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1. INTRODUCTION

Dear Bulletin Readers

In memoriam Edwin Robertson

We were saddened to learn of the recent death at the age of 95 of the Revd Dr Edwin Robertson, Baptist minister and veteran of Anglo-German ecumenical fellowship. Dr Robertson’s remarkable ministry reached so many people in so many places and his enthusiastic ecumenical vision was central to everything he did. Sheila Brain writes that his fluency in German enabled him not only to bring the writings and the life of Bonhoeffer to an English-reading public, but also to be a key figure in supporting the newly emerging German Church in the immediate post-war period, and in particular through the Kirchentag movement. Right from the start this involved international participation and Dr Robertson was one of the key figures in encouraging people from Britain to attend, translating Kirchentag information and study materials into English and through his membership of the British Kirchentag Committee which he helped to establish.

Christmas on the web

As we move through Advent towards Christmas, many churches in Europe have seasonal devotional materials on their websites. For a French view of Christmas, with plenty of materials from the Pax Christi organisation, go to <http://www.noel-autrement.org/>

Ecumenical study courses at Bossey

A good opportunity to refresh or learn new ecumenical skills in 2008 is provided by courses at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, near Geneva. For full details of study programmes at the Institute, see <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/bossey/study-at-bossey/seminars-courses.html> The seminars offered, each gathering up to 20 participants are on sensitive, cutting-edge issues and burning challenges confronting Christians and churches today. Applications can be sent throughout the year. The selection from among the applicants, which strives to create a balanced group of participants in terms of age, denomination, gender and geography, is done approximately two months before the announced date of the seminar. If places are still available, applications can be received up to two weeks before the beginning of the seminar from those persons not needing a visitor's visa to Switzerland.

"Protestantism and Culture"

A new German language publishing series on the theme "Protestantismus und Kultur" is underway at the Evangelical Church in Germany. The aim is to demonstrate the cultural relevance of Protestantism, and a new volume will be produced every six months, on areas such as literature, architecture and ritual. The books will be published by Gütersloher Verlagshaus, beginning with a work on European culture.

European Links Officers Network Conference

Francis Bassett is waiting to hear from some of the European Links Officer about attendance at the Network Conference to be held on Thursday 24 January. If you have not already responded he would be happy to receive an email at francis.bassett@c-of-e.org.uk

A move for Canon Charles Hill

Charles Hill will be leaving his post as European Secretary at the Council for Christian Unity in March, to move to a parish ministry. CCU is looking for a successor, and details of the post can be downloaded at www.prospect-us.co.uk/jobs.

Wishing you every blessing

We thank our readers for their encouragement and support during this busy year of ecumenical work in Europe, and wish you all every blessing for Advent and the Christmas season.

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2. NEWS FROM CEC: CEC Church and Society Paper on “Ageing and the Care for the Elderly”

The CEC News Service reports on a new paper from the Church and Society Commission on ageing.

The report states that the proportion of people in Europe over 65 years old is growing steadily. A generation ago, it was less than 3%. By 2050 it could be 20%, with only half of the population of working age. Such changes bring new perspectives to much older human questions such as “How should we view old age? What is the status of the elderly in our societies? How do we care for their needs?”.

The Executive Committee of the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) has adopted a Position Paper on “Ageing and the Care for the Elderly”, prepared by its Working Group on Bioethics and Biotechnology.

The paper emphasises “human dignity, based on the belief that all human beings are created in the image of God. We are critical of contemporary trends to value people primarily for their youth, attractiveness, health, economic productivity and independence. These trends lead to the concerns expressed by the term ‘ageism’. We think that all people and also our societal institutions should work to oppose these trends, and to be active in asserting that every phase of life has its own value”.

The paper is available on the CEC website:
<http://www.cec-kek.org/pdf/AgeingandCareElderly.pdf>

3. Churches call on World Leaders to address the Challenge of Climate Change

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of Sweden and the Chairman of the Council of the EKD have issued a joint call to world leaders on climate change as the Bali summit opened this December.

The EKD press service reported on this important initiative (3rd December):

“The United Nations Climate Change Conference is meeting in Bali at the beginning of December. In response to this the chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, Bishop Wolfgang Huber, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, and the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, Anders Wejryd, have written a letter to the President of Council of the European Union, José Sócrates de Carvalho Pinto de Sousa, and the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso (see text of letter below). This letter has also been sent to the Federal Chancellor of

Germany, Angela Merkel, to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Gordon Brown, to the Prime Minister of Sweden, Fredrik Reinfeldt, and to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki-moon.

"Drawing on our trust in God, creator of heaven and earth, and on a living faith in Christ, we as leaders of churches in Europe call upon our governments and the European Commission to strengthen their commitment to addressing the challenge of climate change. Following the publication of the Fourth Report of the Intergovernmental Conference on Climate Change (IPCC), November 2007, we urge you to redouble your efforts to secure the necessary framework agreement at the COP-13 in Bali, 3-14 December 2007.

The Fourth IPCC Report is yet further evidence that the conditions for life on earth are not secure, but are more frequently threatened by a violent and seemingly irreversibly changing climate. The report reminds us that we are allocated a position of co-responsibility in the sustainable use and beneficial management of the living space created by God, and accountable before God for its fulfilment. The biblical creation narrative is not to be understood as an unlimited licence to exploit, but rather as a promise of blessing that humankind should and can live up to.

“Throughout this year we have been cautiously optimistic that the international community recognises that the battle against climate change can only be won through robust global action. Reports such as that provided by the IPCC give us hope that the foundations for the negotiations of a post-2012 climate change regime will be secured at the COP-13 in Bali. Our optimism is tempered by an awareness that past climate negotiations have been characterised by a legacy of broken promises and missed opportunities. As such, we recognise that securing a settlement in Bali will be dependent on all government’s taking the necessary steps to reverse the declining levels of trust within the international community that currently exist between North and South.

As you start negotiations for a more comprehensive and inclusive successor agreement to one of humanity’s most pressing and difficult challenges, we see it as important to build on the experience gained from Kyoto, particularly in international emissions trading. We believe, however, that a new agreement will be successful only if it is perceived by all participating countries to be equitable and just. We remain concerned that even at this late stage, there exist as many understandings of what might constitute a just settlement as there are individual negotiating strategies.

Securing a just and equitable post-2012 Treaty depends on governments progressing beyond notions of justice that reflect their own national interests to one that provides for the global common good. Such an appreciation of justice can transform our relationship both with each other and with the natural world so that all may flourish. We welcome, therefore, the creative efforts of several trans-national bodies, which have sought to shape recent climate discussions based on an understanding of the climate as a Global Public Good. Every person on earth, both now and in the future, has the same right to use its natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Any post-2012 agreement should build on the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" as provided by the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. Informed by

the prevailing scientific evidence, all countries should commit to reduce collectively global emissions by at least 80% by 2050. In our view developed countries need to continue to take the lead in emissions reduction by adopting effective targets and timetables to reduce their collective emissions by between 30% and 40% by 2020. Rapidly industrialising countries should be encouraged to commit to reduce their energy intensity by 30% by 2020 (an average of 4% per year), and agree to emissions reduction targets thereafter. Other developing countries should commit to an energy intensity target differentiated by their responsibilities and capabilities.

Without far-reaching reduction targets by heavily industrialised countries we find it difficult to envisage the international community creating the market incentives necessary for technological development and transfer. The Kyoto Protocol's flexible mechanisms, such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), have so far bypassed developing countries. Ambitious reduction targets could help to correct this imbalance by assisting in the development of a more effective system of carbon trading and with it increased and redirected flows of finance for low carbon development and new sources of energy in the developing world. Encouraging the market to factor in the cost of greenhouse gas emissions by investing in research and development will assist the growth of new resource-efficient technologies in all sectors of the global economy. Taken together, this would suggest the need for new styles of economic modelling that pay greater attention to the natural environment.

To be just, a post-2012 agreement must address both mitigation and adaptation. Substantially reducing global emissions of greenhouse gases will not avoid the serious impacts of climate change already experienced by many of the world's most vulnerable communities. Climate change is not just about addressing environmental degradation; it is also about fighting poverty and providing for human security. If left unaddressed it threatens further the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals. The creation of new migration patterns from waterlogged, water scarce or food-scarce regions will exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and lead to heightened regional and international insecurity.

Against this background it is difficult to comprehend why money accrued to the UNFCCC's Adaptation Fund from the 2% levy on CDM projects is not being used. In addition to reforming access to existing funds, new funding streams are required. A similar levy could apply to other flexible mechanisms, as provided for under the Kyoto Protocol, or a global carbon tax introduced - as recommended by the 2006 Report of the International Task Force on Global Public Goods.

The paradox of climate change – that those who contributed least to the problem are suffering most – means that adaptation funding should be seen as compensation rather than aid, complementary to existing Official Development Assistance. Developing countries should not redirect ODA to finance their adaptation obligations. We express our continued disappointment that the levels of international ODA still fall short of the 0.7% target and that the 2002 Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development has not been implemented.

We have little doubt that the challenges facing you and other negotiators in Bali will be immense. Securing a framework agreement capable of limiting global warming to a maximum of 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels will require an

extraordinary effort that is without precedent in global environmental politics. It requires a radical change in mentality and awareness in society as a whole. We believe, however, that our societies do recognise the unique challenges posed by climate change and are prepared to play their part in finding a solution. Please be assured that you and others participating in this Conference remain firmly in our thoughts and prayers.”

The issues in the letter reflect a growing concern among ecumenical partners for urgent action on climate change, taking up the environmental themes from the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu this year.

4. CPCE Study on ‘Law and Gospel’

CPCE has announced a new resource on help towards forming ethical judgments. Its news service reports that the right definition of the relationship between law and gospel is one of the most demanding tasks of theology. However, the right distinction between the two entities makes a valuable contribution to dealing with ethical problems.

With the bilingual (German/English) publication of “Law and Gospel” the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) - Leuenberg Church Fellowship - now presents the result of an eight-year study process. For the first time the text is to create the basis for the formation of judgments with a common and agreed basis by the Protestant churches in ethical questions.

CPCE says that the study consists of a stocktaking from a confessional perspective and a critical discussion of various questions which are put from the ecumenical world and the Jewish tradition to the Reformation definition of the relationship between law and gospel. In this way the document helps the churches to show critical solidarity in the political-ethical problems of society. In conclusion, perspectives for the formation of theological and ethical judgments are demonstrated, with human rights and bioethics as examples.

“Law and Gospel. A Study also with references to decision-making in ethical questions” (297 pages, Lembeck Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2007) can be ordered for 16 Euros from bookshops or direct from www.lembeck.de.

5. WCC - Message from the Global Christian Forum to Brothers and Sisters in Christ Throughout the World

The Global Christian Forum initiative of the World Council of Churches reached its climax in November with a major gathering in Nairobi, Kenya.

The GCF sent the following message to Christians throughout the world:

9th November 2007

"Our Journey with Jesus Christ, the Reconciler"

Greetings to all who call on the name of Jesus Christ as Lord!

As a wide variety of Christian leaders, men and women coming from 72 nations and six continents, from a broad range of churches, confessions and organizations, we rejoice at the unprecedented opportunity we have enjoyed in Limuru, Kenya, from 6 to 9 November 2007. We the 245 participants have reflected on our journeys with Jesus Christ the Reconciler. We have been challenged in our time of Bible study to reflect on the words of the Apostle Paul: no longer to be aliens to one another, but "citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God... In whom you are also built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God" (Eph 2:19-22).

For nearly a decade a compelling vision has empowered the Global Christian Forum process, whose participants have yearned to bring together church leaders and other Christians from all the families and traditions that lay claim to faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord. This vision has also reflected the dramatic shift in the shape of Christianity in the 21st century, which is growing so rapidly in the global south. Representatives of the historic Protestant Churches, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Churches, the Pentecostal Churches, the broader Evangelical movement and other Christian Churches and communities have discerned the need to be brought into relationship with one another for the sake of witness to the Gospel. In regional meetings held in North America (2002), Asia (2004), Africa (2005), Europe (2006) and Latin American (2007), this vision has found strong affirmation. Now here in Limuru we have experienced an historic breakthrough, gathering globally as never before.

We give praise to the Father our Creator, to Christ our Reconciler and to the Holy Spirit our Comforter for the gracious emergence of the Global Christian Forum. This process has encouraged us to develop a new awareness and understanding of one another, and to recognise that God is graciously working among us.

We have been invited into a common journey of faith with confidence in the guidance of Christ's life-giving Spirit. We have been encouraged to move out of the familiar ground on which we normally stand, to meet each other on a common ground where mutual trust might flourish and where we might be empowered to celebrate, enter into dialogue and act together to the glory of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Our desire has been to create an open space wherein the representatives from a broad range of Christian communities and inter-church organisations, who confess the triune God and Jesus as perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity, can gather to foster mutual respect and to address common challenges together.

We began by sharing personal testimonies of our encounters with Christ, and were enriched by a forum within which we could express our faith out of our respective confessional traditions and reflect on what it might mean to walk together in

obedience to Christ. We acknowledge that we have differing views on substantive issues such as ecclesiology, the scope of evangelism and mission. Here a new beginning was made for encounter and dialogue.

Enjoying times of prayer, fellowship and Bible study, we participants have also discussed the challenges and opportunities we have in sharing the Gospel and in pursuing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God (cf. Micah 6:8). We have shared our experience of what God is doing in our churches and organisations, and how we participate in God's mission in the world by witnessing to the Good News of Jesus Christ in word and deed. We seek to show our love for God by also loving our neighbours (cf. Mt 22:37-39), and working for the transformation of our societies in accord with the example of Jesus and the truths of Scripture. We join with all people of good will in the pursuit of justice, peace and the care of God's creation.

We thank God for the unique breadth of this gathering, and for the opportunity it gave us to meet in an atmosphere of trust and openness in which we could acknowledge and repent of past failings to bear with one another in love. We acknowledge that we have often allowed prejudices to shape our understanding of different Christian traditions, and we welcome the opportunity as God's adopted children to encounter one another and to explore together the forgiveness and redemption found in Christ (cf. Eph 1:5).

As Christians within our various traditions, we affirm the importance of being together to reflect upon the prayer of our Lord that those who believe in Him may all be one, so that the world may believe that God sent Him (cf. John 17:21). Recognizing that unity is first and foremost God's gift through the work of the Holy Spirit, our commitment is to press on in promoting ever greater understanding and cooperation among Christians, while respecting the diversity of our identities, traditions and individual gifts (cf. 1 Cor 12). In so doing, we build on the basis of many ecumenical, inter-confessional and other historic initiatives to overcome divisions in the Christian family. We do not seek to replace these efforts.

The process of the Global Christian Forum, affirmed during these days in Limuru, now must continue. We will pray for one another and work to convene local and regional events, as well as other global encounters, in order to deepen this journey toward the goal of reconciliation.

Therefore, we call on all those who confess God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to raise their hearts with ours in the hope that all of humanity may come to know the fullness of life in Christ (cf. Math. 28:19-20, Col 2:10). We invite all brothers and sisters in the Lord to engage within their own settings the rich resources of the Global Christian Forum process in journeying together with Jesus Christ, who is the great Reconciler and the Hope of all ages.

"Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Eph 3:20-21).

Limuru, 9 November 2007

6. Lutheran Church of Denmark looks to the Future

Church News from Denmark reports on important discussions earlier this year on the future of the Danish Lutheran Church. The discussions, envisaging four scenarios for 2016, asked participants were asked to select first the most probable, and then the most desirable of the following:

Scenario 1 – Continuity

The Church will continue to play a significant role in the background of most people's lives via their celebration of baptism, confirmation, marriage and burial and the Church festivals, particularly Christmas. Culturally, church buildings will remain the most characteristic feature of the Danish landscape, while the Christian foundation will continue to influence Danish history, literature and the arts.

Scenario 2 - Diversity

The Church is facing a challenge as faith becomes individualised. Unless the church reacts, by 2016 only the 10% of Danes who regularly attend church will know what it actually stands for, and it will become irrelevant to the vast majority.

Scenario 3 – The Church as a Gathering-point

The market has become globalized, but our values remain Danish – and in an international context they verge on the extreme, witness the furore over the Mohammed cartoons. The Church will become a symbol of unity when Danish values are under pressure, and in cultural confrontations more Danes will turn to its message.

Scenario 4 - Passion

Having lost faith in authority as such the Danes are turning to a “marketing dialogue” in a “flat society” – a kind of Wikipedia with faith questions and active bloggers constantly contributing.

The report says that the sermon as a form of expression is under threat – and should it survive, there must be dialogue sessions after the service. More passion is needed and more dialogue in a church context with philosophers and psychologists, as well as experienced-based leaders.

Apparently, the 145 participants responded by agreeing that all four scenarios were already present today and would still be so in 2016. But Continuity and Diversity were the more prominent of the four, whilst Passion was the least likely yet the most desirable scenario, provided the other 3 were not relinquished. The “official” Church must not just acknowledge good work done by the voluntary church organisations, but engage itself in closer dialogue with them and with the Danish people in general.

Bishop of Roskilde Jan Lindhardt argued for more contemporary language and music (on modern instruments), more impassioned sermons, more social gatherings and more voluntary workers, as well as a greater appeal to social classes 4 and 5 – “at present the Church is largely for the middle classes”, the bishop remarked.

www.interchurch.dk

7. ...AND FINALLY

A new supplement to the German Protestant Hymn Book (Evangelisches Gesangbuch)

“WortLaute” is the title of a new supplement to the Hymn Book in the Rhineland, Westphalia, Lippe and the Reformed Church in North West Germany. This collection of 120 well known and new items supplements the hymn book published in 1996.

It contains songs from the Cologne Kirchentag this year – and claims to reach from Paul Gerhardt to the ‘Wise Guys’, with many new arrangements. It is jointly published by the Verlagsgemeinschaft Luther-Verlag (Bielefeld), Gütersloher Verlagshaus und Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft erschienen and available from bookshops for 4,95 Euros.

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