



The Anglican Church of St Thomas a Becket

The Meissen Theological Conference, 11-14 February 2019

Communiqué

The Tenth Theological Conference between the Church of England and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) took place at the Mission Academy at Hamburg University from 11 to 14 February 2019. We are very grateful for the hospitality of the Academy and to the Nordkirche for hosting an ecumenical reception.

The Theological Conference is a central part of the Meissen Declaration and functions as a theological resource for the Commission's broader work. Conscious of the crucial importance of closer relationships between the Church of England and other European churches in a time of political uncertainty, the co-chairs decided to address the theme of **"Revisiting the Meissen-agreement after 30 years"** with the explicit aim of working 'to resolve the outstanding differences between the participating churches' (Meissen Declaration para. 8).

The Conference identified the principal outstanding issues between the two churches as the exercise and understanding of episcopé and the interchangeability of ministries as an aspect of the stated aim of 'full, visible unity'. The conference received 12 papers discussing a number of historical, sociological and doctrinal perspectives which informed the lively conversation. The papers explored the British participation at the Synod of Dordrecht; Samuel Gobat and the Jerusalem Bishopric; sociological changes in both churches over the past 30 years; ecumenical developments in relation to Community of Protestant Churches in Europe; growing relationships with the Methodist Church in the light of Richard Hooker's writings; and proposed closer ties between the Lutheran Church in Bavaria and The Episcopal Church (USA). In addition, the theme of mutual relationships between theological concepts and ecclesial identity was addressed.

After robust discussion, the Conference participants came to a consensus that the concept of episcopé and the 'historic episcopate' have been and are open to a number of interpretations and have been expressed in a variety of historical forms, which can be held with equal integrity and express the intention of maintaining the apostolic tradition.

Further discussion of the themes of apostolicity, continuity and the historic episcopate were identified as the key topics for the next Conference, and for the ongoing work of the Meissen Commission, in order that outstanding differences might be better understood and allow for further progress towards deeper unity.

The conference also visited an ecumenical project in the Hafencity and the English Church of St Thomas a Becket and learnt something of the mission and ministry in the rapidly developing city of Hamburg.

The Conference was co-chaired by Canon Prof. Dr. Mark Chapman and Prof. Dr. Friederike Nüssel.

Hamburg, 14 February 2019



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Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/work-other-christian-churches/our-news/meissen-theological-conference-hamburg-germany>