

**CHURCH OF ENGLAND
COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
CHURCH HOUSE LONDON**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dear Bulletin Readers

Resources for Lent

As an early Lent approaches, churches across Europe are producing materials to help members keep the season appropriately. The EKD has renewed its Lenten initiative 'Sieben Wochen Ohne' ('Seven Weeks Without') with a focus this year on 'spending'. This actually means spending more of one's time, energy and humanity in the service of others – to be generous with one's resources and opportunities for hospitality. Two million people took part in the 2007 initiative. Resources are downloadable at www.7-wochen-ohne.de.

Meanwhile Churches Together in Britain and Ireland have launched the Lent initiative *Pathways of Prayer*, exploring six major traditions of Christian spirituality, in partnership with BBC Radio 4 and BBC Local Radio. The programmes will be exploring six pathways to come to God, each offering a different perspective on approaching God through prayer. Each pathway will start with Sunday Worship on BBC Radio 4 (0810-0850), backed up with additional programmes on the Daily Service (0945-1000 BBC R4 LW), BBC local radio and downloadable resources for groups and individuals. Pathways of Prayer is intended to be accessible by anyone who is interested in spirituality and prayer, wherever they may currently be on their journey with God. Details are available at www.ctbi.org.uk/228.

St Albans Diocese: celebrating links with Italy and Sweden

During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity St Albans Diocese signed an historic agreement with three Italian dioceses Fano, Pesaro and Urbino. Bishop Christopher Herbert welcomed a party of visitors headed by the Most Reverend Piero Coccia, Archbishop of Pesaro. St Albans' Swedish link under the Porvoo Agreement was represented by Bishop Martin Lind and a group of visitors from Linköping diocese. For pictures and information see <http://www.stalbans.anglican.org>

Faith in Europe bulletin board

Keith Jenkins of Faith in Europe informs us that the organization's new Bulletin Board is up and running and ready for your visits. It is hoped to use it to stimulate debate on the future of Europe and issues with a European character. To visit the bulletin board go to <http://faithineurope.org.uk> and click on the bulletin board sign. You can read the content but in order to post comments or initiate discussions you will need to register.

2009 Kirchentag

Preparations for the 2009 German Protestant Kirchentag in Bremen (20th-24th May) are now well in hand. The motto for the event is 'Mensch, wo bist du?' ('Where are you?' NRSV, Genesis 3.9) with an emphasis on the Christian response to current questions facing society. 100 000 participants are expected. Full details are emerging on the website www.kirchentag.net.

A message from the editors

This is the last European Bulletin co-edited by Charles Hill, the current European Secretary at CCU in London. After eight and a half years at CCU, Charles is now moving to a parish post in the Diocese of Canterbury, and would like to thank all readers for their support and enthusiasm over the years. Francis Bassett will be looking after the forthcoming editions of the Bulletin, as it moves into its fifth year of publication.

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2. NEWS FROM CEC: EU COMMISSIONER ORBAN MEETS YOUNG VOLUNTEERS FROM THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES

The CEC News Service reports:

Leonard Orban, EU Commissioner for Multilingualism, met in Brussels with an ecumenical youth group from Sibiu/Hermannstadt (Romania). Thirty young people from different churches in Romania were visiting the European Capital from 19 to 24 January to inform themselves about the work of the European institutions.

The young people came to Brussels at the invitation of the Church & Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC). They worked as volunteers at the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly, which took place in Sibiu/Hermannstadt in Romania last autumn.

The youth group wanted to hear from Commissioner Orban, who is also from Romania, about his experiences with the integration of their country into the European Union. They were also interested in the outcome of their own activities, asking: "Did the fact that Sibiu was the European Cultural Capital in 2007 have an impact on the image of Romania in other parts of Europe?"

Commissioner Orban stressed the importance of Europe's cultural diversity for the future development of the European Union, also with regard to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. He encouraged the young people to be prepared for the future in a united Europe: "In today's Europe, you have a huge number of opportunities. My message to you is: make the best of it."

CEC LIST OF UPCOMING EVENTS

YEAR 2008

APRIL

3-5 April, 2008, Cyprus, World Association for Christian Communicators Assembly.
Info: Luca.negro@cec-kek.org

JULY

22-27 July, 2008, Prague, Czech Republic: 10th International Bonhoeffer Congress on the theme "A Way between Fundamentalism and Secularism? Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Theology in Today's World". Speaker will include Juergen Moltmann, Martin Marty, Olga Sedakov and John de Gruchy with the chairman, Dr. Keith Clements. For full details go to: www.bonhoeffercongress2008.cuni.cz

YEAR 2009

JULY

15-21 July, 2009, Lyon , France: CEC 13th Assembly.

3. CHURCH OF ENGLAND REPRESENTATIVE TO THE EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS

The Church of England Communications Unit reported on 18th January:

The Revd Dr Gary Wilton has been appointed to the newly created post of Church of England's Representative to the EU Institutions. He will take up his post in Brussels in mid April 2008.

Since 2005 Gary has been a member of the Theology Dept at York St John University where he is currently Head of the Postgraduate Programme in Theology and Religious Studies. He has a long-standing interest in the interface between the Church and contemporary society and teaches Christian Ethics and Christian Mission and Ministry. Ordained deacon in 1988 and priest in 1989 in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, he was Director of Studies and then Associate Principal at Church Army's Wilson Carlile College from 1998-2005.

As the Church of England's Representative to the EU, Gary Wilton will be responsible to the Europe Bishops' Panel for promoting the Church's of England's engagement on European social, political and environment issues. Gary will be an Associate Staff Member of the Conference of European Churches' Church and Society Commission and a Canon to the Pro-Cathedral Church of Holy Trinity Brussels.

Commenting on his appointment, Gary Wilton said: "The creation of this new post marks a significant development in the Church of England's relationship with the European Union. The move from academia to the rough and tumble of European policy development will be immensely challenging. The Church has important things to contribute to the life of the European Union - important things to say about how we should develop community, how we should relate to the wider world and how we should care for the planet. I am very excited about representing the Church of England to the EU Institutions and working alongside colleagues at the Conference of European Churches.

"The move from Yorkshire to Belgium will be an 'adventure of faith' for my family. We are greatly looking forward to joining and contributing to the life of Holy Trinity. The welcome we have received already has been very warm indeed."

The Bishop of St Albans, the Rt Revd Christopher Herbert, who chairs the House of Bishops Europe Panel welcomed the appointment, saying: "It is really good to have been able to appoint Gary Wilton to this new post. The Church of England must continue to increase its role in Europe in partnership with other churches so that together we can play our part in helping to shape the Europe of the future."

We welcome Gary to this important post and look forward to hearing about his work.

4. 10th INTERNATIONAL BONHOEFFER CONGRESS 2008

The Chairman of the Congress, the Revd Dr Keith Clements, writes:

“Many of you will know already that the 10th International Bonhoeffer Congress will take place in Prague, Czech Republic, 22-27 July 2008. The theme will be Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Theology in Today's World - a Way between Fundamentalism and Secularism? The theme will be treated not only by an impressive panel of plenary speakers beginning with the Professor Juergen Moltmann of Germany who will give the keynote address, but also in over thirty seminars on a wide variety of particular topics by scholars from many different parts of the world.

Those of you who are not, as yet, aware of the Congress but would like to have the full information about programme, accommodation, costs etc are encouraged to consult the Congress website: www.bonhoeffercongress2008.cuni.cz where you will find all the necessary details.

There is also a special reason, however, for my writing to all of you. Thanks to the generosity of some donors we are able to offer a number of scholarships to cover the costs of registration and accommodation at the Congress for participants who would otherwise not be able to participate for financial reasons. Priority candidates for such bursaries will be participants, especially students, from Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. The Congress Planning Committee especially wishes to make known this availability and you are therefore cordially invited to publicise it through your institutions and networks of communication, and wherever you have contact with people whom you consider could qualify for consideration. Application forms may be obtained from the Congress office in Prague (see webpage, above).

Thank you in anticipation of your kindness in attending to this!”

5. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IN FINLAND

The Evangelical Church in Finland has commented on recent church membership figures. In a recent press release it reports that Church membership in Finland is close to 82% of the population:

According to the figures of the Finnish Population Register new members of the Finnish Lutheran Church were 10,960, compared with church leavers numbering 37,471. There were 48,429 Baptisms in the church last year.

Figures for current church membership for those permanently resident in Finland were estimated in mid-December to be 4,331,550. This means church membership is 81.7%. Final numbers for national membership and details for parishes and dioceses will be available in February.

The numbers for 2006 were new members 10,116, church leavers 34,952 and total membership 82.4%.

The report adds comments from Bishop Simo Peura of Lapua about the mission challenge to the Church:

“For Finns it is important to be close to the church at the critical turning points in a person’s life: Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage and Christian Burial. Our members see that compassionate work and dialogue in support of lasting human values is essential,” Bishop Peura declared.

“Its essence is the Church’s founding word. The Grace of God is the kernel which the church can offer. Grace speaks to and touches people, and binds them to the Church. There’s a deep need in humanity to be in contact with the Holy.”

The Lutheran church is considering its strategy up to 2015, and Bishop Peura leads the committee responsible. “We are not offering tricks, and we are not trying to woo people. How about being open about the spiritual community, the Church? We should approach people honestly and openly, and they will listen. Talk for the sake of talk is no good. We must speak humbly but surely about God, his will, about Jesus Christ and his Forgiveness,” he emphasises.

6. PROSPECTS FOR THE DANISH LUTHERAN CHURCH

***Church News from Denmark* recently reported on various changes in view for the Danish Lutheran Church :**

“Church politics came to the fore directly after the November election when the centre-right coalition government put forward proposals to limit the tenure of bishops and to replace the state’s direct grant to pastors’ salaries with a block grant to the Danish Lutheran Church, which must then rationalise its economy to live within its means. “The biggest change in nearly 100 years,” says church historian Kurt E. Larsen, referring to the reform in the 1920s which democratised the appointment of bishops by enfranchising all church council members.”

There is concern that church politics will resemble local politics, and that the proposal will turn pastors into politicians.

The future may bring fewer pastors for the country parishes. Danish bishops are also concerned about proposals to cut the number of pastorates and to move pastors around to where the need is greatest. According to a government report the Aalborg bishopric has 33 pastors too many.

More details from the Danish Church website.

7. NEW EKD REPORT ON CHURCH IN THE CITY

Following on from the Church of England report *Faithful Cities*, the Evangelical Church in Germany has published its own document on Church in the City as *EKD Text 93, Gott in der Stadt*.

The aim is to raise the profile of the Church in urban areas, with a clear response to people's new interest in religion. This will mean new forms of parish, organisational reform, opening up of city churches, a review of the rich music provision in churches, and stronger participation of the Church in local policy making.

The report follows an earlier document on the rural church, and is downloadable at <http://www.ekd.de/EKD-Texte/57061.html>. In conjunction with *Faithful Cities*, it will be a valuable resource for work and common mission in Meissen partnerships which include urban areas.

8. ...AND FINALLY

The website of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (www.velkd.de) is always packed with interesting resources. Of particular interest at the moment is a download of the booklet *Leitlinien kirchlichen Lebens der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands* (VELKD). This is a useful resource for readers involved in Meissen partnerships, giving a fascinating insight into church life and order in the German Lutheran Churches. It is downloadable as a pdf file at: http://www.velkd.de/downloads/Leitlinien_kirchlichen_Lebens.pdf

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