

Chairpersons of the Working Groups

WG Theology and Ord. Ministries	Pastor	Zoltán Kovács	present
WG Liturgy	Pastor	Erika Stalcup	present
WG discipline and Legal Affairs	Sup.	Wilfried Nausner	present
WG Children and Youth	Lay	Simon J. Zürcher	present
WG Church and Society	Pastor	Marietjie Odendaal	present
WG Women's Work	Pastor	Monika Zuber	excused
Coordinator	Lay	Barbara Bünger	excused
Assistant to the Bishop		Urs Schweizer	present

Bishop Stefan gives a reflection on Philippians 1:9: Paul writes: "I pray to God that your love may abound more and more in insight and understanding."

Paul really enjoys the local church in Philippi! God is at work in them and his work is bearing fruit. The Philippians' love for God and people is spreading. That's a joy! With all his heart Paul therefore thanks God for them.

But he also has a request. Their love is still unfinished. That is human. They are still living here on earth. And it is necessary that God continues to shape them. Therefore, he asks God: Let their love continue to mature! Deepen it through the addition of knowledge and discernment.

This may surprise some people at first: Love needs the mind. Recently I read the saying: "Love has the peculiarity of not being able to reason". Paul sees it differently. For him it is clear: mature love is reasonable love!

The popular saying goes: "The opposite of good is not evil, but well-intentioned". Apparently, love can be similar. Lovingly meant can sometimes go very wrong. Yes, there is a naïve love, for example in a conflict situation. It closes both eyes and looks past everything - you are sweet to each other after all. But that is not love! Counterproductive are also reactions where I feel urged "out of love" to save a loved one, perhaps my child, from suffering experiences, to shorten a painful path. No, that is not mature love!

Love needs knowledge and the ability to judge. Love has to look, perceive the concrete situation, judge honestly and critically and draw the right conclusions in dialogue with God and brothers and sisters in faith. Only then is it able to do what is good and right, what corresponds to God's will here and now. What is good and right, what God wants here and now in this particular time and situation, cannot simply be read off in a reference book, often not even in the Bible. Nevertheless, it is not arbitrary. Love must always recognize it anew. We do not have this practical knowledge on our own. We need God and his Holy Spirit to give it to us anew every day.

Bishop Stefan says a prayer.

Report of the Office of the Regional Conference

Represented by Bishop Stefan Zürcher

Bishop Stefan: We have received the report of the office with various enclosures. We will now go through it step by step.

1. Presence and Journals

Bishop Stefan thanked the Secretary, Markus Bach, most sincerely for his great work in connection with the 2025 journals. The reports are available digitally on the homepage.

Markus Bach: Unfortunately, the books did not arrive on time, although I had originally been promised this by the printers. Then we could have distributed them now. Now we have to wait a little longer before we can hand them over to you.

Bishop Stefan refers to those who have died since our last meeting. He talks about his last meeting with Ana Palik-Kunčak at the pastors' meeting in Serbia.

2. Planning for the Meeting of the Executive Committee in Reutlingen

Urs Schweizer gives additional instructions with regard to the presentation of the RC CSE on Friday.

3. Financial matters and Statistics

Markus Bach points out the special feature in the 2025 annual accounts: The costs for the Central Conference in Winterthur were budgeted at CHF 60,000. However, the actual costs only amounted to CHF 51,011.76. He is grateful for the good result and also a little proud of his congregation, which made the good result possible.

Bishop Stefan joins in the thanks and refers to the auditors' report. He then reads out the Office's motion to approve the annual financial statements.

The Executive Committee unanimously approves the 2025 annual statement on the basis of the auditors' report, grants discharge to the treasurer and expresses its sincere thanks to her for her services.

Markus Bach: Today I found another error in the list of 2025 statistics that was originally sent out. The revised version is stored in the Dropbox folder. Please use it.

Re 4 Election of delegates to the General Conference 2028 and the Regional Conference 2029

No comments

5. Miscellaneous

Re 5.2 CPCE Regional Group South-East Europe

Bishop Stefan refers to the CPCE Southeast Europe regional group. The office has nominated László Khaled as a member alongside Wilfried Nausner. This year's meeting will take place next week in Italy. Unfortunately, neither member of the CSE RC is able to attend.

The CSE Executive Committee unanimously confirms the election of László Khaled to the CPCE Regional Group South-East Europe.

Re 5.3 Executive Committee in fall 2026

The Executive Committee gladly accepts the invitation to Prague. Ivana Procházková unfortunately has to apologize for this spring meeting due to severe back pain. However, we are very grateful to her that we will be able to meet in Prague in the fall.

Bishop Stefan thanks the Secretary, Markus Bach, for writing the report.

The Executive Committee accepts the report of the office of the Regional Conference CSE with applause.

Reports of the Working Groups

Working Group Episcopacy

Serge Frutiger reports that the Working Group met early Wednesday afternoon for a discussion. He speaks of a good conversation with the bishop and helpful feedback.

For his part, *Bishop Stefan* thanks him for the good feedback. He appreciates the support in the various places and the support in his ministry. This is very helpful for him.

Working Group Theology and Ordained Ministries

Zoltán Kovács informs that the Working Group will meet in Budapest in September 2026.

Working Group Church and Society

Marietjie Odendaal reports that the Working Group has met online. The members informed each other about their commitment. She also points out that Philipp Hadorn (Switzerland) has joined the General Board of Church and Society. It still needs to be clarified how the work can be skillfully linked with the regional conference.

Liturgy Working Group

Erika Stalcup: We had a helpful and good online meeting with the Working Groups from Northern Europe and Germany, and we spent a whole day together. We hope to meet in person this year.

Working Group Discipline and Legal Affairs

Wilfried Nausner: There is not much to report. We are currently working with Germany to produce the final text of the Kirchenordnung. However, we will only publish this digitally and will refrain from producing a print version for the time being.

Bishop Stefan: This makes sense, as the Standing Commission on Regional Conference Matters outside the USA is working on a new Book of Discipline (BoD). This is to be completely revised. We have already talked about this.

Wilfried Nausner: One of the difficulties we have with the text of the BoD is that some parts of it do not correspond to the law in force in individual countries of our regional conference. We need to think carefully about how we deal with this. The Church Order must not hinder us in our work. We must bear in mind that if there are two different sets of legislation, that of the country and that of the church, national law will always take precedence.

Working Group Children and Youth

Simon Joel Zürcher: Last Monday we met for an online meeting. We decided that we will hold another YouMe in summer 2027. The people in charge are very motivated and we want to use the momentum. We have chosen the period from July 15 to 19, 2027 as the date. We have not discovered any major conflicts with other church events. The meeting will take place in Austria. In Cluj we were about 60 people, and we would like to prepare for 80 people next year based on the feedback from the countries. We hope to find a suitable venue. We will launch a "Save the date" in summer 2026.

Bishop Stefan: We are happy that you want to meet again just two years after the last YouMe.

Simon Joel Zürcher: Discussions in the Working Group have shown that the topic of "training for leaders working with young people" is an important one. In Romania, the youth leader training course "Youth hope" has been well received. There are also good training courses in other countries. Please share your experiences with me so that we can pass them on and also consider doing something similar for the Working Group.

Rares Calugar: I have heard good feedback from the "Youth hope" training.

Ben Nausner: What exactly is meant by youth leaders?

Simon Zürcher: We understand this in general terms and are open to any kind of training for youth group leaders.

Rares Calugar: For us, it's leadership training for leaders in local groups.

Bishop Stefan: Take the opportunity to talk to Simon. Take our thanks to the whole Working Group.

Reports from the countries and Annual Conferences

Bishop Stefan: Are there any other concerns we would like to share from our countries?

Stefan Schröckenfuchs: The question of the number of pastors in our church is always on our minds. When I look at the statistics for tomorrow's discussion, I notice that we have very few pastors compared to other Annual Conferences. How should I understand that?

Bishop Stefan: When I enter the numbers in the statistics, I count everyone - regardless of their workload. It is therefore difficult to make too many statements based on the statistics.

Markus Bach: The statistics you mentioned contain figures from all over Europe. Bishop Patrick Streiff compiled them. I assume that he will have something to say about it tomorrow.

Ben Nausner: Youth work in Austria is also growing thanks to the support of the regional conference. The Children and Youth Working Group has a great influence and helps us a lot.

Bożena Daszuta: Last week, the "Indian Village" of our church - after its 18th implementation - was honored by the mayor. The award was presented at a special gala. We were able to showcase our values. We are happy that we can bring the love of God to the people. We are also very grateful that we receive so much support.

Andrzej Malicki: More and more children and young people are coming to our camps.

Christine Schneider: Last summer I was at a conference of the British Methodist Church. I was previously of the opinion that it must be very homogeneous due to language and common country. I was therefore surprised that this is not the case. They also know the challenge of being a church with different language groups and they are constantly learning to be considerate of each other. I also got to know a nice way of paying attention to people attending the conference for the first time. They have all been given a sign that they hold up in the air when they first speak. This makes them more visible. This helps to integrate them into the conference. Perhaps we can try something similar.

Bishop Stefan: We will also have guests from England and Ireland among us these days.

Erika Stalcup: I was here in Reutlingen a few weeks ago for the E-Academy. We would like to start a new German-speaking group in the fall for the next two years. Please send us the students for this. Last week I attended a deacons' meeting in Italy. We met from different countries, and it was interesting to get to know the different environments in which the deacons work. A common experience was that all our churches are under pressure to get new pastors. This pressure is then often exerted on us and our

ordination as deacons with the expectation that we will become pastors. It is not always easy to follow our own calling as a deacon. However, in my opinion, deacons could play an important role in the future of the church.

Ben Nausner: We have also talked about communication. Erika Stalcup introduced us to a Swiss, a German and a Norwegian who have experience with such digital communication tools/AI and could help us. We have made contact and it sounds interesting.

Urs Schweizer reports on the Swiss meeting of the youth groups in Switzerland, to which up to 10 people from other countries will come (2 Cambodia, 2 Argentina, 2 Norway, 1 Albania, 1 Hungary, possibly 2 Great Britain).

Markus Bach points out that the UMC Switzerland will be holding a family camp in Tuscany in the fall of 2027 with hopefully several hundred participants. This will be the first time this has been offered.

Marjan Dimov and *Emil Zaev* report from North Macedonia: The Miss Stone Center has also received an award, from the town of Strumica. This is actually astonishing for a town that is so strongly influenced by the Orthodox Church. The award puts us in a good light. We also received an award from the Commission for Religions.

Dávid Csernák: We will have change due to elections at all levels - in the church (including the change of superintendent), but also in society. The latter in particular causes great tension. We need a lot of prayer and wisdom.

Dávid Csernák: We will also have a nationwide family camp in the summer with around 200 to 300 participants - but unfortunately not in Tuscany.

Gjergj Luskha: In Albania, an agricultural project run by our church was stopped last year. That was very difficult for the families affected. But this year, thanks to Connexio, we can start again. It is a very important project for the people in the remote mountain region.

Rares Calugar: We had great success last year with the "More than boxing" program. It's not just about training, but also about encounters, discussions and mentoring. We also received an award for this project and were chosen as the winning project out of 150 projects in one of the categories (inclusion and diversity). NGOs are now coming to us to learn from us. We always start with a prayer and we already have two groups for boxing training, on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Bishop Stefan: Thank you very much for sharing from your countries and conferences. I will be visiting Ukraine with the European bishops at the end of March. We hope and pray that we can encourage the people there and that we can also learn how we can help. We hope it will be an encouragement to us all.

Bishop Stefan gives us some more information about North Africa: Freddy Nzambe cannot be with us due to a court hearing in a neighborhood dispute. There will also be a meeting in Tunis next week. A group split off from us 20 years ago and would now like to know whether they can work with us again. The situation in Algeria is not easy. Recently there was a good meeting with all the pastors in Tunis. I can see that they are coming to terms with their situation. They can accompany people and point them to Christ despite everything. At our meeting, it was reported that a baptism of five people will take place soon.

Bishop Stefan: Finally, an update from Jeffrey Campbell, the General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries of our church. He wants to meet with people responsible for discipleship in our regional conference to talk and share about this area. He wants to become more aware of what already exists - and how the agency could provide support in a helpful way. Are you interested in such a meeting? We wanted to

check with you. He will be in Europe from June 29 to July 3, 2026. We can arrange a meeting with him, please contact the bishop's office.

Bishop Stefan: This brings us to the end of our meeting as the Executive Committee of Central and Southern Europe. I ask Rares Calugar to pray with us.

Rares Calugar says a prayer.

Unauthorized translation - Original in German

These minutes of the 85th meeting of the Executive Committee of the Regional Conference of Central and Southern Europe, held in Reutlingen, Germany, on March 11, 2026, have been examined and declared correct.

The auditors of the minutes:

Christine Schneider and Serge Frutiger