

Communiqué

Lutheran, Mennonite, Catholic Trilateral Dialogue Commission on Baptism Strasbourg, 26-31 January 2014

Representatives of the Lutheran World Federation, the Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity met in Strasbourg, France, from 26 to 31 January 2014 for the second meeting of the Trilateral Dialogue Commission. The general topic of the dialogue “Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church” was developed in the meeting through papers on the theme “Baptism: God’s Grace in Christ and Human Sin”. Archbishop Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga and Rev. Gregory Fairbanks (Catholic), Professors Alfred Neufeld and Fernando Enns (Mennonite) and Professor Friederike Nüssel (Lutheran) presented papers on this topic. The commission also continued to study the baptismal rites of each participating Christian tradition, with special attention in this meeting to the Lutheran tradition, particularly regarding the contextualization of baptismal rites in the African region. Papers on these themes were presented by Professor Sarah Hinlicky-Wilson and Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata. The commission began its working days with prayers and joint reflections on biblical texts relating to baptism.

The meeting, hosted by the Lutheran World Federation, took place at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, where the staff welcomed the commission with warm hospitality. The Institute also hosted a reception which offered a possibility for the commission members to meet with representatives of the local Catholic, Lutheran and Mennonite communities in Strasbourg. Further theological and spiritual impulses were offered to the members of the trilateral commission during an excursion to the neighbouring city of Colmar where Professor Theodor Dieter gave a presentation on the Issenheim Altarpiece.

Participants of the meeting on the Mennonite side were Professor Dr. Alfred Neufeld (co-chair, Paraguay), Prof. Dr. Fernando Enns (Germany), Prof. Dr. John Rempel (Canada), Rev. Rebecca Osiro (Kenya), and Rev. Dr. Larry Miller (co-secretary, France). The Catholic Church was represented by Archbishop Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga (co-chair, Colombia), Rev. Dr. William Henn (USA/Italy), Rev. Dr. Luis Melo (Canada), Sister Dr. Marie-Hélène Robert, N.D.A. (France), and Rev. Dr. Gregory Fairbanks (co-secretary, USA/Vatican). The Lutheran participants were Prof. Dr Friederike Nüssel (co-chair, Germany), Prof. Dr. Theodor Dieter (Germany), Professor Peter Li (Hong Kong), Rev. Dr Kaisamari Hintikka (co-secretary, Finland/Switzerland), and Prof. Sarah Hinlicky-Wilson (USA/France) as a visiting specialist. Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata (Zimbabwe/Switzerland) attended the meeting part-time as a proxy for Bishop emer. Musa Biyela (South Africa) who was unable to attend the meeting.

The third meeting of the trilateral commission will take place in February 2015 in the Netherlands, hosted by Mennonite World Conference, and discuss the theme "Baptism: Communicating Grace and Faith". The annual meetings of the commission are envisaged until 2016 after which the commission is expected to submit its final report to the Lutheran World Federation, the Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.