

Porvoo Communion Consultation and Meeting of the Porvoo Contact Group

Minorities and Majorities: A Challenge for Church and Society

Tallinn, Estonia, 11-14 October 2018

Communiqué

Representatives of the Churches of the Porvoo Communion gathered in Tallinn, Estonia between 11 and 14 October 2018 for a consultation entitled 'Minorities and Majorities: A Challenge for Church and Society'. The consultation took place at the Theological Institute of the Estonian Lutheran Church where we were made welcome by the Dean, the Reverend Professor Dr Randar Tasmuth. The relationship of communion between our churches was grounded and made visible in our gathering together for prayer and our celebration together of the sacrament of the Eucharist. In study of the scriptures we sought together the word of God for each of us and our communities.

Our churches and people exist in and serve complex societies. Within our societies and churches there are minorities and there are majorities. Sometimes an individual can be part of a majority group and a minority group at the same time. In some of our societies our churches form a majority, in others a tiny minority. In all our churches we seek to be open to all: recognising the sins of prejudice that cause people to fear or reject those who are different from them.

During the consultation we heard and reflected on stories of the personal experience and the reality of the lives of minorities;

We heard some of the history of those minorities which were created by war or shifting national boundaries and we reflected on the deep memories of enmity and prejudice that linger as a result of this history;

We learned about the growth of minority communities brought about by immigration; their positive and negative experiences; and those of the majority communities alongside which they live;

We heard about communities that had been in a majority but which, in the modern age, are coming to terms with now being effectively a

minority.

In all these examples there is a question for the churches to which we belong as to whether they support the status quo or seek to be counter-cultural in their context.

All of our learning was grounded in the reality of Estonia with its modern history of external influence, occupation and independence. We were privileged to hear from local Church leaders about the life and growth of the churches in Estonia. We were inspired by the example of creative co-operation between the Church leaders. The solidarity that grew among the churches in Soviet times is being sustained in the present day and is bearing fruit.

Representatives from the churches of the Porvoo Communion, spread across the Nordic and Baltic States, the British Isles, the Iberian Peninsula and beyond learned from one another. At the heart of our learning was the deepening conviction that God who made humankind in his image loves each person he has made and calls us as individuals, as churches, and as societies to reflect that love and to see the person of Christ in our neighbour.

The consultation concluded in the celebration of the Eucharist at Tallinn Cathedral where the president was the Archbishop of Estonia, the Most Reverend Urmas Viilma, and the preacher was the Bishop of Tonbridge, the Right Reverend Simon Burton-Jones. At this service we commemorated the eightieth anniversary of the agreements of intercommunion between the Church of England and the Evangelical-Lutheran Churches of Estonia and Latvia. These agreements form part of the tapestry of agreements between our churches that predated and prefigured the Porvoo Agreement.

The Porvoo Contact Group expresses its gratitude to the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, to Archbishop Viilma and to the Reverend Tauno Teder and Ms Kadri Pöder for making members so welcome in their beautiful city. This meeting was also the last meeting for the Lutheran Co-Chair, Bishop Peter Skov-Jakobsen, who completes his term of office with the gratitude of all who have worked with him. The Group looks towards its next conference, in 2019 in Portugal at the invitation of the Lusitanian Church, where the topic will be the voice of the Church in the public square.



Porvoo Communion

The Porvoo Communion is a communion of churches that have signed an agreement to "share a common life in mission and service". These churches are either Anglican or Lutheran.

To find out more about the Porvoo Communion visit the [Porvoo Communion website](https://www.churchofengland.org/about/work-other-christian-churches/our-news/porvoo-consultation-tallinn-estonia)

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