

**THE PORVOO CHURCH LEADERS' CONSULTATION
SIGTUNA, SWEDEN
NOTES
Thursday 18th – Sunday 21st March 2010
Theme: Growing Together**

Summary

The Church of Sweden hosted the Porvoo Church Leaders Consultation (CLC) 2010 at Sigtuna, Sweden from March 18-21. The Consultation is held every four years and includes bishops, clergy and lay people, in accordance with the Porvoo Declaration and the Porvoo Common Statement. The signatory churches were invited to send a delegation of 3, which normally includes the Primate or Presiding Bishop; the General Secretary or equivalent; a woman who is engaged in the work of the church at national level and a lay person who is engaged in the work of the church at national level. If possible, one of the delegation members should be a young person (under 35). Delegations from the Diocese in Europe and churches who are observers are entitled to send 1 person in addition to their PCG representative. (Please see Appendix for List of Participants).

In his sermon at the beginning of the consultation, Martin Wharton, the Bishop of Newcastle and co-chair of the Porvoo Contact group reflected on the example of St Cyril a fourth century bishop of Jerusalem. St Cyril was faithful to the tradition he inherited yet responsive to new questions, new opportunities and open to new ways of learning and new insights. His contribution to making the gospel alive, understood and relevant to people around him still influence our liturgy and mission today.

Within the framework of regular worship and Bible study, the consultation reflected on its overarching theme of 'Growing Together', focusing on the following three areas of work within the communion:

- *Ministry*: lay ministry; the diaconate; women in the episcopate.
- *New Contextual Challenges and Realities within the Porvoo Communion*, such as:
The ecumenical challenge of migration and integration with a case study from Finland;
The rich/poor divide with a case study from Iceland;
Secularisation and its challenge to mission;
Responding to conflict.
- *Interfaith Engagement*: after an informative presentation on interfaith engagement from the Scottish Episcopal Church, CLC leaders met in groups to share their interfaith stories and challenges from around the communion.

In an independent session the General Secretaries of the member churches emphasised the importance of the Porvoo Communion. The communion had done enormous work during the last years and had responded creatively to the continuing challenges of growing together. Although the financial situation was difficult, the General Secretaries were clear that future commitments within the Porvoo Communion could not be neglected.

In the concluding plenary session the Church Leaders Consultation recognised the good work done by the PCG. A sense of trust was visible throughout the discussions. The Church leaders

unanimously reiterated their commitment to support the work of the Porvoo Communion in unity and mission and provided the Porvoo Contact Group with suggestions to keep up the momentum towards greater unity and closer fellowship.

Ministries in the Church

The General Secretary of the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, Ms Berit Hagen Agoy, presented a paper on lay ministry. She pointed out that the growing complexity of secular life has consequences for the life of the Church. Churches will need to come to terms with a laity that is highly educated and that offer skills which are not only of importance in the secular world but are also of enormous value within the life of Churches.

The priesthood of all believers will continue to remain a major challenge for all the Porvoo Churches. There is need to articulate afresh the role of ordained ministry, which takes into account and reflects shared responsibility between lay and ordained members. The Lay Leaders Consultation held in Edinburgh in 2007 had made some recommendations for the Porvoo Churches to consider. These recommendations need to be taken seriously.

Discussion on ministry continued in groups. The following reports were received:

1. Lay Ministry

The group summed up the meaning of 'ministry' as '*acts of service within the Body of Christ and beyond the Body of Christ by the Body of Christ*'. It was felt that baptism gives a sense of authorisation to a person's ministry. Authorisation of lay ministry by the local church is helpful for recognition and affirmation of the person's tasks. However, such authorisation needed to be seen in terms of a supporting and not a controlling role. One example mentioned was the authorised role of a lay leader within a home congregation as its worship co-ordinator. This role afforded a certain degree of responsibility and authority to make decisions and to relieve the clergy team from that particular task.

Ordained ministers need to not only be sensitive to the ministry of the laity but to also assess their own role in lay ministry. A priest, already at ordination, becomes not just a minister of a community but someone whose role included the creation of a community of ministers.

2. The Diaconate

There was recognition that the degree of convergence on the diaconate was perhaps closer than had previously been understood. In many situations something like a three-fold ministry was being practised and for many the diaconal vocation was something which is given to all Christians.

There was a desire to look beyond terminology such as 'permanent' and 'transitional' diaconate and to instead look at what the practice of churches in the Porvoo

Communion is. If a person's vocation is to be a Deacon it would be helpful if the term 'Deacon' is not be prefaced with 'permanent'. The term 'Deacon' needed to be honoured.

3. Women in the Episcopate

General comments were made that prejudice is sometimes masked by theological excuses. There was disappointment by some that within the Porvoo Communion the ministry of clergy ordained by woman bishops is not recognised by some of the churches in the Porvoo Communion and that women Bishops were unable to exercise Episcopal tasks during visits to some of their Porvoo Communion churches.

There was recognition that Anglicans could learn from Lutherans on ways to deal with differences. It was furthermore noted that conscience clauses did not always work, and if too expensive, would be risky. Nevertheless, there was also recognition that wherever possible within the Body of Christ, it would be useful to provide space for minorities.

On the issue of a conscience clause, clarification was needed. Did the measure apply to those in post when the measures were passed and/or to those who sought to enter the ministry after the measure was passed?

A person's conscience was a personal matter. It was, however, important that if a person wished to enter the priesthood within a church which had agreed that women could be Bishops, then that person had to comply with decision of the church.

New Contextual Challenges and Realities within the Porvoo Communion

A summary of the workshop discussions is given below:

Migration and Diaspora

Using Finland as a case study, the workshop took on board the importance for churches to take responsibility for the life of the diaspora churches. Currently this was not a top priority. The church in Denmark had offered a consultation on Migration in Denmark, which had to be cancelled due to lack of interest. This may also have been because of the timing.

The proposed Consultation on Diaspora and Migration in the Porvoo Communion in 2012 was supported.

The Churches' Response to Climate Change

Churches in the Porvoo Communion were presented with a rare opportunity to engage ecumenically and theologically on issues concerning climate change during the international conference on climate change held in Denmark in 2009. Churches actions need to be also articulated through prayer, worship, theological reflections and a language of faith, hope justice.

Religions have an enormous capacity to provide leadership and support for more progressive politics on environmental issues. Perhaps we are not used to encourage politicians, but we can say that politicians who work for change will have lasting support from people of faith.

As a first step the work of the Churches on climate change could be presented on the Porvoo web-site.

Rich/Poor Divide and Migration

The dynamics of globalisation along with the financial crisis has created huge unemployment. This has led to a diversity of social problems, such as, social exclusion, poverty and community instability. As churches we must strengthen the diaconal ministry giving it a lead role in responding to these problems.

Another important issue is the lack of quality instruments to take forward the integration of migrants. Churches need to show greater solidarity with the migrant population helping them to rediscover their own worth.

It was recommended that the Porvoo Contact Group reflect further on how diaconal ministry can play a lead role in this matter.

Secularisation as a Challenge to Mission

Some voices made the case that secularisation was gradually eroding the influence of churches from society. In the UK, for example, already 3 generations have had little or no contact with the churches.

The Porvoo Communion should continue to share experiences and resources for mutual learning on the issue.

Responding to Conflict

The issue here was not about solving conflicts but seeking appropriate responses to situations of conflict both within the Porvoo Communion and without. It was felt that the time has come to give this issue top priority.

Recommended that the Porvoo Contact Group work towards holding a 'Consultation on Responding to Conflict' in 2011.

Interfaith Engagement

The delegation from the Scottish Episcopal Church presented a case study of their interfaith engagement. The presentation included a report on the interfaith context and a DVD documenting the various activities. This was followed by group work, from which three points are highlighted below:

- National Churches need to be a visible presence in interfaith engagement and take a stand on the big issues (ex. Denmark Cartoon Crises).
- Extremists should not be allowed to set the agenda.
- More work needs to be done to root interfaith engagement within the Porvoo Communion as an essential ecumenical task.

Drawing things together

Challenges

- To develop better processes of consultation
- The Lutheran Church in Great Britain has requested for observer status in the Porvoo Communion. A delegate from the church will be invited to attend the next meeting of the PCG in Madrid. Other such requests to grow the Porvoo Communion could follow
- To develop a regular newsletter to improve communications

- To develop a youth network and strengthen youth exchange
- To explore the possibility of establishing a Porvoo Solidarity Fund in order to help churches without huge resources to participate
- To explore the possibility of an interchange programme for theological students
- To work towards a clear united perspective on lay ministry within the Porvoo Communion
- To take forward the recommendations from the Interfaith Consultation in Edinburgh working towards codes of good practice
- To keep in mind the needs of churches in their contextual struggle and show solidarity

Summary of Main Recommendations in the Final Session

- To hold a consultation on ***Responding to Conflict*** in 2011
- The theme for next Porvoo Theological Conference will be: ***Sacraments in the Mission of the Church***. The reason for this is to reflect on an enduring issue in the life of the church. Sacraments and mission can be linked in a good way, since they are the core element in the life of the church. For example, one can look at baptism and confirmation and what part they play in the evangelism of the church. Pastoral, liturgical and theological dimensions will form part of the discussions. There is furthermore a vital discussion in Sweden on whether the non-baptised can receive communion. The conference would also address this issue. The 'Porvoo Idea' is to be together in mission and ministry and this conference would give visibility to the idea.
- The PCG should work towards a further **Consultation on Diaconal Ministry** which addresses the question of how churches in the Porvoo Communion see the future of the diaconate in their own church. Furthermore the PCG should work on putting instruments in place for greater solidarity with the migrant population.
- To hold a Consultation on **Diaspora and Migration** in 2012.

Future programme of events

02.10.2010 - 03.10.2010: declaration to be signed in Copenhagen. The Lutheran Church of Greenland will remain a part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark.

03. 10.2010 (evening) – 7.10.2010: Porvoo Contact Group meeting in Madrid

20.02.2011 – 23.02.2011 Consultation on Responding to Conflict in Tallinn

28.03.11 – 31.03.2011: Interfaith Consultation in Gothenburg

03. 10.2011 – 07.10.2011: Primates meeting and Porvoo Contact Group meetings in Cardiff, Wales.

01.11.2011 – 04.11.2011: Consultation on Marriage in Finland (Venue suggestion: Turku)

2012: Conference on Diaspora and Migration, possibly in Denmark

2013: Consultation on Diaconal Ministry, possibly in Ireland

2013: Primates meeting with PCG

2014: Church Leaders Consultation