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COMMUNIQUÉ

Third Phase of Theological Conversations between the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Resumes Work Virtually Boiling Springs, North Carolina, USA

Phase III of international ecumenical conversations between the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, which experienced a hiatus in 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic, resumed its work virtually via Zoom in two working sessions held on 16 and 18 June 2021.

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 emeritus of Paterson, New Jersey, USA. The purpose of these meetings was to review the work of the first three annual meetings of Phase III in the form of a cumulative memorandum, and to envision how the Joint Commission will continue its work after the pandemic-induced hiatus, as well as to renew the relationships between the members and to engage in common prayer.

The Joint Commission will hold its next meeting 6-10 December 2021 in a hybrid format combining both regional in-person meetings and virtual meetings. A virtual plenary meeting will be held at the beginning and end of the week while during the week members will gather in two regional working groups in Durham, North Carolina, USA, hosted by Duke Divinity School and its House of Baptist Studies, and in Rome, hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Commission members who are unable to travel to the two regional locations will participate virtually.

The overall theme of the current phase of Baptist-Catholic dialogues "The Dynamic of the Gospel and the Witness of the Church." The annual meetings will continue through 2022 for this Phase. Previous Phase III annual meetings and themes were: December 2017 (Waco, Texas, USA), "Sources of Common Witness"; December 2018 (Rome, Italy), "Contexts of Common Witness"; and December 2019 (Warsaw, Poland), "Challenges to Common Witness." The scheduled December 2021 meeting will address "Forms of Common Witness," and in 2022 the Joint Commission will finalize its work by publishing a report summarizing the conversations of Phase III. Previous Baptist-Catholic international conversations were Phase II (2006-2010) and Phase I (1984-1988).

The Baptist delegation for this month's virtual meetings consisted of members and persons specially invited as observers. Members participating in these virtual meetings included Rev Dr Paul S. Fiddes (UK), Dr Derek Hatch (USA), Rev Dr Glenroy Lalor (Jamaica), Rev Dr Tomas Mackey (Argentina), Dr Elizabeth Newman (USA), Rev Dr Lina Toth (Lithuania/UK), observer Dr Valerie Duval-Poujol (France), and BWA Director of Integral Mission Rev Everton Jackson (Jamaica/USA).

The Catholic delegation consisted of members Dr Peter Casarella (USA), Rev Dr Stephen Fernandes (India), Rev Dr William Henn OFM Cap. (Italy), Rev Prof Przemslaw Kantyka (Poland), Sr Dr Marie-Hélène Robert NDA (France), Rev Dr Jorge A. Scampini OP (Argentina), and Sr Dr Susan Wood SCL(USA).

The secretaries for the co-chairs are Rev. Dr. Steven R. Harmon, 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.

(Communiqué prepared by Rev Dr Steven R. Harmon and Rev Avelino Gonzalez-Ferrer)

[<http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/alleanza-battista-mondiale/dialogo-internazionale-tra-la-chiesa-cattolica-e-l-alleanza-batt/communiques/online-meeting.html>]