

Internationale Altkatholische Bischofskonferenz der Utrechter Union
International Oldcatholic Bishops' Conference of the Union of Utrecht
Präsident: Der Erzbischof von Utrecht
President: The Archbishop of Utrecht

**Communiqué on the IBC meeting in Bendorf, Germany
from 23rd - 29th September 2001**

The bishops of the Union of Utrecht met in Bendorf am Rhein in Germany from 23rd - 29th September for their annual conference. Due to the attacks in the USA on 11th September, the bishops of the PNCC were unable to attend, which the European bishops regretted. The PNCC bishops had followed the advice of the American government, not to travel to Europe. Both the victims of the attacks and the PNCC in America were included in prayers at the conference.

The main point of the proceedings concerned contacts to the Anglican Church. For this reason, the ecumenical director of the Anglican Communion, the Revd Canon David Hamid, was present. The representative of the Anglican Communion responsible for contact to the Union of Utrecht, Rt Revd Jonathan Gledhill, was unable to participate.

The report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue commission, "The Gift of Authority", the Porvoo Agreement between the Anglican Churches of England and Ireland and the Scandinavian and Baltic Lutheran Churches, and the report on further dialogue between Anglican and Lutheran Churches were all discussed in detail. The IBC also decided to intensify its international dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church and to prepare a common list of topics together with the Secretariat for Unity in Rome as quickly as possible.

The reception of the Orthodox-Old Catholic dialogue should continue as in the past. Priority should be given to possibilities of putting the principles into the practice of church life.

In order to give ecumenical affairs a clearer profile, it was decided to prepare an ecumenical directive. The aim is to reconsider the reference points for ecumenical tasks undertaken by the Union of Utrecht.

In addition, guidelines were adopted which treat the recognition of churches as member churches of the Union of Utrecht, and task of the delegates of the IBC to support groups or congregations which are located outside one of the national churches of the Union of Utrecht.

A decision on the consecration of P. Augustin Bacinsky as Bishop of the Old Catholic Church in Slovakia was postponed. However, the IBC intends to provide intensive support for the church in its process of establishment. The IBC hopes that, with P. Bacinsky as its diocesan advisor, the Slovakian church can grow to become a strong branch on the tree of Old Catholic churches. It is planned to reassess the situation in 2004.

The Old Catholic Church in the Netherlands informed the IBC about the results obtained by the working group it had commissioned on the blessing of homosexual and lesbian partnerships. The bishops took note of the report and discussed this topic against the background of the very diverse social and ecclesiastical situations among the churches of the Union of Utrecht.

During this year's conference, the executive committee of the IBC had to be appointed anew. In view of the retirement of Bishop Hans Gerny, Switzerland, and the impending bishop's election in Switzerland, as well as the absence of the PNCC bishops, it was decided to leave the position of secretary vacant until the next conference. Bishop Wiktor Wysoczanski from Poland, previously treasurer, became a committee member. Bishop Joachim Vobbe from Germany was elected, as a new member of the executive committee, to the position of treasurer.

The next bishops' conference will take place in Austria at the end of June, 2002.

Bern and Utrecht, 2. October 2001

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