

# The Window

MAY/JUNE 2021

THE ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN SOCIETY

Issue No. 125

We hope you enjoy this issue of your Newsletter.

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**And much more**

## FIRST VIRTUAL CONFERENCE STARTS

Our Virtual Conference has begun. The pre-recorded videos are now online and can be watched by anyone, whether or not you have registered for the 'live' part of the conference on 21st May. Follow this link, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChagS0h7RC0jv5bcpP0iubA> to find them.

### Bishop Eero Huovinen

discusses the importance of understanding the nature of the Church in the light of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues. The groundbreaking document the Joint Declaration on Justification (1999) expresses fundamental agreements, including the Christological basis and the spiritual and sacramental character of the Church. Do Lutherans not appreciate the Church enough? Or do Roman Catholics appreciate it too much? The question of ecclesial communities is central: Which Church is a Church "in a proper sense"? Among recent ecumenical documents, "Baptism and Growth in Communion", soon to be published, will be a step forward. Bishop Eero Huovinen, former Bishop of Helsinki in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is the Co-Chair of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Commission on Unity.



### Sister Prof Susan Wood

focuses on two topics arising from extensive international conversations between Roman Catholics and Lutherans a) the meaning of Eucharistic Sacrifice and b) the recognition of ministries. Concerns about the Church offering Christ in the Eucharist recede when the participation of the worshipping assembly is introduced. She asks if it is possible to agree a qualified but mutual recognition of ministries. Does the common sacrament of Baptism provide a basis for an incremental recognition of ministry? Prof Wood is the Academic Dean at Regis College, University of Toronto, and is a member of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic

International Commission on Unity.

**Archbishop Bernard Longley** describes the importance of 'receptive ecumenism' in the international dialogue between Roman Catholics and Anglicans. Churches look to their dialogue partner to help them learn if they need to reform.



Such learning examines theological principles and differentiated structures. Anglicans are invited to consider some gifts that the Roman Catholic Church can offer, including its experience of synodality and the need to maintain unity of communion. Bernard Longley is Archbishop of Birmingham in The Catholic Church in England and Wales, and Co-Chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission.



### The Rev Dr Will Adam

describes some of the key issues discussed during the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue. Active talks began early 1920s and the Anglican Centre in Rome was founded in the 1960s. The goal for the dialogues is the visible unity of the Church. There are still many stumbling blocks, primacy and authority for example, and the validity of the ordination and the participation in the Holy Eucharist. How much diversity is tolerated and what are the tolerable limits? How much do we need to be in agreement? Will Adam is Director of Unity, Faith and Order, and Deputy Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, and Co-Secretary of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission.

**The 'live' session** for those who have registered will be screened on Zoom on 21st May and will include some short presentations from representatives of the wider ecumenical community in response to the talks given on the videos, and interactions among the main presenters, other speakers and participants, and we hope to report it in a special issue of The Window in June.

## ANNUAL MEETING

This is a brief outline of the Society's Annual Meeting. It is reported in full on our website [www.anglican-lutheran-society.org](http://www.anglican-lutheran-society.org)

On 6th March we held our very first 'virtual' Annual Meeting. Members from ten countries gathered on Zoom and were introduced to our host venue, the church of All-Hallow-by-the-Tower in London, by the Vicar, the Rev Katherine Hedderly, who told us a little of its rich history.

### The Business Meeting.

Bishop Michael Igrave (Anglican) and the Rev Dr Jaakko Rusama (Lutheran) were re-elected as Co-Moderators. They reported that 2020 had been a strange year. The conference planned for Rome in October had been cancelled, but they are delighted that it is to be held in virtual form in May 2021, and a 'live' conference is being planned in Trondheim, Norway, in July 2022. The Society's website has been redesigned. Our Presidents, the Very Rev Dr John Arnold (Anglican) and Bishop Juergen Johannesdotter (Lutheran) had both decided that the time had come for them to step aside, and Patrick Litton had been appointed Treasurer when Lisbet Pedersen resigned.

Patrick reported that the Society's finances are in good order. We ended the year with a surplus of over £5000, and a balance of almost £21,500. This healthy position is largely due to the cancellation of the Rome Conference but gives a good basis on which to plan the Society's future work.

There were reports from our National Co-ordinators. The Rev Jochen Dallas has resigned as our German Co-ordinator and the Rev Dr Miriam Haar has been appointed in his place. Jochen was thanked for his long service, as were the other Co-ordinators.

Helen Harding, our Membership Secretary, reported that a number of new members had joined in 2020, most of whom are students. This is a very healthy development.

The meeting ended with the elections. Bishop David Hamid, Suffragan Bishop in the Church of England Diocese of Europe, was elected Anglican President and Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga was elected Lutheran President. The Secretary and Treasurer and the Executive Committee members were also elected.

### First Presentation

The Rt Rev Guli Francis-Dequani, Bishop of Loughborough in the Church of England addressed the question, "**The Blood of the Martyrs is The Seed of The Church: What lessons might we learn from the persecuted church?**". There was a lively question and answer session.

### Second Presentation

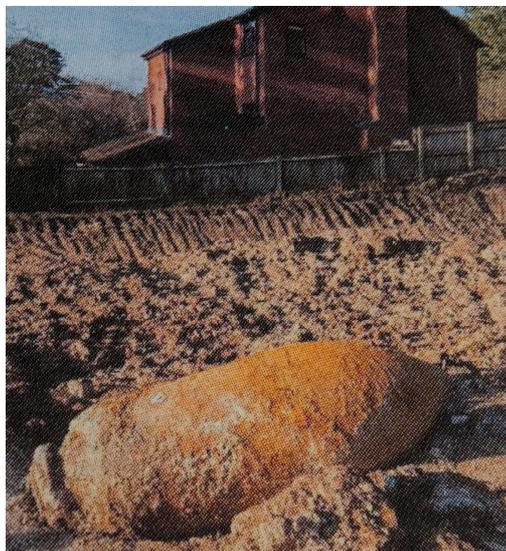
Henrietta Blythe, the Chief Executive Officer of Open Doors UK and Ireland spoke about "**The Work of Open Doors**". This also provoked a number of questions and comments.

### Worship

The day ended with an act of worship and farewell from the Co-Moderators. We look forward to next year's Annual Meeting which we hope will be in-person, though it has been suggested that it might take the form of a hybrid meeting so that members unable to attend the meeting can join online.

**The Annual Meeting is fully reported on the website, with transcripts of the presentations. If anyone is unable to access them the Secretary can provide printed copies.**

## UK MEMBER'S HOME DESTROYED IN BOMB BLAST



The bomb with Ash's home just over the fence

You may remember the Rev Ashley Leighton Plom who, in the last issue of *The Window* described his life since ordination as a Deacon in the Church of England as 'a steep learning curve'. Well, nothing could have prepared him, his wife Deborah and their ten year old son Alfred for what would befall them just a few weeks ago. A Second World War bomb was unearthed in allotment gardens next to their home in Exeter in the West of England. More than 2600 households were evacuated before army experts used a controlled explosion to destroy the bomb.

Unfortunately, the blast did an enormous amount of damage to the Plom's home and to some of the other properties. Because of COVID restrictions the family was forced to find refuge in a Premier Inn. Exeter Diocese has now found them a temporary home until their house is repaired.

Ash says, 'We have been very upheld by the love and support of kind Christians around us. My thoughts and prayers are with the residents who don't have the benefit of a loving church network around them.' He is doing his best to offer pastoral care for those people who have been unable to return to their homes.

## LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH

The Church of England's new teaching and learning resources about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage is described by Dr Eeva John, a member of our Society and Enabling Officer for Living in Love and Faith, Archbishop's Council Central Secretariat

### Why was the Living in Love and Faith project commissioned?

The Church of England has a long history of discussing and debating questions of human sexuality. Landmarks in recent decades include the publication of *Issues in Human Sexuality* (1991), *Some Issues in Human Sexuality* (2003) and the *Pilling Report* (2013), as well as a number of responses to changes in legislation in the UK related to civil partnerships and same-sex marriage. Struggling with continued disagreement, in 2014 the Church initiated a 3-year programme of *Shared Conversations*. The aim was for the diversity of views within the Church to be expressed honestly and heard respectfully. So groups were established within the College of Bishops, regionally and among members of General Synod. In 2017, the House of Bishops concluded this process by producing a report entitled, *Marriage and Same Sex Relationships after the Shared Conversations*. However, members of the General Synod refused even to 'take note' of the report.

It was this stalemate that led to the *Living in Love and Faith* (LLF) project. Its vision, as expressed by the Archbishops, was for a 'large scale teaching document around the subject of human sexuality', now known as *Living in Love and Faith: Christian Teaching and Learning about Identity, Sexuality, Relationships and Marriage*. Following the 2017 General Synod meeting the Archbishops wrote:

'To deal with that disagreement and to find ways forward, we need a radical new Christian inclusion in the Church. This must be founded in Scripture, in reason, in tradition, in theology and the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it; it must be based on good, healthy, flourishing relationships, and in a proper 21st century understanding of being human and of being sexual.

'We need to work together - not just the bishops but the whole Church, not excluding anyone - to move forward with confidence.

'The way forward needs to be about love, joy and celebration of our common humanity; of our creation in the image of God, of our belonging to Christ - all of us, without exception, without exclusion.'

Unlike previous efforts to address these matters, the work that was then commissioned by the House of Bishops, would be characterised by exploring questions of human sexuality within the wider framework of Christian anthropology. Furthermore, there would not be a statement or report, but a suite of teaching and learning resources for use by the whole Church. Its purpose was not to draw conclusions, but for the whole Church to deepen and broaden its understanding of the Biblical, theological, scientific, social and historical aspects of these matters.

The resources call the people of God to be open to learning

- learning to better understand the biblical and theological roots of different perspectives against the backdrop of the diverse lived experiences of followers of Christ. They also invite the Church to explore and affirm the common ground that underpins diversity and difference with hope.

### How were the resources produced?

The work began in earnest in late 2017. Four working groups of experts in Biblical studies, theology, the social and biological sciences and history were set up and chaired by bishops. The work was steered by a coordinating group of bishops and consultants led by the Bishop of Coventry, Christopher Cocksworth.

In an extraordinarily collaborative effort, this diverse group of 40 individuals produced papers, essays and bibliographies. Over time the groups thrashed out the interdisciplinary methodology that would shape the structure of the LLF book. The work was painstaking as individuals, bringing different perspectives and the methodologies of different disciplines, laboured together to present areas of agreement and disagreement as fairly and thoroughly as possible. Over the three years during which these groups worked together deep relationships were forged which fuelled the hope that continues to sustain the project: the hope embodied in the prayer of Jesus in John 17, 'that they may all be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me'.

Alongside this essentially scholarly task, a programme of recording conversations with over 70 individuals and some church groups took place. Some of these lived experience stories can be found in the book as 'encounters' in between each part, while others can be found as a series of powerful films. Their purpose was to ensure that questions of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage are earthed in the lived realities of the lives and convictions of followers of Jesus Christ.

The book is just one of a suite of resources which includes a 5-session course for groups on film and in print, a series of podcasts, lived experience story films, and an online library of over 200 essays, journal articles and books. All of these are located in an online Learning Hub accessed through [www.churchofengland.org/LLF](http://www.churchofengland.org/LLF).



LIVING  
IN LOVE  
& FAITH

**What are key features of the resources?**

A key feature of the resources is that they are pedagogically shaped.

**1. The Book**

The 480-page book, for example, is in five parts that take the reader on a learning journey.

**Part One** – ‘What have we received?’ – is a meditative exploration of God’s gifts to humanity of life, relationship, marriage and learning.

**Part Two** – ‘What is going on?’ – looks outwards, examining questions of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage in society, from scientific perspectives and within faith communities.

**Part Three** – ‘Where are we in God’s story?’ – examines how Christians are to understand and respond to these trends in the light of the good news of Jesus Christ.

**Part Four** – ‘How do we hear God?’ – considers the question of how we go about seeking and finding answers to the question, what does it mean for individuals and the church to be Christ-like when it comes to matters of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

**The final part** – ‘What can we learn from each other?’ – is a series of conversations on the topics of marriage, sex, gender identity and the life of the church, drawing on the learning in the book.

**2. The Living in Love and Faith Course**

In a similar way the even more accessible LLF course invites people to learn *together* about some of the complexities that underlie questions of identity, sexuality and marriage. It invites people to understand each other better. It sets out the different conclusions that Christians draw about these matters, while seeking to remain faithful to Scripture, tradition and reason. And it invites compassionate listening to the diversity of Christians’ lived experiences.

**How will the resources be used?**

The LLF resources were published in November 2019. In an ‘invitation’ and ‘appeal’ in the book, the Bishops of the Church of England invite the whole Church to engage with the resources during 2021, learning together in groups



*Living in Love and Faith Co-ordinating Group hard at work*

across the country, so that a process of discernment and decision-making can take place in 2022. To enable this to happen, each diocese has appointed LLF Advocates who will animate and support churches to engage in groups with the materials and each other.

The aim is for bishops to hear what is emerging from this learning as they exercise their responsibility, as teachers of the faith, to discern a way forward for the Church of England. This is a new approach for the Church of England. It is an invitation for the whole people of God to contribute to – and thereby own – this process of discernment and decision-making about what it means to live in love and faith together.

**Can other churches use the resources?**

Yes! While LLF is a project of the Church of England, there is a deep appreciation of the Church’s connectedness across the world. During the process of producing the resources, the working groups have been keen to listen to and learn from the wisdom and experiences of the Church of England’s ecumenical partner churches and the Anglican Communion. The Church of England welcomes the possibility of meeting with partner churches who would like to engage with and respond to the resources. The LLF resources are freely available online and accessible through a simple email registration process at <https://llf.churchofengland.org/>

**ECUMENICAL REVIEW FOCUSES ON “CHRIST’S LOVE IN THE MIDST OF PANDEMIC”**

*World Council of Churches (WCC) journal explores theological, spiritual, and societal questions raised by the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Introducing the issue, journal editor Stephen G. Brown writes that ‘fundamental questions about the way we make sense of our lives, live in society, and accept responsibility for future generations have been amplified by the global and civilizational crisis of

the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences.’ Issue’s such as missional praxis in a world of pandemic; how churches demonstrate reconciliation and solidarity with communities forced to the margins; ethical dilemmas; ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic

interacts with economic inequality, racism, and climate catastrophe; and contextualized reflections on the pandemic. All articles are currently available for free download from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/17586623/2020/72/4>



## NATIONAL CHURCHES ONLY FOR WELL-EDUCATED, TRADITION-BOUND AND ELDERLY?

*Dr Jonas Adelin Jørgensen of the Danish Church's Interchurch Council reviews some worrying trends in the Nordic Churches*

### The issue

Declining baptism rates may be crucial for Churches in the Nordic countries. It is not just a matter of having fewer members; rather that the Churches might no longer be for all the people. The Lutheran National Churches are by far the largest religious communities in the five Nordic countries, but they are all experiencing a decline in membership. One main reason is declining baptism rates. In the Nordic countries, infant baptism has been the normal way into the Church for the vast majority of church members. But in the last two decades, the number of baptisms has decreased. In Denmark, for example, the baptism of children during their first year of life has fallen from 77.2% in 2000 to 58.7% in 2018. What might account for this decline in Denmark and the other Nordic countries?

### Research reviewed

That is the question a new Nordic initiative “Churches in Times of Change” tried to answer in a series of webinars from March to May. They mapped various national research projects and theological debates over the past 20 years in Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark and compared the insights gained. Basic empirical and sociological questions included: what factors are significant when parents decide to have their children baptised? And, *vice versa*: might the reason for the declining baptismal figures be found in secularization and individualization? Is there a difference in the likelihood of different social groups having their children baptised? What might these trends say about the future of the Nordic National Churches?

### Positive factors

We know from various reports quite a lot about the positive factors that influence parents in the Nordic region to have their children baptised. The most important of these is culture and



*There is a lack of infant baptism after a year in the sign of the corona*

family traditions. In the past it was unthinkable not to have children baptised, but for parents today baptism has become a matter of choice depending on what culture and tradition the parents identify with.

Another positive factor might be the theological significance of baptism - that the child in baptism is accepted as the child of God. However, surveys show this to be less significant than family culture and tradition.

There are also the actual baptismal ritual and the aesthetics that surround baptism - the baptismal gown, the baptismal candle, the hymns and the liturgy. These also play a positive part in leading parents to choose baptism.

Finally, gender also plays a role. A Swedish study claims that in families where there is strong female influence from mothers and grandmothers, the children are more likely to be baptised. In other words, culture and family traditions, the aesthetics and theology of the baptismal ritual, and gender are positive factors leading parents to baptise their children.

### Ambiguous factors

There are a number of factors that are more ambiguous but which it is important to include in the picture. Swedish studies show that family patterns play a role: families with two parents who have both completed a higher education are most likely to choose baptism for their children, while single mothers in larger cities are most likely not to choose baptism for the children.

From Danish studies, we know that the older the parents are, the more likely they are to choose baptism. Researchers suggest that higher birth ages for women are associated with higher levels of education, and the higher the education the greater the tendency to baptize the children. If this is true, it is somewhat surprising because, from a sociological point of view, one would think that the higher the level of education, the higher the degree of secularization. But in Denmark it seems to be the other way around!

Urbanization is another ambiguous factor. Across the Nordic region, the proportion of baptized children is lower in the cities than in the countryside. An explanation might be that urbanization could lead to individualization and a sense of freedom from tradition.

Finally, increased migration into the Nordic countries has led to major demographic shifts, especially in the urban areas. Most migrants have a rather distant relationship to Christianity and have no interest in becoming members of the National Churches. From other types of sociological studies, we know that people tend to be influenced in their choices by people with whom they surround themselves. So the question arises as to whether the presence of believers of other religious traditions means that church members are less likely to 

⇒ baptise their children or, conversely, whether they are more likely to have their children baptised because they consciously choose this tradition as valuable and important?

### Negative factors

There are a number of factors that are negative, influencing parents not to baptise their children. Researchers have pointed to secularization as a main reason, the situation where religion no longer plays the same fundamental role for the understanding of life, but has become one activity among other leisure activities. Secularization leads to a distant relationship to religion in general and ecclesiastical communities in particular.

Along with secularization also belongs pluralism, offering several options for the individual to choose from when it comes to religious beliefs and religious practices. It is clear that in the Nordic countries many do not see religion as an important issue and feel very much free to believe or not believe.

This freedom of choice also affects infant baptismal practice in that some parents decide not to baptize because they feel that the child must choose for himself or herself when he or she becomes capable of it. In other words, secularization, pluralism and religious individualism negatively affect parents' choice of baptism, even if it happens in different ways.

### Conclusions

What kind of future Nordic National Church do we envisage in the light of these trends and factors? If the current development in declining baptism rates continues, in a few years in the Nordic National Churches fewer than half of infants in their first year of life will be baptized.

Church members will increasingly come from the part of the population for whom cultural and religious traditions weigh heavily and the theological significance of baptism is appreciated. They will live in traditional families, and have parents who are older and more educated.

People who live in urban areas, with fewer traditional family patterns, who feel distanced from church communities and religion in general, who are at the same time preoccupied with individual freedom and the individual's right to choose or to opt out of religious affiliation, will be less likely to choose baptism and church membership for their children.

In time, the Nordic National Churches, which have always been regarded as being Churches for the whole people will, to a greater extent, become Churches for the first group, and only to a lesser extent for the second group. In the long run they risk no longer being *Folk Churches* for the whole community but of only that part of the population made up of the culturally and religiously traditional families, who are older and better-educated than the average.

You can find out more about the *Churches in Times of Change* project, and watch the webinars, at <https://churchesintimesofchange.org/resources-and-recordings-from-webinars>

## TWO VOLUMES ON MORAL DISCERNMENT

*Current tensions within and between Churches are often the result of disagreements over moral issues, and consequently Churches face challenges to preserve unity and meet obstacles to restoring unity. The World Council of Churches' (WCC) Faith and Order Commission presents two publications to assist the Churches in finding a way to deepen mutual understanding leading to dialogue.*

These documents are the fruit of a multilateral ecumenical study process that includes scholars and church leaders from different traditions: Eastern Orthodox and Oriental, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Old Catholic, and diverse Protestant and Pentecostal Churches.

**“Churches and Moral Discernment. Volume 1: Learning from Traditions,”** provides self-descriptions on how 14 different Church traditions engage in moral discernment processes. Each one reflects on the sources they use, how these sources interplay with each other and who actually participates in the process.

**“Churches and Moral Discernment. Volume 2: Learning from History,”** examines concrete historical examples where Churches have modified or changed their understanding of a specific moral issue. Expert historians, theologians, and ethicists examine usury, slavery, freedom of religion, marriage, suicide, Church–State relations and Christian involvement in war and in peace-building. The contributions display similarities and differences in the ways in which Churches have approached these challenges in the past.

The Rev Dr Susan Durber, Moderator of the Faith and Order Commission, feels that this particular aspect of Faith and Order's work responds to a really urgent and deeply felt need among the Churches as they wrestle with painful divisions. ‘The ecumenical pilgrimage demands listening to others with close attention,’ she says. ‘These two publications invite you first to listen to those who can tell you, from the inside, what it's really like to respond to the call of Christ upon your life from within a tradition – and then to listen carefully for the lessons we can find in our history about how Churches have responded when differences on moral issues arise.’

When the questions we face today feel sometimes intractable and difficult, it is wonderful to find that we already have resources with which to understand each other more fully and to learn wisdom. These two publications are a true gift to the Churches in our times.’

The newly released volumes are both available online at the following links:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/churches-and-moral-discernment> and <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/churches-and-moral-discernment-ii>

## TWENTY YEARS OF THE CHARTA ŒCUMENICA

*Pastor Christian Krieger, President of the Council of European Churches (CEC), recalls the drafting of a significant document. His article appeared in the French ecumenical review Unité des Chrétiens and is summarised by our editor, Dick Lewis*

Since its signing, on 22nd April, 2001 in the Church of Saint Thomas in Strasbourg, by the then President of CEC and President of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences [CCEE], this Ecumenical Charter has embodied at one and the same time a dream, an imperative, a text and a milestone in the history of the ecumenical movement.

The dream was that the dark clouds of what some called the ecumenical winter would be dispersed, and Christians, Christian communities and Churches in European countries would recover their vocation and responsibility to work for reconciliation and unity. During the Ecumenical Assembly in Graz (1997) the conviction had emerged that if the ecumenical movement was to continue on its way towards unity, a common basis would be required to enable everyone to take their place in this Christian and/or institutional task. The *Charta Œcumenica* became this instrument. Its purpose remains to stimulate and strengthen a common life, prayer and witness among Christians.

This Ecumenical Charter arose because the European Churches wanted to bear credible witness to the Gospel. In Europe, in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the expanding Union was all about living in a "common home", whilst recognizing cultural diversities and identities and maintaining difference. But European countries were faced with new ethical questions (biomedicine, ecology), a quest for meaning and happiness in consumer societies, as well as the pressing question of their responsibility towards the southern hemisphere. The Churches could not claim to make a credible contribution to these social and societal problems until they developed a consensus among themselves. So the challenge of proclaiming the Gospel constituted the imperative behind the Charter, an awareness that European Churches needed to overcome their divisions and conflicts so as to give themselves a firm basis on which to strengthen their witness to the Gospel.

The history of the ecumenical movement is punctuated by numerous texts. An issue has always been their reception both by denominations and local congregations. CEC and CCEE did not want their Ecumenical Charter to become just one more text. What was needed was a document that was short, neither dogmatic nor canonical, and not a declaration, but rather an inspiring text, based on Sacred Scripture, setting out the main elements in promoting Unity within European Churches. Accessible and designed to encourage thinking, it would promote an ecumenical culture of dialogue within Christendom. In fact, these "guidelines for a growing collaboration between the Churches in Europe" include in a few pages a reminder of the common



*Signing Ecumenical Charter, April 22, 2001, in the Church of Saint Thomas in Strasbourg the President of the Council of European Bishops Conferences, Cardinal Miroslav Vlk and the President of the Conference of European Churches, Bishop Jérémie (Caligiorgis)*

faith in the one, holy, catholic/universal and apostolic Church, and a common vocation to live in the Church, united by faith. They then develop the path of visible communion of the Churches in Europe by means of evangelism, and of common life, action and prayer. They outline the perspectives and commitments of the Churches in their common responsibility in Europe concerning European construction, dialogue between cultures, attitudes towards creation, communion with Judaism, relations with Islam and dialogue with other social and political ideologies.

An inspiring text, the *Charta Œcumenica* was to be a milestone on the road to Unity. On the one hand, it was the fruit of the work of generations of ecumenists, of their commitment, their efforts, their dialogues, their vision and their hope. On the other hand, it built on collaborative work in European Christianity by the CEC and the CCEE, from the spawning of the original idea in Graz in 1997 to its adoption in Strasbourg in 2001. It remains an instrument that should be widely promoted in local ecumenical groups, in dialogue, meetings, prayer and common action. It is, of course, a child of its own time. It does not deal with some of the major issues of today such as the migration crisis, security issues, the urgency of climate change. But its insights remain relevant and inspiring. Affirming unity is all the more necessary at a time when Churches tend to be primarily concerned with their own future. All European Churches face the challenge of evangelization. Europe is grappling with the issues of withdrawal, with nationalist or populist movements. So the credibility of a Divided Church is called into question. Living, praying, and acting together remains an imperative on the road to unity. It is with gratitude that CEC and CCEE celebrate the 20th anniversary of the *Charta Œcumenica*, and pray with one voice that the breath of this milestone continues to inspire Christians.

## A PIONEER AMONG THE CLERGY IN MEXICO

*One of our most recent member lives and works in Mexico. He is the Rev Llobet Iván Cetzal-Martinez and our editor, Dick Lewis, asked him to tell us about himself*

I have always been Christian, since I was a little child. I was baptized in 1995 by a Roman Catholic priest in the church of San Francisco Tlaltenco, CDMX, an Original Town (a special status that recognizes the town as a town that has existed since before the Spanish conquest), which is located east of Mexico City and south of the Sierra de Santa Catarina. Its name, Tlaltenco, is made up of the words Tlalli (land), Tentli (shore) and Co (The place in) so it means something like "On the shore of the land".

My grandma is a traditionalist Roman Catholic and my mother used to go to Catholic charismatic renewal worship and sometimes to a Pentecostal Church. I used to go both churches with her, so I obviously learnt to worship God in two different ways: formal liturgy and worship services.

With my grandmother I learned about such things as Carlism (a Spanish conservative political movement originating in support of Don Carlos, brother of Fernando VII who died in 1833, and who claimed the throne in place of Fernando's daughter Isabella. The movement supported the Catholic Church and opposed centralized government and was revived in support of the Nationalist side during the Spanish Civil War); Ultramontanism (a movement beginning in the 15th century which placed strong emphasis on Papal authority and on centralization of the Church, which reached its peak in 1870 when the doctrine of Papal Infallibility was defined); and topics in relation to traditional conservative Catholicism.

For a few years I served as catechist, because I was at that time convinced that the Roman Catholic Church is the true Church, in spite of many doubts about some dogmas because they seemed to conflict with my personal beliefs.

When I was a teenager I expressed the desire to become a priest and I talked with my parish priest about my intentions. He told me that he would teach me about the history of the Catholic



*The priest is the Ven Dr Arruda, Dean of Seminary and Vicar of St Luke's Episcopal Church in Mérida, Yucatán. I am the deacon. Left are Rosa Laura Pichardo-Aguilar and Ricardo Aarón Saldaña-Rocha, the first members of our congregation at our first celebration. The Rev Deacon Miguel Ángel Manjarrez-Torres has a guitar on his shoulder.*

Church and I read "The Catholic Church" by Hans Kung, and my perceptions of catholicity changed. I still went to church where I talked with my new friend who taught me about "rebel Catholicism" until, abruptly, the administration of the parish changed, and the priests left immersed in a scandal over heterodoxy practices.

At that time, near my High School there was a bookstore belonging to the Society of Saint Paul (Paulists) and I remember that I went to buy books for teaching the catechism and found a book on sale: "Night Conversations with Cardinal Martini: The Relevance of the Church for Tomorrow" by Carlo M. Martini and Georg Sporschill (Paulist Press, New York, 2008). They were Jesuits. Cardinal Carlo M. Martini headed the largest diocese in the world, was a scholar and one of the most renowned men of the Church. Georg Sporschill worked in prisons and lived with drug-addicted street children in Romania and Moldavia.

In a series of conversations they asked what faith can mean for life, what future young people have in the Church, and what must be changed so that Christianity itself has a future. My life changed after I read that book, and at the same time I met a friend who is a Christian of the Vineyard Church and he told me about the

Reformation. After that, I supported a local initiative to create a non-denominational Biblical Study Group at my High School with the support of some teachers and friends. Then, in my last days in High School, I met someone who had been a Roman Catholic religious but who had become an Anglican and we shared many points of view. It was he who converted me to Anglicanism. That was in 2013 and I resigned my position in Roman Catholic Church.

I got to know the Anglican Church and became excited because there seemed to be no distinction made between my favourite traditional Christian music and Contemporary Christian music. When I was 21 I returned to Quintana Roo, the place that I am from, and for four years I was a member of St Paul's-by-the-Sea Anglican Church in Corozal, Belize, nine miles from the Mexican border. Unity in diversity is one of the slogans of the Anglican Church and I love it, and that is the main reason I became Anglican.

Some clergy and brothers and sisters in the faith have been saying some unpleasant things about each other in recent years and this has motivated me to want to change the status quo. I can't understand how it is possible that such awful things happen in ➡

⇒ the Holy Church of God. At present there is a schismatic group and I am very unhappy because, not long ago, they made a statement in Jerusalem that caused the separation of certain communities around the world among those who call themselves Anglicans, and have fragmented our beloved Anglican Communion. I invite you all to pray for the unity of the Church and recognize the instruments of communion that symbolise our unity. In the Church there is room for everyone, from the most conservative to the most liberal. Did not Jesus say we were "to love one another" and that God gave us his son?

Currently I am studying at the *Instituto Teológico San Pablo Apóstol* in the Diocese of Southeastern, Mexico to prepare for ordination to the priesthood. I am studying online, because our diocese is very poor and we don't have our own seminary. Bishop Julio Cesar Martín-Trejo ordained me as deacon on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020. My courses for the trimester (January to March) are the Sacred Scriptures, Catholic Creeds and Pastoral Care.



Here I am with Bishop Julio at my ordination as Deacon

Incidentally, we offer some free theological courses in Spanish and sometimes in English to anyone who is interested. Please contact Dean of the Seminary, the Ven Dr José Vieira-Arruda for more information [josevarruda@gmail.com](mailto:josevarruda@gmail.com)

I told the bishop that I wanted to start a mission in the Maya language, given the lack of spiritual attention in that language, and he said it was a good idea. So last July I started a little congregation for Maya speakers. Up to that time only Jehovah's Witnesses offered services in Maya. The other churches only preach the gospel in Spanish and that is sad because they do not contribute to preserving the Maya language. I translate parts of the Book of Common Prayer from English to Maya as part of my new work of inculturation.

Our community voted for St Florence Li Tim Oi as the name for our church because she was the first woman priest in the Anglican Communion. We are the first Anglican church in the Maya zone, and I know that having a Deacon-in-Charge is very unusual, but my job is to be a special figure in the diocese because I am the first indigenous Maya that has become an Anglican and I am working in the St Florence Mission, our church which did not exist before!

Mainline Churches don't have any presence here (excepted Presbyterians but they are very conservative) and ecumenism is not possible at these times for pandemic situation. Since, I am working very hard in mission, the bishop has helped me by offering me a scholarship in the church's virtual seminary and he will soon come to visit us, even though he lives more than 1200 kilometers away.

The bishop ordained me deacon because I am in an isolated part of the Mexican jungle and St Florence's mission is part of the expansion work of the church in Mexico. The Diocese of the Southeast covers a very large territory, but Anglicans are only very few in number, and the Bishop wants to grow the Church in the diocese.

Please pray for St Florence Li Tim Oi's Anglican Maya Mission, for our

work and presence in the zone and for Diocese of South-eastern Mexico. We are starting a work where there was never a presence of the Anglican Church before. We have a small congregation and we meet in the patios of some houses on an itinerant basis in the absence of our own church building. There are many interested people but I am a clergyman without a salary and I have no external financial help, so I have to work, which limits my time to serve the ministry. My job is not stable, and in the pandemic it got complicated. I live in a place that depends on agriculture. Most of my colleagues in the diocese are older than me and have stable jobs, but I am still looking for one.

None of our clergy are paid by the Church because our Diocese doesn't have money and doesn't generate it. Not one of us has a self-sustaining parish. This is the characteristic of our diocese. We serve in love because we are interested in the things of the reign of God and in preaching the good news. We trust in God and his providence.

Martin, the Lutheran pastor, gave me a guide on discipleship and Biblical Studies that includes a section on the history of the Reformation that helps me understand the differences between the Presbyterians, Roman Catholics and us, and I sometimes teach this to people.

I am single. In my personal life I am an activist for human rights, an activist for the linguistic rights of the Mayan people, an activist for the defence of bees (the stingless bees *Melipona*, endemic in the region), I belong to the Casal Catalá de la Península de Yucatán AC, the Mexican Federation of Esperanto and the Mayan Language and Culture Academy of Quintana Roo, and I am a volunteer at Toone Masehualoon, a non-governmental organisation in Belize dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich Maya culture in northern Belize by focusing on the preservation of the Yucatec Maya language, the Maya culture, spirituality, traditions, dances and ancient story telling. On the day that I am writing this I have been unemployed for a month, but my work experience has been as a teacher in Maya teaching.

## MARY AS ECUMENICAL ENABLER

In 2019, the Executive Committee asked David Carter, Methodist Observer on the committee, to prepare a paper on 'Mary, as an ecumenical Enabler' for the scheduled Rome Conference in 2020. Due to COVID-19 the conference could not take place but the paper had been written so our Editor asked David to produce a short summary/taster for The Window.

It is available in full on his website - <http://www.carterbristol.eclipse.co.uk/lutheranism/Mary%20as%20ecumenical%20Enabler.pdf>

Before the Second Vatican Council, discussion of teaching and practice concerning learning from Mary would have been considered a no-no. The Orthodox show deep devotion to Mary but, like all Protestants, regard the Roman Catholic doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and of the Assumption of Mary as lacking clear Biblical basis, let alone the assent of the other Churches.

After Vatican II change began. The Decree *Lumen Gentium* asserted, 'we have but one Mediator, Christ ... all the saving influence of Mary rests on his Mediation. In no way is the immediate union of the faithful with Christ impeded'. Thus was priesthood of all believers safeguarded.

Soon afterwards, a far-sighted Roman Catholic layman, Martin Gillett, founded the *Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary* to promote constructive and irenic dialogue which attracted the interest of several eminent Protestant scholars and leaders though few grassroots members. It did promote much relevant research.

Catholic scholars, most particularly, Fr Laurentin, a peritus at Vatican II on Mariology [Peritus is the title given to Roman Catholic theologians attending an ecumenical council as advisors – Ed], began to admit that devotion to Mary had often been exaggerated in the pre-Vatican II church. He said that the invocation of Mary, asking for her prayers, related 'not to the worship of God but to communication *within* the communion of saints.' The second Council of Nicea (787) had distinguished between worship, due to the Trinity *alone*, and respect due to Mary and all the saints.

The German expression for the feast of the Immaculate Conception is the Begracing, the giving of grace at the Annunciation to Mary for her unique vocation. One may add that that is what God always does when he calls any of us to any vocation - he does



not leave us unsupplied, even if we do not always use his grace aright. The Jesuit, Fr Sesboue, talks of Mary being 'overwhelmed by grace', and Charles Wesley ends the first verse of his hymn 'Behold the servant of the Lord' with the couplet,

'joyful from my own works to cease,  
Glad to fulfil all righteousness'

I suspect that some Methodists have often sung this hymn without recognising the clear reference to Mary's calling! These two lines are the best summary of the Joint Declaration on Justification that I know.

Luther comments on the Annunciation,

'since then, it has been God's manner to regard things which are ... Disregarded ... He has regarded me, a poor, despised and lowly maiden ... I must acknowledge it all to be of pure grace ... and not any worthiness.'

Mary rejoiced in God's will and promises and served God's will, faithfully present and attentive as her divine Son was born and died.

The late Cardinal Suenens commended Mary as a charismatic, a key point for dialogue with Pentecostals, now the second largest Christian communion (if

somewhat disparate in structure compared with Roman Catholics).

Several Catholic women scholars have shed light on the background to Mary in first century Judaism. She was part of an oppressed peasant population, one of the *anawim*, the pious poor, who despite the oppression they experienced continued to trust in God's promises of deliverance. Elizabeth Johnson, in her 'Truly our Sister: a Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints', details her background and faith.

Clearly, all this resonates with Pope Francis, who stresses that she was 'a normal girl. Nothing was exceptional in her life. She worked, went shopping, helped her son and her husband ... just like the people around her'.

The Pope also later added at a papal mass on New Years' Day, 2019.

'Today is also a day to be amazed by the Mother of God. God appears as a little child held in the arms of a woman who feeds her Creator ... God rests on the lap of his mother, and from there he pours out on humanity a new tenderness'.

Luther had great devotion to Mary. Both Elizabeth Johnson and Anita Baly, a Lutheran, agree that she is 'truly a sister and exemplar', for all who try to follow Christ as she did, but not without questioning as she did. Certainly Luke twice presents her as trying to sort out what God was doing, first in his choice of her to be mother of the Messiah and then, after the incident where Jesus went absent without leave at Jerusalem (Luke 1&2)

Bonnie Miller-McLemore states,

'Mary attends to God precisely within the confused messiness of her life', trying to 'see things otherwise hidden and make God's purpose manifest in daily toil.' ➡

## JERICHO IN LEIPZIG

*When she was in Leipzig on pilgrimage Anne Boileau, one of our members, spoke with a man who told her about the vigils they began to hold while commemorating Luther's 'Here I Stand'. The encounter prompted her to write a poem, as she explains.*

The German Democratic Republic had its own way of remembering Martin Luther. The authorities saw him as a social rather than religious reformer. The Protestant Church became a place where dissidents against the regime gathered. Being a devout Christian, though not against the law, was held against you in matters of promotion or privileges. I wrote this poem when I got home, remembering what the gentleman I had spoken with told me about the candles and also the extraordinary power house of music that is Leipzig. It is sad to read of the decline of the Church in Germany.

**Waiting was not against the law,  
even in our country and at that time.  
Standing in the square by the Thomaskirche  
was not against the law.  
Single people holding single lighted candles  
was not against the law.  
The authorities disapproved but could do nothing.**

**We gathered every Monday after work  
in the lee of the church.  
I was ten years old when we began these vigils.  
I was eighteen when everything changed.**

**They haven't exactly forgotten,  
but they choose not to remember  
that it was not Joshua with his brass trumpets  
but Dr Martin Luther who stood his ground,  
refused to recant. And brought it down.**

**Johann Sebastian Bach took those inflammatory words,  
set them to music.  
Felix Mendelssohn re-discovered a forgotten J S Bach,  
presented once again Saint Matthew's Passion  
in the Thomaskirche.**



**When the crowd grew vast  
and restless before the Gewandhaus,  
watched by nervous policemen ready to open fire,  
Kurt Masur raised his baton  
and used his conductor's authority to appeal for calm.**

**The power of music, prayer  
and harmless little flames of witness  
conspired to whittle away at the cruel concrete wall,  
until fissures appeared and it came tumbling down.**

**Only after the wall was gone  
did we realise how it had served as a windbreak,  
protecting our candles from the cold gusts of freedom,  
choice, self-doubt, competition, affluence.**

**Our candles went out. We forgot how to pray.**

⇒ My personal view is that we are both in danger of *underestimating* Mary and the lessons we can learn from example of faithful devotion and of *overestimating* her, seeing her as so far above every other Christian that she can no longer be seen as a fruitfully encouraging and enabling elder sister in faith to us. Some Protestants still fall into the first trap, some Roman Catholics, perhaps, into the latter. We could all learn from her pondering. It challenges us to emulate her in constant meditation as to how the purposes of God have been and still are being worked out in the sweep of both Jewish and Christian history.

The way back to a balanced, widely ecumenically acceptable view of Mary is to locate her, as did the French Catholic-Protestant dialogue, the *Groupe des Dombes* in their 1997 re-

port, 'Mary in the Design of God and the Communion of Saints'. I would add, not simply the communion of saints *above* but also of those *below*, those 'pressing on to full salvation', as John Wesley put it.

The British Methodist-Roman Catholic dialogue, 1995, *Mary, Mother of the Lord, Sign of Grace, Faith and Holiness* took a similar line, even saying that, though the Methodists could not approve the dogmatic status of the Immaculate Conception and of the Assumption, they could accept that the first pointed to unique gifts for a unique vocation and the second to the eschatological expectation of all Christians at the end of time.

The American Lutheran-Catholic dialogue on, *The One Mediator, The Saints and Mary* (1983-90) and the ARCIC II report, *Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ* (2005) complete the quartet of relevant

dialogues relating to the search for further agreement on Mary's role in the history of salvation and our common continuing discipleship.

The early Methodists often referred to female class leaders as 'Mothers in Israel', so great was their role in local spiritual leadership. Many were, like Mary herself, 'meek simple followers of the lamb'. Recently in the fellowship of a small Methodist chapel just outside of Bristol, an elderly lady called Jan died. She was known for her devotion to the scriptures and to pastoral care and help of all who wanted it. I was due to preach in that chapel immediately after her death and was asked to use some of her favourite hymns and share in their celebration of her like. I did so for one whom I think of as so much like Mary, totally devoted to the Lord's will.

## TANZANIAN YOUNG PEOPLE PREACHING THE GOSPEL, PLANTING TREES

The Rev Frank Mexon Mng'ong'o graduated from Tumaini University, Makumira in 2019, was ordained in January 2020 and appointed the Youth Coordinator for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) in May of the same year. In the "Voices from the Communion" series he shared his plans to further engage ELCT young people in the life of the Church and to care for creation through a reforestation scheme begun in 2005 under ELCT Presiding Bishop Dr Fredrick Onael Shoo's leadership (LWI)

### Who inspired you to pursue the ministry?

My father! He has always encouraged me to strive for my goals in life. He was sure that I would become a pastor but, even though my father is a pastor in the Southern diocese, it was not easy for the rest of my family to accept my decision to pursue ordination, but they stood by me regardless.

I am inspired by and appreciate the work of my predecessor, the Rev Anza Amen Lema, who led the youth desk for years. I hope with hard

work, my skills and with God's grace, I will continue the work that he began.

Growing up in the Church, I have seen how God blesses his servants and this inspired me to enter the ministry. I believe service for God is a blessing.

### What are your goals for the youth ministry in 2021?

It is my hope that 2021 will bring more opportunities for young people to participate in different activities and projects. One of my goals is to continue increasing the number of young people who participate in Church programmes.

This year, we are preparing a consultation for young people from all 26 dioceses of the ELCT in June in the Tabora Region (West Central Diocese).

We have plans to participate in tree planting throughout various regions



The Rev Frank Mexon Mng'ong'o (wearing red stole) Photo: ELCT

inspired by the reforestation initiative started by Bishop Shoo. From this initiative, young people have grown to understand the value of tree planting and the necessity of replanting trees lost due to deforestation.

Also on the horizon are camps, seminars and missionary trips. Missionary trips for the young people are very important to areas within Tanzania such as Zanzibar, Kigoma and Tabora. The purpose of these trips is to offer the youngsters the opportunity to preach the gospel in neighbouring communities. This is done through sharing the Word of God, singing and diaconal or social services to those communities.

### How have the young people remained engaged during COVID-19 restrictions? How has it been challenging?

As for sanitation, we are taking precautions to decrease the infection rate. However, if COVID-19 continues to spread rapidly, we will postpone

the youth consultation until next year, of course, but the greatest challenge is ministering to young people who struggle with unemployment, which is one of the consequences of COVID-19.

### What does it mean for your Church, your work and you to be a part of the communion of Churches?

I am grateful for the Lutheran World Federation global youth programmes and climate justice initiative. These programmes give young people throughout the communion of Churches a platform from which to discover their potential.

Our young people have developed small projects about care for creation and climate justice and the prevention of gender-based violence, for instance. Being a part of the communion of Churches has provided an arena for youth involvement in different initiatives and projects here in Tanzania.

## MENNONITE REFLECTIONS ON THE ECUMENICAL JOURNEY

*The Rev Dr Larry Miller, Secretary of the Global Christian Forum, on reconciliation, healing of memories, and the search for balance between doctrine and experience (LWI)*



perpetrator, in one's own mind, comes and says please forgive us,' he added.

### Building trust for active engagement

After two decades at the helm of the MWC, Dr Miller served as Secretary of the Global Christian Forum from 2012 to 2018, playing a key role in broadening the basis for ecumenical engagement among 'leaders who don't usually sit at the same table and don't know each other very well.'

When it was established at the start of the new millennium, the first part of the Forum's mandate, he noted, was 'to be a safe space for building trust' among those Church leaders, while the second was 'to respond to common challenges together.'

A common challenge identified from the start of the Forum has been the problem of proselytism or 'sheep-stealing,' Miller said, which may be how older Churches may experience the conversion of Christians to younger, "Spirit-led" Churches, while those younger Churches 'sense that they are only doing what God is calling them to do.' Discussions on this question have not gone far enough, he felt, adding he hoped the Forum 'can use the trust that has been built to actually engage and go further in more difficult issues.'

Returning to the traditional dialogues with historic main-line Churches, Dr Miller reflected on the significance of the recently published report of the Trilateral Lutheran, Mennonite, Roman Catholic Commission on Baptism. While not unprecedented, the idea of a trilateral dialogue

Looking back over a career spent working for Christian unity, Larry Miller speaks of the divided Church as actual 'wounds in the Body of Christ.' During Holy Week 2021, the former General Secretary of the Mennonite World Conference reflected: 'On Good Friday I think about us wounding Christ again' with those divisions and 'I hope we can give him the joy of Easter by finding new life in the unity of the Church.'

Raised in a Mennonite community in Indiana in the Midwestern United States, Larry Miller had little contact with Christians from other Churches until he attended university in the late 1960s. There, he not only met his future wife, Eleanor, but he also took part in anti-war and anti-racism protests alongside Catholics, Protestants and other Christians committed to the peace and justice movement.

These new friendships led him to respond positively to a call from his Church to travel to Europe to study theology and to undertake ministry in London, Paris and Strasbourg. Each of these experiences, he said, 'challenged and expanded our vision of the Church.' As Mennonites, that meant moving beyond the Anabaptist core "sense of identity" as a people born out of persecution by Catholic and Protestant Churches in 16th century Europe.

### Public apology and forgiveness

These grassroots experiences stood him in good stead when he was asked to lead the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) in 1990. That was a time of profound change in the shape of global Christianity. In Europe the fall of the Berlin wall opened up all kinds of new ecumenical opportunities in the northern hemisphere. But at the same time the rapid growth of the Evangelical,

Independent and Pentecostal Churches in the global south meant a renewed focus on mission and evangelism in these 'Spirit-led' communities.

As leader of the MWC, Dr Miller said one of his major challenges was convincing Mennonite Churches around the world 'to enter into conversations with other Christian world communions.' Mistrust of the Catholic Church ran deep, he recalled, and there was 'also a distrust of ecumenical conversation altogether.' Mennonites felt more 'proximity to Lutherans and to Martin Luther and some of his perspectives,' he continued, but there was a prevailing sense that engagement was 'probably worthwhile, primarily because Lutherans have something to learn from us.'

Two decades later, Miller was on hand to lead his Church through the deeply moving moment of public forgiveness and reconciliation that took place during the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Assembly in Stuttgart in 2010. It is hard to assess 'to what extent locally or nationally [communities] have built upon that global interaction between the LWF and the MWC,' he reflected. But he is convinced that the 'interface and LWF apology has had ... a profound psychological impact on the Mennonite sense of being the victims' of history. 'It's much harder to think of yourself as a victim when the



*Lutheran and Mennonite participants at the 2010 LWF Assembly in Stuttgart anoint each other as a sign of repentance and forgiveness.*

⇒ ‘felt unique at the time but worked well,’ he said, adding that the interactions of participants ‘created a kind of mosaic which provided a richness that is not there with two partners, over and against each other.’

**Receiving gifts, recognizing limits**

Turning to the follow-up to the report, Dr Miller noted that ‘unlike anything previously, the MWC has decided to create a study guide for this, ‘due to be published and distributed to all member churches in the next few months.’ The goal is for the results and implications of that report ‘to be discussed as broadly as possible in the next 18 months or so’ leading up to an Assembly to be held in Indonesia in July 2022.

Working closely with Larry Miller on the publication of the Trilateral Report LWF’s Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Prof Dirk Lange, shares the enthusiasm it has generated for deepening mutual understanding of the sacrament of baptism and its implications for discipleship. ‘The Trilateral Report calls for widespread reception and implementation,’ he said.

Now retired and based back in the United States, Larry Miller is prioritizing family commitments, as well as ‘exploring the world beyond the church that Ephesians 1.8-10 talks about’ in terms of a ‘cosmic unity that is so much bigger than the unity of the Church.’ Reflecting on the future of the ecumenical journey, he longs for a

‘radical catholicity’ that includes all Christian communities and uses the model of ‘receptive ecumenism’ to receive ‘the gifts that [the other Churches] have to give to me.’

‘If we can recognize our own limitations and the reality of multiple gifts in all those churches,’ he said, it may be possible to overcome the current divisions between a classic doctrinal dialogue focus and the more Spirit-led ‘experiential approach.’ Both doctrine and experience are ‘essential but not adequate,’ he concluded, asking ‘if and when will we be able to bring these two sources of revelation into a balance to find fullness in our understanding, our experience and our convictions?’

## NEWS OF SOME OF OUR MEMBERS

A student member, **JAMES PETER CHEGWIDDEN**, will be made Deacon by the Bishop of Fulham on Saturday 3rd July and will be serving in the Church of England parish of St Cuthbert, Philbeach Gardens, in London. Please remember him in your prayers. James is shortly completing a Master of Studies in Philosophical Theology. His dissertation is on the work of Oxford theologian Herbert McCabe OP (1926-2001) and his engagement with issues in contemporary agnosticism. Once settled into his curacy he would like to join in a short ‘parish exchange’, perhaps for a week or long weekend, and wonders if any member in Germany or Scandinavia might be interested in such a project.

We are sad to report the death of **CANON PAUL ROSE** after long service in the Church of England. He has

been a member of our Society for many years, was keen on ecumenical activity, and not long ago wrote an article about the German Kirchentag for the St Barnabas College Chronicle. We thank God for his life and ministry.

**MEELIS SÜLD** is a member from Estonia. In September he is to be ordained into the Lutheran Church in Great Britain and will serve in the UK as assistant to the Bishop, the Rt Rev Tor Jørgensen. Meelis trained as a journalist and then studied theology. He has been working in public broadcasting in Estonia as a radio journalist, presenter and producer. He completed his preparation for ordination some time ago but it has been delayed by COVID-19. We pray that it will now proceed smoothly and ask God’s blessing as he moves into this new phase of his Christian life.



## ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOP-ELECT SHOT IN SOUTH SUDAN

Our Annual Meeting in March focused on the dangers faced these days by Christians in many parts of the world. We were told many stories of the persecution suffered by our brothers and sisters in Christ.

So we were saddened, yet not altogether surprised, to hear that on 27th April, in Southern Sudan, the Roman Catholic Diocesan Offices in Rumbek, Southern Sudan, had been attacked and the Catholic Bishop-Elect of Rumbek, Fr Christian Carlassare, shot in both legs.

The Primate of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan, Archbishop Justin Badi Arama, said that the Anglican Church in his country was saddened to learn of the shooting. He said: ‘As people of God, we are called to live in peace with each other and those around us – “if one member suffers, all suffer together” (1 Corinthians 12:26).’

Fr Carlassare is recovering in hospital in Nairobi, Kenya.

## BOSSEY STUDENTS CELEBRATE "TRULY DIFFERENT THINKING AND LIVING IN CHRIST"

*As they celebrated their graduation from the World Council of Churches (WCC) Bossey Ecumenical Institute on 26th January, students reflected on their one-of-a-kind experience, and how they will continue their ecumenical work as they go forth into the world.*

Twenty-nine students from 22 countries and 19 different Church traditions have earned post-graduate Certificates in Ecumenical Studies. They not only adapted to an ecumenical life but also had to adapt to continuous new developments and restrictions related to COVID-19.

'This generation has been challenged in every aspect by the historical moment we live in, facing constant changes resulting from the pandemic and adapting to it all,' reflected the Rev Karla Selene Evangelista Segoviano from Methodist Church of Mexico. 'Given the reality of physical distancing across the world it's even more important to continue ecumenical work back home.'

For her, another challenge in the Bossey experience was the lack of participants from Latin America. 'So now it's also a task for us to encourage and support other participants from Latin America and to share our ecumenical experience,' she said. 'In a context as diverse in all aspects as Mexico is, we must create and share new experiences that lead us to increasing the ecumenical family, without uniformity, but with unity.'

From COVID-19 restrictions to language barriers, from understanding new theologies to cultural differences, Bossey students worked through it all to form a closely-knit group. 'It was a dream come true, meeting people from over 22 countries under one roof,' said the Rev Moses Jigba from the Republic of Sierra Leone and New Jerusalem Ministries International. 'Many ideas were new to me. Too much information in a compressed time was a big challenge to overcome.' But, he added, by the time he graduated he was prepared to take ideas he learned at Bossey to share with others. 'These experiences gained will be well-implemented,' he said.

Sebastian Mense from the Federal Republic of Germany, Evangelical-Lutheran Church Württemberg, said cultural and political divisions were, at first, obstacles. 'Some of the most difficult obstacles I have encountered were divides – not in theology but culture and politics – that threaten a lived-out common witness and weaken the revelation we encounter in our one Lord, Jesus Christ,' he said. 'Bossey has given me the opportunity to encounter truly different thinking and living in Christ that can only strengthen and broaden my own church back home.' He feels that studying



*Gathered in the chapel of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey. Photo: Sang Hoon Han*

at Bossey has helped the students begin to live into their own definitions of Christian unity. 'It also made clear that Christian unity and ecumenical work goes far beyond my own history, beyond Roman Catholic and Lutheran divides,' he said. 'Our family is as colourful and diverse as humanity and my church needs to partake in this fullness at every level.'

Students also deeply appreciated being able to complete their rigorous studies amid the beautiful mountains. 'Switzerland is my dream country,' said Phontip Phanthakitphaibun from the Church of Christ in Thailand. 'It is a country that I had always dreamed of going to before I die!' Most important, she added, Bossey provided an opportunity to serve God in a broader way.

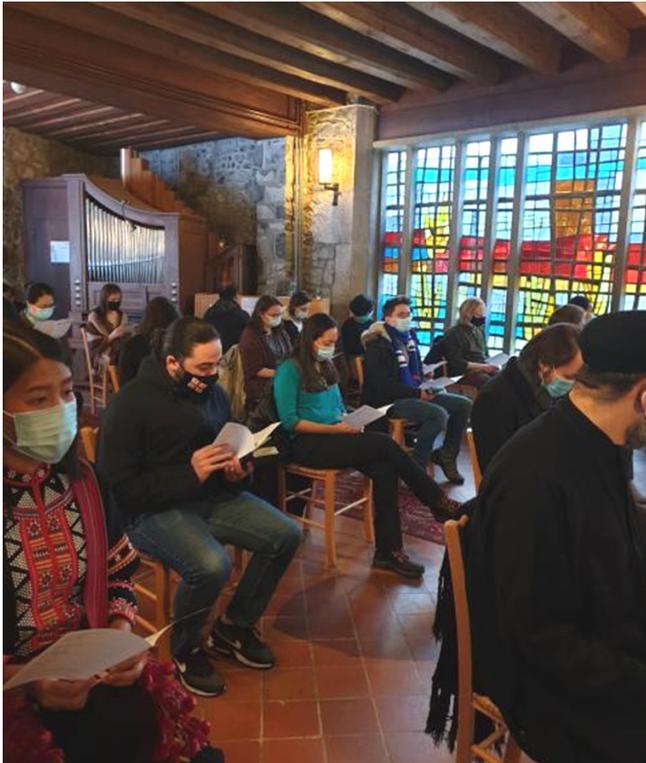
The day before their graduation ceremony, the students met online with representatives of some departments of the Roman Catholic Church, including the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Department for Promoting Integral Human Development and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. They also took part via streaming in the Vespers presided over by Cardinal Kurt Koch for the closing of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

'I will take my knowledge and experience gained at Bossey back to my home church and community,' said Phontip Phanthakitphaibun. 'I will share with them and make them understand, accept and respect other Christian denominations.'

### **Out into the world**

As the students accepted their certificates, the Rev Fr Dr Lawrence Iwuamadi, Academic Dean of the Ecumenical Institute, advised them that the real impact of Bossey →

⇒ starts the moment one leaves Bossey. ‘If it is true that each academic year at Bossey is unique, the 2020-2021 academic year might be the most unique for obvious reasons,’ he said. ‘Our hope and prayers for them: that they make the best of the knowledge they have acquired, their experiences, the rich friendships, the challenges and joys they have freely shared and exchanged in the past months, transforming them into meaningful foundations for future engagement in the pilgrimage of justice and peace in their communities and contexts. We pray that God guides their journeys back to their families, people and churches.’



Students spread out across the chapel space, all wearing masks as a protective measure. Photo: Sang Hoon Han

When they have completed their training and are settled in their first posts perhaps some of our student members might consider applying to join one of the courses at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

## DATING EASTER

### What’s the problem?

Orthodox Christians and Western Christians, among them Roman Catholics and Protestants, believe in the same God, and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but what is arguably the most important holy day, Easter, often falls on different dates. This is because two different calendars are in use. Churches in Western countries use the Gregorian one while their brothers and sisters in Eastern countries follow the Julian calendar.

### But that’s not all!

The calculation of Easter dates is further complicated by the moon! Ecclesiastical moons, paschal full moons, the astronomical equinox and the fixed equinox come in as well, so science seems to be influencing religion, at least in relation to Easter dates, which is an interesting thought!

### Why not fix Easter?

There was talk about a fixed Easter holiday back in 1963. The Second Vatican Council actually agreed to a fixed date, the second Sunday of April, but only if all the Christian Churches would accept it. Unhappily, they would not! Then in 1997 a meeting was set up by the World Council of Churches in Aleppo, Syria, where a proposal was made that was supposed to be favourable to both Eastern and Western Churches. It would have involved the meridian of Jerusalem, as part of some complicated formula. But after the conference ended nothing happened!

### An Easter challenge

What this means is that Christians continue to celebrate Easter on different dates most of the time. However, in 2025 both East and West will celebrate Easter on the same day. Could it provide an opportunity for another attempt to resolve the issue? In an ever shrinking world it makes little sense that Easter celebrations should continue to be held anywhere between a week and more than a month apart. It would be a wonderful symbol of the Christians’ desire for unity if agreement could be reached.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

The Rev Dr Roy Long recommends a book suitable for all readers

Readers of a certain age – those who, to use a Biblical turn of phrase, are “full of years” (Gen.25:8) – will readily remember the name of Bamber Gascoigne, not least because he was presenter of the TV quiz show *University Challenge* from 1962 to 1987. Hailing from a line of distinguished public servants, Mr Gascoigne was much more than a well-known quizmaster, and his other work included many TV documentaries, including *The Christians*, a 13-hour production telling the history of the church. This was produced by Granada TV and appeared on ITV in 1977, and to accompany it he wrote a book in partnership with his wife, Christina. Some twenty years ago this was revised and updated and is now available as ***A Brief History of Christianity* (London, Robinson, 2003. ISBN: 978-1-84119-710-4)**. This is a gem of a book which, in simple and attractive language, tells the story of Christianity from apostolic times to the present day. Lutherans will be particularly pleased with Mr Gascoigne’s personal attitude towards Martin Luther: “Whatever his qualities as a theologian, it is the character of Luther himself which stands out so powerfully from the pages of history and makes him – for me – the most attractive of all those who have diverted the course of Christianity. Brash, obstinate, hasty, unreasonable, he lived life with a ferocious warmth and openness.” (p.108). Above all, this is a book which will appeal to both ordained and lay Christians, and which provides glimpses of the Christian Church through the ages and whets the appetite for more.

## THE LORD IS RISEN, TRULY HE IS

*The Rev Deacon Christine Saccali recently joined our Society.  
A Deacon in the Church of England, she has lived in Greece for over 40 years.  
Here she reflects on her two Easters, one Anglican and the other Orthodox.*



*Christine's lambada and dyed red eggs*

'Christos Anesti,' the cries ring out; 'Alithos o Kurios' comes back the reply. This year Resurrection comes early in the day to Greek Orthodox Christians. Services where the holy light from the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is shared have been moved to 9pm instead of midnight. Congregants holding *lambades* (candles) can only be outside, double masked and keeping safe distances. These precautions are a sign of COVID times we live in, in 2021 when Orthodox Easter is celebrated on 2nd May here, almost a month after Western Easter.

I am writing this piece both as a cradle Anglican, brought up in UK, now ordained as a Distinctive Deacon, and as someone who has lived in Greece for over 40 years and who is married into a not so strict Orthodox family with family of our own now. At one time, I seriously considered becoming Orthodox myself and followed teaching nearly up until *Chrismation* but decided that was not for me, as it would be an easy and convenient path but not necessarily one God was calling me to.

Along with many others in the village near Marathon where we live, who are fully integrated and content with life here, we adopted Greek customs and celebrations as well as keeping our own. The frequent variation in dates between Western and Eastern Easter did not concern us; it was largely ignored or, in my case, adapted to. It is pretty tiring to have one Holy Week followed by another, as in 2022, or one Lent virtually followed by another as has been the case this year. Rarely do the dates fall together and in normal times that is exacting too because St Paul's Anglican Church in the centre of Athens is over an hour away by car. But this year the Anglican churches in Greece which belong to the Diocese in Europe, with the agreement of the relevant Church Councils, requested special permission from our



*The village church where Christine lives*

Bishop to celebrate with the local churches in the hope the weather would be better and some restrictions would be eased. That came true on both accounts. As I write on Easter Eve, Great Saturday, we have high temperatures and permission to have very few congregants in church but more outside obeying strict regulations.

The village bells have been pealing cheerfully for services all Great Week apart from just tolling yesterday, Good Friday. Today we are quiet before big celebrations tonight with firecrackers accompanying the Resurrection cries. This is in complete contrast to last year when no services were held where congregants could be present. The holy light was flown to Athens but not disseminated; it remained in a church in Plaka. The greatest celebration in the Orthodox calendar combined with fasting and family feasting was a muted affair in 2020. It seemed very odd for my husband and I to be eating lamb chops alone, but we are fortunate to have a garden to do that in. This year the family can come up for the traditional barbeque. I will join our congregation on Zoom at noon before we eat, and I have organised an Easter Egg Hunt to keep the others occupied. Apart from the eating and drinking, and a game cracking dyed red eggs to the Easter acclamation, it is good to combine traditions and feels right. We are a cross-cultural family after all.

What does not always seem right is to pronounce the Easter proclamation a month early, unless during the liturgy in church. We are an Easter people and Christ is Risen in our hearts and lives every day, but it is good to celebrate the Resurrection together. That is not to say I am in favour of a common date for Easter - to my mind that might be an easy and convenient solution and God is a god of surprises. It feels good to wait and celebrate together when the time is right and to learn from each other's traditions and liturgy.

I realise from people's comments this exceptional year, when we are aligned with the Orthodox but out of sync with our own Church, that interest is piqued, but for long term residents here, after this pandemic year, we are happy to be able to celebrate the *anastasi* (resurrection) safely with our families and hear the eternal cries of 'The Lord is Risen' with the ringing response 'He is indeed'. We hope next year to be back to normal where we witness to Christ and provide services for tourists in the Anglican and Episcopalian tradition who are visiting Athens at Easter. We pray there will be visitors on pilgrimage in the steps of St Paul to share this blessed season in 2022. This year it was a quieter but nonetheless joyful *Pascha*.

## THE ECUMENICAL SPIRIT AT CALVIN'S CATHEDRAL

*Few moments in the early history of the World Council of Churches have embodied and conveyed the spirit of the modern ecumenical movement as vividly as the service celebrated at Saint Peter's Cathedral, Geneva on 20th February, 1946, less than one year after the end of World War II. The Rev Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus, the interim Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Director of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order; and lecturer at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey was there, and shares some pages from his diary 75 years ago.*

On Saturday, 20th February, I arrived half an hour early at St Peter's Cathedral to attend a service marking the 75 anniversary of the 1946 service. I wanted a few moments before it started to visit to a marble tablet on the cathedral wall commemorating "the first ecumenical service after the Second World War."



This marble tablet was put there in April 1956 commemorating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1946 service. It was the idea of a Geneva banker, Gustave Hentsch. Together with another Geneva Protestant banker, Georges Lombard, Gustave Hentsch pioneered the establishment in 1946 of the Ecumenical Loan Fund, which is today the non-profit, micro-finance foundation ECLOF International.

After the names of the participants in 1946, most of them from countries that had been at war the previous years, the marble tablet gives two Biblical references. The first, certainly addressed to the Churches whose divisions did not help to prevent the reign of violence, is Luke 15.7, "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

The second is from the Epistle that from those days until now has played a foundational role in the Biblical-theological case for the search for unity: "For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between

us ... that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace..." (Ephesians 2.14-15).

As I crossed the central aisle of the nave, listening to the melancholic sound of the pandemic's silence, I started to dream.

I was now a young theological student, selected to be a steward in that 1946 meeting of the Provisional Committee of the future World Council of Churches. I had just heard the exciting news that in the October of that year the Provisional Committee would open a school of ecumenical formation based in an old chateau 20 kilometres from Geneva. During a coffee break, I had heard that in a recent visit to the place, Robert Mackie and Visser 't Hooft had found that "the disorganised old house with its innumerable pictures of Napoleon" did not seem very inviting. However, the idea that the place, called Bossey, could look gorgeous "in the spring and summer" had finally convinced them.

Then in my dream, I suddenly held in my hands a yellowish page from my steward's diary. It smelled like locked rooms of old libraries. It was dated "Febr 20, 1946, 23.45" and I read:

*"My steward duty tonight took me first of all from the Hotel des Bergues to Saint Peter's Cathedral. Delegates attending a reception offered by the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches at the Hotel had to find their way to the Cathedral for the service, which would start at 20.30.*

*At Saint Peter's, my task was to make sure that in a packed church all delegates from around the world who are attending the meeting of the Provisional Committee*



*Gathered at Saint Peter's Cathedral in Geneva, February 2021.*

*of the World Council of Churches would receive the order of worship. The long entrance procession – I counted no less than forty people – was led by the Rev Charles Cellier, the Moderator of the Venerable Company of Pastors of Geneva founded by Calvin, and by the Rev Marc Boegner, the President of the French Protestant Federation.*

*"Boegner and Cellier were followed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, who conducted the service, and Metropolitan Germanos of Thyatira who was in charge of the Biblical readings. The procession included Archimandrite Cassian of Mont Athos and the famous Prof Georges Florovsky of the Institut Saint Serge in Paris.*

*"Since Calvin's days, the Reformed in French-speaking Switzerland and the French Huguenots, following an ancient Jewish tradition, have placed the singing of the psalms a capela at the heart of worship so that the faithful would learn to pray them by heart. Tonight was no exception.*

*A choir – called "Le Choeur de la Maîtrise Protestante" – sang a psalm before and after each sermon. I still can hear the notes of Psalm 8, rhymed by Clément Marot, probably harmonised by Claude Goudimel: Domine dominus noster quam admirabile est nomen tuum ...*



⇒ “Now I come to what was for me, tonight, a sort of ecumenical epiphany. Although the service started rather late, at 20.30, there were still three short sermons. All three speakers had been in prison during the war because of active resistance to oppression, and they all witnessed to the consolation, communion and encouragement they experienced in prison thanks to the intercessions of Christians from other Churches and countries.

“At the end of the last of the messages, I suddenly realised that despite divisions among the Churches there is a fundamental oneness in Christ that no war can destroy because it’s God’s gift; and because it’s God’s gift, it has to be made manifest in, and to, and for the world. That is the spirit of the ecumenical movement! The Church universal was visible tonight!

“The first preacher was the Rev Dr Chester S. Miao. The editor of *Christian Voices in China*, he is preparing a report on “The Christian Church in ‘Occupied’ China.” Miao is the General Secretary of the China Christian Council. He said that he was put in prison in Japanese occupied Shanghai during the war. He told of how he and his Japanese gaoler discovered that both were Christians and, when they discovered it, they would, occasionally, kneel in prayer together in his prison cell.

“Dr Miao was followed by Bishop Eivind Berggrav, the leader of the Lutheran Church in Norway. During the war, Bishop Berggrav was kept under house arrest in the forest due to his prominent role in the church resistance against German occupation. He gracefully preached in German. Towards the end of his preaching, Bishop Berggrav told the audience what he called ‘a detail of his captivity.’

“A peasant’s wife was determined to offer the bishop a bottle of milk. The soldiers placed at the entrance of the bishop’s chalet were probably taking a nap due to the summer heat. In any case, she managed to reach the kitchen window and whispered to the Bishop as she passed him the bottle: ‘Bishop, my husband was illegally listening to T.S.F. yesterday and heard the Archbishop of Canterbury praying for you.’ Berggrav concluded: ‘The woman immediately disappeared, but not her message which

remained with me. It looked as though God had knocked down all the walls...’

“The last address was by the Rev Martin Niemöller, one of leaders of the Confessing Church in Germany, which resisted the attempts of the Nazi regime to interfere in the life of the Church in order to oblige it to comply with the anti-Semitic policies of the State. Niemöller was not only in prison but also in solitary confinement. The citizen of a country that invaded France, he gracefully preached in French.

“Martin Niemöller told a crowded cathedral about the day his father visited him in prison. ‘I will never forget these words from my old father when for the last time he visited at the Gestapo office in the concentration camp of Oranienburg: ‘My son, the esquimos from Canada and the Batak from Sumatra send you their greetings and are praying for you’.’ Niemöller went on to say that during his years in prison that knowledge had kept him ‘not only sane but even joyful.’

“For a young Protestant often used to the reality of the local congregation and the abstraction of the Church universal, this was indeed an ecumenical epiphany. Christian divisions are sin and lead to violence. The search for the manifestation of the Church universal is a gospel obedience and leads to peace.

“I hope the divided Churches will not wait until the twenty-first century in order to put in practice the call to visible unity.

“I can hardly imagine the idea that one day they may gather again to remember what happened tonight. Would that mean that in the distant future divided Christians will have forgotten the disasters related to their past divisions like crusades, religious wars and indeed two world wars? Is not the movement towards Christian unity an act of repentance for violence related to schisms and for dechristianisation inspired

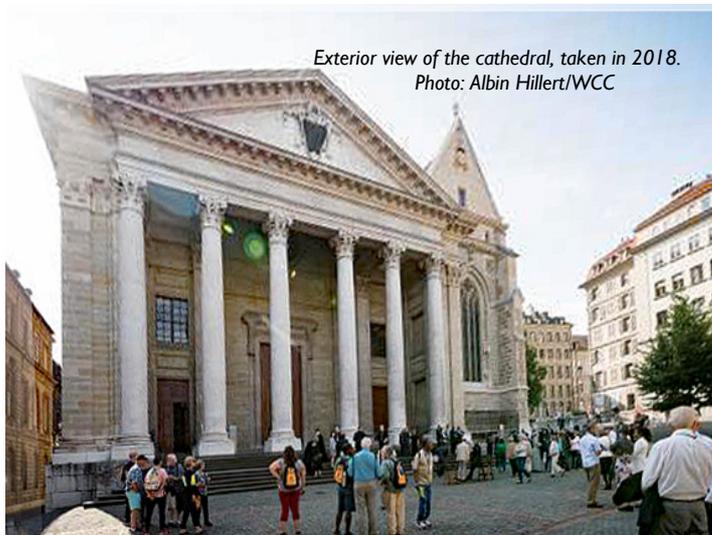
by Christian counter-witness? Is not the ecumenical movement an act of peace, of rebellion against the nationalism that uses the confessional divisions among Christians to place ethnic Christianity above the mutual belonging and mutual accountability of the Church universal?”

The diary page suddenly vanished in the mist. The Rev Emmanuel Rolland, the senior pastor of the cathedral, brought me back to reality. It was time to get ready for the entrance procession. The Rev Blaise Menu, who moderates the Company of Pastors and Deacons, replaces Charles Cellerier and leads it, and I am asked to join him as Marc Boegner joined Cellerier in 1946.

Boegner, whom Israel made a Righteous among the Nations in 1988, did not write his autobiography that would have included his ecumenical engagement from Edinburgh in 1910 to the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. On the contrary, he wrote a book about the ecumenical imperative, *L’Exigence oecuménique*, which gave him the opportunity to talk about his life.

Boegner never forgot February 1946: “More exciting still would be the ecumenical service celebrated in the evening of the following day at Saint-Pierre. The crowd was impressive to watch. Bishop Berggrav of Oslo preached in German and Niemöller in French. It was an ecumenical act of great value.”

It was the ecumenical spirit at Calvin’s Cathedral.



Exterior view of the cathedral, taken in 2018.  
Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

## ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIPS IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

*2020 was a challenging year for the Churches, but especially for those working in ecumenical relationships which are “so dependent upon direct and spontaneous encounter.”*

*Prof Dr Dirke Lange, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, looks back on a year of “consolidation and critical thinking,” and shares hopes and challenges for the months ahead. (LWI)*



Photo: LWF/S Gally

Among the highlights expected for 2021 are the development of a first study guide from the five adherents of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) group, a report from the international Lutheran-Pentecostal dialogue group, a first-time encounter with the Salvation Army leadership and, in this anniversary year of Luther's excommunication, a 'Common Word' from Geneva and Rome tracing the shared journey “from conflict to communion”.

### **How have you and the LWF adapted to the difficulties caused by the Coronavirus pandemic?**

We have tried to be realistic and focus on the work that can be done while in-person meetings cannot happen. There has been a real willingness to keep our ecumenical work on track, consolidating or laying new groundwork for the time when we can meet again in person.

It has also been a time to think critically about broadening the interpretative framework for our activities. Our witness is grounded in a generous confessing tradition encapsulated in the expression ‘To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical’. But what does this mean in practice? How can we expand our models of ecumenical discourse to include the global reality of the church and its wide variety of pastoral and social challenges?

### **Where do you hope to see significant progress over the coming year?**

It's difficult to pick one example because each event has its unique contribution to the overall ecumenical goal. A key question is that of reception: though major doctrinal agreements have been reached, ecclesial communion remains – in many situations – unrealized, so a bridge needs to be found between doctrinal agreement and its implementation or reception. For example, under the umbrella of reception, the Anglican Lutheran International Commission on Unity and Mission (ALICUM) has started its work, meeting for the first time, and beginning the process of selecting regions of the world where we will concentrate our work of deeper cooperation.

Another priority is to develop, expand, contextualize, and implement the JDDJ and the five ecumenical officers (Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed) have been meeting regularly to discuss what this new form of multilateral cooperation in the public square will look like. Now that all the translations of the JDDJ and accompanying documents have been made available – including in Italian – our next step is to produce a study guide to help local parishes engage with the fruits of this document. We're also

looking at developing shared liturgical material and we hope to have something ready by next year's Week of Prayer.

### **You have a meeting with your Orthodox partners coming up soon, don't you?**

Yes, we are grateful for dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox Church and, after the cancellation of our meeting last year, we have been actively seeking to keep the fire burning until we can meet together again. Our dialogue is centred on the Holy Spirit and during our online encounter in March 2021 we will focus on blessing as a work of the Holy Spirit in these extraordinary times.

### **This year is the 500th anniversary of Luther's excommunication – tell us how you will be marking this event?**

This decade marks many significant Reformation anniversaries, leading up to the important 500th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, our foundational document which was also an ecumenical appeal. Today we are on a journey together. Our focus is not about telling a different history, as the document *From Conflict to Communion* says, but about “telling that history differently.”

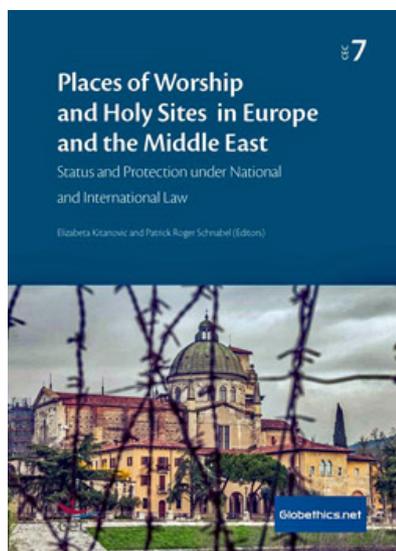
This year, COVID-19 permitting, we will have an ecumenical prayer service and a Common Word issued by the LWF and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity at the end of June. A team of scholars is already working on the intricate historical, theological, and canonical questions concerning the excommunication, as well as the subsequent reception of Luther, despite that excommunication.

### **Many people are hoping that this June meeting will mark a step forward for the reception of Luther within the Catholic world – how do you respond to them?**

As I said, we are placing this significant anniversary in a broader ecumenical context. Fifty years of dialogue have allowed us to approach painful experiences, not as stumbling blocks, but as learning experiences. The condemnations of the past do not determine our actions today, as the JDDJ made clear.

*From Conflict to Communion* already demonstrated a new approach to Luther and his reception from both Catholic and Lutheran sides. That document also provided the foundation for the joint commemoration of the Reformation in Lund, in which Lutherans and Catholics gave thanks for the gifts received and rediscovered through the Reformation. ➡

## NEW PUBLICATION: PLACES OF WORSHIP AND HOLY SITES IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST



A new publication from the Conference of European Churches (CEC) titled *Places of Worship and Holy Sites in Europe and the Middle East*, edited by Dr Elizabeta Kitanovic and Rev Dr Patrick Roger Schnabel, is now out. The book is produced in partnership with Globethics.net.

Featuring a collection of essays from renowned church leaders, academics and experts in the field, the book brings into focus how worship places – churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, shrines – are a key feature in most religions, and part of cultural heritage with a high symbolic and emotional value attached to them. However, as a consequence of armed conflict or actions by radical groups, worship places are often targeted to inflict damage and eradicate identity. For this reason, national and international laws exist to award special protection to such places.

The book offers deep insights into the relevance of the protection of religious sites in implementing Freedom of Religion or Belief and in fostering peaceful relations among different religions. Digital copies of *Places of Worship and Holy Sites in Europe and the Middle East* can be downloaded from the [CEC website](#). Print copies will very soon be available from Amazon.

## PILGRIM PRAYER

*The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle 2021 (314 pages, price: 25 CHF, \$25.00, £18.00, €20.00 ISBN 978-2-8254-1666-2)*

“Pilgrim Prayer”, the new edition of the ecumenical prayer cycle, is a unique resource for global spiritual solidarity. As the Foreword states, ‘One of the greatest treasures of the ecumenical movement is the globally-oriented spirituality engendered by Christians from different regions and confessions. This annual prayer sequence in which Christians everywhere join each other each week to pray with and for Christians in particular countries and regions.’ “Pilgrim Prayer” is intended for use by individuals and groups, in common prayer, liturgies, and newsletters, and this new

edition features updated regional and country introductions and intercessions, a multiyear calendar, and of course a rich treasury of prayers from the many countries and regions. Ten new sections offer prayer resources on specific themes such as migrants and refugees, climate and creation, global health, and gender justice.

“Pilgrim Prayer” and the ecumenical prayer cycle provide deep and broad accompaniment for our faith journey to a better world.

➔ The opportunity and challenge now is to deepen our engagement in joint service and joint proclamation in the years ahead.

### **You also have some new ecumenical engagements on your agenda, including a meeting with leaders of the Salvation Army?**

Yes, LWF General Secretary Martin Junge and I will be meeting the Salvation Army General and ecumenical officer online early February. It is exciting because a planned meeting last year was cancelled due to COVID-19. At last autumn’s meeting of the Christian World Communions, we were all grateful for the witness of the Salvation Army and the way they continue to work with the poorest people who have lost incomes and jobs as a result of the pandemic.

### **Another key development will be a final report from the dialogue with the Pentecostal Churches – can you tell us more?**

Yes, this dialogue has been unique in the way it has sought to integrate contextual ecclesial realities from the countries where the group has met over the past five years, so listening to the witness of Lutherans and Pentecostals in the Philippines, Germany, Chile and Madagascar. The drafting team has brought these experiences into the fabric of the text alongside theological reflections and we hope to hold our culminating meeting in California towards the end of this year.

### **So you see plenty of hope on the horizon for 2021?**

Yes, and I’d like to end by mentioning our trilateral dialogue with Catholics and Mennonites which is a wonderful case of

progress towards reception. In the Trilateral report ‘Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church’, which was just published in the *Menonite Quarterly Review* (January 2021), each partner pledges to reflect on “convictions held, gifts received and challenges accepted,” reconsidering our historically assumed positions. For Lutherans, this means deepening our understanding about the status of unbaptized children, as reflected in the Augsburg Confession.

The other real area of hope for me is the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in which we’re examining together the way we communicate what justification means, what the Gospel is for today’s society. This is a huge challenge but an exciting one for all Christians!

## 2022 WCC ASSEMBLY THEME URGES AN “ECUMENISM OF THE HEART”

*In a world crying out for justice and peace, the theme of the 2022 assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity,” speaks of hope for a future in which resources are shared, inequalities are addressed and all can enjoy dignity*



Photo: Marcelo Schneider/WCC

“Christ’s Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity” is a text produced by an international group drawn from different regions and confessional traditions, intended as a resource for Churches and Christians worldwide in advance of the WCC’s 11th Assembly which is to take place in Karlsruhe, Germany, from 31st August to 8th September 2022.

The Assembly, according to the text, is an opportunity to find inspiration in the love of God, the Holy Trinity; a love that has been revealed in Christ and that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is moving in and through all humankind and all creation.

‘The love of Christ which is central to the Assembly theme is placed within a Trinitarian context, and develops the vision of the WCC’s document, “Common Understanding and Vision” which states that the purpose of God’s love incarnated in Jesus Christ is the reconciliation and unity of all, and of the whole cosmos (Col. 1:19; Eph. 1:10),’ says the Rev Prof Dr Ioan Sauca, the WCC’s interim General Secretary. ‘It opens new horizons and possibilities, and it will

concentrate on what it means for Churches and for Christian unity to confront together the many challenges of the world we live in and on witnessing to our common Gospel values. But it does not stop there, as the purpose of God’s love in Christ is for the whole world. It means openness and care for the whole world, and also dialogue and cooperation with people of other faiths or of no faith but who share the same values.’

The publication offers Biblical and theological reflections on the Assembly theme, inspired by a Biblical verse – “For the love of Christ urges us on” (2 Corinthians 5.14) – against the backdrop of critical issues confronting Churches and humanity as a whole.

‘The assembly theme invites us in this turbulent period for our world, to reorientate our existence toward the one God in Trinity; toward the very source of life, who so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life,’ says Prof Dr Marina Kolovopoulou, the theme group moderator, referring to the verse from John’s Gospel (3.16). ‘With

this faith, guided by the work of the Holy Spirit, and in Jesus Christ our Lord through whom we can see the Father, we are called to testify and witness today in a world that is wounded and suffering.’

The WCC’s assembly in 2022 will take place after “a time of waiting,” the reflection notes, having been postponed by a year because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, something that has exposed and highlighted both the vulnerabilities of humankind as well as the world’s profound inequalities and divisions.

It is the first time that the word “love” has been the focus of a theme for one of the WCC’s Assemblies, which take place about every eight years. The theme reflection underlines the need for an “ecumenism of the heart”. It notes that many people are urging that the search for unity today should not only be “intellectual, institutional, and formal. It should also be based in relationship, in common prayer and, above all, in mutual affection and love.”

We live in a world that is “crying out for profound love, for community, for justice and hope. It needs Churches that are visibly in communion, longing for oneness where there is division, and finding a new future for humankind and all creation.”

The text is available to download in four languages at <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/a-reflection-on-the-theme-of-the-11th-assembly-of-the-wcc-karlsruhe-2022>



## CHRISTIAN UNITY IS THE WAY OF LIFE FOR GRANDCHAMP SISTERS

*Insights into the Ecumenical community in Switzerland that prepared prayers and reflections for the annual Week of Prayer, observed by some in January and others in May 2021 (LWI)*

Working for Christian unity means being grounded in your own identity and thereby being open to other people's opinions. That's not simply a slogan for the 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, but rather a way of life for the sisters of Grandchamp in Switzerland, the ecumenical community who prepared the prayers and reflections for this annual event.

Founded in the 1930s in a hamlet near Lake Neuchâtel, Grandchamp was one of the first monastic communities to be set up by women from the Reformed tradition. Like the brothers from Taizé, who were establishing their own ecumenical community across the border in eastern France, the sisters welcomed women from many different denominations who were called to a life of prayer and hospitality.

Today, the community numbers around fifty members, from ten different countries, who continue the work for reconciliation between the divided Christian Churches. The oldest sister is in her 90s, while the youngest are in their 30s and 40s. Unlike some of the more traditional religious communities, Grandchamp continues to attract new members, drawn to its way of ecumenical worship and communal living.

'It is both a mystery and a blessing that women continue to be called to this unique vocation,' Sister Embla Vegerfors says. She grew up in the Church of Sweden, the largest Lutheran Church in Europe. She joined Grandchamp nine years ago and is one of a group of sisters that worked with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU) to develop the Week of Prayer resources.

'We started by brainstorming with all the community,' Sr Embla recalls, 'and we soon decided on the text from John's Gospel, *Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit (John 15: 5-9)*. We wanted to share something about the way we live, moving from being grounded in God towards being



*Because of COVID-19 Grandchamp has suspended its welcome to guests but increased its online activities.*

open to the other.' Through these eight days of prayer resources, the sisters sought to share the message that unity is not about "losing your identity," but about "being grounded in your own identity" and so open to others. 'If we are secure in our relationship with God, then we're also secure in our relationships with other people,' Sr Embla insists. 'The differences become less threatening and we have less need to defend our own opinions. We see that someone who has a different way of doing things may be trying to express the same things as us, using a different language, but their goal is the same.'

The sisters at Grandchamp experience the truth of this in the practicalities of their everyday lives. 'Whether it's something as simple as cleaning or washing the dishes,' Sr Embla explains, 'everyone who comes here has their own way of doing things.' But whatever the different backgrounds, she continues, 'we have to learn to let go of our own traditions, to know where we come from, but also to enter into something completely new, and to be challenged to see that we are here for a bigger purpose.'



*Grandchamp sisters gathered in their chapel for prayer*

### Prayer in time of pandemic

For many people this year, the Week of Prayer has been an online experience, as Christians are restricted by Coronavirus regulations and unable to attend worship in each other's churches. The sisters themselves have been profoundly affected by the pandemic and for most of 2020 were unable to welcome visitors for spiritual retreats. Several members tested positive for the virus in January, forcing the whole community to isolate and suspend their usual communal prayer activities.

But there have also been unexpected opportunities, Sr Embla reflects, as 'we feel closer to others and have been connected to people' →

⇒ in a new way.’ For several years the sisters have been live-streaming their prayer services from the chapel, but when the virus struck last March, they noticed that the numbers of viewers doubled overnight. Their first online retreat over Easter was attended by more than 140 people, and sisters have also started holding *Lectio Divina* (Bible reading) sessions online. ‘It was a powerful experience, to be alone yet surrounded by so many people,’ Sr Embla says.

In past decades, sisters from Grandchamp travelled to set up a presence in other countries, including many places where Christians are a small minority of the population. A group of sisters stayed for over half a century in Algeria, living through the civil war and witnessing alongside the Trappist monks from Tibhirine, seven of whom were murdered in 1996. Other sisters lived near Jerusalem for many years, praying for peace in the Holy Land, while other small groups were established in Lebanon and also in a number of European countries.

In 2016, Sr Embla travelled back to her native Sweden to attend the joint 500th anniversary commemoration of the Reformation with Pope Francis and leaders of the LWF. ‘For me, this was a real sign of hope,’ she says, ‘because you could feel the desire for unity.’ There are many positive developments happening in the ecumenical world ‘that are not so visible,’ she says, with churches increasingly working together on diaconal initiatives in service to the poor and vulnerable.

Today the sisters travel less, focusing - until the pandemic struck - on welcoming visitors to their community in Neu-



Normally the Grandchamp Sisters welcome many pilgrims and guests

châtel and a smaller retreat house in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. ‘To many people today, it may seem like a strange choice to make a lifelong commitment to this community,’ says Sr Embla with a smile, ‘but my world has never been bigger than now, as we connect through prayer and through our guests to people throughout the world.’

Despite the current challenges, the sisters see this time as an opportunity ‘to rethink our values and ask what changes we want to make once the restrictions are lifted, including our engagement with environmental concerns.’ As Coronavirus restrictions force us ‘to live in a new way with uncertainties,’ Sr Embla concludes, ‘we are reminded to turn to prayer as the centre of our lives.’

## FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST SIGFRID



St Sigfrid’s Way is a recently developed pilgrimage route that begins in York in England and ends in Växjö (Sweden). It is named after Sigfrid who was an 11th century pilgrim hailing from York, and who made the journey to Sweden at the request of the Swedish king to bring the teachings of Christ to his people.

The pilgrimage covers some 760 miles and the route will be walked in full this year for the first time by a small group of pilgrims, following an attempt last year which was aborted due to COVID. The idea is that local people should join the pilgrims for short distances along their way.

The pilgrims will set out from York and walk down the spine of England towards Oxford. Their route passes through the Diocese of Lichfield where our Anglican Co-Moderator is the Bishop. So he will be walking with them on Saturday 29th May, and they will have a day of rest in Lichfield the next day. South of Oxford they will turn east along the River Thames to London, then to Canterbury and to the sea at Ramsgate. They take a ship from there to Göteborg and from there they will complete their pilgrimage on foot.

Bethany Thomas is the Pilgrimage Coordinator and if you would like details of the route the pilgrims will take so that you can join them for part of their journey go to [www.stsigfridstrust.org](http://www.stsigfridstrust.org) or email: [stsigfridsway@gmail.com](mailto:stsigfridsway@gmail.com) or phone: 0044 (0) 7928809735.

Bishop Michael says, ‘It seems to me a good example of Anglican-Lutheran joint endeavour, and of course relates well to the theme of our Trondheim conference next summer.’

## DEBATE ABOUT TRANSLATION OF SERMONS

*A proposal by the Danish government that all religious sermons should be translated into Danish has gained criticism from pastors, bishops and lawyers across Europe*



*'It is absurd to be under surveillance when you are preaching, no matter what language you are speaking,' says Christa Hansen, a German-speaking pastor in the border region of Southern Denmark. In the picture she is next to the mayor of Haderslev, H P Geil.*

*Photo: Diocese of Haderslev/Lene Esthave.*

The Danish government is promoting a new immigration policy that it likes to call "Fair and realistic", according to its own immigration policy paper. One controversial proposal affects non-Danish speaking churches and religious minorities. The proposal is that all religious communities in Denmark should have their sermons and religious speeches translated into Danish in writing and uploaded to their webpage.

Mathias Tesfaye, Denmark's Minister of

Immigration and Integration, says the purpose is to prevent anti-democratic preaching, especially in Danish mosques. The proposal comes after revelations in the media of anti-Semitic statements from Imams, and of Imams participating in controversial sharia divorces.

However, the proposal would not only target mosques but also Greenlandic, Faroese, German churches in the southern part of Denmark, as well as

migrant congregations from around the world. They would all have to translate their sermons which, for many, could be a heavy and expensive administrative burden.

The legislative proposal has not yet been put forward, but it has already attracted criticism and concern from lawyers, pastors and bishops and the Council on International Relations has sent an open letter to Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, and the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Joy Mogensen, urging them to drop the proposal, citing concern for the Danish tradition of freedom of religion.

International ecumenical organizations and Churches from other countries have sent letters of concern to the government, including the Lutheran World Federation, the Conference of European Churches, COMECE, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany, the Anglican Church and many more.

They are concerned about freedom of religion and belief, and the suspicion that might fall on churches and other religious communities where preaching is in a language other than Danish.

## MEANWHILE, THE DANISH CHURCH HAS A NEW CONSULTANT FOR FARSI SPEAKERS

About 1400 members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark come from Farsi speaking countries. Eight deaneries in Denmark have combined to appoint 58 year old Naser Rezaei to lead the Church's outreach to this Farsi speaking community. He has been



a Christian leader, teacher and preacher and so is the ideal person for the job. Prior to his appointment he was working for the Interchurch Council as a consultant.

Naser is planning to extend his work into different parishes as soon as it is possible to meet physically again. His priority will be to support the local work in the parishes and deaneries. Many of the people he will be working with came to Denmark from Iran and Afghanistan during the refugee crisis in 2015 and converted to Christianity. They need community, Christian education, and a church leader with whom

they can identify, a person who understands their language and culture.

### Why a bilingual church?

Most of the Farsi speakers now speak Danish fluently but the most personal and intimate matters can be hard to translate. Christian faith has, according to Grundtvig, a "heart language", that is the mother tongue that people use in their own spiritual life. The objective is not to create linguistic divisions, but rather to strengthen the church's work in other languages and thus strengthen the bonds between newcomers, the Church and Danish society.

## DIALOGUE IS ALWAYS THE SOLUTION

*In November 2020 attorney Karina Arntzen, daughter of a Yerba Mate tree farmer and a primary school teacher, became the first layperson to serve as Vice-President of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate (IERP), a United, Protestant denomination with congregations in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. She is only the second woman ever elected to the office since the Church's independence in 1965. Before her election she served six years as secretary on the Board of Directors, and for many years she has engaged in youth ministry and taught confirmation and catechism classes. (LWI)*

### **What is the role of the Vice President on the IERP Board?**

It is the Vice President, along with the board of directors, the general secretary, and congregations who, by God's grace, carry out the mission and direction of the Church. The specific functions of the Vice President on the board are to direct and supervise everything related to the administrative functioning of the Church, and report what has been done in the meetings of the Board of Directors. The Vice President also summons the Board of Directors to sessions and coordinates their meetings.

### **What do lay people bring to leadership in the church?**

It is important to include lay people in church leadership positions as they are part of the Church just as much as ordained ministers. Lay people, like ministers, work in communities, contribute their gifts to the mission of the Church and have a voice and a way of thinking which must be heard and taken into account. The position of President has always been available to lay people and until the last synod vote, a lay person had never been chosen for this role.

### **You worked in youth ministry for the church. How will you affirm the involvement of youth in the mission?**

It is necessary and essential to give a greater role to young people in the decision-making spaces of the church and all possible participation in the work of the mission of the church. Young people have many ideas and contribute greatly, they work dynamically and collectively, they have a strong commitment to gender justice and environmental justice and I think we have a lot to learn from them.

For example, our young people in IERP are very committed to climate justice and are doing a lot about it. I notice that messages can be heard more clearly when young people reach out. The community is motivated when they see young people working so hard for justice. The young offer the church a different perspective.

### **What about your profession will be helpful in this role?**

I believe that my training, both as a lawyer and as a teacher, gives me a predisposition to active listening and dialogue as a tool to contribute to the work of the Church, as well as to resolve potential conflict situations. I am convinced that dialogue is always the solution. Staying calm and listening.



Sometimes we have to pause, because some subjects need a longer process before a decision is reached, and we need to be patient and allow that process to happen. Likewise, training in law helps to streamline processes and administrative work within the Church.

### **How does your commitment to the Church shape your professional career as a lawyer?**

I believe that, like all Christians, commitment to God and the Church influences every aspect of my personal and professional life. In particular, it leads me to sustain a strong commitment to accompany those people who are most disadvantaged and who cannot always make their voices heard to demand their rights. It also carries a strong responsibility for the defence and promotion of human rights, gender justice and the defence of creation.

Being part of the Church enables me to participate in a community with which to celebrate and share my faith in God. Faith is to be lived and shared in community and the Church is the framework in which we gather to do so. So being at the service of the Church is, for me, being at the service of the Word of God and of my brothers and sisters in faith.

### **What does it mean for your Church, your work and for you to be a part of the communion of Churches?**

Being part of the LWF Communion of Churches implies understanding and recognizing that there are different ways and means of practicing and celebrating the faith and that, within the framework of communion, we can share, celebrate and enrich ourselves as Churches, and generate and deepen bonds with sister churches and other religions.

## BEING LUTHERAN: REAL PRESENCE IN DIGITAL CHURCH

*Theologians from Asia, Europe and USA consider how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting theological, liturgical and pastoral priorities (LWI)*

How have churches responded to the restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic? One year on, how are they coping with ongoing lockdowns and online worship? Most importantly, how will our experience shape our theology, worship and pastoral practice in the years to come? On 3rd February, in a 'Being Lutheran' webinar, three theologians from the United States, the Netherlands and Malaysia reflected on these questions as they shared personal perspectives on the way the Church has been profoundly challenged and changed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### New communities of faith

Professor Deanna Thompson is Director of the Lutheran Centre for Faith, Values and Community at St Olaf College in the state of Minnesota, USA. Recently, she has gained a reputation as 'a spokesperson for virtual church'. It was a role thrust upon her following a stage four cancer diagnosis in 2008. Having been originally 'very sceptical of all things digital', she saw friends organizing vital online support networks and found that 'virtual tools were not poor substitutes for reality, but rather life-giving connections'.

As a people who are 'persuaded by Luther's theology of the Cross,' Prof Thompson said, 'we know that God is present where we least expect him to be.' Before the pandemic she had begun exploring some implications of the belief that "Christ is really present in the Word", a belief that has been further expanded during this time of quarantine.

Online prayer and worship, she insisted, are important pastoral priorities, especially for the sick, the elderly and the vulnerable who may never return to in-person services. Noting that many non-church goers have been attracted and found time to attend online religious activities, she said that digital worship offers 'more connectedness than we think.'

### Enabling digital access

Speaking from a European perspective, Dr Andreas Wöhle said that we are 'being surprised by God's creativity' during this unprecedented time of challenge for the Churches. As a member of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and Principal Pastor of the Old Lutheran congregation in Amsterdam he has seen how online services have engendered profound new experiences of faith, especially within families worshipping together.

At the start of the lockdown, Dr Wöhle recalled, his church responded to the need to provide online worship, but also saw that enabling digital access for less technologically minded members of the congregation was an urgent "diaconal task". During Lent 2020 many felt that fasting



Participants at the Being Lutheran webinar believe the experience of digitally-mediated worship is "changing who we will be in the future." Photo: Congerdesign via Pixabay

from the Eucharist was the most appropriate response to 'Christ present in the pain of not sharing together.' The experience of quarantine has provoked 'a new dimension of communion ... deeper than our current theological thinking.'

### Extraordinary measures for extraordinary times

As Chair of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia's Faith and Order Commission, the Rev Augustin Mthusami has also been challenged by these same critical questions. He serves as pastor at Luther House Chapel, close to the capital Kuala Lumpur, and works in the Church's education and communications ministries. At the start of the pandemic 'we were hesitant about [virtual] Holy Communion,' he said, and saw that there was 'a lot of fear' about 'cheapening' the sacrament of the Eucharist.

But as the lockdown continued 'we drew inspiration' from the Lutheran understanding of "invisible church" and in December the Church approved the option for congregations to allow virtual Holy Communion. 'We realized that, in times of stress, people longed for the sacrament,' he reflected, but 'we drew up conditions' requiring accountability and explaining that 'this is an extraordinary measure for extraordinary times.'

Education is a vital part of the process, Augustin Mthusami said, explaining how his Church sent letters to all parish councils, along with guidance about how to administer the sacraments in these exceptional circumstances.

While internet access remains a key "justice issue" for many people across the world today, the presenters and participants in the webinar agreed that the experience of being church during a pandemic "is changing who we will be in the future."



### 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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The Anglican-Lutheran Society

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## “THE HOPE OF COMMUNION: FROM 1920 TO 2020”

Use a set of videos to catch up on an event organised by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) together with the Louvain Centre for Eastern and Oriental Christianity (LOCEOC) which was held 16th-17th December 2020.



More than 100 participants reflected on the significance and impact the two landmark ecumenical texts from 1920 had on the ecumenical dialogue: “The Patriarchal Encyclical Letter to the Churches of Christ Everywhere” issued by the Orthodox Patriarchate, and “The Appeal to all Christian People” which was issued by the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops. These were referred to in last October’s issue of *The Window*.

The conference examined the expectations for unity formulated in these texts, explored their role in subsequent ecumenical developments and then focused on the question of what the hope of communion means for relations between the Churches today. There were three sessions:

“1920: *Annus Mirabilis?* ‘Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere’ and ‘Appeal to All Christian People’”;

“*Hopes Fulfilled, Deferred and Re-Directed: Changing Ecumenical Priorities 1920–2000*”; and

“*Signs of Hope, Models of Unity: The Ecumenical Landscape Today*”.

The speakers were: the Rt Rev Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Church of England; H.E. Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia, Ecumenical Patriarchate; Prof Joseph Verheyden, Coordinator of the Louvain Centre for Eastern and Oriental Christianity; the Rev Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus, World Council of Churches; the Rev Canon Prof Mark D Chapman, University of Oxford/Ripon College; Prof Stylianos Tsompanidis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (whose paper was read by the Rev Ioustinos Kefalouros); Ms Natallia Vasilevich, Council of Christian Churches in Germany; Prof Peter De Mey, Leuven University; Dr Andrew Pierce, Irish School of Ecumenics at Trinity College Dublin; Prof Michael Root, Catholic University of America; Prof. Friederike Nüssel, Heidelberg University; the Rev Canon Dr Jeremy Worthen, Church of England; and H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, Ecumenical Patriarchate.

You can watch all their video presentations on the CEC YouTube channel; <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL83gYD9sZ1JtX3IqSlqJo68EFkfRfnSKH>

Find the conference programme at <https://www.ceceurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Hope-Of-Communion-From-1920-to-2020-Booklet.pdf>