

**APPENDIX O**

**CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING WORLD**

**TALLINN, ESTONIA 7 – 12 MARCH 2002**

**INTRODUCTION**

The second Porvoo Church Leaders' Consultation which took place in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, between March 7th and 12th was attended by Bishop John Neill (Co-Chairman of the Porvoo Contact Group), Ms Valerie Beatty (contact person for the Church of Ireland) and Rev Canon Desmond Harman (delegate). The theme was 'Church Leadership in a Changing World'. The Churches of the Porvoo Communion were challenged to address the key issues facing the church in an increasingly secular society. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Estonia hosted the Consultation and the Sunday Eucharist in Tallinn Cathedral.

Worship, in the form of a Eucharist service each morning in Jaani Church according to different rites and an evening prayer celebration each evening also according to different church traditions, was a vital element in setting the mood for each day's discussion. Bishop Neill was the celebrant on the first day when the 2004 Church of Ireland rite was used and Canon Harman preached.

The sessions were held in the conference centre of the very impressive National Library in the centre of Tallinn. Apart from these sessions visits were arranged to a variety of different Church projects. Evening sessions included a presentation on the history of Estonia, a concert in the local Swedish Lutheran church (which in the Soviet period had been used as a military gymnasium), a cultural evening and a reception in the Town Hall hosted by the Archbishop of Estonia and attended by the President of Estonia, Mr Arnold Ruutel.

A small group, which included Bishop Neil, met with Mr Ruutel to brief him on the work of the Porvoo Communion and discuss issues of mutual interest. The President spoke of high hopes that Estonia has of joining the European Union and asked the Churches to help in this endeavour. He also expressed appreciation for the important role that the Churches have to play in the emerging states of the Baltic.

**STRUCTURE OF THE CONSULTATION**

The sessions in the conference centre consisted of a number of papers delivered on a number of topics followed by workshops and plenary discussion. The papers considered internal leadership issues (the diaconate and the allocations of resources within the churches), external leadership issues (the churches' role in society) and the challenges in transmitting the faith to the new generation. The final session of the Consultation agreed a press release and recommendations which would form the agenda for the work of the Contact Group over the next few years.

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A statement of support for the church in the Middle East was sent to Bishop Riah in Jerusalem.

### **LEADERSHIP - INTRODUCTORY PAPER**

The conference opened with a very thought provoking paper on the subject of leadership by a leading management consultant, Hugh Burgess, who is a lay reader and involved at diocesan and national level in the Church in Wales. He challenged us to accept that as a Church we tend to appoint managers rather than leaders to senior positions. He used the analogy of business appointing accountants to leadership positions, accountants are trained to be risk averse and this training doesn't make them the best of leaders.

"The strength in a business comes with the tension between the risk-averse accountant and the risk aware leader, the one pulling hard to drive the coach forward and the other pulling on the reins to ensure it doesn't run away. I feel that what we have in the Church is a situation where we train our people and our clergy to protect doctrine and tradition, to be accountants if you like, what we lack is the other half of the creative tension that seeks constantly to pull us over the edge into something new".

It has almost become a cliché now to say that we live in an increasingly changing world - but it is true and one of the dilemmas for the church is that older members want the Church to remain a constant in this changing world while young people will only remain members if the Church is seen as relevant to their world. If the Church continues to appoint managers to the important leadership roles it will struggle to maintain its relevance in modern society.

There are three big changes occurring in the style of leadership in the world's most effective organisations: -

1. Leaders are moving away from being strategists to be visionaries. People want to understand why they should do something rather than simply what they should do. Visions are bold, emotional, engaging statements - in the Church we need visionaries who can paint the picture that will fire up the followers;
2. Leaders are moving away from being commanders to being storytellers. People do not respond to being told what to do, they are looking for meaning and respond to encouragement and example. Leaders show one group of people how another group of people have tackled and overcome particular difficulties concerning a problem. This 'story' demonstrates by example;
3. Leaders are changing from engineers to servants. Traditionally leaders constructed the organisation required to reach the goal. In a changing environment however the more effective approach is to allow people to make decisions for themselves. Rather than saying "I want you to do this..." modern leaders are more likely to ask two questions:-

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“What do you want to do to help achieve the vision?” and “What do you need me to do to help you?”

What is exciting is that modern leaders are discovering that the most effective way to lead is exactly the same way as Christ used 2000 years ago: vision, story-telling and service.

#### **PROJECT VISITS**

Groups from the conference visited different Church projects in the Tallinn area. These visits included a former Russian army base, a hospital, a street children's home, the theological institute and Church House. The groups were asked to focus on identifying the leadership challenges which these projects highlight. (A guided walking tour of the old area of Tallinn took place on Sunday afternoon and ended with a cup of tea in Church House for everyone).

Bishop Neill was part of the group who went to a church run hospital where he was impressed by the dedication of the staff to their task who did their work against a background of very limited resources.

Canon Harman and Ms Valerie Beatty were in the group who visited the street children's home and were particularly moved by what they found there. Peeteli Church building where the home is situated had been seized and closed by the Soviet Government in 1962. The interior had been converted to accommodate a television studio. This remodelling included blocking up the stained glass windows.

The building was returned to the Church in 1993 and in 1997 an ambitious project was undertaken to restore the Church and convert the basement and other rooms in the Church to a centre for street children.

In 2001 a day centre was opened which caters everyday for 20 children where they get a cooked meal, wash themselves and their clothes, play and take responsibility for certain tasks. There is also a short stay facility for children in danger where they can stay for a few weeks and a permanent home for about 12 children where they can live up to the age of 17. This facility is part funded by the Government of Estonia but this funding is under threat because of the small number of children that can be accommodated. The atmosphere of cheeriness, warmth, support and love for these deeply scared children is palpable. There is a huge respect for human dignity.

Street children in Tallinn tend to be of Russian descent, they and their families are treated as outcasts in society because they are associated with the oppressive regime of the Soviets. These children's parents are either dead or due to excesses of drugs and alcohol are unable to care for them. The hard work and sacrifices which the pastor of the Church and his staff and congregation have made is a living proof of Christian charity and love.

The Church's pastor, Avo Uprus, is also concerned about the treatment of prisoners in Estonia and a prison Chaplaincy service has been set up. This service has focussed not

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only on providing care in the prisons but has also sought to change the attitude of the Government to prisoners e.g. the concept of probation was only recently introduced into the Estonian justice system. There is also concern for the victims of crime and a victim services programme was started in 1995. Another prong of the prisoner rehabilitation programme is to involve the community in accepting offenders back into society and offering training and employment opportunities in the community.

The activities at this Church required a very charismatic type of leader, someone driven by the need to right the wrongs that society was inflicting on these marginalised groups of people and all in the context of the Christian message of salvation and redemption.

All the groups returned from their visits more enlightened and more focussed on the challenges of leadership.

### **THE DIACONATE**

The delegates had been provided with briefing papers on the position of the diaconate in each of the churches prior to the consultation. It is evident that diaconal ministry differs substantially from church to church both in its focus and importance. In some Lutheran Churches Diakonia is very much the social work of the Church. The various models were discussed and there was an interesting exchange of views between the churches but no movement towards a common definition and understanding of this type of ministry.

### **ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES**

The challenges in this area are similar for each of the Churches. Money resources are limited and have to be allocated according to perceived and actual priorities. All Churches acknowledged that resources for ecumenical and other overseas activities tend to be down the priorities list. Human resources are more available in most Churches so there is an opportunity to make better use of these resources, especially in examining different patterns and forms of ministry.

### **THE CHURCH AND GOVERNMENT/SOCIETY**

Delegates were conscious of the very different tasks that face each of the Churches. Some have close historic links with the state. Others such as the Baltic Churches are finding a new role and new challenges in the reconstruction of civil society after the Soviet period. It was apparent however that in broad terms the Churches face the same issues which challenge all citizens of a modern, largely secular, society. This series of sessions covered a wide variety of topics including bioethics, the environment (particularly the threat of Sellafield to the Irish and North Seas) and the challenges of a multi-cultural society e.g. forced marriages. Membership of the European Union by the Baltic States was seen as vital to progress and much of the discussion revolved around how the Churches of the Porvoo Communion could individually and collectively make an impact in the European Parliament particularly in the areas mentioned under this heading.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Consultation recommendations were wide-ranging but particularly focussed on actions which could be taken: -

- Within the member Churches - the diaconate, translation & reception of reports and research, exchanging experiences, integrating diaspora congregations;
- By the Contact Group - children and youth ministry, resourcing Porvoo research, links with other ecumenical agreements, promote retreats and pilgrimages, possible sharing of resources;
- Organising conferences - the Gospel and mission in a secular & multi-cultural society, lay and ordained ministry, nurturing Christian witness;
- Arranging specialist consultations and contact - on ethical issues, leaders in society, EU wide consultation and lobbying.

The Consultation was a most successful forum for discussing the key issues which challenge the leaders of the Churches in the Porvoo Communion. More importantly its conclusions outline what the churches need to do to rise to these challenges.

Because of the length of the Consultation and the range of topics discussed this report is an inadequate summary but is offered as a reflection on some extremely interesting days. The conversations outside the formal business were also of great value.

Desmond Harman  
March 2002