

The Window

MAY 2007

THE ANGLICAN – LUTHERAN SOCIETY

ISSUE No. 82

MAKING PARTNERSHIPS MORE MEANINGFUL

Membership Secretary Helen Harding suggests one way of getting more people involved in partnership:

One of the things our Society does is to encourage informal links between Anglican and Lutheran congregations. Over the years many such partnerships have been formed.

The Church of England parish where I worship has enjoyed a link with a German parish for the past twenty years. Road, rail and air connections between our two towns are very good. So it has been easy to arrange all kinds of activities. Members of each congregation have visited the other, and many lasting friendships made. We have learnt a lot from each other and our partnership as helped us to realise that 'ours' is not the only way of doing things well!

We also have a link with an American Lutheran congregation. Travel between Britain and the USA is not quite so convenient or economical so this is not quite so 'hands on'. But nevertheless we enjoy exchanging news and supporting one another in prayer.

I am concerned that there are always people who, for various reasons, are not able to join in exchange activities. While others seem to be gaining so much from the partnerships they feel a bit left out. It occurred to me that a Prayer Pen Pals scheme might meet the need, so I suggested it. It works! Using e-mail, telephone or surface mail according to preference anyone can now be linked with someone in a partner congregation in Germany or the USA.

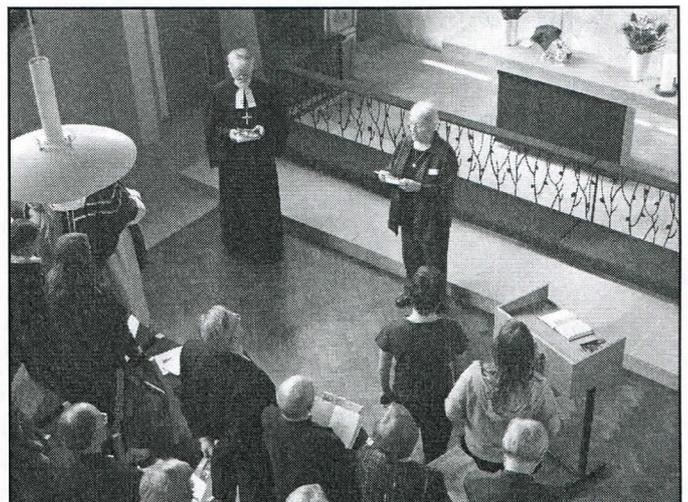
Now when we arrive for Sunday worship we see pictures of prayer pen pals, or the latest additions to their families. We hear about developments in our partner communities. Best of all, we are better informed as congregations and can pray for one another much more meaningfully.

Creating a Prayer Pen Pals Scheme has worked for us. If you haven't already got one it might work for you too.

Report Inside: The Annual General Meeting at London's Finnish Church.



Above: The Rt Revd Jürgen Johannesdotter, new Lutheran Co-President of the ALS (left) with Revd Tom Bruch, Lutheran Co-Moderator. Below: Readings at The Thomas Mass held in the Finnish Church in Rotherhithe, London, at the conclusion of the Anglican Lutheran Society's 2007 Annual General Meeting.



Inside this issue of The Window

Report on the AGM; Excerpts from Bishop Erik Vikström's lecture, Crossing Borders; News from Jerusalem; Three American Episcopal Priests view the Anglican Communion, and
BOOK NOW FOR DUBLIN 2007

The 2007 Annual General Meeting

In a welcoming atmosphere set by the Rector of the Finnish Church in London, Pastor Juha Rintamaki, twenty-four members and an additional number of friends attended the 2007 AGM of the Anglican-Lutheran Society. The church is a centre of Finnish culture in London and, alongside of the ALS meeting, many families and young people from the Finnish community in England were active in this well utilized, multi-purpose building.

In the chair was the Lutheran Co-Moderator, Rev Tom Bruch. He led members through the past year's minutes and presented the report of the Co-Moderators, Anglican Bishop Rupert Hoare being unavoidably absent on the day.

Their report highlighted some of the major efforts of the year, led by the creation of the ALS website which has already had a large number of visitors from around the world. Committee member Canon Dick Smith co-ordinated the website effort and it has proved to be an important new tool for Anglican Lutheran ecumenical work.

Another important task has been the preparation for the ALS biennial conference to be held this September in Dublin. A number of Executive Committee members have been active in ensuring that the theme of the conference, "Aspects of Reconciliation" will be well presented.

Membership figures and financial reports were received. Mr Ron Bentley was thanked for his expert stand-in role as Treasurer while Canon Guy Smith was serving in St Petersburg. The ALS newsletter, *The Window*, was mentioned and members were encouraged to send articles about ecumenical work to the editor. Pastor Bruch also reported that the constitution of the Society is undergoing revision to comply with new charity regulations in the United Kingdom.

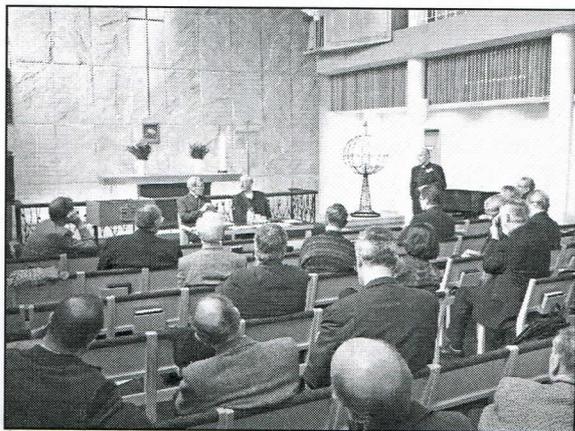
The meeting was helped by the presence of the national co-ordinators from Sweden, Norway and Finland. Additional reports were received from the USA and Germany.

Present for the meeting was The Rt Rev Erik Vikström, newly retired Bishop of Porvoo, Finland and Lutheran Co-President of the ALS. Bishop Erik, who has also chosen to retire from his ALS post, was thanked by Pastor Bruch and by The Very Rev John Arnold, Anglican Co-President, for his staunch support for the Society and its aims for more than ten years. Bishop Erik was presented with a life time membership in the Society.

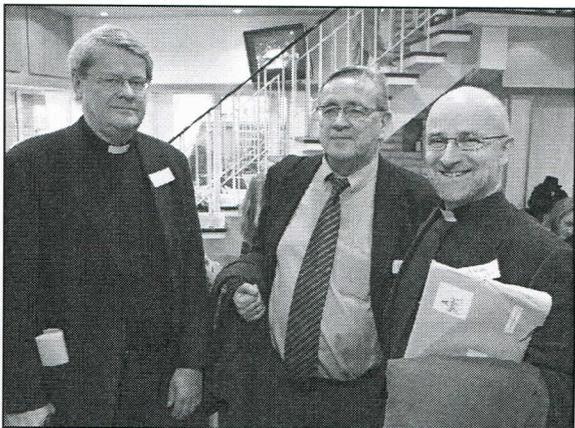
The meeting was informed that Bishop Jürgen Johannesdotter from Shaumburg-Lippe near Hannover, Germany had agreed to be nominated to be the next Lutheran Co-President. Bishop Jürgen has wide ecumenical and international experience and is the German Co-Chair of the Meissen Commission. He was present and was elected by acclamation. The meeting also gave thanks to Dean John Arnold for his commitment and day-to-day involvement in the work of the Society.



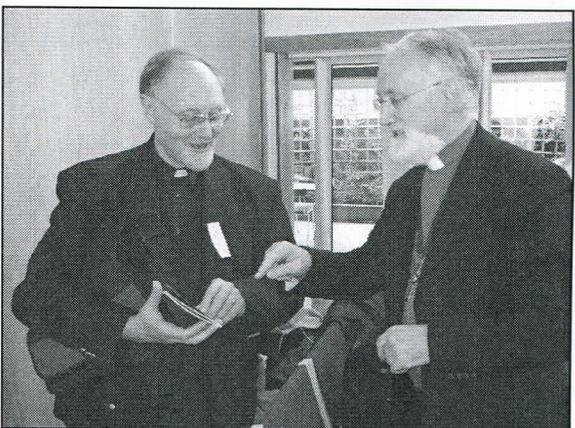
Pr Tom Bruch and Membership Secretary Helen Harding



Discussion following Bishop Erik's lecture



Pr Lennart Sjöström, Pr Jacob Knudsen, Dr Jaakko Rusama



Fr Phillip Swingler with Bishop Jürgen Johannesdotter

THE CHURCH AT THE BORDER

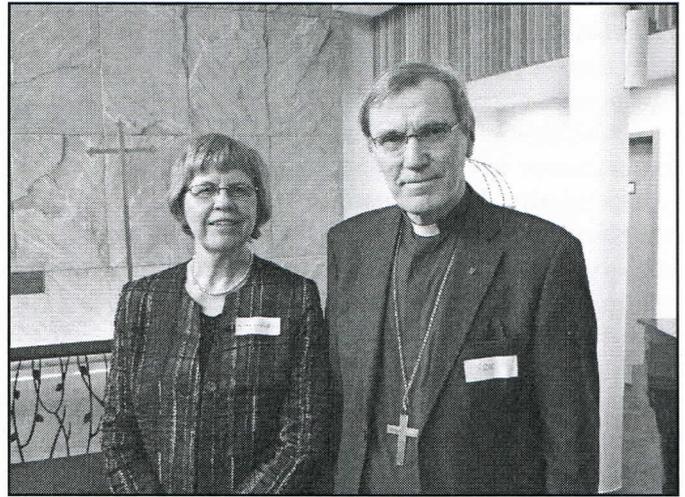
An edited version of the address to the Society's Annual General Meeting by the retiring Lutheran Co-President, The Rt Rev Erik Vikstrom (Bishop Emeritus of Porvoo, Finland)

I would like to start with a sentence by the famous German, later American, theologian Paul Tillich. He once said: Die Grenze ist der fruchtbare Ort der Erkenntnis, i.e. "The border is the fruitful place of insight."

Tillich himself originally came from Alsace, the much disputed borderland between Germany and France. It is a region where nobody during the course of history has been quite satisfied with the rule of the day... One could think that it was a great disadvantage to be a German born and growing up in such a place. But Tillich learned something else: The border region is a fruitful place of new insights. Those who live comfortably far away from borders don't have that possibility. They are not forced to be confronted with those who...speak another language, who might have another religion or faith or who think quite differently. In the encounter with the alien and the different, you learn and discover things that you otherwise would not be able to see.

I think most of us have experiences of border situations. In my own case, being a Finn who has Swedish as my mother tongue and having been brought up within (and later having been Bishop for) the Swedish speaking minority in Finland, it has consisted of the strange feeling of being partly a foreigner in my own country. But I don't blame my fate. It has been an advantage to get to know my own country and its Finnish speaking majority more and more in Finland's own border situation between east and west, including the border between Western and Eastern Christianity. And, when you somehow don't belong anywhere, you can easily adapt yourself to any situation and be at home everywhere...

I remind myself that Jesus grew up in a minority situation in a border country, the Galilee of those days. The region was partly Jewish and partly heathen. It was not easy to maintain Jewish identity under those circumstances. In the Gospel stories we can see that, especially in Galilee, some boundary markers became very important: the Torah, the Sabbath, the food regulations, the synagogue etc. Jesus grew up within a tradition where much weight was put on the safeguarding of boundaries marking out the Jewish



Bishop and Mrs Erik Vikstrom at the Finnish Church, London for the Anglican Lutheran Society's AGM on March 21 2007

community. But Jesus himself seems to have gone in a similar direction as Paul Tillich,(but much earlier on).

Jesus got on well on in border situations. We can see from the Gospel story that the Holy Spirit was very much at work in such situations. This is the insight of John V. Taylor in his beautiful book on the Holy Spirit, *The Go-between God*. Taylor emphasizes that 'I don't have the Spirit and that you don't have the Spirit –but together we have the Spirit when we come together in Jesus' name.' Likewise, the Church has the Gospel only when she is sharing it with the surrounding world, otherwise not. The Holy Spirit is always the Go-between, establishing contact and communion and joining together.

This also suggests that the border land between the Church and the world is not a void rift. On the contrary, it is the space where the Holy Spirit prefers to be at work. We can find an example in Luke 17:11, where, on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. That empty border land between two hostile camps was the region of demons where outcasts and unclean people had to dwell. That is exactly where Jesus was going and where God's almighty power was bestowed upon the ten lepers who were healed by Jesus. Another example is the story of the Canaanite woman in the heathen region of Tyre and Sidon. She approached Jesus with her prayer for her daughter and, after some heated and animated argument, he healed the young girl. We cannot exclude the possibility that this incident was very important to Jesus himself. Maybe even he gained some new insight with regard to the plan of God through this encounter. In that case, this border experience meant even for Jesus "eine neue Erkenntnis", a new and deeper insight of his own calling and of the coming of the Kingdom to this world.

From these examples we can learn that there are two opposite deviations from a positive estimate of the border situation. The first one is to avoid borders, to withdraw from them and to concentrate on maintenance and on preserving your own identity. As we noted already, this was the attitude of the religious community in Galilee where Jesus was growing up as a young boy. In this kind of deviation, importance is placed on all kinds of boundary markers which give one a sense of being right and being in possession of God's special favour. The danger of this deviation has followed the Church like a dark shadow until this day. As Lutherans, we are used to put the question like this: What is the Church? It is a safe question, because we already know the answer from the Augsburg Confession, Article 7: "The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered." But there is another question that makes us much more uncomfortable... Where is the Church? This takes us to Matthew 25 and the questions put forward by the Son of Man at the last judgement: I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, in prison. He says: I was there --the Holy Spirit, going out from the Father through the Son and operating without any boundaries. I was there exactly in those boundary situations — those no man's lands. But you and your Church -- were you there?

It would be a shock on the last day to find out that we had done everything right -- we had rightly taught the Gospel and rightly administered the Sacraments — but we had done all this in a place where the Holy Spirit had no business at the moment.

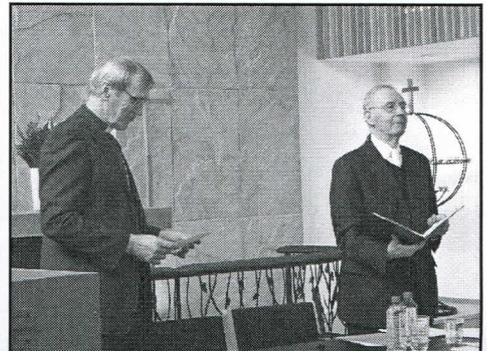
But there is also an opposite deviation. That is not to respect God-given and Nature-provided borders. "Do not remove the ancient landmark that your ancestors set up" is the wise reminder in Proverbs 22:28. Mention this and we are at the heart of the main disease of modern and post modern society. We are confronted today with a mentality that does not respect borders at all — neither in science, nor in technology, nor in the arms' race, nor in agriculture, nor in moral life, nor with regard to our own bodies. We see nature collapsing around us, the seas being emptied of fish, our own bodies burning out and both young and old people being thrown into a state of loneliness and loss of meaning.

Behind all this there is an unconscious (or sometimes very conscious) ethical concept that could be called ethical relativism. Ethical relativism came with a great force at the beginning of the 20th century, hand in hand with the new anthropology and throwing overboard all kinds of normative ethical thinking. Its basic assumption is that there is nothing that is right in itself for *homo sapiens*. What is right is only what is

right for me or my tribe or my group or my nation — and nobody else has the right to say anything about that from the outside. The consequences of this concept peaked in the Holocaust (when the Nazis did what was best for them), but strangely enough, it is still very much alive today, found behind all brutal conflicts...and in much of the modern way of life.

What is the Christian alternative to ethical relativism? The alternative, as I see it, is an ethics of relations, an ethical concept that concentrates on Life itself in all its forms. It starts from what is given. It seeks to develop, protect, and foster life wherever it is found in all its relations, and it accepts that there are some God-given and/or by Nature-given borders which are sacrosanct and which create ethical imperatives,

Bishop Erik (left) being presented with a life-time membership in the Anglican Lutheran Society by Anglican Co-President The Very Revd John Arnold.



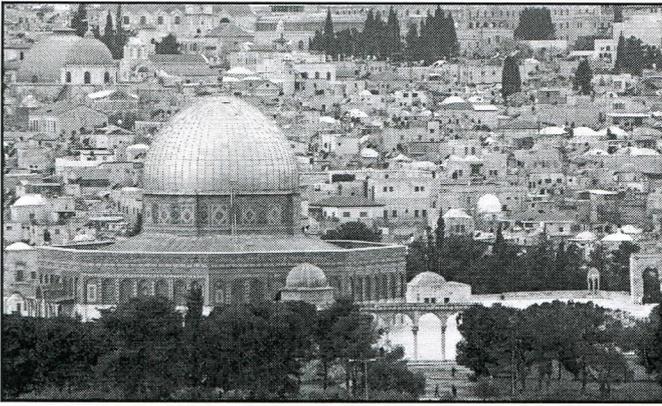
positive as well as negative, as we have them, for example, in the ten commandments. It is always imperative to show mercy and protect life; it is imperative to protect the weak and the sick; and, not least, it is imperative to respect the definitive border of death...

The main task for the Church in those boundary situations is now, as before, the proclamation of the Gospel by word and deed. The Gospel is the main reason for us to be there. As Taylor points out, we own the Gospel only by sharing it with the world. ...This also presupposes a clear identity and a clear sense of what you are and what you are not...

The main road forward is still, so to say, to draw water from your own wells. When each Church tradition does this with openness and faithfulness, the whole *oecumene* will be blessed.

...The following step is then to share what we have in common. We all have to come closer (in attitude) to the formative period of the apostolic time and the young Church — which was a Church living out the Gospel in constant border situations. The strategic superiority of the first Christianity was the lack of all strategy. The only thing the apostles and their followers knew was to preach and to proclaim the Gospel — always and everywhere. *Ends*

Visit www.anglican-lutheran-society.org



JERUSALEM BISHOP LONGS FOR AN AGREEMENT

The Society's Membership Secretary, Helen Harding, and Committee member Dick Lewis met Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan in Jerusalem in February.

Anglicans and Lutherans have a long record of working together in Jerusalem. A joint Bishopric was established there in 1841 with appointments from each tradition in rotation. The arrangement ended in 1887, partly because of an Anglican insistence that the Lutheran Bishop subscribe to the 39 Articles of Religion. Nevertheless, says Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan, Anglicans and Lutherans in Jerusalem have normally regarded each other as twin Churches.

However, because relationships between the two Churches have sometimes depend on the moods and interests of the current bishops, Bishop Munib would like to see a mutual recognition agreement in place.

'We already concelebrate, exchange pastors, lay on hands at each others ordinations and consecrations. But we need to get beyond the stage when it all depends on the mood of the bishop in post. We must involve the grass roots of the congregations. We need an agreement similar to Porvoo or Waterloo that will facilitate our mutual recognition.'

He regards this as a high priority. 'We are all a minority in this country, we Christians. Our witness is the same so what are we disagreeing upon? If we show our unity it's much stronger than when we show our disunity.'

Numerically the Christian presence in the Holy Land is very small, but the influential work undertaken by Lutherans and Anglicans in education, cultural and community development and inter-faith dialogues with Moslems and Jews is out of all proportion to their size.

Bishop Munib is proud of the way that our two Communion are working together for justice for the Middle East. 'A Church is a Church, not just in its numbers, nor in the large work it makes, but by it's living witness in our broken, globalized world,'

One of the major concerns of Christians in the Holy Land today is the reduction in their numbers due to emigration. 'It is difficult,' says Bishop Munib. 'You have to believe in your cause to stay here. Even then, when the odds are against you, it is not always possible.' He believes the only way Christians can be convinced to stay is for the world to be serious about justice in Jerusalem. 'And that is a long way off, unfortunately,' he says. 'I pray that God will wake up the conscience of the world's leaders'

What can Christians do to help and support Christian witness in the Holy Land? 'It is important they know we exist,' says the Bishop, and he repeated something that Christians throughout the Holy Land are saying. 'When you visit the Holy Land be sure you visit the local Christian congregations, worship with them and let them know you care for them as brothers and sisters. Most pilgrims come to the Land of Jesus and never meet one of his disciples here.'

Bishop Munib believes that Christians in the Holy Land need help in education and in reviving their spiritual life. 'Today people care and give money for development projects but hardly any funds for the spiritual work of the Church...Help us to have educational work with women, youth and children, and in-service training for teachers in the congregations. That will help spirituality to grow.'

Bishop Munib is certain that women have a significant role to play in the life of the Church in the Holy Land and the Churches are making a priority of educating and promoting the role of women. The Lutheran schools are all co-educational - and are run by women. Their ministry of giving hope in a hopeless situation is essential.

'Men often have failed to bring justice. Mothers perhaps can,' says Bishop Munib. 'Perhaps in dialogue with Moslem and Jewish women they can teach the men something. Perhaps women are more sensitive to the needs of 'the other' than men. Many women are traumatised because of the situation. Jewish, Christian and Moslem women can admit the pain of the other. Only then can they begin to build reconciliation. I give them full support.'

Bishop Munib remains optimistic. He is looking forward to working together with the new Anglican Bishop, The Rt Revd Suheil Dawani, to promote Anglican-Lutheran co-operation in Jerusalem and the Middle East.



Bishop Munib Younan (left) with Canon Dick Lewis in Jerusalem.

It is not often that we read views from the 'grass roots' in America about the current debate in the Anglican Communion. Here are some of those views from a local newspaper near Chicago, Illinois. Used with permission from:

W E D N E S D A Y
JOURNAL
of Oak Park and River Forest

Who do you say I am?

Episcopal priests discuss conflicts in their church
 By TOM HOLMES

Just before he died, former US President Gerald Ford expressed concern that his beloved Episcopal Church might be facing a schism. Ford, who was eulogized as a healer, was painfully aware of the conflict going on in the Episcopalian Church over sexual issues. Consider the following three recent developments:

Nine Episcopal churches in Virginia are planning to leave the Episcopal Church in the United States and come under the oversight of Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria, in part because of the consecration (in New Hampshire) of Gene Robinson, a gay priest, as bishop.

Archbishop Henry Luke Orombi of the Anglican Church of Uganda informed the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, that he and other bishops from dioceses south of the equator "cannot sit together with Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori" [the only woman archbishop in the Anglican Communion] at the Primates meeting that took place in Tanzania in February.

The Episcopal Church has threatened to begin litigation against congregations that try to take church property with them if they leave the denomination.

The cause of the controversies seems to be a conflict over issues of sexuality: First, when 11 women were ordained in Philadelphia in 1974; second when Gene Robinson – an openly gay man in a committed relationship – was consecrated a bishop in 2003; and third when Katharine Jefferts Schori was elected in 2004 as Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church USA.

Three Oak Park and River Forest Episcopal clergy, however, think there are even deeper fissures at work. Rev. Richard Emrich, for example, believes the underlying conflict is really over power. The "Mason-Dixon Line" (*ed: The 19thC boundary between slave and non-slave states*) for the Anglican Communion tends to be the equator, i.e.

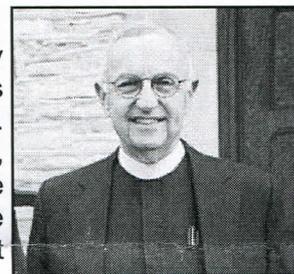
churches south of the equator tend to be more conservative while American and European churches are more liberal.

Nations north of the equator, meanwhile, have been the colonizers, while the peoples south of the equator have been the colonized. Money has tended to flow from north to south, principally from the US, and along with it, influence. That, said Emrich, who is the pastor of Christ Church in River Forest, makes people on the receiving end uncomfortable in the long run.

"Inevitably you have some ambitious people who come to power in the Third World branches of the Anglican Communion, and they've never had an opportunity to beat up on the Episcopal Church before," he said. "So when Bishop Robinson was consecrated, it gave them a wonderful opportunity to hammer the Episcopal Church. People like Bishop Akinola have seen the consecration of Bishop Robinson as an opportunity for getting power."

Identity crisis

"We see this very differently," said Rev. Paris Coffey, pastor of St. Christopher in Oak Park, "and we're in the same deanery, so you can see how difficult it is to talk about how the whole church sees the issue."



Rev Richard Emrich

Coffey believes that, at its core, the issue is identity. To explain, she told a personal story. When she was a teenager in a conservative Presbyterian church, she was "kicked out" of the congregation for arguing about the doctrine of predestination. When she tried out an Episcopal church, she discovered that "not only were the questions tolerated, they were welcomed and encouraged." She said, "My great love of the Anglican Church, since my introduction to it, was the great freedom for many diverse opinions to be held in one community, understanding that the gospel was larger than any single issue."

Rev. Shawn Schreiner, the Priest in Charge at Grace Episcopal in Oak Park, agrees with Coffey. "What's at stake is what it means to be an Anglican. For over 500 years, we have said that to be part of the Anglican Church, you can bring a lot of theological perspectives. The movement right now personally feels like they are trying to make us more of a confessional church."

What Schreiner means by a confessional church is a church built on the foundation of a statement or confession of what it believes. Coffey explained that, historically, theological agreement has not been the glue that held Anglicans together. "I've always said that if you want to know what we

believe, come and pray with us. What we hold in common is the Book of Common Prayer. No matter what Anglican church you go into, anywhere around the world, the language might be different, but you would recognize the [structure of the] liturgy."

All three priests agreed that many Anglicans south of the equator and conservatives here in the North are trying to replace the liturgy with a literal interpretation of the Bible as the test of what it means to be orthodox.

Tripod of faith

Emrich used the image – traditional for Anglicans – of a three-legged stool. The three legs that support the seat are Scripture, Tradition and Reason. While most Anglicans accept the authority of the Bible as God's Word, they interpret it according to the light provided by the church's tradition and reason - or experience.

Coffey explained that where she thinks conservatives are threatening Anglican identity is equating the authority of the Bible with the interpretation of it. She said she accepts the authority of Scripture just as much as Archbishop Akinola. What he seems to not understand is that loyalty to one interpretation of the Bible is not the same as accepting its authority.

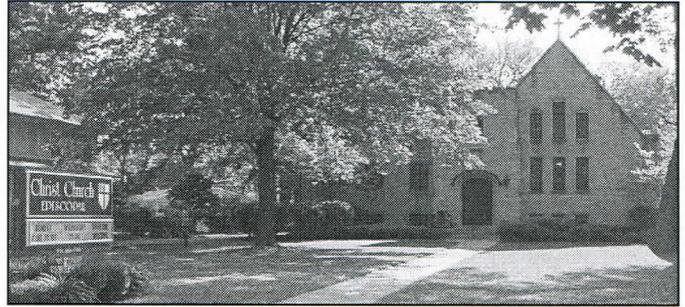
The problem with the three-legged stool is that at times some in the church will put more weight on one leg than on the other two. All three priests – Emrich, Coffey and Schreiner – agree that Archbishop Akinola and like-minded Anglican conservatives are putting too much weight on the leg of Scripture. The conservatives respond that the liberals have been putting too much weight on the leg of reason and tradition.

"From some perspectives," said Schreiner, "the Episcopal Church has gone too far in terms of women's ordination and the consecration of a bishop who is in a committed relationship. I'm a gay person in the church, and I feel like we didn't go far enough. Many of us feel like we bent over backwards [to accommodate the conservatives] even to the disadvantage and exclusion of gays and lesbians in the church."



Rev Shawn Schreiner

Schreiner also resists over-generalizing about the north/south division. She said many Africans are members of Grace where she serves, and they certainly know about her orientation. Schreiner's partner, who has contacts with Africans as a diocesan representative, warns about the danger of anyone speaking for the whole church and says there are a variety of views, even in Africa.



More important issues

Coffey worries that the intense focus on sexual issues is distracting the Anglican Communion from far more pressing problems. She puts lifestyle, money, energy, the environment, how we treat each other, the throw-away society, wastefulness, the growing inequality between rich and poor, homelessness, hunger, disease and health care above whether or not to consecrate a gay man as priorities for the Church.

Schreiner and Coffey conclude that the conflict in the Episcopal Church (and in the larger Anglican Communion) is grounded in the demand of conservatives that adherence to their understanding of truth be the test of who is an Anglican and who is not.

"Suddenly, it feels like we're trying to re-describe what it is to be an Anglican," said Schreiner. "For me the great fear is that it changes our identity. Having said that, if we were to be kicked out of the Anglican Communion, then so be it."

Likewise, Coffey asserted her commitment, standing firm for the truth as she sees it. "I'm proud of the Episcopal Church for the stand that it made at the convention, upholding the consecration of Bishop Robinson. I think it's a mistake to put the church above what God invites."

"The church," responded Emrich firmly, "is what God invites." Although he thinks history will probably show that ordaining women and consecrating Robinson were the right things to do, he also believes they were done prematurely and in the wrong way. "The church is more important than that," he said. "In its ancient wisdom, the wheels have always turned very slowly, and there's a reason for that. If you get ahead of the culture too far, it hurts the church."

Clearly the three priests are not always on the same page. Emrich is more conservative in his ecclesiastical thinking than Coffey and Schreiner, but is probably more liberal than his colleagues when it comes to the authority of the Bible. In spite of their differences – or perhaps because of them – the three seem to respect and even have affection for each other.

They say, in effect, "We're not always on the same page, but we are always in the same book: the Book of Common Prayer."

The Window

The purpose of this newsletter is to support each member 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.

www.anglican-lutheran-society.org

The Window© 2007
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SIGN UP NOW FOR THE CONFERENCE ASPECTS OF RECONCILIATION DUBLIN, SEPTEMBER 7–11

There is still time to register for the 2007 Dublin Conference of the Anglican Lutheran Society. With the need for reconciliation prevalent all over the world, the ALS has put together a team of presenters from Ireland, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States to share new ways to act as agents of reconciliation in an age of myriad divisions.

Held at All Hallows College, Dublin, the conference will introduce you to both the natural beauty and expertise in reconciliation that Ireland brings to the 21st Century. Members of the ALS can attend “Aspects of Reconciliation” for £280, including housing, meals, conference sessions and outings both in the Republic and Northern Ireland.

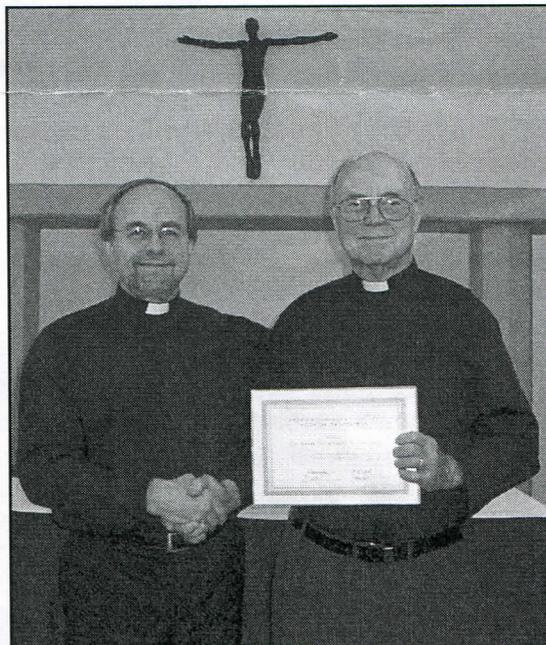
Book your place by the 2nd of June by contacting:

helen@ccwatford.u-net.com

or write: Dublin Conference, Christ Church Vicarage,
Leggatts Way, Watford, Herts, WD24 5NQ, UK.

HONORARY LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP FOR RON ENGLUND

On 6 March Ron Englund visited Co-Moderator Tom Bruch at the offices of the Lutheran Council of Great Britain. Tom used the opportunity to present Pastor Englund with a Certificate of Lifetime Membership in the ALS which the Executive Committee had approved at its meeting of 7 December 2006, in grateful recognition of his many years of dedicated support for the Society, including many years service both as a member of the Executive Committee and as the editor of *The Window*.



Pastor Tom Burch and Pastor Ron Englund

In the next issue of The Window:

A look at ecumenism in Germany – Lutheran, Reformed, and United Protestants look at their future with each other; A new German Vicar in Blackburn; Fresh Expressions of Church in England and What's new in Diocesan Links.