



Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)
and
The United Church of Christ (UCC)
A Common Commitment to Kirchengemeinschaft



Meeting in Washington, DC, on May 30, 2024, representatives of the **Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland** [Protestant Church in Germany] (EKD), led by Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber, Vice-President and Head of the Department for Ecumenical Relations and Ministries Abroad, and of the **United Church of Christ**, led by its General Minister and President, the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, agree to further the deep and historic relationship of *Kirchengemeinschaft*, which has been manifest since 1980-81 between historical components of the EKD with the UCC. In doing so, each church body will pursue the necessary formal steps to advance this agreement and to develop steps to nurture this partnership.

Kirchengemeinschaft, or “church fellowship,” has striven to overcome separations in the church and world, promoting peace and justice, and church unity. Such direct ecclesial engagement has included close exchange and mutual consultation on pressing matters of the times, both theological and worldly, with an embedded acknowledgement of the responsibility of the church to engage.

Kirchengemeinschaft, established between the Evangelische Kirche der Union (EKU) and the United Church of Christ (UCC) at respective General Synods in 1980 and 1981, was born in the era of the Cold War with a divided Germany and world, but the churches sought to overcome those divisions. When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, relationships were already in place. In 2003, the United Church of Christ reaffirmed *Kirchengemeinschaft* with the newly formed Union Evangelischer Kirchen (UEK).

Kirchengemeinschaft has embodied an effort towards reconciliation, peace, justice, and the integrity of creation. We recognize that our societies and the world constantly present new challenges, and that the church is called to be present, to accompany one another, and partners globally in those times and places of difficulty.

Kirchengemeinschaft also offers opportunities for mutual engagement, worship, prayer, fellowship, and spiritual life. It is in local congregations and *Landeskirchen* and Conferences, and diaconal institutions, as well as between national bodies, where such rich fellowship can be profoundly experienced.

In the spirit of Jesus Christ’s prayer “that they may all be one,” and building on existing ecumenical commitments to advance an ethos of church unity as set forth in the Agreement between Reformation Churches in Europe - namely the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Europe along with the Union Churches which grew out of them, and the related pre-Reformation Churches, the Waldensian Church and the Church of the Czech Brethren, called the Leuenberg Agreement [1973] - and the Formula of Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ [1997], we the undersigned commit the EKD and the UCC to engaging in appropriate processes that will seek to expand *Kirchengemeinschaft* between our two churches.

Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber
Vice-President and Head of the Department
for Ecumenical Relations and Ministries Abroad
Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)

Rev Dr Karen Georgia Thompson
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ