

## COMMUNIQUÉ

### on the Twelfth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church.

The twelfth theological discussions between the delegations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church was held at the Danilovski Monastery in Moscow on 28th September – 5th October 2002. The aim was to produce a joint evaluation of the conversations conducted since 1970 and to plan future continuations to these.

The first theological discussions between these two churches were held in 1970 in Sinappi, Turku (Finland), the second in 1971 in Zagorsk (Russia/USSR), the third in 1974 in Järvenpää (Finland), the fourth in 1977 in Kiev (Ukraine/USSR), the fifth in 1980 in Turku, the sixth in 1983 in Leningrad (Russia/USSR), the seventh in 1986 in Mikkeli (Finland), the eighth in 1989 in the Orthodox Convent of Dormition in Pyhtitsa (Piukhtitsa, Estonia/USSR) and Leningrad, the ninth in 1992 in Järvenpää, and the tenth in 1995 in the Convent of Christ's Ascension (Florov) in Kiev (Ukraine) and the eleventh in Lappeenranta in 1998.

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The members of the delegation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) were Rt. Rev. Jukka **PAARMA**, Archbishop of Turku and Finland (leader of the delegation), Rev. Dr. Voitto **HUOTARI**, Bishop of Mikkeli, Rev. Dr. Juha **PIHKALA**, Bishop of Tampere, Prof. Gunnar **af HÄLLSTRÖM**, of the Faculty of Theology, University of Joensuu, Prof. Antti **LAATO** of the Faculty of Theology, Åbo Akademi University, Rev. Irja **ASKOLA**, planner in the Department of International Affairs, Diaconia Polytechnic, Helsinki, Ms. Sylvia **RAULO**, programme officer of Finnchurchaid, and Prof. Hans-Olof **KVIST** of the Faculty of Theology, Åbo Akademi University, as an advisor.

The members of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) were Metropolitan **VLADIMIR** of St. Petersburg and Ladoga (leader of the delegation), Bishop **HILARION** of Podolski, representative of the Patriarchate of Moscow in the international communities of Europe, Archimandrite **YANNUARI** (Ivliyev), docent at the Spiritual Academy in St. Petersburg, Rev. Vsevolod **CHAPLIN**, deputy chairman of the Department of External Church Relations, Patriarchate of Moscow, Prof. A. I. **OSIPOV** of the Spiritual Academy in Moscow, Y. S. **SPERANSKAYA** of the Department of External Church Relations, Patriarchate of Moscow, and Y. A. **RYABYKH** of the Department of External Church Relations, Patriarchate of Moscow.

Bishop Aarre **KUUKAUPPI**, representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria, Rev. Veikko **PURMONEN**, parish priest of Helsinki, representing the Finnish Orthodox Church, and Prof. Alar **LAATS** of the Faculty of Theology, University of Tartu, representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia, took part in the meeting as observers invited by the Russian Orthodox Church.

Also present as advisors to the delegation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland were Rev. Dr. Risto **CANTELL**, church counsellor and executive director of the Church

Department for International Relations, Dr. Kimmo **KÄÄRIÄINEN**, director of the Church Research Centre, Rev. Dr. Matti **REPO**, executive secretary for theology in the Church Department for International Relations, Rev. Heikki **JÄÄSKELÄINEN**, secretary to the Archbishop, and Rev. Timo **ROSQVIST**, secretary in the Archbishop's Office.

The interpreters during the discussions were Ms. Helena *Pavinskij*, Ms. Marina *Latschinoff* and Ms. Tarja *Leppäaho*. Ms. Minna *Väliaho* participated in the work of the secretariat.

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The discussions were held on the premises of the Department for External Church Relations at the Patriarchate of Moscow.

In his opening address, Metropolitan Vladimir stated that the purpose of the meeting was to evaluate the theological discussions held so far since their inception in 1970, emphasizing, among other things, that "With the dissolution of the Soviet Union we have achieved a degree of religious freedom that has never previously existed in Russia. Unfortunately, representatives of a few western churches and sects have been taking advantage of our freedom and have begun to practise proselytism in our country, contravening the resolution of the third general assembly of the World Council of Churches (1961).

Metropolitan Vladimir noted in particular the good relations that existed between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. "The many years of these conversations have enabled us to become more familiar with our neighbours' church life, theology and good Christian characteristics and to strengthen the contacts between our churches. We are resolutely determined to maintain good, neighbourly relations, mutual understanding and a striving for unity in the whole of Christendom, recalling our Saviour's words, "There shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

In his reply, Archbishop Paarma evaluated the discussions that had taken place over more than 30 years from his own church's viewpoint, noting that "The doctrinal conversations have had the effect of making the teachings and life of each church more widely known. Several dozen theologians have taken part in the seminars held in Finland prior to the conversations, and the parish visits and opportunities to share in church services in the parishes have transformed the conversations into a living reality for the communities where the meetings have been held.

Our churches have had a programme of scholarships that have enabled students from the Russian Orthodox Church to study in Helsinki and Turku and Finnish theologians to visit the Spiritual Academy in St. Petersburg. In addition, the first friendship agreements between parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland were signed in 2001.

The conversations have also had a significant influence on the revival of church life in the Lutheran and Finnish-speaking parishes of the Leningrad area and on the founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria.

The conversations have also produced material which has been of value in other theological discussions, benefiting programmes conducted within both the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. Material from the conversations has also been published

in English. The conversations have similarly provided new stimuli for discussions between the Lutheran Church and both the Orthodox Church and the free churches in Finland.

The conversations have been reflected in both Finnish and international research into the theology of Martin Luther on account of the rediscovery of the viewpoint that emphasizes Christ's real presence in faith: "*In ipsa fide Christus adest*".

The more recent Finnish-Russian conversations have also offered the Finns an opportunity to follow at close quarters the development that has taken place in the Russian Orthodox Church during these years of rapid social change."

The invited observers took the opportunity to present greetings from their churches at the opening session of the meeting.

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The members of the delegations took turns in the course of the meeting to lead morning and evening prayers according to the Lutheran and Orthodox traditions.

On Sunday 29th September the participants were present at a celebration of the Holy Liturgy by Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia in the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God in the Kremlin and were later taken on a tour of the churches of the Kremlin. On Wednesday 2nd October the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church were present at a Lutheran service of Holy Communion.

The participants in the conversations had an audience with Patriarch Alexi II at the Danilovski Monastery on Tuesday 1st October, and on the previous day, Monday 30th September, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, gave a lunch in honour of the delegates. On Wednesday 2nd October the participants met with V. Y. Zorin, a minister of the Russian Federation, and on the same day Mr. René Nyberg, Finnish Ambassador to Russia, held a reception in their honour at the Finnish Embassy. He also invited the chairmen of the delegations to dinner on Saturday 5th October.

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The participants visited the Church of Christ the Saviour on Saturday 28th September and the Monastery of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergei of Radonezh at Sergiev Posad and the workshop for the manufacture of church vessels and vestments at Sofrino on Friday 4th October. The programme on Saturday 5th October included visits to the Convent of Martha and Mary and to the Tretyakov Gallery.

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The following papers were presented at the meeting:

1. Bishop Hilarion of Podolski: "The Russian Orthodox Church and relations between Christians in the 20th century and at the turn of the millennium"
2. Bishop Voitto Huotari of Mikkeli: "Ecumenical relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, 1998 – 2002"
3. Archbishop Jukka Paarma of Turku and Finland: "The Church in Finnish society"

4. Rev. Vsevolod Chaplin: “The Russian Orthodox Church, the state and society at the turn of the century”
5. Prof. A. I. Osipov: “An evaluation of the results of the ‘Sinappi’ doctrinal conversations”
6. Bishop Juha Pihkala of Tampere: “An evaluation of the Russian conversations in 1970–1999 from a thematic and dogmatic viewpoint”
7. Prof. Gunnar af Hällström, University of Joensuu: “An evaluation of the dogmatic themes”
8. Archimandrite Yannuarii: “The tradition of intercession in the Russian Orthodox Church and discussions between Christians on common prayer”
9. Y. A. Ryabykh, Department of External Church Relations, Patriarchate of Moscow: “The results of the doctrinal conversations from a socio-political perspective in relation to the current mission of the church in a changing society”
10. Prof. Hans-Olof Kvist, Åbo Akademi University: “The work of the churches for peace as part of the fulfilment of the God of Love’s plan for the created universe”
11. Rev. Irja Askola: “A comment on the evaluation of themes in social ethics from the viewpoint of the ecumenical movement”
12. Rev. Vsevolod Chaplin: “The future of the doctrinal conversations”
13. Bishop Voitto Huotari: “The future of the ‘Sinappi’ conversations”

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The participants presented evaluations of the course of the dialogue held over more than 30 years between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the results achieved and discussed plans for developing the dialogue and priorities among the topics for future meetings. The delegations drew particular attention to the changes that have taken place in the lives of all the churches in recent years as regards theology, social thinking, ecumenical activities and the relations between church and state and between the church and society. The following issues were seen to be crucial: the sources of faith and doctrine, teachings with regard to prayer, the content of social ethics and the reception given to the results of the doctrinal conversations.

The members of the delegation gave particular credit to those who had begun the dialogue, those who had led the conversations and those who had taken an active part in them.

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The delegations arrived at the following joint evaluations of the significance of the conversations and the challenges facing them in the future:

A strong awareness of our own identity has helped us to approach each other. Conversely, by getting to know the other’s spiritual culture we have been able to strengthen our understanding of our own tradition.

The past decades have brought many new things into our lives. Although the shackles of state atheism have been broken in Eastern Europe, the churches there have encountered new problems. Religious freedom has given some Christian groups an opportunity to exercise increased influence of a kind that shows no respect for the local churches that have functioned in the region for centuries or their witness. This has complicated relations between Christians. At the same time secularization and spiritual nihilism continue to pose a

serious challenge to Christians. We are convinced that in the 21st century, with the countries and nations of Europe becoming increasingly dependent on each other, we should attempt to solve the problems that confront us together, making use of the experiences gained from our dialogue. Mutual discussions of profound theological questions, resistance to the politics of brute force, interaction and the understanding of each others' thoughts and ways – everything that we have been doing for over 30 years – will stand us in good stead for our journey into the future.

The new century will not be an easy or cloudless time. If we are to be fully equipped to face its challenges we will have to be firmly anchored in our own traditions and able to open them up to the people of today, to undertake penetrating analyses of the problems of modern society and to bear witness to our own faith and values before those in power and before all people.

In this understanding we now wish to outline the main themes for our dialogues in the near future. Above all we should make a joint study of the field of Christian anthropology, including the Orthodox and Lutheran views of human free will and its relation to the *oikonomia* of salvation. In order to understand our own religious and cultural traditions better, it is essential that we should examine together the question of the Holy Bible, tradition and the heritage of the church and the influence of these on the lives and beliefs of our church members.

The conversations should also deal extensively with social ethics and its impact on our lives and beliefs. People's beliefs cannot fail to affect their deeds and thereby influence society at large. In this connection we should consider how a Christian awareness should be reflected in the social work carried out by our churches. Particular attention should be paid to the nature of the world views and moral values that direct events on the integrated continent of Europe. We should continue our theological work on the question of peace in a modern, dynamically changing context in a manner that is free of all political interests, as in the earlier days of our conversations. At the same time, questions of bioethics and the family and of the relation between human rights and responsibilities should be high on the agenda.

We have experienced spiritual joy through being present at each others' church services, becoming acquainted with each others' lives of prayer and proclaiming the word of God together.

In order to intensify the dialogue between our churches we need a new form of organization which will help us to prepare for and arrange our future theological discussions.

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The documents arising from the conversations were signed in the course of an official ceremony at which Metropolitan Vladimir and Archbishop Jukka Paarma spoke.

The twelfth round of theological conversations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church were held in a spirit of cordial Christian frankness and mutual respect.

On concluding their work, the delegations engaged in the conversations in Moscow offer their thanks to God and express their unanimous opinion that these theological meetings should continue.

Moscow, 5th October, 2002

(signed)  
Jukka Paarma  
Archbishop of Turku and Finland

(signed)  
Vladimir  
Metropolitan of St. Petersburg  
and Ladoga