

**THE SECOND ROUND OF THREE-WAY NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF FINLAND,
THE FINNISH FREE CHURCH
AND
THE FINNISH PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT**

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Finnish Free Church and the Finnish Pentecostal movement held their second round of three-way negotiations on November 26-27, 2001 at the Pori Evangelical Lutheran parishes' conference centre in Silokallio. The theme of this conference was **"New Life in Christ and Gifts of the Spirit"**.

These three church groups gathered together for the first time nine years earlier in 1992, at the Vesala conference centre in Jyväskylä. The Vesala meeting in turn was based on the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland's separate bilateral talks with each of the other parties. Many different themes were discussed in Vesala, including religious education in schools, ceremonial practices for funerals, the legal position of the different institutions, census registry maintenance, corporate taxation and the challenges of international development. Among the doctrinal themes discussed was the essence of evangelicalism and charisma. The Silokallio meeting focused on this latter point and asked what the relationship is between charisma – known as gifts of the Spirit – and the new life given by Christ through faith.

The delegations were lead by Bishop Ilkka Kantola (Lutheran) denominational leader Olavi Rintala (Free Church) and editor Valter Luoto (Pentecostal movement). Each delegation had ten members.

A paper on "Faith, New Life, Sanctification and Spiritual Fight" was presented by Juhani Forsberg (Luth.), and commented on by Väinö A. Hyvönen (Free Ch.) and Juhani Kuosmanen (Pent.)

The subject of "Paul's Charisma, Sound Doctrine and Oversight of the Congregations" was introduced by Simo Lintinen (Free Ch.). Antti Laato (Luth.) and Klaus Korhonen (Pent.) gave reply statements.

Under the general heading of "Charisma Today" sociologist Håkan Sandström gave a presentation on The Modern World as the Address for the Christian Message, which was followed by a presentation on Contemporary Manifestations of Charisma and Questions which they Raise given by Hannu Vuorinen (Free Ch.) and Timo Pokki (Luth.).

It became apparent in these presentations and the discussions which followed that charisma is not a new phenomenon, but rather something which has shown up in various forms throughout the history of Christianity. Charismaticism is growing throughout Christendom, reviving its spiritual life. In Finland charisma is manifested within all three of the denominations represented in these negotiations, offering new possibilities and presenting new challenges.

It was also ascertained in these negotiations that charisma is part of a broader whole of spiritual life, which is based on God's work of redemption in Christ and justification by faith which God gives by grace alone through faith.

All of the parties in these negotiations were in agreement concerning the central message of the Reformation – justification by faith. In details differences became apparent both between and within each denomination, but in several basic points a common foundation was discovered. A mutual understanding was expressed in that God justifies mankind solely on the basis of Christ's work of atonement, through faith and by grace alone. Also in discussing what new life in Christ is and how it is expressed, it was ascertained that the new life of the believer is based every day on Christ's work of reconciliation and the gift of righteousness received by faith.

New life in Christ is expressed in sanctification. It must grow day by day according to the riches of grace. New life is joy and peace in the Holy Spirit: "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). Likewise this growth involves spiritual fight, referring to the battle within each believer against the remaining effects of sin in his life.

In the Bible, especially in the epistles of the apostle Paul, charismatic faith is found in several forms. The Holy Spirit begets the fruit of the Spirit which affects everyday life and equips us with gifts of the Spirit for various tasks of service. The Holy Spirit also operates through healing of the sick, speaking in tongues and prophetic utterances, and other gifts of the Spirit. These gifts are manifested in our churches, but different emphases are involved in the position and significance accorded to them. We are in agreement that such gifts of the Spirit must be fostered and not rejected: "Do not quench the Spirit" (I Thess. 5:19). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are intended for the edification of the whole church, not just for individual benefit. For this reason the evaluation of gifts of the Spirit is the task of the whole church and those responsible for shepherding it. Charisma can also be faked, and therefore it needs to remain submitted to a sound biblical faith.

During these negotiations we discussed the possibilities which changes in society offer to our churches and congregations. Current developmental trends present challenges and questions concerning the proclamation of the gospel and the life of fellowship for which we have no easy answers. We want to confront these challenges supported by sound judgement based on the word of God and led by the Holy Spirit. We wish to be open to those positive opportunities which gifts of the Spirit and the nurturing thereof present for Christian life in our congregations and churches, as well as for their mission and witness.

We attempted in our negotiations to understand each other's views concerning charisma and to seek out the opportunities it affords for the renewal of spiritual life in our congregations and churches. Different emphases appeared in our thinking, but we expressed our will to continue with edifying discussions of this matter in the future as well in order to build one another up in our common tasks of service and witness.

In Silokallio, November 27, 2001

Ilkka Kantola Valtter Luoto Olavi Rintala