

**First Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 18th Plenary Session  
of the International Joint Commission on the Theological Dialogue  
between the Lutheran World Federation and the Orthodox Church**

**Tirana, Albania, 24th September - 1st October 2019**

**COMMUNIQUÉ**

The First Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 18th Plenary Session of the International Joint Commission on the Theological Dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the Orthodox Church was held in Tirana, Albania, from the 24th of September to the 1st of October 2019. The Meeting was hosted by the Orthodox Church in Albania with the generous hospitality of H.B. Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania, and took place at the Skete of the Holy Myrrh-Bearing Women, next to St. Vlash Monastery / Orthodox Theological Academy.

The Meeting, Co-chaired by H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate) from the Orthodox side, and by Bishop Dr. Johann Schneider (Evangelical Church in Central Germany / EKMD) from the Lutheran World Federation side, discussed the theme of *"The Place and the Role of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church"*.

Orthodox participants were: H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and V. Rev. Archimandrite Agathangelos Siskos, Archivist (Co-secretary, Ecumenical Patriarchate), V. Rev. Archimandrite Dr. Alexi Chehadeh (Patriarchate of Antioch), V. Rev. Protopresbyter Prof. Dr. George Dion Dragas (Patriarchate of Jerusalem), Rev. Dr. Cosmin Pricop (Patriarchate of Romania), H.E. Metropolitan Dr. Isaias of Tamasos and Oreini (Church of Cyprus), Prof. (Em.) Dr. Christos Voulgaris (Church of Greece), Dr. Nathan Hoppe (Church of Albania), V. Rev. Dr. Václav Ježek (Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia), and Consultant V. Rev. Protopresbyter Stefanos Chrysanthou (Church of Cyprus).

Lutheran participants were representing various member churches of the Lutheran World Federation: Bishop Dr. Johann Schneider (Evangelical Church in Central Germany / EKMD), Bishop Dr. Donald McCoid (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, U.S.A. / Representing the LWF - Office Geneva), Prof. Dr. Kenneth G. Appold (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, U.S.A.), Rev. Dr. Heta Hurskainen (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland), Rev. Prof. Dr. Stefan Tobler (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania), and Prof. Dr. Jennifer Wasmuth (Consultant, Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, France).

The Committee members heard presentations on the theme from both sides, about the place and the role of the Holy Spirit: a) in the Life of the Church, b) into the World, c) in Baptism and Ministry, and d) in Eucharist:

Rev. Prof. Dr. Jennifer Wasmuth, *"The work of the Joint Commission on the understanding of the Holy Spirit from the beginning until today"*, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima, *"The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church, and into the world. Some General Thoughts"*, Bishop Dr. Johann Schneider, *"A Lutheran Approach to the Orthodox Understanding of Pneumatology"*, Rev. Prof. Dr. Stefan Tobler, *"The Role of the Spirit in the life of the Church and into the world. A General Approach"*, V. Rev. Dr. Václav Ježek, *"Luther's understanding of the Holy Spirit. An Orthodox Approach"*, Rev. Dr. Heta Hurskainen, *"The Action of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, and Ministry"*, V. Rev. Archimandrite Dr. Alexi Chehadeh, *"The action of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, and Ministry (Ierosyni)"*, Rev. Anne Burghardt (presented by Prof. Dr. Kenneth G. Appold), and Rev. Dr. Cosmin Pricop, *"The Action of the Holy Spirit in Eucharist"*.

Discussions on papers reflecting these themes identified areas of agreement between the two traditions, particularly in the understanding of the place and the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. A considerable number of open questions and differences still need further discussion. In addition, discussions were held on pneumatology, as related to Baptism, Ministry and Eucharist. The Committee prepared a common paper, based on previous statements of the Commission, on the works, role and place of the Holy Spirit. It was decided that the new theme for the next stage of the dialogue will be: *"The Holy Spirit, the Church and the World"*.

The working sessions of the Preparatory Committee started with an Opening Prayer at the Holy Myrrh-Bearing Women Chapel, officiated by Metropolitan Isaias. The Commission members participated in working sessions after daily Morning Prayer.

On Friday, 27th of September, the participants had the opportunity to visit places of historical, archaeological and religious interest, such as the Monastery of the Dormition of Theotokos, at the ancient city of Apollonia, and the Tomb of the New Martyr Cosmas the Aetolian, near Fier. They were accompanied by H.E. Metropolitan Nikolaos of Apollonia and Fier.

On Sunday, 29th of September, the members attended the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Tirana, celebrated by Archbishop Anastasios. After that, the members had the opportunity to meet him. The Archbishop welcomed the members of the Committee, spoke about the revival and the history of the Orthodox Church in Albania since the collapse of communism, and about his pastoral and spiritual efforts to regenerate the Church after its complete destruction. In the afternoon they visited the Castle of Krujë.

The Committee expressed deep appreciation and gratitude to Archbishop Anastasios for his generous hospitality, as well to all the Staff of the Orthodox Theological Academy, and Sister Rachel at the Skete.

The Committee decided that the next Preparatory Meeting will be held from the 29th of May to the 4th of June 2020, under the hospitality of Bishop Schneider (venue to be determined).

Tirana, 30th of September, 2019