sunday” photo competition, submitting photographs, depicting what a Sunday without church looks like. The selection of these photos was used to make a calendar for the current year.

The devotional column is a feature in the EKHN, giving on the internet an overview of programs and services they provide, as well as of local parish life. Especially young people and young families search the internet for facilities like nursery schools, event announcements like concerts or information about how they can get married in their own church in the region. The “Church of Roses” photo competition, submitting photographs, depicting what a Sunday without church looks like. The selection of these photos was used to make a calendar for the current year.

Dean Ulrike Scharf says, “by no means do we want to be spoilsports when we take a stance against open stores on Sunday. Quite the contrary! Our intention is to show how important Sunday is for contemplation, regeneration and for family and friends getting together.”

On the one hand we are read by people who work for the church or its social welfare agencies or who are involved in voluntary work for them, and, of course, by rank and file members of the church. All people who are interested in the soul of things and in religion can profit from our newspaper. Moreover, the ESZ provides valuable ideas for work in the parishes. Life coaching plays a very important role. Our newspaper views the Church with optimism and sees it at the same time with a critical eye. It takes a stance, provides orientation, and poses questions. The Church, which way is it going? Of what significance is it in society?

The ESZ is published by the nonprofit Medienhaus GmbH in Frankfurt. The EKHN is the contracting body and main shareholder. The area of circulation is, of course, mainly the region administered by this church.

With what degree of independence can the editorial office perform its task?

For very good reasons Protestant journalism is interested in such a way that direct influence on editorial work is precluded. This also applies to the Hesse-Nassau region. The newspaper appears in a publishing house, which is in legal terms a limited liability company. This company has a supervisory board with representatives from the Church and its social services. They keep a close watch on editorial work, which is not the same as controlling this work. Or course, every minister and dean and even the Church President can complain to the editor, if he or she doesn’t like something. But there are no formal penal stances. The editorial staff appreciates this and handles its freedom with appropriate responsibility.

Who are the readers of the ESZ?

On the one hand we are read by people who work for the church or its social welfare agencies or who are involved in voluntary work for them, and, of course, by rank and file members of the church. All people who are interested in the soul of things and in religion can profit from our newspaper. Moreover, the ESZ is an agreed-upon and is ready for use. If not, the persons involved have to make another optimization attempt. They can get advice from the cooperative staff members of the online agency.