

STATEMENT OF INTENT
OF
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER
AND THE ESTONIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Church of England and the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church are churches that have emerged from within the Christian Reformation in Europe, and are the established or national Churches.

The Diocese of Rochester maintains the partnership relationship with the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church on behalf of the Church of England. The Diocese of Rochester was founded in 604 as part of the missionary activity at that time. Justus, the first Bishop, was consecrated by Augustine, the first Archbishop of Canterbury. As such the Diocese has a long tradition of being part of the English, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Cathedral was originally a Benedictine foundation, and that tradition is still valued. Much of the present building dates from the 11th Century.

The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church has its roots in the Western Catholic as well as in the German and Nordic Lutheran traditions. It is understood that in 1165 the consecration of Fulco as the first Estonian bishop took place. During the Christianization of Estonia in the 13th Century missionary activity was carried out by the Brethren of the Sword and thereafter a German order with its local branch, the Livonian order. Under Danish rule, during the 13th and 14th Centuries, the Bishopric of Tallinn was within the Archbishopric of Lund, which though in Sweden, was part of the Danish Kingdom. During the 1520's the Lutheran reformation from Germany reached Livonia and Estonia. During the 16th and 17th Centuries Estonian lands were under Swedish rule and after that, part of the Russian Empire. In 1917, the year when the empire broke apart, the local church here became the independent Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church. Its structure was reorganized as a Free Folk Church with an episcopal-synodical structure. The first bishop, Jakob Kukk, was consecrated in 1921 by the Primate of the Church of Sweden, Archbishop Nathan Söderblom.

At the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang, ecumenical dialogue between the Church of England and the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church together with the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church took place between 1936 and 1938. In 1938 the three parties involved reached an agreement on altar- and pulpit fellowship, which they initialed in Tallinn. The agreement was ratified by all three churches, but due to the outbreak of World War II the receiving of the report by the Lambeth Conference was delayed until 1948. By that time, active and full fellowship was no longer possible since the Soviet Union in 1940 had occupied the independent Republic of Estonia. However, the Church of England welcomed displaced persons who fled Estonia during the war. Estonia affirmed its independence during the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

With the ratification of the Porvoo Common Statement and the signing of the Porvoo Declaration in the mid 1990's the four Anglican Churches of the United Kingdom and Ireland (the Church of England, the Church of Ireland, the Church in Wales and the Episcopal Church of Scotland) entered into full communion with the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches (the Church of Norway, the Church of Sweden, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania).

After the formation of the Porvoo Communion, the Diocese of Rochester and the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church established a link with the prime purpose of sharing common discipleship in Christ and deepening their friendship.

We believe God has brought about this communion and calls us to manifest this through a covenant in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. We therefore:

- Seek to support and encourage each other in God's mission;

- Commit ourselves to learning about each other's history, tradition and our partnership;
- Seek to share our spiritual and material resources; and
- Build strong and lasting friendships.

Ways in which we might achieve these aims could include:

- Holding in the Diocese of Rochester and the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church a high profile service that celebrates the Porvoo Common Statement and Declaration with a formal signing of an appropriate document;
- Making at least one exchange visit each year between the Diocese of Rochester and the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church; arranged through mutual consultation;
- Encouraging and endeavoring to hold an annual celebration that would include liturgical resources from each other's traditions; for example, in Rochester at its Annual Diocesan Partnership Service;
- Marking our covenant, unity and communion at each other's ordinations. For example, by inviting Episcopal participation, either by attendance or by sending a greeting to be read out at an appropriate point in the service. Liturgical elements could also be shared;
- Representing each other at conferences of clergy and laity where appropriate;
- Being open to the possibility of encouraging and resourcing the sharing of theological study, pastoral formation, practice and experience of parish ministry;
- Sharing experience of being national churches, bearing witness within settings of public and civic life and culture;
- Encouraging and resourcing the parish links and exchanges between interest groups at Diocesan and Community level; and
- Promoting partnership relationships through visible, active links such as on church, diocesan and parish websites.

Nelijärve, January 19th, 2016

James Langstaff
Bishop
of the Diocese of Rochester,
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Urmas Viilma
Archbishop
of the
Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church