

Communiqué

Notre Dame Consultation

From 26 to 28 March 2019, the University of Notre Dame (Indiana, USA) hosted representatives of the five Christian world communions formally associated with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) to discuss implications of that landmark agreement in the context of growing closeness and collaboration between them. Church leaders came from the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the Anglican Communion.

The meeting opened with an ecumenical evening prayer service led by local clergy and members of the Notre Dame community. The event concluded with a public panel entitled “From Conflict to Communion: The Future of Christians Together in the World.”

Participants at the consultation recognized the urgency of presenting afresh the core message of the JDDJ that “by grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.” They stressed the relevance of this gospel message for our conflicted and wounded world.

The representatives discerned further steps on the journey toward deeper ecclesial communion and a more visible common witness. Challenged with showing the deeper bonds that have been developing over the past two decades, the group welcomed the 2016 “Lund Imperative” to act always from the perspective of unity rather than from the point of view of division. The participants also affirmed the method of differentiating consensus that allows for agreement on common convictions while maintaining different confessional expressions.

The purpose of the meeting was not to achieve theological breakthroughs, yet participants were able to discuss key issues of mutual recognition of ministry, highlighting ways of strengthening cooperation in pastoral ministry and social outreach. The group discussed the need for strategies to address the connection between justification and justice, and proposed the production of a range of common resources such as catechetical tools. Together participants encouraged the strengthening of the common bond of baptism in ways appropriate to local contexts.

The participants recognized the need to apply the 1952 Lund Principle, which calls them to act together in all things except when significant differences of conviction compel them to act separately. To continue the conversation, the participants decided to set up a steering committee to carry forward their ongoing work.

The members of the Consultation expressed gratitude for the generous hospitality shown by the University of Notre Dame which enabled them to move forward together on their journey. It was their prayer that the Holy Spirit bring to completion what God has begun.