

The Window

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THE ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN SOCIETY

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We hope you enjoy
this issue of your
Newsletter.

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THE CONFERENCE IN EDINBURGH 2024 A WHISTLE-STOP TOUR

Photos by Helen Harding

Friday 13th September

Throughout the day people were arriving, some from the airport, some from the railway station, some by bus and coach. The weather was wonderful as they made their way down Princes Street towards St John's Episcopal Church, nestling just below Edinburgh Castle which dominates that part of the city.



Most had been able to check-in at the hotel almost opposite the church, many were dressed in winter clothes as you can see. We'd all been warned that it was likely to be cold and damp. It wasn't! Throughout the conference the sun shone.

Registration was efficient, hot and cold drinks were served and on the dot of 5pm we were welcomed to St John's by Dr David Bagnall, the Associate Rector. Our Anglican Moderator, Bishop Paul Ferguson, then welcomed our first speaker. **Canon Dr Emsley Nimmo**, pictured here, is a Glaswegian now living in Aberdeen. He gave a lively presentation he'd entitled '**Pebbles in the Loch; A Jig through Scottish Church history with some reference to Church and State.**' You can find a summary on **page 6** and his full text via the website.



His address was followed by **Lutheran Vespers** led by Joseph Nelson, and perhaps this is the moment to say that **the worship** throughout the conference was beautifully designed and presented and everyone appreciated having separate service sheets for each occasion. Thank you to our Conference Chaplain, Helen Harding, and to all who prepared and took part in the services.



After a delightful **buffet meal** some of the staff and members of **The Iona Community** told us a little about the Community, shared some of their personal stories, and then treated us all to **A Wee Sing**, and it was wonderful to watch them teaching new songs to our Anglican and Lutheran members who, after a slow start, joined in with great enthusiasm. The Community members closed our first evening with prayers.



Saturday 14th September

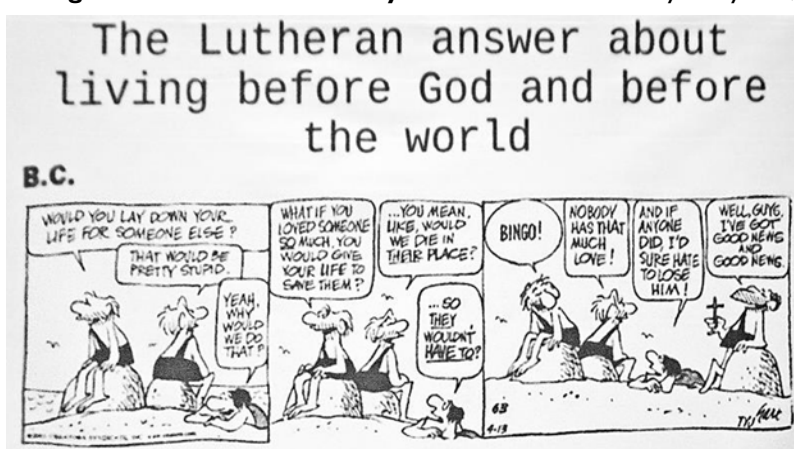
Breakfast was taken in the hotel and by 9am everyone had gathered in the conference centre. This is a new addition to St John's Church and is light, spacious and warm – too warm sometimes! It is very well equipped, with a lift connecting all floors, a lovely café in the basement and a delightful walled garden.

Our worship was sometimes in the hall, shown here, and sometimes in the church itself, which is a magnificent building. This morning started in the hall with **Anglican Morning Prayer**, led by Josh Peckett.



After that our second session began, and Dr Richard Stephenson introduced **The Rt Rev George Samiec**, a native of Australia who now lives in England where he is Chairman of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in England. The title of his presentation was **'What Luther's Theology of the Two Kingdoms has to Offer Today'**. This was another very lively talk, full of humour, and it is summarised (but without very much humour!) on **page 8**. His text, and all our presenters' texts, can

to be found on the website. This is just one of the slides he used to illustrate his talk.



After a coffee break we reassembled for our next session. Dr David Bagnall introduced our speaker, **The Rev Prof Dr Merete Thomassen** from Oslo University. She



spoke about the effect of secularisation on intercessory prayer in the liturgy when offered by lay people. Her title was **'Prayers in New Culture: Divergent Impact of Secularisation in Liturgical Renewal'**. A summary of her presentation is on **page 10**.

Everyone enjoyed a **Buffet Lunch** in the conference centre and then set off on a free afternoon to explore the city. Edinburgh has so much to offer, and all just a short distance from the church. Art Gallery, Museum, formal gardens, The Scott Memorial and much more were all within easy walking distance and frequent buses and trams can take you further afield.

At 5pm it was back to the conference hall for our next session and the Ven Christine Allsopp introduced someone who really needed no introduction, our Anglican Moderator, **Bishop Paul Ferguson**. His talk was **'The Establishment of the Church of England – Help and Hindrance?'** and you can read a summary on page 11. Along with his many other accomplishments, Paul is a very fine organist and we made very good use of him throughout the conference. He accompanied our worship



on the piano in the hall and the organ in church. So after his presentation was ended he quickly changed hats and mounted the organ seat. People had been asked to nominate favourite hymns for a **Celebration of Traditional Hymnody** in the church. As well as the hymns we rehearsed the congregational parts ready for the Common Service Liturgy with which we would end the conference. We stopped singing at 7.30 and the rest of the evening was free.



If you visit YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JgVM2F9O4I&list=PL25VGM2PKRc9YRXq2iU4QI-oSN8gS9Wtj> Richard Stephenson says you will find 50 Lutheran hymns complete with all the words. So if you feel you have missed out you can join in karaoke-style. Something for a rainy day, perhaps?

Sunday 15th September

After breakfast we spent the whole morning in St John's Church enjoying **Choral Matins** and a **Sung Eucharist** according to the Scottish Episcopal Rite. This was one of the high spots in our time together. St John's has a very fine choir and the services were beautifully presented with plenty of congregational participation. At the Eucharist our Anglican President Bishop David Hamid, preached and his sermon is summarised on **page 24**. After the services were over we were able to meet the congregation over refreshments and we were made very welcome indeed. We then dispersed to find our own snack lunch (we knew we were getting a special meal in the evening!).

At 2.15pm we gathered in St Giles Cathedral in the Old Town. There a guide named Robin had reserved a section of the building for us and he told the story of the High Kirk, as it is called, and how it became a church of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in the Reformation times. He then led us round the building and (below) here we are in the Thistle Chapel.



The Thistle is the greatest Order of Chivalry in Scotland. The Monarch appoints Knights and Ladies who have made significant contributions to national life.



Then at 5pm, back at St John's, **The Rev Sigrid Marten**, one of the Ministers at St Giles gave a short talk entitled '**Glory to God in the High Street**' in which she described the High Kirk's special place in Edinburgh's life and in the civic community and the Scottish Parliament. She then joined us for a wonderful **Scottish Meal** of, you've guessed it, Haggis, Neeps and Tatties! The desserts were delicious too!

The day ended with a very special presentation entitled '**Your Will be Done, on Earth as in Heaven: The Prophetic Church in Polarising Public Space**' by **Dr Kathryn Lohre** from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America where she is Executive for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations and Theological Discernment in the Office of the Presiding Bishop. Again, you will find a summary of her address on **page 13**, but you really should go to the website and read it in full. Kathryn had to leave us on the Monday morning because she'd been called back to attend a meeting in Korea, but she had enjoyed her visit to Edinburgh, a place she had long wanted to visit, and had managed a tour of the Royal Yacht Britannia during her short stay!

It had been a full and busy day and the programme ended at 8.45pm so there was plenty of time for people to visit their newly discovered watering holes – or, if they preferred, to return to the hotel and their bed!



Monday 16th September

At 9am we were back in the Hall for **Lutheran Morning Worship** led by Sven Groeger. It seemed hardly possible that we'd reached the last full day of our conference!

Then Bishop David Hamid introduced our next speaker, **The Rev Canon Prof Dr Charlotte Methuen** of Glasgow University. Her presentation was entitled '**State and Territorial Churches: Comparative Reflections**'. It is summarised on **page 15** and is available in full on the website.

She made a clear distinction between 'Territorial Churches' and 'State Churches' and reviewed Nordic and Baltic Churches and their varying relationships to the secular authorities before turning our attention to England and Scotland.



After a coffee break it was time for Tom Bruch to introduce our next two speakers, **The Rev Dr Jaakko Rusama**, our Lutheran Moderator, and **The Rev Dr David Bagnall**, our host at St John's. They had both been asked to share with us '**Some Perplexing Issues in our Two Churches**'.

Jaakko began, describing the present state of the Christian community in Finland, and in his own Church, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church. His presentation is summarised on **page 18**.



Then it was David's turn. He had chosen to focus on one issue, the misunderstandings between Churches concerning homosexuality. He titled his talk enigmatically '**Let's Disagree to Agree**'. It was a presentation full of surprises and it is summarised on **page 19**.

Both these talks are available in full on the website., of course.

Midday arrived and everyone trooped off to find some lunch. There are so many restaurants and supermarkets, coffee shops and pizza parlours in addition to the café at the centre so there was no shortage of choice!



Back at St John's for the afternoon session and our final presentation. Jaakko introduced **Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga**, our Lutheran President. Her topic was '**Church Life in Restless Europe: Bordering Russia Today**'. She had surveyed some colleagues in lands bordering Russia and elicited some interesting responses. The summary is on **page 20** and the full presentation is on the website. (You'll be tired of hearing that by now!)



The rest of the afternoon was taken up with **Break-Out Groups** in which members offered to share matters that were either significant to them personally or issues with which their local churches were struggling. There were six of them, they were kept busy, and in the feedback we requested from all our conference participants these groups were considered important and should feature in all our conferences. As one person said, 'Our members have so much to contribute.'

Our evening worship was **Church of England Book of Common Prayer 'Evensong'**, and everyone joined in all the sung versicles and responses very well. The service took place in the church because the hall was being set up for ...

... **The Conference Dinner**. Now I wonder how many of you know the nursery rhyme, 'Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard to fetch her poor doggie a bone. But when she got there the cupboard was bare, and so the poor doggie had none!' Well, in a way, that was what our Conference Dinner was like. Caterers had been booked, the menus agreed and the meal paid for. Our distinguished guests gathered with us but when we got into the hall the tables were bare! The caterers had failed to appear! But, never fear! There's nothing like a crisis to bring out the best in people! Charlotte Methuen, using her local knowledge, got on the phone to local restaurants. Meanwhile, we sat round the empty tables, speeches were made and, wonder of wonders, Charlotte found two restaurants within walking distance, each ready to accommodate half our number. So off we went and the guests were divided between the two groups. One group went to an Italian restaurant and the other to a South American one. Afterwards both groups professed to having had a good time, and the day was saved. Not so the Society's money! The matter has been reported both to the Police and to Trading Standards but nothing has been heard as this issue of The Window is being prepared. But like the children in all the best stories, we all returned to the hotel and went to bed, 'tired but happy'!



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Tuesday 17th September

Breakfast over, everyone piled into the hall to find tables set out rather like an exam hall. They were told to sit and complete the **evaluation** sheets on the tables. They had just 10 minutes to do so. They set too, and there was almost total silence! Then the people round each table were asked to think about the **future direction** for our Society. They had 40 minutes to record their ideas. They worked hard, and the hall was filled with the buzz of conversations. The result is a very useful set of ideas for the Trustees to consider at their future committee meetings.



By 10 o'clock we were in the church and our **Closing Eucharist** began. A group of people had worked hard to design the service which followed the 'Common Service'. This was fully explained in a leaflet accompanying the service sheets. The rehearsal on Saturday evening had been well worthwhile and the liturgy was sung with great enthusiasm. Our Presidents were at the fore; Bishop Jana presided and Bishop David preached. Guess what! His sermon is summarised on **page 25** and is available on the website! Bishop Paul played a fitting prelude at the beginning of this final service. It was a "combination" of the national anthems of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden - an audible sign of the international character of the Anglican-Lutheran Society. It was a truly memorable service and brought to an end a most enjoyable and worthwhile conference. It was good to see some of our younger members leading worship throughout the event, and to get to know them as well as meeting old friends.

The Post Conference Programme

On **Tuesday afternoon** people who wanted to stay on to explore something of Scotland set off in different directions. A group went to visit the Royal Yacht Britannia while others went to the Castle, Arthur's Seat and all around the city.



They returned through the Cairngorm Mountains and had a tea break at Pitlochry before returning to Edinburgh past the iconic Forth Bridges.

Now we are wondering when and where the next conference might be. However, we do know that the **Annual Meeting** will be at St Mary's German Church, Sandwich Street, London on Saturday **8th March, 2025**. Put it in your diary and we hope to see you there!

On **Wednesday**, very early in the morning, 16 intrepid explorers set off by bus for a 13 hour tour of Scotland. They visited the Great Glen, Glen Coe pictured here, Ben Nevis, Fort Augustus and Loch Ness. They enjoyed a boat trip on the Loch but there was no sign of the Monster! As you can see, the weather was perfect.



Finding the Presentations on the website is very easy. Just go to <https://www.anglican-lutheran-society.org/events/2024-09-13-church-in-a-state> and there they are! Good reading!

EDINBURGH CONFERENCE : A REFLECTION

Anne Boileau offers one participant's very personal view of what it was like.


From the light and airy Cornerstone Centre at St John's Church in the heart of Edinburgh I travelled in my mind and imagination to many different places, through conversations and listening to talks and sermons over the four days of our conference.

Having lunch with Janet and Dick Lewis I went to Retford Nottinghamshire and learnt a bit more about the historic Hospital providing collegiate accommodation for single men. Dick is the Chaplain there. At the reception, I met Tom Van Poole who took me to Virginia and told me about the courage and resourcefulness of the earliest white settlers.

I had supper with Richard Stephenson, Pat Scaife and Helen and David Betts. They took me home with them to Lichfield; we talked about Erasmus Darwin's fascinating house and I recalled the Daniel Quare long case clock which ticks

away the hours there; Dr Johnson's house and the beautiful cathedral set within its Close. And Helen told me of her son who was a chorister there and who is now organist and choirmaster at Houston in Texas.

In conversation with Sven Gröger, I travelled to Tübingen where he is writing his doctorate on Saint Anselm. I learned that this Saint was born in Burgundy, travelled up to northern France, sailed to England and became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093-1109. He seems to have been a troublesome priest though, because he was twice banished from England by King William and King Henry.

Sandy Goldbeck-Wood took me to Bodo in northern Norway where she ministers to Norwegians with two different languages as well as Sami people with their own various tongues. It is very remote, in the Arctic Circle, but she 

⇒ is able to fly down to Oslo without difficulty. She was a gynaecologist before becoming a priest two years ago.

David Bagnall gave a brave presentation about Rwanda and the delicate matter of homosexuality in that country. How the original discrete, unspoken acceptance of such things was confused and disrupted by American missionaries, who changed the language and imposed the concept of sin to the practice.

Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga spoke about her mother country, Latvia; how this small nation has been occupied throughout its history by its neighbours, Poland, Sweden and, of course, Russia. If Russia does succeed in defeating Ukraine, they will not stop there. Anglicans are a minority but many prefer that to the Orthodox Church, who bless tanks and troops and fail to speak Truth to Power. We prefer to look west, she said.

In a breakout group John Murray told of the curious matter of the Lutheran Church in Alsace and how the French government support it by paying the salaries of the pastors. And how older people still like to speak German.

In our free time, I explored the extensive graveyard of Saint Cuthbert, the church just next door to St John's. It is a beautiful green space with enormous gravestones; people with their dogs and picnics sit about on the grass among the tombs, in the shade of tall trees. Above us, the clear blue sky and the splendid castle, and below, in a deep groove,

the surprise of the railway line.

What a fine city it is! I visited the National Gallery of Scotland, stood before Rembrandt's self-portrait, Landseer's "Monarch of the Glen", a huge painting of Niagara Falls with rainbows, and Mary Queen of Scots fleeing in a boat bound for France, and many other wonderful pictures.

On Tuesday morning before our final Eucharist, we were asked to fill in a Questionnaire about the conference and the future of ALS. I think the value of the society was admirably illustrated at the Conference: it is the complex threads of connection across boundaries which we all experienced while being in that gathering; singing and worshipping together, eating together; and sharing our thoughts, ideas and experiences.

The food was good and generous, the lectures and sermons were stimulating and the company convivial. The organisation brilliant. Thanks especially to Helen Harding, Richard Stephenson and Dick Lewis and everyone else who made the Conference happen and helped to run it all so smoothly – and the weather was lovely too!



'PEBBLES IN THE LOCH: A JIG THROUGH SOME TENETS OF SCOTTISH CHURCH HISTORY'

*This is a summary of the Presentation by Canon Dr Emsley Nimmo,
Dean Emeritus of the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney, Scotland,
which you can read in full on the Society's website*

Dr Nimmo embarked on a whistle-stop tour of Scottish ecclesial history. He reminded us that St Ninian, in the fourth century, found a Christian community in Scotland that had been there since the time of the Romans. During the sixth century Columba and Moluag worked on the further conversion of the Scots to Christianity. When Columba ordained and consecrated Áedán mac Gabráin as the first King of Scots in Dal Riata, Church and Secular State were bound together. 'You got close to the local king, you converted him and then you had control; and that's how the Celtic Church operated,' he explained.

About 100 years later along came Dr Nimmo's next character of note, Adomnán, ninth Abbot of Iona after

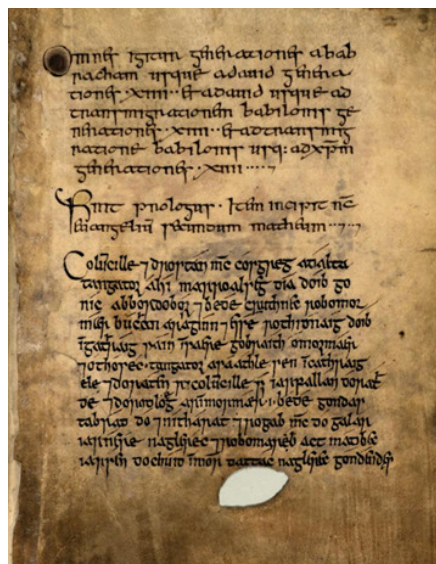
Columba. One of the achievements attributed to him was stopping the advance of the plague, when he drew the sign of the cross in the sky at a place called Glen Lyon, above Loch Tay. But his great contributions were his 'Life of Columba' and his 'Lex Innocentium' (Law of Innocents) which was promulgated amongst a gathering of Gaelic and Pictish notables during the Synod of Birr in 697CE. 'It is called the "Geneva Accords of the ancient Irish", and Europe's first human rights treaty, for its protection of women and non-combatants, extending the Law of Patrick, which protected monks, to civilians,' Dr Nimmo explained.

'Here is an example of the Church influencing society and encouraging

the beginnings of Scots law,' he said. 'If, for example, a woman committed arson or a theft from a church she was to be set adrift in a boat with just a paddle and a container of gruel. She was not to be put to death but set out to sea. This left the judgement up to God and avoided violating the commandment against killing a woman.' The 'Lex Innocentium' also offered protection for children in times of war who, until then, had only been offered protection up to the age of seven. It set out the fines that were to be paid by people who transgressed the law.

Dr Nimmo then introduced 'The Book of Deer', written between 850CE and 1000CE and now kept safe in Cambridge University. It includes ⇒

→ the Four Gospels written in Latin but with notes in the margins in Gaelic (pronounced Gallic) and has later entries written in the late 10th and early 11th centuries, six in Gaelic and one in Latin. 'These Gaelic entries are the earliest known examples of written Scottish Gaelic, and it is these which give the book its unique place in Scottish history,' he told us.



The Book contains the first record of land transactions in Scots Law. The seventh addition, in Latin, is a copy of the Charter granted to the clerics of the Monastery of Deer by King David I dated 1153. David's Latin Charter bestows on the monks of Deer a general immunity from all lay service and improper exaction.

Dr Nimmo smiled as he told us, 'There's a lovely thing at the end of the book where it's written, "If you read this book to the end give a wee prayer for the poor wretch who wrote it!"'

Moving swiftly on we were told about the Declaration of Arbroath of 1320CE, a letter to Pope John XXII, dated 6th April 1320, from Bernard de Linton, a monk at Arbroath Abbey, for the barons and freeholders of the Kingdom of Scotland.

The letter asked the Pope to recognise Scotland's independence and acknowledge Robert the Bruce as the country's lawful king. At that time, the Pope was seeking help with a crusade to the Holy Land. The Declaration sought to influence him by offering Scottish support for his adventure if the Scots could be freed from fear

of invasion by the English.

We were then treated to a musical interlude. Dr Nimmo told us about Robert Carver, born in or around 1487-90CE. 'He was an exceptional musician who seems to have been influenced by music from the Low Countries. He captured polyphony and harmony at its best ... he became an Augustinian Canon of Scone when aged 16 and was a prolific composer. His Mass for ten voices, "*Deum sacram mysterium*", was very probably composed for the Coronation of James V at Stirling in 1513. Carver's music is widely praised for its beauty, originality and technical skill,' he said.

We listened to two pieces, the first by Carver and the second an example of Gaelic Psalmody from the Island of Lewis. 'Here we have the use of a cantor responded to by heterophonic singing by the congregation,' Dr Nimmo pointed out. 'The sound could have an Egyptian influence or it may be based on the German style of Psalm-singing from the Reformation.'



Statue of William Dunbar, Scottish National Portrait Gallery: Photo: Stephen Dickson

He then read William Dunbar's "*The Passioun of Christ*" describing it as a lovely example of Scottish medieval spirituality. You can read on our website.

Dr Nimmo then went on to describe the origins of the Episcopal Church of Scotland of which he is a member. Many people think it derived in some

way from the Church of England. 'It's nothing of the kind!' he protested. He explained that at the Reformation there were some in Scotland who wanted to follow a Reformed, Presbyterian way. However, in the North-West of Scotland where bishops had been very good to their people, there was a desire to remain Episcopalian.

But turbulent years were to follow. After the Civil War Oliver Cromwell (Lord Protector from 1653-58CE) sent troops to Scotland and within a short time they had removed everything that had not been destroyed at the Reformation.

'It was a dreadful time for art and for music,' Dr Nimmo said. 'It was Archbishop Laud who said the Scottish Reformation was "a Deformation, not a reformation!"' When William of Orange seized the throne in 1689CE Episcopalian clergy were driven from their parishes. The Jacobite Uprising in 1745 led to penal laws that almost destroyed the Episcopacy in Scotland.

However, Dr Nimmo went on to say, on Sunday 14th November, 1788, in Aberdeen at Bishop Skinner's Chapel in the Longacre the concept of the Anglican Communion was born like a single cell organism that would grow and grow.

He explained how Samuel Seabury was consecrated first Bishop *apud Americanos*. The Sermon, delivered by Bishop John Skinner, was an exposition of the High Church doctrine of Episcopal Succession and contained a seething attack on Erastian principles ... "I prefer Acts of the Apostles to Acts of the British Parliament," the Bishop thundered.

Samuel Seabury returned to America with the Scottish Prayer book and that influenced American liturgy.

'It's interesting,' said Dr Nimmo, 'that a persecuted Church, the Scottish Church, could have had such an influence by consecrating a new bishop.'

He summed up: in the early days the Church and the State were welded together, but in the later period you have a divergence going on between Church and State which is persisting in our own times.

'IT'S NEVER EASY IN THE TWO KINGDOMS'

*This is a summary of the presentation by the Rt Rev George Samiec,
Chairman of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in England.
You can find the full version on the Society's website.*

Introduction

'The Lutheran understanding of Two Kingdoms is to recognise that we stand in intersections,' Pastor Samiec began, 'and we teach our children to go carefully through intersections. Why? Because we don't want them to get run over!'

Two Kingdoms means recognising that, as we try to live as disciples of Jesus in this world, we shall get bumped or knocked or even run over. But as we get up again we hear Jesus' words, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33b ESV).

Christians have always had to think of themselves as living in two contexts; before God and before the world. But they can take comfort that, being in the world but not of it, they have the great joy of knowing who Jesus is and what he has done for them.

From the earliest days of the Church, Pastor Samiec continued, Christians have felt the tension between Paul's injunction that they must always submit to the governing authorities (Romans 13.1-7) and Peter's words, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5.29).

In times of persecution they sought to serve one another in such a way 'that both the blood of the martyrs

and their love for one another drew the people of their time and place not to them but to Jesus,' he said.

Pastor Samiec then led us from the Edict of Milan (313CE) to the Council of Nicaea (325CE); from St Augustine writing about heavenly and earthly cities in the fifth century to the ninth century when Popes were crowning the 'governing authority'; and on to the time when the words "Holy" and "Empire" were put together.

'Thus,' he said, 'the Lutheran understanding of Two Kingdoms has a trajectory and also a specific context and we cannot simply say, "let's play first century Church and world again".'

A Lutheran approach to living before God and the World

Pastor Samiec reviewed some of the articles in the Augsburg Confession that relate to the Two Kingdoms, and also Melancthon's 'Defence' which offered examples of what happens when Law and Gospel are confused, the chaos that would ensue if the state tried to live according to the Sermon on the Mount, and the burdens that would ensue if the Church said that Christian perfection is determined by civil behaviour as defined by the Church! He quoted Article XXVIII: "In as much as the power of the Church bestows eternal things and is exercised only through the ministry of the Word, it interferes with civil government as little as the art

of singing interferes with civil government ... ecclesiastical and civil powers are not to be confused ... both [are to] be held in honour and acknowledged as gifts and blessings of God."

The work of the Church is to preach Law and Gospel, to remit and retain sins, to administer the sacraments and to provide pastoral care

for people. However, living before the world is not unimportant because that is where Christians live, and the Church helps them live there.

'Hence Two Kingdoms thinking is seen in the Table of Duties in Luther's Small Catechism,' Pastor Samiec told us, 'which focuses on people as individuals first. You are to consider all the relationships with the people around you and how best to serve them in those relationships – whether you are spouse, parent, child, employee, employer, those with authority or those under authority, laypeople or clergy. Two Kingdoms thinking prioritises the individual over the corporate.'

There is a danger in the visible, organisational Church trying to meet health, educational or relief needs. For one thing, if the Church discontinues such activity it might seem that the Church simply doesn't care. For another, in its desire to be needed, the Church may become so engaged in these activities that Jesus and his cross are no longer central. 'So Organisational Church responses to need may come to be regarded as better than individual Christian responses to need via organisations of the world,' Pastor Samiec said.

Now we're in the 21st Century

500 years have passed and the world is a very different place. 'Luther's and the Confessions' teaching on the Two Kingdoms has often been misunderstood and misapplied when it separates and doesn't hold in tension the "two",' Pastor Samiec said, and gave the example of the failure of many Lutherans and Church bodies to perceive or attempt to halt the evil of the Nazi regime. It was a failure to hold in tension another "two", in this case Romans 13 with its call to obedience towards earthly authorities, and Revelation 13 and the call to endurance and faithfulness of the saints over against the spiritual forces of evil, worldly authority that



seeks deification, and false (anti-Christian) teaching. 'The more you separate the "two", the more you remove yourself from the intersection,' he said. 'It might be safer – for a while – but such removal doesn't square with God's declared reality.'

God's Word engaging the world

Jesus didn't leave a set of instructions when he ascended into heaven. His followers had to adapt to changing situations. Even Martin Luther's writings over decades reveal subtle changes. What remains consistent, Pastor Samiec said, is that the Church is to speak both humbly and respectfully to the world. The Church's role is prophetic and with no claim of privilege. 'In the "public square" the Lutheran goal is not to "Christianise" the public square but to "humanise" it so that people may live as safely and as well as possible, and sinners may be saved,' he said. Lutheran preaching will always seek to remind the disciples of Jesus of the intersection of their lives – and yes, it is a paradox – expressed by Martin Luther in two sentences: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." (LW 31: 344).

Unity and Diversity

Most people would prefer to be treated by a doctor known for their excellent work, rather than one known for poor quality! Similarly, in the world compromise is necessary. Christian politicians are constrained by the processes of their political party and government structure of their time and place, just as Christian voters might rub shoulders and agree with non-Christians about political courses of action and priorities in their time and place. People can get in the way of God's blessings to all people and can make life miserable in countless situations. Corruption, selfishness, greed, desire for power in both the political and economic realms can have disastrous effects on individuals, families, even countries. The Church is not immune to people making life miserable for others. People struggle with dilemmas of all kinds. Should I fight injustice at work or should I turn the other cheek, for example? Pastors have to help people see whether the decision they are

making is 'structural'/'organisational' or personal, especially if the people are Christian. Pastors help young people to see their future in terms of God calling them to serve with their gifts and talents in particular ways. 'Choosing an occupational path is not about a salary package *per se* but how one best follows Jesus as God's "hands" in the world, bringing God's providential care to people,' Pastor Samiec said. There is no spiritual/secular dichotomy in Lutheran thinking – God is king of both kingdoms – and young people will be helped if they regard their economic vocation as something more than "just a job".

A hidden reality

Christians live by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5.7). 'When Jesus was most visible,' Pastor Samiec told us, 'God was hidden under what our eyes told us was the opposite of anything divine.' The world didn't see the holy, righteous God on the cross, but the resurrection confirmed that it was – Jesus is Lord! Jesus calls his people to follow him in family, work, country, and church, and God guides us not to focus on ourselves but rather, in his name, to focus on the people around us – and rejoice that God is good.

In worship God is still hidden because all we have are words, water, bread and wine but, he went on, 'when used as Jesus directed, they reveal through faith the presence – and the smile! – and the blessing of God with us. And God doesn't leave us at the altar as we go back out into the world but goes with us.' We pray in church and we pray in the world and God doesn't sit on his hands, as some people think. 'Two Kingdoms enriches and uplifts our life, our perspective, for God is bringing his blessings to us through others and to others through us.' Disciples of Jesus desire to live to the glory of God while being a blessing to those around them, in other words, before God and before the world. It isn't easy but then

again we are never alone. "The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and for evermore." (Psalm 121.8 ESV)

Conclusion

Pastor Samiec ended with a thought experiment concerning the Good Samaritan. 'What's your response to the parable of the Good Samaritan?' he asked. 'Jesus, after all, framed his question not as "Who is my neighbour?" but rather "Who proved to be neighbour to the man who fell among robbers?" to which came the reply "The one who showed him mercy", which received Jesus' follow up, "You go and do likewise." (Luke 10.36,37)

'So what is your response to the parable of the Good Samaritan? Before you answer that question you have to parse it! Who is the 'your'? Was I speaking 2nd person singular or 2nd person plural? And if you have jumped to the plural, and after two thousand years who doesn't think corporately, will we then set up teams of 'Good Samaritans' to patrol the road? Will we set up education programmes for priests and Levites? Will we put up 'Beware' signage? Who would like to pass legislation that travellers can no longer travel alone? Will we build more inns and facilities for those who fell among robbers? Will we set up groups to catch the robbers before they descend on a traveller? I think all might be possible and all have been done in the history of the Church. The question is certainly easier to answer – though far more existentially confronting – when it's considered in the singular.'





PRAYERS IN A NEW CULTURE: DIVERGENT IMPACT OF SECULARISATION IN LITURGICAL DEVELOPMENT

*A brief summary of the presentation by the Rev Prof Dr Merete Thomassen, University of Oslo.
The full script is available in the report of the Conference on the website.*

Introduction

Dr Thomassen explained that as our Western communities become more secularised and church attendance declines, lay people are becoming more involved in liturgy. How is this affecting intercessory prayer?

Secularisation

'Secularisation is a very complicated phenomenon,' she said, and she demonstrated three different perspectives. First, secularisation doesn't necessarily mean a lack of belief in God. In making decisions some people are only concerned with "What is good for me?" God, science and politics take second place.

Second, there are those who believe in a higher power and their concern is to relate to it personally. This has been labelled "self-spirituality" and finds expression in such things as Yoga and Mindfulness. "God out there" can no longer tell you what it is right to do; the answer is to be found within you.

Third, while church attendance is declining, there are still church members who see themselves as believing on behalf of the wider community. In the Church of England Book of Common Prayer people are urged "to pray for others as for ourselves". Then there are other people in Britain, for example, "Believing without Belonging" whilst in Scandinavia you find people are "Belonging without Believing"! So In Norway 65-75% of the population belong to the Church, but they don't necessarily believe. 'The situation in Scandinavia seems to be the reverse of the situation in Britain,' Dr Thomassen commented wryly.

Another aspect of modernity is the search for pleasant feelings brought about by being productive and responsible.

Prayer

Dr Thomassen turned our attention to prayer. 'What are some of the theological notions underlying it?' she asked. 'What makes it so interesting?' Prayer, she said, reveals some of the ways people think about God. 'When we refer to God as almighty, compassionate, or the one who goes alongside us; as having gender, as a patriarch, as a mother, as a fountain, as a rock; these images tell us much more about ourselves than they do about God,' she said.

Prayer also shows how we think of ourselves. Do we see ourselves as sinful and in need of the mercy of God? Do we need God's help, or do we just need God's encouragement and assistance so we can handle things by ourselves? 'Prayer reveals where we think the limits of our own capacities lie,' she commented.

Liturgical Prayer

'Liturgical prayer shapes our images of God, our view of ourselves and the world,' Dr Thomassen asserted, 'and sketches ideas of human agency and God's agency.' Our context will always shape our prayer. In the beginning Christian prayers were influenced by the Roman Imperial Cult and the Jewish tradition. Then the Enlightenment also influenced the way people prayed. Liturgical order did not fall down from heaven in a fixed and final shape; it grows from a constant conversation with our own culture.

'Liturgical prayer includes many things,' she pointed out. Her interest is especially in intercessory prayers.

Intercessory Prayer

In our church services intercessions often follow a sermon (or the creed) as a transition to the Eucharist. They include prayers for the Church and the world, local and global. Sometimes they consist of petitions asking God to do what human beings are not able to do. From Anglican Evensong, for example: "Give peace in our time, O Lord, because there is none other that fighteth for us but only thou, O God."

Lay involvement enables intercessory prayers to include different experiences to those of the ordained. The Second Vatican Council, 1962-65, stressed lay participation as a way of making the Incarnation visible, Christ being incarnate in these people in this place.

Dr Thomassen explained that her interest recently focused on how intercessory prayers are prepared and conducted by lay people. Which images of God are used? What are people thinking about themselves? What theological and anthropological ideas are being worked out in their prayers?

How to enable lay people

Reform in her own Church, the Church of Norway, in 2011 was influenced by the Second Vatican Council's core values: Flexibility, Contextuality and Involvement. Norway is very diverse in terms of culture and the Church wanted local parishes to reflect their local traditions and contexts.

So the central Church authorities decided on a process that would encourage and equip lay people to write and offer their own prayers during their congregational worship. But bearing in mind that aim, the process was very peculiar, she said. 'The Church set up several committees that issued a comprehensive number of liturgical prayers. But these prayers were composed by themselves, assuming what the prayers of lay people might look like! None of them were prayers made by lay people!'



⇒ These prayers were circulated to the parishes, Dr Thomassen told us. 'I, in my position at Oslo University, was responsible for tabulating the results of this consultation. And I was quite shocked! The most striking thing was that no-one any longer seemed to believe in prayer! There were almost no petitions, but a lot of prayers for encouragement ("give us the ability and courage to do this and that") and a lot of prayers asking for pleasant emotions.'

She then shared examples of prayers written by lay people in Norway and in Scotland. You can find them all in her full presentation on the website. One example was simply, "Let us feel how pleasant it is to be in the house of the Lord." 'Why should it be pleasant to be in the house of the Lord?' Dr Thomassen protested. 'It can be very confrontational to be in the house of the Lord. It can be very serious to be in the house of the Lord. It's all very fine if people's experience of being in the house of the Lord is pleasant, but it doesn't have to be!'

Searching questions

In Scotland Dr Thomassen had questioned clergy and lay people about their approach to writing prayers. These are useful questions for anyone preparing intercessions for use in their own congregations.

- i) What do you think of God? Which images do you have of God?
- li) How do you see human beings in the liturgical context?

- lii) What situations and themes do you think it important to pray about?
- lv) What can human beings do? What can God do?
- v) Why do you pray at all?

In addition she asked the clergy what they did to prepare their lay people to lead intercessions.

- i) How are volunteers recruited and trained?
- ii) What liturgical resources do they have?
- iii) Are they asked to follow themes such as the ecclesiastical year?
- lv) What other roles do lay people have in the service?
- v) What is their understanding of the meaning of prayer?
- vi) How might they pray about ethical dilemmas, Healing, for the sick?
- vii) What in today's context is it important to pray about, and so on.

She then shared more prayers written by lay people and asked us all to react to them. You can find them on the website and see how you react to them.

Summing up

'My conclusion,' Dr Thomassen told us, 'is that secularisation is threatening, so lay members of congregations prefer to remain conservative in their worship. The lay people are to a large degree expressing the same theology as their clergy. But they do have different backgrounds and different experiences so their representation in worship ought to make an important difference.'

'THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND – HELP AND HINDRANCE?'

*This is a summary of the presentation by Bishop Paul Ferguson, our Anglican Moderator.
You can find the full version on the Past Events Page of the website.*

Bishop Paul began by reminding us that some form of relationship between Church and State was the norm in medieval Europe. In describing the situation in England he began with the *Constitutions of Clarendon* of 1164, an attempt to regulate the relationship between the Church's and secular jurisdictions. It led to the unfortunate assassination of Thomas Becket who had refused to sign them, much to King Henry II's displeasure.

The *Statutes of Praemunire* 1353, 1365 and 1393 were designed to protect the rights of the English crown against encroachments by the Papacy. Henry VIII, for example, cited *Praemunire* against his chief minister Thomas Wolsey when in 1529, as papal legate, Wolsey failed to uphold the King's desire for divorce. Elizabeth I used the act against Roman Catholics, and

later James I and VI's judges used it to increase the power of temporal courts over ecclesiastical. It was not until 1967 that the Statutes were repealed!

Once Henry VIII pronounced himself Head of the Church on Earth (without any reference to Parliament) a period began when the pendulum was swung wildly: one Archbishop of Canterbury was executed under a Catholic Queen and then another Archbishop of Canterbury was executed under a Puritan regime. 'The tension between Church and State at that time was very much in evidence,' Bishop Paul said.

There followed a whistle-stop journey through the tumultuous events in the reigns of James II (and VII of Scotland) a Roman Catholic, who repealed the *Test Acts* that restricted the lives of Roman Catholics and Protestant Dis-

senters. This was so unpopular that he felt forced to abandon his throne and he was replaced by William and Mary who were themselves opposed by a number of bishops (non-jurors), either for being too Puritan or because they were sympathetic to those hoping the Stuarts might return and reclaim the throne.

Bishop Paul mentioned *Queen Anne's Bounty*, 1703, which took the annates, money that since Henry VIII had been paid to the Crown, and Church Tithes, and diverted them for the support of poor parishes. 'This still exists today,' he told us, 'and it probably remains the last time the Church received an endowment from an external source.'

The Nineteenth Century was a period of Parliamentary and Social Reform due largely to the effects of the ⇒

⇒ Industrial Revolution. Laws were repealed which had prevented people from being able to play their full part in society, or from gaining degrees from Oxford or Cambridge.

But the Church needed reform as well, but lacked the machinery because it had no assembly, legislative powers, or means of expressing a corporate mind. Bishop Paul described in some detail how new structures in the Church of England were created and the characters who in different ways enabled the changes.

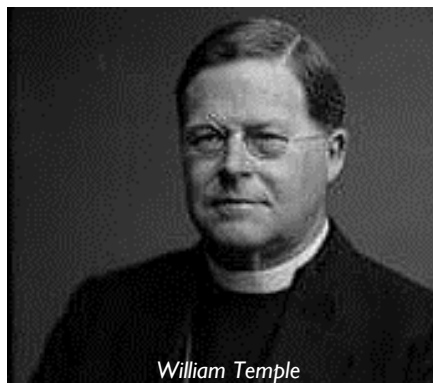
At that stage there were cries for the disestablishment of the Church of England, but these were resisted because of the congruence between English national identity and the Church of England that no other religious body could reflect to anything like the same degree. You can read all about it in his presentation on the website!

While all this was going on there was still no independent government for the Church. Cases about ritual and doctrine were decided by the House of Commons. It was clear that the Church needed some form of self-government. 'The Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919 (also known as the Enabling Act) allowed the constitution of a Church Assembly with three houses, Bishops, Clergy and Laity,' Bishop Paul explained. Every parish had a Church Council.

But there was still a Parliamentary committee to consider any legislation the Church brought forward. This is still the case. 'So if Church Assembly, or the General Synod which replaced it in 1970, passes a Measure it is then considered by the Ecclesiastical Committee in Parliament,' he went on. The committee includes representatives of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. 'Thus, it treats the Church of England as the Church for the Nation rather than it becoming a self-interested body.'

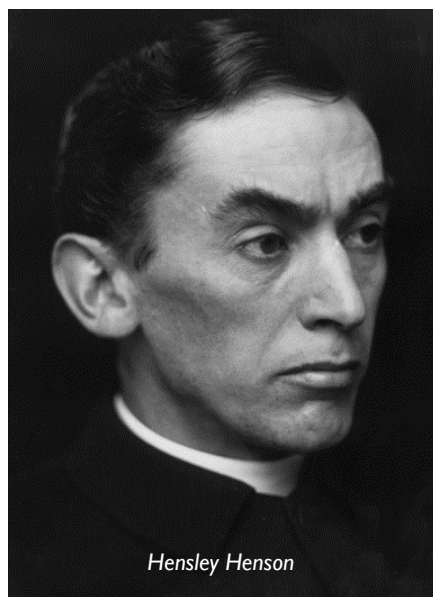
However, things came to a head in 1928 when the Church wanted to revise its Book of Common Prayer dating from 1662. The proposed 1928 Prayer Book included to some extent more "Catholic" elements, reservation of the consecrated elements of Holy Communion, a light form of prayer for

the departed and revised Baptism, Marriage and Funeral services. However, Parliament rejected it twice. 'This was distressing to the bishops in particular, and damaged the Church's authority,' Bishop Paul explained. 'Why was doctrine being discussed in Parliament and decided by those who were not English and not Anglican?'



William Temple

This turned two eminent Churchmen, William Temple and Herbert Hensley Henson, against the establishment. William Temple wrote that he rejected establishment if it means "a claim by the State to exercise a special degree of control over the Church."



Hensley Henson

Hensley Henson called establishment "irreparably anachronistic and anomalous."

But there were others who distrusted what they saw as liberalising tendencies in the Church of England; the use of revised liturgies in modern language and the influence of a more clearly sacramental theology, for example.

These feelings were still strongly felt when, in 1984, General Synod wanted

to reform the way our bishops were appointed. Unhappily, the Measure came to Parliament at exactly the time David Jenkins was consecrated Bishop of Durham. Bishop Paul explained the significance of that very clearly in his presentation which is on the website. The draft Measure, passed by General Synod for approval by Parliament, was defeated 32-17.

The 1980s saw many clashes between Church and State. Archbishop Robert Runcie and PM Margaret Thatcher clashed over the service following the Falklands conflict of 1982, and the publication of *Faith in the City* in 1985 caused enormous controversy. There were further calls for the disestablishment of the Church of England but they came to nothing.

More recently in the 1990s the British Government urged the Church of England to make the clergy more secure, so Common Tenure was invented. It retained office holder status, whilst giving clergy some (but not all) of the rights of employees (for example the Working Time directive does not apply to clergy). And, of course, there has been controversy over the ordination of women, first as deacons, then as priests and finally as bishops.

The sexuality debate has shown how quickly tension can arise between Church and State. Parliament moved to enable what has come to be called "Same-Sex Marriage". Whilst not compelling religious organisations to solemnise same-sex marriages, the Church of England was prevented from doing it at all. 'That outraged many who saw the provision as homophobic, and thought that it was inconsistent for a Church to claim to express national identity whilst being out of step with a major legal change. This has resulted in further calls for its disestablishment,' Bishop Paul explained.

At present the Church of England remains established and so remains subject to Parliament even in doctrinal matters. But Bishop Paul raised some questions. Have we seen a tendency for politicians to be content with the position of the Church of England when they see it as useful, but who want to detach or control it when they don't? – do they expect leadership or followership? ⇒

⇒ How far does establishment give the false impression for instance that the Church of England is financed by the state? 'It isn't!' Bishop Paul asserted. 'There is no church tax and no French-style responsibility for the patrimony when there's a fire in Notre Dame and the State jumps in and says, "We'll fix it!"'

What would be the advantages to the Church of England if it were not an established Church? Potentially that it could decide all questions by its own internal processes that currently have to be submitted to Parliament through its ecclesiastical committee. But is that cost too great? Establish-

ment as we have it may be a classic case of "I wouldn't have started from here!" But again, it started with a situation that was commonplace in medieval Europe.

He ended by listing some possible advantages of establishment: we appoint 'incumbents to parishes', not 'chaplains to congregations'. We have a voice in the public square and engage in Education at all levels. There is still the possibility of working together with other faiths. The legal framework that goes with establishment ensures that wherever in the Church of England there is a locus of power, there is a check and

balance somewhere else. In the sense that the Church isn't a pyramid organisation, nobody is actually in charge. It isn't perfect but it ensures that bishops have influence but not absolute power, and the houses in Synod are balanced.

Whilst it's far from perfect, and there would be ways of managing without establishment, just as every other part of the Anglican Communion does, it's what we have. 'It's said that if God gives you lemons, make lemonade. Is the Church of England making the best lemonade?' Bishop Paul concluded.

There is so much more in his presentation. Be sure to read it!

'YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN: THE PROPHETIC CHURCH IN POLARISING PUBLIC SPACE'

This is a brief summary of the presentation by Dr Kathryn Mary Lohre which can be read in full on the website

A just space for all

Dr Lohre began by considering the contexts of the Church in public spaces globally. In the north there is concern about the Church's decline, while in other areas, it grows and gains influence. Despite being a minority, the Church is called to engage in public spaces, focusing on "neighbour justice" to resist division and create a just space for all.

Why is the Church called to engage the public space?

Christ's Church is a public expression of the Gospel through worship, diakonia, and advocacy. As Christ's disciples, we are called to love and serve our neighbours without distinction. The Gospel calls the Church to engage deeply in the public space, shared by all people, creatures, and creation. Our response to undeserved mercy is to engage anyone made in God's image with mercy. The Church's presence and activities can contribute to creating an inclusive, just, and peaceable public space.

Sin in public spaces, such as gender-based violence, Indigenous injustice, and all kinds of sexism, distorts our calling to work for the well-being of all people, and focuses on differences. Luther's theology of the Two Kingdoms emphasises the Church's role in interconnected temporal and spiritual realms. However, human brokenness and sin can lead the Church either to abstain from involvement in society or simply to submit to social order. The Church must be both self-critical and critical of context if it is to contribute to the creation of a peaceful environment.

How is the Church called to engage the public space?

God intends humans to use knowledge, wisdom and power for the common good, which can only be achieved in the

public space. The Church's calling as a community of moral discernment leads it to engage in the public space in three steps: see, discern, and act. Dr Lohre went on to explore these steps in detail.

See and Discern

The Church must seek to discern two facets of the same reality, she said:

- the lived experience of the public space and how it is or is not "a just space for all"
- how the Church is engaging the public space now – including its meaningful contributions toward neighbour justice, and how it falls short of its calling.

The 2023 Anglican "Lambeth Calls" document, for example, urges the Church to confront the legacy of colonialism, trans-Atlantic slave trade, and other abuses of power, highlighting inequalities in access to land, health, education, and human dignity. Recently, for example, there has been a failure of the global ecumenical movement to facilitate peace in Israel-Palestine, and an unwillingness of much of the Church to be truly in the vanguard of climate justice movements. On the other hand, Churches working together in the public space were pivotal in achieving neighbour justice through ending apartheid in South Africa, and were also engaged in the 1960s civil rights movement in the USA.

Dr Lohre cautioned: 'Understanding the Church's role requires nuanced understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.'

'The LWF study document "*The Church in the Public Space*" explores how the Church's engagement in public spaces is influenced by five major discourses: religion and politics, religion and economics, religion and culture, religion and violence, and religion and science,' she told us.

The document encourages a critical analysis of the Church's role in these discourses. The aim is to bridge the gap between everyone's lived experience and God's vision for us all. 'This approach strengthens the Church's witness and promotes an understanding of neighbour justice as a common good which is sought by everyone.'

Dr Lohre then referred to 'the beautiful diversity of the human family, which exists both within the Church and in the public space beyond.' There are differences in race, class, gender, ethnicity, culture, ability, and generation, to name some examples. However, 'some of these differences are socially constructed and reinforced, which is a challenge to us as we think about creating public space as "a just space for all",' she said."

Public space has historically been shaped by histories of enslavement, casteism, and exclusion. The Church must challenge this by collaborating with others who share a commitment to neighbour justice. Discernment should be done in conversation with people representing the diversity of the human family and the created world. Political diversity is also a significant factor for the Church's discernment today, as humans are not only social beings but also political beings. Dr Lohre reminded us that politics is a necessary and beneficial gift, as God created humans as political beings. The word comes from the Greek *polis*, a state or society characterised by a sense of community.

Dr Lohre referred again to the LWF study document which suggests that the Church's discernment should resist "politicisation of religion" and the "religionisation of politics", maintaining the distinction between state institutions and religion, closely observing the political sphere, affirming public space as shared, and drawing upon the human rights framework to address diversity.

The Church has a new opportunity to counter populism and polarisation by engaging with political diversity, Dr Lohre said. By focusing on neighbour's needs, the Church can promote civic engagement, public service, democratic processes, and respectful dialogue around controversial issues. This can help counter the misuse of political diversity in public spaces.

The Church must navigate religious, human, and political diversity in what is a diverse, divided, and threatened global community. The Church must be committed to defending human dignity, advocating justice, working for peace, and caring for the earth within the structures of contemporary society. 'This engagement in our public spaces is characterised by "ABCDE",' she said, 'Addressing public issues in participatory ways, Building relationships of trust, Challenging injustice, Discovering signs of hope, and Empowering people in need. These practices align with Christian commitment to "neighbour justice" and align with God's vision of life abundant for all,' Dr Lohre affirmed. 'By employing the "see, discern, and act" methodology, the Church resists division and shapes public spaces as "just spaces for all".'

Act

She then gave some examples of how the Church seeks to engage in the public space. The first was the bilateral ecumenical engagement in North America to address Indigenous and racial justice. The second was a global ecumenical endeavour to end gender-based violence. The third spotlighted interfaith cooperation in seeking climate justice. 'None of these are perfect examples,' she said, 'but each uplifts the authentic, courageous, and bold action of the Church engaging in praxis, which can be continually improved through the see, discern, act methodology.'

Churches Beyond Borders

"Churches Beyond Borders" (CBB) is a partnership among four Anglican, Episcopalian, and Lutheran Churches in North America. It is built on the *Waterloo Declaration* and *Called to Common Mission* full communion agreements. A Memorandum of Mutual Recognition (MMR) was affirmed in 2019, binding these Churches together and serving as a model for full communion possibilities. The partnership aims to bridge regional agreements and develop existing agreements.

The MMR acknowledges Indigenous wisdom as a vital part of North America's shared context both outside and inside its Churches. The four Churches initiated internal consultations to discuss public witness to Indigenous justice, racial justice, and the condemnation of white supremacy. These consultations clearly revealed the hurt that broken promises have caused to Indigenous, Black, and all people of colour. The courageous participants challenged Church leaders to invest in long-term relational work, especially listening, to try to truly understand the experiences of people who do not experience a just or safe space.

In this connection the four Churches have been working together to address Church complicity in the legacies of the "Doctrine of Discovery", (*15th century Papal Bulls which gave theological and legal justification for the genocide and expulsion of Indigenous peoples from their lands in the Americas and in Africa* - Ed). They are educating people about their commitments and focusing on Indigenous and racial justice, and they are learning that the Church's witness in the public space requires continuous internal monitoring. Neighbour justice is not authentic or possible without neighbour justice within the Church. In late 2022, the four Churches decided to extend their work beyond North America through solidarity with their partner Churches in the Holy Land. However, the war between Israel and Hamas has prevented any meetings, but this experience has helped to gain a new understanding of the risks Churches are willing to take and of what it means to be "Churches Beyond Borders."

Churches Beyond Borders is a space for learning from each other and challenging us to think beyond national borders. It focuses on understanding how our context impacts others. The crisis of White Christian Nationalism, a unique issue in the US, is supported by Canadian partners. The Church is learning how public engagement can move us beyond the kinds of borders that

inhibit neighbour justice so as to uphold the Indigenous principle that "on this land we are all related."

Thursdays in Black

This example that Dr Lohre offered caught the imagination of many of our conference members, so it forms a separate article in this issue of The Window.

Climate Justice

Pope Francis issued the Encyclical *Laudato Si* in 2015, emphasising the importance of protecting our common home. During his visit to Indonesia in 2024, together with the Grand Imam of Istiqlal Mosque, he signed *The Joint Declaration of Istiqlal*, calling for religious leaders to work together to promote human dignity and environmental protection, especially through inter-religious dialogue. The Pope's message resonated with people of faith and no faith and offered the hope that humanity still has the ability to work together in building our shared environment.

This Joint Declaration acknowledges the environmental crisis as a barrier to harmonious coexistence, and also emphasises the need for inter-religious dialogue to counter dehumanising tendencies. The two leaders emphasise the importance of creating connections and bonds of friendship, care, and reciprocity.

Religious leaders have called for interfaith cooperation to address the climate crisis, with a global network of 28 organizations issuing an "Interfaith Call to Fast for Climate Justice" in 2013. This Call was presented to Christina Figueres, then Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and encouraged long-term engagement from faith communities. The Church recognises that partnering with others bolsters its capacity to engage, as demonstrated in a tiny way by Daniel Sinaga, an Indonesian Lutheran youth participant in the 2017 COP 23 in Germany. His "Cycling for the

Climate" was a personal decision to ride a bicycle rather than ride in a motor vehicle during his seminary years. Daniel believes that faith groups can bridge the gap between civil society and government levels, promoting climate justice through personal commitments.

Pope Francis has acknowledged the importance of everyday people of faith, particularly young people, challenging the public space to respond boldly to the environmental crisis. The Lutheran World Federation and the Anglican Communion have been actively sending delegations to the annual UN climate meetings, prioritising youth and young adult leadership, especially Indigenous people.

COP 28 in Dubai had a strong interfaith dimension, with an Abu Dhabi Interfaith Statement for COP28 and also a Talanoa interfaith dialogue ("*storytelling without concealment*", a kind of community conversation where participants lay a foundation by sharing personal stories, identifying common goals that are responsive to those stories, and considering strategies to achieve those goals - Ed) held for the fifth consecutive COP. The Church cannot afford to go it alone, and by cooperating with people of other faiths and none it can make a stronger impact in curbing climate change and safeguarding abundant life for all.

Conclusion

Dr Lohre concluded, 'The Church is called to engage the public space, prophetically seeking "a just space for all." By seeing, discerning, and acting, our Churches will be able to contribute in meaningful ways toward neighbour justice. By focusing on our neighbour's needs, we resist promoting difference as division, and can carry out our prophetic vocation by seeking God's intention of life abundant for all people, creatures, and creation. This will provide a counterpoint to the polarising realities of our times and is one way in which the Church can live Christ's prayer in the public space, "Your will be done, on earth as in heaven".'

'NATIONAL AND TERRITORIAL CHURCHES: COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS'

*A summary of the presentation by the Rev Canon Prof Dr Charlotte Methuen of Glasgow University.
The full script can be found in the report of the conference in 'Past Events' on the website*

Prof Methuen began with a description of Church and State relationships in the Late Medieval Church. She referred us to an article she published in a volume called *'Entangling Web: The Fractious Story of Christianity in Europe'* (edited by Alec Ryrie and Mark A. Lamport in the Global Story of Christianity series, Number 4; Cascade Books, Eugene, Or pp 97-113) and stressed the importance of distinguishing national and territorial Churches from State Churches.

When Churches refer to themselves, for example, as THE Church of England

or THE Church of Norway it makes it sound as if there is no other Church in those areas!

The point is that these are all territorial Churches. 'Historically these Churches are closely integrated into the political structures of their nations or territories,' she explained. 'They are in that sense "established churches" although they may or may not be "State Churches".' Most emerged in the sixteenth century, tied up with ideas of political and ecclesiastical identity. 'A big question for the Churches in Europe today

is what happens when links between political and ecclesiastical identity begin to break down,' she said.

"Church and State" in Germany

Prof Methuen reviewed Church/State relationships in Western Christendom as it was in the late medieval period when Church and politics were most closely intertwined. Church was tightly integrated into secular rulers' governments. 'In the Vatican Archives you find that German bishops during this period are not filed under "Bishops" as they are in Scotland, England or France,

but are filed under “Princes,” she told us.

She then showed a map illustrating the patchwork of German Territories around 1500 (right) and a second which showed the dioceses (below).



Whereas in places like England and Scotland dioceses were smaller than political boundaries, in Germany they were generally larger. That led to some very interesting tensions between local rulers and Church leaders which she described in some detail before moving on to show how the Reformation was actually a whole set of small territorial reformations that were both profoundly political and profoundly theological.

In 1555, the Peace of Augsburg confirmed the principle *cuius regio eius religio* (the religion of the ruler is the religion of the people). It only recognised Catholicism and those who subscribed to the *Confessio Augustana*, and it was not until the 1648 Peace of Westphalia that Reformed religion was accepted as a third version of Christianity that a German territory may have.

In 1794 Prussia's General Law Code (*Allgemeines Landrecht für die Preußischen Staaten*) recognised Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed as “publicly approved religious societies” which could call their buildings “churches” and use bells. It acknowledged that there were other religious groups defined as “tolerated religious societies” but they were not allowed to have public buildings.

The Napoleonic occupation brought with it secularisation. Most German monastic communities closed around 1802 and not, as in other places, at the

time of the Reformation. The number of German territories was rationalised from over 300 to 39 and the 1815 Treaty of Vienna required all territories to have a secular ruler. That ended any idea of bishops being princes.

When in 1714 the Elector of Hanover became King George I of the United Kingdom the Church Office of the Hanover *Landeskirche* moved to London, which brings the complete breakdown of *cuius regio eius religio* and the religion of the people now becomes the religion of the ruler! 'George is Lutheran in Hannover, Anglican in England and also Reformed in Scotland!' Prof Methuen smiled. 'He didn't speak much English so who knows what he thought was going on! We know his wife continued to have Lutheran worship in German in their home.' There were similar anomalies in Germany.

She then showed a very long list of all the German Protestant Churches around 1900. 'The territorial principle in Germany resulted in a plethora of *Landeskirchen* which, during the course of the twentieth century, was refined to make far fewer,' she said.

Article 137 in the Weimar Constitution, 1919, stated that there is no State Church in Germany and that “Every religious community organises and administers its affairs independently.” That meant Churches having to introduce new systems of Synodical Government and methods of electing church leaders. Lutheran, Reformed, United, Catholic and Old Catholic churches could collect church taxes, making

counting church membership much easier. Religious education in public (state) schools continued to be provided by the territorial Churches. This is the situation that largely persists in Germany today. 'So you have this complex structure of multiple territorial Churches closely integrated into the secular state, though strictly speaking there is no State Church,' Prof Methuen said.

Church and State in the countries

She then reviewed Church/State developments in the Nordic countries and started with the Danish Church Ordinance of 1537, which introduced a confessionally Lutheran theology with (Danish) vernacular liturgy and scripture to both Denmark and Norway.

Norway

The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 affirmed “the Evangelical State Religion” as the “public religion of the State”, and the monarch, members of government and civil servants were required to profess it. Then in 1851 a “Dissenter Law” provided some religious liberty; other Churches and religious communities (including Jews, but not Jesuits) were permitted to hold services. In 2012 constitutional amendments initiated the separation of Church and State in Norway and from 1st January 2017 the Norwegian State Church (*statskirken*) became a separate, independent legal entity, “the Church of Norway” (*den norske kirke*). However, the Norwegian monarch must still “at all times profess the Evangelical-Lutheran religion”.

Iceland

In the 1870s the Church in Iceland was separated from the Danish church. The Republic of Iceland was constituted in 1944, the Lutheran Church continuing as the State Church, with growing self-governance. Then in 1998 the Lutheran Church became the national Church of Iceland, with structures separate from the state, and this separation has been confirmed and increased by a further law in 2021.

Denmark

In contrast, Denmark hasn't gone down that route. The Church is governed by

the Danish Church Ordinance of 1537, but religious liberty was introduced in Denmark in 1849, which, Prof Methuen said, was quite early. The National Church was retained and the monarch and the monarch's family (though not their spouses) are required to be Church members. The Danish Church has no central legislative body which made it difficult when the question of signing up to the Porvoo Agreement was raised. 'In the end they didn't sign,' Prof Methuen said, 'but then, when Leuenburg came along, they worked out how to sign, joined CEPE and after that decided they could join Porvoo.' They have no archbishop, and on their website they say, "The secular authority of the Church is composed of the reigning monarch and Denmark's Parliament, the Folketing." So, in Denmark, Church and State are very tightly related.

Sweden

The Reformation in Sweden was similar to the Reformation in England. 'Both nations have a kind of allergy towards theology!' she quipped. The Parliament of Västerås confiscated Church lands in 1527 and required that the Gospel be preached "purely". In 1536 the Swedish synod decreed that mass was to be said in Swedish and introduced a Swedish hymn book. It was not until the Church Orders of 1571 and 1593 that the Swedish and Finnish Churches were allied to the *Confessio Augustana*. The monarch was expected to be Lutheran, and most inhabitants of Sweden required to be members of the Swedish Church. Only Jews could form their own religious communities. But from 1860 some religious toleration was introduced and members of another "approved religious community" were permitted to resign membership of the Swedish Church, though it wasn't until 1951 that freedom of religion was enshrined in Swedish law. The Church remained closely linked to the state until 1st January 2000 when the Church of Sweden became disestablished, though the monarch is still required under the 1810 Act of Succession to "profess the pure evangelical faith".

Finland

Finland had two forms of Christianity; Western Finland was predominantly Roman Catholic whilst Eastern Finland was predominantly Orthodox. Early-modern Finland fell under the Swedish

crown and the Reformation of Finland's Catholic Church paralleled Swedish developments.

In 1809 Finland became a Grand Duchy under the Russian Czar but through the 19th century the Lutheran Church in Finland achieved considerable self-governance. In the 1919 Constitution Finland is declared a "religiously-neutral country" but both the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church in Finland had a particular status regulated by Church Laws. 'So here we have a really interesting example of two Churches within more or less the same territory, both retain the right to levy church tax and both receive public funding to support their provision of social services, for the maintenance of cemeteries, for church record-keeping and for church repairs,' Prof Methuen commented.

England and Scotland

Until 1603 England, Wales and Scotland were separate (and often warring) countries with their own monarchs. Then in 1603 they were united under one crown but England and Scotland remained two countries until the Act of Union in 1707.

'We have heard in other presentations of their two different experiences of the sixteenth-century Reformation which led to an Episcopalian Church of England and the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, both of which see themselves as national Churches,' Prof Methuen said. 'And today both the Church of England and the Church of Scotland are established in law but retain different polities and very different modes of establishment.'

She then sketched the development of Church/State relationships in both nations, showing how many variations of Christianity gradually appeared in England whilst in Scotland there were constant divisions and reunions among the Presbyterians. 'A lot of those splits came from the question, what is the relationship between Church and State?' she said. 'What power should Parliament have over the Church?'

It was only in 1921 that the British Parliament confirmed the Church of Scotland's independence in spiritual matters. 'That is very different from the situation

in England where Parliament still has the right to "confirm" some decisions the General Synod makes, as Bishop Paul explained in his presentation,' she said.

Prof Methuen ended by providing us with some statistics:

Church membership in Germany and the Nordic countries (likely to be more accurate because of Church Tax):

The Church of Sweden: 52.1% of the population. National Church of Iceland: 56%. Finland: 65.2% Lutheran (+ 1.1% Orthodox). Norway: 69%. Denmark: 71.4%. Roman Catholic Church in Germany: 24.0%. Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland: 21.9% of the population.

In England and Wales (this is harder to assess In England and Wales, because the 2021 census doesn't ask specific questions):

46.2% described themselves as "Christian", a 13.1% decrease from 59.3% in 2011; 37.2% described themselves as "no religion", an increase of 12% from 2011. The Church of England's worshipping community in 2022 was 1.7% of the population.

In Scotland the 2022 census did ask specific questions and showed membership as follows:

Church of Scotland: 20.4%. Roman Catholic: 13.3%. Other Christian: 5.1%. no religion: 51.1%.

Summary

National and territorial Churches emerged in the course of the Protestant Reformation; political and ecclesiastical identity was closely related. Relationships between Church and State varied. Later the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* fairly quickly gave way to an understanding that a territory had a faith, to which the ruler would be expected to conform. Migration and the emergence of free churches produced more confessionally varied populations, making the idea that a territory could have a unified religion problematic; religious toleration became more generally accepted. Most "State Churches" are now disestablished (notable exceptions are the Church of Denmark and to some extent the Church of England). However, many Churches retain important roles both in social care and in education.

PERPLEXING ISSUES WE FACE IN OUR CHURCHES

A summary of the presentations by the Rev Dr Jaakko Rusama, our Lutheran Moderator and the Rev Dr David Bagnall of St John's Episcopal Church, Edinburgh

FINLAND

Dr Rusama told us he would tackle two areas: **Christianity and Nationalism** and then **The reality and the challenges in his own church**, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

Christianity and Nationalism

He started by telling us he had been looking at the rapid changes from the end of the Cold War in the late 1960s to the 1990s, arguing that Western societies suffer both from the seventeenth century Enlightenment and also from the radicalisation of the 1960s. He recommended a recent collection of essays, 'Christianity in Western and Northern Europe', which covers 18 European countries and their major Christian traditions.

Christianity and nationalism have a close relationship, he said, with Europe often viewing it as a Western religion. However, rapid social changes in the 21st Century have challenged both Europe's identity and the role of the Church and Christian Faith. The process of constructing nationhood has become a dominant narrative and the notion of national states has been exported to much of the rest of the world.

Nationalism, often seen as an alternative religion, has Biblical roots in the people of Israel and the New Testament people of God. Church historian Adrian Hastings suggests two models of nation states; ethnic and territorial, Dr Rusama told us. The ethnic model is found in the Hebrew Bible and the territorial in the New Testament. In the latter, Christ's followers share the same values but they don't share the same ethnicity.

Today in Europe Christian identity is sometimes used to negate other religious identities, such as Islam, and exclude immigrants and minorities in anti-democratic ways. On the other hand, proper Christian values can be progressive, advocating for women's rights and democracy, for example,

Dr Rusama reminded us that the conference had already highlighted the indigenous Sámi people found mainly in Northern Finland, Sweden, Norway, and North-west Russia. Churches have been guilty of fostering racist and exclusive notions about them, he said, despite recent efforts

at reconciliation. But Christians, while rooted in the culture where they are found, also belong to the universal people of God all of whom are engaged in a pilgrimage to the world beyond.

Christian contextual rootedness is evident in national Churches, 'but I want to say something about the separation of Church and state which is of concern,' he said. Declining church membership in Europe, and the apparent loss of faith, leads to an increasing secularism which today becomes more and more evident for Christians as they meet people of different faiths and none. But elsewhere in the world there are Christians who are advocating for the separation of religion from state, and for equal treatment of all religions, and India is an example where the government upholds Hinduism and persecutes others.

The Church's separation from the state has occurred in various stages in North Europe, Dr Rusama continued, including in France during the 1789 Revolution. Some scholars argue that as the social significance of Churches diminishes, personal religiosity also decreases, leading to a significant fall in membership. Dr Rusama pointed out that critics of the Church often use rationalistic arguments rather than theological, arguing that religious faith is irrational and Churches do not always measure up to their own Christian principles of freedom. On the other hand, secularisation itself,



A group of Indigenous Sámi people

according to Gianni Vattimo, can be seen as a result of the Gospel's liberating power which offers liberation at three levels: organisational, social and individual.

The Reality of the Church in Finland

Turning to the situation in his own Church, Dr Rusama told us that Finland's secular state recognises the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches as National Churches having legal status and privileges. The Finnish Orthodox Church belongs to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. These two Churches have the right to levy church tax, which is calculated at 1.5% of income tax and paid directly to local parishes. Additional income is derived from voluntary donations and is used for missionary and diaconal projects. The Lutheran Church has had a significant impact on Finland's education system since the sixteenth century, and 65% of the population are baptised members with only 29% of Finns not registered as members of any particular religious community. Religious education is mandatory in primary, secondary, and high schools, focusing on academics rather than ethics, with independent syllabuses for the various religious affiliations.

Finland has active revival movements within the Church, and some claim they are its backbone. The country is ecumenically active, having had the Roman Catholic Church as a full member of the Council of Churches since 1966. Finland remains mostly

Lutheran, but Christianity is not seen as a threat to secular society.

Religious literacy is high, and religious symbols are well recognised in popular culture. In contrast, Dr Rusama told us, in Estonia illiteracy about religion and Christianity is prevalent due to lack of religious education in schools.

Churches and religious buildings are often state-supported, and are considered cultural heritage. Central Church authorities pay clergy salaries, fostering functional relations between Church and State during crises like Covid-19 and the influx of refugees.

Current challenges facing the Church in Finland.

'A recent survey reveals that young men are more interested in religion than women, with only 20% of 15-29-year-olds identifying as religious, 10% as very religious, and 60% as non-religious,' Dr Rusama reported. 'In addition, 12% of religiously-inclined young people feel excluded or minorities.'

'These new phenomena are a tendency we have not yet fully grasped or understood,' Dr Rusama concluded. 'So disaffection with religion among the young is one of the perplexities we face, and is a significant challenge my Church is trying to deal with.'

THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION 'Let's Disagree to Agree'

Dr Bagnall began by pointing out that one of the issues that the Anglican Communion is grappling with is the sexuality controversy where everyone disagrees. Liberals, primarily in the Global North, view homosexuality as a sacred and holy identity. However, conservatives, primarily in the Global South, view it as sinful and a way of life chosen by fallen humans. 'So far, so simple,' said Dr Bagnall, 'We disagree, or so we might think ...'

However, he has explored this issue by meeting and interviewing many priests from both Rwanda and the Church of England and has discovered that disputes are often characterised by misunderstanding rather than by disagreement.

Priests interviewed expressed frustration in discussing homosexuality and



sexuality. One Church of England priest stated that conversations were often "non-starters" while a Rwandan bishop felt there was "no listening". There was clearly a lack of understanding between the two Churches.

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams noted that such conversations seemed to him to be "a dialogue of the deaf", while Bishop Nathan Amooti of Kigali, reflecting on these difficulties, concluded sombrely that "there's no proper dialogue".

Misunderstandings about the English word "homosexuality" are complex due to its diverse meanings across the Anglican Communion. For the British the term's roots in psychopathology, theology, politics, socio-cultural discourses and legal practice reflect its cultural history within the UK and colour people's thinking.

'On the other hand, the word "homosexuality" has a startlingly short history in Rwanda,' Dr Bagnall said. Its usage is relatively new and unfamiliar. One Pastor at St Étienne's Anglican Cathedral suggested that the word had quite recently been imported from USA, and that homosexuality had not been an issue in the 1930s East African Revival because it was a word not known to them, and it appears in none of the documentation of that revival.

The first appearance of the term "homosexuality" in Rwandan Anglican documents is in the late 1970s, but it gained prominence in the mid-2000s through a partnership between the Anglican Church of Rwanda and conservative American Anglicans. This partnership led to a wave of anti-homosexual literature entering the Rwandan Church, and a redefining of

native understandings of homosexual behaviour. Ethnographies from sub-Saharan Africa suggest that pre-modern African societies tended to accommodate all human sexual diversity in relatively humane ways, but naming it remains a novel phenomenon within African culture.

The distinction between "discursive novelty" and "novelty of practice" is crucial

in understanding the existence of "homosexual practices" in Rwanda, Dr Bagnall cautioned. Many Rwandan Anglicans, particularly of the older generations, testify to the existence of these practices before the advent of homosexual discourse. These practices fall into two categories: sexual activities among young men deprived of female contact for a long period, and the all-female *Gukuna ritual* according to which, on a given night before the wedding, a bride's friend "would accompany her to the bed and ... help prepare her for her marital duties by satisfying each other sexually," as Elisabeth H. Verwijs-Vogel describes it.

'The point is that, prior to the 1990s, there is no evidence of such practices being described as instances of "homosexuality" by Rwandans,' said Dr Bagnall. 'Indeed, Rwandans had no word for it.' So discourse on "homosexuality" within the Anglican Church of Rwanda appears to be a novel phenomenon.

Rwandan Anglicans now acknowledge historic practices to be instances of homosexuality, but in pre-modern Rwanda it was not an issue. The term "*mutingany*" was used to describe intimate same-sex sexual friendship and activity, promoting self-knowledge and mutual development. This term has no negative connotations and is not tied to heterosexual norms. Being "*a mutingany*" meant having intimate relationships with people of the same sex without prohibiting heterosexual relationships. So sexuality in Rwanda has a rich history of development, similar to Anglophone culture, but which English words cannot fully describe, nor outsiders fully understand. ➡

‘CHURCHES IN A RESTLESS EUROPE: BORDERING RUSSIA TODAY’

This is a summary of the Presentation by Bishop Jana Jeruma-Grinberga, the Society's Lutheran President

Bishop Jana began by reminding us that there are eight countries bordering on Russia: Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Poland and Ukraine. ‘It’s worth noting,’ she said, ‘that Belarus, despite being independent, is a steadfast ally of the Russian Federation, willing to have Russian troops stationed on its territory, thus increasing the effective Russian border with Poland and Lithuania.’

Latvia is a small country in the north of Europe, and is often referred to either as “Eastern European” or as a “former Soviet Republic”, which is true of other Baltic States and other countries. However, whilst traces of the Soviet era and Warsaw Pact are present all over Latvia, ‘this is not really how we would self-identify,’ she said. The United Nations recommends classifying the Baltic States as Northern Europe, while Eastern Europe includes Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary, and the European part of the Russian Federation.

There is a certain nostalgia for the old certainties of the Soviet era among some people, Bishop Jana told us, but no lasting Soviet identity has been forged. ‘Margarita Simonyan, the notorious head of RT, which used to be “Russia Today”, is supportive of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Russian nationalism, despite being Armenian and being married to an Armenian. She defends multiculturalism in Russia, where everyone is considered Russian which is, of course, a deliberate echo of ethnic policies in the Soviet Union.’

Bishop Jana urged against labelling Latvians and the others as “ex-Soviet Eastern Europeans” as it defines them in relation to a past they no longer identify with. ‘We prefer to look westwards and northwards for our connections rather than eastward,’ she said.


Prior to the conference Bishop Jana had circulated ‘a short and unscientific questionnaire’ to colleagues asking their feelings about their Russian neighbour, and had received responses from various countries, including Finland, Estonia, Norway, Latvia, Poland, Germany, Hungary, Ukraine, Serbia, and from within Russia itself.



‘My aim, after this introduction, is to share with you the outcome of that survey, and then to ruminate on it with the help of a particular image of the Christian Church,’ she said. [What follows are the questions and a very brief summary of the responses. You can find them in full in the presentation on the website – Editor]

The Questionnaire

First question: Does the label Eastern European apply to your country? How do you self-identify, speaking personally - according to your nationality, as European, Eastern European or other (please name)?

The answers were interesting. Most preferred the simpler term “European” or something that reflected their background such as “European and Nordic” or “Baltic/Latvian”. The majority of respondents were wary of the label “Eastern European” seeing it as outdated, coming from 

⇒ ‘The problem is that the word “mutinganyi” is rarely used today in Rwandan Anglican circles,’ Dr Bagnall said. ‘It has been replaced by “homosexual” due to the anti-homosexual discourse introduced by American conservatives in the mid-2000s.’ So meanings and resonances conveyed by the word “homosexual” are both novel and foreign to native understandings of sexuality.

‘The reason why all this matters,

then, is that people like me – who care deeply about the dignity and welfare of gay people, and who long for the day when people of all sexualities can participate fully as equally members of the Body of Christ – need to watch our language,’ Dr Bagnall warned. ‘By using words like “homosexual” in inter-provincial dialogues, progressives are constantly in danger of unwittingly colluding with conservatives by falling into a conservative narrative of a so-called “Western agenda”.’

The Church should be celebrating the diversity of sexualities and orientations, rather than focusing on people’s own sexual categories.

This requires patience, awareness of the particularity of discourse, and the ability to discern when language limits mutual understanding.

‘True agreement may be far off, but at least it might start with disagreement,’ Dr Bagnall concluded.

the Soviet Era, though some thought it is geographically unavoidable.

Second question: *Is there a tension between your government's relationship with Russia, and the Church that you belong to and its relationship with Russia?*

Some respondents reported tension between their government and Russian delegates in international meetings, while some nations welcomed people of all nations to church and prayed for Ukraine and the Russian people. However, there is also tension with the Russian Orthodox Church, which supports President Putin's regime and offers blessings to occupying troops. In some countries, the attitude of Churches reflects government attitudes, indicating greater unity within a nation concerning the current invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

Some mentioned their Church's strong stance on Russian aggression and their support for Ukrainian refugees, while others felt Churches should be more nuanced in their views, avoid dehumanization, and focus on justice. Some mentioned that there are Churches calling for peace and urging politicians to moderate their language and to stop supplying weapons to prolong violence in Ukraine. They advocated for a dialogue between the warring parties and a negotiated solution, and urged large numbers of people to join in vigils.

Third question: *To what extent is the conflict happening so close to all these countries that more or less border Russia reflected in church life?*

The answers were tabulated in graph form. 'In this small sample,' Bishop Jana said, 'over half had discussed issues surrounding the conflicts both in Ukraine and in Israel and Gaza in their churches, while four people said they were not discussed at all.' Bishop Jana found this latter response surprising given the active war in Europe and the proximity to Russia and Ukraine.

Fourth question: *In general, do you think people feel secure in your country?*

A chart showed that only about 41% said "Yes", while more than half of responders were more ambivalent and 22.7% coming up with a straight "No".

Fifth question: *In general, do you think people feel secure in your church?*

68.2% replied "Yes" while 13.6% said "No" and the rest were unsure. Bishop Jana commented, 'I should have asked people to enlarge on their response to this question, but as it stands it is difficult to know what the causes of insecurity in a third of the responders were.'

Question six: *What do you see as the cause(s) of insecurity?*

The reflections on the questions of security were interesting and very thoughtful, Bishop Jana said. Finnish society was prepared for the war in Ukraine due to its long history of preparedness. Half the population of Finland is trained

for guerrilla warfare, and all institutions have crisis plans in place. Joining NATO had alleviated insecurity to some extent, though many still find Russia a threat.

Insecurity in Finnmark has increased due to its border being within shooting range from Russia. The history of being trampled upon by Russia and other empires has led to background fear of Russian infiltrators. The possibility of prolonged war in the region has also raised concerns. A survey published in June 2023 found 79% of ethnic Latvians believing the war in Ukraine was entirely Russia's fault, with 32% of the Russian-speaking minority blaming Russia and 28% the USA. One respondent felt that the destruction of their own Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral, Moscow Patriarchate, in Odessa by the Russians indicates that all Ukrainian places of worship face threats from Russia.

Bishop Jana told us that the Institute for Religious Freedom reported 630 religious buildings in Kyiv, Ukraine, damaged or destroyed by December 2023, with 187 belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate-affiliated Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Hungary's government aligns with Moscow and spreads propaganda about the war's spread to neighbouring countries, making many feel insecure. Ukrainian refugees who shelter in the Anglican chaplaincies feel traumatised by their experience and resent Russia's "special military operation". They express gratitude for help and practice English while waiting for UK visas, which testifies to their lack of any sense of long-term security in any country bordering Ukraine.

Question seven: *How do you view the position that the Russian Orthodox Church has taken towards the war in Ukraine?*

Predictably, many responses to the Russian Orthodox Church's (ROC) actions were critical, describing it as stupid, evil, and predictable. The leadership of the ROC seem like apostates, and the Church's decision to side with war criminals was seen as sad and appalling. The Church's support for aggression and politics was seen as driven by political ambition and as a breach in the Body of Christ. The ROC was seen as an instrument of Kremlin imperialism.

Question eight: *Are you generally optimistic about the future for your own Church, and the catholic (universal) Church in your country?*

Bishop Jana commented that despite the vagueness of the question, it elicited some very thoughtful answers. The Lutheran Church is declining, but may eventually find a new place in society. The Roman Catholic Church is growing, and the Anglican chaplaincy is thriving, but over all the Church as a whole is in a visibly sharp decline.

One respondent continues to trust in God, but believes that Churches must change or make way for new contexts. One expressed disappointment with the Church as an institution, as it seems to prioritise its own interests over serving the people. However, said another, the Anglican Communion shows the capacity to change while remaining true to ancient teachings.

Question nine: *Has attendance/involvement in your church increased or decreased in the last years?*

Interestingly, more than 27% said that attendance had increased and nearly 41% said it had remained the same. Bishop Jana commented that the LWF Good Friday message had highlighted the importance of allowing traumatised individuals to express their feelings and seek help. It seems that churches with stable attendance can help people find help while also allowing them to lament and express their hurt, and provide practical support and spiritual assistance through prayer, counseling, and worship.

Question ten : *What do you think might have affected attendance?*

Interestingly, the majority of possible effects on church attendance quoted were negative, despite the answers given for question nine,' Bishop Jana reported. Young people are increasingly alienated from Christianity. Many people don't see practical significance in church and are seeking alternative spirituality. The Covid pandemic had affected church attendance habits by holding online services. It also meant fewer educational opportunities for foreign students, some of whom attended churches in the past. Many people are forced to have multiple jobs and are prevented from attending church.

But there were some positives, she said. The Porvoo congregation in Tallinn has seen increased attendance, and people seem to be looking for communities to belong to post-Covid. People desire peace, but not at any cost. The Churches' ecumenical hopes for peace sometimes seem naive.

What of the Churches?

Moving on from her questionnaire and the answers, Bishop Jana asked, 'So what might be a role for churches of all denominations in our current setting in the swathe of Europe that is part of this conflict, or is a near neighbour?'



The World Council of Churches, she said, uses this image as its logo, a metaphor for churches and chaplaincies. The image is of a boat on the Sea of Galilee in the midst of a storm, which Jesus calms. We read the story in Mark 4.35-40.

The Church worldwide is facing a 'furious squall' due to political instability, populist politicians, and immigration. Government pressure is demanding Churches stop speaking truth to power, and the threat of war is real in various regions, including Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

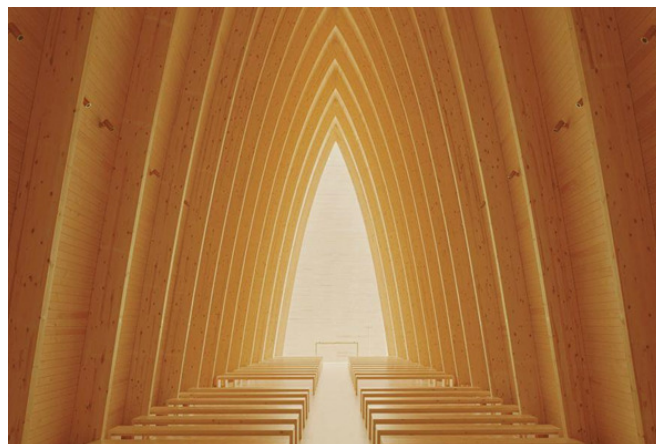
The average church attendee may feel anxious, wondering why Jesus seems silent or asleep during the storm. 'Church leaders often seem to spend time on things that are actually not vitally important, like who should be allowed to board the boat, or who they might like to throw over the side, rather than engaging with the present social and political

contexts,' Bishop Jana suggested.

'St Henry's Ecumenical Art Chapel near Turku, in Finland is built deliberately to remind us of church as ship. As you approach it, it appears to be quite nice – a nod to the image of a boat pulled ashore and left to dry out, or to overwinter – but probably nothing that special,' she said. 'It is not until you go inside that you realise how special it is.'



'Despite its outward appearance, it is filled with golden light, pine wood, and sanctity, drawing our eyes towards the altar.'



Bishop Jana told us. 'I was moved to tears when I went inside and these words leapt into my mind.'

*Locus iste
a Deo factus est,
inaestimabile sacramentum;
irreprehensibilis est.*

(This place
is made by God,
priceless sacrament;
without reproach)

She dreams of a Church presence in Europe that feels like a sanctuary for those weary and traumatised, a place of welcome for those hurt and cynical.

Her hope is that Anglicans, Lutherans, and other Churches can be that Church, filled with the light of Christ and drawing our eyes to the altar for transformation and renewal.

'THURSDAYS IN BLACK : AN EXAMPLE OF CHURCH ENGAGING IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

A summary of a small part of the presentation by Dr Kathryn Mary Lohre which can be read in full on the website

It was in 2019 that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reignited its participation in *Thursdays in Black* in relationship to its social teaching on gender-based violence and sexism. 'With intention, these efforts have also trickled down to local congregations and communities,' said Dr Lohre. 'It was the spike in gender-based violence worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic that reinforced the urgency of the campaign.'

Dr Lohre cited a number of stories and testimonies of why *Thursdays in Black* is important, and how it changes lives. 'Most Thursdays, I remember to don black clothing and affix my button before heading into my day,' she said. 'Because of the nature of my work, I am often in company with others who have done the same.' People then post photos using the hashtag #ThursdaysinBlack.

'From the looks of our social media feeds, the movement continues to grow,' she said. 'But I often wonder if that's true beyond the Church. What impact has the Church really had on the public space?'

In answer to her own question she shared the story of one of her colleagues, Franklin Ishida, that showed this impact. 'He recently travelled to Papua New Guinea for church meetings, and after making his way through immigration, he went to change money at the bank. When he got to the counter of the Bank of the South Pacific, he was surprised. The teller behind the desk was wearing a bank-branded "Black Thursdays" polo shirt.'

'This is an example of a Church-secular partnership,' said Dr Lohre. Since 2020, the Bank of the South Pacific staff members have worn black on Thursdays to raise public awareness about family and sexual violence and gender-based violence.'

The bank is one of the largest employers in Papua New Guinea, a majority-Christian country where nearly 60% of women and girls have experienced some form of physical sexual violence – almost twice the global average, according to the United Nations. The Chief Executive Officer of the Bank of the South Pacific, Robin Fleming, has publicly stated, "As a responsible employer, we are compelled to offer help because we care for the wellbeing of our employees."

The bank's work on this critical social issue long preceded its Black Thursdays campaign launch. 'It was in 2013, the bank responded to increased staff absenteeism, reported incidents, and met requests for refuge by converting one of its properties into a safe house – a project which grew into Campus of Hope,' Dr Lohre explained. 'Additionally, the bank adopted a Family Sexual Violence Policy to create a safe and judgement-free zone for its employees, as well as a Family Sexual Violence Action Committee, and a survivor support group called Voices of Hope.'

As part of their initial and on-going training, staff members learn about these resources and information is shared. 'The support from top leadership has made a tremendous difference not only in the bank's internal culture, but in the broader society as well,' said Dr Lohre, adding that, given the strong participation of South Pacific Churches in the global ecumenical movement, it is likely that a direct link exists between the bank's campaign and *Thursdays in Black*.

'However, I will need more time to say so with confidence,' she said. 'But regardless of that, we can affirm that the Church's involvement can motivate other partners to participate in the public space, and that the Church's engagement is strengthened when done in concert with other partners' contributions.'

She concluded: 'Either way, the message is coherent in the public space, and the work toward "neighbour justice" is strengthened.'



Staff member at the Bank of the South Pacific.
Photo: Franklin Ishida/ELCA

If you don't already know about *Thursdays in Black* the website is <https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/thursdays-in-black> where you will find all kinds of resources including badges, flyers, posters and banners and artwork to enable you to make your own T-shirt.

OUR SUNDAY SERMON

A very brief summary of Bishop David Hamid's sermon in St John's Episcopal Church, Edinburgh on Sunday, 15th September, 2024

Proverbs 1:20-33, Psalm 19, and Mark 8:27-38

Bishop David felt that the Gospel that day resembled the popular TV series "Who do you think you are?" in which celebrities trace their ancestry and discover secrets. Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" Peter confidently answers, "You are the Messiah." Then Jesus says that the Messiah must suffer greatly. He will be rejected by elders, priests, and scribes, and be killed before rising again. Peter thinks, "A suffering Messiah, impossible!" But Jesus rebukes Peter; he is setting his mind on human things, and Peter, prince of the Apostles, is called Satan by his Lord and Saviour.

That Jesus' strong language is recorded in the Gospel is crucial for understanding our faith. Misunderstandings can lead to misunderstandings. 'Friends,' Bishop David said, 'it is on our answer to the question of Jesus, "who do you think I am?", that our whole faith hangs: we must know who it is we are following, and what he stands for, and what he is about.'

Peter's belief that following Jesus is a path of glory, strength, and triumph is mistaken. The Apostles' message was not just about the risen Jesus, but also about the cost of discipleship. Following Jesus can lead to suffering, rejection, and sacrifice, as Jesus himself experienced. Working for justice, reconciliation, and inclusion can be challenging and often face ridicule and opposition.

Christians believe that following Jesus leads to encountering the cross, but this message may not attract people, as many assume faith protects from suffering. Jesus' words about suffering and bearing crosses appear poor slogans for promoting Church growth, the Bishop said. Usually potential members only want to be informed about a church's programmes and activities, rather than being told "If you join you will lose your life!"

We follow a crucified Christ, who reveals the true nature of God, who chooses to be weak and human like us.

The Messiah we follow is a wounded, scarred crucified Saviour. This message is important for today's world, as it counters the expectation of a "feel-good" religious experience. Worship should always begin and end with the sign of the cross, as it is the saving, wondrous cross that the Church offers to the world. Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught that only a suffering God can help, and modern theologian Miroslav Volf wrote, "God is in the midst of humanity's suffering, listening to every sigh, collecting every tear, resonating with the trembling of every fear-stricken heart".

The Church is a mission outpost, serving the crucified Christ in our brothers and sisters. Pope Francis describes the Church as a field hospital, 'rather like the one on the old TV programme



M*A*S*H,' said Bishop David, where the members are the Body of Christ who gives grace and gifts to embrace a hurting world. Instead of focusing on trivial matters like cholesterol or blood sugar levels, the Church should heal the deep wounds in people and our planet, which is itself so wounded that life as God intended it is threatened.

Christ died on the cross to save us, and the Bible reflects God's love for marginalised groups. Jesus, a refugee in Egypt, associated with outcasts and sinners. His execution serves as a model for Christian communities to take up the world's crosses, be present for the poor, oppressed, hurting, and the condemned. 'For this is God's mission. The Church exists only to engage with God's mission and to carry out that mission,' the Bishop said.

He referred to the way churches in USA put up illuminated signs offering some words of invitation. This one was seen outside one such church. 'Friends, this funny advertising bloopers is, ironically, close to the truth!' he said.



St Peter in the Gospel today did not know about a resurrection; but we live on the other side of the cross. We know that Peter's Messiah is the weak, humiliated, and crucified one, but who is also the Risen One. Our discipleship journey includes sharing in Jesus' sacrificial offering for hurting humanity and the hurting planet. But the way of Jesus does not end with losing one's life. It is finally about gaining New Life, entering the kingdom of victory, entering the reign of the Risen Christ over all creation.

'This, friends,' Bishop David concluded, 'is the glorious truth of the Gospel.'



OUR TUESDAY SERMON

A very brief summary of Bishop David Hamid's sermon in St John's Episcopal Church, Edinburgh on Tuesday, 17th September, 2024, at the Final Eucharist

Ecclesiasticus 43.1-12; St John 3.16-21

On this feast day, Anglicans and Lutherans both celebrate St Hildegard of Bingen who was a remarkable woman in Christian history. Born in 1098, she was known for her preaching, teaching, and visionary theology. She was a painter, a composer of songs, a prolific writer in the fields of science and medicine. Hildegard was also a master brewer, introducing hops to beer and writing about its preservative quality. 'She deserves to be celebrated as the unofficial patron saint of beer!' Bishop David said.

Today we honour her as a religious leader; she experienced God's presence aged three and received visions at five. She became a nun and abbess, leading her community and founding others. She was an Agony Aunt, sharing her wisdom and sometimes brave and firm advice with emperors, popes, and others who thought they were in charge!

Pope Benedict, recognising her extraordinary greatness and blessedness, named Hildegard a Doctor of the Church in 2012. She used God's gifts to be a sensitive and spiritual authority, demonstrating a prophetic spirit and fervent capacity to discern the signs of the times.

Her favourite name for God was *Sapientia*, Wisdom. Her writings were both revolutionary yet deeply traditional, and she reflected on the place of women in God's plan. She incorporated three feminine characters in her theological writings: *Ecclesia*, Mother Church; *Maria*, Mother Mary; and *Sapientia*.

Theologian and saint, Hildegard is just the perfect saint for Lutherans and Anglicans. She balances the reality of sin with the inherent goodness in humanity, rooted in God's goodness. Her teaching is deeply encouraging, especially when we despair about our own falling from grace and wickedness. She reminds us that God has created us as part of his good creation, and we can always find a spark of goodness within us.

Hildegard, 900 years ago, focused on the care of the earth and our human responsibility for creation. Today, in our Collect, we ask God to help us follow her example and understand the joy of being ourselves part of creation. She acknowledges our weakness and sin harming creation: "When humanity fell, darkness fell on the whole of creation," she wrote, but she encourages hope that with God's grace we can help to redeem nature.

St Hildegard's words speak to the complex relationship between the Church and secular life, encouraging us to



remain brave and strong, awaken from dullness. "If we fall in love with creation deeper and deeper, we will respond to its endangerment with passion," she wrote. "What a saint she is for our time!" said Bishop David.

He reminded us that the Gospel for this feast explains that God's love for the world led to the birth of his eternal son, Jesus Christ, to save it. Hildegard in a vision described this universal love as "a bright girl holding the sun and moon, God's right hand embracing all of creation, all nations, all realms."

Anglicans and Lutherans, along with other Christians, believe in the Holy Spirit's call to proclaim God's love for the world. They strive to make the communion they enjoy through Baptism a visible reality, demonstrating God's will for human race. 'As we leave this place, and these days of encounter,' Bishop David concluded, 'and as we live a common life as Anglicans and Lutherans, wherever we are, let us be sustained by St Hildegard's teaching. That great Doctor of the Church encourages us to live lives focused first on meditating on God's love and then radiating it outward into love for others.'

WHAT'S LIFE IN CHURCH LIKE FOR US?

Theological Reflections of Persons with Disabilities 2024
Edited by: Anjeline Okola and Syovata Kilonzo

This publication is important. Although good work has been done on disability inclusion in churches, too often the voices of persons with disabilities within the church are not heard. The editors emphasise that "it is no longer valid for other Christians to speak about persons with disabilities as if we weren't already present in the church to speak up for ourselves."

In the first part we hear the voices of persons with disabilities who are currently serving their churches in various roles and capacities and of those who had to leave a church due to the discriminatory behaviour and attitudes that they experienced. The second part shares the WCC statement "A Gift of Being: Called to be a Church of All and for All."

The book has 60 pages; ISBN: 978-2-8254-1851-2. It is downloadable free of charge at

<https://oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/Life%20in%20Church%20Web.pdf>

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE AND RISE IN GLORY

Our Society has lost some longstanding and hardworking members during the past few weeks.

Gudrun Kaper died on 4th October in Stuttgart at the age of 79. She joined the Society shortly after it began and was intimately involved in all our activities. She was a regular attendee at conferences and Annual Meetings, was very outspoken on occasions, and very interested in all aspects of Church Law. She was also our National Co-ordinator for Germany for some years.



For many years she was also active in the Martin Luther League in Württemberg and its Chairwoman. Her true passion was creating understanding between Germans and Americans. She lived next to the Patch Barracks, the US Army base in Stuttgart-Vaihingen, and she not only gave them German courses there but also made sure that the Württemberg pastors held services in English! For Army employees she was always a caring contact person - "Ask Gudrun" almost became a catchphrase there. When she was honoured for her volunteer work in 2019, Dean Schwesig said of her: "She is one of the most impressive bridge builders I know."

On hearing of her death one of our members wrote, "She was such a motivated, fond member of the ALS. She brought me into the A-LS in 1997; without her I would not have come across it, so I am very grateful. Her great knowledge of England and the Church of England was so precious."

Another wrote, "She was a very strong, determined woman of friendship whose company I enjoyed when we met. She served the A-LS well and we will remember her for all she did."

* * *

The Rev Jim Knights celebrated his 90th birthday in May and much enjoyed time with family and friends, his wife Dorothy told us. But in July he became gradually weaker and was admitted to Worcester hospital where he died on 27th September. His funeral was on Oct 30th at Great Malvern Priory at 2pm.

Jim and Dorothy have been members of our Society for a long time and both have been engaged in ecumenical work elsewhere. They have been very active in the partnership between Malvern Priory in the diocese of Worcester and their partner parish Magdeburg-Halberstadt, near Magdeburg, Germany, which originated in the early 90's and is still going.

Dorothy says "I feel very supported by many different prayerful friends."

The Rev Dr Roy Long was a stalwart of our Society, served as a Trustee and was its very efficient Secretary for a number of years. He was a man of great learning and loved sharing his vast knowledge of the Lutheran Churches and characters. He wrote a number of books on the subject, was a voracious reader, and many of us appreciated his book reviews in The Window.

Roy was born in Nottingham in the heart of England in 1942. He studied theology at Mansfield College, Oxford, and was ordained on Reformation Day in 1970 as a Pastor in the Lutheran Church in Great Britain. He served a number of different congregations, but his day job was in education. From 1984-2008 he worked as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. He gained his PhD from the University of Nottingham and his thesis was about engaging parents in school life.



He had a passion for travel and for learning languages and had mastered several Scandinavian languages. Indeed, right up to his final days he was learning Faroese. One of our members wrote, "I am so sad to learn of the passing of Roy. During my first years in the ALS I had many stimulating conversations with him, especially so during our visit to Iceland (was that in 2013, perhaps?), a country which he had visited 54 times (!) as he told me at the time. He was indeed a very nice and knowledgeable man and will surely be missed by many. May he rest in peace and rise in glory."

THANK YOU FOR THE GENEROSITY OF FORMER MEMBERS

A short while ago a very faithful member of our Society, **Marion Minchinton**, died and he have learned that she has left A-LS £500 in her will which has now been paid into our bank account. We are very grateful, both for her contribution to the work and life of the Society during her lifetime, and for her generosity clear desire that the Society should continue to bring together Christians of our two traditions and more.

Now we learn that that **The Rev Dr Ian Phelps**, one of the two founders of the Society, has also left a gift in his will. Unfortunately, the firm of solicitors dealing with his affairs sent the notice to our Registered Address in London while it was unoccupied for the summer recess, so had it returned to them. Happily they contacted us and they now have details of where to send it. We are doubly grateful to Ian - for without him we would have no Society.

CELEBRATING CREATIONTIDE

The Venerable Christine Allsopp, a Committee Member, tells how good ecumenical partnerships can be.

It is twenty years since the link was formed between the Church of England Diocese of Oxford and the Church of Sweden Diocese of Växjö. In 2023 Bishop Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford and Bishop Fredrik Modeus, Bishop of Växjö, agreed that the link continued to be worthwhile and that it should focus on developing in four areas: Parish or Benefice links; Environmental issues; Cathedral to Cathedral link; and Young Leaders' Programmes. Each diocese has a link committee to take this work forward.

We only have a small number of links between parishes but one of them is particularly successful, the link between the Akeman Benefice and the Parish of Mönsterås – Fliseryd. The Akeman Benefice, in rural Oxfordshire, is comprised of seven parishes and the Parish of Mönsterås Fliseryd, in Kalmar County, has two churches and three chapels. The good relationship between the clergy, Gareth Miller and Magnus Johansson, has enabled the link to develop through group visits and online discussion and worship. Meeting to worship together on Zoom is now a regular part of the link. There have been several occasions when the invitation to join in has been spread more widely in the two dioceses.

In September this year over fifty people joined online for a special service for the Season of Creation. (That's me, top second left!) The sermon was given by the Bishop of Reading, the Rt Rev Olivia Graham. She described how many of us are uneasy with the hierarchy of creation described in Psalm 8, for we know the incalculable damage of human greed and destructiveness which has resulted from the sense of entitlement which this and other passages of scripture have instilled in us. Romans 8 acts as a counter-

balance. The environment of the Earth sustains us, feeds us, clothes us, warms us, cools us, heals us, shelters and houses us. What does it mean, she asked, for us to be stewards of God's creation, especially in a world where environmental degradation is increasingly evident?

The Bishop of Växjö, Fredrik Modeus, led the intercessions and invited us to pray the Lord's Prayer, each in our own language. At the end of the service, he gave the Blessing in both Swedish and English.

Although ecumenical links between Anglican and Lutheran Dioceses can seem to be a minority interest, for those of us who participate, they can be a real blessing. It is, I think, important that we continue to visit each other's countries, but meeting online, both for discussion and worship can greatly enrich our understanding of both our differences and also how much we have in common as followers of Christ.



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN AMERICA HAS NEW LEADER



The Rt Rev Sean Rowe will become the Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church on 1st November 2024 and hopefully will serve for a nine-year term. He was the youngest Episcopal priest when he was ordained at the age of 24, then, at the age of 32, he became the youngest member of the House of Bishops, and now, aged 49 he is the youngest Presiding Bishop ever elected. He ended his acceptance speech with a quote from "Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander," by Thomas Merton who wrote: "In a time of drastic change one can be too preoccupied with what is ending or too obsessed with what seems to be beginning. In either case one loses touch with the present and its obscure but dynamic possibilities. What really matters is openness, readiness, attention, and courage to face risk. You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope. In such an event, courage is the authentic form taken by love."

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP ACROSS CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS

Society member Rachel Sheppard describes her Easter experience in Oslo, Norway, with the Anglican Chaplaincy there

Last Easter, as part of my training for ordained ministry in the Church of England I was given the wonderful opportunity to do a Holy Week placement with the Anglican Chaplaincy in Norway at St Edmund's Church in Oslo. I had met Revd Canon Joanna Udal in Trondheim in 2022 at our Society's Conference. I hoped that the placement would help me to learn more about the Porvoo Communion and Anglican Chaplaincy in Europe, and give me the chance to journey with a congregation through Holy Week.

Having arrived in Oslo Saturday afternoon, I settled into the chaplaincy accommodation. Then it was Palm Sunday morning. The service involved a blessing of palms, and it was a great opportunity to meet members of the congregation, servers, the choir and music director, and another ordinand based at St Edmund's. Throughout the week, I was able to participate in various events in the life of the chaplaincy, such as an online confirmation class, with attendees from various cities in Norway, a lent group and a home communion visit.



Inside St Edmund's Church

Good Friday began with a service with the American Lutheran Congregation. The congregation is associated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and it was great to connect

with members there as I had recently spent a few months in Connecticut, USA, where my regular place of worship was an ELCA congregation. On Friday afternoon, we took part in an ecumenical walk of the cross, which was organised by Oslo Cathedral and the Church City Mission, an inclusive, non-profit organisation, which works in towns and cities across Norway, among people who face challenges in life.



The end of the walk, outside Oslo Cathedral

The walk began at the Central Station in Oslo with stops at nine places around the city. As we prayed, sang and read the story of Jesus' suffering, walking in prayer, the focus was on Jesus' solidarity with all persecuted, oppressed and suffering people in this city, and in the world.

The Stops poignantly included the Stortinget (Parliament), Regjeringskvartalet (the Government Quarter) and Tinghuset (Courthouse). This was a good opportunity to meet clergy from the city, including those who work at the Cathedral.

I reflected on how particular points in the liturgical year, such as Easter or Christmas, hold such great potential for ecumenical encounters, and so does on-going social action in local communities. We concluded the day with a visit to the Cathedral for a performance of Bach's St John Passion.

I was given the opportunity to preach at the Easter Vigil on Saturday and it was a great learning experience, putting together a sermon in a different context. Easter Sunday was a joyful occasion, and I enjoyed reconnecting with the congregation members I had not seen during the week.



The Easter garden at St Edmund's

On Easter Monday, we visited Bragernes Church in Drammen, a member of the Church of Norway, and we were able to participate in their Eucharist.



Joining in the Eucharist

After the Eucharist, we attended a service led by a Sudanese congregation who meet in Bragernes Church. Meeting with fellow Anglicans from the wider Anglican Communion, in a Church of Norway church was a wonderful ecumenical experience. ➡

➡ While the placement involved work with the Church of Norway it also encompassed ecumenical encounters with other churches in Norway. One was Margareta kyrkan, the Swedish church in Oslo. It was good to meet with the team there, and to learn more about how the Porvoo Communion works in Oslo with the Church of Sweden, and to hear a Swedish perspective on ecumenism in Scandinavian churches.

During the week, I was able to do some sight-seeing in Oslo. I visited an exhibition by the Sámi textile artist Britta Marakatt-Labba at the National Museum. Her work explores the culture, mythologies and religion of her people and the issues that affect them, such as climate change and industrialisation. It was fascinating to learn more about Sámi life, to reflect on the vital importance of preserving nature and natural resources and to hear stories of Sámi experiences.



A section of Britta Marakatt-Labba's *Historjá*, a 24-metre-long embroidery depicting scenes from Sámi history, mythology, and everyday life.

A trip to Norway would not be complete without skiing! We took the T-Bane to Holmenkollen where I had my first experience of cross-country skiing. It was wonderful to get out of the city centre and to view Oslo from above, to see the iconic Holmenkollbakken Ski Jump and to take part in an activity with such a rich heritage in Norway.

It was a joy to take part in the worshipping life of St Edmund's, especially at Easter, the high point of the liturgical year, to explore how liturgy has been contextualised in a Norwegian setting and to see some of the fruits of the Porvoo Communion first hand.

So often one of the most important aspects of ecumenical encounters is the building of relationships with those from different traditions. Being in Oslo allowed me to make some connections and to experience how Anglican Chaplaincy works in the Diocese of Europe, and in a country where most people are affiliated to the Lutheran church. Doing this placement was a privilege and I hope that this experience leads to more ecumenical encounters with Lutheran churches!

OUR CONFERENCE TOPIC WAS 'ON THE BUTTON'

The issues raised in Edinburgh are issues that are being raised in many other places as this report of the LWF Regions' Meeting in Prague demonstrates.

Delegates of member Churches in the Nordic, Central Eastern and Central Western European regions of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) gathered in the Czech Republic from 8th to 11th October to discuss some challenges and opportunities they face within their pluralistic and increasingly polarised societies. Hosted by the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, the meeting was entitled 'Lutheran journey in a changing European context'.

Discussions ranged from war and peace, Church-State relations, spiritual growth and secularisation, and the renewal of our congregational life, as participants focused on the need to live into the words of the German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, written from prison, and to become "Church for Others."

Young delegates voiced growing concerns about the rise of populist governments and ideologies, calling on churches to follow in the footsteps of those who stood against 20th century totalitarianism and "speak truth to power" in contemporary contexts. Churches throughout the region were encouraged to be models of "ongoing Reformation", trusting not in their own strength, "but in God's promises of grace, mercy and reconciliation."

Youth perspectives

Part of the programme was dedicated to a presentation of the new LWF strategy, with a panel composed entirely of young delegates sharing their perspectives on the four priority areas of Thriving Churches, Responsible Theology, Justice and Peace, and Service and Dignity. The participants discussed the challenges of bringing this strategy to the grassroots level for effective implementation.

Reflecting back on last year's Kraków Assembly, delegates explored ways in which that experience of global communion continues to inspire and shape the work of the Churches in Europe today. For many, the landmark event was a vital experience of empowerment that continues to bear fruit, including among the Polish young people who were serving as stewards and volunteers. They noted that sharing worship and music from many different countries was a powerful experience of communion, while the visit to Auschwitz served as a reminder of past atrocities, and of the need to speak up for peace, justice and human dignity wherever they are threatened today.



A FLOURISHING CHURCH WILL ONLY GROW AT THE SPEED OF FRIENDSHIP

Isaiah Morris, a Church of England recipient of a grant from the Bill Snelson Young Ecumenists Fund, visited Rome and the Vatican and discovered the power of collaboration across traditions and the beauty that can emerge from it. The Fund, administered by Churches Together in England, gives young ecumenists – between the ages of 18 and 35 – the opportunity to experience ecumenism outside England. This experience can be through study, pilgrimage, volunteering or any activity that promotes church unity.



A grant from the Bill Snelson Young Ecumenists Fund enabled me to travel to Rome and the Vatican City for seven days. In Rome, I stayed at the Casa Balthasar, a secular religious house for young Roman Catholics considering the religious life. Broadly, the Casa is guided by the teachings of Hans Urs von Balthasar,

Adrienne von Speyr, and Henri de Lubac - all influential figures in twentieth-century Catholic thought and ecumenical dialogue (Urs von Balthasar, for example, was deeply inspired by, and friends with, Karl Barth).

I followed the Casa's daily rhythm: morning study, midday rosary, lunch, study (or swimming!), Mass, dinner, Compline, and then silence. We studied a letter from St Ignatius on Saturday evening with the Rector, Father Andrea, who emphasised the joy of following the Lord's will during our discussions. What struck me was his reminder that God uses people as gifts for specific communities. Insofar as we follow the Lord's will in this, we become a fragrance that "travels", reminding the rest of us of God's faithfulness so that we, too, might see and encounter joy.

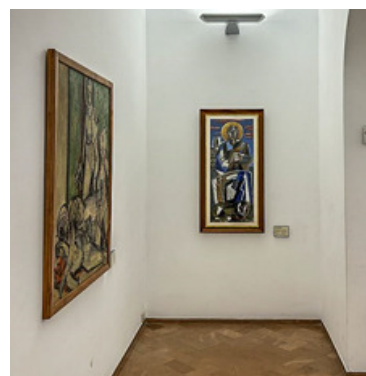
This aspect of joyful and hope-filled obedience was further reflected in one of our dinner discussions. There, I asked one of the resident young men what he thought about the decline in young adult religious affiliation in Europe. His response astounded me: "Christ's Gospel is always with us; it just needs soil and people to till the ground into soft dirt."

His reminder of being soft (meaning welcoming or fertile) has remained with me. It was soft hospitality freely shared by this young man and the others that gave me hope. As we continue to till our soil (communally, ecumenically, and personally), the true promise of the Gospel will find germination. At the Casa, I discovered that this hope will be found around dinner tables with a vivid hospitality and amidst the flickering candles singing songs in the lounge after dark.

My experience allowed me to re-discover something ancient and new: God is found in the face of those with whom we might see ourselves as in disagreement. And through a rich hospitality of mutual encounter, God's presence is felt, and joy becomes our harvest.

Visiting the Vatican

Alongside my stay at the Casa, I visited Vatican City and toured their art collection. What struck me the most was the Vatican's engagement with modern and contemporary art. Personally, coming from a more Protestant-Evangelical context which can, sometimes, lament the supposed "collapse" of art and beauty in the twentieth century, the Vatican City told a different story. Room upon room was filled with great works of art; countless images had didacts beside them, noting their being "a gift from the artist". I was reminded of Pope Paul VI's Letter to the Artists (1965), in which his closing remarks are: 'Be al-



Contemporary art at the Vatican

ways and everywhere worthy of your ideals and you will be worthy of the Church which, by our voice, addresses to you today her message of friendship, salvation, grace and benediction.'

In the heart of the Roman Catholic Church at Vatican City, is a testimony to enduring friendship. The Vatican museum and its accrued artworks offer a memory, both ancient and new, of gifts and companionship between artists and priests. This memory suggests hope for a continued dialogue that expands the imaginative possibilities of who the church and her people might be, whether between poets and clergy, or between traditions and confessions.

This experience has solidified a suspicion of mine. The flourishing of the Church will only grow at the speed of friendship. While this primarily might look like a deepening relationship with our own ecclesial communities, it is also a relationship, as Fr Andrea reminded us, with all those geographical neighbours the Lord has called us to be with. This might look like offering a delicious, fresh, homemade pizza to the parish across the road. Although that church might look, sound or talk a bit differently, the fragrance of food will nevertheless inspire shared longings: to eat, drink, and talk with each other.

My Roman experience has given me much to consider as I discern whether doctoral study and/or an ordained vocation is for me. This opportunity to experience the dimensions of von Balthasar's work at the Casa has helped me to refine what I might like to research further. Functionally, it has encouraged me to strive to continue building friendships with a diversity of artists, and to go out from under my

GOOD NEWS FOR STUDENTS : GLOBAL THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE WILL NOW EARN UNIVERSITY CREDITS

The Institute has offered courses for more than ten years and now, in a new initiative, students who complete courses will receive academic credits and a certificate from the University of Geneva



Some of the students who took part in the 2022 GETI programme

The Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) is a programme in which about 100 people from all over the world are trained in ecumenical theology. They participate in a rather intensive seminar lasting 6 weeks (4 weeks distance learning, 2 weeks in residence somewhere).

‘They actively experience the work of the ecumenical movement worldwide,’ explained the Rev Dr Benjamin Simon, Director of the WCC Commission on Ecumenical Education and Formation and Dean of the WCC’s Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

The global institute has always taken place at the same time as other major WCC events, so that young colleagues can gain insights and contribute their position and opinions to a wider ecumenical audience.

Now the flagship programme is bearing fruit in new ways, with graduates leading church or academic positions and contributing their life-changing experience from the global ecumenical movement. The next GETI will take place in conjunction with the WCC Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order, which will be held under the

theme “Where now for visible unity?” from 24th-28th October 2025, at the Papal Logos Center which is in Wadi El Natroun, Egypt.

From now on, all Global Ecumenical Theological Institutes will be accredited by the University of Geneva with 10 credits within the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, and students will obtain a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Global Ecumenical Theology. As before, courses will have a four-week distance learning component and a two-week intensive residential period of study, research, and community life.

‘This academic accreditation is both a confirmation of the academic and content-wise valuable curriculum and increases the attractiveness of this programme for students to participate and thus be able to have it credited for their studies,’ said Dr Simon.

‘Young ecumenists are trained and involved actively to be able to include transformative thoughts and ideas into the ecumenical movement.’

[Apply for global theological institute: “Where now for visible unity?” at <https://oikoumene.org/news/apply-for-global-theological-institute-where-now-for-visible-unity>](https://oikoumene.org/news/apply-for-global-theological-institute-where-now-for-visible-unity)

own “roof” and build community with Christians from other traditions.

And what’s next for me?

Currently, I am working as a Chaplain Assistant at King’s College, London. This ecumenical experience has gifted me a greater appreciation for the diversity of perspectives that these students share with me.

Having learnt, whilst at the Casa, how to navigate conversations so that disagreements are respected (and celebrated!), but common unity is kept at the forefront, my own language has naturally become more adept at making space for these nuances. At present I am part of a team that is launching a new sung Mass service at the Anglo-Catholic parish, Our

Most Holy Redeemer, Clerkenwell. This service is being done in collaboration with their contemporary Roman Catholic worship group, “One Hope Project”, and the aim is to encourage ecumenism and develop a Church of England community that is contemporary and sacramental.

I have been accepted to join the *Centre for Cultural Witness* as part of their Emerging Leader Programme. With them, I will have the opportunity to meet leaders and laity, tell my own story and share ecumenical experiences, and discover how to communicate this more effectively to a wider audience. The Bill Snelson Young Ecumenists Fund has helped to give me the language and a personal case study on the power of collaboration across traditions and the beauty that can emerge from it.

The Window

supports members of the Anglican-Lutheran Society in better understanding our different traditions and social contexts so that we can more faithfully proclaim together God's love and justice in the world

www.anglican-lutheran-society.org
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The Anglican-Lutheran Society

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A DAUNTING NEW ROLE AND A WELCOMING CHURCH

*This is a heart-warming and encouraging message
delivered by Archbishop Anne Germond on taking up the role of
Acting Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.*

In this season of giving thanks, I write these first words to you in my new role as Acting Primate with heartfelt gratitude for the gift the Anglican Church of Canada has been to me for close to 40 years - and with profound thanks for the dedication, Christ-centred leadership and commitment of our 14th primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, who recently retired.



When I arrived in Canada, a stranger and a foreigner without much hope of finding work in my occupation as a teacher, aside from the love of family and friends the one certainty in my new homeland was my faith and familiarity of the liturgy of the Anglican church. When I stepped (with some trepidation) into St Thomas the Apostle in Ottawa on a bitterly cold January day in 1987, I realised that my fears were unfounded. I experienced an immediate sense of belonging through the Eucharist and in the warmth of the welcome offered - a parishioner even helped us furnish our tiny apartment. I knew I had come home and that all would be well.

The journey from then until now has not always been straight or easy. There have been mountaintop moments, days of desert wanderings and a good chunk of time in the valleys of darkness and despair. But through it all I have experienced God's faithfulness and the abiding presence of Jesus in word and sacrament and in the community of faithful companions given to me along the way. I have tried to return the welcome that has been given to me by making inclusivity and hospitality hallmarks of my ministry.

On the eve of my consecration as Bishop of Algoma in 2017, I received a letter from then-primate Archbishop Fred Hiltz. He wrote that he knew how overwhelming the call to be a bishop could be, but he said he took heart in advice given by Archbishop Howard Clark who was Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada from 1959 to 1971, to Ted Scott on his election as Bishop of Kootenay in 1971: "Any call from God is a frightening and glorious experience and always there is a note of mystery. We know little about the ways in which prayer works, but we know it works. We know equally little about the economy of grace, yet I am sure grace is abounding. Just put your trust in God and go ahead with the work. Then you will find yourself marvellously and wondrously equipped for your task."

This new call to be Acting Primate, even though it is just to bridge the gap until next summer's General Synod, is daunting. But over the years I have experienced the hand of grace as it has been extended to me, and seen firsthand how prayer does really work. I know I do not go alone into this new role, for our Church is filled with Spirit-filled, gifted individuals, immersed in the Church's work and eager to help.

Let us continue to embrace this Church with its amazing gift of hospitality, where over and over again we are invited to the Lord's table to, in the words of the American Presbyterian theologian Eugene Peterson, "eat and drink our Lord's life in the company of his friends."