

Bishop Attends Synod of German Partners

Bishop Nils Rohwer again attended meetings of the synods of our main partner churches in Germany recently, at their invitation, including the important General Synod of the **United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD)** held from 19-23 October in Bamberg, Bavaria.

The VELKD is a union of eight German regional Lutheran churches (Landeskirchen), including our “mother church” of Hanover and those in Bavaria, Brunswick, Mecklenburg, North Elbia, Saxony, Schaumburg-Lippe and Thuringia. Rev. Dr. Hans Christian Knuth of the Schleswig diocese of North Elbia was re-elected Presiding Bishop. The VELKD represents about eleven million members.

The VELKD officer responsible for relations with the Roman Catholic Church, Bishop Johannes Friedrich of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, reported some “successful cooperation” and “definite progress” in jointly “facing challenges in society”, at the same time calling for the “promotion of confidence” in their ecumenical community. The next focus is the joint Ecumenical *Kirchentag* planned for 2003 in Berlin. – On the Iraqi crisis the synod expressed “great concern for world peace” and encouraged its member churches to support measures towards a non-violent solution.

Regarding its relations within the EKD, the synod spoke in favour of strengthening German Protestantism “also through giving a clearer image to Lutheran identity based on the Augsburg Confession.”

The General Synod also adopted new “Guidelines for Church Life”, replacing the previous “Order for Church Life” (1955). The 130-page document describes a basic consensus of what is considered standard practice for each area of activity in a Lutheran church (e.g. divine service, baptism, holy communion; confirmation; matrimony, family life, partnership; membership, service & leadership, financial management; community, pastoral care, diaconic work, church in public domain, social responsibility). Within the agreed framework member churches make their own rulings. An important feature of the document is that the guidelines are placed in an “overall context” which seeks to communicate the theological and legal aspects of church life. The revision was deemed necessary because “so much has fundamentally changed in the church and in society”.

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Source: Lutheran World Information (LWI), Geneva