

**17th Plenary Session of the International Joint Commission on the Theological
Dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the Orthodox Church
Helsinki, Finland, 7 November – 14 November 2017**

COMMUNIQUE

The 17th Plenary of the International Joint Commission on the Theological Dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the Orthodox Church was held at Sofia Cultural Center in Helsinki, Finland (7 November - 14 November 2017), hosted by the Lutheran World Federation with generous support of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Sofia Cultural Center.

The meeting was chaired by the two co-presidents, from the Orthodox side by H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate), and from the Lutheran World Federation side by Archbishop (Em.) Dr. Anders Wejryd (Church of Sweden).

Orthodox participants were delegates from the following Churches: H. E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and V. Rev. Grand Archdeacon Dr. Theodoros Meimaris (co-secretary, Ecumenical Patriarchate), H. E. Senior Metropolitan Dr. Makarios of Nairobi (Patriarchate of Alexandria), V. Rev. Archimandrite Dr. Alexi Chehadeh (Patriarchate of Antioch), V. Rev. Protopresbyter Prof. Dr. George Dion Dragas (Patriarchate of Jerusalem), Rev. Prof. Dr. Valentin Vassechko (Patriarchate of Moscow), Prof. Dr. Rade Kisić (Patriarchate of Serbia), Rev. Prof. Dr. Cosmin Pricop (Patriarchate of Romania), V. Rev. Protopresbyter Prof. Dr. Georgios Zviadadze (Patriarchate of Georgia), H. E. Metropolitan Dr. Isaias of Tamassos and Oreini (Church of Cyprus), Prof. (Em.) Dr. Christos Voulgaris (Church of Greece), Rev. Andrzej Minko (Church of Poland), Mr Nathan Hoppe (Church of Albania), Rev. Dr. Vaclav Jezek (Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia), and Consultants: Rev. Stefanos Chrysanthou and Prof. (Em.) Dr. Nikolaos Nikolaidis (Church of Cyprus).

The following Lutheran participants were representing various member churches of the Lutheran World Federation: Archbishop (Em.) Dr. Anders Wejryd (Church of Sweden), Prof. Dr. Kenneth G. Appold (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, USA), Rev. Prof. Dr. Stephanie Dietrich (Church of Norway), Superintendent Klaus Schwarz (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Wurttemberg, Germany), Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Silcock (Lutheran Church of Australia), Rev. Prof. Dr. Risto Saarinen (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland), Rev. Prof. Dr. Thomas-Andreas Pöder (Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church), Rev. Dr. Anton Tikhomirov (Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Russia and Other States), Rev. Dr. Stefan Tobler (Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania), Rev. Heidi Zitting (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland), Rev. Prof. Dr. Jennifer Wasmuth (Institute for Ecumenical Research, France, Consultant), Rev. Dr. Kaisamari Hintikka (LWF, co-secretary) and Rev. Anne Burghardt (LWF, staff support).

Ms Tiina Kinnunen and Mr Tapio Juntunen, students from the University of Eastern Finland, served the Commission as stewards.

The Commission studied the Draft Common Statement from the Preparatory Committee held in Nicosia, Cyprus, 2016. The following remarks and observations on the Draft Statement were presented: on Sections I and II: “Hermeneutical approaches on the terminology and different understandings of a) ‘Ministry’, ‘Ordained Ministry’/‘Priesthood’ and ‘Service’ (Diakonia) and b) Biblical foundations of ‘Ordained Ministry’/‘Priesthood’” (Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Silcock from Lutheran and Prof. Dr. Rade Kisić from Orthodox perspective); on Section III: “The Ordained Ministry/Priesthood in the Early Church and the Ecumenical Councils” (Rev. Prof. Dr. Stephanie Dietrich from Lutheran and the V. Rev. Archimandrite Dr. Alexi Chehadeh from Orthodox perspective); on Section V of the Nicosia 2016 Draft Statement: “Theology and Practice of Ordination” (Rev. Prof. Dr. Risto Saarinen from a Lutheran and H.E. Metropolitan Dr. Isaias of Tamassos from an Orthodox perspective); on Section VI: “The relationship between the Royal Priesthood and the Ordained Ministry/Priesthood” (Rev. Prof. Dr. Jennifer Wasmuth from Lutheran and Rev. Prof. Dr. Cosmin Pricop from Orthodox perspective); Section VII: “Episcopate and Apostolic Succession” (Rev. Prof. Dr. Thomas-Andreas Pöder from Lutheran and Mr Nathan Hoppe from Orthodox perspective); on Section VIII: “The role and the place of women in the life of the Church and the ordination of women” (Prof. Dr. Kenneth G. Appold from Lutheran and V. Rev. Protopresbyter Prof. Dr. George Dragas from Orthodox perspective).

Following the discussions on the presented papers, the Commission assigned a Joint Drafting Committee, in order to finalize the Nicosia Statement in view of the presented papers and the discussions. A modified draft Statement was presented to the Commission and was amended and approved. This common Statement identified areas where Orthodox and Lutherans agree and disagree on several topics between the two traditions. In addition, the Commission had a thorough discussion on the future of the dialogue. It was decided that the main topic for discussions on the next phase will be “the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church”.

On Sunday, November 12, the Commission members participated in the consecration of the newly elected Bishop of Helsinki, Rev. Dr. Teemu Laajasalo at the Helsinki Lutheran Cathedral. They had also the opportunity to visit the Uspenskij Cathedral of the Finnish Orthodox Church in Helsinki.

On Monday, November 13, a Lutheran-Orthodox Seminar took place within the framework of the Joint Commission meeting, in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, under the theme “Legacy of the Reformation – Lutheran and Orthodox approaches”. The Seminar was greeted by: the Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, Dr. Kari Mäkinen; H.E. Metropolitan Ambrosius of Helsinki; the two co-presidents, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate), and Archbishop (Em.) Anders Wejryd (Church of Sweden), and Rev. Dr. Mari-Anna Auvinen, General Secretary of the Finnish Council of Churches. Presentations were given by Rev. Dr. Martin Junge, General Secretary of the Lutheran

World Federation on *Freedom of a Christian: Luther's Legacy for Today*; Prof. (Em.) Dr. Konstantinos Delikostantis on *The Reformation's notion of Christian Freedom from an Orthodox Perspective* (presented by the V. Rev. Grand Archdeacon Dr. Theodoros Meimaris); Prof. (Em.) Dr. Eila Helander on *The Impact of the Reformation on Finnish Culture and Society* and Rev. Heikki Huttunen, General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches, on *Living as an Orthodox in a Predominantly Lutheran Country*.

The Commission thanked with deep appreciation H.E. Metropolitan Ambrosius of Helsinki for the generous hospitality and for the possibility to use the Chapel of the Sofia Cultural Center for morning and evening prayers which were offered by Lutheran and Orthodox members of the Commission alternately.

The next Meeting of the Commission is scheduled to take place early 2019 (the place to confirmed).

Helsinki, November 14, 2017