

The Window

SEPTEMBER 2024

THE ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN SOCIETY

Issue No. 137

We hope you enjoy this issue of your Newsletter.

It is a bit of a surprise for you because it would normally appear in October. But we want next month's issue to focus on our Conference in Edinburgh which takes place this month.

We are sure you will find plenty of interest inside.

News of members pages 2,3,7,11



Background to the Council of Nicaea Celebration next year pages 5,12 & 24

Insights into the Churches work in the Holy Land while war rages pages 15-19

Reflections on The Ordination of Women page 23

And much more

IS 'THE WINDOW' TOO BIG? ARE THE ARTICLES TOO LONG?

These questions were raised at a recent committee meeting and the Editor is keen to find out what you, the readers, think

There is no doubt that our newsletter, *The Window*, has grown both in size and in reach over the years. If you look at the online archive (which can be accessed by clicking the link at the bottom of the Home Page on the website) you will find that early issues were only about four pages long. However, as the Society expanded from its humble beginnings in the UK 40 years ago to an international membership spread over 37 countries the range of material available, and the number of articles contributed by its members, has increased.

One of the key aims of the Society is 'to promote a wider interest in, and knowledge of, our respective traditions and common developments within them'. From the very beginning the newsletter was the main way

of addressing that aim. It was not always easy for members to meet, but they were all given *The Window*.

Today, *The Window* is largely circulated by email, with a few printed copies going to members with no computers (yes, there are some!) and to some national institutions and libraries. But now questions have been raised about its size and the length of the articles.

We would like to know what you think. So, included with this issue is a brief questionnaire. It will only take just a very few minutes to complete and it can be returned by email or by post. So please check the boxes and return the form as soon as you can to the address shown on the bottom of the form: angluthsociety@outlook.com

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ENGLAND'S NEW PRESIDENT

The Fourth Presidency Group of Member Churches has nominated a Society member, Bishop Paulina Hławiczka-Trotman, as their Churches Together in England President. She is head of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain and will serve as a CTE President for the rest of this term of the Council of Lutheran Churches.

Bishop Mike Royal, General Secretary of CTE said, 'We are delighted that Bishop Paulina Hławiczka-Trotman has become a CTE President. She has a proven track record of ecumenical engagement and an unswerving



Bishop Paulina pictured here with Bishop Mike Royal, CTE's General Secretary

commitment to CTE's Racial Justice Working Group. As the first female Polish Bishop in the UK, she is a trailblazer. We are excited about the ongoing

journey with our Lutheran sisters and brothers.'

Bishop Paulina said: 'I'm honoured to have been appointed a CTE President representing the Fourth Presidency Group, to serve God and his Church across the ecumenical family. I look forward to this challenge and the opportunities it promises, particularly at a critical time in our history in Britain and beyond. Thank you for your confidence expressed in this call to mission and ministry. It is with humility and joy that I come to the task together with you!'

STUDY GROUP ON THEOLOGIES OF THE CROSS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The Lutheran World Federation is initiating a study process on the theologies of the cross, to strengthen both the Churches' proclamation and Lutheran self-understanding.

Imagine my surprise, writes our Editor, when I opened a document from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and there, right in the centre of the picture, was one of our members, the Rev Sarah Farrow. She is also a member of the LWF Council that has initiated a study process designed to explore the meaning of proclaiming Christ's cross amid contemporary challenges. It will encompass theological, spiritual, and public witness aspects.



Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

The new Study Group on Theologies of the Cross for the 21st Century, appointed by the LWF Council at its June meeting, is mandated to produce a study document on the meaning of the theologies of the cross today. The resource will include guiding principles and recommendations on how Churches might respond to misleading theologies, and refer to the experiences of member Churches, and other LWF processes on Lutheran identities and theologies of the cross.

The Rev Dr Eva Harasta, LWF's Programme Executive for Global Lutheran Theology, says, 'The cross is the heart of

Lutheran faith. Yet, proclaiming the cross is hard: how do we realistically, truly and responsibly speak about hope, grace and life in the face of so much suffering, injustice, and death?'

Peace and justice

In a context where LWF's member Churches accompany suffering people, a central theme will be understanding and embracing Christ's vulnerability.

Their experiences will be part of the process, with the aim of highlighting unrecognised suffering, in order to foster communities that embody the vulnerability of love.

The group's composition meets LWF's requirement for regional and gender balance, and expertise in theology of the cross. It is made up of theologians and church leaders conversant with the subject in their work and ministry, and lay or ordained individuals whose personal lives are connected to the topic. But don't expect anything soon. The General Secretary will appoint a chairperson for the study group, which is not expected to present a report to the Council until its 2028 meeting! But meanwhile, we should pray for Sarah and her colleagues.

WRITING AFRICAN HISTORY

Dr Roy Long recommends a book about Africa that is not Eurocentric

Africa is a vast continent, home to many nations and races speaking a myriad of different languages and dialects. It is also generally agreed to be the home of humanity – the place where *homo sapiens* originated. Surprisingly, what has been written about this important region has generally been Eurocentric in nature. Dr Zeinab Badawi, an internationally renowned journalist, has now sought to remedy this with a book of over 500 pages, entitled **An African History of Africa: From the Dawn of Humanity to Independence**. (London, W H Allen, 2024, ISBN: 97800735-6012-9). It is a real *tour de force* and goes a long way to contradict the assertion made some sixty years ago by the distinguished historian Dr Hugh Trevor Roper (quoted in the Radio Times of 9th April 2024): *Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none; only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness.*"

Zeinab Badawi, born in Khartoum in October 1959, came to Britain two years later when her father, also a well-known journalist, joined the BBC's Arabic Service. She studied Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE) in Oxford at St Hilda's College, then went on to study for an MA at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, graduating with distinction in 1989. After many years in journalism, SOAS bestowed on her an honorary doctorate in 2011, and she is now President of that institution. Her book on the history of Africa is the fruit of many years of study, an interest which led to a series of nine programmes entitled "The History of Africa", broadcast in July and August last year on BBC World News.

I sat down and read Dr Badawi's book with just a few interruptions, and thoroughly enjoyed it. Some of the history was familiar to me, such as that of ancient Egypt and Ethiopia, but I learned a lot about places and people that were previously only names to me. If you have the time and the interest, then it is a book that I can thoroughly recommend.

ONE MEMBER'S JOYFUL WEEKEND

'I've made it!' Charlotte Hudd's email message conveyed her sense of real joy. 'Ordained Deacon on Saturday 29th June!'

Charlotte, who joined our Society while she was in training for ministry in the Church of England, was one among the largest number of candidates in Portsmouth Diocese for many years. They had been presented to the Bishop of Portsmouth, the Rt Rev Dr Jonathan Frost; the Ven Kathryn Percival, who had led the pre-ordination retreat, had preached about the unusual kind of 'club' they were about to join; Bishop Jonathan had placed his hands on the heads of each of the candidates in turn, praying for the Holy Spirit to be sent down upon each of them.

Then the Bishop, the Dean and the Archdeacon of the Meon did something that doesn't often happen during an Ordination. They washed the candidates' feet, replicating what Jesus did to his disciples at the Last Supper, and symbolising the humility the new deacons should show in their new roles. Charlotte described a wonderful moment when five-year-old Lucas, son of one of the other candidates, wanted his feet washed too! So the Bishop made sure that his feet were washed in exactly the same way as everyone else's.



Young Lucas has his feet washed too! Photo: Portsmouth Diocese

The Archdeacon then placed a stole over Charlotte's left shoulder to symbolise her new ministry as a servant in the Church. Then she, along with all the other candidates, stood behind the altar as Bishop Jonathan celebrated Holy Communion before they all processed out of the west door alongside their new training incumbents whose task it will be to help these newly-ordained deacons to understand parish ministry as they work as assistant curates. Charlotte will serve The West Wight Mission Community at the west end of the Isle of Wight.

As if that wasn't excitement enough for one weekend, Charlotte, a regular visitor to the Benedictine Monastery



Bishop of Portsmouth, Dr Jonathan Frost, laying hands on Charlotte
Photo: Portsmouth Diocese

on the Island, in Quarr, Fishbourne, had discovered that the Catholic Bishop of Trondheim, the Rt Rev Erik Varden, was to give a talk there. Charlotte met him during the Society's conference in Trondheim two years ago when he was one of the speakers. 'He described pilgrimage as a daily activity, and drew parallels with monastic and community living that struck a deep chord with me,' she wrote 'His presence radiated holiness and a love that comes with devotional and spiritual attachment to God.'

'Naturally, I was still 'full of it' after my ordination two days earlier and meeting Bishop Erik in this way was like the icing on the cake-of-God!'



Charlotte and Bishop Erik who is carrying a copy of 'The Maniac' by Benjamin Labatut which he had been given as a gift.

A BOSSEY STUDENT DESCRIBES LIVING, STUDYING AND PRAYING TOGETHER

The Rev Ingrid Noren Nilsson, from the Church of Sweden, is a Masters in Advanced Studies student at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey. She is currently completing a research fellowship with the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on Faith and Order. In this interview she takes time to reflect on what she has learned, what inspires her, and what she will take home.

Please describe your home context and what inspired you to come to Bossey.

I am serving as a priest in the Church of Sweden, in the Diocese of Lund. When I was a student, I lived in an ecumenical community for a year which gave me a first taste for ecumenism, but it is since I arrived in Lund six years ago that I have engaged more actively in ecumenism. The ecumenical context in Lund and its surroundings is very much alive, specially since the joint commemoration of the Reformation in 2016. We pray together, engage in one another's celebrations – last year the Cathedral marked 900 years and the Dominican Friars 800 years since they arrived in the city – and share together in service of the broad Christian community in the town. The richness, depth and support that lies in sharing one another's traditions have turned out to be precious gifts for the whole Christian community in Lund. For me they are indispensable in my spiritual life. Through this lived experience of the richness and importance of ecumenism, I have discovered an urgency to strive for the unity of the Church for which Christ prays. Out of a desire to be able to engage more fully in this work, which has become a passion of mine, I was inspired to come to Bossey.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of your fellowship with the WCC so far?

I am doing my fellowship with the Commission on Faith and Order, and the most rewarding aspect so far has been the inspiring people and work that I have come across, giving me new perspectives on ecumenism and insights into the current work of the Commission. I have experienced how different commissions and intersecting groups in the WCC challenge and inspire one another in their work which, if it's



Photo: Peter Kenny/WCC

possible, makes the ecumenical task even more ecumenical!

What kinds of skills and inspiration would you like to take back home when your studies are complete?

To be open to the unexpected and to change! This year has been, and still is, intensely rich, academically as well as in all that we have been invited to share in - meetings, conferences, travels.

Through the research fellowship, we have come to know and be inspired by the work and engagement in the WCC. Through the visits to the ecumenical communities, as well as shared prayer-life, we have striven to live ecumenically from a spiritual, internal, perspective.

Through the visits to the Swiss parishes and the week we were able to spend in the Vatican in Rome, we have been introduced to a wide variety of ecclesial contexts and gained knowledge of the official working groups and dialogues.

Added to that comes life in Bossey, which is living, studying, and praying with colleagues and visiting church leaders of the global Christian community. It has enabled me to develop a theological rationale in ecumenism and to develop skills which will be invaluable for when I return home.

Do you keep in contact with your family and friends back home? What do you tell them?

I do, of course! They have shown great interest in what I am doing and I have told them about the richness as well as the challenges in the year here. Even though I was deeply involved in ecumenism before I came here, I hope to engage even more when I come home, sharing the gifts and experiences that I have enjoyed here.

*Week of
Prayer for
Christian
Unity*



“DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?”

These words, from John 11.26, are the theme of next year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 18th-25th January, 2025

The prayers and reflections have been prepared by brothers and sisters of the monastic community of Bose in northern Italy. Since 2025 marks the 1,700th anniversary of the first Christian Ecumenical Council, held in Nicaea, near Constantinople in 325 AD, this is a unique opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the common faith of Christians, a faith that remains alive and fruitful in our days. The material is in several languages and can be downloaded at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity>

LUTHERAN-ORTHODOX COMMON STATEMENT ON THE FILIOQUE

On 30th July 2024 the Lutheran World Federation and the Orthodox Church issued a joint statement on the Filioque clause in the Nicene Creed, which could have impact on relations between Churches in the Eastern and Western traditions.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Orthodox Church have issued a joint statement on the addition of the Filioque clause to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, a theological issue that has divided the Eastern and Western Church traditions for almost a thousand years.

The word 'filioque' ('and the Son' in English) to describe the procession of the Holy Spirit, was added by the Latin Church to the Creed centuries after its composition to counter the Arian heresy. However, the Eastern Church has always objected to this insertion.

Now, in a Common Statement of the Joint International Commission on Theological Dialogue between the LWF and the Orthodox Church, both partners "suggest that the translation of the Greek original (without the Filioque) be used in the hope that this will contribute to the healing of age-old divisions between our communities and enable us to confess together the faith of the Ecumenical Councils of Nicæa (325) and Constantinople (381)."

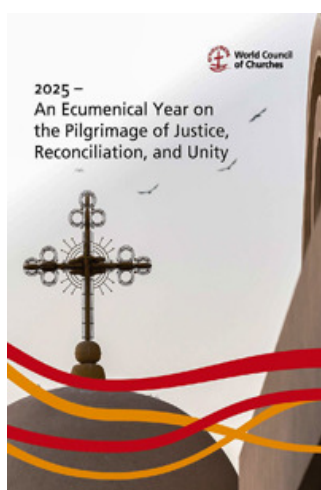
The Commission agreed the statement at its 18th Plenary Session held in Cairo, Egypt, in May this year. The Commission emphasised that the Creed is a foundational liturgical and doctrinal statement and expressed hope for a renewed focus on Trinitarian theology in the life of churches. "We both affirm the full divinity and personhood of the Holy Spirit, which was expressed in different ways in the eastern and the western traditions."

The Common Statement is the result of over 40 years of dialogue and ecumenical commitment between the LWF and the Orthodox Church. It is offered as a sign of reconciliation for the 1700th anniversary of Nicæa in 2025. It also marks a hopeful step toward greater theological understanding and unity between the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches.

You can read the whole statement at <https://lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/Lutheran-Orthodox-Joint-Statement-Filioque-EN.pdf>

WCC BROCHURE HIGHLIGHTS MILESTONES ON PILGRIMAGE OF JUSTICE, RECONCILIATION AND UNITY IN 2025

A new brochure published by the World Council of Churches (WCC) describes momentous commemorations occurring in 2025 that will draw people across the world together in unity during a time when divisions threaten the world.



The booklet, entitled "An Ecumenical Year on the Pilgrimage of Justice, Reconciliation, and Unity," shows how, in 2025, the World Council of Churches (WCC) will seek to renew the quest for unity of the Churches and of all humanity by finding inspiration in two anniversaries: the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 325, and the Centenary of the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work in Stockholm in 1925.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2025 focuses on the common faith of the Church in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Then, in Berlin in May, the WCC and partners in Germany will mark the 140th anniversary of the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, when the European imperial powers, often supported by missionary endeavour, partitioned the continent of Africa. In August 2025 there will be a commemoration of the Stockholm Conference of 1925 as a "Time for God's Peace" in a world disfigured by war and injustice.

The centrepiece will be the Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order, to be held near Alexandria in Egypt in October 2025. These conferences have been held at key moments in the history of the ecumenical movement, and this will be the first such conference to meet in the 21st century. Drawing inspiration from the Council of Nicaea, which gathered the whole of Christendom, it will gather around the theme "Where Now for Visible Unity?" During the year other national and local commemorations will also occur, reflecting a sense of unity and a sense of solidarity with others around the world.

You can download the brochure at <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/2025-an-ecumenical-year-on-the-pilgrimage-of-justice-reconciliation-and-unity>

BEING AN ANGLICAN IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD

Why should you care about the Anglican Communion?

This article by Canon Jesse Zink, Principal of Montreal Diocesan Theological College and Canon Theologian in the diocese of Montreal, appeared in the May edition of Anglican Journal, the newspaper of the Anglican Church of Canada.

His books include "Backpacking through the Anglican Communion: A Search for Unity and Christianity" and "Catastrophe in South Sudan: Civil War, Migration, and the Rise of Dinka Anglicanism"



Why should you care about the Anglican Communion? For some people, the answer to this question is straightforward: you shouldn't. During the last generation, Anglicanism has fractured between, broadly, liberals and conservatives. The presenting issue has been the welcome the Church offers to LGBTQ populations, but there are also related issues of Scriptural interpretation, the role of women, and relationship to surrounding culture. The conflict has coincided with the rise of the internet and is set within the deeply rooted legacy of colonialism as well as the decline of the Church institutions in the Euro-Atlantic world, and the shift of Christianity's global centre of gravity to the south and east.

These fractures have been evident within congregations, dioceses, national Churches, and across the global Anglican Communion. Some of the discourse online suggests many people on either side want nothing to do with the other. Some on the liberal side struggle to see why they should be in relationship with Anglicans who seem to hold retrograde and harmful views in Uganda, Nigeria, and elsewhere. Some on the conservative side want nothing to do with those they deem heretical. Over more than 25 years, this division has unfurled at differing speeds. Right now, the Church of England is locked in a fraught moment of conflict over sexuality, and in February 2023 some bishops in the Global South declared that they could no longer recognise the Archbishop of Canterbury as first among equals. Bitter experience suggests this is unlikely to be the last moment of division and "crisis" of this kind.

My identity as a Christian and my ministry as a priest and a theological educator have been indelibly shaped by my relationships with Anglicans around the world. These have developed by living in, working in, as well as visiting other provinces of the Communion. I, too, am often confused

and hurt by views I have heard other Anglicans express. But I have three reasons that convince me that my vocation as a Christian involves membership in a global communion of Christians.

The first reason is right in front of me. I am writing this article on a computer designed in California, manufactured in China using materials from all over the world and sold to me here in Montreal. You may be reading this online with a device that has come to you in a similar way. This article, therefore, is a reminder that we live in a world that's deeply integrated economically – and deeply inequitable. This computer, for instance, relies on coltan to function. It is reported that much of the coltan in the world is produced in unsafe mines in places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My computer puts me in relationship with the people who work in those mines – but I have the privilege of rarely thinking about that relationship and simply reaping the benefits from it. It is a purely economic relationship, and an unjust one at that.

In the Anglican Communion, by contrast, I find a way to be in relationship with people around the world in their full humanity, in ways that work towards wholeness and hope. Anglicans around the world are working for justice and peace in inspiring and important ways, though their work rarely gets the attention it deserves. True, our relationships are deeply deformed by our colonial past and present. Nonetheless, I am convinced that through the Anglican Communion, we have the opportunity to model to the world what global relationships can look like in their wholeness. It is an opportunity we are singularly failing to grasp – but we could if we wanted to.

The second reason is, frankly, more selfish. I cannot know everything there is to know about the gospel of Jesus Christ on my own. I need other Christians to help me grow. I also know that it is easy for members of a Christian community to get trapped in a particular view of their faith, overly limited by their cultural setting in their understanding of the expansiveness of the gospel. In ways little and big, silly and profound, my understanding of the Christian faith and my walk with Jesus have been deepened by working with and listening to Anglicans from other parts of the world. Max Warren, a mid-20th century Anglican mission executive, is reputed to have said, "It takes the whole world to know the whole gospel." Again and again, I have found that interacting with Anglicans from different backgrounds broadens my horizons and makes me more faithful to the way of Jesus.



➡ The third reason is the reality that the face of Canada is changing as we welcome more people from around the world. The diocese of Montreal has a long history of hiring priests from Great Britain. In recent years we've had new clergy come from Congo, Costa Rica, Haiti, and elsewhere. The same trend is mirrored in our congregations.

The Anglican Communion isn't just somewhere "over there". It's right here, in our communities already. We are

called to welcome these people as siblings in Christ.

The New Testament offers us a glorious picture of the Christian community as one that is constantly seeking to receive from and give gifts to others to grow to full maturity in Christ. In an interconnected world, and we all need Christians from outside our own cultures to help us move in this direction. For that, I thank God for the Anglican Communion.

REVEALING UNITY

Outgoing CTE President and General Secretary of the Council of Lutheran Churches in Great Britain, Dr Anna Krauss, shared her Reflection of the Month for June with Churches Together in England, and through them with us.

Every now and then, groups of people in one of my husband's Church of England parishes asks for a four-week burst of theological discussion. Over the years, we have gone through a host of different topics.

Most recently we unravelled some parts of the Liturgy for Eucharistic Services in the Common Worship Book. During the discussions on different Eucharistic Prayers, my husband mentioned that for occasions with an ecumenical focus, he will often use the prayer that involves these words: "Remember, Lord, your Church in every land. Reveal her unity, guard her faith, and preserve her in peace." (Eucharistic Prayer G)

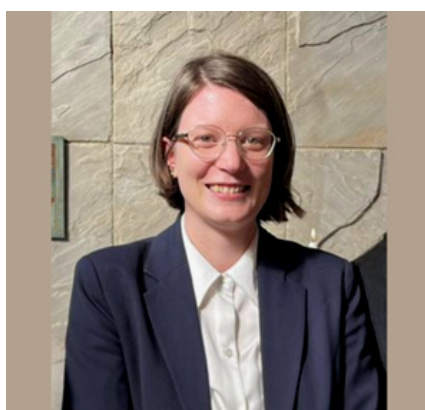
'I like this phrase,' my husband said, 'because it talks about God revealing the unity of the Church. It is not something that is created by humans.'

This may seem entirely obvious: after all, we know that the unity we are seeking is a unity founded, and found, in Christ alone. Not everything is so clear though.

First, there will always be an element of God that remains shrouded in mystery while we journey in this created, earthly body.

Second, while the source and goal of ecumenism may be clear, the path towards unity is not. This is where we encounter the stumbling blocks and challenges and those frustrating situations where we are ecumenically stuck and cannot move on together at all.

Ecumenism, like any other part of the



Christian faith, relies on God's self-revelation. That doesn't mean that we just sit and wait for it to happen. There is active seeking involved on our part.

We need to give the Spirit the space to move among us and reveal the right way forward, which we cannot always see. This is why it is important to integrate prayer and worship into ecumenical gatherings. We seek, God reveals. Even when I feel extremely frustrated, I stubbornly cling to this hope.

Together with Christians from all over the world, I recently attended the Global Christian Forum in Ghana. This global forum only meets every six to seven years and its specific aim is to bring together all major streams of Christianity.

We were seated around round tables with eight or so people from different traditions. Normally, I would expect to speak about our own traditions and how we struggle with this or that debate. Unconsciously, I would probably assess a person by their position in their Church, their age and a host

of other little indicators. It can take a long time to build relationships and trust each other, especially across denominational boundaries. This was all completely swept away when we were asked to share our faith stories.

I, a Lutheran, was sat at a table with people from the Evangelical Alliance, the Orthodox, Anglican, Pentecostal and Presbyterian traditions. In this intimate setting of sharing parts of our personal faith stories, how we grew as Christians, something happened. I could not see those people by their traditional labels and our theological differences anymore. I saw them as true brothers and sisters in Christ.

For me, in this encounter, something that had blocked my mind was taken away and a piece of true unity in Christ was revealed to me. There are many ways in which God can reveal more about the unity we are seeking. What I have learned in Ghana is – to use another phrase from a Eucharistic prayer – to watch more closely for the signs of God's kingdom on earth.

Anna Krauss is a member of our Society. She has a doctorate in theology and has worked as an Old Testament scholar and expert in early biblical manuscripts at Heidelberg University and the University of Oxford.

She represented the Fourth Presidency Group from May 2023 to June 2024 when she was General Secretary of the Council of Lutheran Churches in Great Britain.

From September 2024 she been Director of the Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) Centre in Wittenberg, Germany.

AMERICAS: 'DO NOT BE AFRAID!'

Participants in the Leadership Conference of the Americas shared the challenges and hopes prevailing in the regions.

A message of encouragement at the Leadership Conference of the Americas

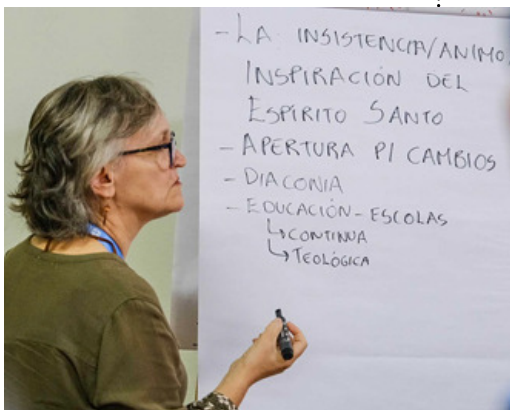
'Do not be afraid!' was the message of the opening service of the Leadership Conference of the Americas (COL). 'God rekindles in us, through faith, the flame of hope!'

The conference in São Leopoldo, Brazil, from 15th to 19th April, brought together Church leaders, young people, women, representatives of theological education institutions, Council members and partners from all over Latin America and the Caribbean and North America. The theme of the conference was "Do not be afraid! There is Good News!"

In her sermon, the Rev Sílvia Genz, Pastor President of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IELCB), said, 'Do not be afraid! The Risen One, God, calls all people, humanity, and creation to be part of God's saving project, leading them to life in fullness. The invitation is inclusive and unconditional.'

Sharing fear, worries, inspiration, and hope

A thematic session on the conference theme was aimed at encouraging joint reflection on the challenges the Churches face and encouraging them to overcome these challenges to move forward. A world café session took people through four stations: fear, worries, inspiration, and hope.



A world café session took participants through four stations: fear, worries, inspiration, and hope.

Photo: LWF/Gabriela Giese



The Rev Sílvia Genz, Pastor President of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IELCB) which is hosting the COL during the opening worship. Photo: LWF/Gabriela Giese

Presenting the outcomes of the world café, group moderators said that generally, fears and worries in participants' Churches concerned the polarisation of people in Churches and societies, their Churches' sustainability financially and in human resources, and conflict and violence in the region.

However, the discussion showed that many fears and worries can be transformed by inspiration and hope. Fear motivates change.

For example, there was the worry about small numbers of young people taking up a Church vocation. Still, the hopeful experience was seeing very committed young people engaged in the Church. Also, the fear of a pandemic ruining communion and communities sometimes resulted in innovative ways of creating and maintaining them.

'Our times of worship together, respectful conversations and a positive interaction with a regional focus serve as a platform for attentive listening, fresh reception of God's message, and a renewal of our commitment to God's mission amidst these challenging times. More than that, the Churches enrich the global communion with their unique insights and contribution,' said the Rev Dr Sivin Kit, who is Director of LWF's Department for Theology, Mission and Justice.

'It is a strong sign of hope in our regions and for our Churches when we realise that we are more than an accumulation of individual Churches. We are a Lutheran communion based on the Gospel and centred in Jesus Christ,' said the Rev Sonia Skupch, Regional Secretary of Latin America and the Caribbean and North America.

God frees us to serve and fulfil God's mission

The participants adopted a message addressed to the communion of Churches in The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The message addresses the fears, worries, inspirations, and hopes of the regions' Churches, stressing the vocational crisis, climate emergency, migration, fundamentalism, the fragility of democracies, patriarchy, discrimination based on class, racism, and armed conflicts, among other issues.

The message states, "These concerns connect with the global communion in many areas. In particular, we express our solidarity with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), which suffers the effects of war. We call for a ceasefire and for access to humanitarian aid for those in need."

The message also calls on Churches to raise their prophetic voice: "Silence in the face of fears and concerns is not an option." Instead, "we accompany one another and walk together as one body in Christ", remembering the message of the Gospel, "Do Not be afraid", and sharing the Good News.

The message describes spreading the Good News as working for peace, strengthening the voice of the ☞

⇒ young, striving for gender justice and ending gender-based violence, bridge-building through intergenerational dialogue, affirming Lutheran identity through ecumenism, caring for creation and climate justice, and through mutual accompaniment.

Keeping calm in stormy seas

In her sermon on Matthew 14:22-33 (Jesus walks on the water) at the COL concluding service, the Rev Katia Cortéz Cristales of the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope (ILFE) said: 'Sometimes leaders and members of our Churches, find ourselves in situations that make us feel as if we are in a boat, buffeted by strong winds, in an angry sea, where fear and doubts take hold of us. As

long as there are wars, there is a storm,' she said. 'As long as women and young people are denied space, there is a storm; as long as there are attacks on creation, there is a storm; as long as there is economic inequality, there is a storm; as long as there are inhumane migration policies, there is a storm.'

In the face of this, 'The mission of our Lutheran Churches is to continue to accompany one another, to fight together for liberation,' she continued.

The Son of God 'frees us to serve; he frees us to fulfil a mission, which is to share this message of love and hope with others,' she continued. Lutheran Churches may not stand still in the face

of the storm of injustices. 'The Son of God accompanies us in pain,' she concluded, 'because in accompaniment there is empathy. Because of being human Jesus knows pain, he knows grief, just as he knows our fears and anguish, and he reaches out his loving and saving hand to us.'



BRAZIL: "BEING THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IN THIS COUNTRY AND ITS SOCIETY"

The Lutheran Church in Brazil takes 2024, its anniversary year, as an opportunity for the Church to further develop its role and mission as part of Brazilian society.

IECLB celebrates 200 years of Lutheran presence

In 2024 the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB) marks "200 years of Lutheran presence in Brazil" with the theme from Matthew 28:20: "I am with you always, to the end of the age." Particularly memorable dates in this anniversary year have been 3rd May and 24th July, when the first Lutheran immigrants from Europe arrived in southern Brazil. They arrived in Nova Friburgo/Rio de Janeiro and São Leopoldo/Rio Grande do Sul, respectively.

Some celebrations were originally planned for this date in São Leopoldo. Instead, however, the historic event was commemorated with a national online service on 28th July. In May, heavy rainfall and flooding, particularly in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, left the area in a state of disaster, meaning that emergency aid for those affected, as well as clean-up and reconstruction work, remained a priority.

'In this anniversary year, we are focusing on our being Church in this country and our role in this society – and not on 200 years of German immigration history,' the Rev Sílvia Genz, Pastor President of the IECLB asserted. 'We want to be the Church of Jesus Christ in Brazil.' The flood and its effects have put this focus to an unplanned test, which the Church faces with outstanding commitment.

Developing perspectives for the future

Before the flooding, a big mission conference (Fórum de Missão) was also part of the anniversary year in April when delegates from all 18 synods – ordained and lay, men and women, old and young – of the IECLB met in São Leopoldo to develop the Church's visions, goals and strategies for 2025 to 2030. 'We worked on four topics, each of which is

intended to help define our future path together as a Church,' said President Genz. The topics were gospel and mission, education and training for full-time and voluntary workers, justice from economic, ethnic, ecological and gender perspectives, as well as administration, management and communication. The results are now being discussed and coordinated in working groups. The National Church Council may adopt the goals at their meeting in October.

'The lively participation in the Fórum de Missão has ⇒



IECLB Pastor President, the Rev Sílvia Genz, preaching at a service in Nova Friburgo/Rio de Janeiro. Photo: IECLB

⇒ given me a lot of hope,' said the Pastor President, 'as the IECLB faces internal and external challenges. Maintaining and strengthening the Church's unity is at the top of the list of priorities.'

Being a welcoming church

'We want to be a diverse and inclusive church,' the Pastor President continued, referring to the Japanese, Turkish, Korean and Indigenous congregations already present in the IECLB. 'But we can become even more welcoming and offer people from different backgrounds a spiritual home.'

A look at history shows that this is a matter that should not be taken for granted. In Brazil, the immigration of non-Catholics was made possible by the Constitution of the Empire (1822), which was then independent of Portugal and which continued to regard the "Catholic religion" as the state religion but allowed other religions. However, these were only allowed to meet in private homes.

In 1824, the first Lutheran immigrants from Europe arrived in a country shaped by the Portuguese colonial period and the Catholic faith. Among them were numerous Lutheran people from Germany who wanted to live their faith in the new context and build a new life for themselves. Lutheran Christians, who were mainly ordinary and often poor people, soon began to establish schools.

'Congregations also met in the schools for church services, and teachers often took on pastoral tasks,' President Genz said. It took many years for people to feel part of society and overcome their tendency to withdraw.

Today, the theological diversity within the IECLB requires 'the ability and willingness to listen to one another,' said the

Pastor President. 'We have people who value traditions, others who want to be more political and uphold liberation theology, but also people with a pietistic-evangelical outlook and a conservative piety. And then there are also people with Pentecostal-charismatic influences.'

Young people kicking off the anniversary

The IECLB's anniversary celebrations kicked off in July 2023 at the National Youth Congress, the 25th CONGRENAGE. More than 1,200 young people gathered there to reaffirm their faith and communion.

The National Council of Evangelical Youth Coordinator, Natan de Oliveira Schumann, had called for reflection on what is 'essential and constant in these changing times.' In his speech, he also reminded participants what their essence and service in society should be: 'We are the good perfume of Christ; we are salt of the earth and light of the world.'



IECLB young people kicking off the anniversary celebrations by forming a '200' during the 25th CONGRENAGE. Photo: IECLB

AN ARTISTIC THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

Dr Roy Long ponders a picture that has had him thinking. He would welcome your comments at roy.long485@btinternet.com



For several years I have had a copy of a painting in my files. The painting is entitled "The Blessed Virgin Mary chastises the Infant Jesus Before Three Witnesses: A.B., P.E., and the Artist." The artist in question is Max Ernst (1891-1976), and the original hangs in the Museum Ludwig in Cologne.

As the title suggests, the picture shows the Virgin Mary, halo intact, administering a spanking to a naked Jesus, spread across her knee. When first exhibited in 1926 the picture sparked considerable controversy, and it continues to do so to the present day.

For me, and for many others, the picture raises important theological questions, particularly concerning Jesus' humanity. Clearly, the Jesus in the painting has done something wrong – his halo lies on the floor beneath him – either that, which begs the question as to whether Jesus *could* do something wrong, or else the Virgin is chastising him unfairly and, if the latter is correct, then why is her halo intact?

Traditionally, many Christians consider that the Virgin is herself without sin and, of course, the Church has always taught that Jesus is sinless, but that does not seem to be the message of Ernst's picture, and it raises the question that if Jesus took upon himself human nature, then it was our *sinful* nature that he took on himself. An interesting conundrum on which I would appreciate your comments.



UK : ECUMENISM IN LEEDS

Society members, the Reverend Joseph Nelson (Lutheran Church in Great Britain), right, and the Reverend Joshua Peckett (Church of England), left, on the importance of grass-roots ecumenism



When we think about ecumenism, we can often remain at the level of official agreements and bishops shuttling back-and-forth between committee meetings. However, ecumenism reaches its greatest benefit to the Church when it makes a tangible impact on local churches and on local communities. True Christian unity cannot be reached by formal agreements alone – personal relationships between Christians, where we can learn from each other and grow together, are equally if not more important.

Here in Leeds, the ministers of St Luke's and St Matthew's Lutheran Church (Pastor Joseph) and St Michael & All Angels' Church, Headingley (the Rev Josh) have formed a strong local partnership. The distance between our two churches can be measured in metres, not miles, and over the last year we have been slowly bringing our congregations into greater contact.

We met at a memorial service in 2022 at St Michael's for someone who had been a member of both the Anglican and Lutheran congregations locally through their family connections. Since then, we have worked together on Churches Together projects and the Bishop of Leeds has given Pastor Joseph Permission to Officiate in his Anglican Diocese of Leeds.

For Holy Week 2024, we held a joint Anglican-Lutheran celebration of the Great Vigil of Easter. The service drew on both Church of England and Lutheran liturgies with music led by the choir of St Michael's. As Pastor Joseph presided, the Rev Josh preached on 'finding the words' to proclaim the resurrection today. He was inspired by Saint Mark's account of the first people who witnessed Christ's resurrection and were silent with fear and confusion.

The Easter Vigil is one of those truly special moments in the calendar, when one can experience that primeval Christian movement from darkness

into light with particular sensitivity and freshness. To share such a service together is symbolically significant and reminds us that Anglicans and Lutherans share a common mission: and that is to proclaim good news and witness to resurrection life for everyone today.

With all the busyness of modern church life, ecumenism often isn't the priority. But by ignoring it, we cut ourselves off from opportunities for discovery and deepening faith. The Rev Josh writes: 'Unlike some of my previous ecumenical encounters, conversation with Lutherans in Leeds has not got stuck at the superficial level. We have not needed to argue passionately about ceremonial hats or guitars in church. Instead, we have been able to move into deeper theological conversation and exchange between the Anglican and Lutheran traditions.'

'The points of contact between classical Anglicanism and Lutheran confessions have fascinated me. In particular, I owe a debt of gratitude to Pastor Joseph for igniting my interest in the practice of private confession and absolution, something which was never abolished in the Church of England but has sadly been neglected in recent years outside of the Anglo-Catholic movement. It remains an untapped well for Christians seeking wholeness, healing and a deeper relationship with God.'

Looking at the position of our Churches today we cannot afford to ignore each other and live separate lives.

God calls us to proclaim good news to the people of England, and has blessed us with two rich, theologically informed and creative traditions that can support each other to further that mission. Working together at grass-roots level is vital.

Several years ago, Josh attended an Anglican-Old Catholic Youth Pilgrimage to Echternach (Luxembourg). The Church of England has been in full

communion with the Old Catholics of the Union of Utrecht since 1931. What interested him most at the meetings was that while the 'official representatives' of each Church talked about agreements, documents and communiqués, the young people were focused on the practical implications of the Churches living out full communion together. How can one Church support another? How can we present a louder Christian voice on challenges our societies face?

These are the same questions which apply to Anglican-Lutheran engagement today. How to stay true to the distinctive aspects of our traditions and faithfully bringing them, along with all our energy and resources to the advancement of the Gospel in England – this is our challenge.

In the months to come, we are hoping to explore how we can use the music of Bach, perhaps by having a joint Bach Vespers, to inform our congregations more about their Protestant heritage and to reach new people through the connection of faith and fabulous music.

Pastor Joseph, as Chair of Churches Together in Headingley, says that it is wonderful that the local communities can work together for the advancement of the gospel in the cause of Christian Unity.

'It has been a real joy to be able to work together with the Rev Josh and the people of St Michael & All Angels', especially to work with the choir. As a small congregation, at St Luke's & St Matthew's we try our best with music, but having a choir really does make a huge difference to elevate our worship on such a great feast day as Easter.'

Pastor Joseph has really enjoyed learning to lead Evensong from the Book of Common Prayer and, as the Rev Josh nears the end of his curacy, we pray that the local partnership we have forged in Leeds will continue for years to come.

FOURTH-CENTURY COUNCIL OF NICAEA SHAPED EUROPEAN HISTORY

The 1700th anniversary in 2025 of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea is an opportunity to reflect on the significance of the event for Christian unity and for the shaping of European culture, says the Rev Canon Prof Dr Charlotte Methuen, from the Scottish Episcopal Church, a member of our Society.

‘It marks a point at which Christianity goes from being a persecuted religion and a religion very much on the sidelines to actually having an official status,’ said Dr Methuen, a member of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Glasgow. She was speaking in a WCC video interview which you can watch at <https://youtu.be/BqZ2u7SCt34>

‘Without the Council of Nicaea,’ she said, ‘we might not have had European Christendom and the whole European history would have been different.’ The Council of Nicaea was a gathering of Christian bishops under the patronage of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who had converted to Christianity in 312 CE and was concerned about disunity among Christians. ‘So the Council of Nicaea is partly called to help Constantine establish a unity amongst Christians. And the reason the Council is so important is because it marks that shift of Christianity, the point at which Christianity becomes a legal religion in the Empire.’

From being a persecuted religion, Christianity now had an official status, she said. ‘In many ways the Council of Nicaea and the whole period at the beginning of the fourth century sets up what’s going to become European Christendom.’

Prof Methuen is a member of a steering group planning for a WCC World Conference on Faith and Order in Egypt in 2025 to mark the Nicaea anniversary. Meeting under the theme “Where Now for Visible Unity?” it will be the sixth such conference since 1927 to gather to wrestle with issues of Church unity in the contexts of their day.

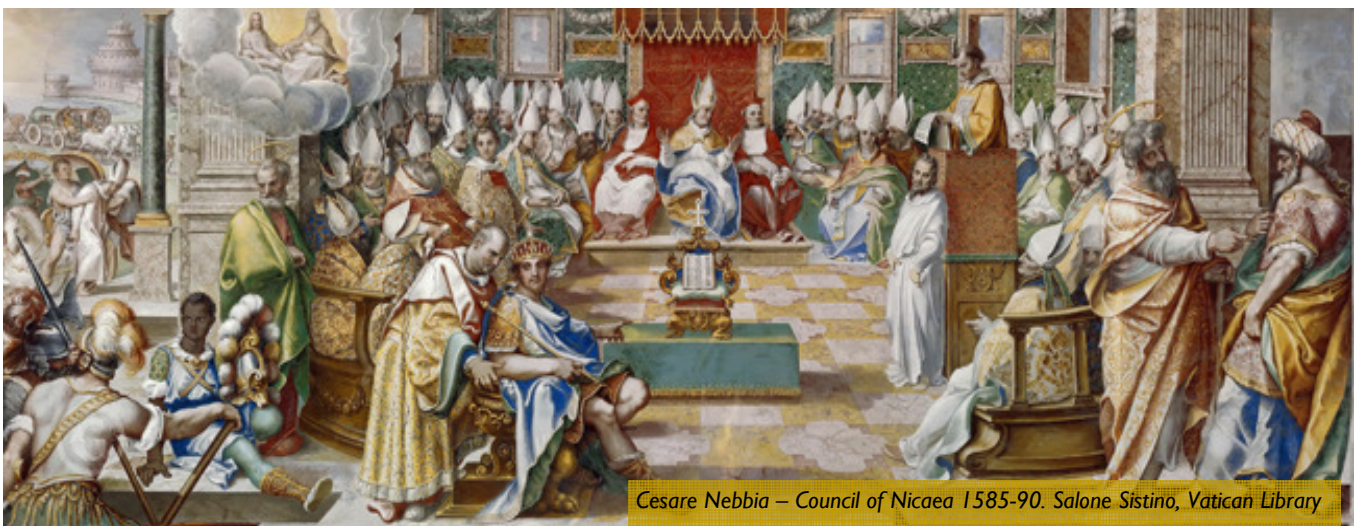
‘I think we’ve come a long way in the last hundred years,’ Dr Methuen remarked. ‘I think the way that we can talk together, the way that we can pray together would have



been unthinkable in the 1920s.’ She acknowledged there might be some truth in the claim that the fourth-century Council of Nicaea led to a rather unhealthy collaboration between the Church and the State, which was detrimental to Christian witness. ‘That is an argument that was made at the time,’ she said, and she noted that people had said ‘the Church has sold out; the Church ought to be a persecuted minority.’

‘It’s one of the great ‘what-ifs’ of history,’ she concluded. ‘I’m not sure we would have had Christianity in quite the same way as such a key part of particularly Western European or European culture if it hadn’t been for Constantine.’

You can download a free booklet, “Toward the Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order: Commemorating the Council of Nicaea: Where Now for Visible Unity, at <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/toward-the-sixth-world-conference-on-faith-and-order> (see page 14)



Cesare Nebbia – Council of Nicaea 1585-90. Salone Sistino, Vatican Library

NORWAY: 1000 YEARS OF CHRISTIAN LAW CELEBRATED

Our Anglican Co-Moderator, Bishop Paul Ferguson, and our Society's Coordinator in Norway, the Rev Fredrik Ulseth, describe a significant ecumenical event.

The Anglican Archbishop of York, the Rt Rev Stephen Cottrell, preached at Moster Old Church, which stands on an island off Norway's west coast, during the celebrations on 1st and 2nd June 2024 marking one thousand years of Christian Law in Norway.

According to the saga recorded by the medieval historian Snorre, an Icelandic recorder of sagas, Olav Trygvason landed at Moster in 995 following his voyage across the North Sea from England, in order to become King of Norway. A church, probably wooden, was built there soon after. In 1024, King Olav Haraldsson (St Olav) held an assembly at Moster and passed laws establishing Christianity in Norway. Moster Old Church, a stone building dating from around 1100, is thought to be the oldest village church in Norway.

The millennium celebration at Moster included various events, including a dinner attended by HRH Crown Prince Haakon and Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre. It was organised by the Christian Council of Norway and the Church of Norway. At this dinner Archbishop Stephen spoke of the importance of the links of mission and ministry between the Anglican Churches in Britain and elsewhere in Europe through the Porvoo Communion. This Communion, which was established in 1992 includes 15 Anglican and Lutheran



Moster Old Church, believed to be one of the oldest village churches in Norway

Churches in Europe, sharing a full interchange of ministries.

This evening event was followed by a special midnight mass service held at Moster Old Church in which Archbishop Stephen preached. Bishop Erik Varden, Roman Catholic Bishop of Trondheim, Erhard Hermansen, the Secretary General of the Christian Council of Norway, and Bishop Ragnhild Jepsen, Bishop of Bjørgvin, led the service, with music of the kind that would have been heard at the time the church was founded.

The Revd Canon Joanna Udal, Senior Chaplain of the Church of England Diocese in Europe's Anglican Chaplaincy in Norway and Chaplain of St Edmund's Church in Oslo, said, 'The Moster 2024 celebrations give us a great chance to celebrate the strong ties between the British Isles and Norway both with the introduction of Christian law in Norway a thousand years ago and our deep-rooted partnership in mission today ... as our Anglican and Lutheran Churches work together for the coming of God's reign of justice, peace and love.'

On Sunday 2nd June, Halvor Nordhaug, Bishop Ragnhild's predecessor, and Archbishop Stephen led a discussion on "the role of the Church in building a more loving, just and sustainable society", followed by an Ecumenical Celebration Service held at Moster's open-air theatre. Bishop Olav Fyske Tveit, Presiding Bishop of the Church of Norway, led the service with local, national and international representatives, and Bishop Ragnhild preached. Archbishop Stephen (right) and Presiding Bishop Olav (left) are pictured here.

Reflecting on the visit on his return, Archbishop Stephen said, 'It has been joyful to be joining the 1000 year jubilee services at Moster. We cherish the bonds of our friendship and Christian fellowship where we are walking, working and praying together.'



'IN THE END, IT COMES DOWN TO THIS ... LOVE EACH OTHER'

There are new horizons opening for Nino Sadzaglishvili, another Master Student at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey.



Nino Sadzaglishvili, Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC

After completing her master's at Athens University, and taking a gap year, Ms Nino Sadzaglishvili was about to continue towards earning a PhD. But her Greek professors gave her some advice: look beyond the Eastern Orthodox reality and consider the-

ological issues from the perspective of other Churches. With the support of Volos Theological Academy in Greece and her family, as well as friends who are former students of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, she took the plunge.

'Although I have heard about Bossey for many years, here I am since June of 2023,' she says. She is earning a Masters in Advanced Studies at Bossey. 'I have grown a lot in this one year and new horizons have opened for me.'

Now completing a research fellowship with the WCC Commission on Faith and Order, Nino Sadzaglishvili says the greatest experience for her has been the direct contact with representatives of the WCC. 'I saw many things from the inside and was better able to compare them with my context,' she says. 'Of course, I cannot help but emphasise the fact that I meet a lot of amazing people - and academic meetings give me this opportunity.'

She plans to bring many practical skills back to her home context. 'Until now I may have somehow developed one-sidedly, theoretical research being my strong point,' she says. 'Now I have a clear idea about organisational issues as well.'

Living with her fellow students is both a great joy and, sometimes, a challenge, too. 'I have never experienced community life before, except for the periods I've spent in Orthodox monasteries and in my family, too, because I was an only child,' she reflects. 'Sharing my daily life with other students along with academic responsibilities requires good communication skills and time management, which is not easy if you are a bit of an introvert and creative person, and also need time for solitude.'

She tries to make time for herself for writing reflections and drawing. 'Sometimes I go for a walk on my own in nature and pray or chant,' she says. 'It's a good way to recharge my batteries after interacting with lots of interesting people.'

From her Bossey experience, Nina says she will particularly remember prayer, going out into nature, and all the other everyday things that bind people closer together. 'Perhaps I will appreciate better what I am taking from here after I leave, when I have more time to reflect,' she says. 'By the way - using my diaries here, I am preparing one big blog!'

She tries to keep in touch with her loved ones and friends back home, because she believes emotional balance is important for her academic functioning. 'And also, in the end, every learning process, and every piece of research, comes down to just one thing: Love each other!' she says.

STAFF CHANGE AT UK'S LUTHERAN COUNCIL

On 10th of June the Board of Trustees of the Council of Lutheran Churches in the UK appointed the Rev Meelis Süld (on the right) as its new General Secretary, and Mr Per Jonsson (on the left) was elected as the new Chairperson.



Meelis Süld came to the UK from Estonia three and a half years ago. He has worked as a journalist in public broadcasting and made Christian programmes. He is an ordained pastor in the Lutheran Church in Great Britain (LCiGB) and served as assistant to its Bishop, Tor B Jørgensen, until he retired. Meelis also worked part-time for the Council of Lutheran Churches (CLC).

It was in 2005 that Per Jonsson from Sweden and his German wife came to the UK. 'We lived twice in Germany, and once in Sweden, and realised our marriage is safer in a neutral country - we can both misunderstand the locals and laugh about it!' he says.

CLC was set up 75 years ago to care for Lutherans from many countries who came to UK as refugees. It consists of representatives of all the various member Churches, and amongst many other things, provides a student chaplaincy in London.

THREE SHORT GLIMPSES INTO THE HOLY LAND AND THE ISRAEL/HAMAS WAR

FROM AN ANGLICAN PALESTINIAN MOTHER TO THE WORLD: “BRING MY DAUGHTER HOME”

Lulu Aranki-Nasir can't tell the story without crying and recalling lots of pain – but she wants the world to know.

On 7th April, in darkness at four o'clock in the morning, armed vehicles pulled up to her home where she, her husband and her daughter, Layan, were sleeping in their home in the town of Birzeit in the West Bank. Israeli soldiers were banging on the door. 'We woke up,' said Lulu. 'My daughter was calling for me.' That night began what has become five months of imprisonment for Layan – and day after day of anxiety and grief coupled with sheer determination from her mother.

Looking back, Lulu is thankful that her sons were not there that night. 'Fortunately, my sons were not home because my eldest son is a doctor, and my younger son, Layan's twin brother, was travelling to Istanbul for a vacation,' she said. 'If they were at home, the soldiers would have treated them very badly.'

When Lulu opened the door, the soldiers entered the house. 'I started asking them: what do you want from me?' Lulu said. 'A soldier told me "Don't talk or we will shoot you!" and he put the gun on my face.' Other soldiers went through the house. 'They searched everywhere,' Lulu said, 'then they asked us to put our hands on the wall.' Layan's parents were also told not to move or talk. So they didn't!

'We didn't want to make trouble for us or our daughter,' said Lulu. 'Then the captain told us he was taking Layan with him.' The soldiers showed no arrest warrant and no warrant to search the home. Layan, who was sitting in her room, asked to change from her pajamas into her clothes. 'He brought a woman soldier who stayed with Layan when she was putting her clothes on,' said Lulu. 'Then he blindfolded her and handcuffed her.'

As Lulu recalls watching her helpless daughter taken away, she breaks down when she tries to describe how she felt. 'She was very weak at that moment,' said Lulu, who wept at the memory.

From that moment, Layan has been held in what is defined as "administrative detention" without any charges. 'They claim that she is a danger for the security of the Israeli state,' said Lulu. 'How come this young lady is a danger to the Israeli state?'

A deafening silence

The lack of communication with her daughter hangs like a weight on Lulu's shoulders. In four months, she has been allowed to talk to Layan twice. 'The lawyer tries to ask for

a visit,' said Lulu. 'He is not allowed to stay for more than 15-20 minutes.' The meetings are held in the presence of Israeli security officers which violates basic principles of due process of the law and human rights.

Leaders from Layan's Anglican church have been denied visits too. Layan's parents have shared her story with World Council of Churches (WCC) moderator Bishop Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm and WCC general secretary the Rev Prof Dr Jerry Pillay, who called for Layan's immediate release and that of other unjustly detained Palestinians.

When the profound emptiness threatens to overwhelm her, Lulu recalls joyful events of the past: birthday parties, games of basketball and soccer Layan used to enjoy playing, and simple family dinners. 'When I feel sad, I also pray,' she said. 'I pray to God to help me be strong. Layan has a strong personality, and she has a sweet heart. I have to have the courage for her.'



Layan and her twin brother pictured cutting the cake during their last birthday together before Layan was detained. Photo: the Nasir family

➡ Lulu worries about Layan's health in prison. 'Inside the prison, the quantity of food is a very small portion for each prisoner,' said Lulu. 'My strong call to the Churches is not only to press to bring my daughter home but also to press the government to make the prison situation better,' she said. 'The prisoners are suffering. There is no food.'

She has also received some good news: 'We have heard Layan gives a very positive energy to all the prisoners,' said Lulu. 'One of the prisoners is very sick and Layan helps her.'

In her own mind, Lulu is imprisoned in a home without her daughter's presence. 'I cannot enter her room because I am too sad,' she said. 'My eldest son got a chance to go to USA to specialise in internal medicine in Atlanta.' He had to leave without saying goodbye to his sister. Her twin brother, who used to commute to work with her, sharing a car, now goes alone each day. Layan, a university graduate with a degree in nutrition and a minor in business administration, was working in a women's development non-

governmental organisation before she was detained.

How many more days?

Lulu is asking the world to pray for strength and courage for her as she counts the days that her daughter has been gone. 'I'm not sure she will be out in December,' she said. 'They may renew her staying in prison. She turned 24 on May 20th – in prison with no visits,' said Lulu. Her twin brother did not celebrate his birthday, out of solidarity with his sister.

Approximately 3,615 Palestinians are being held in "administrative detention", including 40 children and 20 women. Palestinians can be arrested by Israeli forces on suspicions based on secret information, which cannot be accessed by the detainee or a lawyer; without trial; and without having committed an offense, simply on the grounds that they plan to break the law in the future. There is no legal limit on the overall time that a person can be held in "administrative detention", so the detention can be extended over and over.

PATIENTS FROM GAZA FEAR FOR THEIR FAMILIES AS WAR RAGES ON

Cancer patients from Gaza constantly face two challenges: a life-threatening disease and fear for their loved ones back home. Lutheran World Information, producers of the LWF newsletter, spoke to some of the patients during a visit to the Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem where staff work hard to provide medical and mental support.

There were 96 patients and companions from Gaza at the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in East Jerusalem when Israel started bombing the Gaza Strip. In April 2024 they had been living in the hospital compound for almost seven months, and receiving news that their homes have been destroyed and family members killed.

'When the war started, I wanted to stop my therapy and go back home,' says Nour (*names of patients and companions have been changed*). She came for complex surgery and treatment of a brain tumour, leaving her husband, son, and

three daughters in Gaza. Her family convinced her to stay at the hospital though they did not expect to be separated for such a long time.

Afraid to hope

Nour learned on the phone that their home was destroyed, and the family had been evacuated to Rafah, where they are now living in a tent. Her youngest daughter is four years old. Despite their situation, the family tries to support her. 'My children say, "We have seen how sick you were; it is good that you are at the hospital. But when your treatment is done, please, please come back to us!"' she says with tears in her eyes.

'We are trying not to lose hope,' says Bisan Kheir, Director of Resources Development at the AVH. Since the war started, the hospital managers and members of staff organised accommodation, winter and summer clothes, hygiene kits, and sometimes creative activities for patients from Gaza now stranded at the hospital.

For patients and their companions, life now happens entirely on the hospital campus. 'I was supposed to return home in early December,' says Leyla. Her four-year-old son Ahmed is receiving radiation treatment for a brain tumour. Still in the Gaza Strip are Leyla's husband and two younger children, one and three years old. The youngest was a baby of six months when Leyla left.

Leyla's father and two brothers were killed; their home was bombed. Her children now live in a tent in Rafah, ➡



Nour tries to contact her family on the phone. Photo: LWF/ Atta Jabr

⇒ and they complain of hunger and cold. 'I am afraid, even afraid to hope,' the young woman says. 'But I have to be strong for the family and for Ahmed.'



This is "Ahmed" and his mother. Photo: LWF/ Atta Jabr

Ahmed's treatment is palliative. 'Receiving such a diagnosis is a shock for the parents,' says Dr Khadra Salami, Pediatric Oncologist. Our therapy for child cancer patients usually involves counselling for the entire family, especially if the prognosis is poor. Currently, the team can only work with the mother who has been alone and without family support for seven months. They try to counsel the father and grandmother on the phone.

No more contact

Two-thirds of the 100 child cancer patients who receive treatment at AVH every year come from the Gaza, says Dr Salami. Every year, 400 children are diagnosed with cancer in Gaza and the West Bank; there should have been about 50 new patients by now. However, since October 2023, only the few who were already in the hospital received treatment. 'We have a very special relationship with our patients,' the doctor explains. 'Now we have lost contact with most of them. Many have died in the war. When we

receive news these days, it's usually bad news. The past months have been tough,' she adds.

A few rooms down the corridor, Samar has finished her prayers. Her eight-year-old son Khalid is being treated for leukaemia and he struggles with the side effects of chemotherapy. 'The doctors make me look ugly,' he says, trying to refuse even a blood pressure examination. The eight-year-old has lost his hair; his face is swollen. His mother has crafted Ramadan paper lanterns with him and organised a wig, but when she tries to cheer him up, the smile does not reach her eyes.

Samar's husband and three younger children are in Northern Gaza. Their house has been destroyed; they tell her there is no food. Samar's youngest daughter recently said 'Mama,' referring to her sister, who has been caring for the two-year-old. Samar's other daughter refuses to talk to her. 'There is no hygiene, no water, my daughter has lice... it's driving me crazy,' Samar says helplessly. The children in Gaza envy Khalid, who is with their mother. At the same time, the sick boy longs for his family. Khalid is perceptive; he knows about the war.

Risk of deportation

In late March, the Israeli administration asked the hospitals in East Jerusalem to provide a list of patients who had completed treatment to deport them back to the Gaza Strip. Together with civil society organisations, the East Jerusalem Hospital Network got an injunction from the court to stop the procedure. Not only has health care in Gaza broken down to a point where not even paracetamol is available, but many Gaza patients at AVH no longer have a home to return to. Children like Ahmed need special food and medication, physiotherapy and a clean environment. 'I could not send these children to a tent,' Dr Salami says.

The stress on nurses and doctors is great, notes Dr Amal Abu Awad, AVH Chief Nursing Officer. For many, the stress continues at home, she said, because of partners who have lost their jobs, or restrictions to visiting even close family in neighbouring villages. The hospital offers counselling and support groups to both patients and staff. 'It gives us strength to help our patients,' Dr Awad simply says.

LWF GENERAL SECRETARY VISITS JERUSALEM

The Lutheran World Federation's General Secretary, the Rev Dr Anne Burghardt, visited Jerusalem and the West Bank, witnessing at first hand the impact of the current conflict on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and the LWF's Jerusalem Programme.

Keep Palestinian community in your prayers

The urgent need to continue to care for people in need, despite hopelessness, war and injustice: this was the main impression on Dr Burghardt on her visit to Jerusalem and the West Bank. She met with pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and staff

of the LWF Jerusalem Country Programme. Hearing of their challenges in the current situation, the General Secretary highlighted the important witness of the Church during times of war.

Where is God?

Dr Burghardt's visit took place 11th-16th April 2024. She met Bishop Sani

Ibrahim Azar and pastors of the ELCJHL in Jerusalem and Beit Jala, staff at the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) and the Vocational Training Centre in Beit Hanina, as well as other humanitarian partners. On Sunday 14th April, after a night of air raids because of a massive aerial attack from Iran, she preached in the Church of the Ascension on the ⇒

➡ Mount of Olives on the understanding of peace. 'Wherever the greatest commandment that our Lord Jesus Christ gave to his disciples, to love God with all the heart and with all the soul and with all the mind, and the neighbour as oneself, is not lived out, there seeds of violence have already been planted. In the midst of human-caused suffering, we often ask: "Where is God in all this?", whereas we should often be asking: "Where is human being in all this?"' she said.

Small in numbers, but strong in witness

In the meeting with ELCJHL representatives, Dr Burghardt learned about the impact the war is having on Palestinian Christians. 'Many have lost their jobs, and struggle to pay rent, electricity, and even food,' she said.

ELCJHL increasingly invests in diaconal ministry to support church members who have lost their income due to the war in Gaza. 'ELCJHL is one of those Churches which remind me that the size of the Church doesn't depend on the number of its members but on its witness. The Church has a strong educational, diaconal and gender justice ministry,' she added.

In the shadow of the war in Gaza, the international community has not been paying sufficient attention to what is happening in the West Bank, Dr Burghardt said.

She cited especially the increasing number of settlements, settler violence and attacks on many Palestinian villages and homes. 'Even before the war in Gaza began, many Palestinians



Dr Burghardt visited the Vocational Training Centre in Beit Hanina. Photo: LWF/ Maddi Froiland

were killed in the West Bank either by settlers or by Israeli soldiers,' she said.

In their conversations, ELCJHL pastors also voiced a "feeling of injustice," she added. 'When we visited the environmental centre in Talitha Kumi, we heard a story about a Christian family who had their farm nearby. However, the family had been chased off from their land by settlers some time ago. Now they have no access to their land anymore. This one story stands for many, and the Palestinian Christians feel that their right to live in their historical homeland is being questioned, and that the international community is not listening to them.'

A source of pride

Care and support were also major topics in conversations with senior staff of Augusta Victoria Hospital on the Mount of Olives which provides life-saving treatment for cancer and kidney disease for Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. Many AVH medical staff live in the West Bank, and passing the checkpoints is stressful and time consuming. 'One of my concerns was

how they are coping with the situation,' Dr Burghardt reflected. 'It was good to hear that the hospital management makes sure they have access to psychosocial care. It was inspiring to see that despite the sometimes hopeless situation, the staff keep up the high quality of the work that AVH is known for, and how they continue to serve the patients in their care. We are grateful that they are among those whose work permits that allow them to enter East Jerusalem, have been renewed.' The AVH 'serves as a source of pride to many, and a sign that the Palestinian people are not forgotten,' she added.

One body

'It is very important to share stories of people and of everyday realities. Statements are important but it is just as important to listen to the people on the ground and share their experiences about what is happening in these days in Palestine,' she concluded.

'It is important to underline the constant attacks on human dignity in the context of Palestine, and to remember what the Bible tells us in I Corinthians 12.26: "If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it."

As a global communion, we must keep our member Churches in the Holy Land and the wider Palestinian community in our prayers. We should not lose hope that people living in the Holy Land will find ways to live peacefully together one day.'



Meeting the staff of Augusta-Victoria-Hospital. Photo: LWF/ Maddi Froiland

'EASTER IS OUR ONLY HOPE'

Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELKJHL) spoke on Maundy Thursday about the impact of the Israel-Palestine conflict on the Palestinian Christians and how to preach hope during times of war.

It was just before Easter. Bishop Azar had just returned from a parish visit in Bethlehem where he went to see 200 orphans from Gaza, whom the Church was able to evacuate from Rafah through German connections and assistance from the organisation SOS Children's Villages. The five-to-seven-year-olds 'are glad to be out of Gaza but are now experiencing a completely new world,' the Bishop said.

The Bethlehem congregation is still looking for a school to accept so many new pupils all at once, and the orphanage in Rafah is full again, he continued. 'So many children there are wandering alone through the streets,' he said. The ELKJHL would like to take care of them but at present not even medical assistance is getting into the Gaza Strip. 'It's impossible right now.'

Friendships destroyed

The war can be felt everywhere, the Bishop noted. 'When I go into a Jewish shop today the people barely say "Hallo". They used to ask how my children were getting on,' he explained. Now the streets in the Old City of Jerusalem, normally crowded with visitors and pilgrims at Easter, are comparatively empty. 'Just look around! This isn't Easter!' he says. Even the shopkeepers are not as lively as usual. 'They are all withdrawn.' Normally he receives a lot of invitations in Ramadan, but not this year. The Muslim month of fasting, which is a bit like Advent in Christianity, is overshadowed by the war.

The Lutherans' traditional Maundy Thursday procession in Jerusalem, leading from the Church of the Redeemer in the Old City to the Garden of Gethsemane with the Lord's Supper and prayers, was very small this year. Not only the visitors stayed away – his own Church members in the West Bank could not get permission from the Israeli military authorities to come to Jerusalem for the service. 'Maundy Thursday was always the celebration that we all attended together,' said the Bishop. 'This time 30 to 40 people were missing.' That is noticeable in a congregation with just 300 members.

Unemployment and emigration

More and more Christian families are leaving the country. 'They are afraid and no longer feel safe,' said Bishop Azar. The Arab Christians are a constantly dwindling minority. When a family departs that means "8 to 20 people," which leaves a noticeable hole in the small congregations. Just recently a 17-year-old schoolgirl, a Palestinian Christian

with an Israeli passport, was called up for Israeli military service. Most of the Bishop's parish members have had no income since the beginning of the Gaza war. They worked as bakers, bus-drivers or green-grocers, or owned travel agencies. The war has driven the tourists away, he repeats.

Being with the people

In spite of this depressing situation Bishop Azar sees opportunities for action. 'It is important to be with the people, to accompany them,' he said. At Easter, the ELKJHL's diaconal centre helped about 100 families with meat for a traditional Easter meal, which they would otherwise not have been able to afford. 'Many have not eaten meat for weeks but you only find that out when you talk to people.'

Many parents can no longer afford the school fees for the Church Schools in Beit Jala or Beit Sahour. The children attend lessons all the same – both Christians and Muslims together. 'We have to keep the schools open. We have to

make a contribution to tolerance and living together,' Bishop Azar underlines. He is particularly grateful for the work of the Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem, specialising in cancer and kidney diseases, which is run by the LWF. It forms a pillar of the Palestinian health system. More than once the Bishop was able to refer members of his congregation with cancer to it, quickly and without any bureaucracy. The hospital continues to accommodate cancer patients from Gaza [See article on p 16 – Ed].

When it is possible to get back into Gaza he, along with his church members, would like to set up a project for the children who have lost their parents through the war.

'That is our place – our Church originally started here with diaconal activities!'

Hope that remains

How do we talk about hope and resurrection in times like these? Together with other Churches in Jerusalem, the ELKJHL called for an end to the violence in the Gaza Strip during Holy Week. In worship services Bishop Azar always includes the Israeli military in the intercessory prayers – in spite of the suffering that soldiers have caused in his own parish as well.

At this time, the Easter message is more important than ever, affirmed Bishop Azar: 'That is the only hope we have – the hope that after Good Friday comes Easter – the hope that all this will one day come to an end.'



Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

ANGLICAN PRIMATES ENJOY HISTORIC MEETING WITH POPE FRANCIS

In an historic meeting, Anglican Communion Primates from around the world attended an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican, during the morning of May 2nd, 2024. In the hour-long meeting the Pope shared words of encouragement and of affirmation, in conversation with the primates, responding to questions from those gathered.

In his address, Pope Francis spoke about themes of synodality, Church unity and the prioritisation of relationships, Christian love and service. The Pope said: 'Only a love that becomes free service, only the love that Jesus taught and embodies, will bring separated Christians closer to each other. Only that love, which does not appeal to the past in order to remain aloof or to point a finger, only that love which in God's name puts brothers and sisters before an ironclad defence of our own religious structures, only that love will unite us. First our brothers and sisters, the structures later.'

This was a significant moment in a week in which the Anglican Primates' Meeting had been held in Rome. They had gathered for pilgrimage, prayer and conversation about joint mission and witness, and discussions about synodality, and structures and decision making in the Anglican Communion. Deepening synodality (or journeying together and collaborating as Christian sisters and brothers) has always been an important principle of Primate Meetings, which have been one of the four instruments of the Anglican Communion since 1978.

Primates of the Anglican Communion represent diverse cultural settings and Christian traditions, but through the Primates' Meeting they come together to discuss shared priorities and concerns and discern ways to



Photo: Neil Turner

cultivate shared wisdom and create consensus.

The meeting with the Pope was a time of deep encouragement to them. Throughout his reign, Pope Francis has consistently called Christians to prioritise relationships and Church unity.

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, spoke of the Pope's address and its significance to the Anglican Communion, saying it was, 'a most beautiful address around the nature of unity and synodality and of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church – which took our eyes away from ourselves and lifted them to the faithfulness of God in Jesus Christ and the gift of the Spirit. This Primates' Meeting has been wonderful and has now become a moment in history where we have seen the closeness of our relationship with Rome at the pastoral, the missionary and the spiritual level, which demonstrates the progress made over the last half century from antipathy to deep bonds of friendship all round the world. I am so grateful to God for the gift of the Spirit who worked among us this morning and has been working among us all week.'

This is the second time this year that Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury have joined together in Rome. In January, they commissioned Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops

at Vespers in the Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls in an ecumenical partnership during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, as reported in the May Window.

The audience with Pope Francis happened on the last day of the Primates' Meeting, which saw the Primates go on pilgrimage to holy sites in Rome, including the Abbey of Tre Fontane, the Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls and

the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere.

It had been an important conclusion to a week of discussions which had been hosted by the Anglican Centre (ACR) in Rome. The ACR works with the Anglican Communion and Vatican offices on joint projects for education, ecumenism, and shared mission, and it cultivates friendship between Anglicans and Catholics to deepen communion. Archbishop Ian Ernest is The Archbishop of Canterbury's Personal Representative to the Holy See and Director of the ACR.

The Primates' Meeting gathers Anglican Archbishops, Presiding Bishops and Moderators from member Churches of the Anglican Communion. The meeting was held in Rome because of its historical and spiritual significance for the whole Christian world. Pope Gregory the Great sent Augustine of Canterbury on mission to England in 597. Especially since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), Rome has been a centre of inter-Christian encounter and of ecumenical research.

The full text of the address by Pope Francis is available at <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240502-primati-comunione-anglicana.html>

TOGETHER FOR CREATION AND ECUMENICAL RELATIONS : GERMANS ALSO VISIT ROME

LWF Vice-President and head of the LWF German National Committee, Bishop Kristina Kühnbaum Schmidt, recently travelled to Rome for meetings with Ecumenical partners and the LWF member Church in Italy.

German National Committee visits Rome

A delegation of the German National Committee (GNC) visited Rome and met with Pope Francis, some ecumenical partners, and the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy (ELCI), an LWF Member Church. They were led by Bishop Kristina Kühnbaum-Schmidt, chair of the GNC and LWF Vice-President for Central Western Europe.

They attended a general audience with Pope Francis and in a short exchange afterwards, Bishop Kühnbaum-Schmidt thanked the Holy Father for his important and continuous



The bishop spoke with Pope Francis after the general audience.

commitment to the preservation of creation. 'I consider the official inclusion of a festival of creation in the liturgical calendar of all Christian churches, recently discussed at an ecumenical meeting in Assisi, to be a great opportunity to further deepen the theology and spirituality of creation,' she said. She also emphasised the important commitment to peace in the world and to supporting the poor and marginalised.

Exchange with local member church

Before the meeting with Pope Francis, confidential discussions had already taken place with Kurt Cardinal Koch, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, as well as with employees of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith about the upcoming 500th anniversary of the *Confessio Augustana* in 2030, the understanding of synodality and Lutheran-Roman Catholic relations on an international level.

During the trip which lasted from April 15th to 17th, 2024, the Bishop also met the church leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy (ELCI) as well as students and scholarship holders of the German National Committee of the LWF at the *Centro Melantone*. The GNC/LWF represents the eleven LWF member Churches with their approximately 10.3 million members in Germany. Ensuring the involvement and participation of these member Churches in the activities of the LWF, the GNC in turn also presents the global Lutheran communion in Germany, and supports the LWF in its theological, missionary and diaconal work.

UGANDA : DANCING FOR PEACE

Youh Group turns place of conflict into a peaceful place using traditional dance

Like many refugee settlements, Palabek in Lamwo district, northern Uganda, is a place of scarce resources and crowded living conditions. This is a perfect recipe for conflict, which divides communities and families who come from Uganda and across the border in Southern Sudan.

It was the children who proved to be the peacemakers in this situation. In 2018, 32 young people formed the "Acholi Kids Group." The Acholi are native to Northern Uganda and Southern South Sudan.

It turned out that peace was only a few (dance) steps away! The young people used art and drama – and a

traditional dance of the Acholi to bring people together.

'When you are dancing, you cannot be sad. Your teeth must be out as you smile, and that alone is a sign of peace and love,' Tonny Okema, a passionate member of the group, said. 'When we start performing, people gather from different zones to come and watch us,' added Patricia.

Their performances, from the rhythmic Ajere to the vibrant

Larakaraka dance, captivate audiences and bridge divides. However, it's not just about the spectacle; it's about sparking conversation and creating connections. And it works!



TANZANIA AND ETHIOPIA: SERVING BODY AND SOUL

In April this year, on his first visit as LWF President, Bishop Henrik Stubkjær witnessed the multi-faceted work of the two largest Churches in the global Lutheran communion.

'Fast-growing churches that are putting into practice the principle of holistic mission.' That was how the President of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Bishop Henrik Stubkjær, described the Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) and The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) at the conclusion of a week-long visit to those two countries. He visited Arusha and Moshi in northern Tanzania from 16th to 18th April, before travelling to the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, from 19th to 21st April. Between them, these two African Churches number almost 20 million people, making them the largest members of the LWF.

In Tanzania, Bishop Henrik was able to see at first-hand the work of the Tumaini University Makumira, launching a new five-year plan for the institution which has been training pastors and lay ministers for the Church in Tanzania and beyond for the past seventy years. Accompanied by ELCT's Presiding Bishop, Alex Malasusa, and by EECMY President and LWF Vice-President for Africa, the Rev Dr Yonas Dibisa, the delegation met with university students and staff. They also enjoyed a show at the new Cultural Centre, which works to preserve local cultures and traditions through music, song, dance and other artistic expressions.

The following day, President Stubkjær toured Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre, part of a network of 24 hospitals and 148 health facilities which provide services for thousands of people, particularly in rural and isolated areas. Noting that the ELCT provides up to 15% of all healthcare services in the country, the LWF leader said: 'It is important for all of us to see the way that preaching the gospel goes hand in hand with social engagement – not just for the Church but for all people in Tanzania.'

In Ethiopia, Bishop Stubkjær and his delegation visited both the Church and the LWF World Service programme, which has provided humanitarian aid and development support in the country for over half a century. This was established as a response to famine in the early 1970s, the programme currently focuses on support and resilience building among people suffering from conflicts in the north and west of the country. During the visit to Addis Ababa, the delegation heard from several EECMY Synod Presidents about the members of their congregations who have been killed in recent months.

EECMY President Dibisa explained that peacebuilding and conflict resolution are among the priorities of the EECMY, working together with leaders of majority Orthodox Church and also the smaller Roman Catholic community in Ethiopia who have recently agreed to establish a National Council of Churches in the country.

During the visit, President Stubkjær held talks with Patriarch Mathias of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and



The Sisters of the Community of Hope in Moshi, Tanzania, are committed to working with renewable energy and climate friendly agriculture. Photo: LWF/A.Danielsson

with Catholic Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel, reaffirming the shared commitment of the Churches to serving the most vulnerable communities.

Serving the whole person

Education, mission and financial sustainability are also key pillars of the EECMY, which has grown from just 20,000 members when it was formally established as a Church in 1959 to almost 12 million members today. Guided by its vision of "serving the whole person," the Church is strongly committed to proclamation, service, and witness. There are over 400 residential students in its seminary which trains over 4,000 men and women in its in-person and online programmes for theological studies, music, media, management and leadership.

LWF President Stubkjær also visited projects runs by EECMY's Development and Social Services Commission, including a centre for children with special needs. The Commission coordinates 30 branch offices which address the most urgent needs of local communities by a variety of initiatives ranging from food security and climate resilience to healthcare and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) projects.

The LWF leader also had official meetings with Ethiopia's President Sahle-Work Zewde and its Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, both of whom affirmed the important role that the EECMY plays in the life of the nation. And before leaving Addis Ababa, President Stubkjær attended worship at the oldest Lutheran church in country, built over a century ago. He praised the work of the church and its ability to develop activities to financially support the growth of its multi-faceted ministry. 'I have been so inspired by the vibrant witness of Mekane Yesus,' he said. He thanked them for welcoming the delegation as family.'

ROMANIA: CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF WOMEN'S MINISTRY

As Head of her Church's Department for Ecumenical Relations and Pastoral training the Rev Dr Elfriede Dörr reflects on how she has fulfilled her calling to the ordained ministry.



Romania's Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession is celebrating 30 years since its decision to ordain women for ministry. During the last week of August there was a service of thanksgiving and other public events in Sibiu.

The Rev Dr Elfriede Dörr remembers the many difficulties she and other pioneers faced in the early days after their ordination as pastors. 'I was ordained on 8th September, 1996, in Magdeburg in central Germany,' she recalls, 'for ministry in the parish of Mediasch in Transylvania.' The decision to accept women's ordination had been made two years earlier, but it would take several more years before the Church was ready to ordain a woman in Romania itself. 'I remember it wasn't easy when I started my ministry,' Dr Dörr says. 'I came to serve in a traditional parish where there was a strong sense of the 'office' of a pastor's wife. I was married to a pastor, but I did not see myself as only a wife, with all the expectations that role brings.'

Challenging patriarchal culture

One of the hardest things she found was the lack of role models or companions to turn to for inspiration or when she needed support. Sometime later, she remembers meeting a young Slovakian woman pastor at a conference in Graz, Austria, with whom she could share stories and exchange experiences of common challenges. 'I remember how we ate ice cream together during a conference break and I had the feeling of breathing a sigh of relief,' she says.

Three decades on, Dr Dörr has found that working in an international context, including with the Conference of European Churches, has offered her many opportunities to meet women who have served as inspiring role models. She says she is often reminded of the significance of being a woman in ministry when people approach her with the words: 'The way you speak from the pulpit speaks to my heart – women can do that!'

Yet she also reflects on the "web of theologically packaged devaluation" to which women are still subjected, Biblical passages being used to demean and deny their equal dignity. 'Even women have internalized this culture to the extent that it seems normal to us and we do nothing to question it,' she says. 'I am therefore all the more impressed when colleagues speak out against this patriarchal culture.'

Model leaders and mothers of faith

To challenge this mind-set, Dr Dörr notes the importance of explaining 'the historical contexts of the Biblical passages' used by opponents of women's ordination and of presenting 'theological arguments for the equal dignity of women.' Similarly, she says, 'I can name Biblical women in leadership roles, such as Deborah, the Judge and Prophetess, Priscilla, the teacher and missionary, and Junia, who is called an apostle.'

She says women facing such challenges should place themselves in the tradition of mothers of faith, of Shiphrah and Puah, Lydia, Phoebe, Hildegard von Bingen, Mary Daly, Marlene Wermscher and Katharina Ludwig. At difficult times, she adds,

'I think it is important to stay with yourself, to allow God to guide you in the silence of your home or in the blessing of a public service. This strengthens you to stand as a child of God in the world and to follow your calling.'

Despite the challenges, Dr Dörr says her work has given her 'great joy and satisfaction,' particularly in her mission to further ecumenical and international relationships, as well as training new pastors for ministry. As a member of a minority Church in the majority Orthodox nation, she uses the image of an orchestra to describe her task as the face of her Church in international contexts. 'A small minority Church in the wider context of ecumenism is perhaps a piccolo flute that isn't always heard in the whole concert but, when it is, it is important that it hits the right note at the right time.'

A recent satisfaction for Dr Dörr has been the design of clergy dresses with traditional style Transylvanian clasps that date back to the Middle Ages and are normally associated with men's clerical wear. 'I was always fascinated by what Lutheran women from other corners of the world came up with to be recognisable as pastors in public,' she explains. The dresses that she and her colleagues helped to design have been well received she says, adding: 'I see the real achievement in sending out a signal that we are going to change the traditional understanding of ministry and we stand by it confidently, publicly and visibly.'

To women in other Lutheran Churches where ordination is still reserved for men, Dr Dörr says, 'Take heart, change is possible!' She emphasises that 'it is thanks to The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) that we have come this far' and it is important to share that journey with others. At the last LWF Assembly in Poland, she notes, Polish women pastors spoke about the many, lengthy obstacles they had to overcome before ordination became possible in their context.

'It became clear to me there,' she concludes, 'that women's ordination is an indispensable criterion for the reconciled communion of men and women in the Church, although by no means the only one. It can be described, she smiles, as a step towards justice and peace, captured in the beautiful Hebrew word "shalom".'

The Window

supports members of the Anglican-Lutheran Society in better understanding our different traditions and social contexts so that we can more faithfully proclaim together God's love and justice in the world

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10 Sandwich Street, London WC1H 9PL
Tel: +44(0)1626852677
Email: angluthsociety@outlook.com
Registered Charity No.1015153

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National Coordinators

The Rev Susanne Skovhus, Denmark
sus@km.dk
The Rev Dr Jaakko Rusama, Finland
jaakko.rusama@helsinki.fi
Vacant Germany
The Rev Fredrik Ulseth, Norway
fredrik.ulseth@online.no
Vacant, Sweden
Mr Tom VanPoole, USA
anglicanlutheran@gmail.com

Editor of The Window

Canon Dick Lewis
Email : dick@ccwatford.u-net.com

AN INVITATION TO PREPARE FOR FAITH AND ORDER WORLD CONFERENCE

*A new booklet produced by the World Council of Churches (WCC)
invites Churches to get ready for a major gathering in 2025
intended to advance Christian unity.*

Organised by the WCC's Commission on Faith and Order, the conference will take place in Egypt from 24th to 28th October, 2025, and will mark the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, a key moment in the search for Christian unity.

'The Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order is a pivotal event for the World Council of Churches, symbolising a significant milestone in the journey towards Church unity,' said Dr Andrej Jeftić, Director of the Faith and Order Commission. The 16-page full-colour booklet offers more details about the event, its theme, and its setting in Egypt, where it will be hosted by the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The Council of Nicaea in 325 CE gathered bishops representing the whole of Christendom to seek consensus on the central meaning of Christian belief and to affirm their faith in the triune God. World Conferences on Faith and Order have been held since 1927 at key moments in the history of the ecumenical movement, and the anniversary of Nicaea is the starting point for the theme of 2025 conference, "Where now for visible unity?"

The theme will be addressed from the interrelated perspectives of faith, mission, and unity, reaffirming the WCC's vision of churches calling one another to visible unity and advancing the unity of humanity and of all creation. 'Given the challenges we face – disunity, injustice, climate urgency, wars, and violence – how do we approach the quest for visible unity so that we may together witness our common faith in Jesus as God and Saviour in the 21st century?' said Dr Jeftić. 'We invite Churches, ecumenical organisations, academic institutions, and individuals to collaborate with the WCC in their own Nicaea commemorations, and to engage with and support the Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order.'

For further details and information about supporting the conference, please contact: Nicaea2025@wcc-coe.org. Copies of the brochure in PDF format can be downloaded from <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/toward-the-sixth-world-conference-on-faith-and-order>

