THE WINDOW

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Archbishop Mullally talking with Bishop Imad Haddad of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land during her visit to Augusta Victoria Hospital. Photo: ELCJHL/Olivia Slagle

Ecumenism in a world of conflict: A witness of hope and universal love

In April 2026, CTE President for the Fourth Presidency Group and Head of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain Bishop Paulina Hławiczka-Trotman shared a timely reflection of the month.

In a world increasingly shaped by war, nationalism, and deepening conflict, the call to ecumenism has never been more urgent. Ecumenism, the movement toward unity, mutual understanding, and cooperation among Christian traditions, increasingly a path toward interfaith dialogue, offers not only a theological vision but a practical way toward peace. At a time when division is often exploited for political and ideological gain, the visible unity of believers becomes a powerful sign that reconciliation is possible.

War, often fuelled by nationalistic worldviews, relies on narratives of exclusion: us versus them, the faithful versus the stranger, the chosen versus the rejected. Ecumenism challenges these divisions by reminding us that faith calls people into communion rather than separation. When churches and religious communities speak together instead of against one another, they weaken the forces that divide humanity along religious and cultural lines.

Within this vision, the ancient theological concept of *Apocatastasis* (Greek: Ἀποκατάστασις = universal salvation for all/ restoration) offers a meaningful lens through which to understand God's love. This teaching, which I love and on which I base all my ecumenical thinking, efforts and work, is associated with early Christian thinkers (so called Church Fathers). It expresses the hope that God's love is ultimately restorative and universal, that divine mercy seeks not eternal condemnation, but reconciliation and healing.

Origen of Alexandria (c. 184–253) was among the first to articulate this idea, teaching that God's justice serves a healing purpose, guiding all souls toward reconciliation. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–395) similarly emphasized God's infinite goodness, suggesting that

The idea of universal restoration reflects trust in the boundless nature of God's love, a love that does not abandon creation but draws all things toward renewal. Whether embraced as doctrine or Hope, this perspective encourages humility, compassion, and openness. If God's love reaches beyond human divisions, then religious and cultural boundaries cannot limit the divine will to restore and unite.

Such a vision also supports a deeper acceptance of religious diversity. God is not confined by human systems and may be revealed in ways that transcend our boundaries. Different traditions and cultures reflect humanity's varied responses to the same divine mystery. Ecumenism does not erase differences but invites mutual listening and reverence, trusting that truth is enriched when shared rather than defended in isolation.

This witness is especially important for young people. They are growing up in diverse societies but extremely polarized. When they see Christians of different traditions praying, serving, and standing together for justice and peace, they encounter faith as a force for unity rather than division. Many are deeply concerned

evil, having no lasting substance, would ultimately be overcome by divine love. Isaac of Nineveh (7th century) reflected deeply on God's boundless mercy, affirming that divine compassion continues to seek restoration rather than condemnation.

with caring for creation, addressing climate change, and supporting the vulnerable, issues closely tied to both: biblical responsibility and human solidarity.

Young people need visible signs that cooperation is stronger than rivalry, and that faith communities can model reconciliation in a fractured world. Ecumenical partnerships show that differences need not be threats, but can become sources of mutual enrichment.

So let us move toward unity more boldly than ever. Yet we must be mindful: unity is not the same as uniformity. Unity emphasizes harmony among different elements, while uniformity imposes sameness and removes diversity. True unity allows differences to coexist and work together, fostering collaboration without erasing individuality. In a troubled world, ecumenism becomes more than an institutional effort; it becomes a testimony of Hope. Rooted in the vision of God's universal love and the restoration of all creation, it reminds us that unity is not naïve idealism, but a faithful response to God who calls all people, as one human race, into one community of peace.

CEC-CCEE Joint Committee holds its annual meeting in Germany

Members of the Joint Committee of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) met in Frankfurt am Main and Darmstadt, Germany, from 9 to 11 September 2026. The meeting focused on the reception of the revised Charta Oecumenica, synodality and the next steps in ecumenical cooperation. At its conclusion, the participants issued a joint statement expressing solidarity with persecuted Christians, people suffering from violence, and calling for peace, justice and reconciliation.

A central theme was the revised *Charta Oecumenica*, jointly signed by the two presidents in Rome on 5 November 2025. Participants reflected on how the document is being received across Europe and how its commitments can be put into practice through prayer, dialogue, formation and practical cooperation.

Archbishop Nikitas said that the revised *Charta Oecumenica* calls the churches to deepen their commitment to Christian unity and translate it into meaningful cooperation. "Our churches have a shared responsibility to walk together and offer a credible Christian witness rooted in reconciliation, peace and hope," he said.

"Things have moved forward since our meeting in Rome last year, but the *Charta Oecumenica* cannot

remain merely a document on paper. It must become a living commitment that shapes our decisions, strengthens our common witness and leads to concrete cooperation among Christians across Europe," said Archbishop Grušas.

The Joint Committee also discussed synodality from Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican perspectives. The exchanges highlighted that synodality is essential to the Church's self-understanding across Christian traditions. Participants stressed the importance of listening, discernment, participation and communion, and explored how synodality can strengthen ecumenical cooperation and common Christian witness in Europe.



. Photo: EKHN

CEC President H.E. Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain and CCEE President H.E. Msgr. Gintaras Grušas, Archbishop of Vilnius, led the meeting and its discussions

The programme included a common prayer at the Church of the Holy Spirit and a visit to the headquarters of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau, a regional church of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), a CEC Member Church, in Darmstadt. Participants met with the church leadership and discussed its ecumenical life, as well as challenges related to democracy and nationalism in Europe.

At the conclusion of the meeting, CCEE and CEC issued a joint statement expressing solidarity with persecuted Christians, people suffering from violence, and calling for peace, justice and reconciliation. The Committee offered its prayers for all people affected by conflict, particularly in Ukraine, the Middle East and the Holy Land. It also encouraged Christians in Europe and around the world to support efforts to foster peace and protect the life and dignity of every human person. The statement was signed by Archbishop Gintaras Grušas of Vilnius, President of CCEE, and Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain, President of CEC.

Participants in the meeting included Msgr. Antonio Ammirati, CCEE General Secretary; Rev. Frank-Dieter Fischbach, CEC General Secretary; H.Em. Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ, Archbishop of Luxembourg; H.Em. Cardinal Ladislav Német, Archbishop of Belgrade; Bishop Frank Kopania of the Protestant Church in Germany; Archpriest Radu Constantin Miron of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; the Rt Revd Dr Dagmar Winter, Bishop of Edinburgh; Dr Verena Hammes, General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Germany; Rev. Charbel Bteich, CCEE Vice General Secretary; Rev. Dr Karin Sarja of the Church of Sweden; Rev. Prof. Dr Christiane Tietz, Church President of the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau; and Rev. Manuel Barrios Prieto, COMECE General Secretary.

The annual Joint Committee meeting reflects the long-standing partnership between CCEE and CEC. Both organisations remain committed to deepening cooperation among Europe's churches and strengthening their common Christian witness.

Read the joint statement here:
https://ceceurope.org/storage/app/media/2026-news/Statement%20on%20Peace%20-%20CCEE-CEC%20Final.pdf

Young Lutherans launch prayer book on peacemaking

LWF Peace Messengers have produced a new publication with prayers, reflections and liturgies for churches and individuals seeking to engage with the theology of peacebuilding.

"Peacebuilding is work that we do together across generations throughout the communion," said The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Program Executive for Youth Savanna Sullivan at the launch of a book of liturgies, prayers and reflections produced by participants in the LWF Peace Messengers program.

Young people from around the global communion of churches led the launch event on 22 September, the day after the United Nations celebrated the International Day of Peace. Sullivan noted that the new resource was compiled and illustrated by more than 30 young women and men who have taken part in an annual Peace Messengers training.

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Young Lutherans at the conclusion of the 2024 Peace Messengers training in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Photo:

The program, which held its first meeting in Jerusalem in 2017, has trained almost 200 young people, equipping them with skills to become peacemakers

equipping them with skills to become peacemakers within their own local and national contexts. Many of them have gone on to organize peacebuilding events and become trainers for other members of their churches and wider communities.

Here, you can read more about the youths' perspectives on peacemaking and their attempts to inspire others to become peacebuilders: https://lutheranworld.org/news/young-lutherans-launch-prayer-book-peacemaking

And you may find their prayer book here: https://lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2026-09/LWF_PeaceMessagers_230926_Update.pdf

Rev. Frank-Dieter Fischbach: In Ukraine, "their suffering is not forgotten"

Rev. Frank-Dieter Fischbach, general secretary of the Conference of European Churches (CEC), was part of a World Council of Churches (WCC)-led delegation that made a solidarity visit to Ukraine on 14-17 July. He reflected on his impressions of the people he met, and on why a solidarity visit can ultimately be an expression of apostolic truth.

What do you take from this WCC solidarity visit?

Rev. Fischbach: I am thankful to WCC that CEC was invited to join the WCC delegation for this solidarity visit. We worked very well together, and it was an example how ecumenical organisations on different geographical levels can act together. I felt ashamed how this solidarity visit was received as a bold, courageous, and true sign of solidarity, because I thought of all Ukrainians experiencing this war and the threats it poses every day for more than four years. But it proved that this kind of visit strengthens the Ukrainian churches and the Ukrainian society because they feel that they are not alone and are part of a wider community. Finally, I take with me the impression that many Ukrainians are tired and traumatised by the war, but that they don't want to give up and still want to defend their democratic way of life, their society, their country.

What is the most significant role the churches, CEC, and the global fellowship can play in Ukraine?



Photo: Deacon Andrii Sydor/Orthodox Church of Ukraine

Rev. Fischbach: The churches, CEC, and the global fellowship can support Ukraine and its churches in continuous prayers for a just and lasting peace. It became again obvious in this visit that the contact with churches outside Ukraine strengthens Ukrainians, that they are not alone, that others walk with them in these difficult and demanding times. Ukraine and the Ukrainian churches are part of Europe and they want to participate in the European integration process as well as being part of the global community. This honest, open and, at times, probing exchange helps Ukraine to better understand this interconnectedness and integration, just as it helps us to grasp Ukraine's concerns and sense of identity. Ultimately, it also enables us to act as a voice for Ukraine in dealing with other institutions and bodies.

You can read the full interview here:
https://www.oikoumene.org/news/rev-frank-dieter-fischbach-in-ukraine-their-suffering-is-not-forgotten

Archbishop of Canterbury visits Augusta Victoria Hospital

On 22 June 2026, Archbishop Sarah Mullally visited the Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem which is operated by the LWF. Read about the hopes that her visit can highlight the need to reopen a humanitarian corridor and allow Palestinian patients out of Gaza.



A group photo outside the Augusta Victoria Hospital at the end of the Archbishop of Canterbury's visit. Photo: ELCJHL/Olivia Slagle

Dr Fadi Atrash, CEO of the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in East Jerusalem, says he hopes a visit by the Archbishop of Canterbury Sarah Mullally will highlight the need to reopen a humanitarian corridor and allow Palestinian patients out of Gaza for life-saving treatment.

At the start of a five-day pilgrimage to Palestine and Israel, the Anglican archbishop was given a tour by Atrash and staff of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) hospital which is renowned for its specialized cancer and kidney treatments that are not available elsewhere in Gaza or the West Bank.

After meeting with patients and staff at the hospital, Archbishop Mullally said she and her delegation "heard about challenges facing the entire Palestinian healthcare system across Gaza and the West Bank." After visiting other healthcare and social centers, she said: "Please join me in praying for all these courageous health and social workers who bring healing to the sick and comfort to those in distress. So much of Christ's ministry was given over to health and healing and that ministry continues through Palestinian Christians today."

Accompanied by the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem Hosam Naoum, the Anglican archbishop was welcomed by Bishop Imad Haddad of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) on arrival at the medical facility, which is part of the East Jerusalem Hospital Network. AVH partners closely with the Anglican Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza City which was badly damaged during the war in Gaza.

"This is a very important visit for me, for the AVH and for the Anglican Al-Ahli Arab hospital, to shed light on our important joint work trying to save the lives of people in Gaza," Atrash noted. "Our partnership has proved to be one of the most significant, delivering services that are not available in any other hospital in Gaza. Such a high-level visit will help us in our advocacy efforts and will send a message back to the British government to put more pressure on all stakeholders working on the ground to facilitate our work," he said.

Reflecting on the impact of the visit, Atrash said: "The most important message is to allow more people to get outside of Gaza for treatment, meaning we need to restart the humanitarian corridor that was between Gaza and the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network. We also hope it can encourage more support for the work of AVH on the ground with Anglican Al-Ahli hospital, so that can be the starting point of a broader care for cancer patients in Gaza."

https://lutheranworld.org/news/archbishop-canterbury-visits-augusta-victoria-hospital

LWF Statement on World Refugee Day

On World Refugee Day, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) calls for collective resolve to the promise of upholding every displaced person's dignity and working tirelessly "until safety is not the privilege of a few but the reality for all."



At a World Refugee Day event this week in Za'atari Camp, Jordan, bringing together several organizations including the LWF, children and caregivers took part in an interactive mural activity conveying messages on safety, dignity, peace, and hope for the future. Photo: LWF Jordan/Ahmad Al Hariri

'Until Everyone Is Safe' is the theme of the annual United Nations (UN) day, marked on 20 June to honor people who have been forced to flee. In a message for this year's commemoration, LWF World Service Director Maria Immonen describes the theme as both a vision and a challenge, emphasizing that safety and

dignity “are universal rights” that “must be upheld for everyone, everywhere, without exception.”

The 2026 observance coincides with the 75th anniversary of the Refugee Convention on the internationally recognized definition of a refugee and the legal rights to which they are entitled. Immonen appeals to governments and the international community to “reaffirm your commitments” under the convention by sharing responsibility equitably, opening “safe and regular pathways to protection” and “above all”, listening to refugees themselves.

She pays tribute to refugees for their courage and resilience which “inspires us but also calls us to do more.” Out of the 2.8 million people across the world who the LWF international humanitarian arm served in 2025, nearly half were refugees or internally displaced people. The World Service director recognizes LWF staff in the emergency and country programs “who show up every day in quiet, powerful solidarity.”

The number of displaced persons globally has nearly doubled over the past 10 years to reach 123 million people at the end of 2024, including 42.7 million refugees, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. For Immonen, the promise made 75 years ago that those forced to flee would find protection, dignity and hope “matters as much today as it ever did,” as conflict, climate change, economic crises and political instability continue to drive displacement.

https://lutheranworld.org/news/world-refugee-day-promise-make-safety-reality-all

Changing the Narrative. Interview on Migration with Admir Skodo (WCC)

Admir Skodo is the new coordinator of the “Changing the Narrative” migration and media project organized by the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe, World Association for Christian Communication, and World Council of Churches. He took time to reflect on how the media landscape is changing in the representation of migrants and refugees, and how churches can be involved.



Admir Skodo during his visit to the World Council of Churches headquarter. Photo: WCC.

How have you seen the media landscape changing over the last 10 years in the representation of migrants and refugees?

Skodo: That’s a great question, because it's crucial to look at how migrants are represented in light of broader historical shifts. The far right now shapes migration policy in many European countries. It governs in Italy and the Netherlands, sustains government in Sweden, and polls at historic highs in Germany. A term like “remigration,” which was fringe in 2017, is now used by sitting ministers. The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, which member states started implementing this month, has institutionalized and normalized a logic of racialized containment and deportation. Mainstream press across much of Europe is no longer a sleeping watchdog but an active site of narrative production aligned with these shifts. Moreover, today, narratives are constructed across a fragmented yet interconnected ecosystem. Far-right alternative media has a large readership. Its narratives are then amplified on platforms like Telegram, X, and TikTok. Mainstream press picks up these narratives, politicians across the political spectrum pick them up, and then the narratives feed back into mainstream media as “reality.”

You can read the full interview here: https://www.oikoumene.org/news/admir-skodo-migration-is-an-integral-part-of-christian-faith-and-the-human-condition

Utah bishops oppose massive federal immigrant detention facility

David Paulsen, senior reporter and editor for Episcopal News Service, reports on the joint Anglican-Lutheran opposition to a massive federal immigrant detention facility in Utah.

The Episcopal bishop in Utah has joined with her counterpart in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in opposing plans to build a massive immigrant detention facility in their state.

Bishop Phyllis Spiegel of the Episcopal Diocese of Utah and the Rev. Meghan Johnston Aelabouni, bishop of the ELCA's Rocky Mountain Synod, wrote an opinion article for the Salt Lake Tribute voicing their opposition to the federal conversion of an 833,000-square-foot Salt Lake City warehouse into a detention facility. In the piece, they invoke their Christian faith and community values, saying they are "called to love our neighbors and to welcome the stranger among us."

"A detention center of this scale risks defining Utah's role in immigration policy through confinement rather than constructive solutions," the bishops said. "As faith communities, we believe public policy should never lose sight of the people whose lives it affects. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus teaches, 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'"

The Trump administration has said it plans to spend millions of dollars expanding the federal system of detention facilities to house immigrants picked up in immigration enforcement raids to fulfill President Donald Trump's demand for mass arrests and deportations. Those efforts, however, have run into local resistance in places like Utah.

In Utah, in addition to public opposition from faith leaders like the Episcopal and ELCA bishops, the federal government is facing a legal battle with those seeking to block the new detention facility in the state. Salt Lake City and County filed a complaint in federal court opposing the project last week. That legal fight has drawn support from a local advocacy group called Uproar Utah, as well as faith-based groups.

"We cannot allow fear-based narratives to justify the suffering of families who have done everything right," Liliana Bolaños, a program manager for Mormon Women for Ethical Government, said at a news conference last week according to the Salt Lake Tribune. "And we cannot look away from the human cost: the children left behind, the communities destabilized, the trauma that lingers long after detention ends."

You can read the full report here:

https://episcopalnewsservice.org/2026/06/16/utah-bishops-oppose-massive-federal-immigrant-detention-facility-in-their-state/

From Refuge to Reunion: Seventy-Five Years of Latvian Lutheran Life in Indianapolis

By Society Member the Rev Ivo Roderts

On 7th October 1951, the Latvian Lutherans of Indianapolis gathered for a Harvest Festival service in rooms at the YMCA on North Illinois Street. After worship, 103 people remained for a meeting. They voted unanimously to establish the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Indianapolis. A provisional council was elected, the Rev Pēteris Nesaule was invited to serve as pastor and Aurora Zvejnieks became the congregation's first organist. Three weeks later, on 28th October, the new congregation held its first regular service.

That meeting was an important beginning, but Latvian Lutheran life in Indianapolis had already begun before the congregation was formally organised.

A congregation born from displacement

Most of the congregation's founders had come to the United States as displaced persons after the Second World War. They had lost their homeland through war and Soviet occupation and had spent years in refugee camps or temporary homes in Europe before receiving permission to begin again in America.

The Rev Paul E. Huffman, Pastor of First United Lutheran Church in Indianapolis, and those who worked with him played an important part in their resettlement. They arranged sponsorships for many Latvian refugees, helped them come to Indianapolis,

and initially received them as members of Huffman's congregation.

Other Latvians arrived through the assistance of different churches and organisations. The beginnings of Latvian Lutheran life in Indianapolis were therefore closely connected with First Lutheran's post-war refugee ministry during Huffman's pastorate.

The newcomers needed more than accommodation and employment. They also wished to preserve the worship, language and church traditions they had brought from Latvia. For people who had lost their country, worship in Latvian was not simply a matter of personal preference. It was one of the ways in which faith, memory and identity could survive displacement.



The new congregation quickly became much more than a place for Sunday services. Pastor Nesaule helped members find work and housing. A relief fund supported elderly, sick and impoverished Latvians both locally and in Europe. The congregation established a Sunday school, a youth group, a choir and a children's summer camp. It also helped additional refugees come to Indianapolis from Germany and Sweden.

Growth was rapid. In 1952 the congregation reported 203 members. By 1956 it had reached its highest recorded membership, 461 people. The choir numbered about thirty singers, and the children's camp continued for eight summers. The congregation was both a church and a place where a scattered people rebuilt social relationships, taught their children, cared for the vulnerable and formed a new community without abandoning the spiritual inheritance of their homeland.

Two congregations, one community

Not all Latvian Lutherans in Indianapolis joined the congregation founded in 1951. A substantial group remained within First United Lutheran Church, where Latvian-language pastoral care was provided by the Rev Volrads Isaks. In 1957, 158 members of this group organised themselves as the First Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Indianapolis under the jurisdiction of the American Lutheran Synod.

Indianapolis therefore had two Latvian Lutheran congregations. One was connected with the Latvian Lutheran Church body in exile; the other belonged to an American Lutheran jurisdiction. The division reflected differing ecclesiastical structures and understandings of Church affiliation rather than simply a personal quarrel. Both congregations worshipped in Latvian and served the same relatively small immigrant community, but they answered to different Church authorities.

The consequences became particularly clear when the two congregations attempted to secure a common church property. In 1962 they began exploring the possibility of obtaining a church building together. In 1965 they planned to purchase land from the Latvian Community Centre for the construction of a shared church. The project ultimately failed because the congregations belonged to different jurisdictions.

Yet their separate institutional lives did not prevent cooperation. In 1966 they worked together to erect a common memorial in the Latvian section of Floral Park Cemetery. From 1973 the First Latvian congregation was also permitted to use the other congregation's church building for its services.

Their history was not simply one of division. Language, families, friendships, community organisations and the graves of earlier generations continued to draw them together even when ecclesiastical structures kept the congregations apart.

Meanwhile, the congregation founded in 1951 established a permanent home of its own. In 1967 it purchased the former Gethsemane Lutheran Church building on East Michigan Street for $32,000. The congregation had already raised $25,000, and the remaining $7,000 was obtained as a grant from Lilly Endowment, allowing the building to be purchased without debt.

Members repaired and beautified the church themselves. Pēteris Vītoliņš constructed the altar and pulpit, while Edvīns Auziņš created an altar rail decorated with Latvian designs. Others contributed labour, materials and money. The renewed church

was dedicated on 22nd September 1968 by Archbishop Arnolds Lūsis when this photo was taken.

Reunion and adaptation

By the mid-1980s, the circumstances that had sustained two separate congregations were changing. The immigrant generation was growing older, the Latvian population was smaller, and the practical reasons for maintaining parallel congregational structures were becoming less compelling.

In 1986, a formal proposal was made that the two congregations should unite. Their councils began negotiations, and on 5th April 1987 a joint meeting was held in the lower hall of the Michigan Street church. The meeting adopted a new constitution and a new shared name: the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Indianapolis. Pastor Pēteris Nesaule, who had served the congregation founded in 1951 for thirty-five years, agreed to serve as interim pastor until a new pastor could be called.

The union did not erase the different histories of the two congregations. Instead, it gathered them into a common future. People whose church lives had developed under separate jurisdictions could once again worship as one Latvian Lutheran congregation.

The Rev Mārtiņš Irbe became pastor in 1988, followed in 1992 by the Rev Gunārs Lazdiņš. In 1994 the congregation sold the Michigan Street church and purchased a newer building on Guion Road. Once again, the church was acquired without debt, through congregational funds and the generosity of members.

In 2008, however, the congregation recognised that maintaining a large building and several acres of property was becoming an increasing burden. The property was sold, and part of the proceeds was placed in a Future Fund intended to help sustain the congregation's ministry. The congregation then began worshipping at Pleasant View Lutheran Church.



The congregation's final service in the Pleasant View Lutheran Church building in 2023

The move carried a quiet historical significance. Pleasant View belonged to the extended family of Indianapolis congregations historically connected with First Lutheran, from whose refugee ministry Latvian Lutheran life in the city had first emerged.

Regular services at Pleasant View ended with the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. When public worship and in-person gatherings became possible again, the congregation resumed its services at the Indianapolis Latvian Community Center.

The move placed the church in the building that serves as the principal home of organised Latvian cultural and community life in the city.

Seventy-five years on

Since February 2023, the congregation has been served by me, the Rev Ivo Roderts. It is much smaller than the community of more than four hundred members described in the records of the 1950s, but its essential identity remains recognisable. A full Latvian-language service with Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday. The liturgy has developed in some details, but a worshipper returning from the 1980s – or even from an earlier period – would recognise its structure, hymns, prayers and reverence. The congregation remains intentionally Latvian and Lutheran.

At the same time, ministry in English has become increasingly important. Activities such as the congregation's Messy Church services are conducted entirely in English so that children, mixed-language families and those with limited Latvian can participate fully in the life of the church. Preserving tradition and opening new doors are not competing tasks; both are necessary if the congregation is to remain a living Christian community.

The congregation also continues the Latvian tradition of *kapusvētki*, usually translated as "cemetery festivals". This annual summer gathering is more than a memorial service. It combines worship, the tending and decoration of graves, remembrance of earlier generations, and the renewing of family and community ties. Historically, the tradition was shaped significantly by the Lutheran Church, though it became part of Latvian Christian life more broadly.

Ordinary Sunday attendance during the more active winter season is now usually a little over twenty. Yet at Christmas more than one hundred people may gather for worship. The contrast reflects the

congregation's present reality: a small, faithful weekly community surrounded by a much larger circle of people who still understand the church as part of their family history and Latvian identity.

In the autumn of 2026, the congregation will celebrate its seventy-fifth anniversary. Its history is the story of refugees who lost their homeland and built a new community; of an American Lutheran congregation that welcomed them; of two Latvian congregations shaped by different ecclesiastical jurisdictions; of decades of separation and cooperation; and finally of reunion at one altar.

Buildings have changed. Membership has declined. English has become more necessary alongside Latvian. Yet every Sunday the Gospel is still proclaimed, the sacraments are celebrated, Latvian hymns are sung, and the congregation gathers in the faith carried to Indianapolis by the post-war generation. That continuing worship may be the clearest measure of the congregation's seventy-five years: not simply that an organisation has survived, but that a community formed in displacement still gathers around Word and Sacrament, remembers those who came before, and seeks faithfully to hand on what it received.

A Calling I Thought Had Ended

An Anglican Journey into Latvian Lutheran Ministry

In this his second article, Society Member, the Rev Ivo Roderts, shares something of his personal journey.

Every Sunday in Indianapolis, I lead worship in Latvian and preside at Holy Communion as Pastor of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church. Yet if someone asks about my own church identity, my answer is quite simple: I am an Anglican.

That combination may sound unusual. I am a confirmed member of the Church of England, but I am also an ordained pastor of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Worldwide. I have promised to serve this Church faithfully, and I give my present congregation all the energy, care and love that I can. Neither part of that description is merely technical. Both belong to the same Christian journey.

How, then, did an Anglican come to serve a Latvian Lutheran congregation in the United States? The story begins in a very different church and a very different world.

An inherited faith that became my own

I was born into a Seventh-day Adventist family in Soviet Latvia and sometimes say, with a certain amount of pride, that I was an Adventist in the fourth generation. At a time when the official ideology taught that there was no God, simply attending church made a person unusual. Being an Adventist, with Saturday worship and a distinctive way of life, made one unusual twice over.

The Adventist Church was not something I selected from a catalogue of denominations. It was the faith of my family, the language of my childhood and the community in which I learned who I was. In 1993 I began serving as a pastor. For more than twenty years, this was not simply my employment. It was my vocation and the centre of my life.

My theological education gradually broadened the world in which that vocation was lived. I studied through Newbold College, an Adventist institution in England. Yet I remember noticing that, within the programme, I sometimes seemed to be reading more Martin Luther than Ellen White. That was not a problem; it was an invitation into the much larger Christian theological tradition.



Salisbury Hall, he main Administrative Office at Newbold College

Over the years I continued to read widely. One particularly important influence was N. T. Wright, the New Testament scholar and former Bishop of Durham. I was drawn to his ability to combine serious scholarship with a clear account of the large Biblical story.

What first captured me was his emphasis on bodily resurrection and God's new creation. Christian hope is not simply about escaping this earth for a distant heaven. The resurrection of Jesus means that God's renewal of creation has already begun. Its fulfilment still lies ahead, but something genuinely new entered the world on Easter morning. Christians are therefore

called to live and work in the present as signs of that coming renewal.

None of this changed my thinking in a single dramatic moment. My theological world expanded slowly, through study, pastoral experience and encounters with Christians from other traditions. By the time my Adventist pastoral ministry ended in 2016, the separation did not create this development; it revealed how far it had already progressed.

I do not wish to retell the details of that conflict here. With the perspective of time, I can say more simply that I had grown beyond the institutional and theological framework in which I had begun. I believed that my years of pastoral ministry were now over. I remained a Christian, but I no longer expected to be a pastor again.

Looking for a church, not a label

My wife, Dagnija, and I moved to England in 2017. We knew that there was a Latvian Lutheran congregation in London and had attended it, but the journey from our home took more than two hours each way. Latvia itself was only a short flight away. What we needed for ordinary spiritual life in England was not primarily a Latvian cultural setting. We needed a church close enough to become part of our lives.

So we did something very practical. We opened Google Maps and began visiting the Christian churches within roughly ten or fifteen minutes of our home near Bedford. We attended Baptist and Methodist churches, several Anglican parishes, and free churches with a more charismatic atmosphere. We were welcomed warmly everywhere.



Worship in St Mary the Virgin, Wootton, UK

Nevertheless, we found ourselves returning to St Mary the Virgin in Wootton, a neighbouring village. It offered a combination that spoke deeply to us: recognisably Anglican liturgy, contemporary music, families with children, and the sense of a church full of life. We were not only greeted at the door and then left to find our own way. People quickly helped us discover that there was a place for us.

Before we had begun any formal process of joining the Church of England, we were invited to take part. We joined the rota for refreshments after worship. When it was announced that a special choir would be formed for Christmas and we mentioned that we both enjoyed music, we were immediately included.

Dagnija happened to say that she liked arranging flowers, and almost before she knew it she had been introduced to the person responsible and added to the flower rota.

A curate serving in the parish took time to hear more of my story and invited me to join a home group. Later, the vicar led us through the confirmation course. In May 2019, Dagnija and I were confirmed together at St Mary's.

The formal act mattered, but our belonging had begun before it. We had first been received not as an ecclesiastical problem to be solved, but as people who could pray, sing, make tea, arrange flowers and share life with others. The Church of England had become our church home.

A vocation heard again

During those years, close friends from Latvia occasionally asked whether I was sure that my pastoral vocation had ended. I always replied that this chapter of my life was finished. I had served as well as I knew how in the Church of my childhood, but I could not see another path.

Eventually, one friend asked a more specific question. The Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Worldwide needed pastors. Might there be a way for me to help?

That question led to a conversation with Archbishop Lauma Zušēvica, who was then leading the Church. I already had a bachelor's degree in religion and a master's degree in education, but I had not been trained specifically for Lutheran ministry. A church colloquium was followed by a period of further study and practical formation.

I was given two remarkable mentors: the Revd Dr Andris Abakuks in London and the Revd Dr Fricis Kristbergs in Canada. They approached the task differently, and that was part of its value. I was assigned substantial reading, prepared summaries and written reflections, and discussed the questions that emerged. For much of one winter I felt like a student again.

At the same time, under Andris Abakuks's guidance, I began participating regularly in the life and ministry of the Latvian Lutheran congregation in London. Once a month, Dagnija and I made the long journey into the city. St Mary's in Wootton remained our local church home, while London became the place where I learned to serve within the Latvian Lutheran tradition.

When this period of formation was complete, I did not have a particular congregation in mind. I asked Archbishop Lauma where the need was greatest. She mentioned a Latvian congregation in Indianapolis that had been searching for a pastor for several years.

Conversations followed, and on 10th July 2022 the congregation elected me as its new Pastor. On 9th October I was ordained in London during the Harvest Festival service (*picture right*). In February 2023 I arrived in Indianapolis, and on 23rd April I was formally installed as Pastor of the congregation (*picture below*).



The vocation I had regarded as finished had returned – not because I had devised a new career plan, but because friends, mentors, a bishop and a congregation had helped me hear it again.

One Church, one calling

The relationship between my Anglican identity and Lutheran ministry is not merely a private arrangement. Both the Church of England and the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Worldwide belong to the Porvo Communion. For readers of *The Window*, that probably requires no further explanation.

Since coming to the United States, I have often been asked how different Anglicans and Latvian Lutherans really are. My answer is that the differences are enormous. In the Anglican parish we attended in England, when the congregation was invited to sing, everyone stood; when we were invited to pray, everyone sat down. In the Latvian Lutheran congregation I now serve, people generally remain seated to sing but stand for prayer. Strangely enough,



we have so far managed not to divide the Church over this profound disagreement.

There are other liturgical differences too. Soon after I arrived in Indianapolis, one woman asked hopefully whether, as the new Pastor, I would begin singing the liturgy. I had to disappoint her: I would not. She was free to say that she would prefer a sung liturgy, and we were still able to remain on warm and friendly terms.

That may sound like a small thing, but to me it is one sign of ecclesial maturity. A preference does not have to become a judgement about another person's faith. Christians can worship differently, learn from one another and still recognise that they belong to the same family.

I remain grateful for my Adventist roots. I am at home in the Anglican tradition. I am wholeheartedly committed to the Lutheran congregation I have been called to serve. I do not experience these as three competing loyalties. They are chapters in one calling, within one Church, under one Lord.

Perhaps this is also one small sign of the new creation that first captured my imagination in the work of N. T. Wright: God does not simply discard the past. In Christ, God gathers, heals and renews it, and then calls us to take our place in what he is doing next.

Archbishop of Canterbury meets and prays with Pope Leo XIV

Archbishop of Canterbury Sarah Mullally on 27 April 2026 met and prayed with Pope Leo XIV at the Apostolic Palace in Vatican City on the third day of her pilgrimage to Rome.

Mullally had a private meeting with Leo, after which the pontiff and the archbishop each gave an address. Mullally also introduced the pope to her delegation and exchanged gifts with him.

Following her audience, Mullally joined Leo at a service of Daytime Prayer in the Chapel of Urban VIII. The pope presided at the Office, and the pope and archbishop said the grace together.

Mullally was joined at the papal audience by the Most Rev. Richard Moth, Archbishop of Westminster; the Rt. Rev. Anthony Ball, director of the Anglican Centre in Rome; the Rev. Matthias Grebe, national adviser for ecumenical relations; and Margaret Cave, director for Episcopal ministry.

https://episcopalnewsservice.org/2026/04/27/archbishop-of-canterbury-meets-and-prays-with-pope-leo-xiv/



Archbishop of Canterbury Sarah Mullally and Pope Leo XIV met April 27 at the Apostolic Palace in Vatican City. Photo: Vatican Media

You can the text of Mullally's address here: https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/node/31/archbishop-canterburys-address-pope-leo-xiv

Province of Central Africa ordains first 14 women to priesthood

14 women were ordained on 17 May 2026 at a service at the Anglican Holy Cross Cathedral in Gaborone, Botswana – the first women priests to be ordained in the Province of the Church in Central Africa.

The Anglican Province of Central Africa ordained 14 women to the priesthood in a first for the province. The service was held 17 May 2026 at the Anglican Holy Cross Cathedral in Gaborone, Botswana. Among those present were the Most Rev. Albert Chama, archbishop of Central Africa, and bishops from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana, as well as The Episcopal Church and the Church of England.

Over many years, numerous motions to ordain women have been presented to the Provincial Synods of the Church of the Province of Central Africa (CPCA). In November 2023, the province passed a motion to move forward with women's ordination, as proposed by the Diocese of Botswana and seconded by the Diocese of Harare.

The women ordained on 17 May are the Rev. Beauty Autlwetse, the Rev. Lesedi Bahayesi, the Rev. Florence Bogopa, the Rev. Lesego Bosimele, the Rev. Onicah Lentshikang, the Rev. Ethel Matlala, the Rev. Margaret Mere, the Rev. Mercy Molefe, the Rev. Precious Tonny Mosarwe, the Rev. Dijeng Motsepe-Lebatha, the Rev. Hildah Ncaagae-Tshabadira, the Rev. Gasetoro Ncube, the Rev. Bosinki Matlapeng-Ndzinge and the Rev. Mosetsanagape Sepora.



Photo Credit: Diocese of Botswana

More information is available here: https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2026/05/first-women-priests-ordained-in-the-church-of-the-province-of-central-africa.aspx

Kenya: First Lutheran Woman Bishop

A historic moment for the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church as Bishop Catherine Ngina Musau is installed, becoming the church's first woman leader.

The new Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church Bishop Catherine Ngina Musau (middle) and (left) Deputy Bishop Dominic Onsongo Nyambisa with (right) Bishop Dr Msafiri Mbilu, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.



Photo: LWF/Erick Kinyanguli

It was a historic day for the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC) as Bishop Catherine Ngina Musau was installed on 24th May, becoming the first woman to lead the Church. The festive consecration and installation service on Pentecost Sunday at the Jerusalem Cathedral in Nairobi was witnessed by thousands from KELC's congregations across the country, representatives of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and its member Churches in Africa, Europe and North America as well as ecumenical organisations.

Addressing the congregation following her installation, Bishop Musau declared her commitment to serve the Church with humility and strengthen leadership that upholds integrity, inclusiveness, and accountability. She expressed the desire to listen to people, nurture them, and build together a Christ-centred community that brings about transformation in society. "The office of bishop is not merely an honourable title, but a sacred trust and covenant calling to serve God and the people," she said.

She urged Christians to "build bridges instead of walls, preserve unity amid diversity, serving one another in love." The growth of KELC, she added, should not merely be about numerical progress, "but also about spiritual maturity, depth and contribution to transforming society and nurturing future generations."

The President of the Lutheran Communion in Eastern and Central Africa (LUCCEA), Dr Fredrick Onael Shoo, affirmed that "Churches that have embraced women's ordination have done that after prayerfully and very carefully studying scriptures, doctrine, theology and other related materials." Bishop Musau's consecration, he added, "stands as both a spiritual milestone and a prophetic sign of hope for the Church and Society."

KELC grew out of mission efforts by the Lutheran Church in Tanzania and joined the LWF in 1992. Today it has approximately 15,000 members.

You can read the full report of Bishop Musau's consecration here: https://lutheranworld.org/news/lwf-welcomes-kenyas-first-lutheran-woman-bishop-catherine-ngina-musau?ct=t(EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_NL_EN_COPY_01)

WCC joins prayers for peace and stability in Nigeria: "Let us protect Nigeria's unity"

An ecumenical service in Abuja, Nigeria, on 26 August at All Saints Anglican Church drew church leaders from across the nation. World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay addressed those gathered, speaking on justice, peace, and unity, and the importance of Christian witness in Nigeria.

"Justice must be at the heart of Nigeria's democratic life," Pillay said. "We must refuse every attempt to turn ethnic or religious differences into sources of hatred."

Pillay noted that Nigeria's diversity is not a weakness. "Nigeria is a young nation, and its young people are among its greatest resources," he said. "Young people do not need to be given only a voice during elections; they need to have a place at the table where decisions are made."

Pillay also emphasized that women are central to the life and resilience of Nigerian society—yet they remain underrepresented in many centres of political decision-making. "A just Nigeria cannot be built while half of its population remains inadequately represented," he said.



Church leaders from across the Nigeria took part at the Ecumenical service in Abuja, Nigeria, on 26 August 2026 at All Saints Anglican Church. Photo: Omotayo Akanbi/WCC

Pillay also emphasized that women are central to the life and resilience of Nigerian society—yet they remain underrepresented in many centres of political decision-making. “A just Nigeria cannot be built while half of its population remains inadequately represented,” he said.

As Nigeria prepares for the 2027 elections, Pillay appealed to political leaders not to win elections by destroying the nation they seek to govern. “Do not exploit religion or ethnicity,” he said. “Do not finance violence.”

Pillay said that the church must remain prophetic without becoming partisan. “We must teach our people that political disagreement does not make us enemies,” he said. “We must work with our Muslim sisters and brothers and other faith communities to build bridges of understanding.”

Nigeria is more important than any election, Pillay reflected. “Let us therefore protect Nigeria's unity,” he said. “Let us strengthen its democracy.”

Prayers particularly emphasized peace, security, justice, and the forthcoming 2027 general elections. Those gathered also prayed for families and all those experiencing suffering, hardship, and affliction.

Read more about the many voices speaking out in Abuja, and about the one witness they gave: https://www.oikoumene.org/news/wcc-joins-prayers-for-peace-and-stability-in-nigeria-let-us-protect-nigerias-unity

Norway: Migrant Congregations and Local Churches meet at Pentecost

A Pentecost Festival held in Grorud Church in Groruddalen, Oslo, Norway on 25th May celebrated the theme “Together as God’s Family.”

The festival, organised by the Christian Council of Norway, was developed to nurture trust, social cohesion, and unity across cultural and religious diversity. There were musical performances and speeches, multicultural and ecumenical worship, a bouncy castle, face painting, quiz activities, games, community-building activities, food from different traditions and exhibitions.

It brought together migrant congregations and local churches in one of Oslo’s most diverse areas, home to people from over 140 countries. Rooted in the message of Pentecost in Acts 2, the event embodied a living expression of unity in diversity, where language, culture, and tradition are not



Pentecost festival in Oslo, Norway, 2026. Photo: Christian Council of Norway

erased, but woven together into a shared witness of faith, fellowship, and community.

"The church was packed, and around the stage and the booths outside the church, there were crowds of people everywhere," said the Rev Henrik Erhard Hermansen, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Norway. "It was an absolutely wonderful sense of fellowship and celebration."

Quoting St Paul, "May you, together with all the saints, be able to grasp the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge", he concluded: "This is what we experienced together during the Pentecost festival."

Lutheran identity in Norway and the United Kingdom

Reflections on mission, identity and ecumenical relations were high on the agenda during a visit to London and Oxford by leaders of one of Norway's northernmost dioceses.

A recent visit to St Olav's Norwegian church in London felt a bit like a homecoming for Bishop Svein Valle, who leads the diocese of Sør-Hålogaland in northern Norway. Almost 30 years ago, he came to London with his wife and two young children to serve as chaplain to the congregation, which is also known as the Norwegian Church Abroad, or the Norwegian Seamen's Mission.

"We were a bit adventurous and we wanted to experience something new," he recalls, sitting in the sanctuary of the church, where the Norwegian government-in-exile regularly worshipped during the Second World War. Norway's recently deceased King Harald was also a regular visitor and the church became a focal point for hundreds of his countrymen and women who gathered to attend memorial events following his death in August.



Bishop Svein Valle (fourth from right) with deans from the diocese of Sør-Hålogaland in front of St Olav's Norwegian church in London. Photo: LWF/P. Hitchen

In the late 1990s, when Valle came to London (he began his ministry on the day that Princess Diana died), he says that many of his duties were still strongly connected with the support of maritime workers docking on the banks of the River Thames. "Norwegian ships were coming in all along the Thames, with sugar cane, or carbon dioxide to put in the beer, or oil tankers coming in from the North Sea. We visited all of them. We knew where the crews were from and we brought them newspapers from different regions of Norway," he says.

Three decades on, the bishop was back in Britain leading a delegation of deans from his diocese for a visit to London and Oxford, where they attended both traditional and contemporary worship services and held discussions on mission with their Anglican counterparts. "Our goal was to see what others are doing in the Church of England, where they have an ambitious plan to double the numbers of youth and children attending church by 2030," he says, noting that declining membership is a challenge facing both Lutheran and Anglican churches.

Read the full reflection here: https://lutheranworld.org/news/lutheran-identity-norway-and-united-kingdom

More than ‘sorry’: Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada examines theology of church apologies

Canadian Journalist Sean Frankling reports on the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada’s document Theology of Church Apologies and its ecumenical implications.



A mosaic from St. Mark's Basilica in Venice depicts Jesus' meeting with Zaccheus. Theology of Church Apologies identifies Zaccheus as a key scriptural example of making amends for harm done. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The Bible is more concerned with concrete acts of reconciliation than with modeling how to give a verbal apology, Bishop of Quebec Bruce Myers says. That was one of the key findings he and other members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada (ARC Canada) noted in their document *Theology of Church Apologies*, published online in February. ARC Canada is sponsored by the Anglican Church of Canada and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, with members appointed by those bodies.

Inspired by former Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and former Pope Francis’s 2022 tours of Canada to apologize for the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches’ role in running residential schools, Myers says ARC Canada members embarked on the project to answer questions about the purpose of church apologies—and how to do one well.

“We were still hearing echoes of questions within our churches and outside our churches,” Myers says. “Questions like, ‘Why are we apologizing?’ ‘Haven’t we apologized for this already?’ ‘Why are we apologizing for things that happened before, in some cases, any of us were around?’ ‘Do apologies make any difference?’ ‘What makes an apology genuine?’”

ARC Canada therefore set out to create a resource for Anglicans and Roman Catholics to consult when considering apologies their churches have made in the past—or when drafting new ones in the future, he says.

“This document’s starting point is that shared moment in the lives of both our churches, namely apologizing for our respective roles in the residential schools and then theologically reflecting together … on the meaning and value and significance of making those apologies,” Myers says.

The practical applicability of that work “might be refreshing for people who think theological dialogues between churches produce dry, boring, arcane, obscure pieces of theology that just collect dust on peoples’ shelves,” he jokes.

You can read Sean’s full article here: https://anglicanjournal.com/more-than-sorry-anglican-roman-catholic-dialogue-of-canada-examines-theology-of-church-apologies/

You can the document *Theology of Church Apologies* here: https://www.anglican.ca/resources/theology-of-church-apologies/

Meelis Süld: “we are one, different expressions of Christ's body”

One of our members, Meelis Süld - pastor, journalist and general secretary of the Council of Lutheran Churches in Great Britain - reflects on why church unity is important, and what are the ecumenical resources that help the most.



Rev. Meelis Süld, general secretary of the Council of Lutheran Churches in Great Britain; Photo: Olev Mihkelmaa

Last year, you visited the World Council of Churches. What stays with you even today?

Süld: For me, meeting the World Council of Churches (WCC) was a good reminder of how important it is that we as churches work together – that we are one. As St Paul writes, "There is one body and one Spirit" (Ephesians 4:4).

Separately, churches can express their opinions, and many do, and should do, but there's a greater significance if we bring ourselves together, agree with each other, and let the world know. I always say that the credibility of Christianity and Christians depends on our common voice. We do, of course, value diversity and the multitude of Christian worship, but in core matters, if we want to be taken seriously, we need to speak the same language, especially on human rights, protection of creation, and church unity. There are those who would like to show us as being separated, but for me this only gives a boost to work towards unity.

A very important part of the WCC visit was to know more about the statements issued by the WCC, and it's exactly ecumenical work at its best – to show compassion, care, and to draw attention to issues that are of importance. It was interesting to learn that these, often seen as political statements, are rooted in consultations with member churches on the ground, with information verified, and statements carefully formulated, edited, and agreed together. For me the lesson was this: if a statement sounds too harsh, the situation is possibly even harder, and we as Christians from other regions can trust WCC documents because of your contact and work with local member churches.

The WCC helps me to receive information about other churches. I appreciate WCC news and statements very much – it's a way of receiving information from the perspective of our siblings in Christ.

When I was a full-time journalist, I sometimes questioned the use of statements – what meaning do they have if often no actions follow? However, I think it is important that we know the church is not silent, Christians are not indifferent, we speak out, and some of the churches do have enough influence to make a difference. *Read the full interview with Meelis here: https://www.oikoumene.org/news/meelis-suld-we-are-one-different-expressions-of-christs-body*



Telmor Sartison, then-national bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and Archbishop Michael Peers, then-primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, sign the Waterloo Declaration in 2001.

From Generation to Generation: 25 Years in Full Communion

25 years ago, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada signed the Waterloo Declaration which brought both churches into full communion. Their leaders have issued the following statement to mark the occasion.

"We are ready to be co-workers with God in whatever tasks of mission serve the Gospel. We give glory to God for the gift of unity already ours in Christ, and we pray for the fuller realization of this gift in the entire Church."

With these concluding words of the *Waterloo Declaration*, read aloud on July 6, 2001, Lutherans and Anglicans in Canada committed themselves to a shared future in full communion. They chose to treat differences in areas such as church order, faith expression and liturgical style as gifts that can strengthen unity. They chose partnership, mutual responsibility and a reconciled future over inherited division. Through common discernment, joint witness, shared ministry and so much more, we have learned again and again that unity in Christ is not merely an institutional arrangement, but a gift of grace that strengthens the Church for joining God's mission in the world.

This 25th anniversary of our partnership comes at a time of great political, economic and ecological uncertainty, and of growing distrust among nations, communities and institutions. Our churches are also navigating significant structural and leadership transitions, trying to adapt to different capacities and resource levels, and seeking new ways to proclaim and embody the Gospel in rapidly changing contexts. In such a moment, the witness of full communion matters more than ever. When churches choose cooperation over competition and shared life over isolation, they offer a small glimpse of God's healing and reconciling vision for all.

As we give thanks for the blessings of full communion over the last quarter century, we know the call to widen the circle of communion with all who follow the way of Jesus is ongoing. Recently, we extended mutual recognition of our respective agreements with our Churches Beyond Borders partners across the Canada-USA divide, and both our churches now share full communion with the Moravian Church in North America. As Christian ministry presence in Canada continues to evolve, we believe the years ahead will require us to embrace deeper collaboration with many other churches and communities of faith with whom we already share substantial common ground.

As we mark this milestone, let us then renew once more the vocation God has entrusted to us. May Lutherans and Anglicans across Canada continue to learn from one another, pray with one another and serve alongside one another. May our shared commitment deepen our service to the common good and equip the next generation to inherit the structures of full communion and extend its promise with fresh imagination and courage.

With gratitude for the past and confidence in God's leading for the future, we commend our congregations, ministries and leaders to God's grace, trusting that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead us forward.

We also invite Anglican and Lutheran churches across Canada to lift up our 25th anniversary in prayer by including the following petition in Sunday worship on July 5, 2026, or at other suitable occasions near the anniversary date:

God of unity and grace, you have bound us together in the body of your Son Jesus Christ and strengthened us through the gifts we share with one another. We thank you for 25 years of full communion between Lutherans and Anglicans in Canada. By your Holy Spirit, deepen our fellowship, renew our common witness, and lead us into ever greater partnership in your mission. And in all these things, may they be for the life of the world. Amen.

Yours in Christ,

+Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer
National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

The Most Rev. Shane Parker
Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada

https://www.anglicanlutheran.ca/statements/from-generation-to-generation-25-years-in-full-communion/

Faith and Order "Exists for the Church as a Whole"

At an international symposium on "Ecclesiology, Moral Discernment, and the Mission of the Church in a Changing World," held in Sibiu, Romania, from 13–14 May 2026, participants received, deepened, and will carry into the life of the churches the insights from the Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order.



Metropolitan Job (right) addresses the symposium. Photo: Costin Chesnoiu

During the close of the consultation, HE Metropolitan Job of Pisidia of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, who is also Vice-Moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on Faith and Order, underlined that this was an Orthodox consultation that also included non-Orthodox participants. He emphasised that Faith and Order is about "we," not about "them," and that this "we" must include younger theologians and emerging scholars alongside experienced academics and church leaders. The work of Faith and Order, he stressed, is not elitist or confined to specialists; rather, it exists for the Church as a whole, and therefore the whole Church must be involved in its life and mission.

"In this regard, the consultation represented a unique and meaningful event within the context of a faculty of Orthodox theology, where reception and contribution, professors and students, clergy and laity, as well as Orthodox and non-Orthodox voices, were able to engage together in a genuine spirit of dialogue and theological reflection," said Metropolitan Job. "Such encounters demonstrate that theological work is not merely an academic exercise, but a living ecclesial

process nourished by listening, participation, and mutual exchange."

The goal of visible Christian unity

The Rev Fr Prof Emeritus Dr Vasile Mihoc, Cultural Vicar of the Metropolis of Transylvania, reflected on the prophetic vision that has shaped the work of the WCC since its beginnings. Recalling the contribution of Visser 't Hooft, he emphasised that the WCC was founded by people of vision who understood that the search for Christian unity must be rooted in faithfulness to the apostolic tradition and in a common witness to the Gospel. Visser 't Hooft's vision of restoring and manifesting the apostolic faith in the life of the Churches remains, he noted, a defining inspiration for the ecumenical movement today.

"The goal of visible Christian unity has not changed, even if the historical and ecclesial circumstances of the contemporary world have become increasingly complex," he said, recalling that the Church itself, even in apostolic times, was never without tensions, differences, and challenges.

"The WCC had and continues to have people of vision, capable of looking beyond immediate difficulties toward the long-term calling of Christian unity," he concluded. "For this reason, the WCC must remain an organisation of vision: one that courageously works toward the visible unity of the church and encourages the Churches to continue walking together."

A Reception and the importance of reception

Then, on 15th May, the group moved from Sibiu to Bucharest where they were received at the Patriarchal Palace by H.E. Metropolitan Nifon, who welcomed the participants on behalf of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel.

Metropolitan Nifon underlined the importance of Faith and Order consultations. He stressed the need for moral and theological discernment in an age marked by rapid technological development, digitalization, and the growing influence of artificial intelligence.

Particular attention was also given to the importance of reception: ensuring that the theological documents and studies produced by Faith and Order do not remain confined to academic circles, but are received, studied, and discussed within theological faculties, church communities, and the broader life of the churches.

https://www.oikoumene.org/news/faith-and-order-exists-for-the-church-as-a-whole

A shared commitment to the unity of the Church : Lutheran Orthodox Commission concludes a meeting hosted by United Protestant Church of France

Lutheran and Orthodox theologians continued their in-depth study on the topic of Synodality and Primacy during a meeting in the southern French town of Sète



Participants at the meeting in Sète, France, of the Joint International Commission on Theological Dialogue between the LWF and the Orthodox Church. Photo: LWF/M. Rawcliffe

Lutheran and Orthodox theologians have concluded a second plenary meeting of the 19th session of their Joint International Commission on Theological Dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Orthodox Church. The meeting took place in the southern French town of Sète from 10 to 16 May, hosted by the United Protestant Church of France.

The two delegations, led by co-presidents Bishop Johann Schneider from the Evangelical Church in Central Germany and Metropolitan Kyrillos of Krini from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, continued their reflections on the topic of 'Synodality and Primacy'. A communique from the group said discussions focused on "the dynamic relationship between synodality, understood as the collective discernment and participation of the faithful in the life of the Church, and primacy, understood as a ministry of unity and pastoral leadership."

LWF Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Prof Dr Dirk Lange, noted that "these are issues of profound ecclesiological importance for both

our traditions," with discussions "centred on questions such as the nature and connection between Churches in communion." In Sète, he added: "We were working on defining terms and identifying challenges for both sides with the goal of producing a joint statement to be published in the next couple of years."

During the meeting, participants visited the historic city of Avignon with its medieval fortress and palace which was home to the popes during the 14th century. They also heard from the Rev Jean-François Breyne, President of the regional council of the United Protestant Church of France, and attended a Eucharist for the feast of the Ascension, celebrated by Bishop Johann Schneider.

Both sides welcomed the "spirit of fellowship and mutual understanding" which characterised the meeting, alongside "a shared commitment to the unity of the Church." The Commission's next session is from 12th to 15th October in the Greek capital, Athens, hosted by the Orthodox Diocese of Peristeri.

Ecumenical consultation explores collaboration and responsibility in action

A High-Level Strategic Consultation on Ecumenical Cooperation held 29-30 April 2026 at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey created a space for honest, forward-looking dialogue among senior leaders of the World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, ACT Alliance, and the leadership of ecumenical specialized ministries.



Morning prayer of the High-Level Strategic Consultation at the chapel of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey. Photo: Gregoire de Fombelle/WCC

The consultation aimed to discern together strategic priorities, expectations, and responsibilities for ecumenical cooperation, collaboration and responsibility, as well as explore the distinctive value, strategic added value and transformative potential of ecumenical cooperation among those committed to ecumenical witness and action.

Rev. Prof Dr Jerry Pillay, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, stated at the beginning, "Our coming together is not merely institutional – it is profoundly theological, missional, and urgent in light of the world we are called to serve." He called for moving from cooperation to intentional and integral collaboration. "One of the pressing challenges we face is fragmentation of voice, of resources, and at times, of strategy," he said.

"The credibility of our witness depends on coherence, and collaboration," he said. "Coherence and collaboration between theological reflection and humanitarian action; between advocacy at the global

level and accompaniment at the grassroots level; between institutional structures and the lived realities of churches and communities."

"This does not require uniformity, but it does require intentional alignment," he said. "I believe we are living in a *kairos* moment. The call before us is not institutional survival but faithful discipleship in a wounded world." In calling for collaboration, he said, "May we have the courage not only to collaborate, but to be transformed by collaboration."

Find out about the other ecumenical voices that contributed to the consultation: https://www.oikoumene.org/news/ecumenical-consultation-explores-collaboration-and-responsibility-in-action

What does collaboration mean for the world today?

Participants of the 2026 edition of the Working Together meeting shared their insights on what ecumenical collaboration means today.

Rev. Dr Japhet Ndhlovu, from the United Church of Canada, said that ecumenical collaboration is an imperative if we are to respond to the prayer of Jesus for the unity of all believers. "This is an important piece of our common work together," said Ndhlovu.

Anne-Grete Larsen, from Norwegian Church Aid, noted that polarization is increasing. "Some of the multilateral institutions are under extreme pressure," she said. "Human rights are under extreme pressure."

Remaining together, staying together, moving and working together are just so important, she continued. "It's also really challenging because it means that we have to ask questions like: What must we stop doing alone?" she said. "And how can the financial challenges that we see drive change towards a more intentional and focused collaboration?"

Richard Santos, from Church World Service, said he believes ecumenical collaboration today is more important than it has ever been. "In the United States, we work with many of our member churches ecumenically to advance our mission, to advance our values," he said. "I think it's really important in this moment where I think there's more division, more polarization."

Wendy Gichuru, from the United Church of Canada, said that ecumenical collaboration today is about challenging old assumptions and existing models, and "being open to learning new ways of understanding of theological expressions and decolonizing the ways in which we have been operating, and the ways in which we've been relating to each other."

Graham Gordon, from Christian Aid, said he sees an increased desire for more cooperation. "We realize that the challenges are so great that we have to work together to have greater impact," he said. "One of the challenges we face is, how we bring together diverse churches around common impact where we're wanting to make a difference together."

Rev. Tyler Ward, from the United Methodist Church, saw Working Together as an opportunity to listen to one another. "Gatherings like this allow us to hear from one another and to also act together," he said.

The annual "Working Together" meeting on 28-29 April at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, outside Geneva, Switzerland, drew together 36 specialized ministries representatives.

The gathering offered opportunities to share about challenges, opportunities, and direction; to strategize together; and to find paths of collaboration. Four recurring goals provided the framework for Working Together: strengthening collaborative impact, exchanging knowledge for innovation, improving coordination and resource sharing, and enhancing strategic planning and accountability.

You can watch the video feature here: https://www.oikoumene.org/news/what-does-collaboration-mean-for-the-world-today

Young adults enter the ecumenical, interreligious movement with hope, urgency

Logan Crews is a freelance reporter and hospital chaplain resident in the Diocese of Missouri. He reports about an "E-cumenical Youth Gathering" held online in June which brought together over 60 young people from across the world in prayer, solidarity and friendship.



A virtual "E-cumenical Youth Gathering" held online in June. Photo: Courtesy of the World Council of Churches

To be religious in today's world is to live, work and pray alongside people of other faiths, denominations or none at all. Young Episcopalians who have inherited this increasingly secular, interreligious world are looking with fresh eyes on ecumenical institutions of the previous century and entering a movement whose aims of Christian unity and interfaith solidarity they see as existential and nonnegotiable.

In June, New York City-based Hank Jeannel logged onto a Zoom call with over 60 young adult Christians from around the world and was put in a breakout room with others from North America and the Middle East.

Some lamented their region's pressing challenges, such as climate change, while others requested prayers for personal struggles. And amid it all was hope for a world where young Christians are united, Jeannel, The Episcopal Church's associate for ecumenical and interreligious relations, told Episcopal News Service. [...]

It was the second "E-cumenical Youth Gathering" convened by the World Council of Churches. Jeannel said this was just one place where young people are bringing new energy to a movement whose work is increasingly urgent.

Read the full article here:

https://episcopalnewsservice.org/2026/08/17/young-adults-enter-the-ecumenical-interreligious-movement-with-hope-urgency

Austria: a passion for ecumenism, education and interfaith relations

In this Voices from the Communion, Superintendent Rev. Olivier Dantine shares insights from his experiences in ecumenical and interfaith relations.
He leads one of seven dioceses in a small church at the heart of Europe. He studied in Vienna, Berlin and Jerusalem, but it was his experience in the Holy Land which deeply influenced his theology and his passion for Jewish-Christian relations. Today, he shares that passion and those theological insights as a local pastor, as a church leader, and as a member of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Council.

During the recent LWF Council meeting, he sat down to share some thoughts on ecumenism, education and interreligious relations in his country and you can read them on the next page.



Rev. Olivier Dantine, Superintendent of the Diocese of Salzburg-Tyrol with the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria. Photo: LWF/A. Hillert

Can you give us a snapshot of your church today?

In Austria, Catholics make up the majority – around 60 or 70 percent - with Protestant churches numbering about 3 percent of the population. The numbers vary in different regions of Austria, but Lutherans make up the majority of Protestants, except in the western part near Switzerland, associated with the Reformed church.

We have a diverse history going back to the Reformation, with some communities that survived during the Counter-Reformation, but others where Protestants were deported or forced underground. We had many refugees after the Second World War and in recent years, following the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, we have had people from Middle Eastern countries who have settled here and some have come seeking baptism, so we now have diversity outside of the European context too.

You can read the full interview here: https://lutheranworld.org/news/austria-passion-ecumenism-education-and-interfaith-relations

CLC Chaplaincy Group Celebrates Unity at Taizé

The Rev. Joseph Nelson, Lutheran pastor in Leeds and one of our members, led a group of pilgrims to the ecumenical community of Taizé. Find out here about their experiences.

In the early hours of July 19th, eighteen pilgrims, led by Rev. Joseph Nelson, departed from the Lutheran Church House in Headingley, bound for the French ecumenical monastic community of Taizé. The week-long trip, which included many students from the University Chaplaincy in Leeds (a CLC-sponsored ministry), offered participants a chance to experience the hospitality, spirituality, and rich worship environment which the community provides to its visitors. The group was comprised of students and young adults from Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox churches – mostly from the Leeds and Nottingham areas, but also two visitors from the ELCA (Arkansas-Oklahoma) Companion Synod to the Lutheran Church in Great Britain.

While there, students and others enjoyed the diverse community of fellow pilgrims gathered in the beautiful French countryside. Taizé hosts approximately 2,000–4,000 guests from around the world each week during the busy summer months; the community is large, queues are long, and good humour and patience are paramount.

But the blessings of the experience far outweighed any inconvenience.

'Being able to share communion with all of my friends and people of other denominations has been something really special,' shared Flynn O'Reilly, a participant from the Roman Catholic tradition, referencing Taizé's particular practice of welcoming baptised visitors of all Christian traditions to receive at the community's Catholic Eucharist distributed at Morning Prayer each day.

James Eames attends worship regularly at St Luke's in Leeds and came seeking a time of prayer, peace, and contemplation. 'My favourite part is the community here – the fact that I'm in a place in the middle of nowhere in France with 2500 Christians from all over the world, speaking many different languages from so many different backgrounds – that's really powerful and encouraging for our faith.'



Photo: CLC

Regular worship is, not surprisingly, a major focus of the community, and was offered three times daily. The group also celebrated with a Lutheran Communion service in the crypt, and later in the week were able to join an Anglican group for Eucharist in the old village church. A particularly special moment towards the end of the week was when one participant chose to be baptised, and the brothers gave Pastor Joseph permission to do this at Taizé.

Participants also enjoyed visits to the local farmers' market and cheese shop, as well as an outing to the nearby town of Cluny to experience the medieval abbey–and the rare luxury of a chair with a backrest (these are uncommon at Taizé!)–along with some French refreshments. Evenings were for socialising with the community, with music and dancing creating a celebratory atmosphere.

On Friday, Pastor Joseph and Mariam (Faith rep for Leeds University Union and president of the Orthodox society) were invited to share lunch with the brothers, at which Br. Matthew, current Prior of the Taizé Community, a Yorkshireman (and more importantly, a fellow supporter of Bradford City like Pastor Joseph), observed how diverse the group was, and how it was exactly what the community wants to see more of: young Christians from a variety of denominations travelling, eating, and praying together.

Pastor Joseph summed up the spirit of the week: 'It was a great joy, and this is how we will one day achieve Christian unity. When we know and care for one another, it becomes possible to resolve our differences, since it is in loving one another that we realise the unity God wills for the Church.'

https://www.lutheran.org.uk/2026/07/28/clc-chaplaincy-group-celebrates-unity-at-taize/

Artificial Intelligence: A Ten-Step Approach

During an address to the World Council of Churches (WCC) executive committee on 8th June this year Bishop Prof Dr Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Moderator of the Central Committee, reflected among other things on the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence.

Rapid change

'We have seen the steep rise of data corporations, which have taken on the character of monopolies,' Prof Bedford-Strohm said. 'Through their governance of algorithms, they have developed a tremendous amount of power not only over the communication patterns of a large part of humanity but also about the knowledge which drives the different sectors of economy and society … Their close ties to political power result in an amount of power in the hands of a few people which we have probably never seen in history before, and which represents a growing threat to democracy.'

This rapid development of new technological instruments has not been accompanied by an equally rapid development of rules necessary to deal with them responsibly. 'We urgently need a lively discussion on these rules in global civil society. Responsibility is the central characteristic of human handling of AI,' Prof Bedford-Strohm declared. 'It is an indispensable dimension of our relationship to God.'



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

Anomie

He referred to the French sociologist Emile Durkheim who had used the term "anomie" when he described the situation at the end of the 19th century after a century of rapid transformation through an industrial revolution that humankind had never seen before. "Anomie" means a "lack of rules". Society, said Durkheim, had experienced a deep transformation, so rapid that the rules for dealing with it responsibly did not keep up with the rapidity of this transformation. 'I am convinced that Durkheim's diagnosis fits our situation today even much more drastically. We live in an age of anomie to an extent never seen before,' he said.

'How can we respond to these threats?' Prof Bedford-Strohm asked. 'Or, to say it with the terminology of Emile Durkheim, how can we overcome anomie by finding the appropriate rules for a responsible use of AI?'

Churches role decisive

He firmly believes that the Churches have to play a decisive role in this endeavour. 'Several billion inhabitants of this earth are members of churches and religious communities. There is probably no other group of people with a similar potential to encourage the global response to AI that we so urgently need.' Churches are rooted locally everywhere in the world and are united in a global horizon based on our common faith in God the creator of heaven and earth, in Christ the personified love of God, and in the Holy Spirit who leads people with various different national, cultural and social backgrounds together, he said.

"Magnifica Humanitas"

He welcomed the recent encyclical of Pope Leo XIV on the topic of AI, published on 25th May under the title "*Magnifica Humanitas*" (Magnificent Humanity), and his call for establishing effective mechanisms to protect freedom and human dignity against data corporations whose monopoly power is now virtually uncontrollable. The Pope affirms that AI can imitate and simulate the person, but it does not possess a moral conscience, empathy, or affective, relational or spiritual capabilities. Pope Leo claims that the guiding principle must not solely be profit but the dignity of every person and the common good of all people.

A way ahead

Prof Bedford-Strohm summarised guidance which he believes might form an ecumenical perspective on AI:

1. Artificial Intelligence presents clear risks, yet also a great potential to alleviate suffering and promote human and ecological development.
2. The rapid development of these new technological instruments needs to be accompanied by an equally rapid development of the rules necessary to deal with it responsibly.
3. A public theology of AI is needed.
4. The moral guidance, which the Churches can introduce in the ethical discussion process on AI, is based on Jesus Christ as the human being in which God's will for humanity has been shown.
5. In Jesus Christ we see someone who presents as a vulnerable human being, something which is in tension with the ideal of human perfection through technology as, for example, it is promoted by transhumanism.
6. The purpose of human life is love. The double commandment of love provides the central guidance for responsibly dealing with the potential of AI. AI is therefore a blessing when it helps alleviating human suffering or the suffering of the earth. It can become a danger, when it promotes division, instigates hate, or deepens the asymmetries of power in society.
7. Human beings can love. Machines cannot love. Any confusion in this distinction must be avoided.
8. Who profits from AI? Our Christian understanding of justice is based on the "preferential option for the poor" which can be identified in all major traditions of the Bible.

9. Responsibility is an indispensable dimension of our relationship to God. Machines cannot be responsible. The use of AI must always be based on human responsibility.
10. Human responsibility is nurtured by hope. New technological developments do not represent the path to doom but provide the potential for a life in dignity for every human being and human care for non-human creation. Hope leads to action towards these goals.

You can read the whole of Prof Bedford-Strohm's address here: https://oikoumene.org/resources/documents/moderators-address-wcc-executive-committee-june-2026

Germany's Christian churches jointly send a message of confidence: 'For a society that stands together'

Following the outcome of the state parliament elections in the State of Saxony-Anhalt, Bishop Kirsten Fehrs, chair of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany; Bishop Heiner Wilmer, chair of the German Bishops' Conference; and the Rev. Christopher Easthill, chair of the Council of Christian Churches in Germany and rector of the Anglican/Episcopal Church of St. Augustine of Canterbury in Frankfurt issued the following statement:

"We take note of the fact that the AfD [Alternative for Germany] emerged as the strongest party in Saxony-Anhalt by a clear margin. Our concerns have become reality, but we have to accept the result. The churches are particularly concerned about the way people in Saxony-Anhalt live together and relate to one another, and especially about respect for the universal human dignity granted by God, which is unconditionally due to every person. Our concern also extends to the free and democratic constitutional order in Saxony-Anhalt. We call on the election winners to fully respect the State and German constitution and to uphold the dignity of all people, regardless of their origin, religion, way of life, achievements or position.

As churches, we are committed to the message of the Gospel and to the Christian understanding of humanity. In fulfilment of this commitment, we will closely monitor and critically accompany the actions of the future state government. We will not look away and we will not remain silent when human dignity is violated, our democracy is put at risk, or the rule of law is undermined. Ultimately, this is always about people who come under pressure, are threatened or excluded. We will continue to support everything that sustains our democracy and contributes to social cohesion. This requires, above all, spaces where people can come together, engage in dialogue and seek mutual understanding. This is one responsibility of the democratic parties. The churches, too, can serve as important places of encounter.

An election result is the sum of votes cast on a Sunday – but in everyday life, what matters is what holds this country together week after week. The election result shows the extent of dissatisfaction and the loss of trust. This must be taken seriously. What remains unchanged, however, is how hundreds of thousands of people in Saxony-Anhalt and across Germany care for one another day after day, take responsibility for and help sustain our communities. As churches, we will continue to make their confidence, willingness to help and commitment visible and to strengthen them. Together, we will continue working for a society that stands together – in responsibility before God and our fellow human beings."

This press release is being issued simultaneously by the press offices of the Council of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK), the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the German Bishops' Conference (DBK).

https://episcopalnewsservice.org/2026/09/08/germanys-christian-churches-jointly-send-a-message-of-confidence

Kingdom over Nation

An ecumenical response to Christian Nationalism with contributions from across the traditions curated by Churches Together in England.



'Kingdom over Nation' is Churches Together in England's (CTE) resource on Christian Nationalism. It has not emerged suddenly or in reaction to a single event. Rather, it has grown out of a sustained period of reflection and response across the ecumenical landscape. It will be very useful for members preparing for our Annual Meeting in 2027 which will focus on this topic which is so important across the world in these days.

CTE member Churches are committed to the flourishing of God's Kingdom through the Church in our nation and are convinced that this must always trump any form of national identity politics that might be used, in some quarters, to divide and 'other' people.

If you follow the link below you can download 'Kingdom over Nation' which includes

- a Bible study series drawing from a rich range of ecumenical voices and traditions
- video resources and
- regional or local Churches Together group statements about Christian Nationalism

'Kingdom Over Nation' is designed for minsters, leadership teams, small groups and individuals seeking thoughtful theological engagement in this cultural moment to hold honest, informed and pastoral conversations that strengthen unity within the body of Christ and nurture peace within our communities.

https://cte.org.uk/working-together/kingdom-over-nation/

CEC 2025 Annual Report: "Resilient Hope In The Risen Lord"

The Conference of European Churches 2025 Annual Report illustrates how churches, together, have continued to show the way toward resilient hope.



'As Europe – and the world – face challenges that have proven, while not intractable, certainly complex, CEC has responded by expanding its Pathways to Peace initiative, deepening unity, and engaging in substantive dialogue with European political institutions,' write H.E. Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain, CEC President, and the Rev Frank Dieter Fischbach, CEC General Secretary, in the introduction. 'The year 2025 showed us that prayers, dialogue, and action can make a difference.'

The report is divided into the following sections: Pathways to Peace, Charta Oecumenica, Dialogue with European Political Institutions, Communications, and Finance.

You can download the Report: Resilient Hope in the Risen Lord free of charge at https://ceceurope.org/storage/app/media/2026-news/cec-annual-report-2025-online.pdf

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2027 ready now

Churches and Christian communities worldwide are invited to use the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2027 resources to prepare for joint prayers for Christian unity in January and throughout the year



Flock of sheep in County Donegal, Ireland. Photo: Albin Hillert/Life on Earth

The theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2027 is: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Resources are now available online in English, German, French, and Italian, with additional language versions coming soon. The prayers and reflections for 2027 were prepared by the Irish Council of Churches and the Council for Ecumenism and Dialogue of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

Drawing on Luke 12:22-34 and the image of Christ as the Good Shepherd, the materials invite Christians to move beyond fear towards radical trust, vigilant hope, and responsible service. The theme speaks to Christians as a "little flock" called to live, pray, and work together. It also reflects the contemporary experience of the churches in Ireland, where changing social circumstances offer new opportunities for reflection, renewal, and reconciliation.

The materials emphasise that Christian unity is not uniformity, but a shared journey marked by deep listening, humble witness, and mutual care. They invite churches to demonstrate the values of God's kingdom through hospitality, forgiveness, diakonia, and common service to people and communities in need. An ecumenical worship service including the Celtic Cross and texts associated with Saint Patrick and other Irish saints, Biblical reflections, prayers for the eight days, suggestions for hymns and songs, and an overview of the ecumenical situation in Ireland today are all included.

The traditional period for observing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in the northern hemisphere is 18-25 January. In the southern hemisphere churches frequently choose time around Pentecost, which is also symbolic of the unity of the church.

You can download the resources at https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/resources-for-the-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2027

The Woman who would not Remain Silent

Our Lutheran President, the Rt Rev Jana Jeruma-Grinberga, recently received the gift of a new book: "Mulier taceat. A Study of 1 Cor 14:34-35" by a Latvian theologian, Aļesja Lavrinoviča.

Mulier taceat means 'the woman should be silent': and the dedication inscribed called me "a woman who would **not** be silent"! I would rather apply that description to Dr Alesja Lavrinoviča. Her efforts in researching and writing this book (which is based on her PhD examining these verses which have caused considerable controversy over the centuries) have been remarkable and have marked her out as a woman who defies efforts to silence her.

Having made a personal theological journey from Pentecostalism and charismatic worship to now being a confirmed Lutheran and simultaneously an active participant at St Saviour's Anglican Church in Rīga, Aļesja is also something of an embodiment of ecumenism.

Naturally enough, this is an academic book, closely argued and not a light read, and certainly not a book that you might pick up at the airport as holiday entertainment. It is, however, a very valuable text, and as it is freely available also as a pdf, should prove useful to theologians, researchers and students alike. To recap, the expanded pericope that is under the microscope of external and internal evidence here, is this (1 Corinthians 14.31-37, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition):

[31] For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged [32] (and the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets, [33a] for God is a God not of disorder but of peace), [33b]as in all the churches of the saints.

The Window

supports members of the Anglican-Lutheran Society in better understanding our different traditions and social contexts so that we can more faithfully proclaim together God's love and justice in the world

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[34] Women should be silent [*mulieres taceant – JJG*] in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak but should be subordinate, as the law also says. [35] If there is something they want to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. [36] Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?

[37] Anyone who claims to be a prophet or spiritual must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord.

There are number of issues around this pericope, but just to mention a couple of them here. Firstly, vv34 and 35 appear at the end of the chapter in some early manuscripts, raising the question of whether they are an interpolation – and if so, are they written by Paul himself or another, later author.

Secondly, does v33b belong with 33a, as in the NRSVUE, or with v34? In most modern versions v33b is applied to the concept of God as a God of peace, not disorder; but in the Revised Standard Version, the American Standard Version and some others, the text still reads something like this:

33 God isn't a God of disorder but of peace. Like in all the churches of God's people, **34** the women should be quiet during the meeting. (Common English Bible)

Fascinatingly, it would appear that Luther's great opponent, Cardinal Cajetan, may have been the first to apply v33b to v34 (p25 in Lavrinoviča's text), and of course this has had theological and practical consequences for women's participation in church life ever since. There are further questions to be answered, including the relation of v36 to the previous text.

Dr Lavrinoviča uses various methods in analysing this text in great detail: textual and redactional criticism and grammatical, syntactic and semantic analysis. As a non-academic theologian, I can't pretend to apply my own criticism to this process; but it is encouraging to see that highly reputable universities (Tilburg, Regensburg, Leuven and Zürich) have enabled and supported this young theologian from Latvia to explore such a complex and controversial issue in depth.

To quote her concluding proposition:

"The *mulier taceat* pericope, which stands out from the context on account of its semantic and pragmatic communication, damaged syntactic connection, perceived by scribes as a separate thought and removed by some to the end of the chapter due to its incoherence, yet exegetically tied back to its ecumenical frame by the modern scholars (since the 19th century), put in parenthesis by the NRSV, commented on by virtually every exegetical school and every modern Christian denomination, pronounced to be an interpolation by the most excellent textual critics (Fee and Epp), still defended as genuinely Pauline even by feminist scholars, deserves at least to be bracketed by single brackets in the Greek New Testament critical editions to alert the reader to its problems. A reference in [the]modern Bible should be made about the questionable origin of 1 Cor 14.33b-36 in the Pauline epistle to at least inform readers that there are a growing number of scholars who are convinced of the secondary nature of this text since 1863."

Thank you to Aļesja Lavrinoviča for this detailed, interesting and valuable research. I hope that there is much more to come from this indomitable theologian.

Lavrinoviča, Aļesja, *Mulier taceat*. A Study of 1 Cor 14:34-35. Wissentschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.Reihe, 651. Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2026. https://www.mohrsiebeck.com/buch/mulier-taceat-9783162000828/