

THE WINDOW

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FOUR THOUSAND ATTEND INSTALLATION OF WORLD'S FIRST LUTHERAN WOMAN BISHOP

Some four thousand people attended the installation service of Maria Jepsen as the world's first Lutheran woman bishop, held in Hamburg, Germany, on August 30th. The installation was performed by the presiding bishop of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD), Landesbischof Gerhard Müller. Among the guests were over 300 clerics, including some 20 bishops from all over the world.

In her sermon, the new Bishop of Hamburg called for a "solidarity from below in which the marginalised become the measure of action." Bishop Jepsen, who serves in the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church, is responsible for 209 congregations, some 340 pastors and around 940,000 church members.

The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Dr Gunnar Staalsett, praised Bishop Jepsen's installation as "an epochal moment" for the world's Lutheran churches. Dr Staalsett said the election of women bishops was the necessary result of past decisions to ordain women pastors. "To be a woman pastor means in due consequence to be able to be promoted to the position of bishop". He added "We have come a long way." Dr Staalsett described the occasion as "cause for joy and thanksgiving."

The Roman Catholic Suffragan Bishop of Hamburg, Hans-Jochen Jaschke, spoke words of encouragement to Bishop Jepsen in her new office and looked forward to a continued "good, trustful" ecumenical relationship. In marked contrast, Vatican spokesperson Piero Pennacchini called the installation a "serious and high insurmountable obstacle on the path of ecumenism."

The North Elbian Church reacted sharply to the Vatican's criticism. The Church's spokesperson Hinrich Westphal said "The marginalisation of women contradicts the gospel." Not Bishop Jepsen but the present Pope has proven to be "the brake-shoe on Church unity," Westphal added. The North Elbian church's vice-president, Oberkirchenrat Gerd Heinrich, judged Pennacchini's remark to be "an unfriendly marginal comment which betrays much ignorance."

Bishop Jaschke described himself "surprised" at the critical words from the Vatican, according to his church's information

centre. He said, "In the ecumenical community we respect the decisions of other churches and continue to proceed along the path of honest, open consideration."

Maria Jepsen was voted the world's first Lutheran woman bishop in April. Since then the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has also elected a woman bishop. April Ulring Larson, 42, was chosen in June to be Bishop of the ELCA's LaCrosse Synod and thus the second Lutheran woman bishop worldwide. [LWI]

WOMAN PROPOSED AS FUTURE ARCHBISHOP OF WORLD'S LARGEST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Speculation about who will be the next archbishop in the Church of Sweden was heightened by the announcement of a woman candidate. The Friendship Association of Women Priests in the diocese of Uppsala has proposed the director of the Church of Sweden mission agency, Birgitta Larsson, to head the church when the present archbishop, Bertil Werkström, retires. Earlier this year, Archbishop Werkström announced his intention to step down in April 1993, two months before he reaches the official retirement age of 65 years.

The proposal, which came as a 'complete surprise' to Larsson, was welcomed by her 'as a provocation against the present order of affairs.' The fact that she is neither a theologian nor an ordained minister does not present a formal obstacle to her appointment as a bishop in Sweden. Consecration as bishop is also considered to be ordination to the priesthood for those not yet ordained in the Swedish church.

Larsson, who was appointed head of the Church of Sweden Mission in 1991, is at present the only candidate for the church's top ecclesiastical office. Archbishop Werkström's successor will be elected on October 15th, the outcome being subject to government approval. The 7.6-million-member Church of Sweden is the world's largest Lutheran church. Its Archbishop, first among equals in episcopal office, is the church's presiding officer. [LWI]

SOUTH AFRICAN ANGLICANS

VOTE TO ORDAIN WOMEN

The 2.4-million-member Anglican Church of the Province of Southern Africa voted on August 14th to ordain women to the priesthood. The action, approved by a 79% majority, followed four hours of debate. The church province encompasses Swaziland, Lesotho, South Africa and Namibia.

Of the 34 provinces and member churches in the worldwide Anglican Communion, 14 have ordained women to the priesthood, including the Episcopal Church in the USA and the Anglican Church in Canada. Australian Anglicans took preliminary steps earlier this year to ordain women priests. The Church of England will vote on the matter at its General Synod in November.

[LWI]

ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN DIALOGUE IN NORDIC AND BALTIC COUNTRIES PRODUCE DRAFT DOCUMENT

A series of meetings in Copenhagen, Denmark, between representatives of the Church of England and the Lutheran churches in the Nordic and Baltic countries has resulted in a draft document which will be considered at a further meeting soon. If approved by each of the churches involved, it could lead to the reciprocal recognition of the office of pastor.

Henrik Christiansen, former Bishop of Aalborg, stressed the importance of full recognition by the Anglican Church of the pastor's office in the Lutheran churches of Denmark and Norway, which in both cases is not in the tradition of 'apostolic succession' as understood in the Church of England. A final agreed document will be submitted to the decision-making bodies of the respective churches.

The dialogues came about at the instigation of the Church of England in 1988. They included three plenary meetings as well as a number of committee meetings. Similar talks between the Church of England and the Lutheran churches in the Nordic countries led to an agreement in 1957 which allowed members of the respective churches to participate in the Eucharist in each other's churches when staying in a place where this was not possible in their own church.

[LWI]

1993 SOCIETY CONFERENCE

The 1993 conference of the Anglican-Lutheran Society will take place on September 1st - 4th in Løgumkloster, Denmark.

Further details about the conference programme and registration will be included in a future issue of *The Window*.

INDEX TO ABBREVIATIONS

LWI	Lutheran World Information	L	The Lutheran
ACC	Anglican Consultative Council	CT	Church Times
AMM	Anglican Media Mailing	etd	edited
EPS	Ecumenical Press Service	ppd	paraphrased

The *Window* is sent quarterly to Members and Associate groups of the Anglican-Lutheran Society. Information about the Society and membership applications are available from the Secretary.

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SCHOLAR COUNSELS U. S. LUTHERAN CHURCH TO DELAY UNITY TALKS

A Lutheran scholar has proposed that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) postpone consideration of separate agreements that look toward close unity with the Episcopal Church and with the Reformed churches in the USA. "The worst possible scenario would be accepting one proposal and rejecting the other," Dr George Lindbeck, professor of historical theology at Yale Divinity School, told some 800 Lutherans at a conference in Northfield, Minnesota.

"Sizable groups would be alienated if the door were closed to the (historic) episcopacy, not because of special fondness for the Episcopal Church in this country, but because long-range hopes of rapprochement with the Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox would be dashed," Dr Lindbeck said. "Something similar would happen if historic episcopacy were approved and the agreement with the Reformed rejected, except that in this case the disaffected groups might be much larger."

Dr Lindbeck quoted Harding Meyer of the Strasbourg Institute of Ecumenical Studies as saying that the present Episcopal-Lutheran plan (concordat) in the USA comes perhaps too early. "Lutheran bishops are still a very young species (in America)," Dr Meyer was reported to have said. "The office and the way it is exercised and understood in its ecclesiological significance (and in) its teaching and pastoral functions is still not developed and has no agreed concept. It is still not fully received in the church and by the people. So leave the question open for some time. Only then in 10 years perhaps, such a significant step as joining the succession would have a better context."

Dr Lindbeck, long a member of the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue team, said there is also a theological case for postponement in the team's report, called "Facing Unity", which suggests seeking reunification from below instead of at the top. In the present ELCA situation, he said, this would involve working out arrangements whereby local judicatories such as synods, dioceses, presbyteries and parishes could scrutinise, approve and ordain each other's ministers. In order to make sure this process does not lead to division, it would have to proceed under the supervision and with the support of wider church bodies, he said, observing that this scheme "may sound utopian, but Vatican-appointed Roman Catholics helped devise it and claim it meets the exigencies of even present canon law."

Dr David Yeago, professor at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, speaking of the theological impasse that exists in the ELCA over the historic episcopate, called for "ecumenical pluralism" within the Lutheran fellowship. Ecumenical agreements would be implemented not at the churchwide but at the synodical level, he suggested. This would mean, he explained, that "local ELCA synods could be in different relationships to other church bodies without breaking fellowship with one another. Ecumenical proposals currently on the table, such as the Concordat with the Episcopalians... should be re-tooled if possible to fit this model."

Dr Joseph Burgess, pastor and former executive director of theological studies for the former Lutheran Council in the USA, questioned in another major address how much the ELCA would actually gain by seeking the historic episcopate. "We are already in pulpit and altar fellowship with (the Lutheran churches of) Sweden and Finland through the Lutheran World Federation," he pointed out. "If we were, for example, to take on the historic episcopate in the Anglican fashion, we would reach some level of reconciliation of ministries with part of the Anglican Communion - probably not all - and we would be able to change from observer to participant status in COCU (Consultation on Church Union).

"But neither Rome nor Constantinople recognise Anglican orders and in the light of Anglican ordination of women, it is unlikely that Rome or Constantinople will recognise Anglican orders," Dr Burgess said. "To take on the historic episcopate in Roman Catholic fashion, we would have to accept Papal primacy and infallibility, probably as uniates. To take on the historic episcopate in Orthodox fashion, we would have to become Orthodox. To take on the historic episcopate in Swedish fashion does not change the issue: Swedish orders are not accepted by Rome or Constantinople either."

"At this moment in history," Dr Burgess said, "the most important move for those who want Lutherans to adopt the historic episcopate would be to make sure that no Lutheran church installs a woman as bishop, for that would be a real barrier to reconciliation with the vast majority of those holding to the historic episcopate. They should also seek to reverse the ordination of women." In an interview later, Dr Burgess said he knew that Lutherans in Germany already had elected (but not yet installed) a woman as bishop. What he did not know was that two days later the first woman bishop would be elected by the ELCA - by its LaCrosse Area Synod.

[LWI]

The Anglican-Lutheran Society was established in 1984 with the following aims:

- * *to encourage a wider interest in and knowledge of our respective traditions and contemporary developments within them;*
- * *to develop opportunities for common worship, study, friendship and witness;*
- * *to pray for the unity of the Church, and especially between Anglicans and Lutherans.*

GERMAN LUTHERAN NAMED TO HEAD WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

A German theology professor who once called his involvement in the ecumenical movement "a kind of conversion" has been elected as the fifth general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Dr Konrad Raiser, 54, was elected on August 24th by the council's Central Committee to succeed Dr Emilio Castro as the agency's chief officer.

Dr Raiser received 86 votes in the balloting compared with 59 for Martin Conway, a lay member of the Church of England.

A professor of systematic theology at the Ruhr University in Bochum, Germany, and an ordained minister, Dr Raiser has served as assistant pastor in Württemberg and as industrial pastor in Berlin and in Stuttgart.

Dr Raiser is a strong advocate of grassroots ecumenism, believing that the greatest potential for ecumenical engagement lies at the local level. He has said "There are very few instances of genuine renewal in the Church where the initiative has come from above." He added, "Most of the formal agreements worked out in ecumenical dialogues ratify something that has grown up among the people."

Speaking shortly after his election, Dr Raiser said "The more I have been drawn into the ecumenical movement, the more I have come to respect and have been enriched by the gifts of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions."

He pointed to tensions between the Orthodox churches and some of the council's more liberal Protestant churches, saying it is "absolutely vital for the Orthodox churches to feel at home in the WCC and to recognise it as their fellowship, just as much as it is the fellowship of churches from the Reformation tradition." He also said the council must be open to fuller relations with churches that are not among the 320 denominations that belong to the council.

Dr Raiser first worked for the WCC in 1969, at the Faith and Order secretariat, which encourages theological dialogue among the churches. Four years later he was named deputy to General Secretary Philip Potter, a post he held until 1983, when he returned to teach theology and ecumenics in Germany.

[LWI]

ANGLICAN THEOLOGIAN TO RESEARCH RELIGION IN FORMER EAST GERMANY

The director of Coventry Cathedral's International Centre for Reconciliation, Canon Paul Oestreicher, has embarked on a one-year research programme at the theological faculty of the Free University of Berlin. With the help of a research scholarship from the Alexander von Humbolt Foundation, he will prepare a compendium on "State and Religion in East Germany 1945-1990".

Canon Oestreicher, an Anglican theologian and political scientist, was baptised as a Lutheran 60 years ago in Meiningen, Germany. Together with his parents he fled to New Zealand in 1939. For many years, Canon Oestreicher was Eastern Europe Secretary of the British Council of Churches. In that capacity he created close ties between Christians in the former German Democratic Republic and the United Kingdom.

As a leading member of the human rights organisation Amnesty International, Canon Oestreicher regularly pleaded for the liberation of political prisoners. He hopes that he will be able to do his research work with a certain objectivity, encouraging people to speak of those times. The experiences gained and the witness given by Christians in the former German Democratic Republic are of importance to the entire ecumenical world, he stressed.

[LWI]

"EUROPE'S NEW CRISIS"

A day conference for ministers and religious entitled Europe's New Crisis will be held from 10.30 -16.00 on October 29th 1992 at Bloomsbury Baptist Church, London. It will focus church attention on the UK presidency of the Council of Ministers and the coming into effect of the Single European Act on January 1st 1993. It is being organised by Christianity and the Future of Europe (CAFE) which is an ecumenical organisation with aims consistent with those of the Anglican-Lutheran Society. The cost of the conference, including lunch, is £5.

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