



PORVOO

On Friday, 19 September 2014, I signed the document stating that our Lutheran Church in Great Britain now is a full member of the Porvoo Communion. It all happened in the chapel in Bishopthorpe, the Palace of the Archbishop of York. The chapel was crowded with people as it is a rather small chapel. I would have preferred to have the whole service in York Minster so that it would have been more public and official and open for people. But this was decided by others and could not be changed, I was told.

The signing was a part of the closing Eucharist service at the so called church leaders' conference in York. In the conference there were bishops from most of the members in the Porvoo Communion, as well as some other representatives. The new Archbishop of Uppsala, Antje Jackelén – the first female archbishop ever in Sweden – preached and the Archbishop of York presided at the Eucharist.

If you go to www.porvoocommunion.org and click on 'News' you will find some pictures from the event. In the pictures you will see archbishop Elmar Rozitis of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad. That church was also accepted as a full member of the Porvoo Communion at the same occasion as ours. At the signing you also may see the two chairpersons of the Porvoo Communion, the Anglican archbishop of Dublin, Michael Jackson, and the Lutheran bishop of Copenhagen Peter Skov-Jakobsen.

Our church being a full member of the Porvoo Communion means immediately that all pastors in our church are fully accepted as pastors in the four Anglican churches in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Closer cooperation is therefore easy and possible in new ways.

Our future is in God's hands. We may reflect and dream. We don't know how the future will look. Maybe we will have a "flying Lutheran bishop" for our congregations, or maybe our church will come to such a close cooperation with the Church of England that we form a Lutheran diocese within the Church of England, or that we become fully integrated but with all possibilities to keep our special cultural and theological character. Nobody knows about this. My hope is that I may contribute to a closer cooperation. As I have many valuable contacts with Church of England friends in many different positions it may be possible that I could give a substantial contribution. We have to wait and see.

One thing is clear: our church has comprehensive problems of financial sustainability. That will in some sense make it necessary to find new cooperation. Still we continue our work. I

hear good voices telling me about the spiritual health of our church. To a large extent this is a result of energetic and gifted pastors in our church as well as energetic and gifted laypersons voluntarily working in our church.

So many congregations are spiritually healthy with a mixture of older and younger. This is something very good in any case. Our church is the tool of God helping us continuously to receive the holy gifts we badly need. Whatever church organisation, its spiritual health is the nerve and the centre and the most important.

Now, I do think that we in the long run will gain much in being full members of the Porvoo Communion. We will get access to a closer cooperation and will be offered a supply of conferences and opportunities to meet new friends. Within the Porvoo Communion there is now a decision to create a solidarity fund facilitating participation from churches with limited financial possibilities.

There is also an invitation for us to participate in on-going intercession for one another. You will find the list on the same website that I mentioned previously in this letter. Please take note of the days and include this in your Sunday service intercessions. It is of vital importance that we pray for our co-members in the Porvoo Communion, as they pray for us.

With many prayers for all of you

Yours in Christ

+ Martin

NB - Let me remind you of some forthcoming dates:

18 October: Bishop Walter's 50 years Jubilee as a priest

19 October: the Receiving of Pastor Libby as pastor in charge in St Luke's in Leeds and Pastor Mark as Assistant pastor

22 November (provisional): Ordination at St Anne's Lutheran Church, London, for two new priests in our church: Paulina Hlawiczka and Jo Jan Vandenheede

