

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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ZOOM ANNUAL MEETING IN MARCH

'Witness through Service and Sacrifice : Martyrdom in the Church Today'

In these COVID-times we are all getting used to changes at short notice, not being able to meet people in person, and for some of us, perhaps, having to self-isolate on more than one occasion. 2020 has been a bleak year.

But it has not all been bad. One positive side has been the way in which people have used social media, Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype, YouTube and many other platforms to keep in touch.

Suddenly meetings have sprung up, Bible studies have taken place, quiz nights have been arranged and people from many churches across many parish and national boundaries have been able to join in.

Strange to say, there has possibly been more 'togetherness' during these COVID days than normally takes place in our churches and other organisations. We have been able to 'attend' church services right across the world, and sick, elderly and house-bound people have been brought back in worship and fellowship.

It is on this basis that we are planning our Annual Meeting. We cannot easily travel to one location, but we can assemble by staying at home and joining a Zoom meeting.

**It will be on Saturday 6th March
at 11.00 London time**

This timing will be tricky. For members in Europe it will not be too bad, but it will be quite late in the day for members in India, for example, but very early for people in the USA. But that is a minor inconvenience compared with the fact that, for the first time in the life of our Society, the meeting will be open to all our members, wherever we are. Everyone can join in provided they have a computer, a tablet or a phone.

The topic for our meeting is carried over from last year when the first COVID lockdown prevented us from meeting:

'Witness through Service and Sacrifice : Martyrdom in the Church Today'

Our speakers are the Rt Rev Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani (recently appointed Bishop of Chelmsford in the Church of England) and Henrietta Blyth, the Chief Executive Officer of Open Doors UK). You will find some information about them and their presentations on the next page.

The meeting will be 'rooted' in All-Hallows-by-the-Tower and the Vicar, the Rev Katherine Hedderly is hosting the Zoom meeting, assisted by members of her congregation.

Katherine will welcome us and tell us about the church which has a rich and fascinating history. A short Annual General Meeting will follow at 11.25 and then a short break before the first presentation. The 'lunch' break at 12.30 (breakfast for some and bedtime cocoa for others!) will be followed by the second presentation at 13.15 and break-out rooms at 13.45 so people can briefly discuss both presentations.

We plan to make the whole meeting as interactive as possible. There will be a closing act of worship and the meeting will end at 15.00 London time.

If you would like to attend the meeting it is essential that you register as soon as possible because numbers are limited to 100. You simply need to contact us at

angluthsociety@outlook.com

You will then be sent a programme and joining instructions. We look forward to our biggest ever turn-out!

SOCIETY'S FORMER PRESIDENT BISHOP MUNIB YOUNAN HONOURED

The Rt Rev Dr Munib Younan, Bishop Emeritus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land, is the 2020 recipient of the Kenneth W Bensen Award for Contextual Leadership presented by OMNIA Institute for Contextual Leadership.



Bishop Munib Younan.

Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

The award, presented annually for the past several years by the OMNIA Institute, is named after the Rev Dr Ken Bensen, who was honoured for his leadership in the field of affordable housing. The OMNIA Institute for Contextual Leadership is based in Chicago and is a global leadership training and consulting programme serving religious and civic leaders who committed to solving society's most intractable problems, such as racism, extremism, and economic justice.

Bishop Younan continues to serve as an honorary President of the Middle East Council of Churches and is a recent past President of the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches. He is also a founding member of the Council of Religious Institutions in the Holy Land comprising Jerusalem's Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities, which provides leadership to the ecumenical Patriarchs and the Heads of the Christian Churches located in Jerusalem.

Bishop Munib is also the most recent past President of the Lutheran World Federation and currently an honorary president of Religions for Peace International. He has been a part of the OMNIA Institute since its transition from the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education. The award ceremony took place online on 3rd December, 2020.

OUR ANNUAL MEETING PRESENTERS

The Rev Katherine Hedderly



Before she was ordained Katherine worked in the film and television business, in script development and drama production and as director of an independent production company. Up-

on her ordination in 2009 she joined the staff at St Martin-in-the-Fields as Associate Vicar for Ministry, and was responsible for liturgy and worship, communications, prayer and spirituality, and young people's ministry. In 2019 she was appointed Vicar of All Hallows Berkynchirche-by-the-Tower with St Dunstan-in-the-East, and also Area Dean of the City of London (London).

Henrietta Blyth

When "God's Smuggler" came out in 1967 Brother Andrew suddenly became known across the world. An entire generation caught the vision of supporting the persecuted church. As Chief Executive of "Open Doors" in both the UK and



Ireland, Henrietta Blyth will describe the work they do to ensure Christians in many tough situations know they are not forgotten. "Open Doors" seeks to mobilise the Church in many lands to care for Christians living under religious persecution and also to learn from them about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani

"The Blood of The Martyrs is The Seed of The Church: What Lessons might we Learn from the Persecuted Church?" This is the question Bishop Guli has set herself and she will help us to engage with it. She was born in 1966 in Iran but her family sought refuge in Britain, when she was a teenager, after a failed assassination attempt on her father during 1979 Islamic Revolution. After completing her schooling in England and a Music degree at Nottingham University, she worked at BBC World Service radio and Domestic Radio's Religious Department. Ordained in 1998, Bishop of Loughborough in 2017, she was nominated as Bishop of Chelmsford in 2020.



LOOK OUT FOR OUR EXCITING VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Executive Committee member, the Very Rev Tom Bruch, outlines a new opportunity for members of our Society to meet together online in May 2021.

Because of serious concerns about the continuing spread of COVID-19 in many countries, the Anglican-Lutheran Society decided, with deep regret, to cancel the conference that was to take place in Rome on 19th-23rd October, 2020. The theme of the conference was

**'Stumbling Blocks and Springboards:
Working together for forgiveness and reconciliation'**

The programme would explore the achievements and outstanding issues on the road to unity, featuring in particular the bi-lateral relationships between our two Churches, the Anglican and Lutheran, and the Roman Catholic Church.

As places for the original conference were fully booked within a few days, it was clear that the topic was of great interest to our members. This encouraged the Executive Committee to consider pursuing the conference theme through online media, providing a condensed treatment of the topic.

We are pleased to announce that a two-part virtual conference will be held in May 2021. The conference will take into account the Society's international character and the different time zones of expected participants.

The first session will be delivered as pre-recorded videos and will include presentations of 20-30 minutes each by four theologians considering the progress made and some of the remaining challenges in dialogues between Roman Catholics and Anglicans and between Roman Catholics and Lutherans. Registered participants will have several days to watch the videos.

The four speakers will be:

Bishop Eero Huovinen

Bishop Eero is the Lutheran Co-chair of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Commission on Unity



Bishop William Kenney

Bishop William is Roman Catholic Co-chair of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Commission on Unity

Archbishop Bernard Longley

Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, Bernard Longley, is Co-chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission



The Rev Dr Will Adam

Will is the Archbishop of Canterbury's Ecumenical Adviser and Director for Unity, Faith & Order for the Anglican Communion

The second session will be screened live on Zoom at **14.00 GMT on 21st May**. This will include some short presentations from representatives of the wider ecumenical community in response to the talks given on video. It will be a moderated session, allowing interactions among the main presenters, other speakers and participants, and will last for about 90 minutes.

This live session will be introduced by the **Most Rev Ian Ernest**

Archbishop Ian is Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome, which was closely involved in planning the 2020 conference.



The Rt Revd Jana Jeruma-Grinberga, will chair the live session.

She was formerly Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain and later became Chaplain at St Saviour's Church of England parish in Riga, Latvia.

It is intended that other experts in ecumenical affairs will respond to the presentations, and registered participants will be invited to submit questions to the panel a few days before the session.

Information about how to register and technical details will be sent to members of the Society in the coming weeks.

First, they were
STUMBLING BLOCKS
Then, they became
STEPPING STONES
Now, make them
SPRING BOARDS.

ELIZABETH A. IBILOYE

FUTURE OF THE CHURCHES IN GERMANY

Major changes are planned in the Lutheran Church in Germany, which has been hit by a large decline in membership and loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Decline

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (EKD) there is a mood of impending crisis. In 2019, 270,000 members resigned from the Church, which is an increase of 22% compared to 2018. At the turn of the year there had been a decline in membership of almost 2%, which means that a total of 20.7 million are members of the Church or 24.9 percent of the total population - a figure slightly lower than membership of the Roman Catholic Church in Germany which also lost a record number of members last year.

Due to declining church tax revenues as a result both of this membership decline and also declining church attendance due to COVID-19, the EKD is financially challenged.

EKD's synod has decided that it will be necessary to make some drastic changes if the downward curve is to be broken. Three years ago, EKD's synod set up a team to make recommendations on how to secure the future of the Church. The team is led by the Church's President, Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm. A few months ago, the team published their report, "Kirche auf gutem Grund: Elf Leitsätze für eine aufgeschlossene Kirche" (Church on Firm Ground: Eleven Principles for an Outward-Looking Church).

The many new recommendations have already aroused great debate, as they fundamentally shake the tradition and structure that characterise the Church today. At the same time, however, there is broad agreement in EKD's Synod that major changes are needed to tackle the crisis.

Radical measures

The recommendations include the phasing out of the parish structure over time, so that there will no longer be parish congregations at each church, but instead there will be new parish structures and ways of being church. Sunday services are not something people will be able to find in every church in the future, and it also raises many questions about how to redefine the role of the pastor. In addition, the report aims to streamline the Church system significantly by cutting back on administration, councils and professional centres in an attempt to de-bureaucratise and break down church hierarchies.

The report suggests that the Church will work co-operatively with other Church and non-church workers and organizations, with a strengthened focus on ecumenism and the digital opportunities. German society is not yet digitised to the same degree as in Denmark, for example, where the


Church of Denmark is now pressing on with digitisation having created both a digital innovation fund, hackathons [A hackathon is an event in which computer programmers work together on software projects – Ed] and a wealth of large and small digital development projects - which is a branch of work that especially appeals to the younger members of the Church. That is one direction in which the EKD will move.

The core

In this report the team has tried to identify the core of what the Church's task is, what is most important, and what should be prioritised above all else. The report expresses a strong desire that the whole process must contribute to the Church being able to make itself more relevant, and shape society ("missionary action") rather than shutting itself off, and take part in the conversations concerning the burning issues for society. For the same reason, mission, diakonia, publicity, and "Frömmigkeit" (piety) are central to the report.

The report is a very exciting presentation that can contribute to fruitful Church debate beyond the German borders, says Mogens Mogensen, Chairman of the Church of Denmark's Interchurch Council. 'Of course, there are big differences between the churches in Germany and in Denmark. But there are also some similarities, and I believe that the benchmarks that EKD sets in relation to the Church of the future are relevant in a Danish ecclesiastical context.'

Decisions

At its first digital Synod on 8th-9th November 2020, with the motto *Kirche ist Zukunft* (The Church is the Future), the report was adopted by the EKD and austerity measures were agreed that will amount to some €17million by 2030. During the course of the debate it was stated that the EKD wants to become 'more transformative and more willing to take risks.' There was a call for the German Church to be 'less like a 



The November Online Synod

⇒ state agency' and 'more like an innovation orientated enterprise. The Synod urged the 20 member Churches of the EKD to forge closer cooperation and through digitization to open the Church to non-members.



Dr Andreas Barner, the former head of the pharmaceutical company Boehringer Ingelheim and the man who is responsible for the Churches' finance, had told the 120 Synod members that unless changes

were made the EKD would have run up a deficit of €9million. He also pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic was proving very expensive.

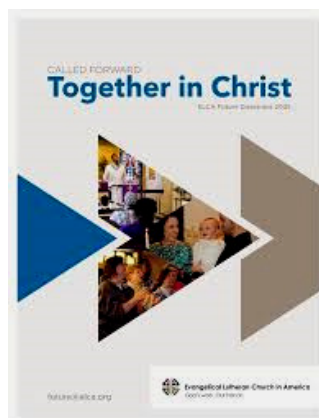
The austerity measures will be phased in from 2022 onwards. They will particularly affect the two ecclesiastical universities for theological training in Wuppertal and Neuendettelsau. There may also be significant cuts in cooperation with some partner churches, congregations abroad and the seaman's mission and, as well as other institutions, charitable organisations and other Church-supported work. In Germany the Churches are the biggest employer after the State.

'With this conference, the Protestant Church has shown that it is ready to change,' said President Irmgard Schwaetzer. 'We know that in 20 years' time the Church will face completely different demands than is the case today.' That is why the Synod started a comprehensive consultation process as soon as the Reformation anniversary in 2017 ended, and has now set itself the necessary course, she said.



NEW DESIGN FOR LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

The German Church is not the only one having to adjust its thinking in the light of changing circumstances. The Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has agreed a new vision for their Church.



Back in July 2020 the ELCA unveiled a new design for the future of the Church meant to ensure the answering of God's call to invite more into the way of Jesus. 'The world has changed but the message of the gospel has not,' said Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA. 'What needs to change is the way the Church engages with the world to invite more people

into the way of Jesus – the way of love, grace and justice. This new design positions the ELCA to accomplish this mission.'

At a virtual meeting from 12th-14th November, the Church Council of the ELCA affirmed this new Church design. It sees the Church body's three interdependent expressions – congregations, synods and the Church-wide organisation – working holistically to bring the gospel to the world. The Church's staff would be re-aligned around this design.

Future Church is based in the belief that members, congregations, synods and the Church-wide organisation must work together to invite more young and diverse people to experience God's grace in action. There are three priority areas:

- 1) a welcoming Church that engages new, young and diverse people;
- 2) a thriving Church rooted in tradition and radically relevant;
- 3) a connected, sustainable Church that shares in a common purpose and direction.

This will be implemented in the Church-wide organisation on 1st February 2021. Three new home areas will be

- a) Christian Community and Leadership;
- b) Innovation; and
- c) Service and Justice.

For more than 30 years the ELCA has experienced a rich history of ministry, but the Church has also witnessed a pattern of significant decline with ageing members and a membership profile that does not reflect the diversity of God's creation.

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A Eaton told the council that the COVID-19 pandemic had brought into sharper focus the need to respond more quickly to this rapidly changing world. 'We know we need to change. I think the pandemic has helped us to see the urgency,' she said. 'We are presenting this design because we believe that this is the way God will enable us to move more quickly, more faithfully, and reach more people so that more people may know the way of Jesus.'

Responding to the continuing trends in membership and diversity, and the data from an innovation readiness survey, the following new criteria were affirmed for the ELCA:

- i. to prioritise the engagement of new, young and diverse people;
- i. to unite all expressions of the Church - congregations, synods and the Church-wide organisation - together into one Church;
- ii. to align decision-making, accountability and leadership where best suited;
- iii. to operate in agile, flexible and speedy ways;
- iv. to act based on data and measurable impact; and
- v. to eliminate divisions.

DECLARATION “OPENED THE DOOR” TO RECONCILIATION WITH FORMER ENEMIES

Protestants in Germany have commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt, made by German church leaders to an international ecumenical delegation shortly after the Second World War, in which they confessed their failings and shortcomings in opposing National Socialism and the Third Reich.

‘It is more than a liturgical “*mea culpa*”; it is a true expression of the existential darkness that the authors of the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt expressed 75 years ago on behalf of many others about the devastation of the years of the Third Reich,’ said Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Chair of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany in a sermon at a central memorial service in Stuttgart on 18th October, 2020.

The 1945 declaration was made at a meeting on 18th-19th October, 1945 in Stuttgart. The Council of the newly formed Evangelical Church in Germany met an international delegation of church leaders which was led by the Rev Dr Willem A. Visser ‘t Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) which at that time was still in the process of formation prior to its official founding in 1948.

In the declaration, German Protestant leaders confessed that, ‘Through us, infinite wrong was brought over many peoples and countries . . . we accuse ourselves for not standing for our beliefs more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently.’

In response to the declaration, Dr Visser ‘t Hooft invited the German Protestant church to become a member of the WCC as soon as possible, writing in his notes about the meeting: “We need the witness of the German Church in the ecumenical movement.”



Willem A. Visser ‘t Hooft



Strict social distancing was observed at the celebration in Stuttgart

Photo: Dan Peter

The declaration was highly controversial at the time, in a defeated Germany, and unleashed a storm of protest, not least from within the Churches, Bishop Bedford-Strohm recalled in his sermon, something that demonstrated ‘just how difficult it was for Germans genuinely to accept guilt.’

However, ‘we cannot

commemorate the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt without naming its shortcomings, and above all the lack of an explicit mention of the guilt toward the Jews,’ he added. Earlier this year the Bishop visited the Auschwitz extermination camp with leaders of German Jewish and Sinti and Roma organizations.

In a greeting to the service, the WCC’s interim General Secretary, the Rev Prof Dr Ioan Sauca, said the Stuttgart declaration ‘opened the door to overcoming enmity and the common search for peace and reconciliation among the member churches of the WCC and thus also among the peoples to which they belong.’

Prof Sauca recalled how in the middle of the Second World War, Dr Visser ‘t Hooft brought together representatives of resistance groups from German-occupied countries with German opponents of Hitler’s regime. ‘They agreed that peace in Europe would not be possible without Germany participating on an equal basis in a European federation. So their ideas anticipated the founding of the European Union,’ he said in his message.

The interim General Secretary was not able to be present in Stuttgart because of restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that the WCC’s 11th Assembly is to take place in 2022 in Karlsruhe, Germany, hosted by the German churches with neighbouring Churches in France and Switzerland. ‘In October 1945 it would have been impossible to imagine that one day a WCC assembly would take place in Germany,’ he said in his message. ‘What happened back then here in Stuttgart has contributed to the fact that that today, between Karlsruhe and Strasbourg, a bridge of peace links Germany and France across the Rhine.’

GERMAN CHURCHES PLAN TO CONTINUE TALKS ON SHARED COMMUNION

The German Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany plan to continue their discussions about shared Communion, reported the German Catholic news agency, KNA, on 8th October, 2020.

German Catholic and Protestant theologians and bishops, in May 2019, published a review of the situation regarding Shared Communion that had been scheduled to be discussed at the German Catholic bishops' assembly in Fulda at the end of September 2019.

A proposal for "reciprocal Eucharistic hospitality" was indeed tabled in September 2019. However, on September 18th, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith voiced strong objections to the review, saying that differences between Catholics and Protestants in their understandings of the Eucharist and the ministry were 'still so grave' that they ruled out the attendance at each other's services. More than that, the proposal contained 'doctrinal errors', and intercommunion could not be left to 'individual decisions of conscience'.



A priest distributes Communion. German Catholic and Protestant leaders will continue talks on shared Communion. (Photo: Harald Oppitz/KNA via CNS.)

As a result, on 6th October that year, the leaders of both German Churches identified questions that still need to be clarified and addressed by Catholic and Protestant sides. For the Catholic Church, the questions are so weighty that it does not feel able to allow mutual participation in general before they are clarified, especially since the question of the unity of the Catholic Church is affected here as well.

Germany has many mixed marriages - Catholic and Protestant - so not being able to receive Communion in each other's churches has long been an issue of concern. Back in 2018 a Catholic-Lutheran couple, Herbert and Ines Heinecke who had been married 24 years, told the *Catholic News Service* that many couples like them 'have experienced rebuffs and cold-heartedness from the churches, which has strained their marriage and led to estrangement from Church. 'It would be unimaginable for us to be separated from each other at the Lord's table, when we share our whole life together in everything else,' they had said.

When Pope Francis visited a Lutheran parish in Rome in November, 2015, a Lutheran woman married to a Catholic asked him why she could not receive Communion when she went to Mass with her husband. The Pope responded that he could not issue a general rule on shared Communion, but the couple should pray, study and then act according to their consciences.

In May 2018, Pope Francis asked the bishops of Germany, in a spirit of ecclesial communion, to continue working to find a broader consensus on guidelines for allowing a Protestant married to a Catholic to receive the Eucharist,

So now Evangelical and Roman Catholic leaders in Germany have vowed to press ahead with moves towards intercommunion. 'We will follow this up; the discussion isn't over,' said the chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm. 'We are now so close, and I sense a very strong will among Catholic bishops to get ahead as well.' Bishop Bedford-Strohm was speaking shortly before being jointly awarded the 2020 ecumenical Augsburg Peace Prize with Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the former president of the German Bishops' Conference, for their contributions to interfaith dialogue, as reported in the last issue of *The Window*.

Both Dr Bedford-Strohm and Cardinal Marx expressed disappointment that the proposals had been rejected by Rome, but remained confident that intercommunion would come. Cardinal Marx said that the plans were already far advanced, and that the ball was very much in the Vatican's court.

'I would like to see Christians celebrate the Eucharist together, without becoming a unified Church,' the Cardinal said. 'Ecumenism only works if we try to understand the position of others and sometimes accept differences.'

But there is no question of the Churches in Germany going it alone. In a statement last week, the German Catholic Bishops' Conference has responded to the Vatican saying that it understands that the issue needs "general clarification" to avoid jeopardising Church Unity. The Evangelical Church has also accepted that there are 'differences in practice and understanding' between the Protestant and Roman Catholic rites.

RECIPE FOR ACTION

Pastor Ron Glusenkamp is the Senior Director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Congregational Mission Funding. His article first appeared in *Living Lutheran*, 23rd November, 2020.



Photo : iStock.com/solidcolours

This parable foreshadows the largest church picnic, known as the "Feeding of the 5,000," in Matthew 14. In this story, Jesus "went ashore, and saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick" (Matthew 14.14). Sometimes in the English language we skip over the word "compassion," thinking it's something that comes from the heart or maybe even the brain. But the original Greek word *ta splankna* is more along the lines of "lower intestines" or in the gut.

Jesus felt something in his gut when he looked at all the people. The unnamed baker in the previous chapter also had the same stomach-ache. "It eats at us

that people don't have enough to eat," a pastor recently said of his congregation. Compassion begins when something "eats at us."

Recently a pastor told me how much his congregation loved to eat together in pre-COVID-19 days. Those activities are on hold, but the feeding continues. The congregation has increased monetary offerings for ELCA World Hunger and provides take-out meals for their community. That pastor said, "No pun intended – it eats at us that people don't have enough to eat."

And that is what verse 14 means. It ate at Jesus that these people – men, women and children – were lost and hungry. Compassion is what led Jesus to the cross. Compassion led him to offer his life for all, bread for the world, for those hungry physically and spiritually. Compassion happened so that we might have life – new life – and have that life abundantly. Compassion begins when something "eats at us".

What's "eating" at you? The pandemic has exacerbated the hunger crisis and experts have predicted that hunger will double before the end of 2020. When Jesus stood among the hungry crowds, we learn that he took the gifts, blessed them, broke them and gave them away. And this familiar pattern is our recipe for action.



If you've tried your hand at baking during the pandemic, you aren't alone. A business report showed that sales of yeast in USA increased 647% during March, and some stores still can't keep up with demand.

I love it when a Biblical story jumps out of the pages and intersects with daily life, and right now I'm thinking about that unnamed woman in the Gospel of Matthew who mixes up some yeast and flour.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened" (Matthew 13.33). Many commentators have written about the rarity of using yeast as a positive commodity in a Biblical parable. Others have identified the heightened role that Jesus gives to this woman baker.

Father Dominic Garramone, who lives in St Bede Abbey in Peru, Illinois, is a skilled baker and he has hosted his own Public Broadcasting Service baking show. He's known as 'The Bread Monk' by his many followers, and he adds an interesting twist to all of this: "'Three measures' is the usual translation for the original Greek *'tria sata'*, which is a little over a bushel of flour (1.125 bushels, to be precise)."

Then Father Dom serves up a beautiful image: "What's the message of the story? It's simple. The kingdom of heaven is like a woman who wants to do much more than feed her family. The kingdom announced by Jesus is like a woman who wants to feed the village. The kingdom of God is like a woman who wants to feed the world. The kingdom is for everybody."

The kingdom is for everybody! I can imagine this woman's children and grandchildren followed her example of wanting to feed everyone.

Beihefte
zur Ökumenischen Rundschau 126



Mark Chapman | Friederike Hüssel | Matthias Grebe (Eds.)

Revisiting
the Meissen Declaration
after 30 Years



REVISITING THE MEISSEN DECLARATION AFTER 30 YEARS

David Carter, Methodist Observer on our Society's Executive Committee, considers a volume edited by Mark Chapman, Friederike Nussel and Matthias Grebe, published by Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig.

This book contains the papers given at a recent conference to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Meissen Declaration. The subsequent Declaration and Agreement marked an important development in relationships between the Church of England and the German Evangelical Church. The mutual affirmation of churchly authenticity, ministry and sacraments had its origins in the visit paid by Archbishop Runcie to East and West Germany in 1983, a development that bore its first fruit just before the final reunification of the country.

The agreement was to bear further fruit in the closely related mutual acknowledgements made between the Church of England and the French Reformed and Lutheran Churches in the Reuilly Agreement and also in the Anglican-Methodist Covenants for Britain and Ireland of 2003. All these agreements provided for mutual Eucharistic hospitality, but *not* for interchangeability of presbyteral ministry. Interestingly, the only situation in which that has since been established is in Ireland under the Irish Anglican-Methodist Covenant, where annually elected Irish Methodist Presidents are now recognised as episcopal ministers and are invited to share in the consecration of Irish bishops. This shows how ecumenical achievements in one area can go largely ignored in others. There is no reference in this book as to whether the Irish solution might have purchase in the Church of England-EKD relationship. The Irish agreement of 2014 is surveyed in three articles in *One in Christ* (2014, no2), by Bishop Harold Miller of the Church of Ireland, Mrs Gillian Kingston, a distinguished Irish Methodist laywoman and myself.

It is clear that the existing Meissen Declaration and Agreement have had beneficial effects on both Churches in terms of ministerial and parish exchanges, involving mutual Eucharistic hospitality. The usefulness of the Declaration, in the context of ecumenical canon 43B of the Church of England, is acknowledged by both Churches. However, there is continuing disappointment that it has not been possible, as under the Porvoo Agreement between British and Irish Anglicans on the one hand and Scandinavian and Baltic Lutheran churches on the other, to move towards full communion and inter-changeability of ministry. My memory of the early stages of the Meissen relationship is that painstaking dialogue trying to solve the problem was characterised on the EKD side by considerable confusion as to why Anglicans should want to commend the historic episcopate so strongly. It seemed to some in the EKD to be a quirk of Anglicanism, and not necessarily normative for everyone.

The essays in this book contain many suggestions from both Anglican and EKD theologians and church leaders as to how the situation might ideally be resolved. From the Anglican side, there is much reflection on how developments within the seventeenth century in England led to the Church of England placing more and more stress on the episcopal succession and identifying less with the Reformed Churches than had been the case under Elizabeth and James I. Stephen Hampton points to the Anglican contribution to the Reformed Synod of Dordrecht in 1619, the canons of which they endorsed. Mark Chapman stresses the effects of the Civil War and Restoration in strengthening the importance of the historic episcopate for those loyal to the Church of England, and in establishing in 1662 the rule of the invariability of episcopal ordination, thus making it impossible for Scottish and continental reformed

ministers to serve as incumbents in the Church of England as a few had done previously. Bishop Jonathan Gibbs and Mark Chapman emphasise the renewed stress placed on the historic episcopate in the nineteenth century as an essential item in reunion as a result both of the Oxford Movement from 1833, and of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral adopted at the Lambeth Conference of 1888.



Bishop Jonathan, in a particularly good essay, argues that 1662 was in this regard not only a high point in Anglican history (liturgically) but also the beginning

of its decline into a religious sect and the moment it lost its claim to be a truly catholic Church. Strong words for a contemporary bishop of the Church of England, but he has a point. Continued inclusion of more moderate Puritans, especially of the calibre of Richard Baxter, would have more firmly kept what Bishop Jonathan calls the mixed economy of Protestant and Catholic elements in the Church of England, especially if Baxter, who only proposed an alternative prayer book alongside the previously existing one, had had his proposal accepted.

Bishop Jonathan further argues that both within the Church of England and in its relations with other Churches, 'we need to recover a deeper sense of what unity in diversity (or diversity in unity) really means'. He argues that Anglicans have over-focused on one model of episcopate. When one looks at the famous Baptism Eucharist and Ministry statement of 1982 on episcopate and episcopacy one can see that he is right, though it is important also to note two vital points. First is the stress on systems of episcopate/oversight as best involving individual, communal and collegial elements; second the concomitant

⇒ challenge to the non-episcopal Churches to consider whether they could receive the sign of the episcopal succession. This suggestion receives greater force from Porvoo's accepting it 'as sign, but not guarantee' of apostolicity, a carefully crafted expression which allows for human fallibility and weakness, even amongst bishops, but also witnesses to a truth that needs to be maintained, namely that, though Churches may indeed err in lack of balance in theology and spirituality, there also remain within such Churches treasures to be re-received even after necessary reforms. Bishop Jonathan is quite right to call for sensitivity in dealing with these issues, applying his remarks to the development of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant as well as to the relationship between the EKD and Church of England.

As a Methodist ecumenist, I have come to believe that one of the benefits of sharing in the episcopal succession is that the Churches which have preserved it generally have a better sense of the continually creative activity of the Spirit even amidst difficult times, whereas many evangelical Protestants tend to see the Church as living in darkness from quite early times through until the Reformation, quite ignoring the genuine and creative developments that have occurred in the tradition in the meantime, and despite other and more disputable ones.

In another good essay Andrea Russell, who teaches at the Queens College, Birmingham, which trains both Anglican and Methodist candidates for ministry,



points to some of the difficulties in the relevant Covenant process. She notes that some catholic Anglicans doubt that the President-bishop is an acceptable adaptation of the historic episcopate.

They see permitting non-episcopally ordained clergy to minister as 'a breach of catholic order'. She also mentions that many students of both denominations fail to see the missional relevance of the proposals.

However, she then proceeds to a more creative theme, entitled 'in conversation with Hooker', where she

finds resources in the thinking of a man whose work often 'resonates beyond Anglican identity', stressing three key relevant points in his thinking. First, his understanding that all Christians, of whatever persuasion, are 'beloved of God', all subjects of his 'endless love and saving mercy.' Next, his stress that 'it might be better to be wrong together rather than right on our own'. Finally, his challenge to remember that 'we only ever know as in a mirror dimly'.

Andrea stresses that 'there is clearly an agenda here'. Hooker's approach is 'one of love and kinship' in direct contrast to the approach taken by those he is addressing (i.e. the radical Puritans). She continues: 'It is, I suggest, a declaration that when Christians engage in dialogue, there must be a commitment to this given, the friendship with God and each other.' One may cap this from a Methodist source of 1820, when the Conference called upon the Methodist people to 'ever maintain the catholic spirit of primitive Methodism towards all denominations of Christians'.

Hooker, as Andrea stresses, is not an easy read. But I treasure especially one passage where he describes the three varying approaches of contemporary Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists to the question of the real presence in the Eucharist and concludes with the reconciling statement, 'who doubts, however, that in the sacrament we receive Christ and all the benefits of his passion', truly a passage anticipating the modern search for differentiated consensus!

Turning to the EKD contributions to this book, Friederike Nüssell, Christof Theilemann and Matthias Grebe, all pay tribute to the practical results of the Meissen process in helping the two Churches to understand each other better and grow closer through the many contacts encouraged as part of the process. They show a growing understanding of the Anglican position, albeit coupled with perplexity as to the extent to which Anglicans can differ amongst themselves. Nüssell, for example, contrasts the differing approaches to episcopacy of Paul Avis and Mark Chapman in their respective papers of 1999 and 2001, whilst finding some rapprochement in Paul Avis'

assertion that 'these historical structures of continuity are fallible. They are effective signs of apostolic continuity as long as they remain faithful to the Gospel'.



Finally, Nüssell concludes that in the light of so much growth in communion between the EKD and Church of England, it would be natural to

consummate that communion in 'full recognition of ministry and the exchange of ministers'.

Theilemann begins by saying how much Archbishop Runcie's visit to East Germany meant to him when the Communist regime was very much still in power. He rehearses the traditional German Lutheran stress on Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession and questions how one can balance acknowledgement of another Church as belonging to the

one holy catholic and apostolic Church and its ministry as 'given by God and instrument of his grace', whilst also suggesting that there might be deficiencies in it. Theilemann ends by insisting on the priority of mission, the basis and very purpose of the Church: 'the point is for the two Churches to be ... with the help of the Spirit, a light to the world as it is, in danger of foundering in the seas of populism, materialism and greed.'



Matthias Grebe tries to locate the problem within the context of four ecclesiologies, Roman Catholic and Orthodox as well as Anglican and Lutheran. He acknowledges the degree of intercommunion that Meissen allows to Anglicans and Members of the EKD in contrast to the other two Churches. He stresses the actualistic ecclesiology of Luther, that for him 'Church takes place



where baptised believers meet in faith and Christ is present'. He sees ⇒

⇒ the use of the Anglican ecumenical canon B43, allowing EKD ministers to preside at services of Holy Communion in Anglican churches, provided notice is given in advance as to which Church the minister belongs, as giving hope, since there is no attempt to question the validity of the Eucharist concerned. He calls for its fullest possible use as 'a sort of metaphorical adapter plug to fit into a UK socket and vice versa.'

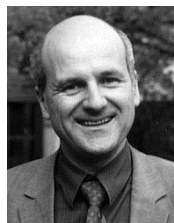
Michael Weinrich looks at developments in the relationship between European Anglicans and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). This is a body of Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist and United Churches including a few Porvoo Churches (although the Church of England has so far declined an invitation to join). Weinrich points to Bishop Gibbs' insistence to the CPCE Assembly in 2018 that the Church of England would not distance itself from the continental Churches as offering a sign of hope for a possibly more meaningful relationship between CPCE and the Church of England.

Two essays deal, respectively, with the current state of the Church of England's involvement in wider English society and the future prospects for the EKD, which faces some financial problems as Church Tax revenue seems likely to decline, but which does seem, nevertheless, to retain a strong profile in German life and which, increasingly, should emphasise spirituality in a world desperately in need of it. Ralf Meister hopes for a Church 'that lives its spirituality and draws on the resource of theology in a way that is self-confident and upheld by its confidence in God, a Church ready to engage in dialogue with Islam and agnosticism.'

I draw my greatest hope for a breakthrough in Anglican-EKD relationships from the last essay in this volume, an interesting account of a parallel dialogue to Meissen, between an EKD provincial Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (ELKB), and the Episcopal Church (i.e. of USA). The relationship dates back to the time when Bavaria was part of the US zone of occupation after World War II, and it did not cease when US forces finally withdrew in the 1990's.

Instead, the three Bavarian Episcopal parishes have enjoyed a close and mutually supportive relationship with the ELKB. The relationship has developed broadly in line with Meissen rules but, more recently, talks have taken place to explore the possibility of full communion; moreover, these talks have involved participation by members of the Church of England and the EKD.

The basis of the talks has been very careful consideration of the general tradition of German Lutheranism, which, as the author of the essay, Bernd Oberdorfer points out, differs from Anglicanism and, to an extent, also from the 'Porvoo' Lutheran



Churches in its evaluation of episcopacy in historic succession. The German Lutheran evaluation takes into account the fact that the bishops in post at the time of the German Reformation condemned the Reformers, leaving German Lutherans with the general impression that bishops in historic succession were not, *ipso facto*, always guarantors of faithful apostolicity. Other Lutheran emphases to be taken into account also include a stress that the authority of bishops had to be qualified and that 'Christians have the capability to ... measure the word of the bishop with reference to the word of God.'

Nevertheless, it was felt there was room for a differentiated consensus on episcopacy in which the partners would be helped by a consideration of the North American agreements which had enabled the Anglican and Lutheran Churches there to come into full communion. It was felt both Churches would be able to accept the 'Called to Common Mission' statement of the US churches, which 'value and maintain a ministry of episcopacy as one of the ways ... in which the apostolic succession of the Church is visibly expressed.' On that basis, a proposed Agreement suggests that it would be possible to move forward and 'commit to share an episcopal succession that is both evangelical and historic, including regularly one or more bishops of the other Church participating in the laying on of hands

at the installation/ordination of their own bishops.'

That, according to Oberdorfer, is the key passage of the Agreement. He adds that it is important to notice exactly what it both *does* and *does not* say. It does not claim the participation of the bishop of the other Church is necessary to the validity of the ordination. It does not establish an asymmetry; the presence of a Lutheran bishop at an Anglican episcopal consecration is no less relevant than that of an Anglican at a Lutheran installation. Above all, it does not say that both Churches share a *unanimous* understanding of the visible sign of the laying on of hands.

The Agreement goes one step further, Oberdorfer points out, stressing that it is a crucial step for Lutherans. It recommends recognising the plurality of episcopacy by ensuring the participation of at least one member of the Synod in the laying on of hands to make visible that neither apostolic continuity nor apostolic succession is *exclusively* (my italics) guaranteed by the succession of bishops. It also gives 'a more complete and adequate picture of the reality of episcopacy in the Lutheran Churches.'

It seems to me that this is a model which the Church of England and the rest of the EKD could follow with integrity. It shows the value of the creative use of agreements made by Lutherans and Anglicans elsewhere. It is also, I think, the sort of achievement for which those responsible for wider ecumenical statements on episcopacy and episcopacy over the years have hoped for, episcopacy being exercised in a way that is simultaneously individual, collegial and also truly communal as two Churches enter into and make space for the other's heritage and sensitivities.

In conclusion, I would add that it is not surprising that both the Church of England and the EKD have had to struggle with the process towards the full communion they both desire. Both are Churches which have been on complex trajectories since the Reformation. The EKD, as it is now, is a federation of Churches from two traditions, Lutheran and Reformed, some of the regional Churches ⇒

BEING LUTHERAN: PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BAPTISED

Recently, in one of a series of webinars on Being Lutheran, the Rev Caroline Christopher from the Arcot Lutheran Church in India explored the impact of what she terms 'democratisation of the Spirit' in India's multifaith context. (LWI)



What does belief in 'the priesthood of all the baptised' mean in today's secular or multi-religious societies? How does this doctrine, at the root of the Reformers' agenda 500 years ago, relate to contemporary relationships between Church and State? How are Lutherans living out this call to holiness and participating in God's mission of reconciliation in an increasingly polarised world?

Those questions were at the heart of a webinar on 4th November, in which the Rev Caroline Christopher from the Arcot Lutheran Church in India was the featured speaker. She spoke about ways that the doctrine of the priesthood of all the baptized had a profound impact when the first Lutheran missionaries arrived in 18th century India. In the context of a rigid caste system Luther's democratizing doctrine challenged not only the religious identity of the Brahmins – the Hindu priests and teachers – but also the socio-political structures that had underpinned people's lives and livelihoods since ancient times.

Impact on the traditional caste system

In particular, she explained, this reform agenda had a great impact on the most marginalised communities of Dalits, originally known as

being a union of the two traditions. The Church of England has gone since 1559 from being a Church most closely related to, though certainly far from totally identical with, the Reformed tradition to being a Church now generally defined as 'catholic and reformed', albeit that some of its members would see it very much as being in the catholic camp with Orthodox and Roman Catholics, others would still wish to see it as evangelical and Protestant. It says a lot for both complex Churches that they have remained persistently faithful in persevering with the search for full communion.

'untouchables' and considered to be outside the traditional caste system. Most Dalits and Adivasi, India's indigenous ethnic minority communities, are still 'deprived of everything,' she said, including healthcare, education, political representation and participation in religious life.

Describing how the early missionaries 'wanted to bring justice,' alongside the new doctrinal belief that all baptised people have direct access to God's mercy and have no need of a priest as mediator, she showed how they taught the Bible to the uneducated through stories and songs. This work continues in Church and Society to empower Dalits and other impoverished communities. She explained that Christian ministry among indigenous peoples is increasingly contested by Hindu leaders spearheading a movement to get people to come back to the "mother religion".

Today, the Rev Christopher noted, about 90% of Lutheran congregations in India are Dalit people, yet the work for a true 'democratisation of the Spirit' still provokes resistance from those who are nostalgic for a more rigid hierarchical system. In her own Arcot Lutheran Church, she said, lay people are often in charge of the teams that travel to marginalised communities to share the gospel message, but 'there are other churches that don't allow lay people to take responsibilities.'

Spirituality and prophetic service

In a cultural context where concepts of "purity and pollution" continue to shape attitudes towards women, the Rev Christopher said there are many Indian Churches where women are still excluded from the ministries of the Word and Sacrament. There is a big debate going on within all of India's religious communities, she added, and 'women are struggling and studying, and so emerging, but there is still a long way to go.'

Another contemporary challenge for

Lutherans in India and elsewhere is the belief that true holiness of all believers is only to be found within the more evangelistic churches. 'Mainline Churches are considered to be lacking in spirituality,' she acknowledged. It is 'really challenging to make them see the spiritual gifts in themselves.'

The Rev Caroline Christopher also shared her experience of working as the manager of a large hostel for students in Chennai, providing a safe place to stay for many orphans, single mothers and destitute women from different religious backgrounds. In discussions that followed her presentation, participants reflected on the importance of such "prophetic diakonia" as a hallmark of Lutheran witness within secular or multi-faith societies.

Participants noted how faithful acts of love in daily life may be the only sign of the Church that people ever experience. The webinar's host, the Rev Dr Chad Rimmer, Programme Executive for Identity, Communion and Formation in the LWV's Department for Theology, Mission and Justice said, 'The priesthood of the baptised reframes the way people understand power, and feel able to participate in transformation. It says that no matter what your occupation or passion in life, the Spirit equips you to share Christ's love in every sector of society ... This webinar took place 500 years from the day Luther published his treatise on the Freedom of a Christian. It describes God's love as a gift that liberates us from bonds of injustice, and compels us to serve our neighbour in economic, social, religious, political and, I'll add, ecological spheres.'

ALTENBERG DECLARATION: FORMAL RECONCILIATION AFTER 500 YEARS REQUESTED

In the summer of 2020 Pastor Dr Hans-Georg Link, a member of our Society in Cologne, and Professor Dr Josef Wohlmuth from Bonn, on behalf of the Altenberg Ecumenical Group ("Altenberger Ökumenischer Gesprächskreis"), Germany, addressed this plea to the Pope and the President of the Lutheran World Federation asking that the Excommunication Bull by Pope Leo X against Martin Luther and all his followers be overturned, and that the Reformers' condemnation of the Pope as "Antichrist" be withdrawn. We wait to see what the response might be.



Prof. Josef Wohlmuth

I. The events of the years 1520/21

The tragic history, which made Martin Luther and Pope Leo X irreconcilable opponents, even though 500 years have passed since the events, demands our attention. The Papal Bull of June 15th, 1520, threatening Luther and his followers with excommunication was then followed by the actual Excom-

munication Bull of January 3rd, 1521. The Pope's Legate, Hieronymus Aleander, handed the Bull to the Empire's Convocation in Worms on February 13th, and the appearance of Martin Luther in front of the Empire's Convocation, including Emperor Charles V, on April 18th, 1521 in Worms, led to the Edict of Worms, depriving Martin Luther and all his followers of all their rights. The confusing conflict then took its course, as everyone knows.

II. New light after the 2nd Vatican Council on the ancient events

We thank God that ecumenical endeavours in the years after the 2nd Vatican Council in dialogues between Catholics and Lutherans have contributed decisively to the understanding of the events of that time in a new light. The many endeavours on the project "Doctrinal Condemnations – Church Dividing?" reached their pinnacle with consensus on the Doctrine of Justification in Augsburg 1999. Therefore it seems to us that on the occasion of the commemoration of the public Excommunication Bull, 500 years ago on January 3rd, 1521, the time is ripe for the Church banns of that time, which concerned not only the reformer, Luther, but also all his followers, to be judged in a new way, something that must apply both to the condemnation of Martin Luther by Pope Leo X and also to Luther's condemnation of the Pope as "Antichrist".

We are inspired to make our proposal for the 500th Commemoration Day by that important event on December 7th, 1965, when on the last day but one of the 2nd Vatican Council, in the Assembly Hall of the Roman Council in the presence of Pope Paul VI, and at the same moment in the Phanar of Constantinople with Patriarch Athenagoras I present, a declaration was proclaimed. It said, 'One cannot pretend that these events were not what they were during this very troubled period of history. Today, however, they have been judged more fairly and serenely.' Therefore Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I declared that they both regretted the mutually inflicted sentences of excommunication in the year 1054 and that they would remove both

from memory and from the midst of the Church and 'commit these excommunications to oblivion.'

We are conscious, that the two Church representatives, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I met with each other on equal terms, whereas in the year 1521 the Pope, as the highest Church authority, and the monk Martin Luther and his followers, proceeded only from theological arguments to mutual exclusions. From the 41 articles of the Bull threatening excommunication it can be seen that from that time the differences at the beginning of the conflict between Rome and Wittenberg had graver and graver consequences. Finally, Martin Luther, in his *Schmalkaldische* articles of 1537, restated his accusation, already raised in 1520, that the Antichrist was seated on the Papal chair, and even that the Roman Church had fallen into idolatry.

However, during the ecumenical dialogues following the 2nd Vatican Council it became more and more apparent that these reproaches are no longer maintained by Lutheranism. The result of these dialogues has been that Martin Luther, once accused of heresy, can more profoundly be understood as "witness to Jesus Christ", as formulated in the Declaration of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission (1983). Furthermore, the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) of 1999 elaborated the message of redemption by Jesus Christ as the basis of faith which binds very deeply not only Lutherans and Catholics but also the World Communions of Methodists, Reformed and Anglicans. Regarding the respective doctrinal condemnations of the 16th century it was then stated (No 41): '[Thus] the doctrinal condemnations of the 16th century, in so far as they relate to the doctrine of justification, appear in a new light: the teaching of the Lutheran Churches presented in this Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration.'

III. Consequences for the ecumenical present time and future

The Altenberg Ecumenical Group proposes the following three procedures:

1. In view of these hopeful developments and in view of the 500th anniversary of the excommunication of Martin Luther January 3rd, 2021, we ask the current Bishop ➡



Pastor Hans-Georg Link

⇒ of Rome, Pope Francis, in consultation with the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, to declare that **the condemnations of the bull of excommunication of 1521 do not apply to today's members of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches.** We link this request with "The Worms Memorandum" of 6th March, 1971, which asked the Pope to announce "a clarification concerning the person and teaching of Martin Luther from today's Catholic point of view in the interest of deepening ecumenical work". What was not possible around 50 years ago should be achieved in the "Year of Ecumenism, 2021".

In the same way we request the President of the Lutheran World Federation, Archbishop Dr Musa Pantil Filibus from Nigeria, together with the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation to declare that **the condemnation of the Popes as "Antichrist" by Martin Luther and Evangelical Lutheran confessional writings** (*Bekenntnisschriften: Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Schmalkaldische Articles, Tractatus on Power and Primacy of the Pope, Formula of Concord*) **do not apply to the present Papacy and its ministers.** In a common act, perhaps taking place at the same time in different locations, both sides could extinguish from the memory of the Church and commit to oblivion the words and deeds, which led to the excommunication of Luther as well as to the "Antichrist" condemnations.

2. At the beginning of the time of Reformation the conflicts between Luther and the Pope took place mostly on German soil. They influence the ecumenical climate in Germany up to the present day. Therefore we ask the German Bishops Conference in consultation with the Central Committee of German Catholics as well as the Council and Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany for **a common public statement regretting the events of the former time and hoping that the mutual condemnations, which led to the separation between the Churches, will be overturned.** In this way they would support the concern to overturn the earlier condemnations and to prevent a relapse into mutual demarcations or even condemnations.
3. We invite all congregations assembling in an ecumenical worship-event on or around the 2nd Sunday after Christmas, 3rd January 2021, **to combine the joy of God's coming into our world with an act of reconciliation with each other after 500 years.** (A draft for this exists.) We are grateful for the cooperation of our local Christian churches (ACK) in taking up this invitation and their readiness to bring it about during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18-25 January), for example, or in the week before Pentecost), so that in future we can walk the pilgrim path of justice and peace in reconciled diversity.

On this the Feast of Pentecost we recall the words of the Apostle Paul, which are the Herrn-hut slogan of this year's Pentecost Sunday for all of us: "In the one Spirit we are all baptised into one Body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we are all made to drink of the one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12.13)

PRESENTING THE BIBLE WITH PLAYMOBIL

The new "Bible to Go" series in 66 episodes is going to be enormous fun. It's in German but if you know your Bible you'll be able to understand what's going on. If you'd like a 'taster' follow this link to the Book of Genesis. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c56ed8394lc> (LWI)



It might appear childish at first sight but German author, director and literary scholar Michael Sommer hits the spot with a combination of toy figures, humorous narrative, and serious content aimed at adults. In "Bible to Go" one book of the Bible is summarized in about ten-minutes of video. Starting at the beginning of October, a new episode has been published every Tuesday. The entire Bible in sixty-six videos will take just over a year. You find them at <https://www.evangelisch.de/inhalte/178739/24-11-2020/die-bibel-go-das-buch-rut-video-playmobil-von-michael-sommer>

Using a collection of about 1,500 Playmobil figures he casts some characters such as the Pharaoh of Egypt "historically". But Noah is a lumberjack - he has an ark to build!

Michael Sommer offers "a fresh look" at the Biblical stories. As he read the Bible "from cover to cover" he found the texts clear and concise in places, and "irritating" in others. To keep to the length of about ten minutes, he had to decide what the primary message is in each Biblical book.

The video series is an invitation to engage: 'If people are irritated by one of the videos, then take the Bible, read the texts themselves and perhaps even talk to someone about them, I am happy. My goal has been reached,' he smiles.

Ten-minute films with Playmobil characters do not replace reading the Bible, but they can bring Bible stories closer to people and encourage them to learn more about them. "Bible to Go" fits well with the Reformation tradition of bringing the Word of God to every person.'

⇒ In an update Hans-Georg Link reported that Cardinal Koch from the Vatican had mailed saying he had handed the Declaration to Pope Francis personally. The secretariat of the Lutheran World Federation confirmed the receipt of the text and promised to forward it to Archbishop Musa.

IS THIS WHERE JESUS COMMISSIONED PETER?

Archaeologists have recently uncovered one of the earliest churches in the Holy Land at the foot of breathtaking waterfalls in the scenic Banias Nature Reserve in northern Israel. The church is at a site where tradition has it that Jesus promised Peter the keys to the kingdom of Heaven.

A rare circa AD 400 Byzantine church has been found that was built on top of a Roman-era temple to Pan, the Greek god from whom Banias takes its name. Christian builders in the 4th-5th century modified the Roman pagan temple to fit the needs of Christianity, which at that time was a relatively new religion, Professor Adi Erlich of the University of Haifa said when announcing the find.

Prof Erlich suggested that the church might have been built to mark the place where Jesus surprised Simon by giving him the name Peter. Tradition has it that it was in this area that Jesus famously told the disciple, 'You are Peter, and, on this rock, I will build my Church... I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.' (Matthew 16.18)

The church clearly suffered damage due to an earthquake at some point, but appears to have been renovated in the 7th century. The Head of Heritage and Archaeology in Israel's Nature and Parks Authority, Dr Iosi Bordowicz, said that the Banias National Park has stunning archaeology spreading from the Roman period through the Crusader era. He



promised that the finds will be conserved and then made accessible to the many thousands of tourists from all over the world who, in non-COVID-19 times, visit the breathtaking Banias waterfalls.

KENYAN ANGLICANS PLAN MONUMENT TO FOUNDING FATHER

The Anglican Church of Kenya is celebrating its 50th anniversary and is going to honour the German missionary who was influential in establishing Christianity in their country.

A German missionary who was instrumental in the spread of Christianity in Kenya is to be honoured by the creation of a new chapel and monument. Archbishop Jackson Ole Sapit made the announcement during a service to mark the half-centenary of the Anglican Church of Kenya as an independent Province of the Anglican Communion. The Service, on 1st November 2020, in All Saints Cathedral in Nairobi was attended by President Uhuru Kenyatta.

The German missionary, John Ludwig Krapf, joined the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to take the Gospel across East Africa from 1844. He landed at Rabai, north of Mombasa, and established a mission station. By 1848 this became Kenya's first Christian church. Shortly afterwards a school, a clinic and space for freed slaves was created in the Church compound.

The Anglican Church of Kenya is now seeking authorisation for a new chapel and monument to mark the work of Krapf in bringing Christianity to Kenya. 'We want to erect a monument to remind us of the first journey of Ludwig



John Ludwig Krapf

Krapf who met some fishermen who introduced him to village elders who led him to establish the church,' said Archbishop Jackson. 'We are more than willing to team up with the government and pool our resources to erect a monument which will remind us of our history. Remembering the stories of our beginnings is important.'

The President of Kenya, Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, who attended the service reiterated the government's pledge to support all religious institutions in the country. He called on them to continue partnering with the government. 'I look forward to working with you, not only with the Anglican community but indeed with the entire religious community, so we can see what we can do

together to guide our children through the challenges that they are faced with.' He added, 'As my father used to say, you are indeed the Church and you are indeed the society. And we need you at the very forefront to ensure that we, who have been given the mandate by the people to execute on their behalf an agenda to improve livelihoods, are being kept on our toes.'

THE OLDEST CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA – NOT COUNTING MEXICO!

Our USA Coordinator, Tom VanPoole, engages in just a little historical trivia



In this picture you see my wife Mimi sitting in the oldest church in North America (I am not counting Mexico). Just a few feet away from where she is seated, in April 1614, Rebecca née Matoaca “Pocahontas” wed John Rolfe (a second marriage for them both).

In 1617 a larger church was built nearby on the site in the background and it was the venue for the first legislative assembly in the New World in 1619. The brick church you can see now was built around the walls of that church starting in 1639. These churches were, of course, all in a Church of England parish.

If we don’t count Mexico, the oldest church in North America is the Anglican Church in James Towne, the first permanent English settlement in North America, dating to 1607.

These pictures were taken two years ago. The actual site of the fort and town are owned jointly by Preservation Virginia and the US National Park Service (an interpretation of the site was built nearby in 1957 and is separately run by the Commonwealth of Virginia). The actual town is mostly an archaeological site.

The original 1607 wattle and daub church burned down in 1608 but it was rebuilt on the same site, where Mimi is sitting in the picture. As I mentioned, Rebecca, nee Matoaca “Pocahontas”, favourite daughter of Wahunsonacock the Great Powhatan, married John Rolfe in 1614. She died in 1617 having crossed to England, and is buried at St George’s, in Gravesend, Kent.

In 1617-19 a larger church was built just outside the fort. This was the site of the first meeting of Virginia’s Legislature, the House of Burgesses in 1619. School children in Virginia are taught to remember that event. It was also the year when the first African ‘servants’ arrived against their will to

work on the plantations, and a large number of English women came to marry the tobacco planters.

Between 1639 and 1647 the slightly larger brick church was built around the walls of the 1617 wooden church, but this building burned in Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676, but the bell tower survived. The 1907 church was built



yet a bit larger, again with the new walls outside the old foundations, which is very convenient for the archaeologists. The tower and church are shown in this picture.

Of course, this has not been an active parish church for quite a while (a third site several miles away was built in the 1750’s). The oldest surviving Anglican parish in the New World is St John’s in Hampton Virginia, established in 1610 but now worshipping in a 1728 building.

STAND AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

On 15th October, the Rev Dr David Tswaedi, Executive Director of the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa, lamented that the voices of survivors and victims of gender-based violence have been muted, due to stigma and the perceived power of the perpetrators.



Dr Tswaedi acknowledged that, for the survivors of gender-based violence, pain often becomes a permanent part of their psyches - visibly or invisibly. ‘At times their silent pain seems to be caught in invisible barbed wire,’ he said. ‘We also would want to offer requisite support to the perpetrators to realize the gravity of their actions and signal to them that help is available for them as well.’ The Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa is committed to join ecumenical voices, including the Thursdays in Black campaign for a world free from rape and violence. ‘Our Lord Jesus Christ was always found on the side of those whose voices were ignored by their societies,’ he stated, and he urged the member Churches ‘to amplify raise their voices against Gender Based Violence and provide much needed support for the victims and survivors.’

Planned workshops have not been able to take place because of COVID-19 restrictions, but educational posters have been sent to 15 member Churches, as well as banners and Thursdays in Black t-shirts.

PAULINE ANTHROPOLOGY: TEMPLES AND BODIES AS GOD'S SANCTUARIES

The Rev Prof Dr Randar Tasmuth of the Institute of Theology of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, a member of our Society, contributes this article which first appeared in the Open Access Journal of Archaeology and Anthropology. He would be pleased to receive your comments (randar.tasmuth@eelk.ee)

The Apostle Paul has always stimulated Christian thinking in many ways, both theoretically as well as practically: "Don't you know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3.16). A similar question follows: "Or don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (1 Cor 6.19). The topic recurs in 2 Cor 6.16-18. So what kind of theological anthropology is visible here?

The Greeks discussed the meaning of the human body, and different ideas of the phenomenon of 'body imagery' circulated among the people of the time. Hence my question: how does Paul the Jew relate the concepts of the temple and the body to each other in a Greek environment?

First, ancient Corinth formed the contextual atmosphere where ruins of the temples of Apollo, Hermes and Aphrodite exercised their influence upon local people. Correspondence be-

Paul, too. The idea that Paul had a wider complex of motifs about the temple in mind is well founded.² I suppose that in Paul's contextual thinking Corinthian temples were important factors when he formulated his temple metaphor(s). Berger and Luckmann say that "common-sense 'knowledge' rather than 'ideas' must be the central focus of the sociology of knowledge."³ It is probable that Paul picked up some common ancient patterns of the Mediterranean temple concept, which would also have been familiar to his pagan-Christian addressees.⁴

Both non-Jewish and Jewish members of the nascent Christian community in Corinth were rooted in the surrounding culture and its symbolic universe. Some of the Jewish members may have had an opportunity to visit Jerusalem in person, but probably most of them knew about their own Holy Sanctuary there. Those who had visited Jerusalem could tell others what the One Temple of the One God looked like. Their national narrative of God's presence in his temple was a living story. The Scripture witnessed to the notion of the sanctuary/tabernacle as the locus of God's presence. In Isaiah 6.1-5, the prophet recounts seeing the Lord seated on a throne, and that the hem of his robe filled the temple. But whereas in Isaiah 6 the whole earth is full of God's glory and the temple cannot

contain God but only the hem of his robe, 2 Chronicles 7.1 tells how the glory of the Lord filled the temple, his 'house' (LXX: καὶ δόξα κυρίου ἐπλησεν τον οἶκον)

These passages are consonant with the belief that God lives in heaven, he comes down if he wants to (Psalm 144.5), and



The Rev Prof Randar Tasmuth

his name shall be in the temple (1 Kings 8.27-30). God consecrated his house (the temple), put his name there forever, and his eyes and his heart will be there for all time (1 Kings 9.3). In later times, views appeared that God does not live in the temple. The temple was an instrument of the presence of God and not literally a dwelling or a house for living in. However, it matters that his glory and spirit are present there – so long as people did not turn aside from following God the Lord. If that were to happen, God may let his house become a heap of ruins (1 Kings 9.6-9).

Later on tension emerged between the notion of the sanctuary as the place of God's presence and the belief in God's "indwelling" in the community of Israel as a whole. This motif is visible in Ezekiel 37.26-27, Leviticus 26.11⁵ and Zechariah 2.10. The Tabernacle, the portable sanctuary, became paralleled with God himself, who will walk among his people and be their God (Lev 26.12). This duality also emerged in rabbinic sources, where "the ⇨



Ancient Corinth : The Temple of Apollo

tween Paul and the community took place there and Paul's references to the temples bind together anthropological thinking and theological argumentation. What kind of relationship did Paul make? Nijay K Gupta asks, "Which 'Body' is a Temple (1 Cor 6.19)?"¹

Second, Paul was a Jew and Jerusalem's Temple was of great importance to



The Model of the First Century Temple in Jerusalem

⇒ *Shekinah*” is said to have left the Temple at the time of its destruction and followed the people of Israel into exile.”⁶ Serge Ruzer pays attention to the interplay between the communal and individual aspects of the “human tabernacle” idea, and attempts to contextualise a special aspect of this sub-motif – the perception of the death of a righteous individual as damaging the Jerusalem sanctuary itself or even as comparable to its destruction.

Paul’s hermeneutics helped his readers to understand that they themselves, Greeks and Jews, are the buildings called “God’s temple” (1 Cor 3.16), and therefore already nearly complete,

since God’s Spirit has already taken up residence therein. While Paul was telling both his Jewish and gentile readers that “you are God’s temple”, in the middle of the first century the Second Temple in Jerusalem was still in its splendour. In his temple metaphors, Paul surely had both the Jerusalem temple in mind, and also the Gentile thought world concerning their own temples.⁷

The word *body* designated both human physical existence and simultaneously referred to the collective, social body. No doubt the individual body of the believer is a key aspect of Paul’s focus here”⁸, but he was unmistakably also

referring to the communal body of Christ, ἡ ἐκκλησία. The relationship between the individual and communal sides of Paul’s “body-terminology” matters. In 1 Cor 6.15 he claims that the bodies of the Corinthians are members of Christ. “Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute (πόρνης μέλη)?” Never! Paul’s primary concern here is with the purity of the church. In 1 Cor 6.19 Paul combines a singular noun and a plural genitive pronoun (τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν) and says that the body of all of the congregation’s members is the temple, “a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit within you which you have from God.”⁹

1. Nijay K. Gupta (2010) “Which ‘Body’ is a Temple (1 Corinthians 6:19)? Paul beyond the Individual/Communal Divide”. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 72: 518–536.
2. Christfried Böttrich, “‘Ihr seid der Tempel Gottes’”. *Tempelmetaphorik und Gemeinde bei Paulus*, in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel. Community without Temple* (ed. Beate Ego, Armin Lange and Peter Pilhofer. *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 118; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 411–425. The author refers to the non-Jewish members of the community and writes (p. 414): “Doch seine heidenchristlichen Adressaten mussten viel eher die Gestalt und Funktion der zahlreichen Tempel in ihrer unmittelbaren Umgebung assoziieren. Allein für Korinth lässt sich aufgrund des archäologischen Befundes sowie durch den Bericht des Pausanias eine stattliche Anzahl von Tempeln im Stadtgebiet nachweisen”.
3. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Allen Lane), p. 2.
4. Böttrich, *Ihr seid der Tempel Gottes*, 422, is of the opinion that Paul “greift auf diese Konzept zurück, weil er mit Tempelmetapher nicht allein Juden Christen anzusprechen, sondern auch Heiden Christen zu erreichen vermag.”
5. Ezek 37:27 (LXX): “My dwelling-place (κατασκήνωσις) shall be with them.” In Lev 26:11 God’s indwelling / tabernacle is interpreted by LXX as a metaphor for the covenant: “I will place my dwelling (covenant) in your midst (καὶ θήσω τὴν διαθήκην μου ἐν ὑμῖν).”
6. Serge Ruzer (2012) *From Man as locus of God’s Indwelling to Death as Temple’s Destruction. Notes on the history of a motif.* *Revue Biblique* 119: 383–402, 384.
7. Martin Vahrenhorst, *Kultische Sprache in den Paulusbriefen. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 230 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr & Siebeck, 2008), 15, says that “[b]ei seinen Leserinnen und Leser dürfen wir sicher davon ausgehen, dass ihnen der Jerusalemer Tempel und sein Gottesdienst weniger vor Augen stand, als die Tempel der Stadt, in der sie lebten, mit deren Kultvollzügen sie aus der Zeit vor ihren Lebenswende vertraut waren.”
8. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, 188.
9. It is true that textual history testifies also to a plural form τὰ σώματα, which may indicate that the copyists found that a singular noun was not appropriate.



POSTAGE STAMP HONOURS WOMEN OF THE REFORMATION

Illustrating the contribution of courageous women (LWI)



Alongside men such as Martin Luther and Philipp Melancthon, many women had a hand in bringing about the Reformation 500 years ago. They have been honoured on a commemorative stamp, available from the German postal service since the beginning of October. It pictures three stylized women's heads in different colours with the legend “Frauen der Reformation” (Women of the Reformation). The stamp has a nominal value of 3.70 Euro – the postage charge for a large international letter in Germany.

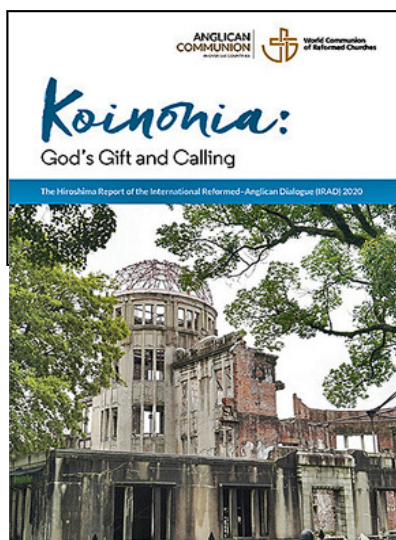
The Reformation was only possible ‘because many were involved in the making of it – including women,’ explained Dr Eske Wollrad, Director of the Protestant Centre on Women and Men, when the stamp was introduced. ‘The gospel found a new path to people,’ she said. This occurred in houses and in the streets, in other words in public places – and women were involved, she continued. Discussions were no longer taking place solely among academia and clergy.

Powerful noblewomen like Elisabeth von Calenberg-Göttingen or Elisabeth von Rochlitz had a crucial impact on the Reformation, said Dr Wollrad. They had the political

power to introduce the Reformation in their territories.

The Rev Dr Margot Käsmann, ambassador of the Council for the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) for the 2017 Reformation commemoration, highlighted a few of these women of the Reformation in the journal “Postfrisch”. Of those who engaged in public theological discussion, she said, Argula von Grumbach, a Franconian baroness, was one of the best-known authors of pamphlets in the Reformation period and renowned far beyond Franconia’s borders. She had discussions with Luther when he was staying in Coburg Castle during the Imperial Diet of Augsburg in 1530. She also protested against the President of Ingolstadt University when he tried to ban Reformation literature. ‘What a courageous woman!’ Dr Käsmann exclaimed.

Dr Wollrad declared that ‘these women of the Reformation believed that forgiveness and justification actually take place through God’s Word, and God’s Word is not bound to a mediating authority in the person of a priest but is revealed through personal study of the Bible. For this reason, the Reformation was also an educational movement for women, motivating them to engage with theological issues.’



KOINONIA : GOD'S GIFT AND CALLING

David Carter, Methodist Observer on our Executive Committee,
offers an assessment of the second report
recently published by the International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue.

In November 2020 the second report of the International Reformed-Anglican dialogue was published; *Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling*.

The previous report in 1984 entitled *God's Gift*

and our Unity had made a particularly distinguished contribution, both to general ecclesiology in terms of its famous definition of the Church as being 'sent into the world as sign and instrument of God's purpose to reconcile all things in heaven and earth through Christ', and in terms of the great thoroughness with which it reviewed all the issues that had so long proved divisive between the two communions, in particular rival views concerning the shape of the ministry.

Clearly, the context, both ecumenically and generally, is very different in 2020. The second dialogue commission was impressed by the need to do two things. Firstly, to adopt Cardinal Kasper's phrase, to 'harvest the fruits' of more recent ecumenical thinking, and in particular about koinonia, the discussion of which has played so great a role since the 1993 Faith and Order consultation at Santiago. It was decided to keep the Greek word since it is so 'multi-faceted', meaning 'communion, fellowship, sharing, participation and partnership'. Above all, 'it refers to sharing in a reality that is greater than ourselves and our own individual needs'.

The second concern was to address the problem of internal division within their own communions and reflect on what is demanded of us, as a result of our common baptism and participation in Christ, in terms of the ways in which we address any differences and tensions, both within our own fellowships and more widely.

Sadly, such a report is needed. The whole oikoumene [in antiquity a Greek term for the known, inhabited or habitable world, but most often used today in the context of "ecumenical" and describing the Christian Church as a unified whole – Ed] should give thanks for this report for that very reason because The United Methodist Church, for example, (the biggest Methodist body in America) is close to a peculiar sort of internal schism which, however, aims to limit ill will, while in the Roman Catholic Church Pope Francis has been criticised more widely than any previous pontiff. Indeed, I gather that Roman Catholics, particularly in the United States, are often at loggerheads over his teaching. And these are not isolated unfortunate incidents.

This report says practically nothing about the formally and formerly divisive issues as between Anglicans and Reformed,

though it does gladly record the partial communion agreements reached in America and Europe, plus giving particular thanks for their *full* unity in the Indian sub-continent. It is interesting that one member of the Reformed part of the dialogue team is a Church of South India bishop.

Above all, the Report is much shorter and more succinct than the earlier one. It is thus much more user friendly for the busy congregational/parish minister and such lay people as may not be theological or ecumenical specialists but who are, nevertheless, key workers in the their own churches and often with local ecumenical partners (the United Reformed Church in England being a frequent partner with Anglicans in LEPs).

However, it is for its irenic and deeply spiritual approach that this Report is most noteworthy and most to be commended to wider attention. It will have particular relevance to Lutherans, amongst other traditions, since there are so many places in which Lutherans are in communion with Anglicans or Reformed, sometimes both, as, for example, in the United States.

A flavour of the approach can be given in paragraph 32 on the spirit in which dialogue should be conducted.

'Dialogue is a vital reality within and between Christian communities that creates a beautiful space in which we both give and receive, opening us to one another and enlarging our understanding of the way God works. Dialogue thus deepens our koinonia. None of us holds complete knowledge of God or truth, and we find reassurance and courage in the opportunity to partner with others in our seeking. Here are the fruits of koinonia: we are free to engage with each other's traditions because our posture is already one of responsiveness to the other. We seek to learn of the work of the Spirit in the other's experiences and traditions.'

I am tempted to cap this with what I regard as the most striking phrase from the 1987 Nottingham Conference in the English stage of the *Not Strangers but Pilgrims Process* that led to the development of the current ecumenical instruments for the British Isles. It was 'unity comes alive as we learn to live in each others' traditions'. There is still too little of that sort of closeness in unity, although the flourishing of *Receptive Ecumenism* (not actually mentioned in the Report, though I imagine they had it in mind) has reinforced the point.

The treatment of koinonia in the Report is dealt with in three chapters dealing, respectively, with The Foundations of Koinonia, Koinonia in the Church, and Koinonia and Missional Koinonia. The foundation of koinonia is in the ➡

⇒ eternal koinonia of the three persons of the Trinity. The koinonia that God extends 'flows from the dynamic vibrancy of the divine koinonia into the self-giving of the Church for all creation. As the three persons of the Trinity are distinct and yet exist in perfect unity, the Church is many, yet one Body'.

Paragraph eleven stresses God's gift as irreversible and unbreakable at the extremes of both divine self-emptying and human suffering, stressing that at the very moment it appears broken in Christ's cry of dereliction on the cross, a new richness is unveiled, revealed both in resurrection and the subsequent gift of the Spirit. The incarnation is the renewal of God's covenant and the election of Israel, and the healing of Adam's fall. It could scarcely be put more comprehensively, yet also more succinctly.

The second chapter, Koinonia in the Church is, in my opinion, the best of three very high quality chapters. It reiterates a key point in the teaching of *God's Reign and our Unity*, that 'if we are as realistic about baptism as the apostolic writers are, then we are already by our baptism one body and *the continued separation of our two communions is a public denial of what we are already in Christ*' (my italics). The chapter continues by stating that baptism 'can only be fulfilled in completeness of koinonia with the entire Body of Christians in which no one can be disregarded or marginalised and in which no one can say that he or she has no need of any other or others'. Paragraph 23 insists that 'the depth of this koinonia is revealed in mutual sharing, mutual recognition, mutual respect and mutual belonging, in which the unique gifts of individuals and groups are to be recognised as part of the greater whole.' It goes on to say that 'Koinonia is not merely a form of Christian behaviour, but a relational way of being together in Christ'.

Nurturing the life of koinonia remains a constant necessity. A key role is played by the ministry of episcopate (oversight), however organised. Structures in both traditions need common attention to make sure that they are 'porous to the gift of koinonia'. Working towards ever closer unity demands 'deep humility and self-giving that is constantly open to conversion and change'.

An important point about unity in diversity is made. 'In listening well to each other, we trust that seeing from a different perspective can be a way in which God speaks to us and builds up the community of the Church'. One may add that this was central to the achievement of consensus, both in the Joint Declaration on Justification and in the agreement between Rome and the Oriental Orthodox that the rival fifth century Christological formulae of Chalcedon and the Oriental Orthodox need no longer be church dividing.

The final section of the second chapter, Healing and Wholeness, stresses that 'even extremely demanding difference and conflict have the potential to teach us more fully about koinonia because they demand empathy, deep listening, patience and humility ... Aligning with God's reconciling ministry often requires us to ask for perspective from others and to repent of the limitations of our own vision'.

One may add that listening in to others' deep conversations can help. The subsequent alignment of Methodists in 2006 and of Anglicans and Reformed (2018) to the Joint Declaration shows this, as does the recommendation from the recent Baptist-Methodist dialogue team that the Baptist World Alliance also consider such alignment. To quote Charles Wesley in a context he could never have anticipated, 'now it wins its widening way'.

Paragraph 60, from a summary of conclusions, makes two more related and valuable points. 'Thanks to the abundance of God's gift, it is inappropriate to speak of having been "in or out" of communion with one another'. In this context, one may also cite the increasing stress of Roman Catholics that we are all in a state of communion, if still imperfect (though they sometime speak of their communion with the Orthodox as 'almost full communion').

The final chapter deals with missional koinonia, for the sake of the whole world. It makes three emphases; first on openness to radical hospitality, secondly on embodying justice and, finally, on affirming life. God's hospitality extends to all creation, God being 'the author of the web of koinonia between and among humanity, the natural world and all creation', a lining up, one may add, which will appeal to Pope Francis as a neat summary of what he is all about in recent encyclicals. Embodying justice means 'lifting up and valuing those on the margins' so that they may become 'witnessing agents of life transforming koinonia.'

A huge challenge is made to all congregations everywhere to move beyond mere maintenance of their structures and to engage in life giving ministry and mission that the world may believe'. These are tough challenges particularly to the greying congregations of north-western Europe where so many feel exhausted simply by keeping the show on the road.

I hope I have said enough to whet the appetite of members of our Society to read this Report. One may assert, as the writers of this Report effectively do, that all bilateral dialogues belong to all of us and should also receive attention from others not directly involved. However, I would maintain that this Report is of particularly high relevance to the rest of the oikoumene. If the ethos of dialogue, exchange and mutual support advocated in it were to be acted on in all relationships, both within particular traditions and between them, then we might be surprised at the breakthroughs that could become possible even in relations to the thorniest of issues. Moreover, we have a Petrine minister, who is increasingly looked to by the rest of the oikoumene as a global spokesman for the faith, particularly in practical mission. The context is ripe for further advances.

The Report is already available on the website of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. I also have a more detailed article commenting on it, which I hope to have published and would be very happy to share with anyone who cared to read it. If you contact me by e-mail at david@carterbristol.eclipse.co.uk I will happily send you an electronic copy.

THE PORVOO COMMUNION OF CHURCHES 25 YEARS ON

The Rev Dr Tomi Karttunen of the University of Eastern Finland is, amongst other things, a specialist in ecumenical theology. In this article he reflects on the progress of the Porvoo process over its first quarter-century.



The Consolidation of the Community

The implementation of the mutual commitments in the Porvoo Declaration has primarily taken the form of a Communion-building process. While weighty structures have been avoided, there are some structures like the Contact Group and Churches Leaders' and Primates' meetings. The first conference of Porvoo Church Leaders' was organised in Turku, Finland, in March 1998. The agenda they addressed together included "some of the challenges facing people in Europe today."

From today's perspective this core-challenge for the Churches involved then still seems of utmost relevance:

"... the erosion of traditional values, often accompanied by an unarticulated search for spirituality. There was a strong conviction that Churches, as part of Society, can work in partnership to meet some of the major issues people are facing."

The way to tackle these major issues is by finding a common approach, and by the enrichment in witness and service that comes through mutual encounters, exchange and being together. Together we are more! We can harvest the fruits of the Catholic

nature of the Church of Christ only by being in connection with other Churches both within the Porvoo Communion and also within the broader ecumenical framework.

In addition to the Church Leaders' Conference, every fourth year there have been Primates' Meetings. The first was held in 1999 in London and until the 2017 meeting in Copenhagen they were organised biannually. However, in 2017 it was decided that the next Primates' meeting will not be until October 2021, in Tampere, Finland, in the context of the celebration of the Porvoo Communion's 25 years. There has been some discussion as to whether the Primates should continue to meet only every four years, or whether virtual meetings could bring some added value to their forum. At their meeting in 2009 in Porvoo, for example, the Primates identified some essential challenges which still seem to be of significance for the future work of the Porvoo Churches and for other ecumenical families:

"Common challenges in the Porvoo Churches at present include the impact of the current economic crises, issues in human sexuality and the question of the responsibilities and privileges of being in communion. These challenges are felt within each Church family."

The Porvoo Contact Group, with its Anglican and Lutheran co-chairs and co-secretaries, has planned and organised these meetings as well as consultations, theological conferences, and other gatherings, and has taken care of all the necessary communication and administration. The Group meets annually, and the co-chairs and co-secretaries also meet at other times to plan their future work and to respond to questions at hand.

What has been the content of the consultations?

A legal commentary was written at a meeting of Church Lawyers of the Porvoo Communion in January 1998, regarding the implementation of the Porvoo Declaration and the Porvoo Common Statement (PCS), and in particular the ten commitments the Declaration includes. The status of the Declaration was described thus:

"The Porvoo Declaration is not legally binding (except in a Church which has incorporated it into its law). However, the Churches which have approved the Declaration are morally bound to implement the commitments which it contains."

In general the system of church law in these established or post-established

Continued on next page ➞



Porvoo Church Leaders Consultation, Porto, 2019

Photo: Department for International Relations/ELCF

⇒ Churches, with their close relationship to the State and its system of public law, has many similarities. Yet the implementation of that law varies from Church to Church depending, for example, on the closeness of the Church-State relationship. From the perspective of ecclesial law perhaps the most complicated system is in Denmark, while in Finland, for example, the legal implications of the Porvoo Declaration were included in the Lutheran Church's ecclesial law in 2001. At the moment, it would take another consultation following a lot of additional background reporting and research, in order to discover the status of implementation in each signatory Church from a legal point of view. Moreover, the theological implications of ecclesial law for the faith and order of Churches would benefit from some deeper discussion.

In 2006, 2009 and 2013 theological and practical consultations regarding the mission and ministry of the Porvoo Churches focused on the seventh commitment in the Declaration; “to work towards a common understanding of diaconal ministry”.

Since then other issues have emerged, and it has become obvious that no easy, quick answers to the issue of diaconal ministry exist. Yet there has been some progress. The Rev Dr Tiit Pädam has suggested three criteria for the implied “common understanding”:

- 1) compatibility with the ecclesiology of the PCS,
- 2) the promotion of visibly unity in diversity, and
- 3) that “the meaning of the structures, themes and ideas studied must be ecclesologically relevant for the purpose of the Churches’ missiological task.”

Dr Pädam has also emphasised that in the Porvoo negotiations the term “diaconal ministry” was agreed to refer to “the deacon’s ministry”, not a general kind of lay ministry of a diaconal type. This has of course implications for the theological and ecumenical process.

In 2006, the first consultation on the diaconate, fundamental questions (which persist today) were raised and discussed. The most pressing were

identified as follows. *For Anglicans:* What diaconate does the presbyterate have and exercise? What is the relationship between the ministry of the Anglican Reader (or lay preacher or catechist) and the ministries of the Deacon and Priest? What range of theory and practice can be identified across the Anglican Communion? *For Lutherans:* What is the relationship of the Deacon to the ordained Pastorate and to various full-time lay ministers? What is the relationship between the caritative [caring?-Ed] and liturgical functions of the Deacon? What of the go-between ministry? If the ordination to one order is ordination to the ministry, is a subsequent ordination to the priesthood a second ordination? *For both:* What theological questions underlie the interchangeability of diaconal ministry? What do we mean by order?

In the second consultation on diaconal ministry in 2009 further work was recommended. *For the Lutherans:* To define more clearly those areas of ministry that are understood as belonging to the diaconate; to clarify whether, and in what sense, deacons are understood as being ordained in each respective Church; to explore possibilities inherent in the role of the deacon in liturgy. *For the Anglicans:* To develop ways in which the element of *diakonia* in the mission of the Church may be more explicitly understood and named as such; to develop an understanding of the diaconate that is not automatically associated with junior ministerial status; to recognise and

affirm the diaconal aspect of the vocation of presbyters, and describe it explicitly; to consider how the vocation of those who are called to a distinctive diaconate may be discerned, and how they may be encouraged and supported.

In 2013 the third consultation took a more practical approach, and emphasis was laid on hearing what distinctive deacons themselves had to say regarding the Porvoo commitment and their practical work. The plan was that a questionnaire would be prepared by the co-workers in diaconal ministry within the signatory Churches and that a consultation among deacons and co-workers in diaconal ministry would be held within two years. Also interfaith co-operation with the help of the Porvoo Keys of Interfaith Engagement was emphasised, as well as the interchange of deacons and diaconal students, the strengthening of diaspora congregations and increased participation in international diakonia. However, no further discussions regarding the actual commitment and these recommendations have taken place since then, partly because of the overload in work for co-secretaries and co-chairs and the more burning issues which they have been expected to deal with. But the fundamental ecclesiological and theological questions regarding ordained ministry, three-fold ministry, and regarding the apostolicity of the whole Church and the implications for our mission still remain. ⇒



Here a Deacon takes part in leading worship : issues concerning the diaconate are unresolved

⇒ Other distinctive contemporary challenges for Churches and Societies have also been discussed in the consultations: How to respond to conflict and the development of a framework for the Churches (2011); The Churches' Teaching on Marriage (2011); The Diaspora and Migration (2013); Economics and Ethics (2014); The Reformation Commemoration (2017); Majorities and Minorities (2018). In addition, a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela for young people was organised in 2015.

The future challenges

In his doctoral thesis *Apostolic Succession in the Porvoo Common Statement: Unity through a deeper sense of apostolicity* (2017) the Rev Dr Erik Eckerdal analyses the understanding of apostolicity and apostolic succession in the Porvoo Common Statement. He has some recommendations regarding the ecclesiological framework of the PCS and the implications for the Porvoo Churches and the implementation of the Porvoo commitments.

Dr Eckerdal pays attention to the differences in attitudes in the general discussions regarding the reception of the PCS in the different member Churches. In particular he compares the Church of England, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark and the Church of Sweden: "What the C of E saw as an opportunity for development was seen as a threat by the ELCD. In the CoS, the PCS was seen primarily as a confirmation of changes already accomplished." Then, as a challenge for Churches which are oriented in a more protestant way

and which hold a rather individualistic understanding of ministry, Dr Eckerdal raises the collegial understanding of ministry. It is expressed concretely, for example, in the Porvoo Declaration's sixth commitment which is normally to invite bishops from other Churches of the communion "to participate in the laying on of hands at the ordination of bishops as a sign of the unity and continuity of the Church".

Concerning the discussion around common decision-making, an acute topic in various ecumenical organisations which understand themselves as a communion, Dr Eckerdal points to weaknesses in implementation and in the expression of mutual accountability among the Porvoo Churches: "The risk of this kind of loose structure is that it produces a number of conferences (with more or less the same persons participating) rather than real, conscious, and directed step-by-step implementation." The task for the Porvoo Contact Group and the participating Churches is to decide what kinds of instruments of communion are needed for our mission. Structures are not needed for their own sake but for the life of the Church.

It seems clear that, ecclesiologically, Dr Eckerdal makes a relevant point here: "...there is a certain distance between the approved ecclesiology of the PCS and the concrete willingness of the member Churches to submit to each other and to the Communion." The Church and the Churches need some kind of structure, locally and regionally as well as globally. He also discusses interesting and relevant

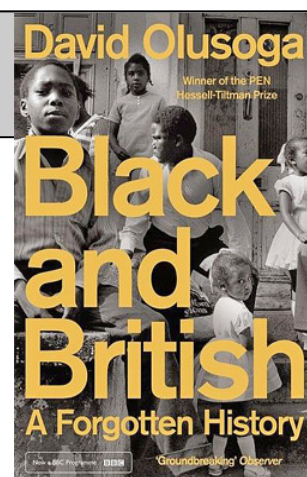
viewpoints regarding church law, use of media and communication, joint liturgical resources and the name of the Communion. Many issues are offered for reflection. In this context, articles by Ola Tjørhom are also noteworthy, in which he encourages the Porvoo Communion not to miss the opportunity to continue growth in communion, but also to have in mind the implications for the wider ecumenism.

The webinar organised by the Church of England Porvoo Panel in November 2020 raised similar issues. The Panel members were asked whether our Communion has had an effect on the way the signatory Churches see themselves and how they act as a Communion of Churches. Do we have the necessary structures for our life as a Communion? Examples of ecumenical work were the Roman Catholic–Lutheran–Anglican trilateral discussions regarding ecclesiology and the ordained ministry, including the global ministry of unity, and also the trilateral cooperation between Anglicans, Lutherans and Methodists mentioned previously. This is in line with the rapprochement achieved by the five world Communions around the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (1999). The next envisioned step in the discussions is a possible further Lutheran-Catholic joint declaration on the Church, Eucharist and Ministry by the 500th commemoration of the Augsburg Confession. A trilateral discussion between the Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Lutherans might strengthen this discussion.

BLACK HISTORY

The Rev Dr Roy Long is delighted by an unexpected gift.

October has been designated (though I am not sure by whom) as "Black History Month". There has been a succession of radio and television programmes here in UK drawing attention to the unsung history of the black communities in Great Britain and beyond. Not that this is something completely new, because there has been a steady trickle of material in the media, in particular a recent series on BBC4 devoted to the history of black people in these islands presented by David Olusoga, an historian and broadcaster of Nigerian heritage. I recently received a birthday present from a young friend at whose baptism I preached thirty years ago: the present took the form of David Olusoga's **Black and British: A Forgotten History**. (London, Pan Books, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-4472-9976-9.) The book is a chunky paperback of close on 600 pages, well-illustrated and fully annotated, and it deals with the history of the black communities in Britain from Roman times to the present day, often presenting us with the stories of individuals who have made their homes here. I am still only a third of the way through the book, but it is one that I have no hesitation in recommending to all of us who live and work in a multi-racial and multi-cultural society. Thanks to David Olusoga for such a readable and informative book.



PORVOO THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE 2020: DIGITAL MEETINGS ARE NOT THE SAME

In October 2020 Provost Thomas Reinholdt Rasmussen, Provost of Hjørring Søndre Provsti, was one of several members of the Danish Church who participated in an online theological conference in the Porvoo community. There were exciting discussions about Christianity and politics and about apostolic imitation, but the physical togetherness was missed.

Representatives of Anglican and Lutheran Churches in Northern Europe in the Porvoo Community met for a theological conference. In these volatile corona times it is difficult to cross national borders so the conference was therefore held as a digital event.

During the conference, we looked back at the past years, and forward to the future of the ecumenical community. In addition, there were discussions about how the church can help to influence society politically.



Provost Thomas Reinholdt Rasmussen

It is not the same to meet digitally, especially not for a meeting that is about Church community and how to strengthen the ties between the Churches. Of course, it is nice to "meet" and talk together, but what is essential in ecumenical work is also to share the same space with each other, celebrate worship together and meet in fellowship together. You are cut off from that in a digital meeting. The company simply feels cut off from one another when you can't meet physically.

Unlike other ecumenical communities such as the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches, the Porvoo community has no staff and no headquarters. It operates on a modest budget and is carried on by representatives of the member Churches. But, 24 years after it was founded, the community is alive and well. Its members often describe it as a forum for deep conversations, friendship, intimacy and solidarity - at least when you

have the opportunity to meet physically!

It was in the discussions about how the Church can influence society politically that I completely disagreed with some of the other Churches, I believe that if you want to pursue politics you have to join a political party. The task of the Church is to preach the gospel, not to act politically! This opinion is not entirely shared by the participants from other countries!

During the conference, an important focal point in the presentations and discussions, and what really clarified the differences between the Churches, was the precise perception of apostolicity.

Apostolic succession denotes the unbroken series of consecrated bishops in the Christian Church that can be traced back to the Apostles. This is an important issue that we should discuss further.

In Churches, such as the Church of Sweden and Church of England, it is believed that the apostolic succession lies in the episcopate. In Denmark we believe, following Lutheran tradition, that apostolic observance lies in baptism. Here, there was clearly a fundamental disagreement between the Churches, which was gently expressed. I think that if you place apostolicity in the episcopate, the Church will be on the edge of society and not a part of society.

Something that often makes a Danish representative feel different in ecumenical contexts is Grundtvig. Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig is so deeply immersed in our culture that we don't realise how much we are influenced by his thinking.

Despite all this it is very rewarding and inspiring to discuss theology and church views in international church contexts such as the Porvoo community. In this way, you become aware of both similarities and differences between the Churches and become more aware of your own point of view.

I hope to be able to participate in a meeting in the Porvoo community again very soon - but preferably in a physical meeting!



Some of the Porvoo Theological Conference 2020 Photo: Department for International Relations/ELCF

AFRICA : A FAITH-CENTERED HOPE TO FACE CHALLENGING TIMES

Once every two years leaders in the LWF member Churches in Africa meet together. In November 2020 their gathering was online. They focused on strengthening relations among the Churches during challenging times, and reviewing plans for the 2021 Africa Lutheran Church Leadership Consultation (ALCLC), due to be held in Madagascar. (LWI)

Online meeting of Africa's Lutheran Church Leadership

Representatives of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member Churches in Africa were glad to be able to meet online and express solidarity with one another in the midst of a global health pandemic. "Being Church in Challenging Times" was their theme and the 60 participants included heads of Churches, LWF Council mem-

bers and advisors, coordinators of the regional networks for women, youth, communication, theologians and diaconal practitioners, and LWF Communion office staff.

From Yaoundé, Cameroon, LWF Vice-President for Africa, the Rev Dr Jeannette Ada Epse Maina of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon, who moderated the meeting, expressed joy 'for the effort to stay connected and see each other again' during the COVID-19 pandemic. Acknowledging the many challenges Churches have been going through, she encouraged them to 'stay focused on nurturing communion relations, and continue preaching the gospel of peace, love and hope.'

Greeting the gathering from Numan, Nigeria, LWF President, Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa, head of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, expressed 'gratitude to God that we can meet in these times when we are called to be Churches together.' The gift of communion, he added, 'is not something we can take for granted when the world is yearning for healing and hope.' He offered his prayers



Before COVID-19 pandemic, a pastor distributes Holy Communion during worship at the Njube Centre parish of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe. Photo: LWF/A. Danielsson

that Churches hold together in 'the one body, one Spirit, one faith, one baptism to which God calls the Church in Christ Jesus.'

Coping with loss, finding new direction

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the 31 LWF member churches in the region in varying degrees, and nearly all of them have adopted new approaches to being church in the community. From Addis Ababa, the Rev Yonas Yigezu Dibisa, President of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), gave an update on the Lutheran Communion in Central and Eastern Africa (LUCCEA). He said the region had been hit hard, including the death of church leaders, grave illness for others, closure of church offices and quarantine for church workers as the coronavirus continues to spread.

He cited the Malagasy Lutheran Church (MLC) which lost its Church President, the Rev Dr David Rakotonirina, as well as other church workers to COVID-19. Solidarity during such times is important, he added, and noted with gratitude that the MLC President-elect, the Rev Dr Denis Rakotozafy, and other delegates

from the Church were present at the online meeting.

Yonas Dibisa emphasized that while Europe and other parts of the world are experiencing the so-called second wave of the pandemic, 'the first wave of COVID-19 is still in the making in Africa,' and the Communion's support is still required. He cited the surging number of cases in his country and neighbouring Kenya,

with up to 700 new coronavirus cases daily, compared to less than 100 per day at the beginning of the pandemic in March.

The house model of church

From Johannesburg, the Rev Dr David Tswaedi, Executive Director of the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA), said that while the coronavirus reality had exposed Churches' unpreparedness to deal with the situation, many are now reflecting on how best to be 'ecclesia without gathering physically.'

When governments imposed lockdowns and normal worship services were suspended, some local churches were quick enough to produce resources for their members, which were promptly shared online and via mobile phones. The support from the LWF Communion Office, regularly checking on Churches was greatly appreciated, he noted.

However, local churches are significantly impacted by the long-term measures to prevent the virus spread. As businesses closed and people lost livelihoods, the regular cash flow

⇒ from offerings, on which the churches depend, has dropped dramatically. Church employees have gone without income for several months. In addition, many social ills such as gender-based violence have become more prevalent. Also, 'the Church, the body of Christ, was not speaking theologically with one voice in understanding the pandemic for what it was,' Dr Tswaedi noted. Many people are still asking, 'Is COVID-19 a natural disaster or punishment from God?' These are some of the challenges for Churches as they support government efforts to promote the wearing of masks and hygienic measures to stop the spread of the virus, he added.

Some lessons learned

Joining the meeting from Monrovia, Bishop Dr D Jensen Seyenkulo of the Lutheran Church in Liberia, and President of the Lutheran Communion in Central and Western Africa (LUCCWA), said the lessons learned from the 2014 Ebola crisis have had

an influence on the approach to the coronavirus disease. 'Regular hand-washing, taking people's temperatures at any kind of gathering, and keeping the recommended distance' had become the norm again in the sub-region.

As in other parts of the continent, the suspension of worship services has affected income. The Lutheran Church compliance with the government's lockdown measures 'brought us into conflict with those who thought this was a spiritual warfare to be fought in the prayer houses,' Bishop Seyenkulo said. 'However, focusing on the health of our people has become part of our ministry,' he added.

The three Lutheran Communion leaders and other delegates expressed their gratitude to the LWF Communion Office for offering support through the COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund.

God's ongoing mission

From Geneva, the LWF General Secretary, the Rev Dr Martin Junge, thanked

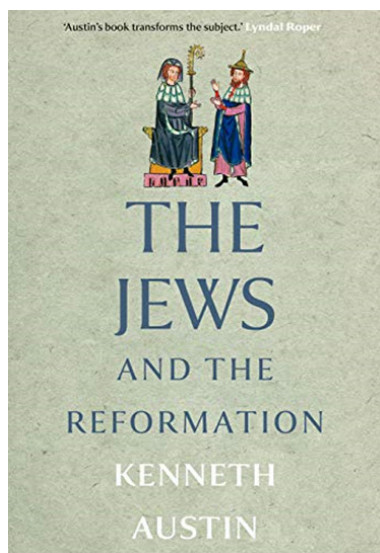
the Lutheran Communion in Africa for the resolve 'to find ways to carry out your calling,' and to encourage one another as they carry out God's mission amid various challenges.

'This mission is ongoing. It has gone through times of war, conflict, illness, oppression, but never stopped. It is a mission that won't be stopped by COVID-19 either,' he concluded.

At the regional meeting, the LWF Communion Office introduced an initiative focusing on theology, leadership and gender justice in Africa which will be launched later this year. The LWF Regional Secretary, the Rev Dr Elieshi Mungure, felt it was significant to hear about the impact of the regional programme on Confronting Poverty and Economic Injustice in Africa. Through its 'grassroots empowerment and resilience-building work, hundreds of vulnerable women and young people are gaining education and skills to help them secure alternative means of earning a living.'

LUTHER, THE JEWS, AND THE REFORMATION

The Rev Dr Roy Long recommends a book that is a valuable contribution to understanding Jewish-Christian relationships



My old friend, Fr Phillip Swingler, the Roman Catholic observer on the Committee of the Anglican-Lutheran Society and something of an expert on Martin Luther, is always assiduous in drawing my attention to articles and books that he knows I will find interesting. I was delighted, therefore, to receive from him a book review from *The Tablet* of 1st October, dealing with the topic of the Jews and the Reformation, by Kenneth Austin. There was no difficulty in getting hold of the book and I am greatly enjoying reading it.

The author, Kenneth Austin, is an academic teaching at the University of Bristol, and a specialist on the position of Jews and the Jewish religion in early modern Europe. His latest book is ***The Jews and the Reformation* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-300-18629-1)** and in eight chapters he looks at the inter-relationship between Jews and Christians from the earliest times down to the time of the Thirty Years War in the mid-17th century. It is a work of considerable scholarship and, in the widest sense, a book of considerable ecumenical importance.

Of course, I was particularly interested in what Dr Austin had to say about Luther and his notorious anti-Jewish writings. He does not gloss over, nor excuse, what Luther wrote, particularly in his treatise of 1543, *On the Jews and their Lies*, but draws an important comparison with the views of other reformers, including some lesser known Lutherans, such as Andreas Osiander, Sebastian Münster, and Urbanus Rhegius – each of whom showed much more moderate views on the Jews. There are frequent references to Martin Luther throughout the book, but of particular interest to Lutherans are two sections of Chapters 2 and 3 respectively. In Chapter 2, which is entitled "The New Dawn", there is an important section about Luther's early attitude towards the Jews and, in particular, his treatise *That Jesus Christ was born a Jew* of 1523. Written partially in defence of himself – Luther was accused of denying the virginity of Mary, of asserting that she had more sons than Jesus, and that Jesus was born of the seed of David – the treatise not only sees the reformer's defence of himself, but also shows his "sympathy" towards the Jews. Then in chapter 3, "Dashed Hopes", Dr Austin gives a succinct account of Luther's *On the Jews and their Lies*, summarising not only its contents, but also the traditional explanations that have been given to explain his vehemence. This is an excellent book and recommended to anyone with an interest in Christian-Jewish relations.

QUITE A STEEP LEARNING-CURVE

In the last issue the Rev Ash Leighton Plom told us about his COVID-shaped ordination retreat. Here he shares some thoughts about his first few months as a Church of England minister in Exeter, in South-west England.

I was helped through theological college by the Anglican Lutheran Society, in part through the generous prize for winning the essay competition in my second year, and in part through knowing I am a member of this fellowship of like-minded Christians from around the world. So let me tell you a little about my first few months of ministry since finishing college and being ordained.

There was a lengthy COVID-related overlap between college and curacy. I was supposed to finish college in May, have June off for moving house and a family holiday, and then start in my new parish in July. But due to lockdown-related extensions my dissertation on Cranmer, Luther and Henry VIII was not submitted until September, and I wasn't awarded my degree until December. So instead of a carefully-paced transition, I was still doing college work even after taking up my new post before being made Deacon at Michaelmas. My training incumbent and my family gave me time and, looking back, I believe God slowed time and filled me with supernatural energy so that everything got done!

In early July most Anglican churches in England were still closed under government and episcopal guidelines, so my first few services consisted of recording video sections (reading from Scripture, preaching to the camera, and leading intercessions) for online services. A clever and generous volunteer from church edited and uploaded the service to YouTube so it was available online for Sundays, followed by some fellowship via Zoom. This enabled me to meet some of the congregation in a format where I could see their faces and name labels, so I could start to learn faces and names in a way which was probably easier than meeting in real life without name labels! I joined the church's Pastoral Visiting Team's WhatsApp group, offering peer support to the folk who were phoning and visiting the church's most vulnerable and isolated members, offering phone support, grocery runs, delivering medicine and cascading prayer requests to the team for intercession.

When lockdown was lifted in July and August we opened the church buildings, first for individual, silent prayer, then for public services, and then for hiring and bookings by community groups. Ours was among the first to reopen in our city, and we attracted visitors from other churches that were still closed so during the first few weeks our midweek services had some of the largest numbers ever, as people emerged from months of isolation or took a break from working from home to gather briefly, masked and safely distanced, for Word and Sacrament. We are continuing to livestream some weekday Morning Prayer and Night Prayer services via our church's Facebook and YouTube pages, and also the weekly Sunday service for those still unable to attend in person. We are also running some midweek online Bible studies via Zoom.

In the autumn, I started Initial Ministerial Education, the formal diocesan curacy training, which has mainly meant

attending lectures via Zoom on subjects like preaching and school's ministry. There is also some breakout group work, chatting with fellow new curates and some colleagues who are a year or two further on than my cohort.

In November, England's "Lockdown 2.0" returned us to online worship, but just before that I did my first baptism – an adult, full-body immersion, in the sea. The temperature was about 8 degrees Celsius with a chilly wind, but glorious sunshine! In December the lockdown was again lifted and so some face-to-face meetings resumed, in a hybrid of online and in-person ministry. Highlights have included leading assemblies in local schools and being recognised every time I pass their playgrounds when walking the parish ("Reverend Ash! Reverend Ash!"); conversations while out and about in the collar, including answering some great questions from scaffolders working on the church building ("Why doesn't God stop COVID?"); student ministry with local university student groups via Zoom which include conversations about doctrine, ecclesiology, and ethics; and pastoral conversations such as crying in church with a dear woman grieving the loss of her son, supporting a wonderful man through his relationship breakup, and helping a brave woman fleeing domestic abuse.

During Advent and Christmas I have trialled a group on Zoom which was basically a fresh expression of church adapted for online meetings, with a combination of Power-Point, break out group and plenary discussions, with links at the end to recommended hymns or carols. I'd really value your prayers as we resume this in January as an evangelism and discipleship resource. Other Christmas 2020 oddities have included a physically distanced Advent Procession, carol singing outside (because congregational singing inside is illegal), and a masked and physically distanced nativity play, where much fun was had by all.

I'm looking forward to what the Lord has in store for us in 2021. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1.5



Masked nativity play and physically distanced carol singing outdoors

HORN OF AFRICA IN CRISIS

Church leaders in Africa are calling for a peaceful settlement of the armed conflict in northern Ethiopia, while across a wide area people are recoiling from the ravages left by locusts

It was on 4th November that Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, launched a military offensive against the semi-autonomous region of Tigray. This followed an apparent takeover of a national army base in the capital, Mekelle, by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Barely two weeks later, thousands of refugees were streaming into neighbouring Sudan with the fighting and airstrikes reportedly killing hundreds. There was a reported massacre of civilians in Mai-Kadra in South West Tigray.

"It's very disheartening that the leaders have ruled out any possibility for peace talks, and I don't think this can be solved through military means," said the Rev Dr Fidon Mwombeki, a Tanzanian Lutheran pastor who is General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches. Until recently Ethiopia, had been Africa's beacon of peace, hope and renaissance, but now it was descending into a conflict.

"When two brothers are fighting, no one comes [out as] the winner," said Ethiopia's Inter-religious Council in a statement issued on 5th November. They begged everyone across the world to pray for a swift end to the conflict.

Meanwhile, locusts which have swarmed into the East and Horn of Africa region are eating their way through pastures and crops. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), together with other partners working in the East and Horn of Africa region is busy making plans to combat the next locust plague. They are endeavouring to support people who have already lost their livelihoods, to obtain pesticides to use against the locusts, and to set up early warning systems to detect the next swarm of locusts which was expected to arrive later in November or December.

The locust attacks, which began in 2019, have affected East Africa and also the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian subcontinent. They continued throughout the spring and summer of 2020 and their onslaught is said to be the worst recorded in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya for decades, threatening food security and livelihoods of millions who are already malnourished or food insecure.



Locals battle the locusts by waving cloth and making noise. Photo: LWF Ethiopia

In October the swarm, along with bands of immature locusts which are also known as hoppers, destroyed hundreds of hectares of crops and greens. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization says that close to seven million Ethiopians will be food insecure in December, and up to 11 million in the first half of 2021.

The pests add to other disasters that affect the region, armed conflicts like the one referred to above, droughts, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic, which has hindered the delivery of relief goods and necessary equipment to battle the insects in the past months.

The photos which the LWF team took back in the spring seem to illustrate a locust plague of Biblical proportions, with roads covered by little yellow insects, destroyed fields and leaving bushes with bare branches. People were fighting the millions of locusts with their bare hands, waving pieces of cloth and making noise by banging pots, and firing gunshots.

The threat of the locusts is far from over, and as this copy of The Window is being prepared the next swarm is already breeding. The danger comes from the Afar and Somali regions, and possible re-infestation from Yemen, where access is very limited and the locusts can breed and form swarms without any control.



A herd of camels struggling through an invasion of locusts in Ethiopia (Photo: FAO/Petterik Wiggers)

IN PALESTINE, 'GOD HONoured THIS OLIVE TREE'

'Just as you cannot live without water, olive oil is the same for us – and the olive tree is our life,' explains a smiling Abu-Issa. He is standing under an awe-inspiring 13-meter olive tree of which he is the guardian. Its umbrella of branches extends over the al-Walaja hills, just north of Bethlehem.

This olive tree is said to be one of the oldest in the world, dating back several thousand years. While its exact age may be unknown, there is no doubt about the tree's spiritual significance for the surrounding communities: 'This tree is the most important in Palestine and it is sacred. God has honoured this olive tree. As Palestinians we take this tree as our symbol. It has stood strong against all the natural and human factors that can affect its existence,' Abu-Issa explains.

Many people come to pray under the tree, receiving blessings and collecting the fallen leaves as keepsakes. Abu-Issa was elected by his family to be the third-generation caretaker of the tree.

No one is able to visit it without him, yet he is eager to invite people of all faiths to enjoy the blessings of the tree. Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the tree receives very few visitors, but he is eager to invite more visitors once COVID-19 restrictions allow: 'This tree is as important as the Church of the Nativity and the Aqsa Mosque. All the nations should take care of the tree because it is a blessing from God,' Abu-Issa reflects.

The tree is also an important source of income for the local community and is described as a "treasure," as it provides a large amount of olives, and oil of the highest quality. The multiple ancient trunks leak olive oil-scented sap, a living tribute both to the age of the tree and to how it is brimming with life.

Al-Walaja at high risk



The barrier that separates Israel from the West Bank. Residents of al-Walaja are worried that their land will be annexed and become part of "Greater Jerusalem."



Abu-Issa, its guardian, stands in front of the olive tree at al-Walaja. Photos: Annelies Wiebenga/WCC

In stark contrast to the beautiful scenery in al-Walaja, the Israeli separation barrier bisects the hillside, cutting off the residents of al-Walaja from most of their land. The people are worried about harassment from Jewish settlers. Abu-Issa explains that it has not happened yet, but the old olive tree is only 20 metres from the separation barrier and could be vulnerable to attack.

The tree remains a sign of both hope and resilience for the local communities and when asked about its future Abu-Issa replies: 'It is all in God's hands. We are staying here and we hope for the best and pray for peace in the Holy Land. This land is God's land. One day he will bring justice for all nations.'

ENCOUNTERING A BISHOP WHO HAS TO LIVE HIS THEOLOGY

Anne Heikkinen is studying at the University in Helsinki. Recently she was given an opportunity which she grasped with both hands. Here she shares some of her experiences.

In October 2020 I submitted my Master's Thesis on Bishop Munib Younan's Prophetic Christianity. However, the process had started nearly two years earlier. It was in November 2018 that I heard that I had been given a place in the Felm Volunteer Programme in Jerusalem. Felm is an agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELF) currently working in 30 countries with more than 100 partner Churches and organisations. It is one of the largest Finnish organisations working in global development and receives funding from Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

I would go to Jerusalem for three months, get to know the area and at the same time collect material for my master's thesis. I then contacted my thesis supervisor, Risto Saarinen, who is a professor of ecumenism at the University of Helsinki. I told him about the opportunity I had, and how I was interested in the peace work being done by the churches in the area. He suggested that I could make the subject of my research a bishop who had been a profound influence in the area, the newly retired President of the Lutheran World Federation, Munib Younan.

Professor Saarinen has known Munib Younan himself for nearly 40 years, since they had both worked at the same time in the Lutheran World Federation. I had heard of Bishop Younan before. He is familiar to many Finnish Christians having lived in Finland in 1969-1975, and he still speaks Finnish fluently. Many Finnish mission-orientated Christians know him as a Finnish-speaking Arab Bishop.



Jerusalem photographed from the top of the tower of the Redeemer Lutheran Church

What significantly influenced my master's thesis is that I had the opportunity to live in Jerusalem for three months. Without that experience I don't think I would have gained so much understanding of Bishop Younan's own context, and the atmosphere of Israel-Palestine. It was notable that Bishop Younan was very encouraging about my thesis. He invited me to visit his home and gave me a significant amount of the source material for my thesis from his own writings.

While living in Jerusalem, I noticed that there were several opinions in the area about the social activity of Christians. Several times during the spring of 2019 I encountered the question of what the role of the Christian should be in the face of protracted conflict. I observed differences of opinion in the area. One view is that the Christian must accept the prevailing situation, or at least refrain from any activity that can be perceived as "political". According to that view, the Church and its priests should focus on "spiritual matters," such as worship, proclaiming the gospel, and caring for the spiritual needs of church members. The opposite view is that the responsibility of the Christian in some situations also includes political activity.

When I interviewed Emeritus Bishop Younan, he stated that he relied on Karl Barth's idea that a Christian must live as if he had "the Bible in one hand and the daily newspaper in the other". In Bishop Younan's view the Church's message is more holistic, as opposed to the view that a Christian should focus solely on "spiritual matters". Bishop Younan also raised this as a defining factor in his theology and action: ➡



A mural at the Lutheran School in Beit Sahour

⇒ social agency is the task of Christians and the Church.

Noticing these contradictions in the area in relation to Christian social thinking, I began to take an interest in the theme. Bishop Younan highlighted social action not only in our joint discussions, but also in his numerous writings, which I used as the source material for my thesis. I began to wonder to what extent Bishop Younan's own thinking is committed to the tradition shaped by some of the Latin American liberation theologians. On the other hand, I also wondered what motivated him in his own Lutheran tradition for social activity.

Traditionally, for example, Luther's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms may have deactivated Lutherans, whereas Bishop Younan believes that, properly interpreted, the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms could support the development of peaceful societies in the Middle East.

Writing a master's thesis was a very inspiring experience for me. At times, it seemed unbelievable that, as a Bachelor of Theology, I was among the first to do research into such an internationally renowned theologian as Bishop Younan. It was inspiring to learn about his diverse theological thinking. If living in Jerusalem and following a protracted conflict had caused me to despair, getting acquainted with Bishop Younan's thinking had the opposite effect. His thinking, defending peace, diversity, and justice and relying heavily on the work of the kingdom of God, roused in me the hope that perhaps people could indeed begin to understand each other better and, in his words, "see God in his neighbour".

Bishop Younan's fresh applications of Lutheran doctrines also strengthened my own Lutheran identity. His theology provides an example of how to be strongly Christian and Lutheran, while standing for interfaith dialogue, ecumenical activity, and a diverse society.

I am so very grateful to have had this opportunity to get acquainted with the Israel-Palestinian context and this internationally acclaimed and award-winning theologian's thinking. As my research progressed, I noticed how many of my own interests — ecumenism, justice, and peace issues — were found together in the subject of my research.

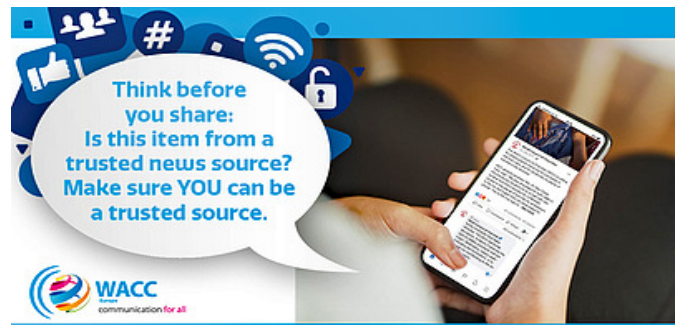
In my research, one of my conclusions is that Bishop Younan's thinking is hybrid in nature. On the one hand, he brings together a wide variety of theological thinkers, both European and Latin American liberation theologians. On the other hand, Old Testament prophets and the ethical teachings of Jesus form the core of his theology. On the one hand, he defends justice, peace and diversity, but on the other hand, he is a proponent of moderation. In my thesis I refer to his theology as a "Prophetic Christianity". For Bishop Younan, the social activity of the churches is a way to act in prophetic manner.

If you read Finnish you can find Anne's thesis here:
https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/321897/Heikkinen_Anne_tutkielma_2020.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

There is an English digest of the thesis which we can send you if you request it from angluthsociety@outlook.com

CRITICAL THINKING AND CRITICAL CLICKING ADDRESS ONLINE HATE

A new report and resource kit to address hateful content online has been published by WACC Europe, the European region of the World Association for Christian Communication. Entitled "Breaking Down the Social Media Divides: A Guide for Individuals and Communities to Address Hate Online," the report was released during a webinar on 13th October.



The report offers case studies, tips and strategies, as well as specific examples of how people have responded to hateful online content. It is the result of a one-year project to identify and promote strategies to counter online hate.

Stephen Brown is President of WACC Europe. He says, 'As social media is now a feature of our lives, we need to find ways to break down divides, to build conversation, and to promote diversity and respect online.'

The report was presented by project consultant Francesca Pierigh, who highlighted the importance of increasing media literacy. 'The more we understand about how content is created and shared and how it spreads on the internet, the more we will be able to stop hateful content from spreading,' she said. There is a need not just for 'critical thinking' but also 'critical clicking', she added.

Annegret Kapp, a communication officer for the World Council of Churches described how social media accounts regularly posting on topics such as religion, migration, women's rights or anything that has to do with group identities often generate responses that are hateful. 'We don't want to provide a platform to people who want to spread hate,' she said. 'We are a platform for dialogue, and as much as possible, we want to see comments that respond to things that are not clear, or to provide a response when questions are asked.'

The project was supported by the Otto per Mille Fund of the Waldensian Church in Italy. WACC Europe promotes communication as a basic human right, essential to people's dignity and community. Rooted in Christian faith, WACC works with all who are denied the right to communicate because of status, identity, or gender. You can get more information and download the report at www.wacceurope.org/nohatespeech or watch the webinar at <https://youtu.be/mj7VE72xLLA>



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

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The Anglican-Lutheran Society

The Anglican-Lutheran Society

10 Sandwich Street, London WC1H 9PL
Tel: +44(0)1626852677
Email: angluthsociety@outlook.com
Registered Charity No.1015153

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National Coordinators

The Rev Susanne Skovhus, Denmark
sus@km.dk
The Rev Dr Jaakko Rusama, Finland
jaakko.rusama@helsinki.fi
The Rev Jochen Dallas, Germany
jodanide@gmail.com
The Rev Fredrik Ulseth, Norway
fredrik.ulseth@online.no
The Ven Richard Wottle, Sweden
Richard.Wottle@svenskakyrkan.se
Mr Tom VanPoole, USA
anglicanlutheran@gmail.com

Editor of The Window

Canon Dick Lewis
Email: angluthwindow@hotmail.com

SOLIDARITY WOVEN INTO LIFE BY GOD'S MERCY

The General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, the Rev Dr Martin Junge, has written the foreword to a new publication by Pope Francis, "Il cielo sulla terra. Amare e servire per trasformare il mondo" (Heaven on Earth. Love and Serve for the Transformation of the World). (LWI)



Pope Francis and the Rev Dr Martin Junge at the Joint Commemoration of the Reformation in Malmö Arena, October 2016. Photo: Church of Sweden

'The invitation to invite Dr Junge to write a foreword to the Pope's new book was a significant ecumenical gesture by Pope Francis,' said Prof Dr Dirk Lange, LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

In his foreword Dr Junge writes: "Throughout his life and ministry, and in the pages of this book, Pope Francis has highlighted the fundamental bond that is 'constitutive' of the human family, a bond, a solidarity woven into life by God's mercy, source of creation and redemption. And God's mercy, revealed in Jesus Christ, continually calls us into the work of reconciliation, of making visible this solidarity and God's mercy."

Dr Junge recounts significant milestones in the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, in particular signing The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in 1999 and the Joint Catholic-Lutheran Commemoration of the Reformation in 2016, where LWF World Service and Caritas Internationalis "committed to jointly serve our suffering neighbours in the world."

"The journey from conflict to communion draws us close to each other, but it is always a journey into a communion with the whole human family and in care for all creation," he continues. He emphasizes the Christian vocation as being for the benefit of the whole human family: "The liberating grace of baptism is a divine gift that calls us together and unites us! Baptism is the prophetic announcement of healing and unity in the midst of our wounded world, and thus becomes a gift of hope for humanity that longs to live in peace with justice and in reconciled diversity."

The book has so far been published and distributed only in Italian. But translations are in preparation. So watch out for one in your language.