

Third Phase of Theological Conversations between the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Concludes Its Third Meeting

Warsaw, POLAND (12/14/2019) -- The third meeting of the third phase of international ecumenical conversations between the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity took place 9-13 December 2019 in Warsaw, Poland, hosted by the Baptist Union of Poland at the Warsaw Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Baptist delegation was led by co-chair Rev. Dr. Frank Rees, Associate Professor and Chair of the Academic Board at the University of Divinity in Australia, and the Catholic delegation was led by co-chair Bishop Arthur Serratelli, Bishop of Paterson, New Jersey, USA. The dialogue took up the theme of “Challenges to Common Witness,” giving attention to contemporary circumstances in church and society that represent not only challenges faced by Baptists and Catholics in fulfilling their summons to offer common witness to Christ, but also opportunities for bearing witness to the gospel together. This discussion built on the first meeting’s consideration of “Sources of Common Witness” and the second meeting’s focus on the “Contexts of Common Witness” in six continents of the world. These sub-themes are dimensions of the overall theme of the third phase of dialogue, “The Dynamic of the Gospel and the Witness of the Church.” The Baptist-Catholic joint commission will meet annually through 2021 for this third phase of conversations, which follows Phase II (2006-2010) and Phase I (1984-1988).

Included in the week of ecumenical conversations was an opening worship service featuring representatives from the Polish Ecumenical Council and the Polish Evangelical Alliance on Monday, 9 December, and a meeting with Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Warsaw, on Thursday, 12 December. The Baptist-Catholic joint commission will convene for its fourth meeting of the current phase of conversations 7-11 December 2020 in Rome, Italy, hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The theme of the fourth meeting will be “Forms of Common Witness.”

The Baptist delegation consisted of members and persons specially invited as observers. Members participating in this round of conversations include Rev. Dr. Paul S. Fiddes (UK), Dr. Derek Hatch (USA), Rev. Dr. Glenroy Lalor (Jamaica), Rev. Dr. Tomas Mackey (Argentina), Dr. Elizabeth Newman (USA), and Rev. Dr. Lina Toth (Lithuania/UK). Rev. Tony Peck (UK/General Secretary, European Baptist Federation) and Dr. Valerie Duval-Poujol (France) were observers for this round of conversations. Rev. Dr. Mateusz Wichary (Poland), President of the Polish Baptist Union and Vice President of the Warsaw Baptist Theological Seminary, served as local host and participated in sessions of the dialogue.

The Catholic delegation consisted of members Dr. Peter Casarella (USA), Rev. Dr. Stephen Fernandes (India), Rev. Dr. William Henn O.F.M. Cap. (Italy), Rev. Prof. Przemslaw Kantyka (Poland), Sr. Dr. Marie-Hélène Robert N.D.A. (France), Rev. Dr. Jorge A. Scampini O.P. (Argentina), and Sr. Dr. Susan Wood S.C.L. (USA).

The secretaries for the co-chairs are Rev. Dr. Steven R. Harmon, Associate Professor of Historical Theology at Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity, Boiling Springs, North Carolina, USA on behalf of the BWA and Rev. Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

[In attached photo, front row, L-R: Rev. Dr. William Henn O.F.M. Cap. (Italy), Sr. Dr. Susan Wood S.C.L. (USA), Sr. Dr. Marie-Hélène Robert N.D.A. (France), Rev. Dr. Frank Rees (Australia), Rev. Dr. Lina Toth (Lithuania/UK), Dr. Elizabeth Newman (USA), Rev. Dr. Stephen Fernandes (India); back row, L-R: Dr. Peter Casarella (USA), Dr. Derek Hatch (USA), Rev. Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer, Dr. Valerie Duval-Poujol (France), Rev. Dr. Paul S. Fiddes (UK), Bishop Arthur Serratelli (USA), Rev. Dr. Jorge A. Scampini O.P. (Argentina), Rev. Tony Peck (UK), Rev. Dr. Tomas Mackey (Argentina), Rev. Dr. Steven R. Harmon (USA), Rev. Prof. Przemslaw Kantyka (Poland), Rev. Dr. Glenroy Lalor (Jamaica), Rev. Dr. Mateusz Wichary (Poland).