

# The Window

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THE ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN SOCIETY

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We hope you enjoy this issue of your Newsletter.

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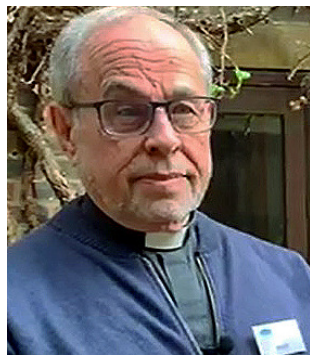
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And much more

## SOCIETY IS 40 YEARS YOUNG!

At our Annual Meeting on 9th March the Very Rev Tom Bruch gave a brief account of how our Society came into being. You can find his presentation in full on our website in the report of the meeting in 'Past Events'

### Introduction



Tom grew up in USA where his Dad was Pastor of a Lutheran church where there was very little contact with Anglicans. Indeed, Tom admitted that Lutherans didn't think much of Anglicans, 'regarding them as Calvinists who liked dressing up a bit!'

### Moving to UK

During the 1970s Tom and his wife moved to the UK and Tom attended theological College, Westfield House in Cambridge. There were lots of Anglicans in the city, but at his college they tended to be kept at arm's length. He was ordained in 1977 and became Pastor of All Hallows Lutheran Church, Sunbury-on-Thames where ecumenical links were 'cordial but distant'. Switching from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in England, which in those days had a strong Missouri Synod affiliation, to the Lutheran Church in Great Britain (LCiGB) in 1980 he was appointed Pastor of St Paul's, Corby, a congregation which considered good ecumenical relations important, and so actively pursued them.

Then, from 1982-85 he served at Hothorpe Hall in Leicestershire. It was a Conference & Retreat Centre owned by the Lutheran Council of Great Britain and there he enjoyed a close relationship with All Saints Church, Theddingworth. 'It was the kind of grass-roots ecumenism that the people wanted,' Tom said. So there he learned a lot about Anglicans.

### Church Newspaper

In April 1982 an article appeared in the Church Times by Canon George Austin who commended Lutheran Eucharistic theology and asked if: 'The assumption that even carriers of bubonic plague should be less assiduously avoided than anyone loosely described as "Protestant" has not simply blinded Anglo-Catholics to the riches of Lutheran understandings of apostolicity and episcopate, thereby diminishing the fullness of our own theology of ministry.' Tom wrote a letter to the Church Times thanking him. He hoped that the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Luther and 150<sup>th</sup> of the Oxford Movement could mark the beginning of better understanding and closer relationship between Lutherans and Anglicans worldwide. He also noted that far more unites the two traditions than separates them in doctrine, worship and Church life.

### The Seed is sown

Among those who responded to Tom's letter was the Rev Dr Ian Phelps, a Church of England Vicar (pictured below). Tom invited him to Hothorpe Hall where they talked about theology, where Ian experienced Lutheran worship and enjoyed their walks in the countryside and a few beers. Ian suggested forming a society so they sent a letter to the Church Times to test the waters, and called a meeting in London on 10th March, 1984 for anyone who was interested. They were amazed when about 30 people turned up!

So the Anglican-Lutheran Society was born with Ian elected chair, and with Tom as secretary. And the rest, as they say, is history!



## THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*An important part of the Society's Annual Meeting was the Business Meeting  
It is fully reported on the website – just go to 'Past Events' – this is a summary*

This year's Annual Meeting, it must be said, was rather poorly attended. Things were not helped by disruption on the railways and London Underground, but there were only 44 members in St Mary's German Church in London for what was a very stimulating day, and 17 of them were on Zoom. Bishop Paul, our Anglican Co-Moderator, welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer. A number of members had given their apologies, and he reported that Bishop Paulina Hlawiczka-Trotman of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain had sent us her greetings.

The Very Rev Tom Bruch explained why the Trustees had decided that we should have a **new Constitution**. Times had changed, he said, and the existing one dated 2018 was no longer adequate. The new one followed guidelines laid down by the Charity Commission and had been circulated to all our members for comment and question. Now, on behalf of the Trustees, he proposed its adoption, and the motion was carried unanimously. Tom then told us that the Trustees would soon be publishing a set of Bye-Laws covering the day-to-day running of the Society which would be circulated to all members.

Bishop Paul thanked our **Presidents** for their invaluable support during the past year. The Rt Rev Jana Jeruma-Grinberga (Lutheran) and the Rt Rev David Hamid (Anglican) had both agreed to continue and were declared appointed. Tom Bruch took the chair for the next item which was the election of the **Co-Moderators**. The Rev



Dr Jaakko Rusama and the Rt Rev Paul Ferguson had both been proposed and, there being no other nominations, he declared them elected, thanked them for their leadership during the past year and returned the chair to Bishop Paul.

Once the **Minutes** of the last AGM on 11th March, 2023 held in Coventry Cathedral had been approved, he called on his Lutheran Co-Moderator to present the **Moderators' Report**. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation Jaakko reminded the meeting of the Aims of the Society and the role of the Moderators. Last year's Annual Meeting had the theme, "An Ecumenical response to the Violence of War" and he spoke of its continuing relevance in our troubled

world. He thanked members of the Executive Committee for their hard work, not least in drawing up the new Constitution. A major event had been a Reception held in Westminster Abbey for Anglican and Lutheran chaplains and pastors. The Society had a stall at the Kirchentag in June 2023 in Nuremberg, and our stall in the "Market of Possibilities" had been well visited. He thanked the Rev Dr Miriam Haar for organising it so well. Thanking everyone who publicises the work of the Society via The Window, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter), Jaakko reminded us that everyone involved in the Society is a volunteer, many are lay people, and they all give their time freely. He went on to thank the National Coordinators who promote the Society in their countries and, as time and money permit, organise activities for local members. 'We are part of a Global Communion,' he concluded, 'and as Anglicans and Lutherans we try to express the unity of all Christians, in Christ.'

Our Treasurer, Patrick Litton, was unable to attend the meeting but his **Treasurer's Report and the Statement of Accounts** had been circulated in advance to all members of the Society. Both were received and Patrick was thanked for keeping the Society on a sound financial footing. His Report and the Accounts are on the website. Lisbeth Pedersen, our Examiner of Accounts, was thanked and re-appointed.

Fredrik Ulseth, Norway, and Jaakko Rusama, Finland, had submitted written **National Coordinators' Reports** and these are on the website. Fredrik, who was present at the meeting, suggested that the Society encourage the making of more partnerships between Dioceses and Parishes. Tom VanPoole from USA, on Zoom, told the meeting that the Society in USA, like many other ecumenical groups, was still suffering the effects of COVID-19. Just recently two new members had been recruited.

Helen Harding presented her **Membership Secretary's Report** and was thanked for the ways in which she keeps more than 350 members in 37 countries informed about the Society's activities. Again, her report is on the website.

The **elections** followed. Canon Dick Lewis (Anglican) was elected Secretary, Patrick Litton (Anglican) as Treasurer and the Ven Christine Allsopp (Anglican), the Very Rev Tom Bruch (Lutheran), the Rev Jonathan Collis (Anglican), the Rev Rebecca Daniel (Lutheran), Mrs Helen Harding (Anglican), the Rev Lagle Heinla (Lutheran), Dr Richard Stephenson (Lutheran) and the Very Rev Eliza Zikmane (Lutheran) were elected to the committee. The Committee members and the Officers are the Trustees of the Society.

There was no other business and the meeting ended with prayer led by Bishop Paul.



## THE SECRET STAIR

*With Rowan Williams exploring the spirituality of Martin Luther and St John of the Cross*

*This is a summary of the presentation given to our Annual Meeting by the Rev Dr Robert Opala. You can find it in full on the website.*

Robert introduced himself. Born in Poland he now serves as a parish priest in the Church of England, in the Diocese of York. But his life's journey has been an interesting one. He started his ordained ministry as a Lutheran Pastor in Poland. Some 25 years ago he suffered a spiritual crisis. 'It was rather like Martin Luther's', he said. His Spiritual Director at that time was a Carmelite priest. Eventually, Robert decided to join the Carmelite Order. 'I wasn't so happy to join the Roman Catholic Church,' he said, 'but it was a condition of becoming a Carmelite!' While he was a Novice in Oxford he acted as Rabbi Lionel Blue's chauffeur! He was in communities in Oxford and in Ireland but one day he met a Carmelite Nun and eventually they both left the Order and were married. Now he and his wife Lisa are both Anglican priests. He told us he would tell us something of his two heroes, Martin Luther and St John of the Cross. They were very nearly contemporaries: Luther died when John was 4 years old. 'They were very different,' he said, 'but when you go into their spirituality they had much in common. Lutheran theology and Carmelite spirituality have been my passion for many years. I find in them an inspiration for my own faith and life journey.'

### **Exploring the subject with Archbishop Williams**

Robert explained that he was enlisting the help of Rowan Williams who is very knowledgeable about the 16<sup>th</sup> century Carmelite reformers and mystics like John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila and who also understands Luther's teaching. He referred to William's book *The Wounds of Knowledge*, the last chapters of which are dedicated to our two reformers. 'Luther was determined to reform the Church using theological concepts and arguments while John of the Cross chose to reform the Church from within,' Robert told us. Then he outlined St John's story.

### **ST JOHN OF THE CROSS**

#### **The situation in Spain**

16<sup>th</sup> century Spain was not the best place for a poor and sensitive child like John. In 1483 the newly united Catholic kingdom introduced a secular version of the Holy Inquisition. Jews, Muslims, and non-Catholic Christians in Spain were persecuted. Once the Jews and Arabs had been forced to become converts to Catholicism the Inquisition turned on the *luteranos* (not only Lutherans but all kinds of Church reformers).

#### **Emperor Charles V and the Catholic reforms**

In 1519 Carlos I of Spain was elected as Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. His vision of a united Christendom was thwarted because so many of the young national

kingdoms were led by Protestant rulers. So he turned his wrath against Spaniards who longed for renewal of spiritual life within the Church. Rowan Williams believes it wrong to think that the 16<sup>th</sup> century renewal of the Church was only the work of Protestant reformers. He says Catholic renewal, with its inner and mystical character, started in Spain, which was almost untouched by the Reformation. John was one of those who lit new lights of spiritual life in Spain.

#### **John's childhood**

Juan de Yepes, John's real name, was born in 1542, the third son of Gonzales and Catalina de Yepes. The family was very poor but his parents, and especially his mother, loved him profoundly. Some scholars even think that his doctrine of mystical union with the loving God was built on his experience of poverty and hardship and on the loving care of his mother.

#### **Life in Medina**

When John was nine years old, the family moved to Medina where, at school, he learned to read and write, as well as carpentry and tailoring. He was an altar boy in the parish church and when he was



17 he started work in a hospital for men suffering sexually transmitted infections. He showed such a degree of care and compassion towards his patients that the manager of the hospital supported his further education. John joined a new Jesuit College where he learned Latin, Greek, and philosophy. He graduated at the age of 21 but was quite a shy, sad young man with many bitter and painful experiences. So in 1563 he decided to join the Carmelite Order.

#### **With the Carmelites**

He was sent to further his studies at Salamanca. He read Thomas Aquinas and other theologians of his time and he loved to pray silently. But after his ordination in 1567 he became depressed, anxious and disappointed with the poor quality of spiritual life in his own Carmelite community. He was thinking of leaving when he met a Carmelite nun, Teresa of Jesus, who was in the process of reforming the Carmelite Order. She invited John to help her to restore the original Rule of Carmel which he was happy to do.



### Reforming the Carmelite Order

However, the Carmelite friars resisted reform and had John committed to prison in Toledo. It was there, living under brutal conditions and isolated in a small dark cell, that John experienced his conversion and wrote one of his most beautiful poems, *The Dark Night*. After nine months in captivity he escaped and later wrote his most important book, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, in which he set out his spiritual doctrine of mystical union with God. He died on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1591 in the Carmelite monastery in Andalusia at the age of 49.

Robert then turned our attention to Luther.

## MARTIN LUTHER: LIFE AND WORK

### Luther's childhood



Martin was born in 1483 into a middle-class Saxon family. Realising how intelligent his son was, his ambitious and dominant father wanted him to be a lawyer. However, in 1505, after a terrifying experience during a thunderstorm, Martin decided to join the Augustinian

Order. His father was furious with him, and it is thought that his anger made Martin suffer both psychologically and spiritually as a result.

### Searching for gracious God

Luther sought a gracious God who would free him from his anxiety. Robert described him as both a priest and popular theologian who was undergoing a kind of mid-life crisis. It reached its peak in what is known as *the Tower Experience*. At last he was to discover the merciful and gracious God he sought so desperately.

### Tower Experience

This *Tower Experience* happened at a crucial time in the Reformation. While many scholars believe that it took place in Wittenberg, Dr Opala subscribes to a more recent theory that it was while he was hidden from the wrath of the Pope and of the Emperor by Frederick the Wise in Wartburg Castle that Luther was suddenly overwhelmed by a sense of God's purifying love. Robert quoted Sam Keen, the American psychologist: *After years of fear and anxiety,*



*Luther discovered that his life was of ultimate worth not because of any work he accomplished, but because he was accepted by God as a sinner. At last, at the age of 38 he was freed from his old angst. 'Many of his biographers see this event as being much more important than Luther nailing up his 95 Theses because it helped to create the doctrinal basis for the Reformation,' Robert commented.*

### Letter to Romans 1.16-17

These two verses from the *Letter to Romans* initiated Luther's own conversion and gave the theological ground for his Reformation: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the justice of God is revealed — a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.* The God who Martin had believed wanted to punish him was gone forever. He had discovered a gracious and merciful God. Luther described it like this: *I meditated night and day on those words until at last, I paid attention to their context: the justice of God is revealed in the Gospel, as it is written: 'The just person lives by faith.'* I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God – that is by faith. But I also began to understand that it is a passive justice by which the merciful God justifies us by faith. All at once I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates.

### Changes in Martin's Life

Martin changed his name from Luder to Luther or *Elutherius* (liberated by God). Liberated, he married an ex-Cistercian nun, Katharine von Bora. With his wife's help he built a bridge between his previous life as an Augustinian friar and the new one as an influential reformer. Marriage also helped him to admit that his father had been right when he described his celibacy as nonsense. Luther became a happy husband, father, theologian and religious leader. He spent his final years writing, enjoying every moment with family and friends. He died in 1546 in Eisleben at the age of 63.

## FINDING THE COMMON GROUND

### Why Secret Stair?

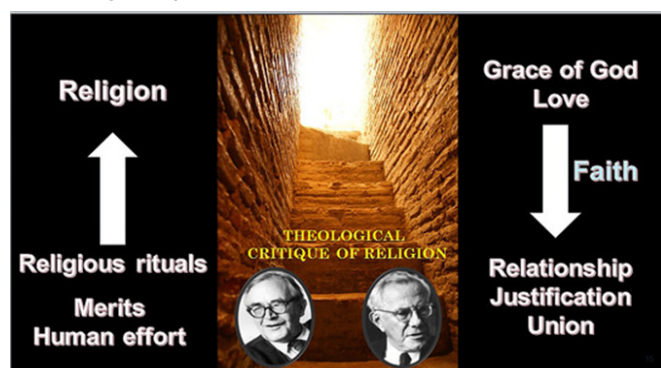
Robert then explained why his presentation is entitled, *The Secret Stair*. 'I borrowed this title from Rowan Williams' book, *The Wounds of Knowledge*. The last chapter of this book, dedicated to John of the Cross, is named *The Secret Stair*,' he said.

### The notion of stair & theological critique of religion

The image of the *stair*, Robert told us, helps to explain the work of God's redemption. When we talk of *climbing the stair* we may think of the effort it takes to climb from the bottom of the stair to the top. But both Martin Luther and John of the Cross realised that the only movement in the God-man relationship which works for our redemption runs the other way: from the top to the bottom. It is God who descends the stair to meet us.

This can be seen both in Luther's distinction between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man and also in John's description of the soul's journey, which ends when she is united with God. During this journey God also purifies

⇒ the soul in the flame of His love, though for the soul it is a dark night experience.



### **The same desert, the same hell**

Rowan Williams, Robert explained, confirms this similarity between Martin Luther and John of the Cross. The image of *the dark night* in John's poetry symbolises the lowest place of human existence and the starting point of the journey. Both John and Luther knew that dark and deserted place. Luther did not hesitate to call it hell. But in that place, both were rescued by God. Both experienced the unmasking of the religious man who dwelt within them and who wanted to earn his salvation by his own pious effort.

### **The liberating grace**

Martin Luther and John of the Cross shared the same view on God's grace. It is a pure gift of God's love, and can only be received through faith. But faith is also God's gracious gift, which our two reformers clearly understood. For John of the Cross, God's grace can lead the soul to union with God in this life. In Luther's teaching God's grace and gift of faith becomes the most important aspect of his doctrine of justification. *Articulus stantis et cadentis Ecclesiae*: if the doctrine on justification stands, the Church stands; if it falls, the Church falls.

### **Luther's doctrine of justification**

We are saved by Christ alone (*solus Christus*), by God's grace (*sola gratia*) given to us unconditionally because of God's love. It is received only through faith (*sola fide*) and not by our merits, devotions or good work. Luther even said, *without grace we are nothing*, and John confirmed this in the same way: *Sin gracia no somos nada*. So, both teach us that everything in our existence – our life and our salvation – comes from God's justifying grace. 'Each complements the other,' Robert pointed out. 'The grace of justification works on two levels: outside us when God pardons us for our sins, and inside us when God cleanses and transforms our hearts.'

### **John's doctrine of mystical union with God**



'Many Protestants may feel uncomfortable when they hear this word *mystical*,' Robert quipped. But Paul Tillich, that great 20th century Lutheran theologian, claimed that all theologians are mystics when they are not afraid to touch the *mysteries of the most secret wisdom of God*. So, mysticism is not about magic. 'It's our contemplation of God's work of salvation and our enjoy-

ment of living from the fruits of God's salvation,' Robert asserted. In this view both Luther and John were mystics. 'The only difference between them was that Luther was a preacher and theologian, while John was a poet and his teaching was an extension of his poetry about the intimate and transformative relationship between God and man.'

## **RETURN TO THE MYSTICAL AND THE SEARCH FOR SIMILARITIES**

### **Hostile attitudes towards Luther in Spain**

Martin Luther and John of the Cross were very different men. Luther was roundly blamed by believers in the Old Church for the 16<sup>th</sup> century loss of unity in the Western Church. Many of John's followers, however, saw John, who wanted to reform the Church from within, as opposed to Luther. 'Even his closest companion, St Teresa of Avila, prayed to God to protect the Church from *those terrible Lutherans*,' Robert exclaimed. But John himself never said anything against Luther. He was not so concerned with the Protestant reformers as he was with a very active religious movement in Spain called *illuminati* that preached what he considered false mystical ideas and values.

### **Anglican approach to mysticism**

Whilst Lutherans historically have been sceptical about mysticism, Anglicans have always showed positive attitudes towards it, as can be seen in the poetry and spiritual writings of Evelyn Underhill and Thomas Eliot. Rowan Williams has no problem in linking Luther with John of the Cross.

### **Purification as God's act of love - similar understanding**

John knew that whilst his practice of radical detachment during the soul's journey to God does not purify the sinner, it does help the sinner not to obstruct the work of God. Rowan Williams suggests that the efforts at self-purification made both by Martin and John left them feeling abandoned and condemned by God. But when their journey through the *dark night* ended, they met their gracious God of love and mercy.

## **FAITH AS THE SOLE MEANS OF JUSTIFICATION AND UNION**

### **The same understanding of faith**



The necessity of faith is a theme equally essential in John's concept of union with God and Luther's theology of justification. John speaks of the notion of *faith alone* in his book, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*. His phrase *sola la fe* means the same as Luther's *sola fide*. John explains that there are two shades of meaning of the notion of *faith*. The first is closely connected with the experience of *the dark night*, which defines the higher stage of the soul's journey to God. This stage is entirely about God's work within the human heart, when God purifies all spiritual faculties of the soul: the intellect, the will and the memory. But the second is about God who communicates ⇒

⇒ with the soul through faith giving, her knowledge of divine ideas. In this act of communication, the soul receives the divine light of truth, which is so bright that it may even blind the soul. That's why faith is often interpreted as *the dark night of the spirit*.

### **John's two aspects of faith meet Luther's theology**

John's concept of faith focuses on two aspects. It is the sole means of reaching God in this life and it is also the revealed truth about God's work of salvation. So faith purifies and guides the human soul, so she may enjoy all the fruits of God's work of redemption, including the *mystical union*. John knew the impossibility of reaching God by the soul's own strengths and efforts and it is at this point that he meets Luther's teaching expressed in 'The Smalcald Articles': *by faith we obtain a new and pure heart and by faith God makes us entirely righteous and holy for the sake of Christ*. So, as John identified faith as a purifying *dark night*, Martin went through his *dark night*, which he described as hell. But these dark experiences led them both into the loving arms of God.

## **THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS**

### **Theologia crucis**

Both Martin and John speak of another essential aspect of Christian theology called *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross). It is impossible to live a true Christian life without the cross. For both of them, the test of true Christian living is to look into the darkness of God being killed by his own creatures.

### **Crucified Lord in Carmelite and Lutheran traditions**

The crucified Lord is essential to both the Carmelite and Lutheran traditions. Without Christ and his suffering on the cross no one would be able to come to redemptive union with God. This view helped Martin and John formulate their theological ideas, which are also similar in other major themes in their teachings on faith, justification, transformation and mystical union with God.

### **Luther's active and passive justice and John's active and passive night**

John was convinced that to experience the cross in human life is to experience an act of pure love. God saves us and purifies us through the cross of Christ because of God's love for us. Otherwise, it would be a cheap grace, which – as Bonhoeffer teaches us – justifies the sins, but not the sinner. So John believed that, on our journey to union with God, our entire being is transformed on two levels: the transformation of our senses and the transformation of our spirit. John of the Cross named these two levels as the dark night of the senses and the dark night of the spirit.

Luther also saw two aspects to the human experience of justification: *iustitia dei activa* (the active justice of God) and *iustitia dei passiva* (the passive justice of God). God pardons the criminal who is now protected from punishment,

though still remains a criminal. During the second phase the sinner is transformed and becomes the child of God.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Luther's doctrine of justification connects with John's view on transformation**

Luther's doctrine of justification corresponds with John's understanding of transformation during which, as Rowan Williams says, God changes the soul by *degrees rather than into something wholly unconnected from the state in which it started*. The work of justification and transformation comes entirely from God, making the person righteous and transformed by Christ.

There is a new school of interpretation among Finnish scholars arguing that Luther always understood the doctrine of justification of sinners as a process of growing in Christ's righteousness rather than as a legal declaration. It stresses that the new life that is given to justified sinners is constructed and verified only by their growth in the divine life of Christ.

### **Luther's justification is also about transformation**

Robert concluded, 'I believe that Luther's theology of justification by faith and John's doctrine of union with God are the most vital subjects in Christian life and thought. It is so because through faith in Christ human beings are given *the right to become children of God* (John 1:12) where the verb *to become* means that they are transformed by God. They also receive a new life in God as they are united with God.' Luther's theology of justification is expressed in the dialectical distinction between the Law and the Gospel, while John's reflection on the spiritual ascent of the soul toward mystical union with God also recognises the differences between the human way, our unproductive effort to reach God, and the divine way in which God walks down the spiritual stair to embrace us with his love and to save us.



Dr Robert Opala ended his presentation with a reading of St John's poem *The Dark Night*.



## “THE STUDENT CHAPLAIN”

*This is a summary of the presentation given at the Annual Meeting by the Rev Rebecca Daniel.  
It is available in full on the website*

Rebecca began by showing the slide you can see in this photo. ‘This is what the international student community looks like today,’ she said. We have students from different parts of the world and these are some from the Indian YMCA and from SOAS, London University’s School of Oriental and African Studies.



The Chaplains’ vision is to foster a sense of belonging, she told the meeting. The strategy they adopt is *Embrace – Encounter – Engage*. “Embrace” is about hospitality, “Encounter” involves offering all kinds of social and spiritual activities, making space for conversation and dialogue. “Engage” is about justice, inclusivity, care for creation and compassion. ‘The students are from different parts of the world and come with different social and ethical values,’ she explained. ‘So here we create a space for them to interact and to learn from each other, and also to learn certain values which have not been part of their up-bringing.’

Rebecca then invited Pastor Joseph Nelson, a University Chaplain in Leeds, to tell the meeting about his work there. ‘I derive my strength from partnership, working along with others,’ she said. ‘So here is Joseph to tell you about the work he does.’

Joseph explained that he works in not one but four universities. There are about 100,000 students in Leeds so there is more work to be done than any one person could manage. ‘So there’s an ecumenical trust where Christians from across the city come to work together to minister to the students in partnership,’ he said. ‘We provide a social space, times for worship, and



we also provide opportunities for intellectual reflection, discussion groups and religious and pastoral support.’

Because there is a vacancy for the Anglican chaplain Joseph is filling the breach. ‘With my Porvoo hat on I have been working with the Anglican students as well as Lutheran,’ he told us. ‘This can be a wonderful example of Anglican-Lutheran cooperation.’ It is a very broad ministry, but it’s very rewarding as well, he concluded.

Rebecca then sketched in the background to her work in London. She was appointed in 2021. Until 2019 there had been a Lutheran Student Hostel but that year the Council of Lutheran Churches (CLC) sold the hostel. ‘My first task was to create a community of people from Lutheran backgrounds and different faith traditions and make a base for them,’ she said. So, drawing on Pastor Joseph’s experience she decided to focus on “Prayer Life”. In conjunction with the congregation at St Mary’s German Church she started Taizé services. ‘I soon realised that coming for Taizé wasn’t their priority,’ she smiled. ‘What a number of them wanted was a space to join in conversation.’ So in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity she held a Vigil for Creation and invited people from the other CLC member Churches – Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, and the Lutheran Church in Great Britain – and it

worked! ‘We invited them and they joined us,’ she smiled.

Rebecca had taken some students to the Society’s Reception in Westminster Abbey. ‘It was a wonderful experience for them,’ she said. ‘Two of them were from the Roman Catholic tradition and to enter such a space and meet people from so many different Christian traditions was very important.’

Last year Rebecca held a retreat in York on the theme “Like a Tree Planted by the Waters”. ‘Some of the students had finished their studies and were going back to India,’ she told us, ‘and so this was to celebrate their success and help them consider where they were going from now on. We continue to communicate through a WhatsApp group which is very effective.’

She has also joined the Churches in Higher Education Liaison Group (CHELG) which consists of chaplains from leading universities and higher education colleges. ‘We discuss the challenges facing higher education and how we can best support our students. We also have a Facebook page through which we offer one another web support and where we provide training for new chaplains. We also arrange a chaplains’ conference in January every year.’

Another of her projects is “Eat and Encounter” when St Mary’s German Church is full of cooking aromas. ‘All that we do is cook and eat and talk.’ Rebecca explained that, because it is very expensive for students living in London, most students need to work. ‘Some of them work two shifts and by the time they have finished it is almost 6pm, so they can come directly from work to the church where they can relax and enjoy hot food and meet their friends. While they are here we pray; sometimes we play games; ➡

⇒ we have had an ice-cream party, a barbecue and a Christmas Party. During the Christmas period we go to the Christmas Markets run by the different member Churches. So Christmas can be a very busy period for the chaplains!' she said.

Our meeting was taking place in Lent and Rebecca was running a Lent Bible Study based on "Life Balance", a book about making time to celebrate life and the importance of rest and recreation. She runs the sessions online. 'We who are based here are joined by a student from Belfast and two from Poland – it's quite late evening for them! Also a South African who attends the Lutheran Church here attends so there are people from a number of different parts of the world with different experiences and different skills. I really enjoy these sessions; interacting with the others enriches the whole experience.'

Rebecca works alongside her fellow-



chaplains in London and something she and Pastor Joseph have been able to do is to invite London chaplains to meet their counterparts in Leeds. 'This helped us all to understand that we are not alone; we are all in it together,' she said. 'We can help each other to move forward. We decided to hold this trip every year and to meet together quarterly online to see how we are going.'

Rebecca feels she is well supported by other chaplains. She has recently joined the SOAS Chaplaincy Team.

'I soon discovered that most students didn't know who the chaplains were. So it seemed a good idea to have coffee afternoons in a room in the Student Union. It's been beautiful. Students come up to you and ask, "Who are you? Can you tell us what you do?"

'The first week we were having just biscuits, fruit and coffee, and a student came up. I said, "Please take what you want." She asked, "What's the catch?" I said, "There's no catch! You're most welcome. We just want to say hullo to you!"'

'The important thing,' Rebecca concluded, 'is that, if you look at our chaplaincy work, we don't try to overlap what we do but we try to support each other and to learn from each other.'

## THE CLOSING EUCHARIST

Our Society's Annual Meeting ended with a Eucharist. The President was the Rev Rebecca Daniel (*right in the picture*) assisted by the Rev Joseph Nelson (*centre*) and the Preacher was Bishop Paul Ferguson, our Anglican Co-Moderator.

In his sermon, which you can read in full on the website, Bishop Paul said, 'We have been able to celebrate 40 years of our Society, and to recognise the vision of those who set it up, and to think about the ways in which the relationships have developed that both make the existence of the Society possible and also have been strengthened through it. It was good to hear from Tom Bruch how the Society's life has run on parallel lines with wider aspects of ecumenism and communion-building.'



The Bible readings were from The Book of Wisdom, 9.13-17; Paul's letter to Ephesus, 4.1-6; St John's Gospel 17.11-23. 'We heard from Wisdom about the inadequacy of human counsel, and how we can only discern the will of God by divine gift. The young church in Ephesus is reminded that patience, love and peace are integral to it, and that all Jesus' followers share in a single hope and call which again is the gift of God. And then John's account of the last session that Jesus had with his disciples before his arrest and death includes the prayer not only for the unity of those who were with him in the room, but also for those "who will believe in [him] through their word".'

These verses from John, he said, are often known as the Farewell Discourses. 'Using the name 'Farewell Discourses' can suggest that this is a long, sad goodbye. No! I want to make the case that these chapters are a call to mission and equipping for it, just as much as the final verses of Matthew or the story of Pentecost in Acts. They do not deserve to be clothed only in the sombre colours of Holy Week, and I wish people could study them when it's warmer and brighter. You might like to give it a try.'





## HOPING TO RENEW ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN RELATIONSHIPS IN NEW ZEALAND

We welcome the Rev Dr Steve Elers as a new member of the Anglican Lutheran Society and our first member in New Zealand. He can be contacted via email [steve.ellers@gmail.com](mailto:steve.ellers@gmail.com)

Kia ora koutou (greetings to you all). I am a non-stipendiary minister at St Michael's Māori Anglican Church in Palmerston North, New Zealand. My Church is part of the Diocese known as Te Hui Amorangi ki Te Upoko o te Ika (the Māori



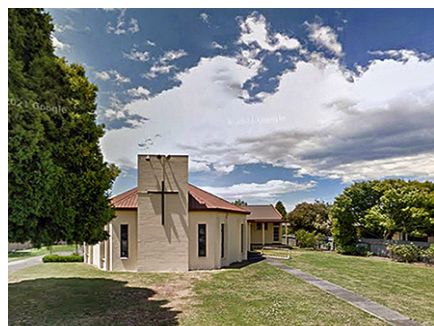
Anglican Diocese that covers the lower to middle part of the North Island of NZ) under Bishop Waitohiariki Quayle, pictured here, who in 2019 became the first Indigenous woman in the world to be installed as a Bishop in a Province within the Anglican Communion.

The Anglican Church in New Zealand is unique, comprising three *tikanga* or cultural streams, each with separate Bishops and Archbishops. These streams share the same prayer book, with cultural differences being the main distinction. For instance, in the Tikanga Māori dioceses, Māori language predominates.

The three *tikanga* unite as one under the banner of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia – I am a member of its General Synod Standing Committee. I am also the Vicar General of my Diocese, but my full-time job is Senior Lecturer (Public Relations/Communication) at Massey Business School, Massey University.

I am near completion of my third master's degree (Master of Chaplaincy through the University of Otago's theology programme) and am considering doing a second doctorate. If anyone can recommend a no-fees doctoral programme (theology) that can be done mainly via distance, I would welcome your contact.

My interest in the Anglican-Lutheran Society is personal, stemming from my German heritage. This lineage includes my great-grandmother from Bremen, a devout Lutheran, and my Elers ancestors' journey from Germany into England, and then to New Zealand, culminating in a rich family history intertwined with Māori heritage and culture. This picture, taken last year, shows me and my daughters Māia (5) and Anahera (7) at St Peter's Church, Bickenhill (located southeast of Birmingham in the West Midlands, England). We are standing next to the graves of my fourth great grandparents, the late Rev Carew Thomas Elers and Sarah Elers. The Rev Carew Elers was the Vicar at Bickenhill from 1823-1863 and was also the Domestic Chaplain to HRH the Duke of Clarence who became King William IV.



Since joining the ALS, I have initiated informal dialogue with the Lutheran Church of New Zealand, marked by significant encounters, including an invitation from Assistant Bishop Warren Paltridge to the 10th Anniversary Service of the Redeemer Lutheran Church of Hawke's Bay and St Francis Co-operating Parish of Clive, which was held on Sunday the 24th of March 2024. This is a 'Uniting Church', a congregation formed by two or more Protestant Churches uniting because of dwindling congregation numbers.

At this event I met several Anglican and Lutheran clergy, including Bishop Emeritus Mark Whitfield of the NZ Lutheran Church. Bishop Whitfield and I have committed to navigating our Churches' policies to renew the formal Anglican-Lutheran relationship in New Zealand. This endeavour represents a hopeful step forward in our ecumenical journey.



L-R: Assistant Bishop Warren Paltridge (Lutheran), Rev Dr Steve Elers (Anglican), Bishop Emeritus Mark Whitfield (Lutheran) at the 10th Anniversary Service on 24th March 2024.

## ENCOUNTERS THAT DEMAND COMMITMENT

*Dr Andrew Thomas very recently joined the Society. In this article he explains how personal encounters and conversations, rather than sitting in ecumenical discussion groups, have sharpened his inter-Church understanding.*



“Well, yes, we agree on pretty much everything, but the character of our Churches are still very different.” This is the kind of spontaneous explanation I have tended to give to my friends when they ask me what an Anglican really is. Almost everyone I meet in Norway is or has been Lutheran, whether they know it or not, and so that is the easiest reference point. I joined the Anglican-Lutheran Society when I realised my spontaneous comparisons weren’t quite enough.

I am a lay theologian from North Devon in England. My ecumenical journey – even before I moved to Norway – was fairly diverse. For half of my childhood my family were Brethren, for half of it we were Anglican. I was baptised as a young adult in the sea by an Anglican priest. As an undergraduate in Durham, I was influenced very strongly both by the charismatic movement and by my high church chaplain, the Rev Ben de la Mare. While they battled for my soul, I was storming through reading lists in Theology, Philosophy and Linguistics. So when I arrived in Norway in August, 1999, as an Erasmus student set to study Theology at the University of Oslo for a year, my brain was already something of a theological melting pot.

It was my meeting with Anglicanism in Norway that settled the battle. The congregation of St Edmund’s Church, Oslo, was warm, the priest experienced, and the liturgy ordered enough that the seeds sown in my teens by years of Book of Common Prayer liturgy flowered into a contented and un-moving Anglican identity. I returned to Durham and finished my degree, but having fallen in love with a Norwegian, I re-

turned to Norway immediately after graduation to begin what has so far been a twenty-three year stay.

Since that time, I have gained many close friends and colleagues from the Church of Norway. I am godfather to four Lutherans, am regularly to be found in Lutheran churches and Bible study groups. I have lived longer in this country, and this religious environment, than in any other. Having completed a PhD at Nottingham, I teach religious education at the teacher training programmes at Østfold University College at Halden, on the border to Sweden in Southern Norway. I have also sat on the theological discussion forum at the Christian Council of Norway on behalf of the Anglican church in Norway.

There are about one and a half thousand Anglicans in Norway, and about three and a half million Lutherans. Freedom of religion in Norway is a recent arrival in European terms (1845) and even then we do not see the blossoming of a thousand Protestant flowers that Great Britain and the US witnessed. That is why not everyone here knows they are Lutheran. In the public imagination, and frustratingly in many school textbooks, Lutheranism is elided with Christianity, to the frustration of the other denominations. That is also why it can be difficult to explain what distinguishes an Anglican from a Lutheran.

The Anglicans in Norway form part of the Church of England chaplaincy of Norway, which has main congregations in Oslo, Trondheim, Bergen, and Stavanger. None of those cities are in the near vicinity of each other, so Chaplaincy Council meetings tend to be online. The Chaplaincy itself is part of the Nordic and Baltic Deanery in the Diocese in Europe, which is even more recent than religious freedom in Norway having been created in 1980, with its Bishop’s seat in Gibraltar, and bordering on North Africa, Alaska, and the East coast of the USA. Very few of us quite appreciate what an anomaly this is, particularly after the signing of the Porvoo agreement.

As Secretary of the Chaplaincy Council, my job is to record minutes and plan meetings. I don’t actually live very close to any of the congregations, and so it suits me to be involved at that level. I have never been ambitious enough to consider dragging my children along the 90 minute journey to the nearest Anglican church on a regular basis. Their mother is Lutheran after all, and they seem not to notice much difference in their parents’ religiosity. I think it may probably have felt rather exotic when my son waved a palm cross in church this year as we attended an Anglican service on our way to the mountains for holy week: skiing and reading crime fiction being Easter activities that enjoy far more faithful adherence in Norway than fasting or vigils.

One of my children has an Anglican godfather who is at present a novice at the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield in the North of England. When visiting him last

⇒ year I enjoyed a series of fascinating conversations with the Lutheran priest in Leeds, Pastor Joseph Nelson. After living through more than two decades of Lutheran saturation, this meeting overturned a number of my lazy assumptions and reminded me that you don't have to be Norwegian to be Lutheran (although I do now have dual citizenship, so that was hardly an impediment any longer).

As we spoke, I realised that I had to take Lutheran theology seriously. I was reminded of my longstanding intention to read Bonhoeffer systematically. I discovered that many of my Lutheran friends with whom I had most sympathy were not closet Anglicans but very orthodox Lutherans. I had to accept that my extensive experience of Lutheranism was itself limited to one (rather idiosyncratic) corner of the worldwide confession. Yes, there is liturgical awareness among Lutherans, yes there are Lutheran religious, and yes

there are Lutherans who take confession and absolution seriously.

There are perhaps sociological reasons for my discovery of Anglicanism while in Norway, and for the awakening of my affection for Lutheranism while in Britain. Perhaps my Brethren roots made me reluctant to ever be a majority. It remains a part of my story that these were encounters that I didn't achieve by sitting in ecumenical discussion groups. However, they are encounters that invite my commitment: not to any particular confessional statement (I remain a staunch Anglican) but to a conversation. When I now dialogue with my Lutheran companions, I am committed to taking their words seriously, and cautious about my old temptation to nurture my own uniqueness by dismissing their words and ministries. I owe to both Lutheran and Anglican Churches a great deal.

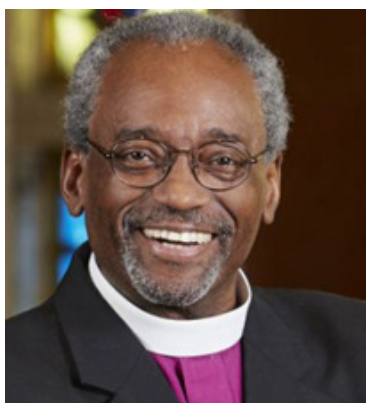
## NEW PRESIDING BISHOPS SOUGHT IN NORTH AMERICA

*The Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Canada and the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, USA, (TEC) both retire this coming Autumn. TEC already have candidates lined up, but the Canadians' process suggests that an Interim might be needed.*

During their 81st General Convention, 23rd-28th June 2024 in Louisville, Kentucky, The Episcopal Church's next Presiding Bishop will be chosen. There are four candidates, Bishop J. Scott Barker of Nebraska, Bishop Daniel G.P. Gutiérrez of Pennsylvania, Bishop Sean Rowe of Northwestern Pennsylvania and Bishop Robert Wright of Atlanta. One of them will become the Church's 28th Presiding Bishop and will succeed Presiding Bishop Michael Curry from 1st November, and an installation is scheduled for 2nd November at Washington National Cathedral, the traditional seat of the Presiding Bishop. Bishop Curry was elected in 2015 and has served his full term of nine years.

The candidates have been nominated by the Joint Nominating Committee for the Election of the Presiding Bishop, which started work in Autumn, 2021, and display a geographical and racial diversity, though there are no women or LGBTQ+ nominees. Whoever is elected will serve for a nine-year term.

However, according to the rules any bishop or Deputy to the 81st General Convention may petition to add a name to the list of candidates recommended by the Committee, but additional nominations had to be made between 3rd and 15th April. The General Convention is held every three years and splits its authority between the House of Bishops and House of Deputies, and each house has a distinct role in the selection of a new presiding bishop. In Louisville, the House of Bishops will gather in a closed session on June 26th at Christ Church Cathedral for the election and then ask the House of Deputies to vote to confirm the result.



The retiring Presiding Bishop Michael Curry (left), formerly Bishop of North Carolina, is well known for his rousing sermons, and his successor must be "someone who loves to preach" and "who longs to bring a word to The Episcopal Church and to the world," the committee said, and must demonstrate "strategic, articulate, collaborative, committed and gracious leadership" while also "building up the body of Christ."

Meanwhile, north of the 49th Parallel in Canada, the Anglican Church's Canon III requires the Primate to retire upon reaching their seventieth birthday, which the present Primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls (right) will do this coming October. The canon also lays down the appointment of an Acting Primate if there is a delay between the Archbishop's retirement and the election of her successor which takes place in June 2025. This Acting Primate should be the "Provincial Metropolitan senior by election and willing to act". Archbishop Anne Germond, the Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario, holds the longest current term of office and should assume the role until the next Archbishop is elected.



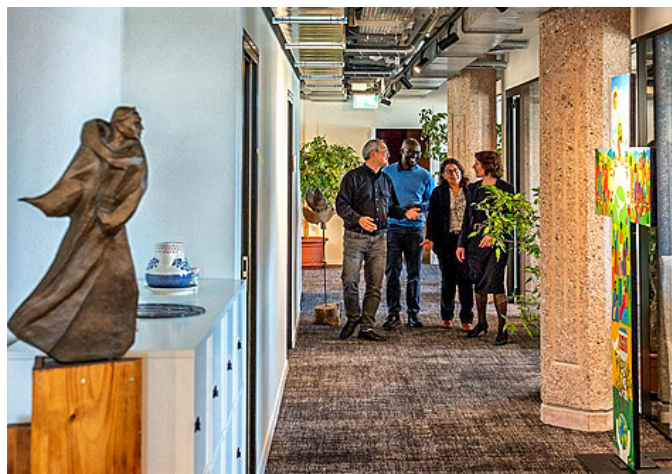
Please remember the two Churches and the candidates for election in your prayers.

## LWF HAS MOVED HOUSE

*After nearly 60 years in Geneva's Ecumenical Centre, the LWF has a new address. The new Communion Office is located on the Octagon campus, close to Geneva airport.*

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has relocated its head offices from the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva to a new address: **Chemin du Pavillon 2, 1218 Le Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland**. The move is only temporary, however, until a new Ecumenical Centre has been built on the plot which housed the LWF Communion Office since 1964.

The old offices of the World Council of Churches (WCC) premises in Grand Saconnex will be torn down to make room for the new buildings. The parts of the Ecumenical centre which are under national heritage, such as the Main Hall and the Chapel, will be preserved. The new office is in the Octagon campus which has attractive open areas, access to a theatre hall, recreational spaces, a café, a gym, and a restaurant, among other basic amenities. The building is equipped with solar panels.



*The Communion Office is on one floor, which will bring staff from all departments closer together. Photo: LWF/S. Gallay*

## CEC HAS NEW GENERAL SECRETARY

*Members may remember the Rev Frank Dieter Fischbach, one of the speakers at our Annual Meeting in Coventry last year. He has been appointed as the new General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches (CEC).*



Frank Dieter Fischbach will take up the position in the summer 2024, successor to the former General Secretary, Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen, who resigned in December 2023.

'I am delighted to announce the appointment of the Rev Frank Dieter Fischbach,' CEC

President H.E. Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain declared. 'I offer my prayers to Frank Dieter in his new ministry. I look forward to working together with him and our member Churches in strengthening CEC's programmatic work, affirming our unique role.'

Responding, Frank-Dieter said, 'I am grateful to the CEC Governing Board for their trust. I have a strong faith in CEC as a fellowship of diverse European Churches, and their special role in shaping a brighter future for Europe, realising peace, reconciliation, and raising voices for common Christian values in the political sphere.'

Frank Dieter studied theology in Heidelberg, Tübingen, and Bonn and is currently Executive Secretary and Head of the Northern and Western Europe Desk, EKD, Churchwide Office in Hanover fostering ecumenical relations.

CEC is a fellowship of 114 churches from Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican traditions from across Europe and, together with its ecumenical partners, represents over 380 million European citizens.

## THE BILL SNELSON YOUNG ECUMENISTS FUND

If you live in England and are aged 18 to 35 this is something you need to know about. It's a fund to enable you to experience ecumenism outside England. The experience can be study, pilgrimage, volunteering or any activity that promotes Church unity.

'We're putting our money where our mouth is,' says Bishop Mike Royal, the General Secretary of Churches Together in England. 'We're investing

not in the generations of the future; but in the generation of today.'

Ecumenism is a great opportunity to explore Christian traditions outside your own. It deepens your understanding of God as well as building relationships with your brothers and sisters in Christ from other traditions. Doing this abroad is life-changing and could be the catalyst that transforms your experience of

faith and helps you make new friends and join new communities. The fund will open for another round of applications in Autumn, 2024. You have to belong to a CTE Member Church, and be aged 18 to 35 at the time of your ecumenical experience.

You can find more details at <https://cte.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/02/Bill-Snelson-Young-Ecumenists-Fund-Introduction-v1.2.pdf>

## DR ANNA KRAUSS TO MOVE TO THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION CENTRE

*The General Secretary of the Council of Lutheran Churches (CLC) will start a new role in September 2024.*

Dr Anna Krauss, who is a member of our Society and has given us tremendous support, has announced that in September she will take up the post of Director of The Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) Centre in Wittenberg. 'I have loved my time at CLC,' Anna says, 'and the Lutheran community in the UK will always hold a special place in my heart. I leave CLC after a period of transition has come to its end and it is time for me to move on. I look forward to the new tasks in Wittenberg.'



The CLC Chair, Bishop Tor B. Jørgensen, says it has been a pleasure having Anna as the General Secretary for three years. 'She's done an important job in securing the future work of the Council, and in that short time has become well-recognised ecumenically, both in the UK and internationally. She has been Churches Together in England's President of the 4th Presidency Group and has represented the Lutheran Church in Great Britain on the LWF Council. We congratulate her on her new role and look forward to continuing our collaboration in this new setting.'

The LWF Centre in Wittenberg organises theological training and conferences for the LWF's 150 member Churches, welcomes visitors from across the world, and oversees some ecumenical projects.

## OUR ANGLICAN PRESIDENT, BISHOP DAVID HAMID, RETIRES AS A BISHOP IN EUROPE

*On February 29th the longest-serving bishop in the Church of England retired. He has for 22 years been the Suffragan Bishop in the Diocese in Europe. In such a dispersed diocese it would be impossible to hold a gathering in one place to bid him farewell, so an online 'Service of Prayer, Thanksgiving, and Sending Out' was held.*



The online service was led by Bishop Robert Innes, Bishop in Europe, and brought together over 300 people from across a diocese that has over 250 congregations in more than 30 countries across continental Europe, Turkey, Morocco and Russia. They all expressed their appreciation of Bishop David's ministry and gladly celebrated his accomplishments.

Reflecting on the Bible passage set for that evening, John 15.8-17, Bishop Robert reflected: 'It seems to me that in a world so marked by division, and mistrust the very possibility of a community like the Diocese in Europe is a miracle. The existence of an even mostly functional Christian community is testimony in itself to God's presence and work. Actually, in this diocese, I really glimpse and see and experience this miracle.'

'Bishop David now moves on to other things,' he continued. 'He takes a very well deserved retirement from this demanding European ministry. We have given him and received from him Christian love, and he is someone who remains our friend.'

Throughout his tenure as Suffragan Bishop, Bishop David has played a pivotal role in shaping and nurturing the spiritual life of the diocese, and his leadership and compassionate guidance have left a mark on the hearts of many people.

Reflecting on his journey, Bishop David said: 'The only really important part of my role over these last 22 years, and it's really at the heart of any Episcopal Ministry, is the responsibility that a bishop has to help people to be faithful disciples and friends of Jesus Christ.'

Expressing his gratitude for all that he has received over the years, Bishop David continued: 'It has been a walking together and a joint pilgrimage. Over these years you have shaped me and shaped my ministry. So, thank you for leaving your mark upon me.'

'Francois Mauriac said, "No love, no friendship can ever cross the path of our destiny, without leaving some mark upon us forever",' he said.

As Bishop David moves into retirement, his legacy of compassion, and dedication, and service will continue to resonate both within the diocese and beyond. And we, in the Anglican-Lutheran Society, look forward to his continuing ministry among us.

## LUTHERANS AND PENTECOSTALS: A BEAUTIFUL STORY OF MUTUAL LEARNING

*Shedding old stereotypes while learning to trust and listen to other Christians' stories:  
Dr Jean-Daniel Plüss takes us inside the first international Lutheran-Pentecostal dialogue.*



'We want to be relevant and we need to see that if we are bickering about our differences, we are not credible to young people today.' That is the conviction of Dr Jean-Daniel Plüss. He is a member of the Swiss Reformed Church and the Swiss Pentecostal Mission, and Chairs the European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association. As a member of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) he co-chaired their first ever international dialogue with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

That dialogue was 'a long time in the making,' he says. Its origins lie back in the 1990s at a time of lingering mutual mistrust between the older, mainline Churches and the newer, more Spirit-led movements. Former LWF General Secretary, the Rev Dr Gunnar Stålsett and the Pentecostal Professor Cecil M. Robeck established an informal group which met five times during the decade at the Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research in France.

Under the guidance of Dr Plüss and Lutheran Professor Kenneth Appold from Princeton Theological Seminary, the group explored some basic differences and common beliefs between Churches that are members of the two global Christian communions. Gradually, as they explored 'the foundations of our self-understanding,' Dr Plüss says, 'we realised that despite our very different histories and traditions, it is our identity in Christ that draws us together.'

At first glance, as the first Lutheran-Pentecostal dialogue statement (LINK) points out, the two traditions 'appear to be so different that they would have little in common.' The Lutheran Churches are confessional, Pentecostal churches are not, while worship styles and organisational structures can also appear to be a world apart. Yet, as they looked more closely at differences within their own communions, they discovered 'the same Spirit at work, creating a willingness to shed stereotypes as we learned to trust and listen to each other's stories.'

Dr Plüss has been interested and engaged in ecumenical dialogue since his student days. His family roots are with the Huguenots from southern France who fled to Switzerland in the 16th century. He grew up in the Reformed Church but, as a teenager, discovered the Pentecostals. 'I felt a call to ministry and began my studies at a Pentecostal college but went on to do a PhD at the Catholic University of Louvain.'

In the 1970s, with the charismatic renewal movement in full swing, there were prayer meetings with people from very many different Churches. 'I was received very well at the Catholic university, so I also wanted to learn more about the beliefs of those with different religious backgrounds from my own.'

### Learning from others to know ourselves better

Learning from others in order to understand and appreciate one's own tradition is a recurring theme throughout the first International Lutheran-Pentecostal dialogue which Dr Plüss co-chaired between 2016 and 2022. 'It is a beautiful story of getting to know each other and ourselves better,' he says. Meetings took place each year on different continents to explore issues relevant to the local context. 'In Chile, we talked about poverty, because Pentecostalism is a Church for the poor, but Lutherans also have a diaconal ministry for the poor and we saw how much we have in common. In Madagascar, we saw how Pentecostals pray for people to be delivered from oppression, but we saw that Lutherans too have a deliverance ministry similar to ours.'

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the final report was not published until 2023. It recommended starting a second phase of dialogue, focused on ways of worship that differ greatly, both within and between the two communions. 'In Ethiopia, Lutherans worship very differently from elsewhere, whilst in Russia Pentecostals have been heavily influenced by the Lutheran Church, so maybe we can learn to understand our own constituents better,' Dr Plüss says.

### Ethical evangelism, relevant witness

The report, called 'The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me' is written in a user-friendly style, 'so that both Church families can draw benefit and local pastors can share testimonials of mutual learning.' It explores typical areas of tension such as proselytism, noting that both sides have used "dishonest and dishonourable forms of mission." It says: "We are dismayed when missionaries carry out their programmes in total ignorance of local culture or history, frustrated and ashamed when Christians attempt to 'evangelise' members of other Churches as if those Churches did not exist."

Proselytism is an issue. How can we ethically engage in sharing the gospel with the world? Pentecostals, with their more dynamic styles of evangelism need to learn to do so in a responsible way to respect the life of other Churches, while Lutherans may want to ask themselves why people prefer to worship in Pentecostal Churches.

Dr Plüss says, 'I hope that, when we see we are one in Christ and that one Spirit calls us into mission, we will see what God is doing through the other Churches.' Dr Plüss concludes: 'As we discover our ultimate identity in Jesus Christ, I think we will grow together in unity, making our shared witness to the world more relevant.'

The Report, "The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me", can be downloaded at <http://lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/20230810%20Lutheran-Pentecostal%20dialogue%20EN.pdf>

## ALPHABET SOUP: LUTHERAN CHURCH BODIES IN AMERICA

*In their article on American Lutheran worship traditions on page 28, Tom Bruch and Tom VanPoole mention 19<sup>th</sup> century Lutheran Church bodies that cooperated in developing a Common Liturgy, and others that adopted the same liturgy subsequently. Here they paint a sketch of those various Lutheran traditions for members unfamiliar with the story.*

The multiplicity of Lutheran Church bodies in America, both historic and present, may be unfamiliar to many Anglican and European Lutheran members. Church historians refer to the plethora of complex Church names and their abbreviations, especially at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as “alphabet soup”. To add to the confusion, several Lutheran bodies that had or have geographical names are actually nationwide Churches.

In North America today are two national Lutheran bodies with over a million members, three more with over 100,000, two (in Canada) with over 50,000, seven more with over 5,000, and numerous small groups with 1000 or fewer members. Since 1820 in America there have been more than fifty Lutheran bodies representing at least seven ethnic backgrounds and diverse theological traditions. Here is an overview of the major bodies today.

About two thirds of American Lutherans (3.3 million) are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) formed in 1988 by a merger between three bodies; the LCA, ALC and AELC. The Lutheran Church in America (LCA) had been a 1962 merger between descendants of late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century German immigrants settled in the eastern United States, mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Swedish immigrants, late 19<sup>th</sup> century Grundtvigian “Happy Danes” and Icelandic immigrants, mid-19<sup>th</sup> century “churchly” Finnish immigrants, and Slovak immigrants. The American Lutheran Church (ALC) was a 1960 merger between descendants of early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century German immigrants, some fleeing the 1818 Prussian Church Union, who settled in Ohio, New York and the Midwest; mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Norwegians, both orthodox and pietist, in the upper Midwest US and late 19<sup>th</sup> century Inner Mission “Sad Danes”. The Association of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations (AELC) had left the Missouri Synod (see below) in 1976 because of the Seminex controversy at Concordia Seminary, St Louis in 1974. [This was a dispute over ‘traditional’ as opposed to ‘modernist’ Biblical doctrine. Students and some faculty members rebelled after the Seminary’s President was suspended and some faculty members accused of false teaching. ‘Seminex’, the Seminary in Exile, was established separate from the Missouri Synod – Ed] In 1978 the AELC proposed to the LCA and ALC that they begin discussions that led to the 1988 merger. So the ELCA was created and today is divided into 65 synods and is a member of the Lutheran World Federation.

About one third of American Lutherans (1.8 million) belong to the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), formed in 1847 from mostly mid-19<sup>th</sup> century immigrants in the mid-west US, Germans who had fled from Union Churches in Saxony. They espouse strongly confessional Lutheran doctrine and are very apprehensive of relations with less conservative Lutherans. Their first leader, Bishop Martin Stephan (1777-1846), was deposed for fiscal (and possibly moral) misconduct. Due to that experience LCMS has had fiercely congregational polity ever since. Their most influential later leader was Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (1811-1887). Most congregations wor-

shipped in German until 1918 or later. LCMS has a strong parochial school system and focuses on mission to African-Americans rather than on relationships with other Lutheran bodies. They are considered the “wettest” Christian denomination in the US due to German affinity for beer! Because they insist on accepting the entire *Book of Concord*, many congregations, schools, and their publisher are named “Concordia”. LCMS led the formation of the Synodical Conference (1872-1967 - Missouri Synod, Wisconsin Synod, “Little Norwegians”, and Slovaks - and of the International Lutheran Council (1993) - a more conservative international group than the Lutheran World Federation. Women are not ordained in Missouri Synod and, despite its name, the Missouri Synod has congregations nationwide, divided into thirty-five districts.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) is a 1917 merger of four synods in, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska. Of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century German descent they are very conservative. WELS does not ordain women, does not allow women to serve on parish councils or to vote in church meetings (see their 1993 statement on *Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles*). With about 350,000 members nationwide they are divided into twelve districts. Internationally, WELS is a member of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (1993).

Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) was formed in 2001 by congregations associated with the Word Alone Network. They were opposed to the *Called to Common Mission* agreement with the Episcopal Church and left the ELCA. There are about 300,000 in thirteen districts. The North American Lutheran Church (NALC) number about 142,000. In 2010 they left ELCA because they were opposed to the 2009 Church-wide Assembly’s adoption of the social statement “*Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*” and the related revisions to clergy discipline policies. They have twenty-eight districts and belong to the Global Confessional and Missional Lutheran Forum (2015)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCC) was formed in 1986 by a merger of the former Canadian portions of the ALC and LCA and has about 95,000 members in five synods. The Lutheran Church–Canada was formed in 1989 from the Canadian congregations of the Missouri Synod. There are about 53,000 members in three districts.

Two ethnic groups that have not been included in the groups above came from the Baltic states. The Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (LELCA), formed in 1975, has about 12,000 members. It is distinct from, but related to, the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Worldwide. Both are distinct from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia.

The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad, based in Canada, has been a diocese of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church since 2010. It has about 5,500 members in Canada and 3,500 members in the United States.



## “ECUMENISM AT THE HEART OF LIFE”

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January, the Lutheran World Federation’s Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Prof Dr Dirk Lange, reflected on the way we are freed by faith to love and serve our neighbours in need.

### Growing together in faith and solidarity

This year’s theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, “You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10.27), sets ecumenism at the heart of life. The moving witness and powerful honesty of the people on the preparatory team from Burkina Faso remind us that ecumenism is not simply for theologians and church officials but is an essential way of responding to life’s crises and hopes. It is not a lofty, theological ideal but a way of being, and a Gospel response, a pastoral response to the many situations in which all created beings find themselves.

Burkina Faso is “in a serious security crisis” and “has endured a proliferation of terrorist attacks, lawlessness and human trafficking,” leaving over three thousand dead and almost two million people internally displaced, notes the introductory material for this year’s Week of Prayer. Amid this crisis, solidarity is growing among Christians, Muslims, and people of traditional religions. As Christians seek to witness to God’s love, Churches offer mutual hospitality, visiting each other, sharing worship, engaging in common projects. This growing solidarity is not only “ecumenical,” it is also interreligious. The text of Luke 10 is broad and generous.

Yet, the Churches also note that many challenges to unity remain. A basic lack of knowledge of one another leads to suspicion and there is a perennial concern that ecumenism implies a loss of identity and uniqueness, opening the doors to a formless, meaningless communion.

### A unity that is already given

The honesty of this witness of the Churches in Burkina Faso is refreshing. To name the fears, to acknowledge the fact that in the lives of our Churches and Communion, ecumenism remains too often an agenda item and not the core, the heart, of our witness should not be a discouragement, but an admonition to respond to that prayer of Jesus for unity. When will all Christian Churches realise that the gifts of faith, hope, and love imply solidarity and call us to a reconciled life, drawing us into the reality that we are all part of one human family, with creation, continually accompanied, nurtured, shaped and moulded by the Holy Spirit?

The introductory material reminds us that Jesus prays for unity. Jesus doesn’t command unity, or legislate unity, or impose unity. Jesus prays for unity, a unity that is already given. Jesus prays that it becomes true for us, that it be witnessed in our lives and communities, that it defines our lives “so that the world may believe.”

### To whom am I neighbour?

This engagement happens through faith, a faith born in

Christ’s own solidarity with us, faith in God’s promise of love, faith in what God has done and is doing now. Through faith, we become part of Jesus’ prayer, leaving behind all that burdens us or holds us prisoner. Freed from all the constraints that the world and we ourselves impose upon us, hope arises within our hearts and we are able to love, to be a neighbour, to be a good Samaritan who sees Christ in the victims on the roadside.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted that Jesus’ response flipped the lawyer’s question around. Rather than asking, “who is my neighbour”, Jesus responds with the question we should be asking: “to whom am I neighbour?” It is the same question we hear in Matthew 25:40, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’ The allegorical reading of the Church Fathers, beautiful as it is, finds here a new reading: not Christ as good Samaritan, but Christ as victim.

Perhaps the ecumenical challenge is not about how we can love each other more, but how, as we pray together, we can recognise our needs, stretch out our hands together, and call upon God together, in every situation. About how, as we grow in faith, we can grow together in communion, in our reliance upon God and spontaneously (in an “unrestrained” manner Luther said) reach out to those around us who are suffering. As we step together into their suffering, our baptismal vocation is practiced and we enter ever more deeply into that mystery of communion that is the Church in God’s plan.

## INSIGHT INTO A FAVOURITE HYMN

*A book suggestion for you from Dr Roy Long*

I listened to BBC Radio 4’s *Thinking Allowed* which featured Laurie Taylor interviewing Dr James Walvin, Emeritus Professor of History at the University of York, about his most recent book, ***Amazing Grace: A Cultural History of a Beloved Hymn (Oakland, California University Press, 2023. ISBN: 978-0-520-39182-6.)*** I wanted to hear what Dr Walvin had to say, because his book was my Christmas reading. It traces the history of the hymn from two hundred years ago, when it was first penned by John Newton, parish minister of Olney (then in Buckinghamshire, UK), to its present-day status as a hymn that is sung worldwide. As the *Radio Times* puts it “How did a simple Christian hymn, written in a remote English vicarage in 1772, come to hold such a sway over millions in all corners of the modern world?” (p125). Dr Walvin does an excellent job of answering this question. Incidentally, John Newton has a particular interest for me, living, as I do, only six miles from Olney.



## IS 'DISCIPLESHIP' JUST THE FLAVOUR OF THE MONTH?

John Bowen was Professor of Evangelism at Wycliffe College, Toronto.

His most recent book is

*"The Unfolding Gospel : How the Good News Makes Sense of Discipleship, Church, Mission, and Everything Else"* (Fortress 2021).

He is a member of St John the Evangelist parish in Hamilton, Ontario.

His article appeared in the January and February issues of *The Anglican Journal*.

Jesus teaching his disciples, woodcarving c1508-1519, Amiens Cathedral, France

Photo : James Womack and Anne Richardson, Nashville, TN



"Discipleship" seems to be everywhere. There are books about discipleship, sermons about discipleship, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, suggested in the *Journal* two months ago that baptism isn't just entry into the Church, but also the gateway to – you guessed it – discipleship. Another article suggested that discipleship is the key to the Church's survival. And on the international front, apparently more than 100 dioceses around the world have decided to make discipleship a key priority, it being the theme of one of 10 Statements or "Calls" to the Anglican Communion from the Bishops at the Lambeth Conference in 2022.

Not surprisingly, people in the pew are asking, "But what on earth is this discipleship thing?" Is this just one more in a long line of bright ideas guaranteed to solve our problems and grow our churches? We've seen it before. Remember the Decade of Evangelism? Back to Church Sunday? Ideas like this come and go – but nothing really changes. So how is discipleship any different?

### New life from the roots

I think the clue is this: in times of spiritual renewal, something very counter-intuitive happens. As people pray for something new, when that new thing arrives it bears an uncanny resemblance to something very old, something that takes us back to our roots. The good thing about returning to roots, of course, is that roots are precisely where new life comes from, so this shouldn't surprise us.

In the Christian story, discipleship is about as old as it gets – as old as the four Gospels. It's worth reminding ourselves of that story. It sheds light on what discipleship is, and why it is more than a buzzword. Early on in each of the four Gospels, two things happen: Jesus announces his mission, and he calls disciples. The two seem intimately connected, but how?

Jesus called his mission "the kingdom" – an image which didn't have the negative connotations it can have in our day. Quite simply, it was shorthand for saying that in the coming of Jesus, God was beginning to work in a new way to put right everything that is wrong in the world. This, Jesus says, is Good News. Indeed, it is the best possible Good News for the world: it is gospel! And this new kingdom is somehow connected to the arrival on the scene of Jesus.

For three years Jesus lives a life that embodies what

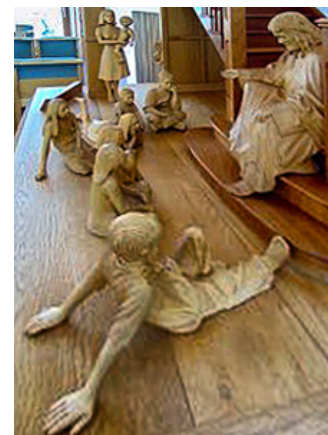
"kingdom" means: he teaches about it, he tells stories about it and every day he demonstrates what it means to live the way of the kingdom. As a result, in every village that Jesus visits, people get a taste of what life in this new kingdom feels like. New Testament scholar N. T. Wright speculates that in the villages Jesus visited, small communities would have sprung up composed of people inspired to live out this new way, even after he had left.

### From kingdom to discipleship

So that's the first theme of the gospels. Jesus announces – and demonstrates – this radically new way of doing life and of being human, to a world that is alternately delighted and outraged by what it sees.


But the second thing he does is to call disciples. Why? Because the kingdom is not a one-person show put on for our entertainment for a three-year run. It is not a religion but a movement, with a dynamism that will grow and spread around the world like – well, like those natural growing things that Jesus is always telling parables about: vines and yeast and mustard seeds and fig trees and wheat. And he calls disciples in order to sow seeds of the kingdom in their lives, and to nurture those seedlings to the point where they can continue to grow and reproduce even when he is no longer physically present.

### A better word than 'disciple'



*The Storyteller, Chapel of National Arboretum, UK, Photo: Dick Lewis*

"Disciple" is an old-fashioned word we don't often hear in everyday life. Sometimes people explain it by saying that a disciple is a learner or a student, and that's true. But to me those terms always sound a bit academic – maybe because I spent too many years in classrooms!

No: the word I think best conveys what Jesus was up to with the twelve is the word "apprentice." You know how an apprenticeship works. Maybe you have been an apprentice yourself. There is a theoretical component, of course, often with books or lectures or written assignments. But the 

⇒ majority of the apprenticeship is about a different way of learning: on the actual job with the trainer. David Kolb, the educationalist coined the phrase “experiential learning” in 1984 – which might make us think it a relatively recent invention. Really, however, what is new is sitting in a classroom listening to a lecture and regarding that as education. That’s not how Socrates taught in the ancient world. Nor is it how the rabbis of Jesus’s time taught. In both cases, students would simply hang out with their teachers and learn by living life together.

That’s what Jesus is doing with the twelve. As they spend time together, day in and day out, they learn on the job how to live the kingdom. In fact, as the gospels unfold, you can see how the disciples develop in their kingdom skills. Think of the time when Jesus sends them out two by two (the twelve in Luke 9 and the seventy in Luke 10). They’ve watched him at work, teaching and preaching, healing and working miracles. And now he says, “OK, now it’s your turn. You go and do these things too!” You can imagine how they must feel. But this is part of the apprenticeship – and they do it, with results that startle and delight them.

Or again, remember the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus has been teaching for the whole day, and the listening crowds are hungry. The disciples do what comes most naturally. They come to Jesus and say, “Um, Lord, we’ve got a problem, and here’s what we think you should do about it.” To which he replies – I like to think it was with a smile – “OK, why don’t you give them something to eat.” What happens next is actually a partnership: They find the food and get the crowd seated, and he prays and does the miracle. That’s another way apprenticeship grows: novice and expert working together.

Here, I believe, is the Church in a nutshell: it is the trade school of Jesus, where he trains apprentices in the ways of the kingdom. Is the Church not more than that? Of course there is more, lots more. A nut needs a shell to protect and nurture it – as the Church needs institutional structures – but the kernel is where the life is. The shell by itself is dead.

**Christ’s Great Commission**

Jesus’ last instruction to his apprentices is often known as the Great Commission: “Go and make disciples.” But what if we translated that into the language of the trade school? “Go set up satellite campuses to train apprentices in the ways of the Kingdom.” Which, of course, is what they did, all around the world! We call them Churches. Why are we encouraging this thing called discipleship? It’s because discipleship is the essence of the Christian life.

**Discipleship then and now**

“Well,” you may say, “That’s all very well. But Jesus is no longer around. I can’t traipse after him through the villages of Galilee. How can this work in today’s world?”

It is true, the practicalities are different, but the principles are the same. The Bishop of Oxford, UK, Steven Croft, has suggested that it’s Mark 3.14 that captures the main themes of discipleship: Jesus “appointed twelve to be with him and

to be sent out to preach and to have authority to cast out demons.” In other words, there are two halves: being with Jesus, and then going out in ministry – a coming in and a going out.



In today’s terms, we spend time in the presence of Jesus when we read the Gospels, alone or in a group, or when we hear them explained on a Sunday morning. Prayer also puts us in the presence of Jesus to listen for his voice. And so does congregational worship – above all as we come to his table week by week. But then there is the going out, the learning by doing. How does that work?

**It’s not that difficult – in theory, at least.**

Sometimes it’s in the big choices we make: What work should I pursue? Who (if anyone) should I marry? How should I use my leisure time? How should I use my money? If we really believe that God is remaking the world through Jesus and is inviting us to participate, then no decision is too big to be included.

Of course, in our daily lives it is more often small choices that are guided by our commitment to discipleship: Should I stop and speak to this beggar? What can I afford to give to relief efforts in the Middle East? Would this deal my office is proposing be an ethical one? What is our church’s responsibility to these new refugee claimants? Have I the courage to apologise to my spouse (or, even harder, my child)?

**You and I make such decisions every day.**

We may object that Jesus is not present in person to guide and challenge, encourage, and forgive, in the way he did with the Twelve; surely that makes it much harder for us than it was for the first apprentices. But the secret is this: the Holy Spirit is actually the Spirit of Jesus – the active presence of the same Jesus who trained the Twelve. Strangely enough, Jesus himself seems to suggest that the presence of the Spirit is better than having him present in the flesh (“But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” (John 16.7) – though I confess I don’t fully understand how.

**What of the future?**

In light of this, I can’t help asking myself: Will encouraging this kind of radical discipleship save the Anglican Church of Canada, or the Churches across the world? Maybe – and maybe not. Philip Jenkins and other historians have documented how, over the past 2,000 years, whole denomi- ⇒

⇒ nations have come into being, flourished (sometimes for centuries) and then slowly died out. Such things are largely beyond our control. In that case, is it worth encouraging discipleship? Yes – a thousand times yes. But why, if not for survival? The answer is that Jesus is not terribly interested in survival. In fact, he warns, “Whoever wants to save their life will lose it.” (Matthew 16.25) We desperately want to save our lives – and that of our Church. But Jesus tells us that doing things merely in order to survive is counter-productive: it’s actually a guarantee we will die. The only way to truly save our lives, says Jesus, is to give them away – the way Jesus models for his apprentices, the Kingdom way.

So if encouraging discipleship is not just the latest strategy for survival, then what is it? It is not code for being a nicer person, or being more religious or giving time to more

good causes. Discipleship is the heart of Christian faith. Discipleship is individuals and communities passionately committed to the living Jesus and learning from him the ways of the Kingdom. It is Churches whose whole *raison d’être* is following the leadership of God in what Jesus calls the renewal of all things. As one young church planter explained it to me, “God is changing everything, and we can be a part of it!”

Is discipleship the flavour of the month? Maybe it is right now. But it’s a flavour worth getting used to. I didn’t have Chinese food until I was 19 (I obviously had a deprived childhood) and I remember being startled at first by its wonderful and exotic flavours. Over the years, of course, that new flavour has become a regular and much-appreciated part of my diet. Maybe the same can happen with this new flavour we call discipleship.

## BRITISH LUTHERANS WELCOME NEW BISHOP

*In the January issue of The Window we reported that Society member the Rev Paulina Hławiczka-Trotman had been elected Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain.*

*The Rev Meelis Süld, Council of Lutheran Churches Outreach Coordinator, wrote this report for Churches Together in England of her Consecration in Nottingham on 20th January 2024.*

The Lutheran Church in Great Britain (LCiGB) has a new Bishop. She is the Rt Rev Paulina Hławiczka-Trotman. Originally from Southern Poland, she studied Theology & Ethics, and Opera with Acting in Warsaw. At that time, the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (Lutheran Church) in Poland did not ordain women. ‘Unfortunately, for a vocal woman fighting for her and her colleagues’ rights for the ordination of women, there wasn’t much space for me,’ she explained, so she relocated to the UK.

The outgoing Bishop, the Rt Rev Tor B. Jørgensen, said, ‘Paulina illustrates the true history of our Church. From an East-European minority Lutheran tradition she has shown individual courage and integrity by following her call to be an ordained minister while it was still not possible in her own Church. She has instead been a blessing for LCiGB since her ordination nine years ago.’ Bishop Paulina will continue to serve English Lutheran congregations in Nottingham and in Corby, and a Polish congregation in London.

Jeffrey Trinklein, the Chair of the LCiGB, said, ‘Her international background is a great fit for our Church since we come from so many places. She is also well known to the Church

of England and is a one of the Chaplains in the University of Nottingham.’

The consecration was conducted by Bishop Tor B. Jørgensen, with Rt Rev Jāna Jēruma-Grīnberga (former Bishop of LCiGB) and Rt Rev Paul Ferguson (Bishop of Whitby, Church of England). Among ecumenical and international guests were the Rt Rev Mike Royal (the General Secretary of Churches Together in England), the Rt Rev Jerzy Samiec (the Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland), the Rt Rev’d Patrick McKinney (Roman Catholic Diocese of Nottingham), the Rt Rev Dr Andrew Emerton (Bishop of Sherwood, Church of England) and the Rev Dr Ireneusz Lukas (European Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation).

Bishop Paulina, while reflecting on her upcoming ministry, said, ‘I would like to listen to the needs of people in these times of economic difficulties and engage with ecumenical and interfaith



*Bishop Emerita Jana Jeruma-Grinberga, prays over Paulina with Bishop Tor and Bishop Paul Ferguson in attendance.*

*Photo : © LCiGB/ Alex Wilkinson*

partners in our joint work.’ She added, ‘I believe we meet God in times of our biggest troubles and tribulations; that is why we are able to work on love and peace with people everywhere, and this is what the world needs most now.’

Dr Anna Krauss, Churches Together in England President and General Secretary of the Council of Lutheran Churches commented, ‘The LCiGB has added another ‘first’ – after consecrating the first woman bishop in the UK, (Bishop Jāna) the Church is now led by the first-ever Polish woman to be consecrated bishop.’

## INDIAN 'UNTOUCHABLE' IS LONDON'S NEWEST ANGLICAN BISHOP

*The new Anglican Bishop of Edmonton in the Church of England Diocese of London is an Indian academic descended from the lowest caste in Hinduism, the Dalits. Next to him in the picture is the Bishop Of London, Dame Sarah Mullally.*

The Rev Dr Anderson Jeremiah has his origins in South India. Missionaries to the Dalit community converted his family to Christianity. He grew up in Tamil Nadu, the southernmost state in India, as a Christian. He is the first Dalit, and the first person ordained in the Church of South India (CSI), to be appointed a Bishop in the Church of England.

In the course of his life he has lived in five Anglican provinces in different parts of the world and served in both rural and urban contexts, and in both deprived and affluent communities.

Dr Jeremiah completed his PhD in Edinburgh, Scotland. Until his appointment as bishop he was Associate Dean at Lancaster University, in North-West England, and a senior lecturer in the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion.

He served the Diocese of Blackburn, as advisor to the Bishop on black, Asian and minority ethnic affairs, is a member of the Church of England's General Synod, has served on the

Church's anti-racism taskforce and as associate priest at St Paul's, Scotforth, south of Lancaster, where his wife, Rebecca, is Vicar.

Dalits are assigned to the lowest caste of Hindu society by birth. They are subject to extreme racism, excluded from the official caste system, and are eligible only for sanitation jobs like scavenging rubbish, cleaning drains, collecting waste and sweeping roads. The Bishop-designate says that he has experienced 'overt and covert racism, at every sphere of social and religious life.' This has given him a passion for working towards justice and peace as 'central to Christian Discipleship'.

Dr Anderson took up his post in the early part of 2024, joining the College of Bishops in the Diocese of London.



He succeeds Bishop Rob Wickham as Bishop of Edmonton, who stepped down last August to become Chief Executive of the Church Urban Fund.

'I am particularly excited to take responsibility for racial justice as a portfolio amongst the bishops in London,' Dr Anderson commented. 'My own experiences of exclusion and discrimination have formed my life, research, and ministry, and they inspire me to embody the expansive hospitality of God.'

## SOME CHRISTIANS IN INDIA MAY FIND LIFE TOUGHER

*When Jesus told his disciples to make disciples of all nations he warned them that it would be no easy task. But for Christians in parts of India the task may soon be even more difficult.*

Whilst there is no central anti-conversion law in India, eight states within that country have enacted anti-conversion laws making religious conversion by force or allurement a punishable offence. One of them, Chhattisgarh State, is moving to strengthen its anti-conversion laws, often used to target Christians and Muslims. A bill proposed by the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), will require anyone

wanting to convert to another religion to apply at least 60 days in advance to the district magistrate who will then ask the police to assess the "real intention, reason, and purpose" for the conversion. The wording of the bill states that conversion from one religion to another "cannot be done by the use or practice of abuse, force, undue influence, coercion, inducement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage." Punishment for mass conversion will be a minimum of three years and a maximum of 10 years in prison, along with a fine of 50,000 rupees (\$602). However, the proposed law will not apply to anyone who wants to convert back to their previous religion.



In reality there have been few prosecutions under similar laws in other states in India. But they create a hostile, and on occasion violent, environment for religious minority communities because they do not require any evidence to support accusations of wrongdoing.

## HISTORIC MEETING OF AFRICA'S ANGLICAN WOMEN BISHOPS HELD IN KENYA

*The first ever meeting of Africa's six female Anglican bishops was held in Kenya early this year. The gathering took place from 8th to 14th January at St Julian's Retreat Centre, Limuru, Kenya, under the theme "African Anglican Women Bishops embarking on a journey of faith: defying conventions and leading with Grace."*

Bishops Filomena Tete Estevão (Diocese of Bom Pasteur, Angola), Dr Emily Onyango (Diocese of Bondo, Kenya), Elizabeth Awut (Diocese of Rumbek, South Sudan), Rose Okeno (Diocese of Butere, Kenya), Dr Vincentia Kgabe (Diocese of Lesotho, Southern Africa) and Dalcy Badeli Dlamini (Diocese of Eswatini, Southern Africa) issued a communique in which they reflected on five key principles: Re-defining the Church; Moral and Ethical Leadership; the Triple threat of Gender-Based Violence, teenage pregnancies and HIV/AIDS.

They stated, 'For far too long the Church has been silent on gender inequalities that have been worsened by endemic cases of gender-based violence (GBV), teenage pregnancies and HIV/AIDS .... Our congregants, who could be described as perpetrators and survivors of the aforementioned triple threats, demand of us that we intervene.'

They also reflected on Women Leadership Empowerment and Climate Justice, guided by a Bible verse from Proverbs 27.17, "As iron sharpens iron so one person sharpens another." In their communique they stated, "We humbly adopt the inspiring message of Archbishop Dr Jackson Ole



Sapit to us: Women of faith shall continually be instruments of hope, transforming the world and offering thoughtful and practical leadership in various issues that affect society; Women of faith are placed at the core of progressive communities and their voices add valuable contributions to build a stronger Church; The Church must remain vocal in highlighting the reforming and transforming power women hold as agents of change."

## CANADA : ANGLICAN, LUTHERAN LEADERS MARK TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

*This article by Matthew Puddister appeared in the Anglican Journal, January 2024*

Leaders of the Anglican Church of Canada and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) condemned transphobia and called for acceptance of transgender people in advance of the Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20th. Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, and ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson released a statement that included a link to some resources for Christians to mark the Transgender Day of Remembrance, an annual observance around the world to commemorate people murdered due to transphobia and to raise awareness of ongoing violence against transgender people.

'Transgender people have suffered enormously from the expectations and limits culture has in the past, and in the present, placed on their lives,' the two Church Leaders said. 'The call of the gospel is to love, to desire fullness of life and joy for all human beings in their relationship with God. We long for that fullness to be the experience of transgender people in our midst.'



The Primate and National Bishop said all human beings are created in the image of God and that this was central to the gospel. They offered prayers of healing for victims of hate and transphobia and invited repentance for transphobic words and actions perpetuated in society and in their Churches. 'We long for God's world to reflect the unconditional love of God for the rich diversity of all of creation and especially for all who bear the image of God,' the two Leaders said. 'Let us create communities of acceptance and welcome that all may know God's love.'

# POPE FRANCIS AND ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY RECOMMIT TO JOINT MISSION

*In January Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops paired up for a series of ecumenical discussions and visits to holy sites in Rome and in Canterbury, acknowledging the common roots shared by both traditions.*

Meeting for Vespers in the *Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls* in Rome on 25th January, 2024, Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, paired up Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops from across the world to engage in joint mission and witness and to promote the reception of the agreements already reached in theological dialogues between the two traditions.

‘Brothers and sisters,’ the Pope told the pairs of bishops, ‘Pope Gregory the Great commissioned St Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury, and his companions, to set out from Rome to preach the joy of the Gospel to the peoples of England. Today, with gratitude to God for our sharing in the Gospel, we send you forth ... so that wherever you carry out your ministry, you may together witness to the hope that does not deceive and the unity for which our Saviour prayed.’

Archbishop Justin then reminded the bishops that they were being sent out from the tomb of St Paul, the Apostle to the Nations. ‘As you preach and celebrate the sacraments with God’s holy people,’ he said, ‘bear witness to the one hope of your calling. May

your ministry alongside one another as both Catholics and Anglicans be for the world a foretaste of the reconciling of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ for which we pray this day.’

Pope and Archbishop then shared the sign of peace with each of the bishop pairs, as the hymn “*Ubi caritas*” was sung, an ancient hymn from the liturgy of Holy Week which includes the words, “*By the love of Christ we have been brought together. Let us find in him our gladness and our pleasure. ... So when we are gathered together, let us strive to keep our minds free of division; may there be an end to malice, strife and quarrels, and let Christ our God dwell here among us.*”

## Growing Together

The bishops were taking part in a week long programme of dialogue and pilgrimage, starting in Rome and ending in Canterbury, organised jointly by the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), supported by the Anglican Communion Office and the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity. This was the second occasion on which the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury have commissioned Anglican and Catholic bishops in pairs. The first commissioning took place in 2016 at the *Church of San Gregorio al Celio* in Rome, in the context of the first IARCCUM summit.

The Most Rev Donald Bolen, the Archbishop of Regina, Canada, and Roman Catholic Co-Chair of IARCCUM said, ‘It is a sign of the great ecumenical work done in recent decades, growing in understanding and in respect, that today we experience our Churches’ leaders jointly sending forth Anglican and Catholic bishops to carry out their mission, and wherever possible to carry it out together. It is



Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin

a day of great joy for the Church.’ The Anglican Co-Chair, the Rt Rev David Hamid, who is Suffragan Bishop in Europe, agreed: ‘It both calls and challenges bishops to go home and work with colleague bishops, as well as with clergy and parishes, to join more profoundly in common mission in our fragmented world ... as we journey towards the visible unity which is Christ’s will,’ he said.

## From Rome to Canterbury

On 26th January, before moving on to Canterbury, the bishops gathered to pray at the *Church of San Gregorio al Celio*, a fitting location since it is the church from where St Augustine was sent to England by Pope Gregory the Great in 597, to be the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

During the service, Archbishop Justin Welby and Bishop Anthony Poggo, the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop Donald Bolen and Bishop David Hamid (Co-Chairs of IARCCUM) stood at the Chair of Gregory the Great.

The Bishops agreed that meeting in Rome during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity had been extremely important, particularly at a time when the world is so fragmented. They had visited holy sites significant to both our faith traditions and had prayed together. This fresh com- ➔



(left to right) Archbishop Donald Bolen, Bishop David Hamid, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and Bishop Anthony Poggo stand beside the Chair of Gregory the Great.  
Photo : Neil Turner

⇒ missioning had reminded them that the faith both traditions share is a sending faith that goes out into the world to serve and to bring transformation and witnessing to the saving love of Christ.

The bishops eagerly anticipated their time in Canterbury where, from 26th-29th January, they would discuss their ecumenical work on joint witness and mission, and on how to share the fruits of their discussions in their home dioceses, and where they would visit pilgrimage sites.

### "Called to be Jesus Partners"

The Canterbury programme involved continued discussions on Church and World affairs, and the bishops enjoyed a tour of Canterbury Cathedral by candlelight, visiting the altar of the martyr, Thomas Becket, and standing beside St Augustine's Chair, the locus of the enthronement of Archbishops of Canterbury. They attended a Vigil Mass in the Catholic Parish Church of St Thomas of Canterbury where Archbishop Chris Cardone (from the Catholic Archdiocese of Honiara in the Solomon Islands) presided, and Bishop Bruce Myers (Bishop of Quebec) preached.

During Sunday, the bishops attended sung Eucharist at Canterbury Cathedral, where Cardinal Stephen Chow Saau-yan (Bishop of Hong Kong) preached. In his Sermon, the Cardinal said: 'Jesus has brought us together here. The same Lord has graced us with an array of rich experiences that should prompt our hearts and move us into ecumenical actions.'

I recall the heart wrenching experiences that were shared by my fellow bishops in the Amazon, Middle East, Myanmar, Sudan, South Sudan, et cetera, where martyrdom is a real possibility. We Anglicans and Roman Catholics are all called to be Jesus' partners, individually and collectively. The twelve Apostles and Disciples were not called to form camps, working for their

own missions, or competing against each other. They were to become an assembly, a community, a communion, a synodal koinonia, praying together and discerning, teaching and serving for the mission of our Triune God ...

May God's ever loving and ever inclusive mission of salvation ... and what we have learned at this summit ... enlighten us and spur us forward so that we can be counted as worthy mission partners of the Son of God. May God bless you, all my sisters and brothers in a Church that is of Christ. Amen.'

The bishops spent time in the afternoon working on a joint statement on their common witness, and the day concluded with Choral Evensong at Canterbury Cathedral, at which the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canterbury Girls' Choir was also celebrated.

### Ongoing Commitment

As their meetings ended the Anglican and Catholic bishops shared their post-conference 'Call' entitled

#### "Our Common Witness, Calling and Commitment"

This document covers important themes relevant to Church and world affairs. It is written not only as a summary of the bishops' commitment, but also as a united call to the wider Church. In its opening it says:

"After four centuries of conflict and separation, the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion have now

been on a walk towards reconciliation for almost six decades. At times, the path has been bumpy, but the Holy Spirit has been at work and our Churches have persevered in a dialogue which has been extraordinarily fruitful. We willingly proclaim that our communion in Christ is a source of joy and life. While that communion is not yet full, decades of rich theological dialogue, nourished by prayer for and with each other, have brought us to a place where the bonds which unite us are deep and profound. Yet in our Churches we have barely begun to do all that is possible to do together ...

"Mindful of God's sending us forth to engage in common witness, to build relationship of friendship in Christ, to walk a synodal path together and to share wherever possible in the Church's mission, IARCCUM brings together bishops from across the world where Anglicans and Catholics live together side by side in significant number."

The statement goes on to make calls and invitations to the Church in the areas of Witness, Friendship, Mission and Synodality. It says: "Synodality is not merely about Church governance; it is about putting relationships at the centre of the Church's life."

It references Pope Francis' words to the bishops at their commissioning in the *Basilica of St Paul outside the Walls* in Rome: 'First our brothers and sisters, then the structures.' It also makes a promise to proclaim the "Good News of peace to those in places scourged by ongoing wars".

The bishops end with an ongoing commitment to work for unity:

"As we return to our own local Churches after our pilgrimage in Rome and Canterbury, we pray that our ministry alongside one another as Catholics and Anglicans will be for the world a foretaste of the reconciling of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ."



Cardinal Stephen Chow Saau-yan preaches at Canterbury Cathedral as part of the 'Growing Together' ecumenical summit Photo: Neil Turner

## FINNISH BISHOP GIVES GLOVES TO POPE FRANCIS AS UNITY GESTURE

*Finnish Bishop Bo-Göran Åstrand gifted a pair of gloves to Pope Francis, described as "a modest gift," to warm the pontiff's hands "in an otherwise cold world" in an annual audience during this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This story by Peter Kenny appeared in Ecumenical News, January 24th, 2024.*



Pope Francis stressed the importance of always 'welcoming our poor and forgotten brothers and sisters' during the Week of Prayer, including 'those who feel abandoned by God or have strayed from the path of faith and hope.'

Bishop Åstrand responded that the meeting is an important expression of the existing ecumenical collaboration in Finland and to visit Rome during the Week of Prayer is an important tradition in the long-term relations between the Churches.

After the audience with Pope Francis, Bishop Åstrand explained, 'In fact, this is the 39th visit to the Vatican on 19th January, the day we celebrate Saint Henrik's life and work ... The ecumenical tradition was established by Archbishop John Vikström and the local Catholic bishop. Every year one of the Lutheran bishops is asked to lead the delegation to meet with the Pope and the staff in the Vatican. This year it was my turn to lead the ecumenical delegation to Rome.'

To mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Pope Francis met with Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox from Finland, encouraging them to journey together as a "pilgrim Church". Each year Pope Francis welcomes an ecumenical delegation from Finland – comprised of Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox – to the Vatican. This year's visit took place, as always, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and it involved an exchange of gifts and reflections.

Speaking to Pope Francis, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland Bishop Åstrand, whose country is known for its cold winters, stressed the aspect of journeying on an ecumenical pilgrimage. Sometimes the Ecumenical World seems very cold, so he gave the Pontiff a pair of gloves to keep his hands warm. He recalled the Biblical passages about a man journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho and about the good Samaritan, and reflected that 'Christ sends us all out into the world.' He noted that 'as pilgrims we are called to walk together in this world in the name of compassion, reconciliation, and in the service of peace.'

The audience with the Pope on January 19th was part of a larger delegation visit of Finnish Church representatives to Rome. Bishop Bo-Göran Åstrand's group included Karin Åstrand, deacon; Fr Martti Savijoki SCJ; the Rev Mari Puska; Metropolitan Arseni of the Finnish Orthodox Church; Dr Kimmo Kääriäinen, Executive Director National Church Council, Department for International Relations, WCC Central Committee member Maria Mountraki from the Orthodox Church of Finland; Bishop Raimo Goyarrola from the Roman Catholic Church, and the Rev Lucas Snellman, Head of Communication for the Swedish Communication Department.

Pope Francis thanked the Finnish delegation for their visit saying that 'this meeting with you is a living sign in the midst of the present Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ... Let us ensure that this annual ecumenical encounter continues to flourish and expand.'

St Henrik brought Christianity to Finland. According to legend, he entered Finland together with the king, Saint Eric of Sweden, and died as a martyr, becoming a central figure in the local Catholic Church. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is one of the largest Lutheran Churches in the world and a majority of Finns belong to the Church.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There's an old joke that quotes the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche saying, "God is dead." The riposte, "Nietzsche is dead – God." Recent research in USA suggests atheists make up 4% of Americans. However, this does not mean that the other 96% believe in a god because 28% identify as religious "nones", that is to have no religion ("none").

Most of those claiming to be atheists are relatively young men; they are generally white and have a college degree and almost all of them (80%) lean toward the Democratic Party. Whilst these atheists seldom or never pray, most feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe, whilst a third of them are conscious of feeling deep spiritual peace and well-being from time to time. Most find a source of meaning in family, in hobbies, in money, creative pursuits, travel, and leisure activities.

Western Europeans are more likely than Americans to identify as atheists. For example, among adults 23% French, 18% Swedish, 17% Dutch and 12% in the United Kingdom all claim to have no belief in God.



## CHURCHES' RESPONDING TO EVENTS IN HOLY LAND

Your editor was asked how the Churches are reacting to the worsening situation since 7th October 2023.

In February 2024 there were two significant journeys made to Israel/Palestine.

The first was by two members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark. Theirs was a more 'grass-roots' visit. The second was by the Rev Prof Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. His was a 'high level' visit. We start with the Danes.

### How it began

The Council on International Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark asked the Rt Rev Marianne Christiansen, Bishop of Haderslev, and its Chairman, Prof Dr Peter Lodberg, to go to Jerusalem. They were to visit Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar of the Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and hand him a letter expressing the support of the Danish Church for local Christians during the tragic war in Gaza between Hamas and Israel, started after the 7th October 2024 Hamas incursion into Israel.

They were encouraged by the warmth of the reception they received from everyone they met. What struck them was the isolation felt by the Palestinian people who, since many checkpoints between Israel and the West Bank have been closed, are suffering from unemployment and lack of income from the tourist industry.

### In Beit Sahour

It is estimated that since 7th October 35 families have left Beit Sahour using the last of their money to leave their homes in the West Bank to settle abroad – not least for the sake of their children. Lutheran church workers in Bethlehem described people who either cannot or do not want to move turning to the Churches to provide food and to offer psychological-social counselling for families in crisis.

Bishop Marianne and Prof Lodberg visited the Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit Sahour. Founded in 1901 for boys and girls, it is run by Palestinians and serves as a spiritual centre for the local community. The school is open outside school times and is the meeting place for the Scouts and other community groups.



Some children at the school in Beit Sahour (taken a while ago)

"Sahour" means night watch and is associated with the Shepherds' Field. 20% of the West Bank's Christians live there and people say, with a twinkle in their eye, that no better people than the shepherds of Beit Sahour could have been chosen to be the first to receive news of Jesus' birth. News there spreads faster than anywhere else! People are



Bishop Marianne (left), Prof Lodberg (right), Bishop Azar (centre) and the letter

very close to each other; culture and society is family-based, and everyone knows everyone else!

The Lutheran congregation in Beit Sahour has about 100 members out of a population of 15,000. 20-25 children and 20-25 adults attend church on Sundays. The school has 70% Christian children (of which 10% are Lutherans) and 30% Muslim children. It is estimated that the city's income has reduced by 90%. Someone Bishop Marianne and Prof Lodberg met told them, 'The current situation is the worst I have experienced in my life. Hopelessness and distress is great. But we don't talk about it because the situation is far worse in Gaza.'

### Threatened existence

Others told them, 'We are already dead. Bethlehem is a big prison. We have no hope. What's happening in Gaza will happen here. We are shut in. Israel is moving to the right politically. We are separated because people can't come from Ramallah to Bethlehem. At the same time, we feel betrayed by our partners, by those in the West we used to trust. Right now South Africa is our only hope. The Global South is now the moral beacon. We have seen a moral collapse in the West. What must Israel do before a Western Church will condemn Israel? The 450 students here at the school are our only hope. They must be raised and trained to a non-violent and democratic future.'

People spoke very candidly about the ways in which Israeli Defence Forces make incursions into the West Bank when people are arrested, often for no apparent reason, buildings are damaged and families split up.

One person who spoke to their Danish visitors told them, 'My children are scared. Their school is close to settlements. The children speak English together in the street so as not to be exposed as Arabs.'



➡ **Lutheran identity in Bethlehem**

The next port of call was Bethlehem and another Lutheran school, Dar al Kalima, located on the road to Hebron very close to the Dheisheh Palestinian refugee camp where about 18,000 live. The camp is run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).



Photo: ELCJHL

This school has 460 students, 80% are Muslim and 20% Christian, many of them from the Camp. This Lutheran institution aims to provide good education for everyone as well as empowering people to be leaders in society and the Church. 'For us,' Bishop Marianne and Prof Lodberg were told, 'a Lutheran Christian identity consists in always seeing the Reformation as a contemporary and existential process, both historical and current: Love, peace and justice – how do we live it?'

**Ecology**

They then met a representative of the Ecological Centre established by the Lutheran Church in 1986. From the very beginning the focus was on teaching, involving children and young people in combatting pollution, encouraging biodiversity and strengthening climate awareness. They planted a "Biblical Garden", but because of the Zionist abuse of the word "biblical" it is called "a botanical garden".

Bishop Marianne and Prof Lodberg were told how climate changes can be seen in bird migration. Birds do not move as far south as before.



Photo: Nature Guides

The centre works to create awareness of nature and climate change in schools and in public institutions, and has actually influenced the Palestinian Authority's climate regulations. But the centre's greatest contribution is in the adoption of the Palestinian Sunbird (*Cinnyris osea*) as the national bird.

The centre also focuses on the right to free movement. Not only the animals, but also young people have the right

to move about freely. Sadly, many young people from the West Bank and Bethlehem have been to many places in the world, but never to Jerusalem.

The Israeli separation wall poses particular problems. It restricts movement of people and animals, and it prevents Palestinians from cultivating their land on the other side of the wall or in an area up to the wall. An old Ottoman law states that if landowners do not cultivate their land for ten years they lose the right to it. This law has been used by the Israeli government in relation to Palestinian farmers, so students from the centre go to plant trees for families who have been separated from their land by the wall so that continual cultivation can be documented. Settlers often threaten the students and let their goats enter Palestinian fields, so it is an on-going issue.

**Diakonia**

Because of the growing economic and social crisis the Lutheran Church has centralised its diaconal work. The leader, Rana Zeidan, made it clear that the Lutheran Church serves people of all backgrounds and religions. 'We provide a

Christian presence to alleviate need,' she told her Danish visitors, explaining that the work that was done by local



Rana Zeidan with her guests  
Photo: ELCJHL

churches has now been coordinated in a centre. 'We have to be on the West Bank, transporting medicine and food, because people have no money for fuel so they can't collect supplies for themselves.'

She described the Church's work assisting the unemployed and the many people suffering from mental illness. She also spoke about the deaf who, because of their deafness, tend to work independently making goods for the tourist trade, which has ceased. 'They are marginalised,' Rana Zeidan said, 'and they don't have access to audio information about rocket attacks, for example.'

There is lack of food and fuel, people live in fear and there are major alcohol problems, but what concerned her most were the children and young people. 'We are not used to seeing so much violence,' she said.

**More meetings**

Meanwhile, Bishop Azar had been away in Germany but, on his return, Bishop Marianne and Prof Lodberg met him at the Lutheran Church in East Jerusalem. There they ➡

⇒ presented the letter that had been entrusted to them and the Bishop said how pleased he was with their visit. 'It is important for the Lutheran Church to receive solidarity visits from Churches in the West,' he said, 'so that they can see for themselves what is happening.'

Next Bishop Marianne and Prof Lodberg went to meet His Most Godly Beatitude Theofilos III, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Jerusalem. The oldest Church in Jerusalem is the Orthodox which has the most members in Palestine and



Israel. The Patriarch said how difficult it is for the Churches to keep access to the holy places open. The Zionists try to establish new settlements in the Christian quarter, which is evidenced by the many Israeli flags near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Both Bishop Azar and Patriarch Theofilos felt that the Christian Churches must move closer together to counter the pressure they experience from the Israeli authorities and the settlers.

The Greek Orthodox Church enjoys a special role that was defined as far back as 638, when the Muslim Caliph Umar entered into an agreement with Patriarch Sophronius. In return for the surrender of Jerusalem the Greek Orthodox Church received a number of special rights within a framework which in orthodox theology is called "symphony", the cooperation/interaction of the Church with the political power. This agreement is still upheld, which means that the Orthodox have a key role in assisting the other Churches.

Next it was off to the Anglican Cathedral of St George and a meeting with the Anglican Archbishop Hosam Na'om. The Archbishop was particularly concerned with the long-



(Left to right) Prof Lodberg, Bishop Azar, Archbishop Hosam, Bishop Marianne and Canon Donald Binder, Archbishop's Chaplain

term consequences of the war. He feared it would help promote religious extremism on both sides. That could make the situation of the Churches yet more difficult. As a Christian minority, they would be pressured even more.

Both Archbishop Hosam and Bishop Azar affirmed that the unusually good relationships between the Lutheran and the Anglican Churches in the Holy Land are something that goes all the way back to the time when Christ Church, Jerusalem, was founded as a joint Anglican-Lutheran church, where the episcopate alternated between the two denominations. These two Churches are the only Protestant denominations among the so-called 13 historic Churches in Jerusalem, and see themselves as responsible for keeping in touch with Protestant Churches around the world.

That day ended with a drive to Beit Jala which, because of queues took two hours instead of the normal 15 minutes. Only one checkpoint was open. Several Lutheran Pastors had recently stated that the Lutheran Church in Palestine ought to cancel communion with Churches in the West because they do not distance themselves from Israel's destruction of Gaza. Bishop Azar, however, was clear that it made no sense to talk about cancelling Church fellowship with other Churches. Right now there is a need for cooperation and conversation, even if people cannot agree about what is happening and how to deal with the war in Gaza.

Last was a visit to Augusta Victoria (AV), the main hospital for the Palestinian population. AV has always been a beacon of hope. But to be treated there people from the West Bank today have to have a permit to pass through the wall and endure a journey which used to take two hours but can now take six hours.



The hospital's Director, Dr Fadi Al Atrash, told the two Danes, 'We have a strong connection to Gaza. Before the war, 40% of our patients were from Gaza. At the hospital, people from Gaza and the West Bank met together.'

AV, which is run by the Lutheran World Federation, managed to get advanced equipment into Gaza. Gazans were recruited and trained to run a newly built cancer clinic, but it was attacked and destroyed on 14th and 17th October, 2023. Israeli military invaded and arrested the staff, and the clinic was evacuated. Dr Atrash said that both AV and LWF usually have a good trusting relationship with both Israeli and Palestinian authorities. 'We emphasise being transparent in everything we do.' He prays for an early ceasefire so that the patients can receive the urgent treatment they need, either at AV or in Gaza.

The Danes returned home with the impression that Palestine and Israel are going through the worst crisis ever. They are afraid of each other, they feel desperate and anxious, everyone has lost, the 100,000 Palestinians who worked in Israel cannot work and have lost their income, and the fact that they are missing from the workforce affects everyone in Israel. Life is changed. ⇒

## WCC GENERAL SECRETARY'S VISIT TO HOLY LAND

⇒ As Bishop Marianne and Prof Lodberg left the Holy Land the Rev Prof Dr Jerry Pillay arrived there.

Prof Pillay, World Council of Churches (WCC) General Secretary, had come for meetings with the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem. On 17th February he was received with gratitude 'at this difficult and complicated time for all the peoples of this region, and especially for the Christian community of the Holy Land,' as His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, said in a welcoming address. He went on, 'Your visit is of such importance, for you bring with you the attention of the World Council of Churches and its members to the situation here. War and violence are always the consequence of human failure.'



But the Church proclaims a different truth, the Patriarch said. 'In theological terms we affirm that hatred and darkness have no hypostasis; it is only light and life that have a true and enduring existence,' he said. 'Death is not our mission.'

Calling for unity, peace, and reconciliation, Patriarch

Theophilos said, 'This is our common human vocation and our common human destiny. Our historical experience in the Holy Land is a powerful and tangible example of how Synagogue, Church, and Mosque may exist side-by-side in mutual respect.'

The next day Prof Pillay went with Bishop Azar to the Mount of Olives where he preached in the Ascension Church. His sermon, based on the lectionary reading from Matthew 4.1-11, focused on the devil's tempting of Jesus in the wilderness. He pointed out that we all struggle at times with understanding and doing God's will, and related this to the struggle in the Palestine context, especially now in the context of the war in Gaza. He called on people of faith to surrender like Jesus to the will of the Father and to be assured, even in the context of violence and uncertainty, that they can have security in Christ.



The next day Prof Pillay was in Ramallah for a meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Prof Pillay pleaded for an end to the 'seemingly endless cycle of violence and suffering.' The President briefed him on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, in Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem, stressing the immediate urgency for a ceasefire, and the need for Israel to stop attacks on Islamic and Christian sanctuaries and properties in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Dr Pillay said: 'It is clear that collaboration is required in the efforts to end the war in Gaza, in providing humanitarian support for all people affected, ensuring freedom of religion, and stressing the necessity of dialogue to create a secure and safe future for both Israeli and Palestinian people.'

But he also spoke of the pivotal role and the responsibility political leaders must take in upholding the dignity of every human being and respecting the principles of international law.

President Abbas affirmed that his government is prepared to participate in dialogue processes with the Israeli government to establish a peaceful and stable future for all people.

The Secretary General's final encounter with the President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, once again focused on the current situation in Israel and Palestine, and the war in Gaza. They enjoyed what was described as a very frank, fair and cordial conversation. They agreed on the importance of working towards a ceasefire in Gaza and on the role of religions in helping to create a world in which peace, security and safety exist for all people and for the creation, the kind of world that God desires and wills for all of us.

Prof Pillay was able to express his concern about the loss of over 27,000 lives in Gaza, most of them women and children. The WCC's position, he said, is that violence and wars are not the way to seek solutions, and stressed the need for dialogue to end the war and to create a better future for all people in Israel and Palestine.



President Isaac Herzog

The General Secretary also raised issues related to the freedom of religion and religious practices, making reference to a recent report on further restrictions to be imposed by the Israeli government during the Muslim celebration of Ramadan. He also referred to the information shared with him during his meeting with Heads of Churches concerning disrespectful treatment by some young Israeli extremists.

The Israeli President acknowledged that such disrespectful treatment is happening. 'It is certainly unacceptable, and it is being addressed,' he said.



## GERMANY : “SPREADING FAITH THROUGH SONG”

*The first Protestant hymnbooks were printed in Germany 500 years ago, and thousands of editions were to follow. Over time, a treasure of immense impact on faith and culture was created.*

The unique history of the Protestant hymnal began 500 years ago with the first printed copies. It was a fundamental expression of Protestantism and its religiousness, both locally and globally. It is also a songbook that has influenced the German language, literature, and music for centuries. The “Erfurter Färbefass Enchiridion”, published in 1524, is the oldest existing Protestant hymnal. There is only one copy of it left in the world today. It is kept in Goslar, Germany.

‘With the first edition of the hymnal from 1524, there was a change from listening to songs to singing along in church services,’ Friedrich Kramer, Bishop of the Evangelical Church in Central Germany says. From Central Germany the idea of spreading faith through song went out into the world.

The 500th anniversary of the Protestant hymnal will be celebrated throughout Germany. There will be an extensive programme of recitals, radio shows and streamed events. There will be competitions for singers and songwriters, workshops, symposia and conferences. People will be encouraged to get together and sing chorales and hymns, and in Erfurt, where the Enchiridion (ancient Greek for little handbook) was first published, a cantata service will take place in the famous Augustinian Church on Reformation Day.

### Hymns as “Psalms for the People”

The first hymnbooks include the first songs of the reformer Martin Luther. Five centuries later, some of the hymns they contain, such as “Christ is risen”, an Easter hymn, are still sung in church services. Until the Reformation, congregations did not sing sacred songs in the vernacular during church services. Nevertheless, popular “cantiones” (chants) already existed in the Middle Ages, though in the Catholic mass singing the Latin liturgy was reserved for the priests. At the Reformation things changed fundamentally.



The “Erfurter Färbefass-Enchiridion” is the oldest existing Protestant hymnal. The pages show the Easter hymn “Christ is risen”. The sheet music bears witness to the first hymns of the reformer Martin Luther. The Enchiridion was printed in Erfurt, Germany, in 1524. Photo: epd/Hans-Jörg Hörselejau

Luther was convinced that anyone who believed the good news of the Gospel ‘must not abandon it, he must sing it cheerfully and with joy, so that others may hear it and come here.’ For him, singing was a spiritual way to God. Around 1523/24, Luther wrote to Georg Spalatin, Secretary to the Saxon Elector Frederick the Wise, that he had a plan to “create German psalms for the people, following the example of the prophets, that is, spiritual songs so that the word of God would remain among the people through song.”

Such melodies were included in the hymnals from the very beginning. The “Achtliederbuch,” published by the Nuremberg printer Jobst Gutknecht around the turn of 1523/24 contained four songs by Martin Luther, including a rewrite of Psalm 130 “Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir” (Out of the depths I cry to you). Shortly afterward, the

“Enchiridion” was published in Erfurt. In the same year, the “Geistliche Gesangsbüchlein” by the cantor Johann Walter was published in Wittenberg with 43 hymns and a foreword by the Reformer. It is considered the first choir hymnal.

### Hymns to bring comfort

The hymnal reached its prime in the Baroque period with hymns such as “Befiehl Du Deine Wege” (Commit whatever grieves thee) and “Geh aus mein Herz” (Go forth, my heart, and seek delight) by Paul Gerhardt, the German theologian, Lutheran minister and hymnodist. This offered comfort and hope in the face of hardship and horror during the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648). The tradition of hymns of consolation continued with the Pietists and their Jesus Songs right up to Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s poem “Von guten Mächten wunderbar geborgen” (By good forces), written whilst a prisoner of the Gestapo.

A special stamp, dedicated to the 500th anniversary of the Protestant hymnal has been issued in Germany and was published at a ceremony in the Marktkirche in Goslar on 23rd January, 2024.



## WHAT IS 'THE COMMON SERVICE'?

*Tom Bruch and Tom VanPoole invite you to consider the development and usage of a traditional Lutheran Eucharistic rite to be used at our Conference in Edinburgh this coming September.*

### What is the Common Service?

For the Church of England, the Book of Common Prayer and the recent Common Worship are the resources for worship materials. The Church of Scotland has the Book of Common Order, and American Lutherans have the Common Service.

At our Edinburgh Conference in September, the closing worship service will be based on the Common Service used for worship among most American Lutherans for most of the twentieth century.

While many of our older Lutheran members are familiar with this liturgy, it will be unfamiliar to many of our Anglican, European, and younger members. However, the liturgy follows the commonly accepted pattern of the 'Mass' in the Western Church. When we suggested using this service someone described it as an "archaeological curiosity"; a friend involved in developing more recent worship resources called it a "museum liturgy"; we prefer to think of it as a "snapshot in sepia tones" of mid-20th century American Lutheran worship. It should be noted that the "Common Service" or "Divine Liturgy 3" is still very much in use in the Missouri Synod and other associated Lutheran Churches.

### How did the Common Service develop?

In the mid-nineteenth century, Lutheran immigrant churches in the United States began to become increasingly enculturated, gradually moving from worshipping in people's native tongues to worshipping in English.

Lutheran worship in America over the previous century had gone through the influences of pietism, rationalism, and of neighbours without a strong liturgical tradition, and American Lutherans were now becoming increasingly aware of their Lutheran confessional roots, and also, like the Oxford movement in England, desirous of recovering their ancient liturgical heritage. When the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South began to revise its Book of Worship, it resolved to approach other Lutheran bodies about cooperating on a common English liturgy and a common hymnal. The General Synod and the General Council agreed to cooperate. At the time this group represented about two thirds of American Lutherans.

A committee was formed and began extensive research based on sixteenth century Lutheran precedents, to develop the Ordo. The English texts were filled in by borrowing from the 1549 Anglican Prayer Book, so it is not without some irony that the beautiful language of Cranmer adorns the Lutheran Common Service. The result was published by the three Church bodies in 1888 and 1892, initially as texts only. The final product very much resembled the liturgy already used by the General Council since 1868. The committee chair, the Rev Dr Beale Melancthon Schmucker, literally gave his life for the Common Service: after running to catch a train with the printer's proofs in his briefcase, he suffered a fatal heart attack on the train.

From 1893 to 1957 the Common Service became incorporated into ten more hymnals, starting with the English Synod of Missouri's 1893 Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book and soon spreading to Missouri Synod German-Americans (1912), then Norwegian-Americans (1913), Iowa Synod German-Americans (1918), Swedish-Americans (1925), and Danish-Americans (1927). Slovak-Americans and Finnish-Americans joined in the 1941 and 1957 hymnal projects. Even after this liturgy was largely supplanted by a more modern liturgy in 1978, it continued to be included in four more hymnals, two of which are still published (The Missouri Synod 2006 Lutheran Service Book and the "Little Norwegian" 1996 Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary).

### Why is the Common Service important?

Several of these hymnals provided a significant impetus for Lutheran unity in America. The three Church bodies that originally cooperated in the 1888 liturgy finally published a common hymnal in 1917, the Common Service Book. Their cooperation transformed into a merger into the United Lutheran Church in America in 1918. After cooperating on a joint hymnal in the 1913 Lutheran Hymnary, three Norwegian-American bodies also merged in 1918 into the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. Early printings of the 1958 Service Book and Hymnal show copyright shared by eight Church bodies: mergers in 1960, 1962, and 1963 reduced their number to two, the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America, each about one third of American Lutherans (the other third using the 1941 Lutheran Hymnal of the Synodical Conference).

### An Explanation of the Common Service



⇒ **So what is distinctive about the Common Service?**

The Common Service was actually a full liturgical collection including Morning and Evening Prayer and various ministerial acts. But here we are discussing the service of Holy Communion at the heart of that collection.



One of our goals in choosing this service for our conference was to share our Lutheran love for musical worship. Lutherans feel the need to sing, and soon after the texts were published, musical settings began to appear, starting with Harriet Krauth Spaeth's *Church Book with Music* in 1893 and Harry Archer & Luther Reed's *Choral Service Book* in 1901. Mrs Spaeth (pictured here) compiled a very diverse assortment of arrangements, some recommended for particular seasons. Mr Archer and the Rev Dr Reed selected a single setting compiled from various chant sources. Both provided music for almost all portions of the service. Sometimes all parts were sung with the exception of the Sermon, General Prayer, Exhortation, and Distribution. Not many of us are accustomed to singing it all these days. Later hymnals expanded our musical resources.

In selecting the music for the service, our workgroup was influenced by which music was already familiar (particularly for the celebrant) and by the availability of some music in electronic format (rather than copying from aging hymnals). The 2006 Lutheran Service Book and the 1921 edition of *Music for the Liturgy* in conformity with the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* have been our major sources.

As to the Order of Service, the 1884 committee's mandate was to base their service on "the common consent of the pure Lutheran Liturgies of the Sixteenth Century, and when there is no entire agreement among them, the consent of the largest number of those of greatest weight." The committee quickly agreed on a list of eighteen items they felt constituted "the Normal Lutheran Service". As to the greatest weight, the committee appeared to favour conservative orders like Luther's 1523 *Formula Missae*, Brandenburg-Nuremberg 1533, Bugenhagen's orders (e.g. Braunschweig 1528) and, surprisingly, the 1549 English Prayer Book of Thomas Cranmer (but not the 1552 edition, nor the 1543 Reformation of Cologne, which was felt by the committee to have un-Lutheran elements). And although the committee were familiar with Wilhelm Loehe's work, he had no weight because he was not in the Sixteenth Century!

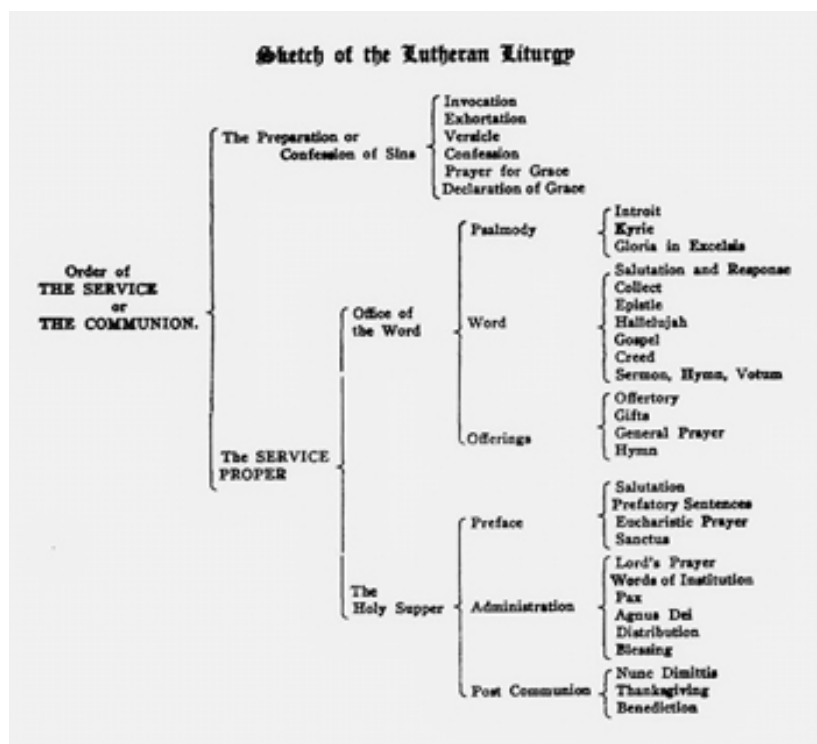
As mentioned before, the 1549 English Prayer Book provided much of the text of the service. To begin the service, the committee added elements, for pastoral reasons, that they acknowledged were not part of their list: a hymn of invocation of the Holy Ghost, the invocation of the Trinity, and a general confession and absolution. The form of confession they chose was based on that prescribed in the 1552 Mecklenburg Church Order which did not survive the transition to modern language in 1978, perhaps because some theologians objected to confessing "that we are by nature sinful and unclean".

**The Shape of the Liturgy**

The "Service Proper" begins with the Introit, recovering the traditional proper Introits, the Creed and the Principal Hymn followed the Gospel, before the Sermon. This was the traditional position, but modern liturgies have moved them after the Sermon. The Creed translations (both Nicene and Apostles') were distinctive in their third article referring to the "Holy Christian Church" rather than "Holy Catholic Church" (according to Theodore Tappert, a pre-Reformation 15th Century German translation).

The General Prayer was a prescribed form and occurred after the Offertory (we will sing "Create in me a clean heart..." from Psalm 51:10-12), and followed by a hymn before the Communion.

After the Preface and Sanctus, a rather long Exhortation to Communion was included (which we will omit from our service in Edinburgh on the assumption our worshippers will not be reluctant to receive the sacrament!).



At this point in the service, the 1884 committee was divided on the order of the Lord's Prayer and the Words of Institution. They acknowledged that the Church Orders most faithful to pre-Reformation precedent (such as Luther's *Formula Missae*) had the Verba first, but the committee decided that the weight of numbers among their sources favoured the opposite order. So, the consecration in almost all of the hymnals we consulted (prior to the 1957 Service Book and Hymnal) consisted of the Lord's Prayer followed by the Words of Institution. The use of the Words of Institution alone, and not embedded in nor following a Eucharistic Prayer, was a distinctive practice in the Common Service, and while it is lamented by most liturgical scholars, it still persists as an option in more recent American Lutheran hymnals like the 2006 Evangelical Lutheran Worship.

The Pax followed the Verba, but the congregation's response to "The peace of the Lord be with you alway" was not "and with thy spirit", but rather a simple (and one-sided) "Amen."

The Agnus Dei preceded the Distribution of the Sacrament. The Distribution formulas were "Take and eat, this is the Body of Christ, given for thee." And "Take and drink, this is the Blood of the New Testament, shed for thy sins." After all had communed, the Pastor said "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ and His precious Blood strengthen and preserve you in the true faith unto everlasting life." (Some Pastors were reluctant to self-administer the sacrament, and might only receive once a year at synod meetings when other pastors were present.)

Nunc Dimittis was sung as a post-communion canticle. The post-communion prayer "We give thanks to Thee, Almighty God..." from Luther's *Deutsche Messe*, is introduced by a versicle and response, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good. And His mercy endures forever" from Psalm 118:1.

The Pastor greets the people again ("The Lord be with you: and with thy spirit"), and the service ends with the Benedicamus ("Bless we the Lord. Thanks be to God"), followed by the Aaronic Benediction "The Lord bless thee and keep thee..." from Numbers 6:24-26, (without the Trinitarian ending added later).

### The Propers, Hymns, and Service Music

September 17th, the day our conference will end, is in our modern church calendar the commemoration of St Hildegard of Bingen. Our workgroup recognises that when the Common Service was most widely used the only saints remembered in our calendars were Apostles and Evangelists (and St Michael), but we have chosen anyway to use a collect, readings, introit, alleluia, and proper preface appropriate for St Hildegard (some are those appointed for All Saints). The first reading is from the Wisdom of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) rather than an Epistle.

The music we have chosen includes a Gloria in Excelsis set to an Old Scottish chant that has been included in Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Methodist hymnals; an Offertory from Freylinghausen's *Gesangbuch*; Agnus Dei from Braunschweig 1528; and Nunc Dimittis from Soest 1552 and Pfalz 1557.

The Hymns we have chosen are:

**Come Down, O Love Divine** by Blanco of Siena d. 1434; tune *Down Ampney* by Ralph Vaughn Williams

**O Holy Spirit, Root of Life** by St Hildegard adapted by Jean Janzen 1991; tune *Puer Nobis* by Michael Praetorius

**Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness** by Johann Franck 1618-1677 translated by Catherine Winkworth; tune *Schmucke Dich* by Johann Cruger

**I Come, O Saviour, to Thy Table** by Friedrich Heyder 1677-1754; tune *Ich Sterbe Täglich* from the Emskirchner Choralbuch

**A Mighty Fortress** by Martin Luther translated in the Pennsylvania Church Book 1868; tune *Eine Feste Burg*

For almost a hundred years The Common Service was the predominant worship resource among English-speaking Lutherans. Its influence echoes through the orders of service that replaced it, starting in the late 1970's.

We hope that our conference attendees will learn about the American Lutheran worship tradition in the 20th century and enjoy the musical tradition that enhances that worship.

Here is a depiction of the first Lutheran Divine Service in Brandenburg in 1539, painted by Carl Röhling in 1913, entitled "Spandauer Adelsmesse". The painting hangs in the Nikolaikirche at Berlin-Spandau.





## CREDIBLE WITNESSES IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

*What tasks and actions arise for the LWF member Churches from the message and other results of the Thirteenth Assembly? Two German Churches explored this together at a joint event.*

Several months have passed since the Thirteenth Assembly in Krakow, Poland. What questions, impulses and goals are member Churches of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Germany taking up locally? In Eastern Germany, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony (EVLKS) and Evangelical Church in Central Germany (EKM) met for a joint conference on this topic.



Many conference participants were present as delegates, in other official functions or as visitors, either at the Assembly or Pre-Assemblies. Other participants were people interested in international church relations.

### Theology and Ecumenism

‘We took from the 13th Assembly the invitation to engage intensively with the Augsburg Confession,’ said Friedemann Oehme, the Ecumenical Relations Officer of the EVLKS. The Confession is ‘a treasure trove of concentrated faith that needs exploring by generation after generation.’

‘We want to ask what relevance this confessional writing of the Lutheran Churches has for us today,’ he went on. ‘That’s about its significance for ecumenical cooperation, especially for the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, but also with the Free Churches. Globally, the question is what role the Augsburg Confession plays in the different contexts of the Lutheran communion. Reading it from different perspectives could ‘inform a deeper understanding and make it possible to experience the significance of this confession in our churches and congregations.’

### Intergenerational Justice

Young people’s participation and inter-generational justice were another focus of the conference. Assembly resolutions sent ‘a clear message’, said Pröbstin Astrid Kleist, who served as LWF Vice-President for Central and Western Europe from the Twelfth Assembly in Windhoek up until the

Assembly in Krakow. In the future, ‘inter-generational justice will be even more relevant.’ The younger generation wants to be taken seriously in their issues, ‘but also in their claim to participate in leadership and power’ to ‘help shape the Church and Society of tomorrow today.’

Some possibilities for implementation within the EVLKS and the EKM were discussed in a workshop. A youth member of the LWF Council from 2017-2023, Julia Braband, presented a project inviting church members from different generations to work together on creation care.

In discussions in workshop people from different generations were clear that participation in church leadership at a young age is formative and often leads to long-term commitment on the part of these people. It was also clear that working together is not just about different generations but also about diversity in other areas such as education, gender or origin.

### Gender Justice

Even ten years after the publication of the LWF’s Gender Justice Policy, ‘ongoing efforts and clarifications’ are needed to implement this guideline, said Kathrin Wallrabe, the Project Coordinator of the LWF Women’s Network in Central and in Western Europe and Gender Equality Officer of the EVLKS. All LWF member Churches should know these jointly agreed goals and actively engage in concrete measures that will promote gender justice.

‘Gender equality is not just about women; it is a transformational movement for the whole communion,’ she said. ‘Individual people should be empowered and not be confined to stereotypical roles.’

“See–Act–Review”, a three-step process is very useful in taking concrete steps toward overcoming things like gender hierarchies.

“See” refers to assessing the situation and current statistics regarding things like earnings, committee appointments and so on, which must be considered. “Act” concerns measures to improve individual and structural equal opportunities. The third step, “Review”, looks at what has improved and what still needs to be changed.

### Dialogue and Partnership

Participants had appreciated the encounters during the 13th Assembly, the Pre-Assemblies, and visits to the Assembly. For example, the EKM was in Poland with a group of students from the EKM and the partner Churches in Sweden, Slovakia, and Tanzania.

Between Assemblies, partnerships between parishes, church districts and churches from different regions were also playing an essential role in fostering mutual understanding.

The EVLKS and EKM, in cooperation with the Leipziger Missionswerk, dedicated a partnership meeting to the topics of the LWF Assembly. The participants discussed the role of the Assembly themes in their ecumenical partnerships. They also exchanged views on their respective roles in partnership work.

Finally, they discussed funding opportunities so that groups can continue to meet across countries. Experiences of individuals with the work of the LWF and the Assembly were appreciated as strengthening and affirming partnerships and ecumenical encounters.

## ANGLICANS CONTINUE TO SUPPORT HUMANITARIAN WORK IN THE HOLY LAND



*A hospital worker at St Luke's Hospital, Nablus - the Anglican Alliance Appeal is supporting humanitarian work. Photo Credit: The Anglican Alliance*

A humanitarian appeal, coordinated by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem with the Anglican Alliance, continues to provide much needed support to people impacted by conflict in the Holy Land. In the lead up to Easter, Canon Rachel Carnegie, Executive Director of the Anglican Alliance, visited the Diocese of Jerusalem for a journey of solidarity and pilgrimage. The visit was made in the same week that the UN Security Council passed a Resolution calling for a ceasefire to the conflict in the Holy Land and for urgent humanitarian access.

Since the conflict in Gaza began, the Anglican Alliance has assembled a consortium of international partners from across the whole Anglican Communion to respond to a specific humanitarian appeal issued by the Diocese of Jerusalem. The appeal has been raising funds to help vulnerable people access quality healthcare and education services through Anglican-run institutions across the Holy Land including Gaza. Up to now, this has included:

- Costs of medical services for the vulnerable outpatients at Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza, as well as in Saint Luke's Hospital in Nablus and Penman Clinic in Jenin in the

West Bank.

- Costs of medical services for vulnerable inpatients at the hospitals.
- Assistance to those displaced or economically impacted by conflict in the West Bank, especially to ensure children continue to receive quality education together with psychosocial support.

Representing the Anglican Alliance, the aim of Rachel's visit was to listen to the experiences of the Church and people, to pray together and to visit some of the diocesan healthcare and education institutions, learning how they are sustaining their care of the most vulnerable in these desperate times.

Speaking about her visit, Canon Rachel Carnegie said, 'The experience was both heart-wrenching in seeing and hearing about the suffering, but also profoundly inspirational in witnessing the Church's commitment to serving the most vulnerable, in sustaining lives and hope, and in speaking for peace, justice and reconciliation ...

'During this Holy Week, the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem continues to walk the Way of the Cross, as it perseveres with resilience and compassion to meet the needs of the most vulnerable

across the Holy Land, including Gaza, through its healthcare and education institutions... It represents the love of Jesus within this devastating time and points to an Easter hope beyond the suffering.'

The conflict in Gaza continues to cause loss of human life, suffering and material devastation. On March 26th, the UN Security Council called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. It is the first time the Council has called for a ceasefire since the war began in October after several failed attempts.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has also spoken out about the conflict and the risk of famine in Gaza. His statement on March 21st said, "*If nothing changes in the war in Gaza famine is imminent... For some it's already too late – children are beginning to die of starvation and dehydration... As I have said before, and I repeat again now, the only effective solution to this catastrophic situation is an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, and sustained humanitarian access for the provision of essential supplies and services to those in need. Another way must be found. I continue to pray for the Palestinian Christian community in Gaza and the West Bank, and for the people of Palestine and Israel, and for justice, peace and security for all the peoples of the Holy Land.*"

As a result of the Humanitarian Appeal supported by the Anglican Alliance consortium, funds raised are providing vital support on the ground. The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem is committed to keeping children in school at this time when so many families have lost their income. Some of the funds are directed to church schools so they can help needy parents cover education costs.

In the West Bank, St Luke's Hospital in Nablus and the Penman Clinic in Zababdeh are using the funds from the Anglican Alliance joint appeal to provide free access to treatment for those without resources. At the Al Alhi Hospital in Gaza City, services are being provided to the sick and injured, currently ➡

⇒ with 150 inpatients, and managing 22 surgical operations and 250-300 outpatient consultations each day. The library and chapel have also been converted to accommodate patients.

Sawsan Aranki Batato, Programmes Development Officer in the Diocese of Jerusalem, described how the fund is being used to provide healthcare for hundreds of those in need. She gave an example of a woman whose coronary disease was diagnosed and then treated. The loss of family income since the war meant that without this support, she would not have been able to access this care. She

went on, 'This project saved her life, by enabling early detection and timely intervention. The funds are helping us to save the lives of so many. We are reaching the needy in marginalised areas. It is one of the most cost-effective interventions.'

A prayer shared about the conflict by Archbishop Hosam Naoum from the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem reads:

"O God of all justice and peace, we cry out to you in the midst of the pain and trauma of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land.

Be with those who need you in these days of suffering; we pray for people of all faiths – Jews, Muslims and Christians and for all people of the land.

While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace, we also call to you to bring justice and equity to the peoples.

Guide us into your kingdom where all are treated with dignity and honour as your children – for to all of us you are our Heavenly Father.

In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen."

## SOUTH SUDAN CHURCHES SHARE EASTER MESSAGES OF HOPE



Churches in South Sudan shared Easter messages of hope, even amid troubling times for the African nation.

The South Sudan Council of Churches emphasises in its message renewed hope. "In today's world, marked by so many conflicts and so much suffering, we understand that many of us feel disheartened."

"So together with you," it continues, "we would like to set out from the proclamation that is the basis of our hope and that of all humanity: 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen and is alive!' (Luke 24:5)."

The message also calls for inclusive political dialogue, as well as a peaceful and democratic transition from violence.

The Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan in the

Anglican Communion, in its message, encourages citizens in South Sudan to celebrate Easter with love for one another.

"We are tired of the continued violence, road ambushes, political and inter-communal killings happening in different parts of the country," the message reads. "We ask our political leaders to prioritise dialogue and build consensus on how to take the country forward peacefully."

The Catholic Archdiocese of Juba reminds us that, through faith, we are never alone or forsaken.

"Just as Christ has risen, we too are called rise above our trials, our doubts, and fears," their message reads. "Let us embrace the spirit of Easter, a season of rebirth and endless possibilities."

The Presbyterian Church of South Sudan urges the leadership of South Sudan to bring an end to the continued ethnic violence, child abduction, and gender-based violence. Their message also expresses appreciation for international friends and partners for their unwavering support.

"We are also indebted to the South Sudan peace partners and the entire global community for their firm stand with the war-entangled people of South Sudan, for the provision of critical lifesaving humanitarian interventions during this economic meltdown of our country."



## ‘GOD SAVE THE KING!’ CHURCH AND STATE IN ANGLICANISM

*Sven Michael Gröger describes the Third “Young Forum on Anglicanism” held in Berlin last November*

From 17th to 19th November 2023, the “*Junges Forum Anglikanismus*” (“Young Forum on Anglicanism”) took place for the third time. The Forum is sponsored by the “*Konfessionskundliches Institut der EKD*” (“EKD Institute for Denominational Studies”) in Bensheim, and organised by the Institute’s Academic Researcher on Anglicanism, the Rev Dr Kai Funkschmidt, and a team of volunteers. It aims to be a platform for learning about and for sharing experiences with Anglicanism for young adults (students or at an early career stage) from a German Protestant background (mostly, but not exclusively).



The third Young Forum took place in Berlin under the title ‘*God save the King!*’ *Church and State in Anglicanism*. That might have been a bit of a bold title since the relations of Church and State are different in every country. Consequently, we could not, of course, take into account every single Anglican Province and the State(s) they exist in. Thus, we were first and foremost concentrating on England and the Church of England (as the title suggested which was of course inspired by the 2023 Coronation). However, we did at least manage to regularly take a glance at the other parts of the UK and their respective Anglican Churches. In this way we tried to understand the commonalities and differences with the situation in England, doing so from our (mostly) German perspective. So we were very happy that we had been able to convince some outstanding experts to be our guides through the, at times, tangled thicket of the British political system and its constitutional as well as practical links with the Anglican Church(es).

The Rev Dr James Hawkey, Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey, made a powerful start when presenting us with *A Theology of Monarchy for the 21st Century*. It was a masterly and thought-provoking introduction into a field of theology which – due to the different nature of our political systems – was frankly quite alien to us Germans. Yet we soon realised that it touched upon fundamental questions about the Church’s role and function in society and about the basis of government which we, and in fact Christians everywhere, have to answer to, notwithstanding any differences in the systems of government.

After Jamie’s deep theological reflections, we turned more to the practical side when Dr Anne Richards, National Public Policy Adviser for the Church of England, gave us many insights into *The Workings of Church and State in the United Kingdom*. We learned a lot about the procedures of General Synod, the role of the bishops in the House of Lords, the ecumenical and interreligious dimensions, and some current political debates.

After two voices that told us about the theory and practice of the established Church of England, we had the opportunity to listen to Dr Jonathan Chaplin, Honorary Fellow of Wesley House, Cambridge, from *The Centre for Faith in Public Life*, (pictured here with the group) who was making *The Case for Disestablishment*. It was very illuminating to follow his calm theological argument in favour of a separation of the Church of England and British State. Thereby, we did not just get an understanding of his position, but also of the advantages and the challenges of the current system.

Finally, Dr Patrick Roger Schnabel, the “*Oberkirchenrat bei der Bevollmächtigten des Rates der EKD bei der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Europäischen Union*” (“Senior Church Councillor with the Representative of the Council of the EKD to the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Union”), gave us a profound and rich overview over *The Relationship of Church and State across Europe* which was extremely useful to contextualise what we had heard so far about the specific relations between Church and State in the UK and to some extent in Germany.

These more academically oriented sessions were flanked by other formats. An informal round of exchange about everybody’s ecumenical, especially Anglican, encounters, connections, or research interests, gave space for people to share more personal experiences and insights. A Bible study on Psalm 72 invited everybody to personally reflect on one’s understanding of the Biblical vision of Church and State. By watching the episode “*The Bishop’s Gambit*” from the iconic 1980s BBC series “*Yes, Prime Minister*”, we even managed to approach the whole topic in a more humorous way. And, of course, we prayed about all of it.

On Sunday, we were given a very warm welcome by the Rev Canon Christopher Jage-Bowler and the congregation at St George’s Anglican Church Berlin where we joined in the Eucharist and thereby brought our conference to a worthy and joyful close.

The fourth “*Junges Forum Anglikanismus*” (“Young Forum on Anglicanism”) will take place in Bonn, 15th-17th November 2024 when the topic will be *The Anglican Communion and Ecumenism*. All are cordially invited!



### 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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## LWF LEARNING PLATFORM OFFERS A VARIETY OF TRAINING RESOURCES

*A new online platform offers churches and other institutions a variety of training materials and resources in theology, diakonia, leadership and other thematic areas of LWF's work.*

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is offering a wide variety of free online resources including training material on its new Learning Platform. The online space provides modules, practical guidelines from webinars and other meetings, and publications for use by member Churches, theological institutions, and other interested groups. Your editor has looked at some of them and they are a wonderful resource for anyone wanting to learn more about Lutheran beliefs and practice.

"Deeper and life-long learning is essential for leaders, pastors, educators, women and youth as well as lay leaders to enable them to serve effectively in different kinds of ministries. I am delighted that a rich and wide variety of LWF resources is now easily accessible for wider usage," said the Rev Dr Sivin Kit, Director of the Department for Theology, Mission and Justice.

LWF Learning is organised according to LWF's thematic focus areas which include theology, diakonia, and leadership, with more themes to be added. Under Theology for example, undergraduate students, pastors and other church workers can access a nine-module course on the different aspects of Lutheran theology.

Under the diakonia section, resources such as Diakonia in Context explain LWF's theological rooting and serving the neighbour as part of the Church's holistic mission. Engagement with LWF's humanitarian arm World Service and other diaconal actors is explained in a Guidance Note with practical steps for such cooperation.

Collaboration and co-branding with other organisations is a long-term goal of the new platform which also offers training modules on theology in the public space, ecumenical and interfaith contexts, which were developed in cooperation with the Berlin Institute for Public Theology (Germany) and the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology (South Africa).

For more information please contact [info@lutheranworld.org](mailto:info@lutheranworld.org)

