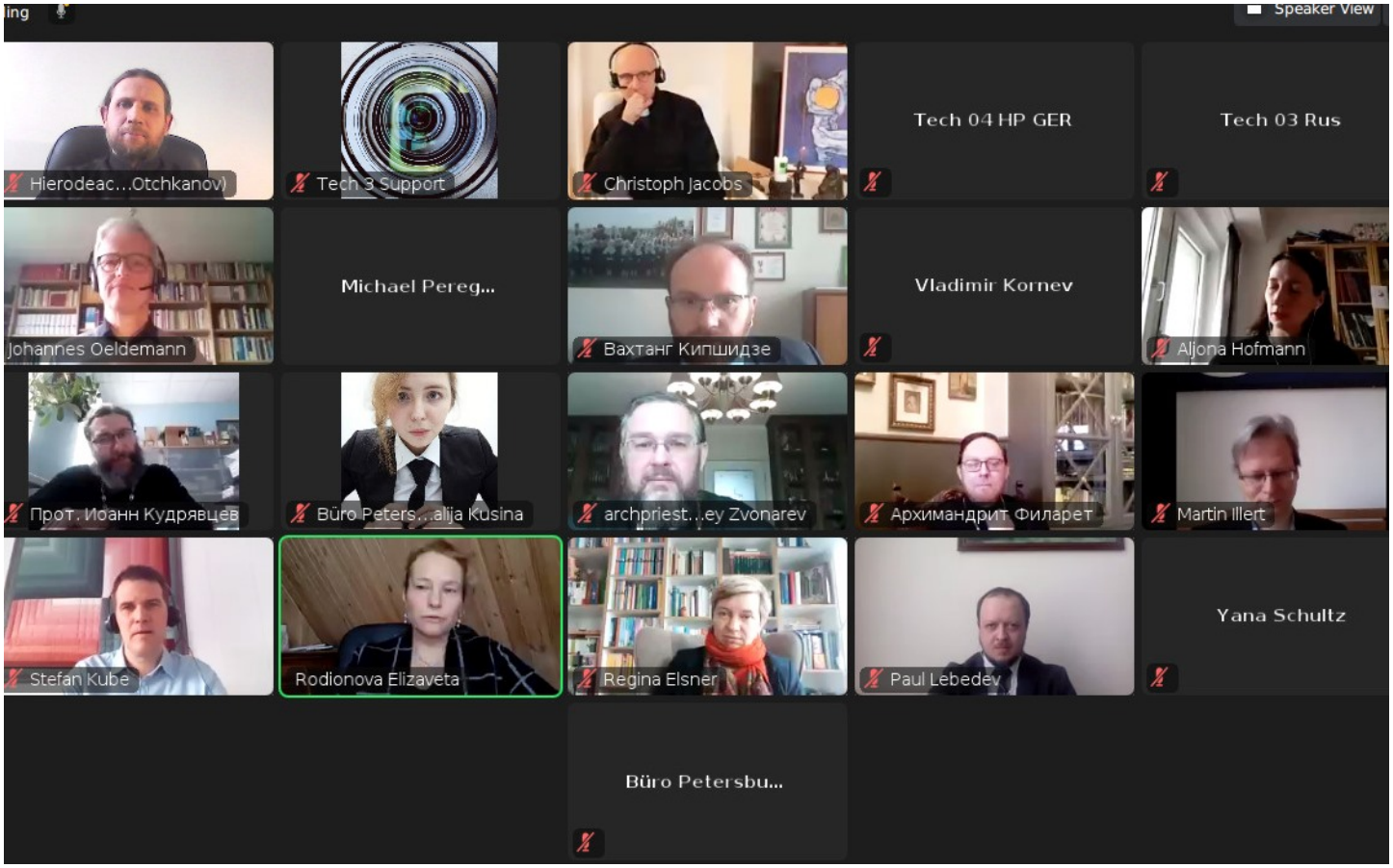
Influence of pandemic on service of Churches in Russia and Germany is subject of discussion at online conference



On February 24, 2021, the round table of the Churches in Europe working group of the Russia-Germany public forum ‘St. Petersburg Dialogue’ held a virtual meeting to discuss the theme ‘The Pandemic and Its Influence on Churches in Russia and Germany: Challenges and Consequences’.

The event was attended by representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church including Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov) co-chair of the Churches in Europe working group of the St. Petersburg Forum; Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the affairs of the far-abroad diaspora; Archpriest Ioann Kudryavtsev, member of the Moscow diocesan commission for hospital service, rector of the church of Our Lady the Joy and Consolation at the Botkin Hospital; V. Kipshidze, deputy head of the Synodal Department for the Church’s Relations with Society and Mass Media; P. Lebedev, head of the office for work with state structures of the Department for the Church’s Relations with Society and Mass Media; Hierodeacon Yaroslav (Ochkanov), DECR secretariat for the affairs of the far-abroad diaspora. Among the participants of the round-table conference was also Ms. E. Rodionova, assistant professor at the

chair of sociology, culture and communication, St. Petersburg State University.

From the German side there were Dr Johannes Eldemann, co-chair of the Churches in Europe working group, director of the Institute of ecumenics; Prof Martin Illert, head of the Central, Southeast and East Europe Consistories of the Evangelical Church in Germany; Prof Christoph Jacobs, the chair of pastoral psychology and pastoral sociology of the Department of Theology, Paderborn University; Mr. Stefan Kube, head of the C2W Institute - Inter-Christian forum on faith, religion and society in East and West; and Dr. Regina Elsner, a researcher at the Centre for East European and International Studies.

Papers were read by Prof. Christof Jacobs on 'The individual during a crisis - the care of God: the mission of the Church during the pandemic of coronavirus; Archpriest Ioann Kudryavtsev on 'The work of the Moscow diocesan commission in hospital service during the COVID-19 pandemic; Prof. Stefan Kube on 'The coronavirus - the need to define the role of the Church', and P. Lebedev on 'The interaction of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Russian Federation state bodies during the COVID-19 pandemic'.

Russian and German participants in the international meeting shared their experience of the service carried out by Churches in the two countries during the coronavirus infection pandemic. The discussion focused on the important topic of the pastoral work with the faithful in a situation of numerous restrictions imposed by the state authorities. It was agreed that the pandemic challenged Churches in Europe to search for new forms of pastoral work and diakonia and this search continues today.

They also discussed the need during the pandemic for active digitization and mediatization of all spheres of public life including church life. How far is this process positive or negative? Will digital means of communication occupy the niche of real communication among people, pastors and flocks even after the restrictions are lifted? These questions were believed to still need answers and more reflection.

The Russian and German church representatives pointed to a high extent of similarity of challenges and problems facing today religious organizations in the two countries

***

St. Petersburg Dialogue is a forum of civil societies in Russia and Germany. It was initiated in 2001 by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin and Chancellor of Germany Gerhard Schröder, It is called to help deepen mutual understanding between Germany and Russia and promote the

development of bilateral cooperation in all the spheres of society.

The Churches in Europe working group was set up in 2007 at the initiative of representatives of religious communities in the two countries. In the same year, it held its first meeting in Wiesbaden. The Working Group includes representatives of Christian confessions in Russia and Germany. They meet on a systematic basis alternately in Russia and Germany.

DECR Communication Service

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/61522/