



Rev'd Patkai with Bishop Emeritus Jagucki in 2009

Winter/Epiphany 2012 **ISSUE 11**

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Looking to the Past as We to Look to the Future

Below is the sermon delivered at the closing service of Hothorpe Hall on Saturday 27 October 1984 by Rev'd Robert J Patkai. Hothorpe Hall was a conference and retreat centre in Leicestershire, bought by the Lutheran Council of Great Britain in the 1950s with funds from the Lutheran World Federation. It became an important gathering place for Lutherans from all over Britain, including many who had recently arrived as refugees from the Baltic countries and members of the LCiGB (Lutheran Church in Great Britain). As the large 18th century house and its grounds were in poor condition, work parties of volunteers devoted much time and energy to improve the facilities and offer a welcoming environment to individuals and families. The directors of Hothorpe Hall were Lutheran pastors and voluntary workers came from a wide range of countries in Europe, the Nordic countries and North America. With much sadness, the Lutheran Council of Great Britain sold the building in 1984, as the costs of maintenance and meeting the requirements of legislation for public buildings had become beyond the means of the Lutheran community in Britain.

'It was there from the beginning; we have heard it; we have seen it with our own eyes; we looked upon it, and felt it with our own hands; and it is of this we tell. Our theme is the word of life. This life was made visible; we have seen it and bear our testimony; we here declare to you the eternal life which dwelt with the Father and was made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.' (1 John 1:1-3)

One of the greatest achievements of English music in the realm of oratorios is "The Dream of Gerontius", by the late Sir Edward Elgar. At the end of the original score of the work Elgar

wrote these words, 'This is the best of me, for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, and loved and hated, but this I saw and knew; this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory.' There was the great composer's testimony that the music of the mighty work was given to him by direct inspiration, that it laid hold upon him creatively a first-hand, authentic revelation of the eternal beauty at the heart of things.

'This I saw and knew'. When a man speaks like that, the world is bound to listen. Can we speak this way of our Christianity? Can we, in an age when subtle forces are striving to undermine the basis of conviction, when even religious people grow uncertain in their attitude and vague about their witness and excessively problem-conscious – can we, in such an age, stand up and confront the whole world with the assurance of an authentic, first-hand experience, and say of our Christianity what Elgar said of his music: 'This I have seen and known'

It is particularly important that we should face ourselves with this question at the present time and that for two reasons. On the one hand our Christianity is going to make absolutely no impact whatsoever on the world in which we live and move, and is going to leave not the faintest impression, unless it is our own assured conviction. There is nothing appealing about a second-hand faith. If you have borrowed a creed, if it is not your own, you will never set another soul on fire with it. As the Bible says, 'If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?' If Christ's people are hesitant and doubtful about fundamentals, where is the dynamic force of Christianity?

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LIFE TOGETHER

**A Conference for theological students, ordinands, recently ordained pastors, and lay ministers
The College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, West Yorkshire
Monday 3 September to Friday 7 September 2012**

Church historians and theologians often refer to the past hundred years as the “ecumenical century”. In many diverse ways, it has been an era in which the different Christian denominations, often separated for hundreds of years, have started to draw closer together, and, in some cases, formally unite into new church bodies.

This movement could be said to have started with the missionary conference held in Edinburgh in 1910. This led, directly or indirectly, to inter-church movements such as *Life and Work*, and *Faith and Order*, and, ultimately, to the establishment of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948, which brought together more than 150 different church groups. Parallel to this, there has been a coming together of denominational families, and Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Reformed – and others – now have their own global organisations. For us, Lutherans, this is, of course, the Lutheran World Federation.

Another feature of the ecumenical movement has been the growing together of church bodies which are closely related, but which for historical reasons have developed separately. A case in point is the Anglican and Lutheran churches. In Europe, there have been such bilateral agreements as that of Meissen, between the Church of England and the *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*, and the wider Porvoo Agreement between the Anglican Churches of Europe and the Lutheran Churches of northern Europe (and beyond). Historically, Anglicans and Lutherans never excommunicated each other – they just developed separately and in different places, while retaining much in common.

Within the broad ecumenical movement, with its big set-piece conferences and formal inter-church agreements, less formal groups and organisations have played an important part. There are communities like Iona, Grandchamp, and Taizé, and associations like the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, which works for greater understanding between Anglicans and Orthodox. Alongside these is the Anglican-Lutheran Association (the ALS).

This Society was established in the early 1980s, and one of its founding members was Tom Bruch, now Dean of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain. Its basic aim is to promote a greater mutual knowledge and understanding between members of the two church families, and it does this through a quarterly magazine, *The Window*, through its Annual General Meeting (to be held this year on 10 March in Cambridge), and through international conferences held every two years. During the past decade, these conferences have been held in such diverse places as Liverpool, Tallinn, Dublin, Turku, and Salisbury, and it is hoped that the next one will be in September 2014 in Hungary.

Meanwhile, there is “Mirfield 2012”, which represents a new venture for the ALS. Members of the Society have, for a long time, been aware of the need to involve the younger generation in its work, and, at the same time, have been increasingly aware of the growing challenges that face younger men and women at the start of their ministry of Word and Sacraments. It has never been easy to be a minister, but in an increasingly secularised age, and with the myriad of social, economic, and political problems faced by the world, it has never been more daunting. “Mirfield 2012” is planned for theological students, ordinands, and recently ordained ministers, not just Anglican and Lutheran, but from the other mainstream denominations as well. At the time of writing this article, there have been expressions of interest from all over Europe, from South Africa and the United States – and even from Greenland!

The conference will be held at the College of the Resurrection in West Yorkshire from 3rd to 7th September. The college is attached to the Community of the Resurrection, which is an Anglican monastic foundation dating from the end of the nineteenth century, so participants will get a flavour of the monastic life. Speakers at the conference include two Lutheran bishops, Martin Lind (Sweden) and Tamás Fabiny (Hungary); three Anglicans – Michael Jackson (Archbishop of Dublin), Dr Christina Baxter (Principal of St John’s College, Nottingham), and Monica Schofield (the Anglican Church in Hamburg); and Dr Margaret Barker, a Methodist lay theologian who will lead a daily Bible Study.

The conference is open to theological students and pastors, and to recognised lay ministers. Dr Roy Long is part of the organising committee, and you can find out more information from him at roy.long485@btinternet.com.

Let Evening Come: A short review essay

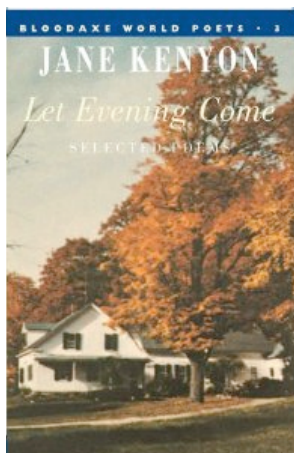
In a poem published in a book of poetry called *Constance*, the U.S. poet Jane Kenyon wrote that '... God, as promised, proves/to be mercy clothed in light.' This strongly connects with Christ both when he states, 'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.' (Luke 6:36) and when he gives this definition of himself, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.' (John 8:12). The poem's title is 'Notes from the Other Side'. It is very accessible, written in a sequence of two-line stanzas making it like a contemporary Psalm. There are some surprising, direct, thought-provoking descriptions. For example, in heaven, 'there is no more catching/one's own eye in the mirror'. The poem is included in a selection of the writer's work published by Bloodaxe Books in 2005. Recommended by the Poetry Society, based in London, it is still in the publisher's most recent catalogue. Jane Kenyon, a major modern poet, is the third in their series of world Poets. The book is entitled *Let Evening Come*. The title poem has been printed in an earlier edition of 'The Forum' (Issue 6).

Far from every poem in the collection makes an assertion about God, but when they are made they have a compelling humanity and vibrancy. Here are some others:

'God does not leave us/comfortless, so let evening come.' (p.99)

'You wouldn't be so depressed/if you really believed in God.' (p.107)

'I loved the Lord, he heard/my cry, and he loved me as his own.' (p.141)



Let Evening Come by Jane Kenyon is published by Bloodaxe Books (2005)

Among the subjects of poems in the publisher's selection are 'Gettysburg July 1, 1863', 'Coming Home at Twilight in Late Summer', 'With the Dog at Sunrise', 'Chrysanthemums', 'Trouble with Math in a One-Room Country School', 'Two Days Alone' and 'Eating the Cookies'. Other poetry focuses on both the suffering Jane Kenyon experienced – she suffered from depression, died young of leukaemia – and that of others, including the U.S. poet Donald Hall to whom she was married for twenty-three years.

In his 'Treatise on Good Works', published in 1520, Martin Luther wrote, explicating a quotation from Isaiah 28, 'He sends us suffering and unrest to teach us to have patience and peace.' The 'Treatise' is a set of reflections on the Commandments. In some of her poems Jane Kenyon enacts an understanding that is closely connected to Martin Luther's argument that 'God overwhelms us... to perfect his own work in us, that is, his peace.'

To give an example from *Let Evening Come*, one of Jane Kenyon's short poems is titled 'Coats'. It shows the poet empathising with an unnamed man in loss. The poet's observations from which she has constructed the poem leave the reader in no doubt about his suffering but also reveal an attitude of very touching patience and resolution. The poet herself has commented, 'I found that by talking about the coats – the man's coat and the woman's coat – I was able to write the poem... It's only three stanzas long, about twelve lines, and it's all about the coats.' Elsewhere, in the same interview, which is also published in the collection *Let Evening Come*, Jane Kenyon reflects, 'Even when a poem addresses a painful subject, it still manages to be consoling, somehow, if it's a good poem. Poetry has an unearthly ability to turn suffering into beauty.'

Martin Luther, in another section of his 'Treatise on Good Works', wrote of specifically Biblical poetry, 'God... has comforted us in the Scriptures with many words and told us in Psalm 91 v.15, "I am with him in all his suffering and will help him out of it." And again in Psalm 34 (v.18), "The Lord is near to all who suffer and he will help them."'

Pete Mathers
St Anne's Lutheran Church, London

2012 New Year Message from the LWF General Secretary

“My power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor 12:9)

What a promising biblical text to remember, pray and proclaim throughout the year! Weakness is not an obstacle for God's power, but the entry point for God's empowering action.

The message that in weakness there is power connects to the good news of the arrival of “Immanuel” – God with us - in the most vulnerable conditions. God comes as a baby, born to a migrant couple, without shelter in a village that is remote from political powers. It is in this vulnerability that faith recognizes the powerful confirmation of God's life-bringing promises for the entire creation.

This watchword for the year 2012 also has strong links to the Christian interpretation of Jesus' death on the cross. While erected as an instrument of violence and death, a life-denying and humiliating symbol of the powerful, faith apprehends the cross as the place and the experience in which lasting peace and life in fullness originate. Instead of signifying the horrifying absence of God, the cross becomes the expression of God's most intimate communion with the vulnerable human condition. Indeed, the cross is a powerful confirmation of the “God with us” announced at the manger in Bethlehem!

What a promising watchword this is for churches around the world, therefore, who attempt to be faithful to God and endeavor to be God's instruments in the world. The apostle Paul, confronted with his own weakness, does not become defensive, nor does he withdraw into stubborn denial of his human condition. He recognizes his weakness and vulnerability, claims them and expresses his deep trust that God will transform this weakness into power.

Human beings have difficulty understanding their weakness and vulnerability, and therefore their deep dependence on God, their neighbor and creation. The international community's failure to tackle the ominous threat of climate change is a reflection of this lack of self-awareness. We ought to recognize how carefully humankind has been woven into the fragile fabric of ecological systems and acknowledge our interdependence with the whole of God's creation. However, our pursuit of power and control over these systems is pushing humanity closer and closer to the abyss of ecological disaster. In the same way, the current

financial crisis highlights our futile attempts to live on resources which do not exist and exposes the dead end where relying on the logic of power will ultimately lead us. The financial and ecological crises will not be overcome by continuing to please the markets, but by finally addressing the issues of justice within the human family!

The watchword for the year 2012 represents a powerful invitation to understand ourselves and meet each other with an honest self-awareness that recognizes the vulnerability and fragility of human beings. It comes to us as people liberated by God's grace, and as a communion of churches that holds together the vision of living and working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world. It reaches us as a communion of churches that continues to be engaged in discernment and conversations about how to faithfully serve God in this world. These conversations will be nurtured by the churches' engagement in mission, and the deep trust in God's empowering presence over what may be seen as weaknesses. Instead of falling into despair when there are no easy answers to complex realities, we will trust in what God will do in the church and in the world.

This watchword that in weakness we can find power is also a dynamic reminder that the church's mission should be focused on the vulnerable, marginalized and weakened sections of society, as well as on God's creation, which has been wounded by human action. A church faithfully engaged in God's mission will seek to empower humanity and creation. By understanding the weakness, fragility and interdependency of human beings, the church will also learn to trust in God's perfecting power.

May God bless all of us as we enter the year 2012, aware of our weaknesses and vulnerabilities, but cognizant that God can transform them into power.

Rev'd Martin Junge
General Secretary
Geneva, 6 January 2012

BERNARDINO OCHINO (1487-1564)

A 16th century Italian Lutheran in London?

You will notice that there is a question mark at the end of the sub-heading to this article. The question mark is not there to suggest either that Bernardino Ochino might not have existed, or that he was not in London, but to ask whether or not he was Lutheran. He was a 16th century Italian “evangelical”, described in several academic articles as a “Lutheran”, he stayed in London for several years during the reign of King Edward VI, and he was given permission by no less a person than Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, to hold services in Italian and Spanish in London. His significance for Lutherans in Britain today is that, if he was, truly, a Lutheran, then he held the first Lutheran services in England a full 120 years before the services held in the embassy of Brandenburg in the 1660s which led to the formation of the first Lutheran congregation in this country. But the problem lies in the adjective “Lutheran”.

During the first period of the English Reformation, which we might say lasted from the mid-1520s to the accession of Queen Mary I in 1553, the word “Lutheran” was one of the most frequently used to describe priests, scholars, and lay people who were attracted by the ideas of continental reformers, among whom the most pre-eminent was, of course, Martin Luther. The only real distinction that was made was between these “Lutherans”, who broadly agreed with Luther’s ways of thinking, and the “Sacramentarians”, who were radical and who went much further away from the traditional teachings of the Church. We can say for certain that some of the earliest reformers were “Lutheran” in the way that we would use the word today – men like Patrick Hamilton in Scotland (d.1528), or Robert Barnes in England (d.1540), and we can

say that confidently because of what they wrote. But what happened in England was that, as time went on and the influence of reformers like Martin Bucer and John Calvin grew, so Luther’s influence declined, although the Reformation scholar, John Schofield, maintains that Elizabeth I herself was really a Lutheran, as was her Bishop of Gloucester, Richard Cheyney. The fact is, though, that many “evangelicals” who started out as followers of Luther, moved on to be followers of Calvin and his colleagues.

This is probably what happened with Bernardino Ochino. He started out as a Roman Catholic (prior of a monastic house, in fact), became a Christian Humanist in the style of Desiderius Erasmus, moved on to become – broadly speaking – a “Lutheran”, and at the time of his death (in what is now the Czech Republic) he was a radical theologian whose thinking was taking him outside the realms of orthodox theology. Was he still a Lutheran when he was living in London? The evidence is not conclusive, but his “evangelical” services certainly pre-date those of the much more famous “Strangers’ Church” at Austin Friars (now the Dutch Church). A fascinating little side to the story of the English Reformation.



16th Engraving of Bernardino Ochino

Dr Long has written a longer paper about Bernardino Ochino as part of a series entitled “Notes on Lutheran History in Great Britain and Ireland”. If you are interested, you can contact Dr Long for a copy. There are also several interesting articles on the internet: just type in Bernardino Ochino and see what comes up!

Dr Roy Long

Lutheran Women in Great Britain's Retreat 2011

This year's retreat was held at Belsey Bridge, a Christian Conference Trust facility, in Norfolk, from Friday 11 - Sunday 13 November. There were 14 ladies attending from London, Leeds, and Nottingham LCiGB congregations.

The retreat was hosted by the women of St. Anne's, London with a special thanks to Sarah Farrow for preparing the program but was regrettably unable to attend. Sarah Owens readily and competently, led the sessions in her stead, which we are very grateful for.



A visit to Norwich by some of the women

The theme of the retreat was "The Simple Life" in the context of: Proper use of wealth, Stewards of God's creation, The Lord's Prayer, and Grace. On Saturday there were two sessions to discuss the topic, which was anything but simple. The discussion was thought provoking and uplifting.

In the afternoon the ladies enjoyed a tour of Norwich Castle; thereby getting to see 17 churches in all;

albeit from the battlements of the Castle. The Cathedral was also visited, where an impressive and inspirational guest choir performed Evensong.

In the evenings we enjoyed fellowship with the poppy challenge, music by Richard Digance from his CD 'Letter from Afghanistan', tracks: In the Beginning, The Hour Song, and Strange Thoughts. We also watched the films, *Into Great Silence* and *Amelia's Wings*. All of which were entertaining, some serious and some seriously funny.

On Sunday, Pastor Libby Toomsalu preached and presided over the service, which was inspirational; and for which we extend our gratitude. It was lovely to hear the ladies sing the hymns a capella. You go girls!

The morning service was followed by a photo shoot and a lovely countryside walk. Apparently it is not life threatening even for a city girl and can provide your fruit and veg for the week to come.

It was an uplifting and inspirational weekend filled with sisterly love and laughter; we truly enjoyed fellowship with one another. To all the ladies out there, we would love for you to join us. The next retreat is scheduled for 9 -11 November 2012, at Willersley Castle Hotel in Derbyshire. If you are interested and would like to reserve your place, please contact Annette Higgins (annthggns@sky.com).

Elaine Makowski
St Anne's, London

Poetry

Oh Come Let Us Adore Him

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun
which comes out like a bridegroom
from his wedding canopy:

as the eyes of servants
look to the hand of their master

as the eyes of a maid
to the hand of her mistress

so our eyes look to the Lord our God
for with you is the fountain of life
in your light we see light;

you desire truth in the inward being therefore teach me wisdom
in my secret heart.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation. My lips will praise you!

Pete Mathers
from the verses of the Book of Psalms (NRSV); December 2011

The day I wrote this column, it was the seventh day of the Chinese New Year. Traditions have it that on this day, Chinese around the world celebrated their birthday. The Chinese Lutherans worshipping at the American Church near Central London's Goodge Street were no exception. They greeted one another not only with 'God's peace be with you' but also 'Happy Birthday!' Lucky for them to have three birthdays a year - one according to the western calendar, the lunar calendar and the Chinese New Year! The Chinese Christians' celebration of birthday is not so very different from the culture in the west – going out with friends to have fun or enjoying a delicious meal together. It is also time to give thanks to God for giving us life, and an opportunity to reflect on what we experienced in the past year and what the future holds. Let me take this opportunity to also reflect on what has happened in the LCiGB Council in the past year and ponder what the future holds for LCiGB.

The LCiGB Council met six times last year and prior to meeting the Officers had three to four "mini-meetings" to prepare for key discussions. All Council meetings were held on Saturdays, probably the most convenient day for everyone. Every meeting lasted for at least seven hours. More often than not, we did not feel we had enough time due to the many issues that emerged between meetings that we have to deal with. At one stage we had to set priorities, screening out items that should belong more appropriately to the Strategic Planning Meeting (SPM) than operational matters.

Twice the SPM was postponed last year – the first in February and the second in July due to either unprecedented numerous topics that emerged and required our immediate attention and discussion, or internal human resource hearing that was extended to cope with unexpected demands.

We have to thank God that the Council managed to take LCiGB forward in many aspects of development despite the many complex human resource issues that required our immediate attention. Most significantly, I think, is the congregations' steadily growing compliance of the rules and regulations of the Charity Commission in England and Wales (CC) and Companies House (CH). Our commitment for compliance means that LCiGB will be able to build on a solid ground of structure and enable us to grow in its ministries with an appropriate framework that is acceptable by the government.

The Council has been constantly giving thought to strengthen its relationship with the various congregations to help them comply with government and charity regulations, especially in financial management. One outstanding achievement I think in the past year is the Service Agreement drawn up with the Polish Lutheran Congregation. The agreement provided a framework for the LCiGB Church Office to give staff assistance on procedures that are related to employment legislation and returns to HMRC. I am happy to report that the result was so good that a six-month implementation of the Agreement, though experimental in nature, will continue with our Polish brothers and sisters after the evaluation in December.

Apart from administrative matters, to have a sound faith and financial base is key to church growth. I was glad to report that the Council has decided tithing be continued next year and will ask our congregations to send in tithing in three batches: Easter, Pentecost and Harvest.

The famous "Change-for-Church" Appeal, which we launched last year, has been "moderately successful". The Council suggested congregations to have a Lent Appeal in 2012, with a Lent Study Guide for meditations. Our veteran theologian and leader of our Diakonia Working Party, Rev'd Dr Roy Long has told me that he will be sending out a series of five bible studies on the theme of "Service", entitled "Serve the Lord with Gladness". The "Service" series seems to be a timely resource that will help us reflect in the Lent season on God's gift for us – His unconditional love, and our talents and on what we can do for Him to build His Kingdom on earth.

I hope and pray that the Lent Appeal will be an opportunity for us to build a financial foundation that will be much needed when we plan for development of ministries for the needy and the marginalized. Lent will also be time for us to thank God for His sacrifice for the redemption of our sins as preparation for the celebration of Easter.

In the next column I will report about the Council's Strategic Planning Meeting that will be held at St Columba's House in the suburb of Woking from 4-5 February, 2012. As planning has to do with future, please pray for God's majestic power to grant us discerning wisdom, visions and insight so that we could build LCiGB as the real Lutheran Church that will both be a blessing for ourselves, our folks and for others in society.

David Lin
Chairman, LCiGB

Seminar for Chaplains Working with International Students: 'Going home – to new challenges'

The Lutheran Church in Great Britain (LCiGB) hosted a training seminar for Lutheran university chaplains on 26 November 2011. The aim of the seminar was to enable chaplains to provide appropriate welfare support for international students who are about to return home and might experience cultural re-entry difficulties.



Students who have been away from their country for some time can experience reverse culture-shock when they return. This can be particularly unsettling for them, as generally students do not expect to have such problems when they go home. They think that going back to a familiar place will be smooth sailing. They can encounter various challenges, however, as they return to families, friends, the work place and their societies generally - circumstances at home might be quite different and the students too might have changed more than they realise.

Chaplains can play a key role in preparing students for the challenges that they might encounter after they have finished their courses and go back to their homes countries. They can help international students simply by talking with them about the difficulties that they might face when they return home. Chaplains can also offer workshops for groups of students, for example, a few months before the students leave the institution for home.

The seminar was aimed at:

- Enabling chaplains to understand how reverse culture shock develops;
- Developing an awareness, through case studies, of difficulties students might experience on their return home;
- Developing workshops or other events that will help students to be aware of and cope with reverse culture shock.

The seminar was led by Alison Barty, Head of Student Services and Senior Student Counsellor at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. She has worked with international students for many years and is an experienced trainer, having presented courses on this topic at several institutions and in international settings.

Most of the 11 participants were pastors or lay ministers of the LCiGB but two from other Lutheran churches and one Anglican also registered. The programme included presentations on a number of different strategies used to help students come to terms with the idea of returning home and what issues may arise upon their return. Excerpts were shown from a DVD about cultural adjustment that included interviews with international students giving first-hand accounts of their own challenges with culture shock. However, what may have been most helpful were the personal experiences shared by those participating in the programme (most of which were ex-pats themselves).

Participants were very positive about the usefulness of the seminar. All intended to use the information and suggestions to prepare special sessions for students who would soon return home. It seemed that few institutions or congregations were already providing such opportunities, although the Tanzanian High Commission in London had recently started organising pre-return programmes for its nationals and one of the chaplains would be able to use the knowledge gained from the seminar in that context.

The Lutheran Church in Great Britain is enormously grateful to VELKD and the German National Committee of the LWF for supporting this seminar. Without the funds provided, this successful event could not have happened.

Very Rev'd Tom Bruch
Dean, LCiGB

New Year's Day Sermon (Luke 2:22-40)

Grace to you and peace from God our father and Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Happy New Year to everyone. I hope you are all well and ready to start a new beginning. I believe you have new ideas, new ways to face the challenges ahead of you with Christ in mind.

Once again, as we start the New Year we don't know what is ahead but what I do know is that we start with worship and praising God. That means God is in our midst, he is with us, and that is a good thing to start the year.

It is customary to many people to have a New Year's resolution every year, however to some the resolution is hard to fulfil. I don't know if your resolution for last year was fulfilled or not. But today's Gospel narrative recalls a resolution of Simeon and Anna, which was fulfilled by divine promise.

In today's Gospel we celebrate the presentation of Jesus in the temple. Luke's Gospel recounts that forty days after his birth, Jesus was taken to the temple by his parents, Mary and Joseph, as was the customary for God's people in that time and place.

Jewish law required that after the birth of a male child, his mother was regarded as unclean for seven days and had to remain at home for further a thirty three days, after which, on the fortieth day, a purification sacrifice had to be offered.

Also the law required that the first born had to be redeemed, all first born were regarded as consecrated to God. This is how they remember when the Lord delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt.

It was important for Mary to make a special offering for her child to God for His gift, just as Hannah had given Samuel to God at the tabernacle.

The gospel narrative continues with the young couple and child noticed by two people, Simeon and Anna.

The Bible says Simeon was righteous and devout, who looked to God for consolation, Simeon's promise had arrived, and he had received a divine promise - that he would not die before the coming of the Messiah. Simeon firmly believed that before he died, God would grant him the privilege of laying eyes on God's own son, the Messiah.

The moment had come when Simeon went to the temple and embraced the child. He then expressed both his gratitude to God and his readiness to die. Simeon, his promise fulfilled,

saw the child's coming as that of the saviour for his people, not merely Jews.

Something welled up in Simeon, and it came out in the following prayer:

Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

Simeon's prayer is the prayer of completion. What he had been praying for all his life was now present in this infant. Simeon held the purpose and meaning of his life in his arms. He was now ready to die. After a long life of hopeful prayer and faithful witness, he stepped aside and gave place to a letting go, to a relinquishment. God words not only initiated prayer, but it also provided wholeness to completion. God gets the first word in prayer, he also gets the last word.

Luke's story of Jesus tells us about beliefs, expectation and hope. God is acting for the good of all creation, for the Jew and gentile together. As the New Year starts, our hopes and expectations are in mind, and let our perseverance be the main focus.

Let this year begin with new things, Christ is born within us. Let the past be a stepping-stone. Let us focus with hope and faith in Christ Jesus.

Simeon's story is a challenge to us to listen and believe God's word, even if it seems that God is taking a long time in producing 'the goods'. The birth of Christ is good news for us; he came to release the captive, give sight for the blind and freedom for the oppressed. However, this promise may not be fulfilled yet so let us have hope and perseverance.

On hope, Rev'd Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope.' And ultimately, as is written in Proverbs 3: 'Trust the Lord completely; don't ever trust yourself. In everything you do, put God first, and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success.'

Simeon message is a challenge to us to trust in God in prayer in whatever we do, and let this message draw us closer to God. And let the language we use in prayer be spoken submissively and believingly for this year. Amen

Lay Minister Moses Shonga
St Anne's, London

Hothorpe Hall Sermon, cont.

On the other hand, I ask you to observe the great certainty of John's message in our text, 'What we have seen and heard, we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life' in Jesus Christ. You see the apostles are not weaving an abstract theory, they are not saying: 'Come and we will explain the speculative process by which we have reached our idea of the divine nature.' Their message is totally different. 'It was there from the beginning; we have heard it; we have seen it with our own eyes; we looked upon it, and felt it with our own hands; and it is of this we tell.'

This is crucially important. It means that Christianity is not just another beautiful speculation on the mysteries of life, not a theory of spiritual values or a vague mysticism. It is a historical fact. It is God visibly and dramatically in action, in the midst of our hard and often tragic realities of human existence. 'And we have seen it.' We experienced it – that is what made those men irresistible. That is what carried their Gospel like fire around the world.

I need not illustrate further. It is abundantly clear that a vivid, personal experience of the basic facts of the Gospel was no monopoly of the men of the New Testament. What they have seen is ours too. What they have heard we can hear today. And we can say with a strong conviction: I know in whom I have believed. It is our common, proven experience.

And this experience, common and proven to many of us is ours when we remember the past 29 years of Hothorpe Hall. This Conference, Youth and Ecumenical Centre was destined to serve as a gathering point where Lutherans from many different countries could come together to know and understand one another and to grow together in faith, love and forgiveness.

In 1955 the call went out to people from this Hall to all parts of Great Britain and to many parts of the world, to come to Hothorpe, to serve, to share our common faith in Jesus Christ as well as our various cultures. What is the content of our experience? What can we see happening during these almost three decades? We can see Estonian, Latvian, German, Polish members of congregations adopting a room for each nationality and restoring it in their own distinctive styles. We can see and hear Hungarian, Estonian, Polish, Finnish, English, German, Swedish, Norwegian, Latvian children at camps singing and dancing, studying and praying, worshiping and playing. We see confirmation groups, various retreats, house parties for young and old. We see pensioners and families who have found peace and companionship. We see conferences for pastors, women, for lay people and synodical meetings.

With gratitude and conviction we say with the apostle as our witness today, 'We have heard it, we

have seen it with our own eyes, we looked upon it... and it is of this we tell.' What else can we tell? We can tell of early days when in 1959 in the Director's report we read: 'From any empty house and a jungle of weeds has emerged a Lutheran Youth and Conference Centre which has been a blessing to thousands of people. God has blessed the work, and has countless youth, laymen and women and the prayers and support of churches from far and near to fulfil His purpose among us.' We can tell of one of the strengths of Hothorpe Hall programme, which was the international volunteer work. Here at Hothorpe they shared their customs, our common faith in our Lord and international friendship developed, between young adult volunteers from Germany, Great Britain, Finland and America. Others came from Switzerland, Hungary, France, Sweden, Belgium, Canada and elsewhere.

With the apostle we can say that 'we have seen it and bear our testimony' that God has graciously used several people to the benefit of all churches and synods in this country. I would like to mention the zeal and dedication of the founder and first director, Pastor Lloyd Schwantz, our present director, Pastor Thomas Bruch and in between those who served here with vision, dedication and love. I would not like to fail to mention the dedicated staff during our past history here. Today I would like to mention only three names: Oskars, John and Marlies. May God bless them, who one way or another were or became instruments of our service and witness through this Hall. And last, but not least, I would like to recognise with gratitude the tremendous financial help from the Lutheran World Federation, from the Evangelical Church in Germany, from the Martin Luther Bund as well as gifts from countless groups and friends of Hothorpe Hall.

I began by quoting Sir Edward Elgar, 'This I saw and knew'. I want to end now by saying that what lay behind that crowning moment of vision and inspiration was Elgar's utter self-abandonment to the heavy demands of his art. And before you and I can say with conviction our common experience and testimony about the service of Hothorpe Hall, 'This I have seen and know', one thing must happen – we must accept and surrender to the inevitable fact that today we have the last service in Hothorpe Hall. Our Lord lent us this Hall for nearly 30 years. We used it in His name. We glorified His name in it. Here we found peace, friendship, forgiveness. Let us be grateful for it. It sheltered us during our growing years. Let us be thankful for it.

This is an emotional occasion for us all. If we weep, let us not be ashamed of it. Through our tears we can look back. Through our tears we can look at the present and the future with hope and certainty that our theme is still and will remain with the Word of Life, the life which we share 'with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ'. Amen.

Services in Amharic

London

St Anne's Lutheran Church
Services held at St Vedast Church, Foster Lane,
London EC2
Services every Sunday: 15:00
Website: www.stanneslutheranchurch.org.uk

Services in Chinese

London

London Chinese Lutheran Church
Services held at The American Church in London,
79A Tottenham Court Road, London W1T
Services every Sunday: 14:00
Website: www.lclchurch.org.uk

Services in English

Birmingham

St Mark's Lutheran Church
Services held in the Worship Room, St Francis
Hall, University of Birmingham Main Campus,
Edgbaston, Birmingham B15
Services every first and third Sunday of the month: 11:00
Website: www.chaplaincy.bham.ac.uk

Bradford

St Matthew's Lutheran Church
Services held at 70 Little Horton Lane, Bradford.
Services every first Sunday of the month: 12:00
Contact: Mrs H Martin (telephone 0113 267 7679)

Corby, Northants

St Paul's Lutheran Church
Services held at Church of the Epiphany,
Elizabeth Street, Corby, Northants NN17
Occasional services
Contact: Mr David Whyte (david_whyte@talk21.com)

Harrogate

St Luke's Lutheran Church
Services held at St Peter's Church, 19-21
Cambridge St, Harrogate, HG1
Services every third Sunday of the month: 17:00
Contact: Mrs Joan White (telephone 0113 278 5075)

Leeds

St Luke's Lutheran Church, 9 Alma Road,
Headingley, Leeds LS6
Services every Sunday: 10:30
Website: www.stlukeslutheranchurch.org.uk

London

St Anne's Lutheran Church, Gresham Street,
London EC2V
Services every Sunday: 11:00 and 18:30
Website: www.stanneslutheranchurch.org.uk

Manchester

St Martin's Lutheran Church
Services held at Martin Luther Church, 9 Park Rd,
Stretford, Manchester M32
Services every first Sunday of the month: 15:00
Contact: 0161 865 1335

Nottingham

Trinity Lutheran Church, 67 Homefield Road,
Aspley, Nottingham NG8
Services every first and third Sunday of the
month: 11:00
Website: www.trinitylutheran.org.uk

Services in Polish

Bradford

St Matthew's Lutheran Church
Services held at 70 Little Horton Lane, Bradford.
Services every first Sunday of the month: 12:00
Contact: Mrs H Martin (telephone 0113 267 7679)
Services are occasionally in English or bilingual

Cambridge

St John's Lutheran Church
Services held at St John's Abbey Church,
Newmarket Road CB5
Services every first Sunday of the month: 12:00

Edinburgh

St Matthew's Lutheran Church
Services held four times a year
Contact: Arkadiusz Kilanowski arkil@poczta.onet.pl

High Wycombe

St John's Lutheran Church
Services held at St John's United Reformed
Church, London Road HP11
Service second Sunday of the month: 14:30

Leeds

St Luke's Church, Alma Road, Headingley,
Leeds LS6
Services every first Sunday of the month: 9:30
Website: www.stlukeslutheranchurch.org.uk

London

Christ the King Lutheran Church
Services held at Christ Church, Montpelier Place,
Knightsbridge SW7
Services every fourth Sunday of the month: 14:00

Milton Keynes

Please contact Pastor Robert Wojtowicz by email
at rowojtowicz@yahoo.com

Manchester

St Martin's Lutheran Church
Services held at Martin Luther Church, 9 Park Rd,
Stretford, Manchester M32
Services every first Sunday of the month: 15:00
Contact: 0161 865 1335

Reading

St John's Lutheran Church
Services held at St John's West Methodist
Church, 448 Oxford Road, RG30
Services every third Sunday of the month: 12:30

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Poems of Creation



Written by Peter Mathers

Poems of Creation Available for Purchase!

Poems of Creation is a collection of poems written by Pete Mathers, a regularly featured poet in The Forum.

The cost of the book is £3.50.

Please contact the editors if you are interested in ordering any copies (including larger quantities to sell at individual congregations). Contact details are below.

LCiGB Directory Cont

Services in Swahili

London

St Anne's Lutheran Church, Gresham Street, London EC2V

Services every first and third Sunday: 14:00

Website: www.stanneslutheranchurch.org.uk

Reading

Imani Lutheran Mission Church

Services held at St Andrew's URC, London Road, Reading, Berks RG1 5BD

Services every Sunday of the month: 14:30pm

Services in Tigrinya

London

Eritrean Wengelawit Lutheran Church

Services held at St Andrews, Frognall Lane, Finchley NW3

Services every Sunday: 13:30

Website: www.wlcl.co.uk



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