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Editorial

Anglican–Old Catholic Theological Conferences address issues which are important to both church communions. Between 1957 and 1993, theologians who had been delegated by their respective churches met for regular consultations; since 2005, such conferences have been held in an open format at approximately five-year intervals. The 2023 conference took as its core theme for discussion “sacramental theology and the Church’s mission in contemporary culture”. The communiqué states that “the purpose of the conference was first the ecclesiological basis of the sacramental communion between the two families of churches, and then to explore how the theology of the church as communion could energize the witness and mission of both our communions in our time”. Voices from other churches in communion were involved in the theological exchange, including the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the Church of Sweden. The proceedings appear in both the IKZ and the journal *Ecclesiology* (2024, ed. Paul Avis).

Representatives from our fellow churches have also been invited to the Old Catholic Congresses since their beginnings in the 19th century. This includes most recently the 33rd International Old Catholic Congress, which took place in early September 2022 in Bonn, on the topic “For Life: for Creation and the Church”. I extend my thanks to Vicar General Anja Goller (Bonn) for her assistance in compiling the documentation.

In 2023, changes in the episcopate were implemented in several of the Union of Utrecht’s member churches: in Austria, a female bishop was elected for the first time; in Poland, four new bishops were elected and consecrated at the same time; in Switzerland, the change was initiated by the incumbent bishop’s resignation. Many Old Catholic Churches have commemorated the beginning of their “independent ecclesiastical existence” (Urs Küry) over the last few years, whether that be 150 years ago (as a result of the disputes surrounding the First Vatican Council of 1869–1870) or 100 years ago (such as the Church in Croatia). The Old Catholic Church in the Netherlands looks back even further: in 1723, the Metropolitan Chapter claimed its traditional right to elect an Archbishop of Utrecht. Then as now, at heart the mission is about enabling Christians of an Old Catholic persuasion to access the sources of Christian faith (the Holy Scriptures and the sacraments), while shaping ecclesiastical and pastoral structures in a way that is simultaneously traditional and contemporary. Dealing with our chequered history can also energise our witness in our time.

Angela Berlis