

Church Leaders Consultation, Bishopthorpe, York, England 17-19 September 2014

Communiqué

Forty-five church leaders from The Porvoo Communion of Churches met in York, UK, from 17-19 September 2014, and received the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad and the Lutheran Church in Great Britain as new member churches of the Porvoo Communion. The co-chairs of the Porvoo Contact Group, the Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson and the Rt Revd Dr Peter Skov-Jakobsen, welcomed participants and introduced the theme Towards Greater Unity and Closer Fellowship. Most of the sessions were held at Bishopthorpe Palace, office and home of the Archbishop of York, the Most Revd Dr John Sentamu, who greeted the church leaders and took part in the deliberations.

Bible studies were led by Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien of the Church of Norway and by Archbishop John Sentamu. The group openly shared different viewpoints, hopes and aspirations for the future of the churches and their life in communion together. The co-chairs presented introductory reflections related to the theme, which were followed by presentations from participants on communicating the gospel in today's world; leadership as servanthood and Christian witness; religious freedom and human rights; and engaging young people in the church. The presentations focussed on the Porvoo context and led to extensive discussion and further input.

The meeting affirmed:

- The role of servanthood, leadership and discipleship in authentic Christian witness, with a special focus on the current situation in Europe
- The need to provide space and opportunities for prayer, spiritual expression and pilgrimage
- The need for a refreshed emphasis in mission as a way of life with and in the community
- The importance of including young people emphasising their visible and active role in the life of the Communion
- The important contribution of majority and minority churches in the Porvoo Communion.

Based on the discussions, the church leaders agreed a tentative work plan for the next four years, which allowed flexibility for appropriate changes to be made by the Porvoo Contact Group.

Participants attended Evensong at York Minster each day and the meeting concluded with a solemn celebration of the Eucharist, at which the Most Revd Dr Antje Jackelén preached and Archbishop John Sentamu presided. During the celebration, the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad and the Lutheran Church in Great Britain signed the Porvoo Declaration. Those who signed were Archbishop Elmars Ernsts Rozitis and Bishop Martin Lind. The two churches were welcomed as the newest members of the Porvoo Communion.