Working group on cooperation between Russian Orthodox Church and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland meets in Helsinki



On 9 March 2020, the Working Group for cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, established by the Holy Synod decision of 6 October 2017, met in Helsinki.

From the Russian Orthodox Church the working group included Bishop Siluan of Petergof, rector of Sankt-Petersburg Theological Academy and Seminary- co-chair of the group; Hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov), secretary for inter-Christian relations, Department for External Church Relations (DECR), Moscow Patriarchate; Archpriest Vladimir Khulap, pro-rector for training, Sankt-Petersburg Academy and Seminary; Archpriest Dimitriy Yerevich, head of the Chair of Bible Studies, Sankt-Petersburg Academy; and Ms Yelena Speranskaya, lecturer, Moscow Theological Academy.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland was represented by Bishop Dr Seppo Hakkinen – co-chair of the group; Rev. Kimmo Kaatijanen, director of the ELCF international department, Rev. Dr Uha Merilainen; Rev. Tomi Karttunen, secretary of the ELCE international department; and Rev. Timo Rosquist, secretary of the Diocese of Mikkeli.

The main subject of the meeting was preparations for the 16th session of the renewed Sinappi

theological dialogue between the two Churches planned to take place from May 14 to 17, 2020, in Turku, Finland.

In anticipation of the dialogue, the working group exchanged information about the present situation in their Churches.

Bishop Soluan spoke about the present state of inter-Orthodox relationships giving special attention to the meeting of Primates and delegations of Local Orthodox Churches held on 26 February 2020 in Amman, Jordan. He also informed the Finnish side about changes that took place in the Russian Orthodox Church and its initiatives concerning important public issues.

Hieromonk Stephan spoke about the inter-Christian cooperation of the Russian Orthodox Church, the development of its dialogue with other Christian confessions and joint humanitarian aid projects.

After that, a discussion was held on the program of the 16th Sinnapi Theological Dialogue.

The meeting also discussed the working group's terms of reference as responsible for coordination of all aspects of cooperation between the two Churches. In recent years, projects have been implemented for an exchange of experience in chaplains' ministry in prisons in contact with respective departments of the Russian Orthodox Church. It was considered important to renew the students' exchange, which historically has played a considerable role in the bilateral relations. It also deemed important to develop joint projects in the sphere of social service, pilgrimage and youth work.

The next meeting of the Working Group will take place in autumn 2020 in Sankt-Petersburg.

DECR Communication Service

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