

For celebrating the anniversary of "50 years of the Leuenberg Agreement"

2023 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Leuenberg Agreement. This is an occasion for the grateful remembrance of lived church fellowship, but also for giving a new impetus for the future shaping and the tasks of the fellowship that has formed around this Concord. We are gratified that 95 churches of Lutheran, Reformed, United and Methodist character have taken the risk to meet present challenges as brothers and sisters in Christ.

A Leuenberg service in which this jubilee is brought before God **differs from general ecumenical services**, since we do not - together with Roman Catholics, Orthodox or Free Church fellow Christians - merely speak of the hope for unity, but of an already realized unity through witness, teaching and service.

A service that emphasizes this unity should be a common service. A service **organized jointly** is preferable to a denominational one inviting other member churches to participate. Commonalities should be celebrated, and differences should not be ignored. We recommend that invitations to such services should mention the joint support. Even if other ecumenical representatives are invited (which makes sense), it should be clear who are the hosting churches and who are guests.

In order to make the local unity visible in its diversity, a joint **greeting** from all hosting churches could be given. While it may be that Churches represented use different languages, it is not necessary to have each language represented equally. The church in which the service is celebrated naturally has a tradition (also linguistic) which may be taken into account. However, the other languages should also be used at least in concise places, in the readings, in the intercessory prayer and in the blessing. Of course, it would be desirable for all participants to understand or at least be able to comprehend the service.¹

Ideas for the **theme** can easily be derived from the Leuenberg Agreement, for example: "fellowship", "unity in diversity", "common service", "joined at the Lord's table", etc.

Musically, both the diversity and the commonality of the churches involved in the organization can be expressed very beautifully, through the choice of hymns and/or through joint choir/orchestra/band projects.

Beyond a service according to the worship order following a confessional model, there is freedom in this composition to include, for example, a **symbolic act**², which shows the advantages of working together. It is also conceivable to include one or more key passages of the Leuenberg Agreement with some explanatory comments. **Testimonies** from

¹ Each congregation has its own technical possibilities and experiences with this: Printout, projection, headphones.

² For example, bringing together various pieces of the puzzle to make a whole. Leaving out one or more parts, as a sign of the still incomplete ecumenical unity, is also visually expressive.

Christians who experienced the change from coexistence to togetherness are another possible enrichment. There are no limits to creativity here.

In the **prayer of the Church** intercessions for the Leuenberg Church Fellowship - and the wider ecumenical community - can be lifted up to God. The longing for progressive unity has its place here. Liturgically, we propose using the diaconal prayer³. It enables the active involvement of all clergy of the supporting denominations: those of the host church in celebrating and those of the co-celebrating churches in a diaconal function, i.e., in announcing the prayer requests. In sections, the congregation can underline this with the Kyrie.

When it comes to the **Eucharist**, there is no getting around to decide which tradition should be followed, unless the choice falls on a completely different setting, e.g., a meal supper or celebration supper. During the distribution of the Eucharist, there is the opportunity to make the cooperation visible if representatives of the participating denominations are involved.

The **offering could** be designated for a common project, which again indicates that the community is not only one of worship, but also of social ministry.

Not to be underestimated the **opportunity provided for fellowship**. Each individual church congregation already has its own experiences here.

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Liturgical Committee for the Jubilee Year

³The celebrant prays the introductory prayer. At the lectern, the deacon or deaconess then recites various prayer intentions to the assembled congregation. These are then brought before God by the celebrant as intercessions, with each intention formulated in a separate intercession. Each intercession concludes with praise to God. The congregation can confirm these individual petitions with their "Amen".