THE INFLUENCE OF THE U.S. FEDERAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ON THE ECUMENICAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GERMANY: FROM “INNER-CHURCH AID” (1920) TO “INTER-CHURCH AID” (1946)

KARL HEINZ VOIGT

Until 1948, Germany had no organized community dedicated to the principles of ecumenicalism comparable to the Federal Council of Churches in the United States, Churches Together the current British organization, the Swiss Evangelical Church Federation (Schweizerischen Evangelischen Kirchenbund), or the Swedish World Federal Council (Schwedischen Weltbundrat). Thus in 1945 when vast quantities of emergency supplies were donated by ecumenical organizations of churches in the U.S., Great Britain, the Scandinavian countries and Switzerland, some problems arose.

This paper illustrates how the international trans-confessional emergency aid given after World War II laid the foundation for the development of ecumenical relationships within Germany. Because of time constraints, I will focus particularly on the outstanding role of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S. This development occurring in 1945 from inner-church aid (from Methodists to Methodists) to ecumenical inter-church aid (from all churches to all churches) becomes especially dramatic when considered in a larger historical context. At that time the central Geneva office of the future Ecumenical Council of Churches (Ökumenischer Rates der Kirchen) acting in the interest of all of the donating churches insisted that the supplies collected from all churches must also be distributed to all churches. As a result, the former regional state churches in Germany found themselves forced, at long last, to work together with the “free churches,” which in turn led to the founding of the Aid Society of the Protestant Churches of Germany (Hilfswerks der Evangelischen Kirchen in Deutschland) and in 1948 also

1 The Fifth Conference of the European Historical Commission of the United Methodist Church took place from August 10-15, 2010, in Budapest, with eighty participants from various European lands and the U.S.A. The theme of the conference was “European Methodism after World War II.” On the third day of the conference, our topic was “Reconstruction: International Aid and Ecumenical Contact.” This essay is the documentation of the German representative’s lecture. The official title of the organization is, “Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.”

2 Along with these were some deliveries, mostly from German-speaking congregations in the U.S., which reached the Protestant community (EUBC—former Evangelical Church) and the Methodist Church as “inner-church” aid.

3 Johannes Michael Wischnath, Kirche in Aktion: das Evangelische Hilfswerk 1945-1957 und sein Verhältnis zu Kirche und Innerer Mission, Arbeiten zur kirchlichen Zeitgeschichte 14 (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), did not compare post-World War II aid in relation to aid delivered after World War I. However, if the “background” considered reaches only into the war years 1941-1945, the ecumenical aspect is both insufficiently covered and distorted. (The title translated into English is Church in Action. The Evangelical Aid Society, 1945-1957, and its relationship to Church and Domestic Mission.)
to the Association of Christian Churches (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen*), a far less mutually-committed community than the Federal Council of Churches.

**Inner-church Aid after World War I (1914-1918)**

*The Forgotten Prelude*

Between 1918 and 1922, celebrating the centennial of their missionary divisions, the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS), collected a large sum of money in the *Missionary Centenary Fund*. After 1919 many millions of dollars flowed into a European Reconstruction Fund. With the horrible destruction of the war still manifest, when the entry of foreigners was again permitted, on August 31, 1919, the Methodist congregations in Berlin held a memorable worship service with representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church from the United States, thus reestablishing contact between the churches of the two countries. In one report on this service of peace and forgiveness it was stated, in Germany, “the Methodists were the first, after the sad events of the previous years, to come together in public worship with the citizens of the United States, who, until so recently had been enemies.” In mutual recognition each extended the hand of brotherly love and promised for the sake of Jesus to forget the hostilities that stood between the peoples of their lands. From the American speaker, Professor Lemuel H. Murlin, who had been president of the Methodist Boston University since 1911, the members of the Berlin Methodist congregation clearly received the message,

that the Mother Church sympathized, that she was ready to resume work, with them, on the kingdom of God . . . . It was a thrilling moment when Professor Murlin reached out to heartily shake the hand of Br. Schaedels [the Berlin superintendent who was translating], remarking that he was certain he represented the opinion of the majority of the Mother Churches, demonstrating her love and good will towards her German daughter

by taking that hand. Afterwards, Bishop John L. Nuelsen delivered the sermon; further speakers were Superintendent George Simons and F. H. Otto Melle.4

This act of forgiveness was not nearly as publicized as the later “Stuttgart Admission of Guilt” (*Stuttgarter Schuldbekenntniss*) of 1945, but it had a similar effect for Methodists. In the mother Church there was no thought of turning away from her German subsidiaries. In fact, to the contrary, already in 1919 the editor of the Cincinnati church periodical, *Der Christliche Apologete*, wrote, “As soon as possible and could happen without arousing mistrust or disobeying orders of the government of the United States, our

---

missionary society started sending help to Central Europe.\textsuperscript{5}

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was able to take up new missionary activities in Europe. In Poland, in (what was then) Czechoslovakia, and in Belgium, new Methodist churches were established, and through these, various projects—church leadership, educational measures, congregational development, and regular services were all effected. The Methodist ecclesiastical relations system Connexion was already functioning before other churches had even started attempting to deliver emergency help within Germany.\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{quote}
\textit{The Methodist Aid Society for the Reconstruction of Europe}
\end{quote}

At the beginning of December, 1919, a commission of the American Methodist Episcopal Church met in Berlin to initiate steps towards delivery of aid.\textsuperscript{7} The American visitors had talks with President Friedrich Ebert, Chancellor Gustav Bauer, and other members of the government. Particularly important for this process of aid delivery was the group’s reception with the Minister of Welfare (\textit{Minister für Volkswohlfahrt}) Adam Stegerwald, also attended by the president and five other cabinet members, along with elected representatives, representatives of charitable institutions and representatives of the university. The little Methodist Church in Germany had never before had such great attention paid to it. Among church-related organizations, the World Federation for Promotion of Friendship among Churches (\textit{Weltbund für Freundschaftsarbeiten der Kirchen}) organized a reception with representatives of missionary societies, the German League of Nations (\textit{Liga des Völkerbunds}) and the Red Cross. Representatives of the German regional state churches did not attend.

During their first visit the representatives of the U.S. Missionary Society brought along a check in the amount of 200,000 marks for the work of the Red Cross. This was the beginning of a Europe-wide aid project that in no way was limited to the Methodist churches. In Germany one specifically Methodist project, however, was the Children’s Aid from the Methodists (\textit{Kinderhilfe der Methodisten}) which immediately achieved recognition as an official community project. The organization acquired five homes in which thousands of children, independent of their confession, found rest and recreation. Other programs provided meals for needy children and students; and farmers were even given animals for breeding. Entire trains with emergency supplies were sent to Russia. Methodist congregations in Switzerland

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{5} August J. Bucher, “To the Readers of The Evangelist,” letter, October 24, 1919, \textit{Der Evangelist}, 70 (1919): 417f.
  \item \textsuperscript{6} Richard Solberg, \textit{Also sind wir viele ein Leib: Vom weltweiten Dienst des Luthertums} (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1960) (the English translation of the title is \textit{Thus We Are Many in the Body: On the Worldwide Service of Lutherans}.)
  \item \textsuperscript{7} Members of the group were Dr. S. Earl Taylor, Mission Secretary; Bishop William Burt (1852-1936), who had worked many years in Italy and had visited Germany repeatedly; Bishop William O. Shepard (1862-1931), who later worked in Paris; Hanford Crawford, a prominent merchant from St. Louis; and finally, August J. Bucher, who had worked in Germany and was the present editor-in-chief of the \textit{Christlichen Apologeten}.
\end{itemize}
and Denmark invited children from Germany to come and visit.

These aid projects after the First World War were unparalleled. All European lands in which the Methodist Episcopal Church was active benefited from the Missionary Centenary Fund, whether they were former participants of the war—Bulgaria, Germany, France, Italy, and Russia—or had been neutral states, including Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Finland. The project had three emphases: missionary work, educational measures, and social and church leadership.

The relationships between the State Churches and the Methodists were, at that point, still cool. Until 1918, the state churches had succeeded in hindering the spread of the “free churches” in Germany. In the long run, that was certainly a loss for the ecumenical church, here meant as the ideal body of believers in Christ transcending any one worldly organization. People in the nineteenth century were especially receptive to the type of worship that the Methodist Church offered, and many might have benefitted.

With the war lost, monarchy ended, and the previous relationships of the state churches to these institutions in ruins, the state church was deeply shaken. They justified their official absence from the international ecumenical conferences with the rationale that, one simply cannot proceed “as if the deep abyss that separates us did not exist.” The condemnation of the German emperor, “who always supported the state Evangelical Church, out of deepest inner conviction,” was grounds enough for their refusal to attend. Though these regional churches had distanced themselves from the ecumenical movement, they had still come into direct contact with the “Connexionalism” of the worldwide Methodist movement.

Compared to the rapid worldwide aid of the Methodist organization, the World Lutheran organization reacted both with too little and too late. The question arose whether it would not be possible to distribute the supplies donated from the world over among the large German state churches and the Methodist and other “free” minority churches in a more just way.

The Copenhagen Bethesda Conference: Planning for the Future

After World War I, continental Europe had few ecumenical structures. One impetus for a meeting of the European churches came from the United States when the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, formed in 1908, held their “Conference on Responsibility towards European Protestantism,” from August 10-12, 1922, in Copenhagen. This became known as the “Bethesda Conference.” Churches from lands which had formerly participated in the hostilities both victors and vanquished, as well as those from neutral nations, were all represented there. The German regional state churches, which had up to that point remained absent from the official international occasions at which contacts were made, were also among the

---

thirty-nine churches from twenty countries in attendance. The continental Methodists were represented by Bishop John L. Nuelsen (Zurich), Ole Olson (Norway), Alfredo da Silva (Portugal), and Theophil Mann (Germany).

This Bethesda Conference had a long term influence on the development of ecumenicalism in Europe. First, it brought together representatives of the Protestant churches of Europe, officially, for the first time in history.9 Second, it created the preconditions for establishing an ecumenical organization, the European Central Office for Church Aid Societies (Zentrale für Kirchliche Hilfswerke). Third, through it the organization of the United Protestant Free Churches of Germany (Vereinigung Evangelischer Freikirchen in Deutschland) was initiated. This organization became the first ecumenical committee of autonomous churches in Germany and would in the future become the body authorized to collectively represent all of the Free Churches which had membership in the group.

The European Central Office for Church Aid Societies, 1943

The European Central Office for Church Aid Societies, founded in 1922, later moved to Geneva. Already in 1943 the Swiss pastor Adolf Keller,10 the Central Office’s very active leader, was considering the questions of post-war aid along with the Federal Council of Churches of Christ seated in New York. In particular he wished for a “more just distribution” that even after the Bethesda Conference had only been realized “in a very small way.”11 Keller hoped that the experiences which occurred at the end of the First World War would not be repeated at the conclusion of the Second. Thus, Keller attempted to have the Central Office placed under the aegis of the rising Ecumenical Council of Churches (Ökumenischen Rat der Kirchen [ÖRK]). However, he was still skeptical: Would the large Methodist churches in the United States be prepared not only to support their European branches, but also the Lutheran and Reformed Churches? Would the Lutheran Aid Society (Lutherische Hilfswerke) not persist in supporting only Lutheran Free Churches and refuse help to the broad spectrum of the Protestant churches? Would the Baptists also support churches that practiced infant baptism? He wondered about the Anglicans, Fundamentalists, the Disciples, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Evangelical Congregations, the Moravians, the Quakers and other groups’ support. His concern, of course, was rooted in his experience of 1922, when “in spite of great effort,” the Federal Council had been unable to manage “even the mere coordination of the existing denomina-

tional aid projects.”

Adolf Keller, along with the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, led the development of an ecumenical aid structure for the time after 1945. A “General Model for the Possibility of Integrating Reconstruction and Aid Funds into the Ecumenical Council” would show the way into the future. It was in this essay that the terms now commonly used, such as “Hilfswerke” (relief organizations), “Rekonstruktionsabteilung” (reconstruction division), or “Wiederaufbauabteilung” (re-building division) first appeared.

An Interim Report

The influence of the New York office of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America cannot be ignored. The Council convened the Bethesda Conference in 1922 and also financed it. After this conference when the European Central Office for Church Aid Projects was established its financing was also managed by the New Yorkers, working with the Swiss Evangelical Church Federation. Soberly considered, Geneva’s Central Office was practically an unofficial branch of New York’s Federal Council. The relationship of these two offices became an important junction on the way from an inner-church orientation to aid projects to an inter-church orientation.

It was a happy circumstance that Methodist bishop Nuelsen was working in Switzerland and, coincidentally, was a member of the Commission of the US-Federal Council for Relationships to the European Churches. In this capacity he presented Adolf Keller’s thoughts to the seventy-five delegates from eighteen churches who participated in the second European Aid Conference of the American Ecumenical community which met in the U.S. As a result the decisions made in Copenhagen could be ratified. It seems as if it were the ecumenical bridge-builder Nuelsen who first brought Adolf Keller and the Federal Council together.

Inter-church Aid after World War II (1939-1945)

Ecumenicalism in Germany in 1945

After 1945, Germany, among many European nations, suffered immensely from lack of food and clothing, from ruined cities and houses, and several million people on the move, many as refugees and exiles from the east. In addition to the physical chaos came spiritual confusion along with the disintegration of the nation, and perhaps a growing sense of guilt and implication in the crimes of the Nazi system against so many people. The people were simply at rock bottom, both physically and spiritually.

14 Macfarland, 30.
In October, 1945, after the EKD submitted an “explanation”—later it became an “admission of guilt”—for all of German Protestantism, foreign churches came forward and were of enormous help. However, to be able to use this help a certain infrastructure was necessary. The donor churches in the USA were already coexisting self-evidently in ecumenical community. These churches had had the National Council of Churches ever since 1908, while in Germany there had never been such an ecumenical organization. Furthermore, Americans lived, as a matter-of-course, in a society where the democratic spirit had also formed the various churches. For the German state churches, meanwhile, the end of the four hundred years of monarchy in 1918/1919 was a radical break with the past. An immature republic followed for only a very short time giving way after just a few years to the Hitler dictatorship. Yet without democracy there can be no freedom of religion. There had been no such freedom in Germany for centuries. The mighty regional state churches with their state-bound bureaucracies had also influenced the German mentality in certain ways, in particular, that they did not tolerate any other churches. In 1931, in a Handbook of Church History, the Evangelical Congregations and even the Methodist Churches were still considered, even by liberal theologians, to be “Anglo-Saxon sects.”

When the international ecumenical community designed the structures that were meant to carry post-war aid they did not know about this situation in the German Church and society. Inter-church aid presupposes adequate ecumenical community structures and mutual trust. Neither of these preconditions prevailed in Germany of 1945.

A Framework for the Church Aid Society

The decisive impetus for the creation of a framework for church aid came from the Geneva Ecumenical community. From there the word to the state churches was that the Free Churches must of necessity be part of the planned structure. For the Geneva ecumenical community participation of the Free Churches was clearly necessary for the establishment of a communal European aid society with the support of the wealthy Free Churches of the United States.

The situation of ecumenicalism in Germany can be illustrated with an anecdote: Eugen Gerstenmaier, head of the Aid Society (Hilfswerk), had to be informed in writing of the necessity of including the Free Churches in the National Reconstruction Committee (Nationaler Wiederaufbau-Ausschuss). Entertaining the somewhat illusory idea that “ecumenicalism” primarily meant a cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church, Gerstenmaier had

---

15 Karl Heinz Voigt, Schuld und Versagen der Freikirchen im “Dritten Reich” Aufarbeitungsprozesse seit 1945 (Frankfurt am Main: Otto Lembeck, 2005), 12-18 (English title translation: Guilt and Failure of the Free Churches during the Third Reich: Atonement since 1945).
to be informed that, in their case, the most important factor in their success would be the involvement of the American Methodists, Baptists, Moravians, and so on, in the Ecumenical Council, and that these churches laid great emphasis upon their relationships with congregations of their own kind among the Free Churches of Germany.\textsuperscript{17} Apparently, after reading the letter Gerstenmaier was confused, and embarrassedly he had to ask the Geneva organization which of the Free Churches would be appropriate to ask to join.\textsuperscript{18}

At the end of January, 1946, the first meeting of the National Reconstruction Committee took place. The Methodist participant, J.W. Ernst Sommer, must have been fairly assertive otherwise some of Gerstenmaier’s responses are hardly understandable. For example, at one point Gerstenmaier angrily stated, “The Methodist Church can get in touch with Geneva directly.”\textsuperscript{19} Clearly Gerstenmaier had not yet fully realized that the traditional state church “monopoly” had already been lost. This small episode demonstrates that the inner-German ecumenical community was not yet functioning. It also shows that Gerstenmeier had not yet understood the Geneva politics. To win the American churches over to inter-church aid projects Geneva absolutely needed evidence of an integrated effort that included the Free Churches. Only so could a repetition of the exclusive, own-denominational, inner-church aid, such as had hampered church aid projects after World War I, be avoided.

Finally, at the urgent and unyielding pressure of J. W. Ernst Sommer who had been elected bishop in 1946, the Aid Society of the Evangelical Churches in Germany (\textit{Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen in Deutschland}) was (temporarily) formed. The Society in fact had no lawful title and the EKD held the sole legal rights and duties, but for the churches it was indeed a great step.\textsuperscript{20} What was established at the Central Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church (in Germany, \textit{Evangelische Gemeinschaft}) in 1950 became a watchword for the Free Churches: it was, “the first time in the his-


\textsuperscript{18} Even the answer from Geneva was unclear in this respect. Indeed, it was stated, “that formal belonging of the free churches to the Ecumenical Council was not the point,” meanwhile communicating the sense that “as yet none of these churches” had any such “formal belonging.” However, both of the active German Methodist churches were integrated branches of their own worldwide church. Also later, they would never aspire to membership in any national organization, being already part of a worldwide church membership.

\textsuperscript{19} Wischnath, 106.

tory of the Protestant Church since the Reformation, that German Protestants stood together, publically united in the service of charitable aid . . .”  

Along with the gains of ecumenical integration, from a European Methodist viewpoint there were certainly also some losses. Aid for the various branches of European Free Churches had always been presented under the motto of “Free Churches as the essential foundation of democracy.” The political interests of America still requited those of the Free Churches after World War II, though those interests were no longer couched in denominational terms.

The Development of a “National Council of Churches” in Germany

The first steps toward the organization of an ecumenical working group for Germany were made at the Geneva Ecumenical Center. In the beginning of 1946, during their first post war conference, a preliminary committee of the Ecumenical Council decided to establish an ecumenical hub for the up-coming work to be done in Germany. Funds from the United States were made available. In this way, the obligatory intention was accomplished to take “the steps necessary for an ecumenical approach to essentially ecumenical tasks, by planned cooperation with the ecumenically-orientated free churches.” Actually, the ecumenical community had forced an ecumenical central committee on the German churches.

Yet again, the introduction of future cooperation between state churches and Free Churches had to come from Geneva. It was urgently necessary to create an organ that would correspond to the otherwise customary National Council of Churches (NCC). After a prolonged period of planning, four Free Churches finally came together to form a working group in 1926 as the Union of Evangelical Free Churches (Vereinigung Evangelischer Freikirchen, or VEF). Their task was to consider how to actively influence the new legal system of the young republic and to take an active position at the same table with the regional state Evangelical Churches. Although there would have been much to discuss, the leaders of the Free Churches and those of the state churches never got so far as having an official meeting. This missed oppor-


23 It is significant that the first conferences, starting in 1925, were sponsored by the Ministry of Culture in Württemberg. These talks were a consequence of granting incorporation rights to the Methodist Churches and had the goal of clarifying their rights in relation to their new status. See Karl Heinz Voigt, Der Weg zur ersten Vereinbarung einer Landeskirche mit einer Freikirche (“The Way to a First Agreement between a State Church and a Free Church,” in Freikirchen Forschung, 17 [2008], 257-274).
tunity would come to have especially negative consequences during the Nazi Regime. How could the “Confessional Church” (Bekennende Kirche) open up to the Free Churches when for a hundred years there had been no official contact? In order to get to the table together they needed that ecumenical prompt from Geneva with the influence of the Anglo-Saxon Free Churches in the background.

In 1946, the German Evangelical Church Chancellery (EKD-Kirchenkanzelei) received encouragement from Geneva to enter into a conversation with the Free Churches in order to form a national council. To do this even the Chancellery had to ask for a list of addresses of the Free Churches. Today it is unimaginable that there was not even an address list of the Free Churches. However, so it was at that time. And, in addition, the interest in a cooperative working relationship with the Free Churches was also still negligible. On April 14, 1945, the Chancellery head, Provost Hans Asmussen, writing to the Rhennish ecclesiastical president Heinrich Held, commenting upon the Geneva proposition that they form a national council, said, “We simply are not going to be able to get around dealing with [the Free Churches], because their sister churches in North America (Baptists and Methodists) would like to help us out, but cannot, as long as we have no relationship with members of their confession in Germany.”

Thus, again, it was Geneva which gave the definitive push to ecumenical development in Germany.

On March 10, 1948, after lengthy preliminary talks six denominations founded the Working Group of Christian Churches (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen). On January 24-25, 1947, the Council of the EKD spoke for the first time about the Working Group of Christian Churches, and in the protocol of the meeting, it was noted, “The Chancellery should begin to engage with the free churches in a preliminary discussion regarding the formation of a national council of German churches, which can be presented to the ecumenical community (Ökumene). Yet again we see the influence of Geneva’s expectations. By the time the next EKD Council meeting took place two months later, the preliminary talks with the Free Churches had started. In the protocol under the point “National Council of German Churches” the telling comment stands, “The council approves forming a loose association with the Evangelical [Free] Churches in Germany. However, the term

25 Founding members were the Old Catholic Church, (Altkatholische Kirche), the Evangelical United Brethren Church (Evangelische Gemeinschaft), Baptists (Bund Ev. Freikirchlicher Gemeinden), Moravian Church (Herrnhuter Brüdergemeinen), the Evangelical Church in Germany (Ev. Kirche in Deutschland), the Methodist Church (Methodistenkirche), and the German Mennonite Church (Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden).
‘council’ should be avoided, as it suggests a closer community.”

From the very beginning an inner-German ecumenical community was not meant to have much significance. This attitude is shown in the following facts: first, instead of forming a more usual “national council,” only a “working group” was formed. Second, the signing of “Guidelines” (instead of the “by-laws” originally planned) occurred as a peripheral event at a normal EKD council meeting, with no public recognition. Third, in the meeting before the signing the EKD Council made changes to the document, although it had already been ratified by the leaders of the Free Churches. Martin Niemöller, an active ecumenist, ignored their breach of etiquette. Some two years later, Erich Geldbach, a Baptist, came to the conclusion that “the Working Group of Christian Churches was from the very beginning meant to be a loose association without any right to make decisions.”

After the founding of the Working Group of Christian Churches, Bishop Sommer flew to the United States. There he held talks regarding the aid society with, among others, his bishop colleague G. Bromley Oxnam then-president of the American Federal Council of Churches. Sommer reported from Clifton Springs, USA, to Germany, “My ever-stronger impression is that the communal aid society and the Working Group of Christian Church’s professed will towards a friendly cooperation among all German Protestants has a positive resonance here and increases the readiness to help, as well.”

Apparently, Geneva’s goal of organizing ecumenical aid in Germany in order to increase the Americans’ readiness to help and, in the meantime, taking on a crucial role itself in the process, had been realized.

**Instead of Spiritual Unity, Useful Ecumenical Relationships Only**

The organization of the Aid Society and the Working Group of Christian Churches (Hilfswerk and Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen [ACK]) constituted, at the beginning, only a marriage of convenience. Germany needed to create structures that would make possible the distribution of foreign aid coming from the ecumenical community. The organization of an aid society with the Free Churches was forced on the State Churches by pressure from Geneva. That, of course, was not the best way to overcome old prejudices. In addition, the leaders of the respective churches only found their way to the meeting table under the influence of Geneva. At the 50th year cel-

---

27 Die Protokolle des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, Bd. 2, S. 68.
28 The EKD Council changed the term “by-laws” in the title, to “Guidelines” and reduced the number of official delegates from five to only two. See Die Protokolle des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (Protocols of the Council of the Evangelical Churches in Germany), Bd. 2, S. 399 (Meeting on March 9-10, 1948).
30 J. W. Ernst Sommer, Letter of March 26, 1948 in Amtsblatt der Methodistenkirche, Nr. 6, 1. Jg. (1948), S. 1.
ebration of the Working group of Christian Churches, Heinz-Joachim Held, the ECK bishop in charge of foreign relations and ACK Chairman of many years, expressed the situation precisely:

It was a demand for historical honesty . . . if, after fifty years, we are reminded that the pressure to form the Working Group came from outside. We only have an inner-Germany ecumenical community today, thanks to that outside pressure. One could speak of a salutary force upon the inner-German ecumenical community, yes, upon the entire ecumenical community, which began at the end of the Second World War.31

Within the Methodist tradition these post-war experiences mean that the Connexion of the earlier Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUB-Church) and the Methodist Church, took part in the ecumenical development in Germany in an invisible, but nonetheless concrete way. With their generous help after World War II the American Mother Churches, along with the Federal Council in New York and the Ecumenical Council in Geneva, accomplished a much deeper inter-Church Aid than the mere material help that was originally imagined by the Church World Service. What was introduced at that time, with the support of our churches in the USA, was a catalyst for change in the longer process of inter-church relations in Germany. I have recalled these formative beginnings today with great thankfulness.