

The Window

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THE ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN SOCIETY

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the Conference
in Visby.
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And More

CONFERENCE WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL

'This conference has been the best one ever.' That was said by several people on leaving Visby. Mind you, similar comments were made after the conferences in Hungary and Salisbury and after many preceding ones too! Our conferences always offer a high quality experience. But it is true that there seemed to be something special about our August gathering in Sweden.



Helen Harding giving Joe Seville his welcome pack

For a start, almost everyone was a member of our Society. Several people commented on that. 'It was so good to meet up with old friends and to make new ones,' said one of the more regular attenders, while another, who had only been once before, wrote, 'just to say how much I have enjoyed re-reading *The Window* ... now that I know so many of the people and can put experiences to faces.'

'The hospitality of our Swedish hosts was outstanding!' Praise for 'the local team', Richard Wottle of the Diocese of Visby and his co-hosts Stellan and Sara, echoed throughout the conference and long after. The accommodation they had arranged at the Solhem Hotel was very comfortable and the conference venue was well appointed and accessible. Outings and meals in restaurants, the transport for the less mobile among us, and the speed with which any little problems were solved, were all remarkable. 'It was amazing!' exclaimed one of our number,

'from the beautiful churches to the glorious food everything was beyond all expectation.'

But it was not all outings and eating! We did some useful work together. 'The sessions have given us much food for thought,' one person wrote, while another said, 'I was quite tired after the conference, but I also had an inner boost of energy because of everything I had heard and experienced.' You can discover a little of what we learned from the following pages, and there is a lot more on the website.

As always, our worship, held in a variety of different places, was a highlight and provided the framework for the whole event. 'The wide range of liturgy helpfully combined well known pieces from both our traditions with recently developed ones,' commented one participant, and much of the credit for that is due to Perran Gay, our conference chaplain, to Helen Harding and Anna Norman-Walker and her workshop members for the more informal services they designed, and to the many members who offered to sing, read and lead intercessions.

There is no doubt that this healthy mixture of learning and worshipping together, all in a convivial and holiday atmosphere, really works. 'Meeting other people from "across the spectrum" made it particularly stimulating and worthwhile, but I was getting close to "stimulus overload",' gasped an exhausted member, 'There was a great atmosphere all the way through.'

One newcomer to the Society said, 'I look forward to our next encounter wherever that is.' Well, the next encounter will be

the Annual General Meeting

on Saturday 25th February 2017 at 10am
in London.

Full details will be in the January *Window*
and on the website.

So put the date in your diary, book your
transport and we will see you there.

ALL WERE SAFELY GATHERED IN

The first part of this edition of The Window gives an account of the Society's conference in Visby from 19th-23rd August. Our editor has summarised the presentations which can be read in full by clicking the relevant buttons on the welcome page of our website www.anglican-lutheran-society.org.

When 63 people set out from all around the world and converge on their conference venue strange things can happen. So it was not entirely unexpected that two people's baggage went astray somewhere between Croatia and Visby. The bags and their owners were reunited a couple of days later, and they had survived thanks to a little judicious shopping. A series of violent thunderstorms at Dulles Airport, Washington DC, delayed two people's flight by two-and-a-half hours and so they missed their connecting flight and arrived a whole day later than they'd planned. Someone else missed a flight by just five minutes and also lost a day. But everyone else had relatively smooth journeys and arrived on time.

We were very comfortably accommodated in Visby's Solhem Hotel. As we arrived we all received a Welcome Pack containing the conference papers, worship booklets, several maps and a free pen. They had been put together by Sara and Stellan, pictured here, who work in the Visby Diocesan office and who acted as our hosts for the entire conference.



After tea, coffee and cakes most of us were taken on a guided walk through the medieval city to the cathedral and our conference venue in the cathedral parish hall. Those people who were less mobile were offered lifts there by minibus. The Parish Room is very modern, light, airy and comfortable and provided all the facilities and equipment necessary for conferences these days.

We were welcomed by our Co-Moderators, Bishop Michael Igrave and Dr Jaakko Rusama, who then handed over to Richard Wottle, *Stiftsprost* in the Diocese and also Vice-Chairman of the Society for Gotlandic Church History. He gave us a brief but fascinating introduction to the Island of Gotland and Visby Diocese and Dick Lewis made this summary. It was entitled:

'THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE PEARL OF THE BALTIC SEA : PAST AND PRESENT ON GOTLAND'



Richard told us that, whilst there is written evidence that Christianity had reached Gotland by the 11th century, it had probably done so even earlier. According to the *Gutasagan*, 'the saga of the Goths', many Gotlanders were merchants sailing to many countries. Some were baptised and brought Christian priests back to their island. There were probably discussions at the *athing*, the island's parliament, resulting in Christianity being accepted quite quickly. That is what happened in Iceland where the *athing* accepted the new faith in the year 1000.

According to the *Gutasagan*, King Olof Haraldsson, infamous in England for destroying London Bridge, wintered

on Gotland from 1029-30 before going to Norway to try to drive out the Danes. He died there at the Battle of Stiklestad and two years later, in 1032, was proclaimed a saint, becoming the



King Olof Haraldsson portrayed in a medieval wall painting

most popular local saint in Scandinavia during the Middle Ages, despite not having been a very saintly person! His death marked the end of the Viking period in Scandinavia, which by this time was Christian.

While Christian kings were ruling lands that included present day Denmark and Sweden, they did not rule over Gotland! There is no mention of kings in the *Gutalagan* (*Goth's Law*), Richard explained, because Gotland was a republic of free peasants, rather like Iceland. But whereas Iceland, over the centuries, developed into a quite hierarchical society where poor peasants had to relinquish their land to higher ranked people, Gotland remained an astonishingly democratic society. There was no nobility, nor great landowners. Since the ninth century Gotland had elected to pay tribute to the king of Sviones, the land around Lake Mälaren in central Sweden, but the Anglo-Saxon Wulfstan

recorded that this had little effect on Gotlandic society or on their ability to enter into commercial agreements with foreign powers. Parishes, or *socken*, remained legally independent right up to modern times, and the *althing* was genuinely able to represent the people of the island without noblemen or kings interfering.

Church building accelerated from the eleventh century onwards. The first buildings were undoubtedly of wood but, unlike some early Norwegian churches, none has survived. The oldest church in Gotland is probably the one in Garde. It has an inner ceiling which perhaps dates from the late 11th century and contains Byzantine wall paintings like the one shown here. It is probably Russian and demonstrates how Gotland was influenced by both Eastern and Western Christianity.



No fewer than 94 parish churches were built during the 12th century, of which 92 are still in use, as well as some monastic buildings including the Cistercian Abbey at Roma, the magnificent ruins of which can be seen today. The population was probably much the same as today, so there were at least 110 churches for 50-60,000 inhabitants.

All these churches were built and paid for by the peasants themselves, Richard told us. In the city of Visby churches belonged to the Dominicans and the Franciscans, the Danish king, German merchants – the present day cathedral was one – and the Bishop of Linköping, amongst others. But in the countryside people owned their own churches and the priests came from local families who often passed the incumbency from generation to generation.

Visby soon became one of the most important towns in the Baltic region. Many German merchants settled there, and the thirteenth century is regarded as Gotland's "golden age". Tax records from the beginning of the fourteenth century list 1500 farms on the island. However, the Black Death struck in 1350 and was followed by the Danish invasion in 1361 which marked the end of the "golden age".

From then on, until 1645, Gotland was a tiny province of Denmark and, having been one of the wealthiest parts of the Baltic region, soon became quite poor. Even Visby, with its useful harbour, was bypassed by merchant ships on their ways to the eastern Baltic region and Russia.

And then the Reformation arrived! It was instigated from Denmark, where reform in general was much more brutal than in Sweden. The citizens of Visby took the precious objects from their churches and tried to hide them from the authorities, but in the end almost all were confiscated and at most, Richard told us regretfully, just one percent of the medieval objects remain. This was the beginning of 200 years of confusion until the Church in Sweden which, until the Reformation had been in very good order, was able to repair the damage done during the period of reform.

In 1645 Sweden gained large parts of Danish territory, including Gotland, and three years later, under the terms of the Westphalian peace treaty, the Swedes established a hold over large parts of Northern Germany.

Once again Gotland became very central in the Baltic region. In 1656 the Swedish King gave Johannes Brodinus the task of incorporating Gotland fully into the Church of Sweden. However, the Gotlandic clergy continued to insist that their sons inherit their incumbencies and that Gotlanders should be preferred to "mainlanders", with the result that Brodinus failed to recruit a single Swedish priest to work in Visby Cathedral!

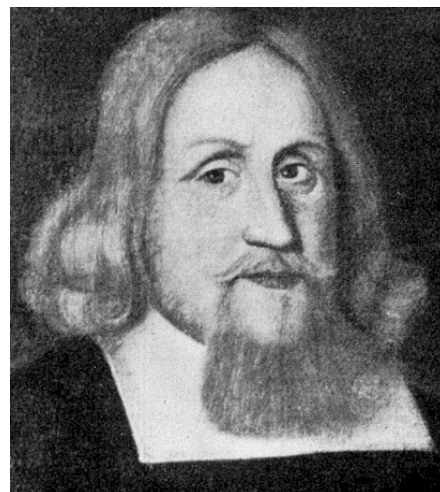
After a brief interlude between 1676 and 1679 when Gotland was recaptured by the Danes, King Charles XI sent his brightest young clergyman, Haqvin Spegel, to Gotland.

Spegel visited all the Gotland parishes and his reports of these visits make sad reading. In one parish he found just one old Danish hymn book, one Bible and very little else. Parishioners were poorly informed about the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and the church buildings were in a poor state, although attempts were being made to modernize their interiors during this period, as the splendid baroque pews and pulpits we would see on our tour of the island clearly showed. Many priests were badly educated, discipline was often slack and many of them had a drink problem, as indeed did their parishioners!

But it was not all bad. The Danes had established schools in most parishes and children flocked to them to learn to read and write, though the difficulty in finding competent teachers rather hampered their efforts.

Plague struck in 1710 and 1711 after which the Swedish government worked hard to improve Gotlandic agriculture and industries. A variety of farm produce, stone, timber and tar were exported in large quantities and the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are sometimes called the "silver age of Gotland". It was in 1772 that King Gustavus III made the island an independent diocese, appointing Gabriel Lütkehan as first bishop. Then, as now, Visby was the smallest diocese of the Church of Sweden.

Richard then told us that, during the nineteenth century, several evangelical movements arose, known collectively in Swedish as "*väckelsen*", meaning "the awakening". He then described how



Johannes Brodinus

poor harvests in Gotland, where 80% worked in agriculture, led to widespread emigration to the USA from the middle of the century right up to the First World War. The desire to seek a happier destiny elsewhere was especially strong among the people in the south of the island where the evangelical movements were strongest. So by 1915 only about 10% of the population were members of a so-called free church. But the great majority, who still belonged to the Church of Sweden, appreciated the contribution the evangelicals had made in bringing religious education to the people through the creation of Bible societies which, for the first time, made the private reading of the Bible possible for people of limited means.

Today the ecumenical climate between the larger denominations is very good, we were told. In Visby are found the Eumenia Church, the Pentecostal Church, the Salvation Army, a thriving Roman-Catholic congregation and a few Orthodox. A bit further from the centre of Christianity are the Jehovah's Witnesses. In the countryside "The Evangelical Free-church" is to be found, which is also a Pentecostal movement. In addition to Christians there are some Thai Buddhists, a small Bahá'í community and, of course, Muslims of different persuasions, although no mosque has as yet been built.

Today Visby Diocese has many small parishes. In 1962, in a restructuring of the Church of Sweden, the number of incumbencies in Gotland was reduced to twenty. In the year 2000 the

Church of Sweden formally separated from the state, but that separation is incomplete because there is a special law for the Church of Sweden and the politicians still have a strong influence over the management of the Church. One good thing is that the State continues to collect the Church Tax (which in Gotland is about 2% of gross income) and to provide financial help towards the upkeep of church buildings. The downside is that quite a lot of people, about one percent per year, are leaving the Church on financial grounds. The result is that during the last ten years or so the number of incumbencies in Gotland has been further reduced to 12. With 30 priests working and living on the island the ratio is one priest for every 2000 inhabitants, whereas in more densely populated parts of Sweden the figure is one for 5000.

Secularization has hit Sweden hard and, together with parts of Eastern Germany and the Czech Republic, Sweden is now one of the most non-religious countries in the world. However, Richard reassured us, there are still many Christians around, and on Gotland the attachment to the parish church and what it means is still quite strong, which makes it a very rewarding place to work.

The Diocese of Visby may be by far the smallest in the Church of Sweden but it is also the diocese for the Swedish parishes abroad. There are about 40 of these and the Bishop of Visby divides his time between Gotland and the rest of the world. This has helped



Visby to regain its position as an international centre, and many international church conferences like ours take place in the city. Richard said that Gotlanders are especially proud of the 'Theobalt Conferences' during the last thirty years bringing together representatives of the Lutheran, Roman-Catholic and Orthodox traditions around the Baltic Sea. The next one will be in Visby in 2018, and there will be a smaller one in Stettin in Poland in January 2017.

Summing up, Richard assured us that, while the Diocese of Visby might seem small and insignificant, for the people who live and work in Gotland it is a very dynamic place, with one foot in an old and traditional agricultural society and the other foot firmly planted in the midst of all the trans-national movements that affect the world of today. He ended by expressing his sincere hope that everyone would enjoy and benefit from their stay.

REFRESHMENT FOR BOTH BODY AND SOUL

When Richard Wottle had completed his presentation we were able to sample what would become key ingredients in our conference diet, good food and refreshing worship. It was just a short walk from the Parish Hall to the *Munkkaellaren*, a



restaurant where we were served with a wonderful fish dish followed by dessert.

Then we made our way back across the busy square and into the cathedral for Night Prayer led by Perran Gay.



'THE TYRANNY OF THE NORMAL'

On Sunday, after an early breakfast, we reassembled in the Conference Room where there were to be three presentations.

The first was given jointly by Sally Barnes, an Anglican lay woman, and Eliza Zikmane, a Pastor of the Latvian Church Abroad working in London. Dick Lewis summarises it here.



Sally and Eliza suggested that what regular members of congregations simply regard as 'normal' can, if closely examined, be recognised as a real obstacle to many people, making them feel either that they do not belong or that they are actually excluded. Jesus prayed that 'all might be one'. His Church, therefore, should symbolise that unity which he desires. It should be *inclusive* where all too often it appears *exclusive*.



They began by inviting us to turn to our neighbours and share ideas about the ways in which the congregations we come from work to ensure that everyone is included and to identify individuals or groups that might have been excluded, either accidentally or deliberately. 'What can we do about it?' we were asked, and 'What if we don't like what we hear?'

We were then reminded of Jesus's little warning, 'If you love those who love you what reward do you have? ... If you greet only your brothers and sisters what more are you doing than others? Be perfect therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect.' (Matthew 5.46-48)



Women in Ministry in the Latvian Lutheran Church

Eliza then shared something of her experience of being a woman growing up in the Church in Latvia. She began by reminding us that Gotland had been a haven for people from Latvia and Estonia for centuries. But movements across the Baltic are two-way and just two weeks before our conference a new bishop had been consecrated in the Latvian Lutheran Church. He is Swedish and he went to Latvia a few years ago because he would not be ordained in the Church of Sweden owing to his opposition to the ordination of women. One of his first pronouncements after his election was that he will not co-operate in any way with Churches which ordain women.

She sketched in the background. The First World War and revolution in Russia, she told us, deeply affected the Latvian people. In 1917 a decision was taken in St Petersburg to form one Latvian Lutheran Church. The aim was to unite the parishes in the several Russian provinces into which Latvian territory had been divided. In 1918 the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed and a new Church structure created in which, from the start, women had equal voting rights both in secular and some church contexts.



Bishop Karlis Irbe

This newly formed Church was anxious to loosen its ties with the German system of church organisation, and forged links with Nordic Churches. The office of bishop was introduced and in 1922 Karlis Irbe was consecrated as the first Latvian bishop by the Swedish Archbishop, Nathan Söderblom. Meanwhile, in 1919, the University of Latvia had been established where women studied theology alongside the men. By 1940 more than 12% of graduates were women, but women could not be ordained.

The first General Women's Conference back in 1925 had called for the rights of women to be affirmed and in 1932 the Synod resolved that "women are allowed to speak in Church from the lectern". They could not preach from a pulpit because a pulpit was seen as a sacred space. The Society of Latvian Women Theologians challenged this, arguing that churches were not designed for speaking from the lectern! A female Member of Parliament, in a newspaper article, pointed out that women had good pastoral skills and that at the time a number of parishes were without pastors. She wondered if male pastors were afraid of competition!

In the debates that followed all the now familiar arguments against the ordination of women came up. Women had family duties to attend to, or belonged to non-believing families, or could not conform to the same working conditions as the men. The outbreak of the Second World War brought these debates to an abrupt end. Between 1939 and 1944 there was

great turmoil. First the Soviets invaded Latvia, they were driven back by a German invasion, only to come back again a short time later. During this period Latvia lost one third of its population, killed, sent to concentration camps or fleeing as refugees. The Church became a target of the Soviet atheistic regime and lost more than half of its clergy.

In the early 1950s the office of deaconess was introduced. Deaconesses were theologically articulate women permitted to look after parishes under a (male) pastor's supervision. Prior to that, the Archbishop had offered ordination to Johanna Ose, a very gifted preacher, but she refused it on the grounds that if she became the first female pastor she might give in to the sin of pride. During this period harsh, oppressive Soviet rule made it hard for deaconesses and theologians to exercise their ministry.

In the 1960s a lack of (male) pastors led to new discussions about women's ordination. By now the German and Nordic Churches were ordaining women. A new theological seminary was opened after a long struggle with the Soviet authorities and a few women students were admitted. Finally, in 1975, at the Church Council meeting, Archbishop Janis Matulis expressed his belief that the Latvian Church should follow the practice of other Lutheran churches. One month later the first three women were ordained.

Archbishop Karlis Gailitis continued his predecessor's practice of ordaining women. It was during his time in office, on 4th May 1990, that Latvia regained its independence. Now the Latvian Church could engage with the Churches on the other side of the Iron Curtain, among them the Latvian Lutheran Church in Exile which had been established by Latvian refugees after the Second World War and in which women had been ordained since 1974. However, Archbishop Gailitis died suddenly in 1992 and, at an Extraordinary Synod, a new Archbishop, Janis Vanags (pictured right), was elected. He was opposed to the ordination of women and discussions on a merger or reunification of the two Latvian Lutheran Churches ended.



In 1990 the Theology Department in Latvia University reopened. After graduation a number of women moved to other countries and were ordained in the Latvian Lutheran Church Abroad. Others stayed in Latvia and formed the Latvian Women Theologians' Association. A shortage of pastors led to the introduction of a ministry of readers (evangelists) in 1995. Then a Lutheran seminary was established in 1997 but women were not admitted for training as pastors and at the same time the Church distanced itself from the University, branding it too liberal and not fit for the education of faithful servants of the Church. As more pastors graduate from the seminary and take positions in the Church the stance against the ordination of women becomes more ingrained in church life.

In the face of a lack of financial resources and allegations of corruption, pastors and parishes are afraid that if they openly challenge the Archbishop and Church leadership they will lose their livelihoods. The result is that women still exercising ministry as readers or chaplains feel quite isolated. Finally, in 2016, a majority in the Synod voted to write into the Church Constitution that candidates for ordination must be male.

Eliza concluded that the Latvian Church has not yet been able to form a clear and stable identity from within. This hinders the inclusion of women in ministry. It is not easy to welcome other people into a situation where you yourself do not feel secure, and the long exclusion of the Church from public life has led to an exclusion of women from public ministry in the Church.

Inclusive Church

Sally Barnes then gave her presentation on Inclusive Church (IC) which was formed 20 years ago. It began when a very popular and respected priest theologian was treated in what many people considered an unjust way. A small group decided to form an organisation to work for justice for people who did not "fit" the picture of "Church". It soon became clear that individuals and whole groups of people were being excluded from congregations for many different reasons: race, gender, sexuality, illness, disability, poverty and, increasingly, age. Churches and congregations failed to recognise the gifts, abilities, vocations and sense of self-worth that everyone, no matter who, brings to the Church. People were beginning to express strong feelings of alienation and resentment at being prevented from becoming what God intends them to be by the very people proclaiming Jesus who said, 'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.'

Too many people do not have that abundant life: individuals suffering from mental health problems, people who commit suicide, those who are bullied and rejected because of their sexuality, to say nothing of the women denied access to certain professions. Sally said that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, in an interview on BBC Radio Kent, had said, 'The Church needs to be an incredibly inclusive Church in which people are welcomed for who they are, not for what they are.'

When people are excluded the Church itself is deprived of the gifts they could bring and their contribution to the 'abundant life' of the Church itself. All too often people walk away or remain "on the edge". So IC campaigns for justice for such people, and quotes the Biblical demand for social justice. "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6.8)

Sally explained that what IC stands for is encapsulated in their statement: ***“We believe in Inclusive Church – a church which does not discriminate, on any level, on grounds of economic power, gender, mental health, physical ability, race or sexuality. We believe in a church which welcomes and serves all people in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ.”***



Members of IC who have been invited to visit parishes and congregations around the UK have found that rarely are people being deliberately excluded, but that the parishioners were all suffering from what Jean Vanier called **“the Tyranny of the Normal”**. The key to exposing the systems at work in any community is to work with, and to learn from, people who have personal experience of being excluded.

IC has this approach at its very heart. All kinds of groups and individuals are represented on the committee. IC has also assembled a good network of experts and theologians willing to help organise and join in conferences and workshops. What is abundantly clear, Sally declared, is that from whatever vantage point people come they are all, in their own ways, on a very steep learning curve. Church, like any other organisation, should never be about “being done to” or “talked to, about or over” but should always focus on “learning from” those who have lived experiences of exclusion, ensuring that they have time to tell their stories and, most importantly, listening carefully so that everyone can learn from everyone else and reflect on the experience.

‘If we have a conference or workshop, for example on *disability*, those with a range of disabilities take the main part,’ Sally explained. ‘They tell their stories, give the listeners time to take in what they are hearing, discuss the implications for church groups and the way they see things in their own lives too. Someone with severe disabilities has said, *“We need to move beyond inclusion towards developing a transforming vision that changes the way we all see ourselves and each other. We must be able to change our vision and to realise that we are all created by God to be as we are”*.’

At present, Sally told us, about 300 churches have registered with IC as fully inclusive and there are many others who are expressing interest. And IC is thriving not just in the UK. Queries come in from abroad where people facing similar issues want to discuss ways of tackling them.



Probably IC’s greatest achievement to date has been the publication of a series of resource books relating to six key areas: *Disability* by John Hull, *Mental Health* by Jean Vanier and John Swinton, *Sexuality* by Susannah Cornwall, *Poverty* by Susan Durber, *Ethnicity* by Michael Jagessar, and *Gender* by Rosemary Lain Priestley. They are selling like hotcakes.

Each has an introduction followed by three chapters written by people experienced in the particular area. Each book has a theological underpinning written by a distinguished and respected theologian. At the end are resources and suggestions for groups to consider. You can find out more about these publications and about IC from their website, www.inclusive-church.org.uk

‘We know we have a long way to go,’ Sally concluded, ‘and it isn’t easy. But we live in hope that by challenging the Church to do things differently the people “living on the edge” will find themselves included and be able to make their contribution to the great benefit of us all.’

People were then asked to get back into small groups. They were to try to identify what they might do in their own home contexts to identify and be advocates for people who may feel excluded so as to make our church more inclusive. They were also asked to consider the kinds of gifts the Church might be missing out on simply because people are (consciously or unconsciously) being excluded.

There was then a short time for comments and questions before we all moved from the Parish Hall to the Cathedral for the Sunday Eucharist.



SUNDAY SERVICE IN VISBY CATHEDRAL

Discernment is not easy. Christians at the time of the Reformation, relying on the guidance of the Spirit and reading the scriptures, came to radically different conclusions. Now we regret the violence and the cruelty to which those disagreements led. But even today, as we try to create new stories of reconciliation and cooperation between separated Churches, we know that new splits and new arguments are emerging within and between the Churches. We must try to handle them with love and respect, Michael said.

He told us that the latest catchphrase in the Church of England is to find “good disagreement”! And “good disagreement”, he said, is the price for being a Church that is “always in need of reformation”, always in the process of reshaping itself. But the Reformation story is not just about change. There is also continuity. ‘We sometimes speak as if all the Roman Catholics were immediately replaced by Protestants, by Lutherans and Anglicans,’ he smiled. ‘It was not like that at all. Almost everywhere the same people continued worshipping in the same churches, very often with the same ministers, and a large continuity in their organisation.’ This illustrates how God is faithful and will not let his people fall away or be abandoned.

Even as Jesus presents dramatic contrasts, “You have heard that it was said...but I say,” he also says, “Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law and the Prophets; I have not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” And in the reading from Romans chapter 13 St Paul tells his readers, “Love is the fulfilment of the Law.”

Michael reminded us of Paul’s contemporary, Rabbi Hillel, who was approached by a Gentile with a request. “Rabbi, please sum up the whole Law for me while standing on one leg!” The great Jewish scholar humbly stood on one leg and said, “What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole Law. The rest is commentary.”

It is Jesus’ command to love that provides the continuity that counts – to love our God and to love our neighbour. While we have to find new ways of expressing this in new situations its simple challenge never changes. And it is to keep that challenge of God before our world that the Church exists. This is no easy task. Love is costly, as Jesus taught: “Turn the other cheek!” “Give your cloak as well!” “Go the extra mile!” “Pray for your persecutors!” These are not things that come naturally to us and we can only do them through the unmerited help of the Holy Spirit who comes to us in our weakness. This was one of the great insights of the Reformers: everything is *sola gratia* – by God’s grace.

The world in every generation needs the Church to be a model society that demonstrates the changeless reality of love in an ever-changing world. Whether we are Lutherans, Anglicans or Christians of any other denomination we are to be a “school of love” so that the world might believe.

Bishop Michael Ipgrave, our Anglican Moderator, had been welcomed to the cathedral by the Bishop and Dean of Visby and invited to preach at the Mass which we all attended. The pulpit is most imposing. He climbed the many stairs, said a prayer in Swedish and then spoke in English.

He began by explaining that 63 of us were in Visby for our conference. Our theme, he said, was ‘Churches : Constant yet Ever Changing - Reformation Then and Now’, remarking that it was very topical because 2017 will mark 500 years since Martin Luther nailed up his 95 Theses in Wittenberg.

Michael confessed to having been brought up to see the Reformation as one, big event that dramatically changed everything, for good or for ill. But nothing is that simple! Then, as now, there was the potential for change, but alongside constant change there is always real continuity. We had been reminded of this when we visited some Gotland churches the day before where medieval decoration and furnishings have survived a long period of many changes.

While change is very real, he told us, one thing happened just once and for all and that was the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The one reality that is never changing is the God whom we meet in Jesus Christ who is “the same yesterday, today and forever.” In contrast, as Karl Barth taught, “the Church is always in need of reformation,” and Michael reminded us that Barth was drawing on the work of St Augustine who in turn had profoundly influenced the thinking of Martin Luther.

In a constantly changing world the Church must also be constantly changing. In the Gospel reading that morning (Matthew chapter 5) Jesus set before the people of God what God was saying to them in their generation. “You have heard that it was said...but I say to you...” he declared. And that is a radical challenge to Christians in every age to discern new answers to new problems as we try to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.

'WHAT HAS PORVOO DONE FOR ME?'

After the cathedral service we enjoyed an extended lunchtime during which we explored the walled city and found something to eat. At 3pm we reassembled in the conference room and Bishop Johan Dalman, a long-standing member of our Society who is now Bishop of Strängnäs, told us of his love affair with Anglican-Lutheran relationships. Dick Lewis has provided this summary.

Bishop Johan began by explaining that "Porvoo" is shorthand for the ecumenical agreement of 1992 between the Anglican Churches of the British Isles, the Lusitanian Church in Portugal and the Reformed Episcopal Church of Spain, and the Lutheran Churches in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Great Britain, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and the Latvian Church Abroad. But what does "Porvoo" mean for these Churches, he asked. What is its future potential?

Right from the beginning, he told us, the intention was not to create another world-wide or even regional ecumenical organisation, but to build on current work within the Churches. The aim was to get as many different people together for mutual exchange of ideas, experiences and resources.

The Porvoo Declaration as such might appear to have focused on the office of bishop, he said, but this was only natural because it is an important issue for Anglicans. The Lambeth Quadtrilateral of 1888 listed four things as essential: the Holy Scriptures, as containing all things necessary to salvation; the Creeds (specifically, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds) as the sufficient statement of Christian faith; the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion; and finally the historic episcopate, locally adapted.

Johan was involved in the "Porvoo" discussions from day one. He told us that in his view "Porvoo" has strengthened the confessional identity of both Lutherans and Anglicans.

It has encouraged us to revisit our understandings of Holy Scripture, the Creeds, the Sacraments and the episcopate. But more than that, "Porvoo" has liberated ecumenism, broadening it to involve people within our Churches with special interests and competences other than ecumenical theology, people like Canon Lawyers, IT and Communication officers, Youth Officers and so on.



Bishop Johan (right) with Perran Gay who chaired the session

Something that Johan has discovered is that differences in churchmanship between Churches are mirrored in the differences *within* the Churches. 'So people coming from one party within a Church might resonate with people from another party within another Church, without them otherwise having much in common,' he said.

The great value of "Porvoo" in his view is that it provides a common focus, builds no walls, and seeks to involve and interact with Churches outside the group of signatory Churches. "Porvoo" is very much a communion in the making with a strong emphasis on cooperation at all levels, he concluded.

At that point, Bishop Johan gave us all a few minutes to stretch our legs before turning to a different topic which is very close to his heart. 'I believe the Porvoo Churches have a precious gift to value and develop. It is the gift of being rooted in Scripture, Tradition and Reason and, at the same time being open to a more sensual and experientially oriented spirituality,' he told us. He introduced us to the Beads of Christ as a tool for connecting our "ordinary life" with our "spiritual life", an ecumenical

rosary which today is worn/used by several hundred thousand Christians (there are currently well over a million sets sold) in Scandinavia, Germany and in the British Isles.

He ended his presentation by saying, 'It is my firm belief – my absolute conviction – that when tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of Swedes (our own Queen Silvia among them) carry their Beads of Christ into their ordinary everyday lives, either around their wrists or in their pockets, they slowly, but effectively, break down the artificial and unhelpful barrier between the secular and the sacred. They re-sacralise the world – they bring worship, in a wordless way, back into society. And as a fearless Anglican once said, that is like picking up the torch from a ditch, the torch of Christian belief with a flame intense enough to light up every corner of our own life and of every life.'



Bishop Johan's description of his use of the Beads of Christ will be fully reported in the next issue of *The Window*.

If you have found something from your own tradition or from another that has enriched your own prayer life and deepened your spirituality we would love to hear from you. Send an email to the Editor telling him about it. dick@ccwatford.u-net.com

WORSHIP AS MISSION : ANCIENT FAITH WITH FUTURE HOPE

After a tea break, Canon Anna Norman-Walker, Canon Chancellor of Exeter Cathedral in the South-West of England, told us about the importance of creative and contemplative worship that connects with young people today. In the diocese in which she works there are 615 church buildings in 525 parishes, and about 170 of them have fewer than 10 people worshipping on a Sunday. This summary of her presentation has been made by Dick Lewis.



Anna began by quoting the Christian philosopher Professor Dallas Willard: "We must flatly say that one of the greatest contemporary barriers to meaningful spiritual formation into Christlikeness is overconfidence in the efficacy of regular church services. They are vital, but they are not enough. It is that simple".

During her time as a youth worker and then as Diocesan Missioner in Exeter Anna became aware that many younger adults had stopped attending church. They had not lost their faith in Christ but had difficulties with the ways that churches see things, with the fact that churches do not belong in communities, and that the worship is frankly boring and lacks the space to ask questions. Many wanted to "do faith" through social action and to "do fellowship" with other like-minded people, and the pub rather than the church building became the main place of fellowship.

'I found myself in agreement with many of the arguments I heard from these "de-churched" people who had a "Churchless Faith",' Anna told us. 'I could agree that "expressing our faith in Christ through active service" was a vital expression of faith and demonstrates our love for God – "worship", if you like. I also could agree that there is something rich and profound about sharing fellowship with friends in

intimate settings like the pub or the coffee shop, and that food shared in these moments can feel almost sacramental and profoundly moving. But it was the things that *cannot* be achieved in social action or private friendships that concerned me.'

Anna believes passionately that the liturgy and rituals of the Church connect us to the inheritance of the saints in glory, the experience of Gospel handed down to us from generation to generation. These liturgies and rituals impact upon us spiritually, theologically and relationally. But, she said, Dallas Willard is right when he says that regular worship is vital but *not enough*, and the key to unlocking its potential is to catch a vision for worship that is missional and connects.

The British church is shrinking fast, she told us. In 1960 24% of people went to church. In 2000 it was just 12% and since then 1000 people each week have been leaving the Church of England. Almost half of the regular attenders today are over 65. So within 20 years our present attendance will halve again. That is bad news when you realise that a 2016 national survey reported just 1.4% of the population attending Church of England worship weekly.

Anna feels that cathedrals, which were described by the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart as "a creation imagined by the human spirit in order to affirm an inspiration and a faith", might have a role to play in helping to reverse this trend. At Exeter cathedral they are seeking to "affirm an inspiration and a faith."

There has been 30% growth in cathedral attendance between 2000 and 2012, and that trend continues at 3% per year. Several things characterise growing cathedrals, she said, and she listed them:

- a) initiating new services and congregations,
- b) enriching the quality of worship,
- c) improving welcome and hospitality,
- d) engaging with culture and the arts,
- e) promoting spiritual openness, inclusivity and diversity in membership and outreach,
- f) increasing the civic profile,
- g) developing educational programmes and
- h) prioritising discipleship and Christian nurture.

She suggested that cathedrals, churches and congregations that really **want to be** missional **tend to be** missional!

So she moved on to explore what 'missional' might mean.

What is mission?

When the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, was asked how to define "mission" he said that it is 'finding out what God is doing and joining in.' Anna suggested that wherever there are unjust structures in society our God of Justice is to be found at work, challenging and changing them. We can join in by signing petitions, engaging in politics or pressure groups and campaigning for a more just world. In situations where creation is being cared for and stewarded with faithfulness our creator God is at work. We can join in through our lifestyle choices by being as environmentally friendly as we can be. Wherever the Good news of God's love for the world is proclaimed and people respond our God



Exeter Cathedral where Anna works

who loved the world so much that he sent his Son to save it is at work. So we can play our part by joining in and telling colleagues, friends and families about the hope that we have within us through our faith in Christ.

How does this all connect with our worship and our attendance at church services?

In worship we turn our hearts, minds and wills to the God who is in essence missional, and we do it in community with others. Our liturgical greetings, 'The Lord be with you – and also with you' or 'The peace of the Lord be always with you – and also with you', help us to align our frequently unaligned selves to God and to one another. That, Anna assured us, is why worship matters and that is why returning again and again to the rituals and words inherited from the saints in glory also matters.

However, we do need to find fresh ways of expressing ourselves because our culture is becoming less and less familiar with these rituals, words and their meaning. The German theologian Helmut Thielicke said, 'The Gospel is always being forwarded to a new address because the recipient is repeatedly changing his place of residence!'

So we must repeatedly be asking ourselves what the new address looks like, to which we are called to proclaim the Gospel afresh. Anna told us that the younger generation today is multi-sensory. It is no use asking them to come to Church and sit up, shut up, sing up and cough up [give money-ed]. The normal habitat of today's young people offers a range of stimuli – rolling magazines, chat shows, apps, google searches and screens. Go into any pub, she said, and you see groups of young people looking at their screens, absorbed and concentrating on soaking up information.

Another characteristic is that young people are suspicious. Experts are not to be trusted, new truth is always being discovered, authenticity is the most trusted attribute. But, Anna said, they are also *spiritual*, though not necessarily *religious* (religion is a toxic word for many). So, when thinking about mission, churches and congregations need to recognise that young people tend first to belong, then to believe, then to become and to behave, and that all this

comes before they finally make a decision. 'I will know is something is real if my experience tells me of its reality,' a young person might say, and young people will check everything via social media like Twitter and Facebook. Thanks to 24 hour news apps they live the emotion of the moment. "Je suis Charlie Hebdo" is a wonderful example.

But far from making young people feel secure, living at this address makes them feel vulnerable. They know the truth that nothing is certain, everything is changing and they are small.

This is the context in which we are called to proclaim the Good news of Christ

So the challenge is to devise worship that genuinely *enables* encounter with God, *encourages* prayer so that people feel 'networked' to God, *inspires* *discipleship* so that people want to follow, and *stimulates* response – "I want to live and work to his praise and glory". More than that, it has to be worship that does not become "entertainment" and has real integrity. Anna suggested that one way of approaching the task is to consider the *values* of missional worship that are central to any worship that we offer.

Ask some basic questions. Who might be there and how can we help? What songs or hymns, music and liturgy shall we include? What words, themes and seasonal material can we include that will encourage the congregation to look up (*Transcendence*), to look in

(*Immanence*), to look around (*Community*) and to look out (*Mission*)? At Exeter Cathedral she and her colleagues have been exploring all this through two particular expressions of worship:

a) Holy Ground was started in October 2011 with 40 people. In July 2016 there were 180. It is not a church but a congregation of Exeter Cathedral. It meets monthly not weekly, and the whole emphasis is on creating a space where people can explore and experience Christian worship in ways that resonate with our present culture and feel 'spacious'. Each gathering engages with topics which relate to faith, and academics, artists, campaigners, and representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations and charities engage in a 'two way' conversation. The cathedral offers space where people feel welcomed and listened too (by God) and can listen to themselves and others in ways that are generous and non-coercive.

Anna described a typical Holy Ground service. You can find the outline in the full version of her presentation on our website. But essential to every gathering are large screens, music, Bible reading, a penitential rite and absolution, plenty of time to reflect on the theme, a Eucharist, refreshments and interaction with a guest speaker. A visitor commented that "Holy Ground is rooted in the Christian value of catholicity; it deliberately connects to Bible, Saints and tradition. The first section on



most evenings is Eucharistic. The catholicity is expressed too in seeing itself as but part of the whole – one congregation within the Cathedral, linked to an ancient past yet today inclusive of several groups in society. Yet there is also future hope, for believers in the kingdom of God think that the present is being shaped by the future, not just influenced by the past. Embracing a future, it has no qualms about using contemporary technology or artistic skills; being concerned for the future, an element of its life is concern for social justice. It seeks to envision and move people on. 'Guided contemplation' draws on the values of inherited wisdom; the 'Café style engagement' honours the minds and respects the opinions of all who are there; it is a forum for conversation and exploration, not a school with a curriculum and teachers; 'Reflective installations' take this freedom and trust further. There is preparation and prayer in what is offered for people to explore, but it is accompanied by trust in both them and the Holy Spirit to take and transcend what is offered."

b) In September 2015 Anna and her team of volunteers started Sunday@7 for those for whom Holy ground had become 'church for them'. It is a weekly Eucharist taking place in the Chapter House and so far has attracted 40 regular attenders.

There is no doubt that these initiatives are valued, not least by people from churches and congregations with very limited human and material resources who come to be refreshed and go away with ideas about how the worship in their own context could become more missional.

To find out more look at Anna's presentation on our website or visit <http://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/worship/join-us-for-worship/holy-ground.ashx>



'MORE THAN JUST DE-CHRISTIANISATION : CHRISTIAN MISSION IN THE FACE OF RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE IN EASTERN GERMANY'

On the Monday morning of our conference Eberhard Tiefensee, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Erfurt's Faculty of Catholic Theology, gave a challenging presentation summarized here by Dick Lewis.

Professor Tiefensee began with the assertion that Eastern German Protestantism is 'imploding'. In 1946 81% of the population was thought to be Protestant whereas today around 80% of the population claims to have no church affiliation. 'Western Europe has been described by Peter Berger as a "disaster area for the churches,"' he said, 'and Eastern Germany is at the epi-centre.'



Until the 1990s it was generally held that human beings are "incurably religious", as Auguste Sabatier described them in 1898. Karl Rahner, for example, considered the existence of non-religious people unimaginable. Such a person, Rahner said, "would cease to be a human being. He would have crossed back to being a resourceful animal."

However, the situation in Eastern Germany shows both a decline of religion *per se* and a loss of interest in religious matters altogether, the Professor told us. One group describing themselves as having no religious affiliation can be termed 'the religiously indifferent' (RI). They are not atheists because atheists have a belief, namely that God does not exist. They are not agnostics, because agnostics do not know whether or not there is a God. The RI are just not interested. Any discussion about God is to them meaningless, irrelevant and incomprehensible.

The RI consider religion of any kind as unscientific and premodern. It is family associations and other social networks that provide the foundation for their lives, not a faith. The key moments in their lives are marked by secular rituals - birth, enrolment at school, *Jugendweihe* (a secular alternative to confirmation), civil marriage and secular funerals. No church or religion is necessary. Ask whether they are Christian or Atheistic and they simply do not understand the question. 'They simply refer to themselves as "normal",' Professor Tiefensee told us.

Faced with such people religious folk try to look for "equivalents of religion" among the RI but this is a very dangerous approach. Some anthropologists think they find human-like behaviour in animals. But the animals in question remain entirely indifferent to such anthropological hermeneutics. In a similar way, the RI are unconcerned if others describe them as actually being somehow religious, he said. But, he warned, 'be careful to distinguish between "a replacement-religion" and "a replacement of religion"'. The latter is not religion! And beware assuming that someone exhibits some kind of religious attribute or religiosity when such an assumption contradicts that person's own self-understanding.'

So how might a Christian approach the RI? One way might be to examine those areas of life that are common to all people but which lie outside any individual's control. Professor Tiefensee offered birth as an example. Everyone has been

born. No-one has initiated his or her own existence, and the existence a person experiences is fragile. At some point everyone dies. People know this through experience. They encounter instances of birth and death. But whilst these are things that all human beings have in common, they do not all interpret them in the same ways.

Some experience what Schleiermacher described as “a feeling of absolute dependency” and might cope with such a feeling by expressing gratitude to their parents or, if they are religious, to a God who they reckon to be the source of all being. But others, including the RI, might simply say, “I am the product of evolution” or even, “I am the product of chance.”

Karl Marx’s humanistic variant of this non-religious consciousness suggested that the human being is a network of social relationships and that every human being should work to serve humanity. This feeling of being part of a greater whole can be expressed in an entirely non-religious way.

If, Professor Tiefensee argued, every human being is not “incurably religious” as was previously thought, and in fact there are people who are “religiously indifferent”, questions are raised for committed Christians. Are the RI lost to every kind of Christian mission? Are they a new version of the *massa damnata*?

He went on to suggest how Christian mission might be understood and undertaken in these circumstances. Religious issues seem to lie so far beyond the horizon of the RI that a mutual point of reference can hardly be found. While Christians and other religious people can engage in debate with atheists and agnostics, the RI simply do not understand the arrogant aggressiveness of atheists like Richard Dawkins or the faith-based certainty of people who celebrate church services and pray. This is a very real challenge to Christians because the RI appear to manage perfectly well without God. ‘This is an historically unique situation,’ the Professor said. ‘It is the first time Christians have encountered “religionlessness”. Up to now Christian missionaries have always been able to engage in some kind of inter-religious dialogue with the people they seek to evangelize, either by trying to show that the other person’s beliefs lack something important, or by exploring the different ways in which the Christians and the others approach ultimate truths.’

What is needed, he explained, ‘is a path to a target – one which the others have either not found or, if they have found it, are comparatively not far along the way.’ But this approach could only work if both the Christians and the RI stand on an equal footing. Whilst the RI make this kind of engagement very difficult it should not be impossible, he said. Mission has to be about exploring the other person’s position and understanding it better. When this is done it becomes apparent that the RI do not understand themselves as *lacking* religion but rather see themselves as being *free* of religion. To them it is the people like us, who need



No-one had initiated his or her own existence

religion, that are deficient, not themselves! Christians need to counter this understanding.

So Professor Tiefensee offered some Biblical images which he thought might be helpful. First, “*We know in part*” (1 Corinthians 13.9). If we believe this it follows that truth may lie in points of irreconcilable difference rather than in points of agreement. Both sides in the discussion need to recognize that the truth is always greater (*veritas semper maior*), so in ecumenism and in mission

absolute truth, however it may be expressed by one side or the other, does not have the final word. For St Paul the final word is love.

Second, “*Salt of the earth*” (Matthew 5.13). While salt is not a staple food in itself, as anyone who has ever taken a mouthful will testify, it can be very effective in flavouring or preserving another medium. It follows that if the Church is to be the *salt of the earth* Christian mission will be better practiced in a non-religious milieu rather than a “church of the people milieu”. When Christian missionaries are ready to be challenged by the otherness of the other they gain a new and better understanding of their own faith. ‘Then,’ he said, ‘what emerges from the encounter will no longer be the concern of this particular mission or missionary, but will be the work of the Holy Spirit.’



Third, “*One body and many members*” (1 Corinthians 12.12-30). If we think of our globally networked world society as an organism, Paul’s image of the Church as an organism is helpful, he continued. The one body of Christ has many interrelated members, and it is apparent that the global organism encompassing time and space is today, more than ever before, differentiated and specialized to a very high degree. Clearly not everyone can do everything. ‘So there are believers who believe and pray with and for others,’ Professor Tiefensee suggested, ‘while those who are “religiously indifferent” have other skills and other tasks.’ He quoted St Paul who says as much when asserting that “the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband.” (1 Corinthians 7.14)

Borrowing Grace Davie’s concept of “vicarious religion” the Professor suggested that Christians might understand the task of Churches and church leaders as *performing ritual* on behalf of others, *believing* on behalf of others and incurring criticism if they did not do this properly, *embodying moral codes* on behalf of others and, finally, *creating space* for debating unresolved issues in modern societies.

Whilst in theological thinking the “vertical” dimension is

well understood – Christ died in our place for our sins (see, for example, 2 Corinthians 5.14) – the “horizontal” seems to him to be theologically under-developed. ‘The idea of “vicarious religion” would go against the strong individualization of today’s understanding of religion,’ he said, ‘which is, above all, a consequence of the Reformation.’ The concept of the priesthood of all believers, something valued by Protestant Christians but seldom properly worked out in practice, is not only about participating in decision making in the Church but is about *being a priest* and *doing the work of a priest*, he said. The Church would become an advocate or a representative before God of all humanity, including the RI. Those being thus represented do not have to agree, but such an approach might ensure that a place is being kept open for them, in this case for the RI, so that they can come and take it at any time.

Today, Professor Tiefensee concluded, ecumenism begins in

the home. There are increasing numbers of inter-confessional and inter-religious marriages and families, just as there are also marriages between Christians, atheists and the RI. This is recognized, for example, in new rituals for the Roman Catholic wedding ceremony. The resulting confessional patchwork-families all face similar challenges: Which religious festivals shall be celebrated, and how? Which biographical rites of passage shall be adopted? How and in what ways might a child learn to pray? How shall all of this be communicated to the extended family? ‘Perhaps the domestic microcosm, and actions at ground-level, can motivate the world and the world-church to greater “ecumenical” efforts,’ he said.

Professor Tiefensee has contributed a chapter to a book to be published next year, The Decline of Established Christianity in the Western World: Interpretations and Responses, ed. Paul Silas Peterson, London: Routledge, 2017, forthcoming.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

On Monday afternoon Bishop Jonas Jonson, who is a former Assistant General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, drew out some of the themes that he had observed emerging from our conference sessions. His presentation is summarised by Dick Lewis.



Bishop Jonson began by asserting, ‘We don’t know anything about the future.’ However, he was willing to offer a few thoughts, and felt that the place to begin was where our conference began, looking at the island of Gotland and the churches we went to see.

The ways in which commerce, culture and religion were all held together in the past was symbolised by the local churches we visited. But the Churches today find themselves in a globalised and inter-dependent world, he said, a world that is obviously in a process of fragmentation and increasing authoritarianism. He suggested some of the major trends affecting the Churches.

First, world Christianity is moving from

the North to the South. The majority of Christian believers now live in the southern hemisphere and numbers are increasing in the South and decreasing in the North. The Churches of Europe are ageing Churches with decreasing numbers of members, and Europe is beginning to look like a pagan continent. So the future of world Christianity will not be determined here in the North.

Next, he told us, migration has come to stay. While people in Sweden and in the rest of Europe talk about “a flood of refugees” from the Middle East we should remember that global migration is nothing new.

Jews constantly remind themselves that “my ancestor was a wandering Aramean.” (Deuteronomy 26.5) From time to time migration increases and decreases, something Europeans must live with while, at the same time, recognising the extent to which migration is changing Europe’s ecumenical map.

He elaborated this from his own experience. ‘When I started in the ecumenical movement more than fifty years ago,’ he told us, ‘we still could define churches as, for example, the Church in Sweden, the Church in

Bulgaria, the Church in Tanzania. But today all kinds of Christianity are to be found everywhere.’ Sweden has welcomed more refugees than any other European nation apart from Germany. ‘We have refugees in almost every community, from the south to the far north,’ he told us. ‘And what do these people do? A large number join the local churches. On any Sunday you find some Armenians and Orthodox, all kinds of people assembled in the churches. They participate fully, they take communion and they try to use the churches as a means of integration in the local community.’

This, he went on, is a new situation, one that suddenly makes many of the ecumenical agreements we have been talking about for decades seem irrelevant. ‘This ecumenical activity just happens!’ he smiled. ‘What it will lead to, we don’t know. But it’s an entirely new situation.’



But none of this is new to Gotland, he reminded us. On Saturday we were told how in the past the churches we visited integrated cultures, traditions and religions. We saw evidence of the Eastern Orthodox and of the Latin Church in the same building and people worship in forms that remind us of the continuity from the Apostles through the Reformation and into our own times, a continuity expressed primarily through the Eucharist. 'Eucharist is inclusive communion,' he said, 'It is participation in the community of Christ, and it is an expression both of protest and of hope.'

Next he referred to the Reformation. Whilst the conference had not spent much time talking about the historical Reformation as such, because we had been focusing on the continual reform the Church has always been engaged in, Bishop Jonson expressed the view that the peak of the Reformation was the Second Vatican Council. This showed that the historical Reformation also had profound implications for the Roman Catholic Church. Since the 1960s the Roman Catholic Church has begun to move into new times and into a new world and it is entirely appropriate that in 2017 Roman Catholics and Protestants will celebrate together.

But the downside of the historical Reformation was that it led to fragmentation and to conflict and, after the Enlightenment, to a secularisation that was irresistible. In short, the bishop told us, the Reformation contributed to a severe weakening of the only institution that for centuries had provided an intellectual, spiritual, cultural and moral counterweight to the raw and dehumanising violence of political exploitation throughout the whole of Europe. The missionary movement exported our divisions to every corner of the world and these divisions remain.

'Around and inside us lies a vast graveyard of failed, faded and buried ecumenical visions,' he said regretfully, 'for Christianity seems to have lost its unity for good and settled into four different traditions, the Orthodox, the Catholic, the Reformed and now, most recently, the Pentecostal. It remains to be seen whether migration will affect this situation and help us to open up the doors to each other.' But in the meantime we have to live with what he

described as 'a rather deplorable situation' whereby the Churches and denominations recognise diversity and even decent competition as a good thing. The one Church as an invisible eschatological reality is what we have left. Unity in reconciled diversity has become an ecumenical goal which, for all practical purposes, equals the *status quo*.

'It is indeed a trying and challenging vocation to remain true and consistent as an ecumenist these days!' he said. 'The institutional Church right across Europe, be it Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed or Pentecostal, finds itself in a severe crisis,' the bishop continued, 'and as we heard from Professor Tiefensee, the epicentre of this crisis is in Eastern Germany, with Sweden not so very far behind!'

But it is not all doom and gloom! Here and there we find signs of hope. We have heard about some of them during our conference. He referred to the inspiring example of Exeter Cathedral, to new communities of various kinds, to liturgical renewal, to increased media recognition, to some of the visionary church leaders we have met, and to the experience of creative inter-religious relations that many of us enjoy. 'Yet despite all these signs of hope the destruction of the old order continues,' he said. 'And, honestly, we do not know what the future holds for any of us. What we do know is that we cannot turn the clocks back. The beautiful ruins of the city of Visby could also symbolise a ruined spiritual heritage and the kind of religious indifference that Professor Tiefensee talked about this morning.'

'At school my history teacher, a humble, white-haired humanist, repeatedly told me, "You must learn to resign yourself while preserving your enthusiasm!"'. This is a profound summary of the Lutheran ethos,' smiled Bishop Jonson, 'which has guided me through decades of ecumenical work and episcopal ministry!'

So, what of the future? 'The vocation of the Church in this part of the world is to try to promote European

integration, to encourage ecumenical convergence, to establish peaceful inter-religious relations, and to serve the people regardless of their faith,' he said. 'At the heart of every Christian community is Eucharistic celebration that brings the created world and all humanity before God in intercession, and the Church becomes an icon of a just and equal community. And we praise God who makes his presence known and invites us to share in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world.'

'We are not at the end of the Christian era in Europe,' the bishop proclaimed. 'Past centuries of continued reformation have been a preparation for the Church in Europe to fulfil its calling in succeeding ages. Medieval churches in this island, constructed by a very small community of neighbours on their own initiative, all tell the Bible story on their walls and in the rites and rituals performed in them. Central to each is the altar, the Holy Eucharist where the harvest and prayers, the illness and poverty, life and death – the totality of life – is brought to God and blessed by Christ. We have seen the past as a preparation for the future, and we also know that in celebrating the Eucharist the future comes to us and creates the present.'

'This is the start of a new reformation,' he concluded, 'of discovering once again the great gifts of God graciously given to us all in order that we may grow in the likeness of Christ in this time and in this world. It is a terribly difficult time of transition from having been majority Churches, national Churches, established Churches and resourceful Churches to becoming Eucharistic minorities. But we shall serve God and serve people by being authentic Eucharistic Christians.'



Do Visby's ruined walls symbolise religious indifference?

VISBY WANDERINGS, WORKSHOPS AND WORSHIP



One of our guides, Gunnar Beck

Several of our speakers, during their presentations, made reference to the pilgrimage we made round the island of Gotland on the Saturday. There is a colourful description of it on the website, so a brief account of it will suffice here. We were two coachloads, and as we went along our guides gave us insights into the island's rich history, culture and geography. They usefully reinforced what Richard Wottle had told us the night before.

We visited six medieval churches and were able to appreciate 'The Poor Man's Bible', the whole of salvation history from Adam and Eve to the Last Judgement recorded in wonderful wall paintings dating from the 13th to the 17th centuries. This one of Adam and Eve is in the church at Masterby.



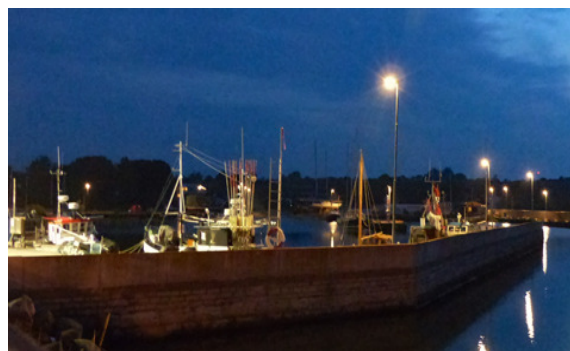
We were shown 12th century Baptismal Fonts, 13th century Roods, altarpieces, baroque decoration and this fabulous Triumphant Cross at Oja. In the grounds of the church at Frojel we found a medieval labyrinth which offered several of us a prayerful experience.



But we saw more than church architecture. In Hemse, the largest settlement in the south of Gotland, we met Pastor Tomas Holder (right) and some of his parish team. They led midday prayers before inviting us to the Parish Hall and giving us a wonderful lunch of beef, salmon, salads and cakes. Tomas told us how they are trying to meet the challenge of increasing secularism which affects Gotland as well as the rest of Sweden. 'We are leaking members,' he told us, and explained how they are trying to make the church more accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds, and how the congregations try to serve the needs of people in the community, from the youngest to the oldest. Then in Oja church the Pastor, Walter Wiklund, led us in a Bible Study, and at Lau on the eastern side of the island we enjoyed Lutheran Evening Prayer.



The day was a cultural, theological and architectural feast but as the sun began to set we entered Herrvik, a very active fishing port, where we were welcomed at a restaurant that served us not fish but steaks. We enjoyed a very convivial time there before leaving the east coast and making our way back to Visby, our hotel and our beds!



WORKSHOPS

A feature of the Visby conference was the workshop session on the Monday morning. It was a chance for members of the Society to share their passions and enthusiasms. Each session ran for 40 minutes and everyone could attend two, with the exception of the people who joined Anna Norman-Walker's workshop. They spent the entire 90 minutes designing the worship that we would share in at the end of the day in the Bishop of Visby's garden - but more of that later.

The first workshop gave people the chance to be 'At home with Katherina von Bora'. Anne Boileau has written a novel about Luther's wife's early years, so she assumed the persona of Katherina and invited people into her 'parlour' where she cheerfully answered their questions about her childhood and how she first encountered the writings of Martin Luther and later married him.

Anne's novel, *Katharina von Bora: Nun, Rebel, Wife* by Anne Boileau, Clink Street Publishing, September 2016 is available in print and on Kindle. It is a very good read, and we shall carry a review in the January *Window*.



The second was a presentation by Alfred Sebahene (*right*) on 'Christian Faith and Corruption'. He suggested that corruption is not just a political, economic, legal or developmental issue, but is something that the Churches have a theological and ethical duty to combat. Alfred made some suggestions as to how this might be achieved and engaged in healthy discussion with his groups.



The third was given by David Brown (*left*) and was entitled 'Culture and the Church'. He reminded us that 'culture' forms our opinions and our way of life, and we expect our children and other people to conform to our 'norms'. So it is a good idea to take a critical look at how 'culture' shapes our understanding of the Church, its structures, its systems and its customs. David's book; *'Leaven: The Hidden Power of Culture in the Church'*, by David Brown, RoperPenberthy Publishing, 2016 is available now and will also be reviewed in January.

In **the fourth** Randar Tasmuth (*left of television*) described the programme '500 Years since the Reformation in Estonia' and the seminars, congress and printed materials that will help inform Christians in the Baltic countries about the theological, social, cultural and educational developments in their region since the Reformation. Again, the participants were able to enjoy some lively exchanges and share ideas and information about the preparations for Reformation500 in their own localities.



WORSHIP AND FAREWELL

After tea on the Monday we were divided into groups and taken on a guided tour of Visby. Those who could walk easily went on foot in two groups, each with a local guide, to explore the medieval city with its narrow streets, ruined churches and many shops and businesses. Those who were slightly less mobile went round the city walls and past the harbour and along the sea front in a little tourist train which provided them with a lively commentary along the way.



Then, after a quick change at the hotel, we gathered at the Bishop's House. He and his wife had generously invited us to dinner. But before they led us inside their lovely home we gathered in a circle around the 'small garden'. A bell was rung, everyone fell still and silence descended, and we were treated to a retelling of the Garden of Eden, the fall of humankind and of our redemption and restoration to the Lord's garden. This was the act of worship prepared earlier in the day

during Anna Norman-Walker's workshop, and our singing was beautiful.

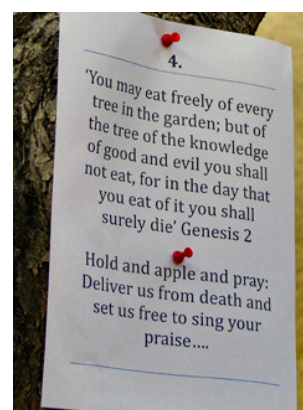
We were given time to walk round the larger garden where stations had been prepared at which we were encouraged to pause, contemplate and pray.

When the bell rang again we returned to the 'small garden' which became for us Joseph of Arimathea's garden and we found ourselves in the company of the women who found God's tomb bursting with his merriment. There was more singing and we ended with the grace. It



was an act of worship that engaged all the senses and we were enriched by it.

Jaakko Rusama expressed our thanks to the Bishop and his wife for their hospitality and for the generosity of the Diocese which had made it possible for our conference to take place in such wonderful and evocative surroundings. He also thanked Richard Wottle, 'our man in Visby', and his team; Perran Gay who had masterminded our conference worship; Helen Harding who had been our conference registrar; and Dick Lewis who had generally managed to keep things under control.





cantors Tim Moore and Marian Knetemann, and Perran Gay played the piano and led the intercession.

The preacher was Bishop Martin Lind (*seated right*). 'The Gospel text for today is full of demands,' he said. 'DO to others as you would have them do to you. ASK and you shall receive. KNOCK and the door will be opened.'

But it is also full of promise. Jesus offers a wonderful picture to encourage us. If a child asks for bread, would his parent dream of giving that child a stone? Of course not! Jesus simply points out that if human beings, who are evil, know how to give good gifts how much more will our Heavenly Father give us good gifts!

'We are all called to be God's tools,' Bishop Lind concluded, 'to show his love, to ask/pray for the Kingdom of God to be real in our world today.' The full text is on the website.

It was a beautiful service and, sharing the Peace together and receiving the bread and wine, we felt that our conference had come to a fitting end.



Following drinks in the garden, we occupied a number of rooms on the ground and first floors of the Bishop's house where tables had been set and where we enjoyed a magnificent meal.

It was a truly wonderful ending to a very rewarding day, and for some people, with early flights and ferries to catch in the morning, it marked the end of their conference experience.

But on Tuesday there were still 45 inside the *Visborgskyrkan*, less than a mile from our hotel, for a final Eucharist.

The church was built in 1969 and is the most modern in Gotland. Christine Allsopp (*seated centre*) presided at the Eucharist, with David Brown (*seated left*) as Deacon. The singing was led by two

WHAT SOME OF THE PARTICIPANTS THOUGHT

In addition to the comments on the front page the planning group received several messages. These are just a few

Judi Hattaway wrote: 'There were so many highlights it is difficult to name them all. The group itself was lively and interesting. The landscape was very beautiful as we travelled through it especially on the Saturday visit to six medieval churches. The lectures and worship fed my soul. The conversations with people over meals were enriching. Making new friends I hope I will meet again in two years was life-giving. The sense that we were all equal despite there being several purple shirts - there was no false forelock tugging. The food was gorgeous! The weather sublime!

'And Bishop Jonas's prophetic words about how he sees the churches in Sweden both now and in the future resonated and gave me much to think about as our own church leaders are telling us how we need to do ever more to connect with those who do not come to church here in England.'

Mimi and Tom VanPoole said: 'We all enjoyed the gracious hospitality of the Bishop of Visby, Sven-Bernhard Fast and Mrs Fast. We shared a worship experience in their garden, and then ate a wonderful dinner as guests in their house. The delightful dinner was the perfect ending for a conference already marked by excellent meals!

Gudrun Kaper wrote: 'The wide range of worship we had helpfully combined well known pieces from our traditions with recent ones. A "Holy Ground" community at our *Stiftskirche* in Stuttgart would be a great blessing. Many of the American Christians I support work with African Christians and Canon Alfred Sebahene and his wife Ruth were a great gift and will help me with my ministry.'

Marian Knetemann, referring to our Sunday evening worship, told us: 'I have already talked about "Jonah" and about us all being inside the fish and some of our youth workers are very interested. Can you send me the text, please?'

But there is little doubt as to who were the stars of the show. Everyone agrees that Richard Wottle, backed up by Sara and Stellan, were wonderful. The fact that everything ran so smoothly, that we kept to time so well, that we were given all the essential information we needed and that the practical arrangements fell so easily into place is entirely due to the enormous amount of work they put in before we even arrived in Visby. They illustrate how important it is, when organising events of this kind, to have a good "home team". Truly, we are all very grateful to them.

AN ICON FOR ST TIMOTHY'S LUTHERAN CHURCH SUNDERLAND

An icon has been specially written for St Timothy's Lutheran Church, Sunderland, UK by Ian Knowles, Director of the Bethlehem Icon Centre, using traditional materials and methods dating back 1,500 years.

Whilst the writing has been done in a classical style using egg tempera and water gilding it has a number of unique features. No similar icon of St Timothy is known to have been written before. Richard Stephenson, a member from Lichfield, explains.

During a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2015 with a group from Lichfield Diocese I was able to visit the Bethlehem Icon Centre School (BICS) and meet its director Ian Knowles who has formed a close link with Lichfield Cathedral. Ian's passion is to restore iconography as a living part of the spiritual landscape of the Holy Land.

Iconography as a Christian art form began in the Holy Land and Ian hopes to encourage young people to stay, rather than emigrating as so many do because of the very difficult situation. At BICS they can start making a living as professional iconographers and can gain a Diploma in Icon Painting under an arrangement with "The Prince's School of Traditional Arts" in London.



By Easter 2016 a pencil sketch had been prepared and because Ian's Bethlehem team were already working on three huge icons for Lichfield Cathedral it was agreed that the completed (somewhat smaller) St Timothy would be brought to the UK in July when the Bethlehem iconographers came to Lichfield.

I was very excited to meet Ian again in the Close of Lichfield Cathedral to view the St Tim's icon for the first time, and immensely impressed at how Ian had created not just a beautiful art work but a living evangelical statement. The boat refers both to the travels of the Saint and to his being a shepherd of the flock which are in Christ, the ark of salvation. The ship is a Medieval English one and links with St Tim's Church and

Most icons purchased today by visitors to Bethlehem are not produced in the city, and their writers receive as little as 10% of the purchase price. The Icon Centre guarantees that 80% of the final fee for commissions will go to the iconographer, and only the highest quality materials, natural pigments, egg tempera with no additives, wood and chalk powder are used as the iconographer weaves a hymn of praise to God our Creator. "Icon" simply means "image" in Greek, Ian explains, and when Jesus said to Philip, 'he who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9) he was saying that he was an icon of the Father. In Jesus God showed us his face. So the very first icon was written in Bethlehem by God himself.

Visiting the centre provided the inspiration to commission an icon of St Timothy for St Timothy's Lutheran Church in Sunderland in North-East England. In January 2015 St Tim's (as it is universally known) was hit by an arson attack. The fire did extensive damage to the church hall under the sanctuary, and oily black residue liberally coated all of the church and its possessions. The cost of repairs amounted to over £150,000 and took more than 8 months to complete.

St Tim's is built in the shape of a ship because Sunderland was once the largest ship building town in the world. And that is why St Timothy was selected as its patron. Timothy accompanied St Paul on many of his sea voyages, co-authored many of Paul's epistles and received two letters from the Apostle. He was martyred at the age of 80 in Ephesus where he was Bishop.

with Sunderland and its ship building past. It also reminds us of Noah's Ark and of the waters of baptism. The Saint sits teaching with a "family" attending to him, young, old, middle aged, married and widowed (is the bearded man sitting in the boat St Paul?). He wears a white robe and a halo of burnished gold, illustrating that he is a Bishop and Apostle. Because of the "reversed perspective" shared by all icons the ship appears to curve towards us inviting us to join the congregation and listen to the Apostle's teaching. Around the ship are three sea beasts symbolising the demons St Paul warned Timothy would threaten the life of the Church. But they are transformed into a symbol of the Trinity - three entwined fish - showing that through true doctrine evil is overcome. The fish is one of the earliest Christian symbols and Jesus made his disciples "fishers of men".

The cross on the sail refers to St Timothy's martyrdom but again resonates with England and St George. The ship flies a pennant upon which is the emblem of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in England (the red and white roses around a red heart) linking the ship to the Seal of Martin Luther. Icons are always ecumenical belonging to the whole communion of saints and not to one denomination, and Ian felt this slight 'Lutheran' touch was not too intrusive. The frame is decorated both in gold leaf and a floral design to associate the Icon with early English style manuscripts.

The new icon has been warmly received by Pastor Steve Edge who has described it as, 'one of the most stunningly beautiful things I have ever seen', and hopefully it will be displayed for many years to come in St Timothy's.

BLACK FOREST MEETS SOUTHWARK ON A MEMORABLE DAY

The Rev Cornelia Hole, a member of our Society working in the northern part of the Black Forest in Germany, reports on a visit of Calw Deanery's Clergy Conference to Southwark Cathedral last June

Sally Barnes, a member of our Society's Executive Committee, came to Southwark Cathedral and gave an enthusiastic talk about Women and the Church (WATCH) which was very illuminating for me and my colleagues, the clergy from Calw Deanery in the northern part of the Black Forest, Germany. Sally's task was not easy because most of my colleagues knew hardly anything about the Church of England, and many of them were unable to communicate in English. Nor do most of them respond well to issues they would consider feminist! So it was a very challenging job and Sally mastered it brilliantly on that historic day of the British Referendum.

BISHOP MICHAEL ENTHRONED



*Our Co-Moderators,
Jaakko Rusama and Michael Ipgrave*

Six members of our Society were at Lichfield Cathedral in central England on 24th September when our Anglican Co-Moderator, the Rt Rev Dr Michael Ipgrave OBE, was installed as the 99th Bishop of Lichfield. In an inspiring act of worship, involving children and young people, Bishop Michael was placed in his *cathedra*, the Bishop's chair. He spoke of following St Chad who had both "sat down" in a particular place, but who had also "walked around", meeting people and travelling alongside them. We too, are called to be both citizens and pilgrims, he said.

Yes indeed, it was the 23rd of June. We had been given a hilarious tour of Southwark Cathedral by the Dean, Andrew Nunn. We learnt a lot from him about Murdoch, money, Shakespeare, the acoustics of his bathroom, the work of the Cathedral with schools, and how much the Borough has changed during the last years.

The rude awakening came the next morning when the friend I was staying with shouted, "Cornelia, they are out!" We subsequently tried to digest the Brexit while having breakfast. To me it felt, and still feels, like reunification reversed. I am deeply grateful for the part the British played rescuing Europe and the world from the horrors of World War II and, for me, the idea of Europe is closely linked to maintaining peace whereas, sadly, many British people only seem to care about unwanted bureaucracy and migration.

The topic of our clergy conference, when it wasn't taken over by discussions about the referendum, was 'Churches of the Reformation - How to be an ecumenical church. Insights into the Church of England.' Calw Deanery belongs to the Church of Württemberg (nb: *not* Wittenberg!) in the South of Germany and is one of the regional churches which together form the EKD, the Protestant/Evangelical Church of Germany. As we are so close to Switzerland, my home church is a funny mixture of two reformations: it is Lutheran in confession and Reformed in liturgy, meaning that our liturgy is very simple without much singing involved. As a result, we are neither proper members of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) nor of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC).

Another characteristic of our church is that we have different 'political' parties within our synod and church; a huge pietistic movement (*Lebendige*

Gemeinde/'lively church'), some in between (*Kirche und Evangelium*/'Church and Gospel') and a liberal wing (*Offene Kirche*/'Open-Inclusive Church'). The confrontation between these manifests itself in almost every topic which comes before the synod. Coming from this background we were curious to learn how the Church of England manages to bring together and reconcile the various and often contradictory strands within itself and to be one Church despite all the differences and challenges.

'Winning the hearts and minds, and not giving in easily' – that is what I learnt from Sally's talk about the campaigning by WATCH. Philip Potter apparently once said, 'To work for the ecumenical movement you must have three things: i) some screws loose; ii) a sense of humour; iii) a death wish.' I am sure, by looking at the tea towel you can see me and Sally holding, the Watch people at least fulfil the second!



Thank you very much to everybody who made our rewarding encounters possible; Sally Barnes, Dick Lewis, Andrew Nunn and Bishop Michael Ipgrave.

STAND UP FOR WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

One of our Anglican Committee members, the Venerable Christine Allsopp, describes the Conference of European Churches (CEC) 2016 Summer School on Human Rights

More than 90 people, from different countries and from a number of denominations, participated in the opening of the Summer School at the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, Greece on 31st May. Understandably, many participants were from Greece, but Lutherans from Finland, Germany and Sweden were also represented alongside Anglicans and other denominations. Each of the three full days of summer school focused on a particular topic: The Rights of the Child; The Rights of Women; and Children and Women as Refugees. Each day was divided into three sessions: the Theological approach, the Legal Approach, and Rights in Practice which grounded the theory in reality.



The Rights of the Child

A common theme was the importance of listening to and learning from children. Their right to be heard is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Church of Sweden provides all local churches with a handbook to encourage involvement of children in decision-making. 'No theology without a child in the centre' was quoted, yet the child is often unnoticed amongst the adults. How does the right to freedom of religion or belief relate to children? Should children be given freedom *for* religion or freedom *from* religion? There must be an awareness of the evolving capacities of the child when assessing religious maturity.

The Rights of Women

The varied experience of women was highlighted as we heard from speakers from different countries and different faith communities. A speaker from Finland spoke of the importance of inclusivity. In contrast a Greek Orthodox woman quoted a modern Orthodox theologian; 'it is imperative for orthodox women to break the silence on gender discrimination, challenge patriarchal prejudice and question the culture and tradition of exclusion that denies them full participation in the life of the community and sacramental ministry of the church.'

Against this background I gave my presentation: 'Women ordained in the Church of England: an account of the journey'. The visual impact of women celebrating twenty years of ordination as priests, and of some of our newly consecrated women bishops, was more powerful than I could ever have imagined. The reaction, especially of the Greek Orthodox women present, reminded us how important it is to support

our sisters who, as yet, are not even allowed to formally discuss women's ordination within their churches.

Children and Women as Refugees

From January to May 2016 155,000 refugees have arrived on the Greek Islands. Of these 38% are children and 22% are women. We heard how Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were overwhelmed by requests for family reunifications where a family member is already living in Germany or Sweden, for example. The process is difficult and in some cases can even take years. Some of us met a small number of Syrian refugees one evening in Thessaloniki. They had no trust in the re-location process which required them to go for interview in Athens without being allowed to take a legal advisor with them.

On the final morning we were able to pay a visit to Diavata Re-location Centre 10km north of Thessaloniki. It is a camp for refugees who have been registered and seek re-location to another country, and is currently home to some 2,000 people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The manager is trying to do his best with the limited resources provided by the Greek government but worries about what will happen to those in tents when the cold weather comes. One Syrian man told us that he has three children in Sweden where his wife has died. They are being cared for by a Swedish family but he has no idea when or whether he will be able to join them.

The children followed us everywhere, telling us their names, involving us in clapping and dancing games, holding our hands. We were told not to encourage them, a request we ignored, and I thought of Jesus's words: 'let the children come to me, do not stop them'. I reflected afterwards that although we felt helpless in our inability to change their situation, the children had enjoyed our attention and the adults appreciated being listened to and being able to tell us their stories. Yet I also remember one of our speakers criticising the failure of the European Churches to inspire politicians to act together to solve the refugee crisis and to work for peace in Syria.



Diavata Re-location Centre taken from a distance. Photography was not encouraged but Christine managed to get this shot.



WITTENBERG IS CLOSER TO ROME

Protestant Churches are nearer to Roman Catholics than Anglicans, argues Society member Alexander Faludy in an article first published by the Church Times (www.churchtimes.co.uk). Alex is Vicar of St John the Evangelist, Wallsend, in the Church of England Diocese of Newcastle.

The “special relationship” between the United Kingdom and the United States in foreign affairs, defence, and intelligence

is famously one that London seems to be more aware of than Washington. It is also one that seems not to register especially with the United States’ other strategic partners.

At times, I have wondered whether there is a parallel here with the Anglican self-perception of our special status in relationship to the Roman Catholic Church, compared with the rest of the Protestant family. Talk about Anglicanism’s vocation as the “bridge Church” – not just passively standing between two ecclesiastical thought-worlds (the older language of *via media*), but actively connecting them – has a long history. It is at least as old as the modern ecumenical movement, but is perhaps particularly associated with the thinking of the 1948 Lambeth Conference. It has been the cornerstone of the Church of England’s post-war ecumenical strategy. This conception of Anglicanism’s ecumenical vocation continues to be eloquently espoused by writers with an Anglo-Catholic background, such as Geoffrey Kirk and Arthur Middleton.

Doubts about the bridge-Church rhetoric swam into my mind after reading Pope Francis’s recent warm words about Roman Catholic-Methodist relations. At the opening of the new Methodist Ecumenical Office of Rome last April he spoke of his desire to ‘overcome all that stands in the way of our full communion [with the Methodist tradition]’.

These words pose uncomfortable questions for Anglicans: is our self-perception as the bridge-Church somewhat hollow and self-deluded? Does the Pope need any other bridge than himself in dealing with the rest of the Christian world?

It is difficult to think of a significant concrete instance where Rome has needed Anglicans to facilitate human contact with other Protestants (or *visa versa*). In the large swathe of Continental Europe where Anglicans have no historic presence, the suggestion that the Roman Catholics might need Anglicans to have conversations with either their Lutheran or Reformed neighbours tends to be met with a mixture of amusement and incomprehension. A reading of modern church history suggests that our self-appointed position in providing interpreters between the Roman Catholic and Protestant theological worlds might be superfluous. This is neatly exemplified by comparison of the parts played by Karl Barth and John Moorman as respectively the Reformed and the Anglican observer-participants at Vatican II.

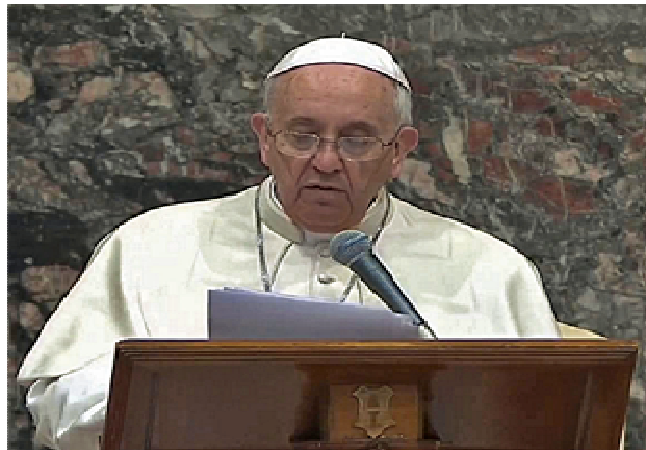
Barth’s influence on the Council was far greater than Moorman’s: it has merited a full-length academic study (Donald Norwood, *Reforming Rome: Karl Barth and Vatican II*, Eerdmans, 2015), as Moorman’s has not. Norwood says

that the disparity in their influence may be precisely ‘because High Church Anglicans like Moorman found it much more difficult to be critical of Rome than Reformed theologians like Barth, who were not craving for Rome’s acceptance’.

The fruits of recent Roman Catholic-Protestant conversations have been more tangible than those of the continuing Anglican-RC dialogue. The 1999 Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation is emphatically a document of the Roman Catholic Church. It thus possesses a canonical status to which our own much-prized Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) documents, for all their admirable creativity, can only aspire. ARCIC’s substantive statements on unity, so far from achieving this status, were not even allowed safe passage through the Vatican’s own printing press. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s 1982 evaluation of ARCIC I’s 1981 final report followed three paragraphs of praise with 53 of cold criticism.

Recently, Pope Francis’s two most significant ecumenical gestures on the admission of non-Roman Catholics to communion have occurred in the context of Roman Catholic-Lutheran, not Roman Catholic-Anglican, relations. The first was the Pope’s counsel last year to Anke de Bernardinis, a member of the German Lutheran Church in Rome, that her reception at mass alongside her Roman Catholic husband was a matter for her own conscience rather than of ecclesiastical discipline. The second was the unprecedented admission of visiting Finnish Lutheran bishops to communion at a service inside the Vatican earlier this year. In this trend, Francis is in surprising continuity of spirit with his predecessor, particularly the latter’s take on the *Confessio Augustana* (Lutheranism’s key doctrinal text, also known as the Augsburg Confession). In 1976, the future Benedict XVI (then the Most Revd Joseph Ratzinger, Archbishop of

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Pope Francis speaking at the opening of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome last April

A MAN OF ENTRANCING PERSONALITY AND ASTONISHING ENERGY

John Arnold, our Anglican President, reviews Nathan Söderblom: Called to serve by Jonas Jonson
Published by Eerdmans £29.99 ISBN: 2016 978-0-8028-7308-8

Born in 1866 and deeply rooted in the Lutheran piety of his father, the uniquely gifted Söderblom brought the Church of Sweden from the periphery into the centre of world Christianity and did more than any other individual to give the Ecumenical Movement its eventual scope, coherence and effectiveness. He was an accomplished linguist, mastering ancient Persian, lecturing in English, French and German and even speaking in Latvian and Estonian at the installation of bishops. He was a poet and a musician and a captivating public speaker. He was destined for a brilliant academic career as a professor of the History of Religion, developing a universalist view of revelation without sacrificing the centrality of Christ. At the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 he was called by the King, but without the support of the other bishops or the diocesan clergy, to be Archbishop of Uppsala. Through his sheer goodness, entrancing personality and astonishing energy he eventually won (almost) everyone over. He was an exemplary diocesan, diligent in visitation and inspiring in personal contact. He took seriously his duties at national level, and was in the forefront of efforts to reform rela-

tions with the state, frustrated until 1999, but now resolved in a way which may prove exemplary for others. He also oversaw a rapprochement between an essentially conservative church and the workers' movements, paving the way for the welfare state.

He is best remembered, though, for his work at international level. He loved and learnt much from the Church of England; and his protégés, Gustav Aulen and Yngve Brilioth, made substantial contributions to Faith and Order later. The Porvoo Communion is surely rejoicing his heart in heaven now. Still, his heart on earth was in practical Christianity and in the movement for Life and Work, culminating in the Stockholm Conference of 1925 of which he was the architect and organiser beforehand, the life and soul in action, and the inspiration for his successors, Bishops Temple and Bell, afterwards. We owe it to him and his ability to make friends like Archbishop Germanos and Patriarch Photios, that modern ecumenism embraces Eastern Orthodoxy, and that it eventually found a viable form in the World Council of Churches. Worn



out by his exertions at home and abroad, he died in 1931, just as his work for peace, for which he had received the Nobel Prize, was doomed to temporary frustration by the rise of the dictators. Much of his vision, both for peace and for unity, was only vindicated later. He is commemorated in the Calendars of the Lutheran and Episcopal Churches. Jonas Jonson, fellow Swede and former Bishop of Strängnäs, writes sympathetically but not uncritically and with personal knowledge. His book is worthy of its subject and it has been fluently translated by Norman Hjelm for our instruction and enjoyment.

continued from previous page

Munich) wrote enthusiastically in the journal *Bausteine* of his desire 'to achieve recognition of the *Confessio Augustana* as catholic and thereby to establish the catholicity of the Churches of the *Confessio Augustana*, which makes possible a corporate union while the differences remain'. He is not known to have ever said anything of equivalent warmth about the Thirty-Nine Articles.

It might be too much to suggest that Rome might like us Anglicans if we were a little more like the Lutherans. And yet the best way forward for Anglican-Roman Catholic relations, especially with the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation in 2017, might be for the Anglicans to become signatories to the Joint Statement on the Doctrine of Justification with our Porvoo-Lutheran brothers and sisters, with whom we are in full communion. It would cost nothing, and gain much. The Methodists are a long way ahead of us on this, having adopted it back in 2006 (a move that perhaps underpins Pope Francis's recent expression of enthusiasm for them). Our adoption of the statement

alongside our Methodist Covenant partners might provide some welcome sense of renewed energy and theological depth to the stalled Anglican-Methodist process. Getting closer to our Protestant neighbours is often wrongly perceived as entailing our being distanced from Rome. In this instance, it might be possible to take a step that makes progress in both directions simultaneously. Drawing closer to the Methodists and Lutherans would also mean drawing closer to Rome.

In 1950 R N Flew and other learned Free Church writers published a now unjustly neglected volume, *The Catholicity of Protestantism*, correcting some rather crass mischaracterisations of Protestant theology and ecclesiology, and Anglican distance from it, made in the 1947 Anglican report *Catholicity* (edited by E A Abbott). All too often, it feels as if we have still not learned the lessons set out there about our place within the intellectual geography of the Christian world. On a real map of Europe, Wittenberg is closer to Rome than Canterbury is. It would do us no harm to remember in all humility that this is true ecumenically, too.

WHY DIDN'T IT WORK?

Society member Judi Hattaway is a self-supporting minister who has had four years in hospital chaplaincy. Having heard Sally Barnes at the Visby conference talking about 'Inclusive Church', she was prompted to share her story.

I have two very differently disabled grandsons. About ten years ago, while training for ordination, I became interested in the way that churches coped (or failed to cope) with people who have additional needs. I started by visiting two churches that made extra provision for this special group. They both held mid-week evening meetings, one monthly and the other weekly.

I felt called by God to do something for people with additional needs (PWAN). I envisaged working with people aged 13 years and upwards right through to old age, people with the kinds of learning disabilities and difficulties that would make accessing regular church services very difficult. They might include some who were non-verbal, possibly suffering from Autism, others might have Downs Syndrome, and others might have global delays of one kind or other.

In 2014, after discussions with the Rector of my new church, I was given the go-ahead to try and get something started. Our diocese gave me a grant of £400. This enabled me to join a MAKATON signing course in 2015. (For those of you unfamiliar with this, there is plenty on the web about it, but it is a language signing system, not dissimilar to that used by the deaf). I could also spend some of the money on craft materials, badges, printing, advertising, refreshments, and so on.

I approached my Parochial Church Council (PCC) and talked to church groups in our locality who were not all Anglican. People responded well. They saw the need for the group and said they would support it. We have three distinct churches in the parish I work in and one was enthusiastic and encouraging and eight people volunteered to become involved.

The group gained a name, CAYR – **C**ome **A**s **Y**ou **a**Re, with the "R" working a bit like the 'R' in Toys R Us. I believed that it was likely that each of the local churches in our

town and surrounding area would have at least one PWAN plus a Carer, and I hoped we might start small, perhaps with six people as founder members. Meetings would be on the first Tuesday of the month for the very good reason the parish hall was available! It has very good facilities – wheelchair friendly, plenty of parking, good toilets and a kitchen.

February 2016 was launch month. I arrived early to set up for our first evening. It would run from 7pm until 8.30pm. I had spent time planning what we might do together. I knew that the volunteers would need to be checked for safeguarding, but I also knew that at this stage nobody was going to be alone with any vulnerable person, so that could come later. I had bought gluten and dairy free snacks and drinks as well as ordinary foods for the rest of us.

The volunteers arrived and we waited. Around 7pm one person with additional needs arrived. He was the only one! I felt a sense of disappointment, but we all had fun together and made much of the fact that he was now THE founder member. We did some administration to create registers, badges which we decorated, ate the snacks, told a simple version of the Good Samaritan, said prayers which we created at the time, and sang lots of songs. I had downloaded CDs on to the iPad I bought from a charity called Prospects. This is a Christian charity that's *raison d'être* is to enable PWAN to access church.

In March and April nobody came to CAYR at all! The volunteers and I spent the evening praying for the group and for the parish. In May we had the original member, and a woman in a wheelchair and her Carer. And in the month of June it was the same two again. July and August are holiday times so we planned a break. But, I became aware that to re-start in September was going to take some effort, and we were moving back into the dark evenings.

After much thought and prayer, I very reluctantly decided that in its present

form CAYR is not viable. The amount of time it takes each month, about eight hours in total plus the time the volunteers give, could not be justified for so few attendees. So, I am left with some questions and reflections:

- * I felt God call me to create this special church and I honoured the call. So why didn't it work out? The two churches I visited during my training had a similar demographic – so why didn't it work in our area?
- * What more did I need to have done before I embarked upon this?
- * Was it the wrong time of day? Was it the wrong day of the week?
- * How could we have advertised it better, and where, and to whom, remembering that we needed to reach the Carers because many of the PWAN are probably not able to read?
- * How do we get around the problem that if the Carers don't want to bring the PWAN out to something, they won't be able to access it (and the PWAN may be non-verbal and thus unable to express a desire to come).
- * Why did each church in our locality not produce at least one person with PWAN, when they said they would support it?
- * How do we reach invisible groups of which this may not be the only one?

I have no regrets about trying to get CAYR off the ground, and I can't see where we went wrong. I am open to the possibility that in the future we may yet get CAYR started.

Perhaps we might create an annual service – Christmas looks a likely time – that is very accessible to those with additional needs and their Carers.

At heart I have the feeling that 'even though you do it to one of these you do it to me.' I still feel passionately that this particular group is marginalised in society and in our churches. I am sad I could not seem to find a way to make a difference. I am wondering if any of our readers might have some positive experiences to share?

GERMAN PROTESTANTS AND CATHOLICS PLEDGE "HEALING OF MEMORIES"



Bishop Bedford-Strohm and Cardinal Marx

Germany's main Protestant and Roman Catholic churches have published a "Common Word" for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. In it they call for a "healing of memories" of past divisions and for the event to be commemorated in ecumenical fellowship. In the introduction Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and Cardinal Reinhard Marx of the Roman Catholic Church say, 'Together we want to use the 500th anniversary of the Reformation as an opportunity to reflect on the concerns of the Reformers and to listen anew to their call to repentance and spiritual renewal.'

When Martin Luther published his 95 Theses on 31st October 1517 he could have had little idea of what the ramifications might be. In denouncing church abuses he set in motion events that led to the separation of western Christianity into Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. 'A look at history reveals the suffering and wounds that Christians have inflicted on each other. This shocks and shames us,' declare the two church leaders, and they continue, 'We see 2017 as an exceptional moment of our fellowship when, after centuries of mutual separation, we are able to mark a

Reformation anniversary with such readiness to engage in forgiveness and a new beginning.'

So the separated churches will commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in ecumenical fellowship. There is to be a service of penitence and reconciliation on 11th March 2017 in Hildesheim. This is to be thought of as another milestone in the process of healing memories. The two Churches in Germany are encouraging similar services at regional and local levels.

Members of our Society should also play their part wherever they are in the world. In Northampton, England, for example, plans for joint celebrations with Roman Catholics and Protestant Churches in the locality are well in hand. We hope that everyone will work hard to ensure that Reformation500 is properly ecumenically commemorated in their parishes, deaneries, synods and dioceses.

Pope Francis and Bishop Munib Younan who is President of the Lutheran World Federation and one of our Society's Patrons, will pave the way with an ecumenical service on 31st October this year at Lund in Sweden. They will pray together for forgiveness and for the healing of the wounds the different Confessions have inflicted on each other down the centuries.

A GOOD READ

Tom and Mimi VanPoole recommend
'Moral Warriors, Moral Wounds'

*by Wollom Jensen and James Childs,
Cascade Books, Eugene OR, 2016, ISBN 9781498223515*

Wally Jensen, a longtime friend, performed our wedding. He had a distinguished career in military service. James Childs has enjoyed a long and productive career in the fields of theology and ethics. Together they bring Christian ethics into dialogue with the harsh realities of military service in today's world of war. They examine the ethics of neighbourly love and the vocation of military chaplaincy, the just war theory and the published value systems of the US military services. They range widely over such topics as the challenge of pluralism for the chaplaincy, drone warfare, interrogation techniques and truth-telling. They emphasise the reality of moral injury and stress suffered by troops who have been to war, and that these wounded warriors have needs that the churches and society must respond to. "Soul injuries" are not simply medical or psychological. They need something that congregations are uniquely capable of providing, if they are properly prepared. It is a faith-based regimen of healing for those who struggle to be faithful and fear that they have not been. This is a short but fascinating book that deserves a much wider readership than simply the military. It contains much good sense and will be valuable to all clergy and their congregations.



25 YEARS OF THE MEISSEN AGREEMENT

One of our members, Dr Christof Theilemann, has been a member of the Meissen Commission right from the start. Here is what he told his colleagues when they met in Munich on 3rd September, 2016. It has been translated from German by Dr Paul Kremmel.

In all the years that I have been a member of the Meissen Commission, I never denied my love for Systematics. But here I will spare you a systematic treatise, following the good advice of Friedrich Nietzsche: 'Those who seek to build a system betray a lack of integrity.' My comments are intended as sidelights, as personal observations. But perhaps you will allow me to raise one or two systematic questions. I will start with the obvious. How do matters stand with the "visible unity" of our churches that we sought in the Meissen Agreement?

I think things are much better than is commonly thought. In my humble, German-Protestant opinion Meissen is, praise God, the most dynamic process of European ecumenism next to the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). The foresight of Archbishop Robert Runcie and the pioneering work of Mary Tanner, Christa Gengel, Irene Koenig, Maria Herrbruck and Klaus Kremkau have had one marvellous result, namely the profoundly joyful experience of celebrating the community established by Christ through receiving the Sacrament together, which we painfully miss in other ecumenical gatherings. This is a true sign of visible unity!

To that you may add a wealth of joint services and, above all, an unparalleled richness of human encounters. These are seen not only in the meetings of the Commission, the visits by delegations, the theological conferences and church congresses, but especially in a myriad of municipal, church-district and diocesan partnerships. Urged on theologically by the efforts to show "visible unity", we have also achieved a number of clarifications, through which we are moving towards attaining this unity. As the history of philosophy and theology shows, such clarifications are themselves a sign of progress, and behind the formulations lies much hard work in London, Rinteln or Loccum! Recently, however, our work has become less strenuous and more matter of course. More emphasis is being placed on our common theological and ecclesio-political activities in the world. This is just as it should be!

Then there is the incredible wealth of people who have put their hearts and souls into the Meissen endeavour. It is always the people who carry these partnerships forward. Although I am not a supporter of the doctrine of a social trinity, in the personalities who advanced the Meissen project there is a very specific unity in diversity. Such different people as Bishop Rowe and Bishop Knuth were brought



together in a common cause, even though Gordon Rowe, in referring to his Schleswiger colleague, explained that with regard to a certain Anglo-Catholic practice, he was "ontologically different". Bishop Knuth failed to understand this! There have also been personalities like the amateur astronomer, Bishop Bourke, and the avid BMW driver, Bishop Johannesdotter. We have enjoyed Archdeacon Townley's ready wit, the ironic cosmopolitanism of Dr Podmore and OKR Paul Oppenheim, and the theological prudence of Archbishop Rowan Williams, Bishop Huber, Bishop Chartres, Professor Dalferth, Bishop Hoare and Professor Nüssel. The incredible dedication of Bishop Baines and Mrs Holstein, the unbelievable musicality of Archdeacon Rob Jones and the charisma of Bishop

Weber are all things we can never forget. In short, Meissen is wonderful! Meissen practices what the Apostle preached in Ephesians 4. The Meissen process may not be a parable of the Kingdom exactly but, with due respect to my English colleagues, it is almost as wonderful as a holiday in France!

Of course, we are not there yet. The meaning of what we have mutually acknowledged in the Meissen Agreement as being an integral part of the one Church of Jesus Christ must be rediscovered again and again, must be clarified and filled with life. In light of recent political developments, Meissen has a vital role to play in the public sphere. And precisely for this reason, I conclude with two self-critical questions.

Have we adequately recognized the proclamation of the Gospel as a common ecumenical task? In Berlin, for example, a new English-speaking church arises every two months, though often of a fundamentalist nature. There is a lot to be done.

Second question: in light of the necessity of our common ecumenical mission, are our remaining differences really justified? We are not called to pass final judgment on what is right but rather on what is pleasing to God. This is a theological and an ecclesio-political question. It is the case that our unity is already given to us in Christ but we must strive to reach its perfection. Also for this reason, wanting to build a system perhaps betrays a lack of integrity. But sacrificing a faith seeking understanding (*fides quaerens intellectum*) does not follow from this. Neither does sacrificing humour! There is no other commission in Europe that is filled with so much laughter as ours.

HOW THE CHURCH GROWS IN THE SOUTH

When summing up the Visby conference Bishop Jonas Jonson reminded everyone that there are now more Christians in the Southern Hemisphere than there are in the North. When people from Europe and North America visit Tanzania, for example, they are often very surprised.

Tanzanian Christians are very zealous for their faith, as anyone who spoke to Alfred and Ruth Sebahene during the conference was quick to realise. This becomes very evident if you ever meet with them for worship. An average service might be two or three hours long. It is likely to include a great deal of singing and multiple offerings. But it is the sheer number of people gathered together that is truly impressive.

There are more Lutherans in Tanzania than there are in the USA. That might sound astonishing, but it is true.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) has 6.5 million members, roughly 13% of the country's population. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) has just 3.7 million. The Tanzanian Church is one of the largest Lutheran churches in the world.

A report from the Pew Research Centre has predicted that, if current trends continue, by 2050 four out of every ten Christians in the world will live in sub-Saharan Africa. To put this in context, when seven Lutheran churches across Tanzania merged in 1963 to form the ELCT there were 500,000 members. In just 50 years the Church has grown to be eleven times bigger, and the pace of growth is increasing. How can this growth be accounted for?

One contributory factor is that the ELCT has created a culture of strategic evangelism. All congregations are expected to establish preaching points in neighbouring areas where Catechists preach and work toward establishing an independent congregation.

Another factor is the commitment to social service. What connects congregations to the wider community are basic needs – health, education, clean water, shelter, employment and security. Before he taught people, Jesus made sure their needs were met. The Tanzanian congregations do the same and that is another reason for church growth.

Right across the country Lutheran institutions abound: 23 hospitals, more than 140 health centres and dispensaries, several schools and a university with 10,000 students. These institutions provide services for everyone, regardless of religion. So the Church is involved in every aspect of life. That leads people to ask the key question, 'Who is this God you are talking about?', and then the good news about Jesus can be shared.



Lutherans from Usolanga in the Iringa Diocese of the ELCT, outside their church after worship. Lutherans in Tanzania number 6.5 million.

FORMER LUTHERAN CANONISED

In June this year a very remarkable Swedish lady, Elisabeth Maria Hesselblad, was officially pronounced a Saint by Pope Francis. St Elisabeth has been described as one of the most remarkable women in 20th century Christian history. She was born in 1870 in a village in central Sweden. Her father ran a store but went bankrupt. In 1888 Elisabeth migrated to the USA where she trained as a nurse.

In 1902 she converted to Roman Catholicism and in 1911 founded a new branch of the medieval order of St Birgitta along with three young women from England. Their focus was to pray and work for the unity of Scandinavian Christians with the Roman Catholic Church. During the 20th century the community grew to over 50 houses in more than 20 countries with over 700 sisters.

During the second world war the sisters housed many Jewish refugees, welcoming them and respecting their dignity and their religion. For these acts of love Elisabeth gained the title 'Righteous among the Nations.'

But throughout her life she pursued her ecumenical ideals and she came to symbolise much of the current rapprochement between Rome and the Lutherans. She saw the unity of the Church as being predicated by loyalty to Rome, but did not see differences as insurmountable. Her sisters work in a practical way towards creating greater unity by offering hospitality to all, by allowing Lutherans to join their oblate groups and through their presence at Catholic-Lutheran events.

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 God's love and justice together in the world

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LUTHERAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMISSION ON UNITY ALMOST 50 YEARS OLD

The International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity was set up in 1967 and so will be fifty years old in the very year that marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. And the Commission met in the UK for the first time from 14th-21st July 2016 at the Focolare Centre for Unity in Welwyn Garden City.

Perhaps the Commission's greatest achievement over the years was the signing of the **Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification** in

1999 which dealt honestly and creatively with the fundamental issue which had divided Catholics and Protestants at the Reformation. In 2006, a 'Statement of Association' with the Joint Declaration was agreed and signed on behalf of the World Methodist Council. The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) has given the Declaration its support and endorsement and there are indications that the Church of England itself may follow in this direction to mark the commemoration of the Reformation in 2017.



Bishop Eero Huovinen (left) and Cardinal Vincent Nichols admire their matching pectoral crosses

The Catholic Co-Chair of the Commission is Bishop William Kenney, an auxiliary bishop in Birmingham, and his Lutheran counterpart is Bishop Eero Huovinen of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. In addition to **From Conflict to Communion**, and to help prepare for the 2017 Reformation commemoration, the Commission has produced a very helpful liturgy entitled **Common Prayer** which Pope Francis will use when he goes to Lund in Sweden to take part in a special service on 31st October 2016.

At present the Commission is focusing on the implications of our common baptism and the unity we share as members of the one body of Christ. Unity is both a gift and a task, they say, and they give thanks for the real but imperfect unity their two Churches already share, and are committed to pray and work for the full unity Christ desires. In the words of the *Chemin Neuf* prayer: "Lord, Jesus, who prayed that we might all be one, we pray to you for the unity of Christians, according to your will, according to your means."

On Sunday 17th July the Commission went to London and attended the 10.30am Mass in Westminster Cathedral at which Cardinal Vincent Nichols presided. They went on to Westminster Abbey for Choral Evensong and were then given a special tour before visiting St Anne's Lutheran Church (in the City) for refreshments, a presentation and a short act of worship.

On Tuesday 19th July they went to Cambridge for tea and a tour of St John's College which the scholarly and saintly Bishop of Rochester, John Fisher, had helped to found. He was martyred in 1535 because could not, on grounds of conscience, agree to Henry VIII's decision to divorce his wife Catherine of Aragon. From St John's to a Lutheran Service in the Church of St Edward before visiting the Parker Library, and then to the Master's Lodge at Corpus Christi College to dine. One Commission member said that, during their stay, they had been fed in body, mind, heart and spirit.