



The Lutheran Link brings you short articles about ecumenical news, special events, Lutheran work in Britain and practical information for Lutheran churches and congregations.

If you have any news or a feature article to submit, please write to enquiries@lutheran.org.uk

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Salvation breaks dividing walls

James Laing, General Secretary

Easter in Jerusalem is special, but it was not a time of hot cross buns, chocolate eggs Easter bunnies, or even a meditative service in Church. It was Passover, attracting Jews from around the world to gather with and remember Exodus from captivity in Egypt, God’s rescue of the Israelites. We were also reminded of the global nature of Jerusalem’s spiritual importance, drawing Ethiopian Orthodox Christians clad head (including lace veils) to toe in white, evangelicals to the Garden Tomb’s services dawn until dusk, and other Christians from everywhere and every denomination to their representative missions.



Easter Day Dawn on the Mount of Olives

As well as uniting diverse peoples, it threw the local situation into stark relief: Palestinian Christian families divided who happen to live on different sides of the “separation barrier”, because the authorities restricted access, only allowing ticket-holders to the Old City and the Greek Orthodox community’s special tradition of the “holy fire”. In a panel debate a few months ago we explored some of the issues facing Christians in the Middle East as well as other minorities, as part of our occasional series of meetings inspired by Luther’s “*tischreden*” – see inside for a write-up and keep an eye out for announcements!

Recently CLC brought a group of Lutherans and others to visit the land of the Holy One, as local Christians say – it is Jesus who lived, died, and rose again who is Holy – as you can read below, engaging with contemporary Christians as well as deep personal spiritual encounter and preparation for Easter’s victorious sacrifice.

Jesus prayed in the Garden “that they might be one, that the world will know who sent me” (John 17:21). Contemporary Israeli-Palestinian politics and social justice aside, some of what is seen in Jerusalem at Eastertime is indeed a coming together to remember and relive the most significant event recorded in the gospels.

The Lutheran Council is also playing its part to bring Christians together, in service to our communities and in witness to the world. Recent months have seen the

ordination of two new pastors in one of our member Churches, the Lutheran Church in Great Britain, one of whom is now working in the Gustav Adolf Kirke in Liverpool (which is profiled in this issue of *Lutheran Link*), ministering to Lutherans from a wide variety of backgrounds, as well as engaging with the local ecumenical community. We can also read about the vibrant life of the Bonhoeffer Church in

Forest Hill in East London with its recent Bonhoeffer Day activities and plans to reach even more into the local community.

The life and witness of our Churches is multifaceted, reaching from our Lutheran communities into local society, and working with other Churches. The Council has been a long time supporter of the Anglican Lutheran Society, so it is good to read their news in this *Link*.

In this crucial year for the environment, it is hoped that a global political agreement on climate change will be signed in Paris in December. We are working with other Churches and agencies to organise a service and mass lobby of parliament on 17 June, prayer events in November, and to support cycling and walking pilgrimages to Paris—get involved however you can!

It hardly needs mentioning that there is a General Election in a few weeks. Pray for the candidates and voters, and attend hustings to ask questions and inform your own vote: there may be local events, and the Quakers and others are running national hustings as we announce in e-newsletters.

All of this is important as we approach the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, remembering the LWF themes of humanity, salvation and creation “not for sale”. CLC will be organising some events centrally – notably a high profile ecumenical service in Westminster Abbey on 31 October 2017 so please mark your diaries and come to that! – as well as exhibitions, seminars and other services around the country. We will support, with financial and human resources, activities that are organised by our members wherever you are, so get creative and let us look forward and outward, together, in the spirit of continual reform and improvement, to live in the light of the Resurrection.

“Journal” of a Pilgrim: First Days in the Holy Land

By Normunds Barons

(Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Great Britain)

The Holy Land is the place where our Lord Jesus Christ lived and ministered. He was born in Bethlehem, in Judea. He grew up in Nazareth, in Galilee, with his parents Joseph and Mary. The last moments of his life Jesus spent in Jerusalem. Galilee, a region situated on the West side of the Sea of Galilee is where we spent the first two days of our pilgrimage, and is also where Jesus started his ministering when he was about 30 years old. It's important to keep in mind that in those days it was a province of Roman Empire, but today the Holy Land is split between Israel and Palestine. Wanting to see with my own eyes and walk in the footsteps of Jesus, when the Council of Lutheran Churches advertised the pilgrimage, this was one of the easiest decision I had to make.

Tuesday, 24th February

In the early hours, after a five-hour flight, our group of seventeen pilgrims touched down in Tel-Aviv Airport. After an unusual and unexpected questioning about my ancestors I was granted a visa to enter the country, where Bishara, our guide for the next week, was waiting for us inside the terminal.

Here between the green hills, palm trees and olives, we drove to the city of Nazareth where we first found the Church of St. Joseph. There in the basement we still see the remains of



Church of St. Joseph

Joseph's carpentry shop. I paused for a moment to admire the stairs where Jesus perhaps once used to walk. Nearby we also find the Synagogue Church. According to tradition, this is where Jesus preached from the book of Isaiah (Luke 4:16-30). Today Nazareth is a predominantly Arab city, of whom a considerable 30% are Christians.

In the afternoon we have an opportunity to meet Elias Chacour who was the Archbishop of Akko, Haifa, Nazareth and All Galilee of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church from 2006 to 2014. The archbishop emeritus is noted for his efforts to promote reconciliation between Arabs and Israelis. He describes himself as a "Palestinian-Arab-Christian-Israeli." We had an opportunity to purchase some of his books and that way support the work of Mar Elias School founded by the archbishop. Inside each book he handwrote the words "God does not kill".

In the evening, tired but full of experiences we return to the lush Scots Hotel in Tiberias, situated by the Sea of Galilee. This concludes our first day in the Holy Land.

Wednesday, 25th February

We continue our pilgrimage through Galilee. The day starts with a boat trip across the Sea of Galilee. The wooden boat was made as a replica from Jesus' days. The warm spring sun shines upon us and I try to imagine what it was like two thousand years ago when Jesus walked across these waters (Mathew 14:22-33). I also read the passage where Jesus calms the storm (Mathew 8:23-27), but today the sea was completely still.



Dancing on the Galilee boat

Once on the shore we make our way to the Mount of Beatitudes. This is the place where Jesus delivered his Sermon on the Mount to the large crowd (Mathew 5-7). Today on top of the hill stands the Church of the Beatitudes. Our two Norwegian pastors, Tobjørn and Jens, delivered a short but memorable sermon.

We continue our journey to Capernaum, the place that is so often mentioned in the Bible. In this city Jesus called his first disciples to follow him; he also worshiped and taught in the synagogue and performed many miracles.

In the afternoon we continue to Tabgha. The place is known for Jesus' miraculous multiplication of loaves and fish to feed the five thousand men (Mark 6:30-44). This place is also remembered for Jesus' third appearance to his disciples after his Resurrection. Here I draw some water from the Sea of Galilee to bring back to the UK.

Later in the afternoon on the way back to Tiberias, we stop at the place called Magdala, which was a major first-century port. It was only recently that archaeologists discovered under a thick layer of mud the ancient port and a city grid of Magdala, with paved streets, water canals, a marketplace, villas and mosaics. It is also thought that this is the city where Mary Magdalene was born, as suggested by her name. Last year a new church was built on this site, with an altar in the shape of a first-century boat. Behind the altar is a large window with a view towards the Sea of Galilee.

There is much more to see than Galilee, and this part of the pilgrimage is only the beginning. Tomorrow we make our way to Judea where we will visit the fortress of Masada and swim in the Dead Sea.

[This is the first in a series, which we will publish in future editions of the Lutheran Link and online—Ed.]

What is the Anglican-Lutheran Society?

By Canon Dick Lewis, Secretary

How it all began

It was 1984. Two friends were talking about the churches they attended. One was a member of the Church of England. The other was a Lutheran. Each realised that he knew very little about the other's Church tradition. There and then they decided to form a society. They advertised an inaugural meeting, several people came along, and that's how the Anglican-Lutheran Society began.

The Society's aims are simple: to promote a wider interest and understanding of our two traditions, to meet for worship, study and friendship, and to pray for the unity of the Church, and especially between Anglicans and Lutherans worldwide. Ours is a 'grassroots' society, open to anyone keen to further these aims.

The Meissen (1991), Porvoo (1996[1995]) and Reuilly (1999) agreements brought the Anglican Churches in the UK and Ireland into a new set of relationships with Lutheran and Reformed brothers and sisters in Germany, France, Scandinavia and the Baltic. These agreements opened up all kinds of possibilities for links and partnerships within and between local congregations, and as many new discussions and agreements continue to take place all over the world, the network of relationships is growing. Membership of the Society, though still relatively small, is now spread over 33 different countries.

Conferences with a difference

Our most recent conference, last September, gives a good impression of how the Society operates. 'Conference' might sound a bit daunting to you, but because ours is a grassroots organisation the word 'holiday' might describe it better! All our events are designed to enable people to meet, to worship and study together, and to make friends.



Lajos Ordass Lutheran Conference Centre, Lake Balaton

So we met in a delightful conference centre on the shore of Lake Balaton in Hungary. There were around 60 of us from 20 different countries. There were some church leaders and professional ecumenists

among us, but the majority were regular church members. We had come together to listen to the experience of people belonging to minority Churches to see what we could learn from each other.

That's an important aspect of our gatherings – listening and learning from one another. On the first day, for example, we heard how tiny minorities in the Netherlands and in Ireland had been effective in helping to bring about con-

flict resolution. We were shown examples of how small Lutheran churches in Hungary, and how Anglicans scattered across their Diocese of Europe, can form partnerships and offer valuable diaconal service in the secular communities to which they belong. But we also spent time on the lakeside, drinking in the atmosphere (and the local liquor!) or enjoying a boat ride.



Members enjoying an Anglican Lutheran Society meeting

We worshipped together regularly, using the liturgies of both our traditions. Sometimes we were in the church at the conference centre, but we also visited a local Lutheran congregation and shared in their Sunday morning service. We were given lunch by the Benedictine community at Tihany Abbey followed by a tour of their magnificent chapel and monastery.

Another day we heard how the Lutheran Church in Italy and the Anglican Lusitanian Church in Portugal,

both very small numerically, struggle to make their voices heard in traditionally overwhelmingly Roman Catholic countries, and how they have discovered that Churches need one another in order to discover their own identities.

Even AGMs are fun!

We have just held our Annual General Meeting. It was in Southwark and the topic for the day was 'pilgrimage'. So we began with a mini-pilgrimage in the area around Borough High Street. It has a fascinating history and there were seven prayer stations where we were invited to reflect on relevant contemporary situations while walking in small groups. It only took about one hour, but was a very rich and moving experience.



Dr Martin Lind, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain, spoke of his long experience of pilgrimage, and of the deep symbolism underlying every journey. People then shared their own experiences of pilgrimage, from cycling in Germany to following the pilgrims' way to Canterbury, and from skiing in Finland to walking the route to Santiago de Compostela. And, yes, we did hold the formal meeting, receiving reports and electing officers and committee members in just 35 minutes. It was followed by an excellent Mediterranean lunch!

Care to join us?

You can find out more about us by visiting our website, www.anglican-lutheran-society.org. We hope you might consider joining the Society, either as an individual member or as a congregation. All the information you need is there on the website, or can be obtained from our Membership Secretary, Helen Harding at harding232@btinternet.com or by phoning 01626 852677.

Minorities Under Fire: The situation of Christians and other minorities in the Middle East.

By James Laing

In a full but intimate gathering in the Norwegian Church in London on 17 October 2014, a panel of senior global church leaders gathered to discuss the plight of Christian minorities in the Middle East.



Very Revd Jan Otto Myrseth the acting Bishop of Bergen, and Rt Revd Christopher Chessun the Bishop of Southwark

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Rt Revd Christopher Chessun the Bishop of Southwark, and Very Revd Jan Otto Myrseth the acting Bishop of Bergen, began by challenging assumptions in the question being addressed: Christians in the Middle East, who have been there since the time of Christ and seen empires rise and fall, do not consider themselves “minority” because that implies that they do not belong. Although they may be numerically small, it is important for us to understand and remember how they understand themselves in order for us to be able to stand alongside them and show solidarity.

Accompaniment was a key concept for all speakers as they grappled with how we can best support communities driven from their ancestral homes, fleeing persecution for their faith and heritage, or in vulnerable situations where they are in the crossfire between warring factions. In these situations they find out what it really means to be Christian and carry their cross. So too we must stand in solidarity and carry with them. In this crisis an unexpected hope and resilience can come forth, a witness and a firm stand to believe in and live a non-violent solution.

We must recognise that the present conflict was not only borne of local influences but also international, Western powers and pressures. So the solution also will not be left to Middle Easterners alone but must involve the rest of the world; and while the Western concept of the nation state does not sit comfortably in the Middle East, it will be there for a time, even as tribal, ethnic or faith loyalties exert their pull. But “solutions” cannot be imposed by outside forces: while there are undeniable humanitarian and security crises which must be addressed immediately, the long term solution must be a political vision shared by locals, neighbours, and the wider world.

It is important to share the vision: as the Coptic Pope Tawadros said, the worst outcome would be to develop or entrench anti-Muslim feeling, in East or West – so it is good that Muslim scholars wrote a statement not only stating that IS was not representative of Islam, but also that it is a Muslim obligation to protect Christians, fellow *ahl al kitab*. It is good that in Norway, following Anders Behring Breivik’s attacks in 2011, Muslim groups immediately contacted the churches (while suspicion fell on Islamic fundamentalists) so that Muslims and Christians

stood side by side condemning extremism; that Jews in Bosnia Herzegovina recall how Muslims cared for the Jewish community for centuries; that Kurds have provided sanctuary to Christians, Yazidis and other minority groups fleeing IS towards Europe. In Arbil they did not have the luxury of focusing on divisions, and now we like them must stand side by side with people whom God loves, to condemn man’s inhumanity to man. Our solidarity is to the poor and oppressed, and not limited to our Christian brothers and sisters.

In the midst of these crises, hope was a theme picked up by Rev. Dr Leslie Nathaniel, who mentioned a recent statement by Archbishop Justin Welby calling for us to hold onto hope and support it. CLC Trustees Rev. Mark Steadman and Very Rev. Michael Persson built on this theme, recently returned from a visit to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. They conveyed the hope of the Christian leaders there, even while many of the ordinary people do not see a clear, peaceful or prosperous future and so try to emigrate (even if they are not actually being driven out).



Rev. Torbjørn Holt addresses the group

Due to the spiritual value of the holy places, the importance that all three faiths be in Jerusalem is clear. Alongside prayer, we can do more to support these communities. All the Church leaders called for support for the living stones, their people, so they invite us all on pilgrimage, to walk with them (as well as walking in the steps of Jesus) in solidarity. We can support and build their identity as an indigenous people; support education for sustainable communities; empower the disempowered, mix men and women, Muslim and Christian (as the Christian schools do); and always educate, allowing each to maintain their identity.

In addition to pilgrimage, the theology of solidarity and accompaniment is made explicit and practical in the WCC’s Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). While the Separation Barrier imposes a peace (temporarily, without justice) by preventing meetings between peoples, EAPPI is the only way that many Palestinians can continue to live in their homes. In representing us as sending Churches, in photographing, writing articles and blogs while in the West Bank or visiting Israeli peace movements, and when speaking out on their return, EAs are our eyes and ears as well as accompanying feet. Any of us can volunteer as EAs, and EAPPI enables us all to better understand the complexities of Israel, Palestine and the situation viewed through the eyes of those that live there, and to move from unquestioning support of one perspective to a nu-

anced view building to a peace with justice.

Peace is not just the absence of war: the Oslo accords were helpful for immediate cessation of hostilities at the time and establishing a framework with good intentions, recognising that at the time there was a real willingness to talk face to face, and a belief that there was a practicable solution. However it left out the religious leaders, and since 1995 the good intentions have evaporated, annexations and the separation barrier have been built, and tensions increased again. There will never be a permanent solution without the involvement of religious leaders and an understanding of the religious questions at the highest political and diplomatic levels. Meanwhile it is ironic that the country which claims to be the only democracy in the region ignores several international laws, and noteworthy how much attention ordinary people pay to UN actions and to international law. EAPPI, the ACT Alliance and ChristianAid, and other international advocacy initiatives

stand up for the rule of law and on behalf of our Christian brothers and sisters.

CLC will continue to work with these diaconal groups and others supporting religious freedom such as the Free Churches Group, and investigate providing extra appropriate training for diplomats if required. The ACT Palestine Forum, of whom the Lutheran World Federation and ChristianAid are members, convenes a virtual, global prayer vigil for the peace of Jerusalem, Palestine, Israel and the world, on 24th of each month (info at <http://actpalestineforum.org/vigil/>). Let us stand with them, pray for them, and visit them. Justice and peace belong together as aspects of the Kingdom of God, as aspects of being together as Churches, not particularly political or humanitarian or diplomatic, but of spiritual importance wherever we are called as Church and as Christians.



“Voices in the Silence”: Bonhoeffer Day 2015

By Revd Dr Ulrich Lincoln



Music, poetry, and the psalms: these were the main themes of this year’s Bonhoeffer Day at the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Church in Forest Hill/Southeast London on January 31. Every year the Bonhoeffer Centre, an ecumenical group from that German speaking church, organises a thematic day about the famous theologian and martyr who from 1933 to 1935 served as pastor at that location. The idea of Bonhoeffer Day

is that people from all walks of life get together to learn about the man and his legacy, and discuss what his story has to tell us today. Lectures, discussions, music and food are the main ingredients for the event.

The Bonhoeffer Day 2015 focused on Bonhoeffer’s years in prison when he wrote the letter, drafts and poems that were published posthumously as “Letters and Papers from Prison”. In the course of these extremely difficult months, from April 1943 to October 1944, Bonhoeffer in his prison cell found treasures that helped him to cope: the memory of music, the faith language of the biblical psalms, and the expressive power of poetry. The writer of academic books became a writer of letters and poems, and indeed it is the experiences of sounds and voices, friendly and hostile, which seemed to have become an important part of his life in cell 92.

The first part of the Bonhoeffer Day turned to Bonhoeffer’s music. As Ulrich Lincoln, pastor at the Bonhoeffer Church, explained in his presentation, music and musical memory became an essential means by which Bonhoeffer could relate to the world outside as well as the world from where he came from and where he was rooted. The language of music proved to be essential for his theological imagination and spiritual language.

In a second talk, Bishop Martin Lind looked at the impact that the biblical psalms had on Bonhoeffer. In fact, as he

laid out, the Book of Psalms provided Bonhoeffer with some of his main intuitions about religion, suffering and God – ideas which would culminate in his “short draft” from summer 1944 in which he talks about “religionless Christianity in a world come of age”.

The third lecture focussed on Bonhoeffer the poet: While in prison, Bonhoeffer discovered poetry as a new way of expressing himself; he actually wrote many poems. Frank Hirth, a member of the Bonhoeffer Centre, offered a reading of two of those poems. He contextualised the beauty of the pieces within the grim circumstances in which they were written. In these poems Bonhoeffer finds his own voice which consequently takes on a larger meaning. “Bonhoeffer is able to capture a moment whereby the words, their meaning and metaphors and the music of these words no longer belong to him and his fate.”

Throughout the day, there were lots of words, thoughts and discussions. But there was also music, lots of it! The King Cave Project mesmerized the audience with their unique blend of jazz, medieval and renaissance chant and folk music. The tenor, Norbert Meyn, even performed a piece by Heinrich Schütz, Bonhoeffer’s favourite composer. And finally, there were recitations of Bonhoeffer’s poems. In that way the power of the voices, the words which had such an impact on the man in cell 92 in Tegel prison, received a listening on a day that centred very much on exactly that strange phenomenon. Listening.



The King Cave Project—eclectic and electric.

In early February 2016, there will be another Bonhoeffer Day. Its topic will be: “Church and Exile. Bonhoeffer, Bell and the refugee relief work”. Everyone is welcome!

Looking in on: The Nordic Church, Liverpool

By Andrea Wright

This article relates the author's experience of a particular church of the CLC when visiting. "When did we see you a stranger and welcome you?"-Matthew 25:38a



The many flags outside The Nordic Church

A few minutes' walk from the docks of Liverpool sits the Gustav Adolph Kyrka, as it has stood for 130 years. Ringing the doorbell I am greeted by Ole, who runs the cultural centre and building. As he shows me around,

he tells me a little about the history of the church. Originally started as a seamen's mission for Swedish boatmen stopping in Liverpool, the church has recently joined together the cultural communities of Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, and Danish constituencies from the area, thus becoming the Nordic Church in Liverpool (LCiGB). This blending of cultures and church traditions makes for a lively environment, and not just on Sundays. Ole remarked to me how not everyone who comes to the Nordic Church shows up just for the worship side of things, but many are regularly there because they feel at home. They like the time to talk with others and the feeling of coming together. I think even outside of services, the work of the pastor, the centre manager, and the various people who contribute to the daily life of the Nordic Church, gives anyone who walks through the doors a space to find comfort and joy.

I joined Revd Jo Jan Vandenheede, who provides worship and pastoral care for the Nordic Church, at Wednesday coffee hour—though between the coffee and tea, the food, conversation, cakes, and raffle, we must have been gathered for closer to twice that time. People found their regular tables, but there was no feeling of exclusion. "Would you like to pull up a chair?" I was asked more than once by various people around the room.

And even when I mistakenly did pull up a chair into the middle of a meeting, I was graciously treated. The atmosphere was warm and playful, with much of the excitement centred on two main



Singing a "Happy Birthday" at coffee hour

events: the aforementioned raffle (where I even won a bit of Cadbury chocolate), and the celebration of Edie's 86th birthday. Edie was described to me as the matriarch of a group of women who came regularly to coffee hour, and we were all happy that day to sing along and celebrate.

Some of us stepped away from coffee hour and moved up-

stairs to the sanctuary, the high domed ceiling on the top floor making even the voices of our small group fill the room as we took in a quiet communion service. Refreshed by the sharing of the sacrament, we returned to the group, as people started to say their goodbyes and gather their handbags, coats, and raffle prizes. Needless to say this church is a living and moving place, and I was glad to spend some time in it.

So if you're ever in Liverpool, you might want to make your way to the Gustav Adolph Kyrke, and find yourself surrounded not only the beauty and history of the building, but by an atmosphere where God's love is easily felt.



News Feed:

General Election, 7th May 2015: Go and vote!

Finance Training, 16th May 2015 Augustana Centre, 30 Thanet St., 9:30am-4:30pm

Annual General Meeting, 9th June 2015

Augustana Centre, 30 Thanet St. 6-8pm

Mass lobby of Parliament on climate change and the environment, Millbank on 17th June 2015 including an ecumenical service in St Margaret's at 12noon

World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel, 20-26 September, meetings around the country

Reformation Day service, 31st October 2015

St George's Church 55 Alie Street, London, E1 8EB

Reformation Day service at lunchtime on 31 October 2017 Westminster Abbey, London

Prayer for the election (from the Church of England):

Heavenly Father, source of all truth and wisdom, who knows and loves the whole creation, watch over our nation at election time, that truth may triumph over distortion, wisdom triumph over recklessness, and the concerns of every person be heard.

Lord Jesus, who chose the way of the cross in the Garden of Gethsemane, help us turn our backs on self-interest and to support policies that sustain the poor, the vulnerable and the frightened people of this world.

Holy Spirit, who brought understanding among myriad peoples and languages at Pentecost, give to all your people a passion for peace and inspire us to work for unity and cooperation throughout the world and in our political life together. Amen.