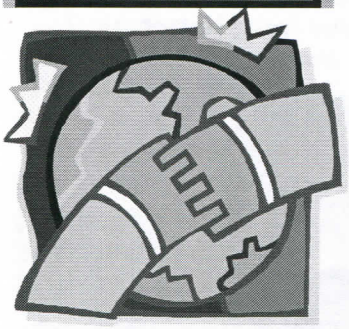
The Window

February 2008 | THE ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN SOCIETY | Issue no. 85

More news of ecumenical Exchanges

- In the September issue we reported that German Lutheran Pastors had been appointed as Team Vicars in a parish in Blackburn Diocese.
- Anglican Moderator, Rupert Hoare, asked members for further examples.
- Here are two. We would love to hear of more.



Annual Meeting

Saturday 8th March 2008 10.30am in St Matthew's Westminster

An opportunity to explore a little known aspect of our Lutheran heritage

Full details are enclosed with this issue of The Window

Move to turn Priest into Pfarrer

This month a Lancashire Vicar, the Revd Peter Ford, is moving to a three-year post in a Lutheran parish in North Germany.

Mr Ford, Vicar of St Paul's, Warton, is diocesan ecumenical officer for Blackburn. He does not speak German, but is undaunted by the prospect of living in a small village where the people speak no English.

He's been doing lessons for two hours a week, and hopes that a two-month crash course in both liturgical and social German will get him started.

"It'll be a steep learning curve, and they might be short sermons at first.... But we don't use a lot of technical words in preaching. The gospel is simple and direct, and it might even be clearer without complicated sentences."

Mr Ford is to work in the Flothe team ministry for three years in what he describes as "an historic appointment" under the Meissen Agreement.

Blackburn diocese is linked with the Lutheran diocese of Braunschweig. Two Lutheran pastors, the Revd Woldemar Flake, and his wife, Sabine, are already working in the Colne and Villages Team in east Lancashire

One church in the Flothe team has a congregation of five. German churches face similar issues to many Church of England parishes and are seeking to develop mission and growth in a secular society.

(First reported in the Church Times 9th November 2007)

Steps to a Growing Communion

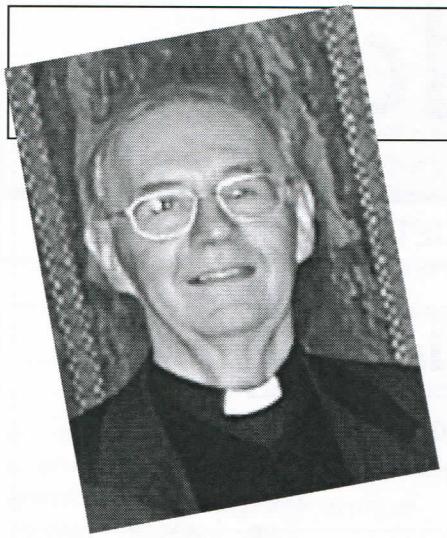
Society member Dirk Dempewolf on his experience as a Pfarrer working in England

The article about the German minister couple working in an Anglican parish in the September issue of *The Window (No 83)* describes a real step forward, whilst still taking the Meissen Papers seriously.

In 1999 my wife Sabine and I, from the Bavarian Lutheran Church, were asked to take the post of assistant Anglican Chaplains in the University of Bristol. We were funded and installed by the Diocese of Bristol under the ecumenical canon 43. When the University Chaplaincy became a Local Ecumenical Project (LEP) the bishop then reinstalled us under both canons and under the same regulations that are valid for the Braunschweig couple.

In 2002 Jutta and Martin Müller-Schnurr succeeded us. Jutta became senior Anglican Chaplain when her colleague left for Canada. Martin then became part time minister in a parish in Bristol diocese, which then was an LEP too. That was a step even further than a Chaplaincy post.

These projects are to me further steps to a growing communion without leaving the basis of agreements and our mutual church laws. I would want this to be possible with other churches too.



Can Spring be Far Behind?

John Arnold, Anglican President of the Society, sees signs of ecumenical hope

There has been talk recently of an ecumenical winter, but that is by no means the whole story or the most reliable forecast. If it is indeed winter, there are also signs of spring.

Last year, in April, I helped to arrange a weekend at Aylesford Priory near Rochester for ninety postgraduate students from the Theological Faculty of the Catholic University of Leuven/Louvain under the leadership of Professor Peter de Mey. They heard lectures from Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali on Anglicanism, Dr Mary Tanner on the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission and from myself on the Porvoo Agreement, which I offered as a model of 'communion', at least for episcopally ordered churches, 'for it offers a form of uniatism between equal partners, with no hint of dominance or subservience. It breathes the same spirit as the fine formula of the Malines conversations 1921-1925 (between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church in Belgium) "*unie, non absorbée*"' and of the noble words of Pope Paul VI at the Beatification of the English martyrs in 1970: 'There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican church when the Roman Catholic Church – this humble servant of the servants of God – is able to embrace her ever beloved Sister in the one authentic communion of the family of Christ…'

They visited a Local Ecumenical Project, to which they had mixed reactions; and they spent Sunday worshipping in Canterbury Cathedral, where their guide and mentor was Canon Clare Edwards, the first women priest most of them had ever met, to whom they responded wholly positively.

I was immensely impressed by their commitment to a rigorous, two-year MA course in Ecumenics. The very fact that the younger generation of Roman Catholic students is taking ecumenism so seriously is a challenge to Anglicans and Lutherans, and indeed to other Protestants, to match that level of engagement, discipleship and scholarship.

"Older and younger generations of scholars discuss the present and future of the Church"

Then from November 7th-10th I was the Faculty's guest at an international conference on ecumenical ecclesiology, which brought together the older and younger generations of scholars to discuss the present and future of the church. I noted the combination of evident frustration with their own church with absolute loyalty to it on the part of many participants. By the end, I felt that every legitimate criticism of the Roman Catholic Church, which Anglicans and Lutherans might wish to make, had been voiced by the Catholics themselves. I was able to respond, as a member of the final forum, that I had the impression that the Petrine principle, which had in the course of the centuries assumed such massive institutional form in the Church, was now being complemented from within by the Pauline principle, which both includes 'the care of all the churches' and also, when necessary, 'withstands Peter to his face.' Will the Pauline element prove strong enough to make any real difference? Or will it continue to be exercised only on the margins or from within separated churches?

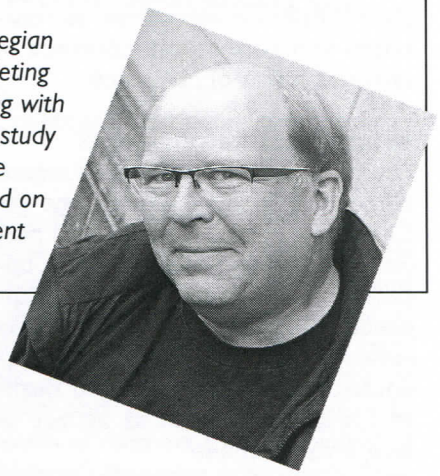
Over my desk in Canterbury hangs an icon of 'The reconciliation of Peter and Paul.' It records and illustrates a key moment in New Testament Christianity; and I contemplate it daily as a reminder that the reconciliation of these two saints and of the principles which they represent, is a current and recurrent necessity in the life of the church and the churches. It has happened in the past; it must be possible for it to happen in the future. As Shelley said, 'If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?'

Procession at Aylesford Priory

Christ
giver of life
who raised Lazarus from the dead
touch the dead, dark places of this world
with your resurrection

Revenge and Penitence in Conflict Resolution

As a young pastor Professor Paul Leer-Salvesen served as a prison chaplain in two Norwegian prisons. He then worked as a scholar in theology and a researcher in criminology, completing research projects on "The Ethics of Punishment" and "The Phenomenon of Guilt", starting with a series of interviews among Norwegian men convicted of homicide and continuing as a study of the phenomenon of forgiveness. This was the background to a paper he shared at the Society's International Conference in Dublin last September. The full paper can be found on the website. In this extract Paul points towards a theological understanding of punishment that does not have to depend on violence or retribution.



Retribution or healing

When we read the history of punishment and study different models of conflict solution, we find at least two different tracks. The first track is revenge, the theory and practice of retribution. In this universe the sin or the crime requires an answer of the same kind: blood for blood. The second track is penitence, the theory and practice of atonement as healing. In the first form of punishment, the offender is passive; he is an object for the evil he deserves to meet because of the crime. In the second form, the offender will always be active; he will be a subject in a process of doing good, an act of restoring.

It is astonishing that we seem to find these two different grammars of punishment side by side in very different cultural contexts. In the Hebrew Bible we find both of them: the teaching of revenge as a necessity, but also warning against revenge and retribution. The philosopher Seneca discusses the different models, and is a strong defender of mercy instead of retribution. Even today we find the two models side by side in our societies: good programs for restoring justice in some societies, and at the same time a renewal of the rhetoric of revenge in our wars against terrorism and organised crime.

The place of penitence

My thesis is the following: Revenge and retribution will never bring reconciliation. If reconciliation occurs in an environment of revenge, it is not because of the punishment, but in spite of the punishment. But still I think that some sort of punishment may be a way to reconciliation, but this punishment is a sort of mourning. It is repenting. It is penitence.

Both parties in a conflict needs repenting. The offender is always threatened by the possibility of being completely identified with what he has done. I heard this terrible possibility in many of my meetings with the murderers: Am I what I have done? Does my work, my crime tell the truth of who I am as a person? Repentance and penitence offer possibilities to show the surroundings and the victim that I am different, I am a good person too. Penitence may lay a distance between the crime and the person. Grief. The Easter-road from death to new life. The victim also needs the penitence: How can I trust him again? Penitence offers a possibility to rebuild trust.

Revenge and retribution will never bring reconciliation

Forgiveness and repentance

In the book "Explorations in Reconciliation", Joseph Liechty has some wise reflections in this direction. He says that the Christian tradition is "heavily weighted towards forgiving rather than repenting". He is right, and maybe we should add that the Reformation and the following centuries of protestant theology has utterly narrowed the possibilities for a good and creative practice of repenting in our western culture. The gospel of freedom by grace alone is maybe good theology, but it is a catastrophe for ethics, criminology and victimology. Parties in a conflict need practice, concrete deeds, results. An offender needs to deserve the grace coming from the victim-side. Joseph Liechty writes (page 61):

"However difficult, forgiving involves dealing with how we have been wronged, while repenting involves what most of us find more difficult, dealing with what we have done wrong. Moral maturity requires both. Healing of relationships, that is, reconciliation, whether personal or political, requires both."

Stages in repenting

Liechty refers to his work in groups in Northern Ireland and sums up the dynamics of repenting in five stages: acknowledging a wrong done, accepting responsibility, expressing remorse, changing attitudes and behaviour, and making restitution. Here we have got the alternative to punishment as retribution. Here we have also got the alternative to the naïve and dangerous "impunity". But what amazes me is that these five stages are nearly exactly the same as the stages in the institution of the confession from the Middle Age Church. And even more, if you study secular models of conflict resolution you will often find similar paintings of the process.

Punishment and theology

It is fascinating to experience how many of these grand themes are explored both in theology and in criminology and the theories of conflict resolution. In all three disciplines we ask whether justice is a

condition for reconciliation, and which form of justice: Revenge? Blood? Pain? Or atonement as reparation and restoration, concrete of symbolic forms of penitence.

What kind of atonement?
Let me take the most difficult examples of all from the theology: As Christians we believe that God reconciled mankind with himself because of Jesus Christ. But what happened? Did God demand a bloody revenge as a condition for the reconciliation? Or is the life and death of Christ to be seen as an act of love, an atonement?

You remember that Anselm of Canterbury formulated the alternatives in his Cur Deus Homo: How shall we understand the death of Christ, he asks: "Aut poena, aut satisfactio", and this alternative is to be translated: Revenge or penitence. Dear friends: we have got the same alternatives today when we talk about possible processes on the way to reconciliation.

Theology can be dangerous. Theology can deliver powerful legitimation for revenge and retribution. But theology can also deliver other options, in Imitatio Christi, really other options than the violent ones. As you know, this topic has been discussed by many theologians in recent years, inspired by the French scholar Rene Girard. A good example is Denny Weaver and his book about Nonviolent Atonement.

Penitence the way
How is a non-violent theology possible? How is a non-violent punishment possible?

My little draft for an answer is to point to one of the tracks in the history of punishment: Punishment doesn't need to be violent. It does not have to become revenge or retribution. In the Christian church we have a long experience with the Sacrament of Penitence. In this doctrine and in this practice, it is possible to find tools which are useful in our modern struggle for reconciliation without a painful punishment.

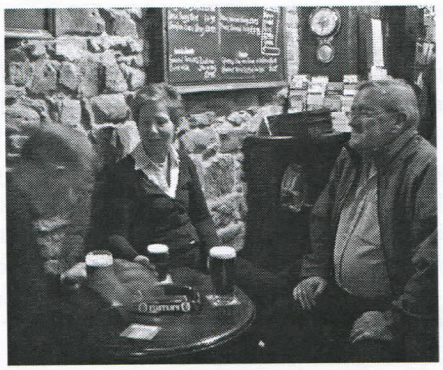
Going West ...

with our Norwegian Co-ordinator, Jacob Frode Knudsen

Lindisfarne Priory Ruins, Northumberland, England

In the year 793, our Norwegian ancestors, the Vikings, raided Lindisfarne Monastery, and the poor brothers had to flee. They took with them their dearly beloved leader's body, St. Cuthbert. For 200 years his remains were carried around, until they found their final resting place in what turns into Durham Cathedral.

Now we are a little group from Bergen Cathedral in Norway on our way to Lindisfarne, Holy Island. In Newcastle we meet another group from our twin cathedral, Southwark in London. Since we have quite some time in Newcastle, we are able to visit the impressive Durham Cathedral before boarding the train for Berwick-on-Tweed.



Jacob enjoys a welcome pint on Lindisfarne

Onboard the train we meet our friends from London, and joyfully we travel together to Holy Island. We spend three September days together, enjoying the fellowship in several ways: from praying and sharing the eucharist to sharing meals and sharing pints.

We learn more about the Celtic spirituality - the kind of Christianity that first reached the shores of Norway. We are all enriched by our common pilgrimage and realize that the Church is truly catholic; it knows no boundaries in time or space. And our friends are more than friends, they are our Christian brothers and sisters.

By Any Other Name...

Laura Lincoln explains the Society's change of identity in the USA

The United States branch of the Society is now called the **International Lutheran-Episcopal Society**.

***'International'** because (to my knowledge) ALS is the **only** organization enabling U.S. clergy and laity (not part of formal dialogue efforts) to meet other ecumenically-minded people across the globe. We need to stress that unique character.*

***'Episcopal'** because, since the election of Gene Robinson as bishop in 2004, the term 'Anglican', which was relatively unknown, vaguely suggesting something to do with England, has become associated with those in the Episcopal Church USA who protest that decision. Several dioceses have formally broken ties with ECUSA, taking on the 'Anglican' name, associating the term 'Episcopal' with unlawful and unfaithful practice. Suddenly 'Anglican' here in the U.S. does not bring to mind the worldwide Anglican Communion; it signals the rift in the Episcopal Church.*

***'Lutheran-Episcopal'** because the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America is in full communion with the ECUSA. We welcome all ecumenically-minded people of any faith, but our branch's focus is the grass-roots support of that full communion relationship. By any other name, we are people of faith struggling to find our way – together.*

But don't worry. We have not left our parent behind. Every time we use the name ILES, we also state that we are a branch of the Anglican-Lutheran Society.

Life Conquers Death : *Meditations on the Garden, the Cross, and the Tree of Life*

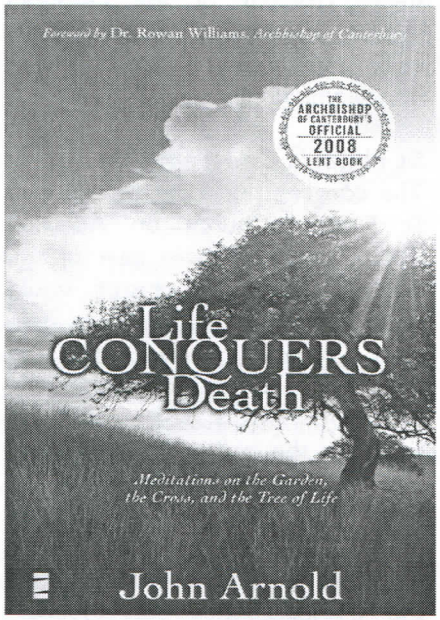
If you haven't chosen your Lent Book for 2008 this one, written by our Anglican President, might offer just the refreshment you are looking for. It is reviewed by Rupert Hoare.

This is the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book for 2008, and in his Foreword, Rowan Williams commends it to us as "a powerful statement of basic Christian hope". He asked John Arnold to write it after he had heard him give two retreats in which the Archbishop felt he had been "introduced afresh, with authority and profundity, to what was most central to our faith".

I concur with everything the Archbishop said! The Anglican Co-President of this Society has given us a superbly crafted series of meditations on the central themes of the faith. John deals with very familiar passages from the Bible, and as he does so, I found myself constantly surprised and delighted by the insights he was providing. Again and again, I had to go back to the biblical text to read it afresh and would end up saying to myself: "Oh yes! Of course! I had never thought of that!"

Don't be put off by the large chunk of the first Chapters of Genesis with which the book begins. You could think: I can skip that: I know all that. But read on to John's exposition and you will find yourself coming back to look at the text afresh. For example, I have never asked myself why the Lord was *wanting* to walk with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening. John says it was in order to teach them stage by stage the wisdom they would need, in order eventually to be able to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But they, like us, could not wait for wisdom!

John pulls no punches about the Fall, or the pervasiveness of the sin of the world; but quoting the first lines of Milton's Paradise Lost, he links it indissolubly with the story of



our redemption, and the birth of Christ. All the time, John is drawing deeply on the riches of the Christian tradition, Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox. He demonstrates a mind that has fed deeply, widely and thoughtfully both on the Bible and on the tradition, and that loves it all, and he enables us to catch his enthusiasm. From time to time he is autobiographical - in order to introduce us afresh to some of the great explorers of the things of the Spirit, whether in art (in particular Rembrandt), poetry or storytelling. A special love is Russian literature; we are introduced afresh to Pasternak and Solzhenitzyn (both steeped in the life of Russian Orthodoxy), and to the worlds they inhabit, worlds of terrible degradation and suffering in the era of Stalin's communism, but more importantly of indomitable human spirit: "life conquers death".

Those chapters are not an excursus into an enthusiasm of John's, but preparatory and integral to the thrust of the book, which is always towards the story of our redemption, the Passion and Death of Jesus. John leaves on one side technical New Testament discussion, simply takes the texts as they stand, and meditates on the story as it is shared by the four Gospel writers. He focuses on the last words of Jesus and those around him. In terms of method, I was reminded of Temple's Readings in St John's Gospel. Here was *lectio divina,* and our souls would benefit from treating it as such. For me, fresh insights abound: for example, read his meditation on the words: "I thirst" - and be refreshed. Or his account of Mary Magdalene's history and encounter with the risen Christ, or his exposition of the meaning of the attribute given to Judas: "son of destruction". You will catch John's enthusiasm for the story of our redemption, and his own love of Jesus Christ, and of those who encountered him.

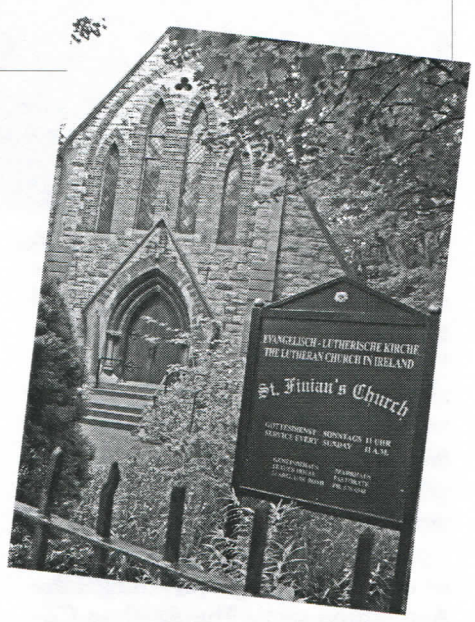
The book starts with Genesis, and ends appropriately with Revelation, and the need to give hope pride of place in today's lost world. On the basis of the faith, John looks for a new "garden city" in which the love of God and the love of justice go hand in hand, and a proper balance is found between individual person and community. At this point I would ask John whether he knows and can expound for us today's Russian novelists, and their account of "life conquering death" amidst the all-encompassing tentacles of a ruthless capitalism...

But that's for another day: for this Lent and Holy Week get hold of this book; live with it, pray with it, explore with it, use it as *lectio divina,* and be refreshed.

***Life Conquers Death**: Meditations on the Garden, the Cross, and the Tree of Life, by* John Arnold is published by: Zondervan 2007 £8.99; $14.99

Lutherans in Ireland Look to the Future

Roy Long, a Lutheran Pastor in England, on the role of St Finian's Church in Dublin



Almost eleven years ago, on the St Patrick's Day weekend of 1997, Lutherans from all over Ireland gathered together in Dublin with ecumenical guests from at home and abroad to celebrate the three hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the city's Lutheran congregation. Now the centre for a flourishing community both south and north of the border, this congregation in Dublin is a small, but important, part of the Irish ecumenical scene, and of the world-wide Lutheran family.

Lutherans in Ireland

Founded in 1697 after William of Orange's campaigns in Ireland, the congregation originally ministered, among others, to demobilised German soldiers, and eventually dedicated its own church in Poolbeg Street in 1725. The original church fell into disuse in the middle of the nineteenth century, and its site is now occupied by an office block. This, in itself, mirrors the history of the congregation, which, after flourishing throughout the eighteenth century, disappeared until the period after the Second World War, when visiting pastors from Great Britain travelled to Dublin to conduct services for the growing German-speaking community in the capital. By the mid-1950s a congregational structure had been put in place and on 17 April 1955 Pastor H D Mittorp was installed by the then President of the Lutheran World Federation, Bishop Hans Lilje, to be the first pastor of the re-born community.

Corinna Diestelkamp (4th from left) with ALS Conference members in Dublin

St Finian's Congregation

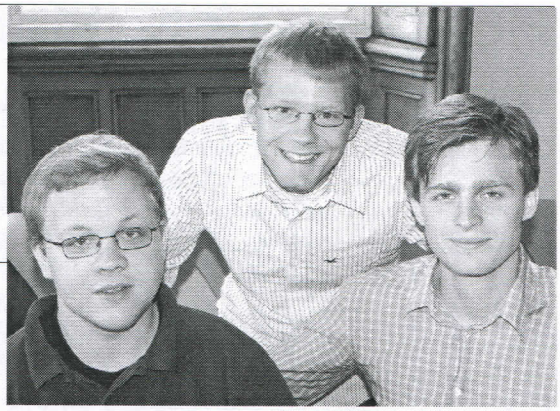
The congregation now worships in St Finian's Church on Adelaide Road in the southern part of the city. This beautiful church would merit a magazine article in its own right. Although it now legally belongs to the Church of Ireland (the Lutherans have a ninety-nine year lease on the building), the church was originally built by the Catholic Apostolic Church in the latter part of the 19th century. The Catholic Apostolic Church, sometimes called the "Irvingites" after their founder, Edward Irving, a Church of Scotland minister who was excommunicated for teaching that Christ's humanity was sinful, was one of a number of adventist and millenarian groups that flourished in the nineteenth century. Unlike the others, the Irvingites placed great stress on the liturgy, so St Finian's was exactly the right sort of building for Lutheran worship. After extensive refurbishment, it was rededicated for Lutheran worship on 21 May 1961, and, together with the next-door *Lutherhaus*, providing a parsonage and meeting rooms, it is now the spiritual centre for *An Eaglais Liútarach in Éirinn*, the Lutheran Church in Ireland.

A quick look at the *Gemeindebrief* gives a picture of how the congregation's ministry reflects both its history and the challenges that are now facing it. German remains the main language, and apart from weekly services in St Finian's, one of which is in English, and a monthly service in Belfast, there are also occasional services in such widely spread places as Cork, Galway, Kerry, Killarney, Limerick, Mullingar, and Wexford. The present pastors, Corinna and Joachim Diestelkamp, who have been in post since the Autumn of 2006, know only too well what it means to be travellers in the Gospel!

But with its burgeoning economy, Ireland is now becoming home for thousands of immigrants from Europe and further afield, many of whom are Lutheran. St. Finian's now hears other languages besides German and English: the Lutheran Church in Latvia has sent a pastor to Dublin, and he holds weekly services; there is an Estonian deacon working in the city; a Lutheran pastor from Poland flies in once every six weeks to conduct services, and there are occasional services in Finnish and Swedish. Altogether, it is an exciting time for the Lutheran Church in Ireland as it explores how it can work together to minister effectively to these growing communities, and give a common Lutheran witness on the ecumenical scene.

Reflections on Reconciliation

The Society offers bursaries to students in theological faculties, colleges and seminaries to enable them to attend our international conferences. Last September Gretar Halldor Gunnarsson, Haraldur Hreinsson & Jon Omar Gunnarsson, all from Iceland, shared the bursaries and here are their impressions of the conference in Dublin



On a Reykjavik Wednesday morning three Icelandic theological students embarked on a journey to the Emerald Isle. After a two night stopover in London, where we emptied several SPCK bookshelves, we arrived at All Hallows College, Dublin, where a warm welcome awaited us from our new friends in the Anglican-Lutheran Society.

Gillian Kingston's opening address [*reported in the last issue and available on the website*] gave an interesting insight into Ireland, its people and culture. We were amazed by the similarities in the Icelandic and Irish ways of thinking.

At dinner that evening we engaged in interesting and enlightening discussions. In our opinion these conversations were among the highlights of the conference. It is extremely important to learn from each other and especially enriching for us (being the youngest conference participants) to learn from those wiser and more experienced.

We attended many insightful lectures on the theme 'Aspects of Reconciliation', each lecture complimenting the next. Rupert Hoare's Bible study on Matthew 18.15-20 [*see page 8*] opened to us a new perspective on reconciliation, giving guiding principles on how the Church can be the kind of reconciling community it was intended to be.

Michael Trice's lecture was stimulating, offering enriching philosophical and theological insights into conflict and cruelty. His discussion of the harm of the cruelty of conflict was, in our opinion, very important. Paul Leer-Salvesen's lecture introduced us to his research into the healing power of forgiveness [*see page 3*] from the viewpoint of a theologian with experience and as a Norwegian prison chaplain.

'The Church has an important role on the path to peace and reconciliation in our torn world'

David Toombs' introduction to the Irish School of Ecumenics and its work in the field of reconciliation was especially interesting for us due to our course work on the Ethics of Peace and War at the University of Iceland's Department of Theology .

But it was our trip to Armagh in Northern-Ireland that was especially thought provoking. As we grew up, like many others we experienced through the media the conflict in Northern Ireland. It was inspiring to experience a peaceful Northern Ireland and to witness reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics. But driving through Armagh, the barricaded police station was a startling reminder of what was and will hopefully never be again. That day we learned that it is not an easy task to heal the hurt that years of conflict have caused. The church has an important role on the path to peace and reconciliation in our torn world. Its message of love, peace and forgiveness changes people's hearts and that is what is needed for a better world.

We feel we have learned a great deal from the conference. We are immensely grateful for the opportunity to participate in the work of the Anglican-Lutheran Society, and especially for new friendships with brothers and sisters from the Anglican and Lutheran communions. This was our first Anglican-Lutheran Society conference and hopefully not our last.

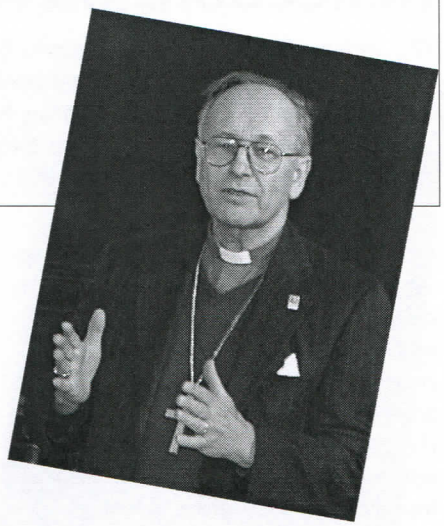
Time to Rekindle Commission's Work in Africa

'Now is the time to re-kindle the work of this Commission,' said the Rt Revd Musonda Mwamba, Bishop of Botswana, at the first meeting of the All Africa Anglican-Lutheran Commission since 2001, held 12th -14th December 2007, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The goal is to seek a relationship of full communion between African churches belonging to the Anglican Communion and The Lutheran World Federation. Dr Ishmael Noko (General Secretary of LWF) has proposed steps that might facilitate this process: mapping current relationships; analyzing the contexts; taking account of the changing ecumenical landscape; developing common projects; and giving responses to historically divisive issues.

The Commission hopes for a joint regional meeting of Anglican and Lutheran bishops in 2009. Meanwhile, sub-regional groups from all areas of church life, including youth, women, and theologians, will be set up to engage in theological reflection. Stories of local ecumenical co-operation will be told and heard. All this will encourage a proposal for full communion to emerge from the life of these communities in Africa. (*Anglican Communion News Service*)

How Serious is this Business of Reconciliation for the Followers of Jesus?

Canon Flora Winfield, was unable to attend the Society's Conference in Dublin last September. So as part of a 'Do-it-Yourself' session by conference members, our Anglican Moderator, Rupert Hoare, led this Bible study illustrating an approach introduced to him by Professor Chris Rowland



Matthew 18.15-17

15. "If another member of the church (lit. 'your brother') sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. 16. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or tree witnesses. 17. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church: and if the offender (lit. 'he/she') refuses even to listen to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."

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A lesson in conflict resolution

The crux is how to interpret the final sentence (verse 17b). What are the limits, if there are any, to the attempts at reconciliation ('conflict resolution')? We are to start on a purely personal level: just the two concerned alone: a personal appeal, or even confrontation; we are to "go and point out the fault", with no one else present (verse 15).

If we are not listened to, we are to go and get two or three witnesses (whether of the original incident, or of the attempt at reconciliation is not completely clear), in order to try to get matters put right (verse 16). That would be in line with Deuteronomy 19.15 "only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained".

If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church: the 'ecclesia', the body of those "called out" (verse 17a). Note that it is almost impossible for us not to think of 'church' in terms of our own experience of church now; if Jesus used (the Aramaic equivalent of) this term, what did he mean by it? Whom had he 'called out' by this point in his ministry?

If the offender refuses to listen to the church, ***let him (or her) be as a Gentile or Tax Collector*** (verse 17b). Most of us have interpreted that as implying: Have done with him! Throw her out! Have nothing to do with such a person! Or, in more measured and truly 'reasonable' terms, there does come a point, doesn't there, at which one is bound to say, 'There is nothing more I can do... I have done everything I possibly could....Enough is enough'. That, I think, is how the church has interpreted the passage down the ages, and certainly I did.

Can Matthew possibly intend us to understand that to treat someone as a Gentile or tax collector means throwing them out?

But what did Matthew - himself a tax collector who had been called into the ecclesia - intend by recording this teaching, and at this point in his story? How did Jesus himself relate to Gentiles and tax collectors?

Jesus, Gentiles and tax collectors

Right at the beginning Matthew told the story of some Gentiles paying allegiance to Jesus, in the figures of the Wise Men (2.1ff). Later he described the healing of the centurion's servant (8.5-13) and recorded Jesus prophesying that many would come from east and west to eat in the Kingdom, while the heirs would be thrown into outer darkness. Then he recounted his own summons to follow Jesus, from the very seat of tax collection (9.9), and then how Jesus healed the Canaanite woman's daughter (15.21-28). And immediately after the passage under discussion, Matthew records Jesus' saying that when two agree on earth what they ask for will be granted them, and he follows that with the famous discussion with Peter, who is told that he should forgive his brother not seven times, but seventy times seven (18.19ff).

Conflict resolution has no limits

So, in the light of all that Matthew has already told us of Jesus' dealings with Gentiles and Tax collectors, how could he possibly intend us to understand that to treat someone as a Gentile or tax collector means throwing them out?

Surely he intends us to hear Jesus saying: treat an offender with the same love that you have seen me show Gentiles and tax collectors. For, in the Kingdom, Gentiles and tax collectors are ***in***, not ***out***! And if we in the church are to be an instrument of the Kingdom, how can we possibly ever give up on anyone?

There is no limit to working for reconciliation. We are to go on and on trying. Anything else is a denial of the Kingdom Jesus came to bring. Keep on keeping on!

England set for Changes?

Treasurer, Guy Smith, on the possibilities a change of Prime Minister might offer

The arrival of Gordon Brown as Prime Minister has brought some proposals for changes to the way appointments are made to high office in the Church of England. Up till now, the diocesan vacancy committee has sent possible names to the Crown Appointments Commission, who then sent names to the Prime Minister's office and secretary, who in turn sent two names to the Queen, with the proviso that the first one would be chosen. The only Prime Minister who did not obey this rule was Margaret Thatcher!

Mr Brown has decided that he wants no part in the process, and will only be a letter box to the Queen! So the process could work like this. The diocese would send names to the Commission, who would then give the Prime Minister only ONE name. He would not say whether he considered the person suitable or not, but would send the name on to the Queen. In this way the diocese would certainly have more say than in the past, but the Queen would still act as Supreme Governor of the Church. Since 1534 a suffragan (assistant) bishop of a diocese has been nominated by the diocesan bishop, but the rule says there must be two names sent in; now it is suggested that only one should be sent. So that's another slight loosening of the ties between church and state.

If the Church was willing to be adventurous, it could be possible at diocesan level, one thinks, to have at least the semblance of an election for diocesan and suffragan bishops (and for deans of cathedrals as well). It might work like this, though it would not have any legal status. Nominations could be sought by the diocese, and an electoral college formed comprising clergy and laity, representing a cross section of the diocese. When the election was held, perhaps the three names with the highest number of votes would be forwarded to the Crown Commission. Then at least one of the people preferred by the diocese would actually be appointed!

Whether this will happen is debatable, but there is at last a bit of room for manoeuvre at local level. It is hoped that dioceses might make an attempt to be adventurous. If it worked, it might lead to even greater things !

The Society does not hold any particular views on how church appointments should be made. We are always interested to hear from our members about how things are done in their Churches - and what might be done differently!

Bergen Bishop Visits Anglican Congregation

Jacob Frode Knudsen reports

The Porvoo agreement has been really effective in opening new doors in the Anglican – Lutheran context. Church communities can often find 'strangers' in their midst.

One Sunday last September the Bishop of Bergen, The Rt. Revd Ole D. Hagesæther, made a visit to the Anglican congregation that worships in the town. We shared our common objectives in a good discussion.

Most importantly of all, we also shared fellowship, at the Lords Supper and the following social hour.

Then What Happens?

asks USA Co-ordinator Laura Lincoln

Sometimes it seems as if an amicable peace and quiet is the primary thing to come out of the years of study, struggle, and negotiation that go into achieving denominational ecumenical agreements. Where is the changed behavior, the new and visible witness of that hard-fought-for ecumenism?

I suspect that part of the reality is that the ecumenical challenge is first attitudinal. Changed understandings of the role of bishops or the meaning of justification may not show. If we talk together, you'll hear my new thoughts, but otherwise, there is no visible identifier.

Need seems to be the motivator for change at the congregational level. If my congregation can't afford to hire the help needed we begin to look for partners. Ecumenism opens the options by including people we could not have worked with in this way before. In that respect, new life can come to programs and communities through inviting in partners with different ideas and practices.

But surely helping a struggling Christian infrastructure to patch up its personnel or financial difficulties is not what is meant to lie at the heart of the ecumenical vision.

I am currently working on a booklet and a companion web site to encourage grass-roots ecumenism between members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and the United Methodist Church. They will model best practice, helping people to think and act in new ways as these two denominations grow into a new long-term relationship.

What has worked in your experience... and what hasn't? What are your "best practices" for living ecumenism at the personal level? I invite you to share your thoughts on your Anglican-Lutheran experience via future issues of The Window, or by emailing me at als-usa@att.net.

The Window

The purpose of this newsletter is to support 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

www.anglican-lutheran-society.org.uk

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The Anglican-Lutheran Society

30 Thanet Street, London WC1H 9QH

Tel: +44 (0) 207 554 2900

Email: ALS@lutheran.org.uk

Patrons

The Archbishop of Canterbury

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Observer Members

The Rev Jochen Dallas - Lutheran

The Rev Patrick Irwin - Anglican

The Rev Fr Phillip Swingler - Roman Catholic

National Co-ordinators

The Rev Ulla Monberg, Denmark

ullamonberg@msn.com

The Rev Dr Jaakka Rusama, Finland

jaakko.rusama@abo.fi

The Rev Holger Harrack, Germany

Holger@Harrack.com

The Rev Bjarni Bjarnason, Iceland

The Rev Jacob Knudsen, Norway

jacob.frode.knudsen@bkf.no

Mrs Gunnel Borgegård, Sweden

gunnel.borgegard@skr.org

Mrs Laura Vaught Lincoln, USA

laura.lincoln@att.net

Editor - The Window

The Rev Canon Dick Lewis (temporary)

Tel: +44 (0) 1923 672240

Email : angluthwindow@hotmail.com

A Church Welcoming Adults?

Paul Cobb, a Reader in the Diocese of St Albans in the Church of England, writes about a recent Conference held in the Diocese of Linköping, Sweden

Between 18th –21st October, 2007 representatives of the Dioceses of Strängnäs, Sweden, Tammerfors in Finland, Thüringen, Germany, the Southern Diocese of Hungary, Linköping and St Albans in England gathered at Vadstena, a town with a rich heritage. It is a centre of learning and pilgrimage and we met in a beautiful lakeside setting. So the conference offered a profound spiritual experience as well as an important time of fellowship, deepening friendship and learning together.

We considered the social trends in our countries, the problems and opportunities these represent, and local initiatives to welcome new people to our churches. We benefited from challenging input from Bishops Martin Lind (Linköping) and Hans-Erik Nordin (Strängnäs), and from the opportunity to share resources and ideas.

The Swedish contribution focused on the Adult Catechumenate. Seekers are formed into small house groups with several 'sponsors' drawn from the local Church. The Pastor and a chaplain are attached to the group, but are not integral. The seekers raise issues that are addressed in discussion, but there is no structured teaching. It is a very 'low-threshold' entry into the Church, and is proving popular and successful.

The Finnish delegation talked of a multi-pronged approach. The Church sets up groups for men, women, young couples, young parents according to need. The result is a small (1-2%) growth in Church members. The men's groups strongly emphasise work. Men are perceived as becoming isolated in society, a survey showing that a majority of men had only one friend or none. The social consequences include high levels of depression and alcoholism. Men are attracted to groups that are practical, involving manual work, where tangible results can be achieved. Despite the cultural-specificity of chopping logs together in the forest before a communal sauna and a plunge into the lake through the ice, there was much that was applicable to our situation wherever we came from.

The Eastern Europeans are faced by many problems arising from the relative newness of their democratic systems and the social tensions in their developing economies. Churches follow a rich social agenda, becoming involved in educational projects aimed at helping people into employment. Sharing of personal stories is still difficult following the long period under régimes when it was unwise to share personal opinions. This makes the building of a Church community a sensitive task.

St Albans presented a cyclical model based on the stages of *Belonging*, *Growing* and *Serving*. We offered approaches for drawing people into the fellowship of a Church community, helping them to grow in knowledge and faith and then encouraging them to develop their ministry to build up the community.

The meeting ended with Mass at Linköping Cathedral, after we had been entertained the previous evening by the Dean of Vadstena, Torbjörn Ahlund. Everyone played their part in making this a wonderful evening of fellowship. The lasting impression with which we returned is that we should all be working harder to engage men in the life of the Church.