



The Meissen Theological Conference

12-15 February 2024

Communiqué

The Twelfth Theological Conference between the Church of England and the Protestant Church in German (EKD) took place at the Dietrich-Bonhoeffer-Hotel in Berlin from 12 to 15 February 2024. We are very grateful to the Evangelical Church Berlin Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia (EKBO) 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. The conference built on the previous conference from 2021 'Towards Interchangeability: Episcopacy in theory and practice', and focused on how the Meissen Agreement with its desire for 'full, visible unity of the body of Christ on earth' (III.7) might be realised to the maximum extent possible within the current constraints of the laws and doctrines governing both churches. While some earlier conferences had addressed the understanding and significance of the episcopal office for full, visible unity, the focus has now shifted to legal and practical questions related to the interchangeability of clergy. The conference theme was "Towards Interchangeability II: Legal and Practical Lessons".

The conference discussed 13 papers on the themes of enabling local ecumenism, including case studies from Cumbria, Nuremberg, and the South Indian Church; recognition of orders in the Church of England; interchangeability of clergy according to Protestant church law; understanding of apostolicity and the theological basis of ecclesiology in the Meissen Declaration; denominational development in Germany based on the church membership survey of the EKD; the growing importance of visible ecclesiastical identity in the ecumenical movement; and challenges for a sustainable understanding of the episcopal office in England against the backdrop of its history. Furthermore, the deepening of the communion between the EKD and the Church of England was discussed in the context of the growing relationship between the Church of England and the Methodist Church in England, as well as the model of communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria and the Episcopal Church in the USA.

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

The meaning of episcopé and episcopacy for the apostolicity of the Church in the context of increasing secularization will be further discussed at the next conference.

The conference also visited the Kaiser-Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche and an Ash Wednesday service at St Matthäus Kirche.

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

Mark Chapman

Friederike Nüssel

Berlin, 15 February 2024

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