



JUNE 2019

REPORT OF THE ELF PRESIDENTS MEETING

GENT JUNE 14th-16th 2019

Attendance:

There was representation from the following countries: Austria, Belgium CIL, Belgium IPB, Denmark, England and Wales, Germany, Ireland, Polish Council for Western Europe, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

The President and all members of the Steering Committee were also present.

On the Friday evening, following a conducted tour of the Cathedral given by the Chancellor, the members adjourned to the Bishop's House and were welcomed by Bishop Lucas Van Looy. He gave a talk on the Church in Belgium, followed by questions and answers, then a conducted walk back to Het Rustpunt for evening meal. (*notes on the bishop's talk attached as a file*)

On Saturday morning, President welcomed everyone and gave apologies that had been received, these included Cardinal Jozef De Kesel, who had hoped to be with us for the discussion on relationship of the ELF with the Vatican Dicastery for Laity Family and Life of which he is a member.

Peter Annegarn, immediate past president of ELF, gave a summary of the meetings and correspondence that has taken place between the ELF and members of the Dicastery over the last few years. At present our individual organisations are not organised as the Dicastery requires for us to be accepted.

The steering group had therefore decided that "It is necessary for each ELF member to clarify its identity / juridical nature:

- a) *If it is a canonical and / or a civilian collective person or if he has no juridical autonomy (for being, namely, a working committee in the Episcopal Conference or in a Commission in the national Episcopal Conference);***
- b) *In case of being a canonical collective person: if it is a public or private person;***
- c) *In case of being a civilian collective person: what is its nature (an association, a foundation, a society or other)."***

We would also be grateful if you could state how you are funded.

Each of the Presidents at the meeting then gave a brief presentation on their status and how they are funded.

It was agreed that these presentations along with answers to the questions and a copy of the statutes of each country, including those that were not present, should be sent to the secretary for collation by the steering committee. This will then be used in determining how we go forward in developing our relationship with the Dicastery.

After lunch there were three presentations:

1. President Josian Caproens introduced the Study Assembly 2020. She presented the theme that had been worked on by the steering committee:

“Daily life is all we have, how do we live as Christians in today’s society?” (*Full text attached as file: presentation theme*)

Quotes from Josian’s presentation:

“Living our faith - It is in the everyday that our faith must prove its strength and be alive.”

“Living faith communities - “Daily life is all we have” but for living our faith daily we need religious communities. Living our faith daily has to be concretely centred in Christian communities, and we must consider how do we build them up.”

“A synodal church as a basis for religious communities- The theme of the next SA can only be appreciated fully when we locate it within the comprehensive - vision of Vatican II regarding revelation and faith, its transmission through history, and, consequently, the nature and mission of the church.”

.....the church needs to be synodal so that it can listen to God communicating at this time in history, in Christ through the Spirit. The Spirit is the conduit; and the Spirit’s instrument of communication is the *sensus fidei* in each believer, and in the church as a whole. The church listens to the Spirit when all listen to one another.”

What is the role of our lay organisations in the daily life of Christians, in the religious communities and in the church in our different countries - can we learn from each other.?

2. Peter Annegarn, ELF’s representative on the European Christian Convention - ECC, outlined the path that ECC had taken since its formation. He quoted from their new flier, “The aim is to organise a participatory large-scale gathering fully ecumenical, inviting civil society, bringing together people and organisations from Europe and beyond”.

He informed the meeting the ECC would be holding their next meeting in October, and the President of ELF would be attending.

After questions, discussions and comments, it was agreed that details of the venue, dates, costs, format etc hopefully finalised at the Crete meeting would be sent out to all the member organisations of ELF. We would then have to decide if we continue with our involvement in ECC and what it would mean in concrete terms for all of us.

3.a) Representatives from Germany then informed the meeting that a proposal for a European Catholic Day in 2026 had been presented to ZDK. The meeting agreed that if the ECC was to be held in 2023/4, it would be difficult to support both events. A decision about the European Catholic Day is therefore to be made after the future of the ECC is known in October.

3.b) ZDK are holding their General Assembly 15th-16th May 2020 and suggested that it may be possible to hold the ELF Study Assembly at the same time. After discussion and consideration, the meeting agreed it would not be best to hold both at the same time. ZDK representatives said it may be possible to invite the steering committee of ELF or one or two representatives from each ELF member country to the General Assembly.

Returning to the ELF Study Assembly for 2020, it was agreed that it be held in Madrid from 18th to 21st June, with the title: **“Daily life is all we have, how do we live as Christians in today’s society?”**

Presidents were invited to put forward suggestions for guest speaker(s) - names of potential speakers should be sent to the secretary and president before the middle of September, along with background information, including: linguistic skills, availability for facilitating over the course of the assembly; method of working; agreement to present in advance an overview of their presentation either power point notes or summary points - for purposes of translations being available at Assembly; and indication of fees and expenses.

On Sunday morning the ELFev meeting was held chaired by Josian Caproens and minuted by Dr Markus Grimm of ZDK. These minutes will be available prior to the next meeting.

At the ELFev meeting a full financial statement for 2018 was given by the Treasurer along with a report from the auditor. The treasurer also gave an outline of the budget for this year.

ELF finances were then discussed in the Presidents’ Meeting, the treasurer answering questions raised by the meeting and accepting the thanks of the meeting for a positive balance in the 2018 accounts.

The issue of criteria for determining the fees paid by countries to be members of ELF was raised in the meeting. The Treasurer is to review and report on this issue at the December Steering Committee. The way in which we determine the financial contribution made by new member countries is to be determined at the same meeting.

The secretary gave a presentation on ELF, its purpose as stated in the statutes with regard to how we communicate, and use the various forms of social media. It was reported that the Steering committee had considered our ways of communicating at the October meeting. The President now ‘tweets’ on issue she thinks require response from the European Laity Forum; the steering committee have considered ways in which to communicate between meetings apart from emails, and will be trying Skyping before their next meeting in Madrid 29th November to 1st December.

Each member of the Steering Committee (SC) had also accepted responsibility for personally contacting potential new member countries. A revised flier or information sheet for ELF had also been agreed by the SC and circulated at this meeting.

In reporting on the ELF website, the secretary apologised for it not being up to date. He referred to proposals concerning the ELF website that had been put forward at Steering Committee level.

After discussion it was agreed that the secretary approach on behalf of ELF, Elvira Polinevska, whose husband had set up the web site, with regard to inviting her to continue the management of the website, ELF providing reimbursement for the work involved.

The President thanked everyone for their attendance and involvement in the meeting, and for the way in which there had been open and honest discussion allowing the Holy Spirit to direct our thoughts, conversations and decisions. She looked forward to seeing us in Madrid in June 2020.

Meeting closed at 12.00