# Third meeting of Working Group for Cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland

On June 10-11, 2019, the Working Group for Cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland held its regular meeting at St. Petersburg Theological Academy.

The delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church included Bishop Seraphim of Petergof, rector of St. Petersburg Theological Academy and Seminary – head of the working group; Archpriest Vladimir Khulap, the academy pro-rector for training; Archbishop Dimitry Yurevich, head of the academy Chair of Bible Studies; Hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations, and Ms. Ye. Speranskaya, DECR adviser and lecturer at Moscow Theological Academy.

The Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland was represented by Bishop Dr Seppo Häkkinen of Mikkeli; Rev. Kimmo Kääriäinen, director of the external church relation department of the Evangelical-Lutheran

Church of Finland; Rev. Dr. Juha Meriläinen; Rev. Tomi Karttunen, secretary of the ELCF department for external church relations; and Rev. Timo Rosqvist, secretary of the Diocese of Mikkeli.

Addressing the Finnish delegation, Bishop Seraphim spoke about the long tradition of relationships between the Diocese of St. Petersburg and St. Petersburg theological schools with the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland, also through the dialogue, which has lasted for almost 50 years. Although there were some difficulties a few years ago, he said, now we can resume common theological discussions. He referred to the 2016 ELCF Bishops' Assembly's confirmation that the Finnish Lutherans uphold the traditional biblical understanding of marriage as a turning point in the resumption of the relationships.

In his speech of greeting Bishop Seppo Häkkinen reminded the gathering of the prehistory of the dialogue pointing to the decisive role played in its organization by the late Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) of Leningrad and NObgorod and the late Archbishop Martti Simojoki of Turku and Finland.

After that reports were made on the present situation in the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland. These reports were followed by a discussion on the possible themes of the reviving theological dialogue. It was agreed to hold the next session in 2020 and combine the theological discussion with events to mark the 50$^{th}$ anniversary of this dialogue. The results of this dialogue will be presented for adoption to the supreme authorities of the two Churches.

On June 11, the guests from Finland visited the St. Alexander Nevsky Laura of the Holy Trinity and the St. Nicholas Cemetery to bow at the grave of one of the founders of the dialogue, Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) of Leningrad and Novgorod.

*DECR Communication Service*

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