

# French Archdeaconry Synod

## Report on Reuilly Group

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Dear Archdeacon,

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ

It's a great pleasure to be with you for this French Archdeaconry Synod. It's the first time I have the opportunity to participate to your work.

I bring you the greetings from the CPLR (Communion Protestante Luthéro Réformée), the Communion of the French Protestant Lutheran and Reformed churches. In the name of the CPLR I wish you a good Synod and blessed days here in this nice Abbaye based in Saint Jacut de la Mer.

I will try to speak in English and will present three points: Firstly, a short presentation of CPLR, common organisation of the Reuilly signing churches, secondly a presentation of Reuilly and his wider context, than thirdly a brief report of the meeting of the Reuilly common statement following group.

### **I. Presentation of CPLR**

The Reuilly statement signing churches on protestant side were all member of the CPLR.

The CPLR was created 1972 as a council of 4 churches in France, 2 Lutherans and 2 Reformed. Since 2013 CPLR is a communion composed of two components: 1) a United Church, the Eglise Protestante Unie de France and 2) a Church Union, the Union des Eglises protestantes d'Alsace et de Lorraine. The creation of CPLR precedes the signature of the "Concorde de Leuenberg", which is the mutual recognition between Lutheran and Reformed churches in Europe. Based on a recognized common understanding of the Gospel, this agreement established a preaching and sacramental communion. Therefor, ministries of both churches can serve either in one or the other confession, without any restriction.

Nowadays, CPLR is working on 5 projects:

- The main one: Training for minister (Formation permanente) of EPUdF and UEPAL. CPLR organize yearly about 9 training sessions. This year one of them is organized in Leicester in order to strengthen the mutual knowledge and understanding between Lutheran, Reformed and Anglican ministries.
- A "Plateforme catéchétique", a "catechesis platform" organized to share on internet catechetical material, ideas, resources (it is called "Point KT", and has more than 200 000 connexions a year)  
Swiss French speaking churches and the Eglise Protestante Unie de Belgique are associated to this project.

- A platform organized to coordinate the common international relationship of EPUdF and UEPAL, especially for the delegation to the assemblies, working groups etc. of CEC, WCC. (except for the Communion Protestant Churches in European the Lutheran World Federation, and the World Communion of Reformed Churches)
- CPLR is committed in Ecumenical work through
  - the “comité mixte catholique-protestant”,
  - dialogue with de CNEF (Evangelical churches in France)
  - Working group of Reuilly common statement
- CPLR has a theological working program, especially by organizing conferences (“Proestantisme et vie monastique” the 4 July 2015).

## II. Reuilly common statement and its context

### A. REUILLY COMMON STATEMENT

The english version of the “Reuilly common statement” was signed on the 16<sup>th</sup> june 2001 in Canterbury . the French version, called “les accords de Reuilly“, was signed on the 1st july 2001 in Paris.

The Reuilly common statement is an agreement to strengthen the common and respective witness and service of the Protestant and Anglican churches. The agreement stipulates:

- that “each of our churches belong to the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ” (i), which occurs a communion in word, sacrament (ii), and confession (iii).
- that “each other’s ordained ministries are given by God as instruments of grace for the mission and unity of the Church and for the proclamation of the word and the celebration of the sacraments” (iv).
- that “personal, collegial and communal oversight (episcopate) is embodied and exercised in all our churches in variety of forms” (vi).

On this base, the signing churches commit

- “to welcome each other to his worship and to share pastoral ministrations” (ii),
- “to encourage shared worship” (iv),
- “to welcome ordained ministers of our churches to serve in each other’s church” (v),
- “to continue theological discussions between our churches and work on the outstanding issues hindering fuller communion” (vi),
- “to work towards closer relations between ourselves in diaspora situations” (vii),
- “to encourage twinning sans exchanges” (viii).

As you see, possibilities for common worship, witness and service are widely given. There is only one restriction, based on a theological different understanding of the

ministry. This difference occurs a constraint in case of the celebration of common Eucharist, which is possible but must be celebrated with the liturgy of the celebrants church.

The signature of the Reuilly common Statement was understood, as said Bishop Christopher Hill and Reverend Werner Jurgensen, as “a decisive step forward in the direction of a visible unity” and “a closer sharing of word and sacrament allowing for mutual hospitality in worship and witness”.

## B. WIDER CONTEXT

This common statement is embedded in a wider European and ecumenical context. You get a good presentation made by Diana Murray of the closer context. So I take the opportunity to present the wider one.

As all of you know, the fundament of our unity is not an agreement between churches. It is the common salvation given in Christ. Our reference to the one Gospel, telling God reconciliation to all human and making us sisters and brothers in Christ, is the basis of our unity. A unity that precedes everything we can do for or against it.

It was the twentieth century, especially “*la barbarie*” (barbarity) of the first world war done one to another by so called Christian states, and the drama of the holocaust which pushes forward Christian leaders to strengthen their relationship, going beyond confessionals and states borders, in order to prevent further exaction and violation of human kind, by building a stronger visible unity.

Important steps were made since the second council Vatican II. One of the first of them was to recognize the other church as a real expression of the true church of Jesus-Christ (see point (i) of the statement). But don't think that ecumenism is a low culture of relativism. It is a demanding theological work to get a consensus in the understanding of the Gospel, even if it's a “consensus différencié”, (differentiated consensus), as it is the case in 1999 for the joint declaration of the justification by faith signed by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church. As far as I know, the Anglican Church and the World Communion of Reformed Churches work to sign this declaration in 2017. Nevertheless, in recent years, the ecumenical movement reached the stage that churches get convinced they can learn one from each other. This is for instance the case in the EPUdF with the ministry of Andy Buckler, Mister “Fresh expressions” in France.

As you see « The Reuilly common statement cannot be seen in isolation form, but is rather embedded in, a wider narrative of ecumenical and theological dialogue. »<sup>1</sup> Nowadays we stand in an other ecclesial, societal and European context, but facing new challenges, like the more European than refugee's crises, with the same call to witness and to serve. Our time, even more than in the second half of twenty century, needs links between churches, bridges, and working together for those who need our human solidarity and compassion.

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1 Steven Brown : « The Reuilly Agreement cannot be seen in isolation form, but is rather embedded in, a wider narrative of ecumenical and theological dialogue. History directly links Meissen and Reuilly, but there are other important ecumenical advances, particularly in Europe (Leuenberg Agreement, Porvoo Agreement, also national dialogues, between Methodists and Anglicans in England and Ireland). »

### III. Reuilly common statement working group - December 2015 meeting

Last December, the group created to follow the agreement and strengthen the communion by theological work, stimulating common pastoral training, exchanges, twinning's, met in Paris. Led for the first time by Bishop John Stroyan and myself, we made an evaluation of the collaboration happening in the frame of the Reuilly common statement.

Archdeacon Ian Naylor gave us a short overview of the Anglican presence in France. He presents the situation of the 35 established churches and the 80 congregations. Most congregation members are not necessarily Anglicans but English is their spoken language. He explains that because of having only 11 Anglican church buildings, the Diocese in Europe is grateful to the Protestant and the Roman Catholic churches for enabling the use of their buildings for worship. This was a significant contribution from the churches in France. He also underlined that each community has its own definition of hospitality and worship and there is huge collaboration at the local level (morning prayers, and bible study, events), giving visibility to the Reuilly statement.

Reverend Claire Sixt-Gateuille did the same work on the protestant side. She identified about 24 Reformed or Lutheran pastors of EPUDF, whose parishes are located next to Anglican congregations. The relationships are good and friendly almost everywhere. There is ecumenical collaboration. Where specific common activities happen, they mostly consist of evening prayers (Easter week), or pulpit exchange. Then she spoke about reasons for specific sharing and relationship and mentioned:

- People either attend or serve both congregations (organists, lay preachers, etc.).
- The congregations share a common place of worship.
- There is a shared choir (Christmas Carols is an important shared activity).

On the other hand, she mentioned reasons for less relationships:

- During ministry vacancies (relationships loosen, misunderstanding may arise between congregations. However, it can also be an occasion for solidarity (support at funerals etc.).
- Protestants may wish to be together as Protestants.
- Language difficulties (low level of French spoken by an Anglican priest; there are translators in a number of cases).
- Small size of the congregations (on either one or both sides).

The group analysed the experience in Lille, presented by Debbie Flach and Jan Albert Roetmann. The group worked on an Ecumenical Overview of the Reuilly Agreement with Stephen Brown. And thereby we get the feeling that there is a kind of "kairos" (an opportunity to take) for further steps.

- In the group, the personal encounters which takes an important role in theological advance is given.

- The willingness of the church leaders is there, as mentioned by Diana Murray "Archbishop Justin Welby asked Bishop Stroyan to lead efforts to revitalise the Reuilly relationship.

- And locally, most chaplaincy and protestant churches seems to be willing to strengthen their collaboration.

We agreed on short and Longer Term Priorities

### C. SHORT TERM

- We decide to work towards identifying about 5 places as hubs to experiment and strengthen collaboration in France, experiencing new ways of collaboration. The experience in Lille is good and the group suggests a focus on other possible places in France, where Anglican chaplaincies are adjacent to Protestant congregations. Ian Naylor and Claire Sixt-Gateuille are to lead in the selection of the places. But you can also apply to your Archdeacon to take part in this project.
- We decide to organize a 24 hours residential meeting the next spring in Lille (Friday 12:00 –Saturday 14:00). Guests (pastors/priests and lay people) will be staying overnight. This event should be the occasion to
  - commemorate and celebrate 15 years of Reuilly agreement with worship, and by this opportunity explain the Reuilly Declaration more widely
  - introduce the experiment of 5 hubs of specific Reuilly engagement. It would be good to have representatives from the 5 hubs of specific Reuilly engagement, but also others from chaplaincies and churches interested in Reuilly.
  - For the celebration, an appropriate liturgical material may be prepared by Jan Albert Roetman and Debbie Flach. It can also serve as material for the other parishes/chaplaincies.
  - An appropriate communication in France will be organized to support this project.

### D. LONGER TERM, IDEAS, WE HAVE TO WORK AGAIN ON:

- Training of lay people is a matter of priority for each church. Claire Sixt Gateuille will examine the interest in EPUDF parishes. CPLR organizes one conference every two years (open to lay people as well).
- Promoting encounter, exchange and twinning.
- Improving the exchange of information.
- Exploring ways to better profile Reuilly common statement.
- Developing sustainable possibilities for furthering pastoral relationship locally.
- Exploring the possibility of a holding a conference with the Reuilly Agreement as the theme.
- Having an Anglican presence at the Synod of the French Lutheran and Reformed churches. On the other hand, Christian Krieger will participate on the French archdeaconry Synod.

#### E. THEOLOGICAL WORK

- Further reflection on ministry and episcopate (Leslie Nathaniel and Claire Sixt-Gateuille will work on appropriate papers for discussion).
- Christian Krieger and John Stroyan will get through previous minutes and collate any appropriate insight for greater unity and closer fellowship.

On this base, we will agree on an agenda theological discussion to focus on a fuller communion.

So far the report and my presentation.

Thank you for your patience and kind attention

Christian Krieger, may 2016