



Communiqué of the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference | Amersfoort, 2025

This year, the International Bishops' Conference (IBC) took place from June 16th to 20th in Amersfoort, the Netherlands. The bishops were guests at the Old-Catholic Conference Center Alticollense, which also houses the Episcopal Office of the Old-Catholic Church of the Netherlands.

Participants

Present were: Archbishop Bernd Wallet (President of the IBC, Utrecht, the Netherlands); Bishop Frank Bangerter (Secretary of the IBC, Switzerland); Bishop Andrzej Gontarek (Assessor of the IBC, Warsaw, Poland); Bishop Dirk Jan Schoon (Haarlem, the Netherlands); Bishop Maria Kubin (Austria); and Bishop Pavel Stránský (the Czech Republic). Bishop Matthias Ring from Germany, who was unable to attend due to a surgery, was represented by Vicar General Anja Goller. The bishops were supported by Rev. Ryan Birkman (translator) and Rev. Michael van den Bergh (IBC Secretariat).

Consultations with Anglican Bishops

The bishops met on Monday and Tuesday for their annual consultation with Anglican bishops from continental Europe. Representing the Anglicans were: The Rt. Rev. Andrew Norman (Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese in Europe of the Church of England), accompanied by Archdeacon Sam van Leer; The Rt. Rev. Carlos López Lozano (Spain); and The Rt. Rev. Jorge Pina Cabral (Portugal).

Topics of the consultation included, among other things, relations with churches in war zones. There was also time for updates on the topic of "Safe Church" as well as on the situation in the respective churches.

Session of the Old-Catholic Bishops' Conference

From Tuesday to Thursday, the Old-Catholic bishops gathered for the International Old-Catholic Bishops' Conference. Official representatives from sister churches were present: The Rt. Rev. Peter Eagles (on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Communion), The Rt. Rev. Mike Klusmeyer (on behalf of the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church), and The Rt. Rev. Dr. Erik Eckerdal (on behalf of the Archbishop of Uppsala). In an online conversation, The Rt. Rev. Dindo Ranojo reported on behalf of the Obispo Máximo about the situation in the Iglesia Filipina Independiente.

On Wednesday afternoon, the bishops visited Amsterdam, where Bishop Dr. Dirk Jan Schoon, in his role as a church historian, spoke about the history of the city's hidden Catholic churches. In the evening, they celebrated the Vigil of Corpus Christi with the Amsterdam congregation through a sung Eucharist and a shared meal.



Topics Discussed and Decisions Made

The bishops addressed a range of topics during their sessions:

- The International Old Catholic Congress, which will take place from September 24th to 27th, 2026, in Rheinfelden (Switzerland), was presented.
- The bishops emphasized the special importance of joint initiatives within the Union of Utrecht – particularly in youth ministry (among others the Youth Congress at the 2026 Old-Catholic Congress), diakonia, and liturgy. The IBC welcomes existing connections between national church organizations and encourages further cooperation.
- Dem Thema „Der ökumenische Auftrag der Utrechter Union“ widmeten die Bischöfe mehrere Sitzungen. Prof. Dr. Peter-Ben Smit und Dr. Mattijs Ploeger (Altkatholisches Seminar, Universität Utrecht) präsentierten Bausteine zur Überarbeitung des gleichnamigen IBK-Dokuments aus dem Jahr 2011.
- The bishops dedicated several sessions to the topic *“The Ecumenical Mission of the Union of Utrecht.”* Prof. Dr. Peter-Ben Smit and Dr. Mattijs Ploeger (Old-Catholic Seminary, University of Utrecht) presented building blocks for a revision of the IBC document of the same name from 2011.
- The bishops received the report *“Gewachsene Gemeinschaft”* (tr. *“Growing Communion”*), which documents the relationship between the Old-Catholic Church of Germany and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD). Prof. Dr. Andreas Krebs (Old-Catholic Seminary, University of Bonn) explained the local background. A deeper engagement with the report will be necessary in 2026 in order to consider possible implications for the member churches of the IBC and for ongoing ecumenical dialogues.
- The bishops took note of the final declaration of the International Conference on the Preservation of Armenian religious, cultural, and historical heritage in Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh. The Union of Utrecht was also represented at this conference.
- Together with a delegation from the Church of Sweden, the bishops are preparing to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their full church communion in 2026.

The next meeting will take place from June 15th to 19th, 2026, in Warsaw.

Amersfoort/Bern, June 20th, 2025