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# The British Lutheran

February 2026





# From the Chairman

Rev. George Samiec  
Chairman of the ELCE

**T**HERE HAVE BEEN MANY BEGINNINGS to this article! As I drove into my first parish in western Queensland in the '80s, I stressed about how to introduce myself. You never get a second chance at a first impression sort of thing. Charlotte just laughed at my turmoil and told me not to worry. A new beginning here

in the ELCE and the UK had the same issue, but I wasn't stressed as I was more comfortable in my pastoral identity and had learned that I have limited control over other's perceptions. (I still get surprised, after all these years, when people tell me how they can hear my Australian accent!)

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## ON THE COVER



*The chalice and paten used at the Lutheran Mission in Ireland in Cork.*

Photo: © John W. Fiene

When some Greeks came to Philip in Jerusalem and said, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus” (John 12:21), the outcome was pretty straightforward. He went to Andrew and they went to Jesus! The point was that they could go to and see Jesus! Today, because we live after Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension, seeing Jesus doesn’t involve the simple use of our senses but rather faith in Jesus’ words – in God’s Word – as we encounter words, water, bread and wine. When these words are spoken as Jesus wants and when water, bread and wine are used as Jesus instructs, then people encounter Jesus!

Over the years I have conceptualised for myself and I teach pastoral students that the role of pastors is to present and point to Jesus, to serve in Jesus’ name, and to introduce Jesus to the world so that people meet Jesus, and that the pastor does this, as well as possible, by becoming ‘transparent’ as it were – the focus is Jesus.

I’m not denying our physicality, our geography, our time, our identity – you are reading *The British Lutheran* in 2025 after all! But I am saying that the goal of Lutheran pastors, the desire of the ELCE, the aim of *The British Lutheran* – and, if you who are reading this article are in Christ, then our goals are the same – that we want to meet Jesus and we want others to meet him too! We’re not saying that Jesus is English, Scottish, Welsh, or from Northern Ireland. We don’t want to turn Jesus into an ‘everyman’ who can be shaped by what we think he should be. Just as we are located in time and place, so Christmas and Easter remind us that God has become personal to us in Jesus. And now nearly 2,000 years later we know that the best thing for us is to see Jesus; meet Jesus; follow Jesus! And that’s possible because Jesus comes to us!

The best thing for us is to see

Jesus; meet Jesus; follow Jesus!

Yes, our Lutheran Confessions – the way we hear and then teach God’s Word – give us the clarity and best way of using words so that people meet God in Jesus Christ: hear about our sin and God’s grace. And the process is the same: the focus is not on us but on Jesus. Jesus is at the heart and centre of the ELCE.

Sometimes you might know when you’re saying a last word and you might wonder what you leave behind. That’s for others to say but for now I say ‘good-bye’. Let us all seek to see Jesus where he reveals himself and then step out of the way so others can meet Jesus too!

God bless you all! Peace! + George

## Plus ça change ...

**P**PLUS ÇA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA même chose. "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

So goes a French saying, usually abbreviated in English to 'plus ça change'.

This little aphorism is often used as an expression of disillusionment or pessimism: "things never get better". As such, one could make the case that it is a thoroughly biblical thought. As the preacher says,

*What has been is what will be,  
and what has been done is  
what will be done,  
and there is nothing new  
under the sun.*

(Ecclesiastes 1:9)

It is a common misconception in Western culture, stretching back a few centuries now, that our own time is somehow unique in the history of humanity. That somehow, because of philosophical, technical or some other kind of "progress", humanity too has "progressed". As a result, the last few generations in particular have seen a wholesale rejection of all kinds of practices, values and standards that countless generations would have considered timelessly true and wise. It is not hard to see that this cultural revolution has not been an unqualified success.

Against all utopian projects, it is a salutary thing to remember that there is nothing new under the sun. New technologies, for example, tend not to advance humanity to unprecedented heights, but rather to afford new ways to carry out the desires of the human heart, both good and evil.

The tools may change, together with the environment in which they are used. But human nature remains what it is, in both its created nature and its fallenness. *Plus ça change* indeed!

Human nature remains  
what it is, in both its created  
nature and its fallenness.

Thanks be to God, then, that He has sent to us "the eternal Gospel" (Revelation 14:6). In God, "in whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17).

Whether the world remains the same century after century, or changes rapidly from one decade to the next, all flesh remains fleeting grass, but "the word of our God endures forever" (Isaiah 40:6).

Nor is this some abstract truth, but an ever-present reality. As St. Peter writes in his first letter, "this word is the good news that was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:25).

Ultimately, people remain people – and God remains God. The gospel of Jesus Christ remains unchanged and unchanging, from generation to generation.

As the world changes, and new technologies and the world is transformed, they become opportunities for the eternal gospel to be communicated in new ways and in new places.

*Plus ça change* – thanks be to God!

\* \* \*

The ELCE is also in the midst of changes. As of last Synod, we have a new Chairman. Since last Synod, two pastors have retired from their calls. The long-running story of the ELCE restructure is on the home straight, with the recent registration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United Kingdom (ELC-UK).

The present issue has the final “From the Chairman” from George Samiec, not only the most recent Chairman of the ELCE but a long-serving editor of this magazine, the architect of its revival and the father of its present form.

Having been installed as the new Chairman, I am also leaving my post as the editor of these pages after six years.

In none of these years, have there been four issues of *The British Lutheran*, which is a disappointment, and for which I apologise.

On the other hand, I am not embarrassed by the quality of either the contents or the presentation of the magazine. Members of ELCE congregations, as well as writers outside our Synod, have contributed engaging and thoughtful articles, devotions and news items. The editorial team have turned these into a well-written and well-presented magazine.

For all who have contributed, I offer my warmest thanks.

The new editor, Mrs. Hanna Mitchell, inherits a magazine with strong roots, which has changed with the times, but whose core task has always been the same: the sharing of the eternal Gospel within and beyond the ELCE.

*Plus ça change.*

*Rev. Tapani Simojoki, Editor*



## Call for Material

The Editorial Board of

*The British Lutheran* needs you!

You can submit material for consideration to the editor:

*editor@tbl.lutheranchurch.org.uk*

# I Say to You, Arise!

*Rev. Timothy Teuscher  
President, Lutheran Church—Canada*



**“Soon afterwards, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and His disciples and a great crowd went with Him. As He drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her.” (Luke 17:11–17)**

THIS HAPPENS TO BE THE ONLY TIME that the town of Nain is mentioned in the Bible. It is an obscure, unimportant Galilean town of the first century. And yet, the fact that Jesus goes to this town emphasises a most important truth. For there is no town that is insignificant or unimportant to Him – including the town in which you are living. Moreover, there is not one person who is so obscure and ordinary, so insignificant and unimportant, that God is unconcerned about and unaware of his or her present and eternal well-being – including, therefore, each and every single one of us.

On this particular day in this ordinary, obscure town there happens to be two large processions moving toward each other. At the head of one procession is Jesus along with His disciples and a large crowd who had just heard Him teach with authority and

who saw Him drive out demons and heal the servant of the Roman centurion in the neighbouring town of Capernaum. At the head of the other procession is the coffin of a dead man followed by his grief-stricken, widowed mother and a large crowd of mourners. And at the gate of the town, these two processions meet.

And what took place here in Nain has taken place in every town, in every nation, for every person, throughout the past 2,000 years or so. For these two processions are always on a collision course. There is the procession of death, and of which most of us have at one time or another literally been a part of – following a funeral coach carrying the earthly remains of a loved one out to a cemetery ... and, yes, a procession that we, too, will one day be leading. The procession of grief and sorrow, of pain and suffering, of despair and hopelessness.

And then, there is the procession of life, led by Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, the Lord and Giver of life, our Lord Jesus Christ ... the procession of pastors and people following Jesus and who exclaim, as we do in the office of Matins: “O come, let us sing to the Lord, let us make a

joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.”

**“And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep’.”**

When Jesus sees this grieving widow crying over her great loss and her hopeless future with no one left to provide for her, His heart goes out to her. He is filled with compassion, feeling her pain and sorrow. Yes, He who came to this world

to bear the griefs and sorrows of all mankind, cannot but also feel the

grief and sorrow of this one particular obscure, un-named woman.

And that is most significant and comforting. For Jesus has compassion for each and every single one of us in our pain and sorrow, grief and suffering. There is not one single person reading this towards whom the heart of the Lord Jesus does not go out. Moreover, there is not one single member of a congregation in our churches for whom the Lord does not have compassion.

**“Then Jesus came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still.”**

When Jesus stops this funeral procession and reaches out to touch the bier or stretcher on which the dead body of this young man had been placed, He is doing something far more significant than we might realise. The Old Testament Law of Moses says for

instance: “Whoever touches the dead body of anyone will be unclean” (Num. 19:11). And by touching the funeral stretcher, Jesus is, in a sense, thereby trading places with this dead young man – becoming unclean so that this man might be clean; taking upon Himself this man’s death and giving him in return His life.

And in this action of Jesus, we are thereby given a wonderful picture of what He has done for the entire world

**Jesus has compassion for each and every single one of us**

of unclean, dying people; what He has done for each and every one of

us who by nature are dead in our trespasses and sins. For Jesus came into this world in order to die in the place of sinners, to take all our uncleanness, all our sins, all our guilt upon Himself so that we might not die but live forever; so that we might be clean and holy in the sight of the one holy God. St. Paul puts it like this: “For our sake God made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

**“And Jesus said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise.’ And the dead man sat up and began to speak.”**

Notice how it is by the power of Jesus’ life-giving, life-sustaining, life-restoring Word that this dead man is brought back to life; thereby pre-figuring what will happen on the Last Day when He returns to this world and say to all the dead, “I say to you, arise.”

For then will take place that of which He says in another place: "A time is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear the voice of the Son of Man and come out" (John 5:28-29).

But do you know what? Even here and now, Jesus does this very thing for people who by nature are dead in their trespasses and sins; for those who are filled with grief and sorrow over the wages of their sins; for those

who mourn over the effects of sin that we see in this sin-

marred world. And how does He do this? Why, through those who have been placed into the office of the holy ministry – the ministry of reconciliation.

For many of us, it was at our baptism that our parents led, in effect, a funeral procession into a church building, carrying in their arms their newborn child who, although full of physical life, was at the same time spiritually dead. But at the gate, at the baptism font, they were met by the Lord Jesus Himself who, in the waters of Holy Baptism, spoke His life-giving Word through His called and ordained servant to us: "I say to you, arise. Arise, and be baptised and wash your sins away" (Acts 22:16).

Every Lord's Day, when the people in the congregations of our churches are gathered together, He does it again. A funeral procession enters our places of worship and people lament: "We

have sinned against You, O God, in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone." But, then, at the gate they are met by Jesus who, through His ministers like you and me, pronounce those absolving, life-giving words: "I say to you, arise." "As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins."

Jesus came into this world ... so that we might not die but live forever

"And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and

Jesus gave him to his mother."

What a touching, heart-warming scene; for Jesus replaces this woman's grief and sorrow with great joy by returning her son to her. And is not that precisely what took place when you were baptised ... when you brought your children to be baptised? For in the washing of water and the Word children are born again as children of God, restored to spiritual life by the Lord Jesus, and who then gives them back to their mother – to our holy mother the Church where, as the catechism puts it, "the Holy Spirit ... daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers."

"Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and 'God has visited His people!'"

And how can we not but respond in the same way? We can but declare of Jesus, as we sing in the Te Deum can-

ticle, “When You took upon Yourself to deliver man, You humbled Yourself to be born of a virgin. When you had overcome the sharpness of death, You opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.”

**“And this report about Him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country”;**

that is, the good news of what Jesus did here in the town of Nain was spread abroad by the people, not only to the other towns and villages of Gali-

lee, but throughout all of Judea and even into the surrounding country of the Gentiles – and throughout the world. In fact, is not that precisely what is taking place in the reading of and meditating on this miracle of our Lord? We are the ones who have now also heard again of this Jesus – the Lord of life and death, the Great Prophet, the God who has compassion on us, the God who has visited us, the Lord who makes us clean, the Lord who gives life to those dead in sin.

## *The Nicene Creed: A Fresh Look at the Church’s Timeless Faith*

Kylie Berg  
*Oxford Lutheran Mission*

BOOK REVIEW



**O**N THIS 1700<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF the Council of Nicaea, readers of *The British Lutheran* may enjoy reflecting on the statement of faith born out of that council by reading *The Nicene Creed: An Introduction* by Philip Cary, a recently retired professor of philosophy from Eastern University in Pennsylvania, USA. This beautifully bound little volume serves as a helpful introduction to the theology confessed in the Nicene Creed by offering a rich reflection on the language of the Creed itself.

In the final pages of his introduction, Cary explains that his book has three aims: (1) to enrich the reader’s understanding of the Christian faith by examining the Nicene Creed’s orig-

inal Greek text, its widely-used Latin translation, and the etymologies of English words used in various translations; (2) to provide lay Christians an entry into further theological study by explaining vocabulary related to the theology of the Creed; and (3) to demonstrate through Scripture how the Nicene Creed gives expression to the apostolic, biblical faith. As Cary writes, the Nicene Creed is a confession of the Gospel, for it tells us not “what to do but ... what God has done for us and our salvation” (12).

In simple, clear prose, Cary walks the reader through the Nicene confession phrase by phrase. Along the way, he frequently cites Scripture to illustrate the biblical basis for the claims

of the Creed and discusses how it responds to the false teachings of Arius, which stood at the centre of the controversy over which the Council of Nicaea was summoned.

The chapters of the book each focus on a single phrase and are thus quite brief, generally only a few pages long. These easily digested chapters transition seamlessly from one to the next and prompt the reader to continue turning the pages. For those who would prefer to slowly meditate on each line of the Creed individually, the brevity of the chapters would also allow the book to serve as a daily devotional.

As is suggested by the first and second of Cary's stated aims, his commentary is foremost a study of words, with frequent discussions of the Nicene Creed's Greek text and historic Latin translation. However, lest the less-scholarly among us be intimidated, the book primarily addresses Christians who are unfamiliar with these ancient languages and adeptly makes the ideas conveyed by the Greek and Latin accessible to lay readers.

### **Words in Their Context**

In addition to explaining Greek and Latin words, Cary situates the language of the Creed within the Graeco-Roman philosophical world. For instance, he explains how the Graeco-Roman understanding of divinity differed from the Jewish, and therefore also Christian, understanding of divinity, and then goes on to demonstrate how the description "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God" is a way of putting the Jewish conception of God in terms that the

polytheistic Graeco-Roman society could understand (67–72).

Cary also offers enriching insights on how some words in the traditional English translation of the Nicene Creed – still used in the liturgies of many denominations, including the ELCE – have evolved in their meaning over time. For example, the word "worlds" in the phrase "before all worlds" would have originally implied what we now express by "ages," as in the phrase "ages to come" (61).

In another instance, Cary critiques the traditional translation of the Greek word *homoousios*, used to describe Christ "being of one substance with the Father," because, while the English word "substance" derives from the Latin *substantia*, meaning "essence," the word "substance" in modern English has come to principally convey the idea of a material (or physical) substance, which inadequately describes God's transcendent being. Thus, Cary argues that either "being" or "essence" would better convey to most modern ears the original meaning implied by *homoousios*, which is that Christ has the same divine essence as the Father.

As we confess our faith in words used by English-speaking Christians for centuries, it is beneficial to be aware of the connotations of these words at the time when they were translated and to rid ourselves of misconceptions stemming from the subtle evolution of language over time. Cary helpfully guides readers in this endeavour.

### **The Nicene Creed after Nicaea**

The book not only dwells on the

Nicene Creed as it was originally formulated in AD 325, but also explains how the Creed has been received by the Church in the ensuing centuries. With a spirit of charity and understanding, Cary explains the differences, both minor and major, between how the Creed came to be confessed in the eastern and western halves of Christendom. He also discusses instances in which Christian traditions have further developed ideas articulated but not fully expounded in the original Creed by taking these ideas to their logical conclusion. For example, Cary guides readers through the logic which the Church followed in concluding that, because the Son shares the Father's divine essence (as bishops at Nicaea made clear with the word *homoousios*), the Son therefore also shares every divine attribute of the Father, including His wisdom, power, and will (81–84).

### Some Criticisms

While much is laudable about this book and its aims, readers should be aware of a few weaker points.

In the chapter reflecting on God as creator “of all things visible and invisible”, Cary begins to contemplate the Creed's philosophical implications for the cause of evil (32–33), though his musings on this point are too brief and superficial to address the issue with much satisfaction.

Another instance of brevity leading to oversimplification is found in the book's introduction, aimed at placing the Nicene Creed in its historical context. Here, Cary flattens all subtleties of the controversy in its caricature of

the Arian position. In this instance, the book paints a clearer picture of what the Nicene Creed has come to mean for the Church than the immediate concerns surrounding its composition in the fourth century.

Finally, Lutheran readers will note that, although an admirer of Luther, Cary breaks from Luther's interpretation of baptism in the degree to which he emphasises it as a “pledge of allegiance” which Christians make to God, rather than a washing performed by Christ to cleanse us from sin and unite us to Himself (19–20, 199–201).

### In Summary

Nevertheless, Cary does successfully introduce readers to the Nicene Creed and how it proclaims who Christ is and what He has done for our salvation. Because Cary assumes that his readers “are familiar with the Bible but not necessarily with the traditions of Christian theology” (11), readers already well-versed in theology or Church history may find the book simplistic at times. However, the discussions of Greek and Latin vocabulary will likely provide new insights for anyone unfamiliar with these languages. Furthermore, the book offers all believers an opportunity to meditate anew and perhaps more deeply on the fundamentals of the Christian faith, which are always worth revisiting.



Phillip Cary, *Nicene Creed: An Introduction*. Faithlife, 2023. 248 pp.

Paperback £16.99 / Kindle £7.89

## Learning to Confess

Luke Williams

St. David Lutheran Church, Cardiff



**I**N THE CHURCHES IN WHICH I WAS raised, the Nicene Creed did not feature. There was the suspicion that reciting extra-biblical material might be unwise - after all, isn't Scripture sufficient for us? What's more, aren't such things inherently Roman Catholic and therefore to be avoided at all costs?

It is now a great joy for me to confess the Nicene Creed regularly during Divine Service with the gathered people of God. The following three reasons encapsulate why I changed my position.

### **We confess according to the Scriptures' content**

Firstly, every statement of the Nicene Creed can be reinforced with Scriptural quotations. The Nicene Creed was not plucked out of thin air, nor was it dreamed up on a whim. Rather, it is drawn from the truth of God's Word.

The events of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension are clearly recorded in the Gospels. More than this, we are also taught that Jesus is the Word made flesh and the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14-18). We are taught that all things were made through Him (Col 1:16), that His own resurrection was according to the

Scriptures (1 Cor 15:4), and that His kingdom will never have an end (Luke 1:33).

The Scriptures also teach that the Holy Spirit is God and therefore worthy of worship alongside the Father and the Son. This is sometimes alluded to rather than stated outright, however the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1:11), He is a distinct person who can be lied to (Acts 5:3-4) and blasphemed (Mark 3:28). Moreover, He is the Spirit who is Lord and life-giver both in creation (Genesis 1:1), and in new creation which he brings about through the water and the Word (John 3:5). He spoke through the prophets (2 Peter 1:21), and speaks today (John 20:21-22), bringing us the forgiveness of sins in Word and Sacrament and resurrection life which lasts forever.

### **We confess according to the Scriptures' form**

But it isn't just the content of the Creed that is in accordance with the Scriptures; the very idea of confessing creeds is itself entirely biblical.

The people of Israel would daily pray Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one". This short statement informs the opening confession of the Nicene Creed; that we believe in one God.

In the New Testament we also see hints of the creeds which develop in later centuries. St. Paul was a particularly masterful composer of creeds. His list of matters “of first importance” in 1 Corinthians 15 sounds very much like our confession of Jesus Christ that we see in the Nicene Creed. The Creed deliberately echoes both the content and the pattern of Paul’s words. Similarly Paul’s confession that there is one Spirit, one Lord, and one Father (Ephesians 4:4–6) forms the backbone of the Trinitarian theology that underlies the Nicene Creed. Towards the end of his life, Paul also urges Timothy to hold onto “the pattern of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13) that had been passed on to him. One such pattern is found in his other letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 3:16):

“Great indeed, we confess,  
 is the mystery of godliness:  
 He was manifested in the flesh,  
 vindicated by the Spirit,  
 seen by angels,  
 proclaimed among the nations,  
 believed on in the world,  
 taken up into glory.”

Since confessional and credal statements are in accord with the Scriptures and contained within them, why

would we not want to continue to confess this pattern of sound words?

### **We confess the catholic faith**

This was also the considered position of our forefathers in the faith who met at Nicaea in AD 325, and in AD 381 in Constantinople. They not only quoted God’s Word, but compiled its teaching into an easily memorisable creed that all Christians could learn to confess. We continue to confess the Nicene Creed today because it still teaches us the truth of God’s Word. And – precisely because of this – it connects us to the church catholic.

We should be happy to reclaim that word “catholic” and stick to its original meaning. It refers to something that is whole, entire, and unbreakable – like the Church which belongs to Jesus Christ. All Christian people – from all over the world, from the creation until the end of time – are part of one body joined to one head, which is Christ. Together with all our brothers and sisters in this one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church we should be pleased to confess our faith in God the Holy Trinity who has revealed himself to us in his Word, and preserved his church from false teaching through these matters of first importance.

Why would we not want to continue to confess the pattern of sound words?

# Summer Celebration in Wells

David Lusby

Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Fareham



**I**N THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE METEOROLOGICAL Office classifies the end of summer as the last day of August. Thus, moving into September is something of a psychological step even though the weather is sometimes better in that month than in August! However, it is a significant part of the MO's calendar.

Within the ELCE calendar we have several events that are worth noting. One that has been added in the last few years is the meeting of the four congregations in the south-west of England, plus the Youth Rally, which is held on the same weekend in Herefordshire (*see below*).

These gatherings started in the mid-2000s when St. Peter's in Plympton and Our Saviour in Fareham – both in vacancies at the time – began holding a joint meal and communion service in Weymouth. After both congregations were blessed with pastors, the joint services continued.

More recently, a young member of Our Saviour suggested meeting at as close a central point as possible and inviting the Youth Rally and the other congregations and missions in the Southwest to join. St. Thomas' church in Wells, Somerset, agreed to host us

in their Parish Hall for a lunch and the use of their magnificent church for a Communion service in the afternoon. Being easily accessible from Coventry as well, the congregation of Good Shepherd was also invited.

We start gathering at noon for a bring-and-share lunch. As each car or minibus arrives, old friends are greeted and new friendships made – each year the numbers seem to grow!

Despite hearty appetites there always seems food left over (gratefully received by the organisers of the Youth Rally for any evening hunger pangs back at their retreat).

We are fortunate that the two pastors who have much to do with the youth are two of the pastors serving congregations in South-West England, Pastor Bessel from St Peter's in Plympton and Pastor Simojoki from Our Saviour in Fareham.

After the meal, one of the pastors normally leads us in a Bible Study, though in 2025 we were fortunate to be taught by Luke Williams (*see photo*), as one of his steps towards the pastoral ministry, God willing. Moving around the assembly we found that there were people from about twenty different nations from most



continents (but not Antarctica ... yet!); some yet to be confirmed, some members of the Lutheran church for over 80 years.

Some free time for further mixing allows the church to be set up for our service, the roles of liturgist and preacher being shared in alternate years. This year there were well over seventy people taking part, some for the first time but many for a repeat visit. This must make it the largest annual “informal” ELCE gathering!

One sad aspect for 2025 was the fact that Pastor Bessel has announced that he will be retiring in early 2026, so this will have been his last visit as a Pastor in an ELCE congregation. Our very best wishes and thanks will go with him.

We give our thanks to St. Thomas in Wells for hosting us each year. It is a lovely church in a beautiful small city not too far from both Bath and Bristol, set in the beautiful Mendip countryside.

A date for 2026 has not yet been confirmed with St. Thomas, but it will probably be the traditional Sunday of the August Bank Holiday weekend. Keep a watch in British Lutheran for the date and try to join us!



Photo: George Samiec

# NEWS FROM THE ELCE

## Corpus Christi Conference 2025

**W**E RECENTLY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND THE 2025 CORPUS Christi conference in Prague. And what an amazing experience this was! To be able to share fellowship and come together in worship with Lutherans from around the world was such a blessing.

The conference consists of presentations, discussion groups, services, and free time. One of the great benefits of going to Corpus Christi is being able to discover the city in which we meet; we were able to take some time out to discover Prague. The opportunity for international fellowship was really special, and we enjoyed uniting in faith with so many people! Presentations and discussion groups were engaging and enlightening. We attended daily services, following the traditional Daily Office of Lauds, Ad Sextam, Vespers, and Compline. Finally, we had two Services of the Word, which we both agree were highlights of the trip.

The theme of this year's conference was "The Image of God" led by Rev. Tapani Simojoki. In our plenary sessions, an overview of the meaning of humanity being created in God's image was given. Rev. Simojoki outlined the privilege and responsibility that comes with this, and how easily this image can be corrupted through the sinful and misguided attitudes of the world. It was particularly refreshing to be reminded of what is biblically correct and not merely socially correct. This led into the reminder that we are not and can never be perfect representatives of God, but we are redeemed and restored in the image of God through Christ.

In addition to the plenary sessions, the conference also offers a range of other presentations, all differing in theological intensity. We attended the series of presentations from Rev. Dr. Christian Tiews, in which the Reality of Spiritual Warfare was discussed. These presentations were interesting and left us with lots to dis-



*The closing service in St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Prague.*

cuss, and reflect upon. Collectively reflecting upon broader topics is a big part of Corpus Christi; taking part in discussion groups is something offered every day. We attended talks in which we spoke about The Unmarried Vocation, The Married Vocation, and How to Love your Neighbour by Listening. It is particularly valuable to reorientate our understanding of these topics with particular focus on the instruction of the Bible, and to hear from other Christians with relatable experiences.

Fellowship was a particularly joyful experience – activities offered included a Reformation Tour of the City, a trip to Prague Zoo, and speed befriending. We also took part in the choir, which was very special to be involved in. The last evening was especially enjoyable with the Corpus Christi Feast, where sweets were shared and a dance was held.

Singing in church where you cannot hear your own voice, enjoying the company of hundreds of young Lutherans, and having deep and insightful conversations with likeminded believers left us both with a sense of real Lutheran community and unity in Christ. We've both said what a faith strengthening and refreshing experience this conference was, and we definitely recommend. We look forward to next year's conference in Finland!

*Hannah and Katherine Sutherland (Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Coventry)*

*Photos: Josaphat-Mattias Burmeister*



*The ELCE delegation. The authors are second and third from the left.*

# New Mission in the Scottish Borders

The Borders Lutheran Mission is a new mission of the ELCE based in the small village of Gordon in the Scottish Borders. It was started by David and Melissa Gardner with the blessing of Pastor Jon Ehlers who also serves the mission.

David and his wife were confirmed in the ELCE in 2024, after making the difficult decision to leave the Roman Catholic Church. They had struggled with various doctrines of the Roman Church for many years, and after discovering the Book of Concord, they found the Catholic faith they already held, but purified by the Gospel.

“The Lutheran reformers challenged the same doctrines that we were struggling with,” David explains. “They based their response on Scripture and the Church Fathers, instead of man-made traditions placed over Scripture. We haven’t looked back since!”

Currently the liturgy celebrated most Sundays in the Borders; Pastor Ehlers visits us once a month for the celebration of the Divine Service, and once a month David leads a Service of the Word at St Columba’s in East Kilbride.

David writes: “Currently the mission only consists of myself, my wife Melissa and our two children Isabella and Cecilia, but it is our prayer to see the mission grow and to reach the people of the Borders with the Gospel, and the truth of the Christian faith as found in our Confessions.”

David is also beginning training to become a Pastor in the service of the ELCE.

“Please pray for me, my family and for the growth of the Lutheran Mission here in the Borders. It’s been a difficult journey and we know there is much work ahead of us, but we know we’re right where God wants us to be and all things are possible through him.”





## The 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England

**“The Joy of the Lord is Our Strength” (Nehemiah 8:10)**

**14–15 November 2025**

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Tottenham**

THE WEATHER MIGHT HAVE BEEN OVERCAST BUT THE ATMOSPHERE WAS BRIGHT and sunny at the 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Synod of the ELCE held at Holy Trinity, Tottenham. In spite of more papers and more resolutions than ever before, this Synod was marked by a spirit of co-operation and kindness, speaking clearly (and concisely!) and listening well meant that while there were time pressures, all the business of Synod was completed! The joy of the Lord is our strength after all!

Synod opened with a service of Matins, with Pastor Jon Ehlers (vacancy pastor at Holy Trinity) serving as liturgist. ELCE Chairman, Pastor George Samiec, preached.

“When you hear Law and Gospel, when the themes that ring in your ears are sin and grace, and when the Gospel is the good news of the gracious God ... even if you feel that things will only get worse again, sooner or later, then trust that news for now and go and celebrate God’s goodness. The celebration is not because we’re trying again, we’ll do better next time, but because the rescuing God produces joy – in the victory, in the relief that we don’t truly get what we deserve. And that joy strengthens us for tomorrow – as the struggle resumes again to be God’s faithful people.”

Delegates and visitors were welcomed to Holy Trinity by her chairman, Stephen Corbin. Throughout the two days of Synod, Holy Trinity were wonderful and generous hosts. Thank you, Holy Trinity, for making us so welcome!

## Our Many Friends

Greetings were received from our international relationships and also from our English ecumenical relationships. From overseas, we received greetings from our sister churches in the USA, Finland, Norway and Iceland, Ghana, Sweden, France, Germany, Denmark, South Africa, and Portugal, as well as from the International Lutheran Council. The ELCE is also a member of Churches Together in England



Clockwise: Rev. Jon Ehlers (Christ Church), Solveig Fiene, Rev. John Fiene (LCMS), Joyce Moon (St. Columba)

(CTE). Written greetings were received from Bishop Mike Royal, CTE General Secretary, and from the Society of Friends. Verbal greetings were received from the Council of Lutheran Churches.



Rev. Patrice Legbanon

Present at Synod was the General Secretary of the Lutheran Church in Africa—Benin Synod, Rev. Patrice Legbanon, a former student at Westfield House. He brought greetings to the ELCE.

Pastor John Fiene and his wife, Solveig, from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod also joined us for the two days. Pastor Fiene gave an exciting report on the newly formed Lutheran Mission in Ireland (see pp. 28–29), where Lutheran groups are forming in two areas – Belfast and Cork – under the oversight of Pastor Tapani Simojoki. Everyone was excited to hear of this development!

## Reports and Resolutions

The Executive Council reported on its work – and the many additional meetings held to help the ELCE become the ELC-UK. Many of the resolutions related to policies – some new, some updated which can be taken into our new structure. All the policies presented to Synod were adopted, and ongragations were urged to note these policies and adopt them for themselves.

Two congregational resolutions were discussed. One was to change the title of the ELCE Chairman in the new structure to ‘Presiding Pastor’. Synod had previously debated and voted for the title ‘Bishop’. Synod reaffirmed the its



Rev. Jon Ehlers

Rev. George Samiec



Rev. Didzis Stilve

Rev. Jon Ehlers



Rev. Claudio Flor

Rev. Wade Bellesbach

decision that the new title of the ELCE Chairman is to be ‘Bishop’ understanding it as ‘Church Leader’. The details of the what the role encompasses are clearly stated in the Church Order.

The second congregational resolution was that congregations offer eye tests for her employees who are users of Display Screen Equipment. This resolution was passed.

### **One Synod, Two Meetings**

The two days of Synod combine both the work of the ELCE and also the AGM of the ELCE Trust Ltd. ELCE Treasurer, Dr. Cyndy Lumley, presented the financial reports and budgets of both ELCE and ELCE Trust. The story is mixed, with some congregations doing well and having healthy bank balances while others are more ‘hand to mouth’. Income to the central administration remains a concern, limiting what can be done to support congregations.

A number of resolutions were considered that have impacts on pastors’ terms and conditions and also clarify how we ‘do business’ together. Amendments to the terms and conditions of pastors.

Synod also approved one sale and one purchase. First, it approved the sale of the St Timothy’s building under new terms that were different from the terms agreed at the last Synod. Synod also agreed to purchase a house that could have multiple uses – for a curate and his family, for a retired pastor and family, and for rental (when not required for curacy or retirement).

### **Farewell and Thank You**



Synods are also a time of fellowship. This was enabled by Holy Trinity’s wonderful catering and hosting. But there was also a more devious (or rather secret) event happening on Friday after dinner. Dubbed as ‘Fellowship Time with Holy Trinity’, what in reality happened was that Pastor Bessel and Pastor Samiec were the focus of many words of appreciation and thanks for their service to the ELCE. (Both men are returning to their home countries next year.) They have 86 years of ordained ministry between them – 42 of those years have been serving the ELCE! Both pastors received an ELCE plaque and everyone shared cake and fizz!



Two pastors, 46 years of ministry!

### **Chairman’s Report**

The second day of Synod often has more people attending – and this was the case this year – notably because of the installation of the new ELCE Chairman



at the Divine Service at the end of Synod. The Saturday is largely for reports, elections, the occasional resolution, and the special part: the congregational reports where everyone shares the joys and struggles of the past year.

ELCE Chairman, Pastor George Samiec gave his last Chairman's Report outlining how the ELCE has interacted internationally and ecumenically, and encouraged everyone to walk together and work together because 'we are the ELCE and the ELCE is us'. A lot of his chairmanship has revolved around the restructure, and there was also a pandemic, but the joy of the Lord remains our strength.

### **New Policies to Support Ministry**

Synod approved the **Voluntary Elder Supply Policy**, which clarifies how elders might help another congregation with reading services. A particularly significant other item adopted was the **ELCE Pathways to Ordination and the Roll of Pastors** document. Pastor Samiec encouraged everyone to know what is in the document, to have copies in congregations, so that everyone in the ELCE knows how the ELCE trains men to be pastors.

### **ELCE Teaching and Media Reports**

**Westfield House** continues to serve the ELCE and global Lutherans providing many subjects in both the liberal arts and theology. There was much rejoicing with the increase in faculty (0.5 full-time equivalent) of Rev. Dr Wade Bellesbach, who is over-seeing the Certificate courses and is Dean of Chapel.

Synod said farewell to **Lutheran Radio UK** in its current internet radio 24/7 broadcasting format. Pastor Jaime Kriger pre-sented his final report and was sincerely thanked for his magnificent and professional work in bringing Christ to the nations over the past 15 years. The final broadcast was be Compline on 31<sup>st</sup> December. Most of the programmes are being transferred into a podcast format and is available on many platforms. The future, it seems, is podcast – but how that will happen going forward is still unknown – anyone inter-ested, please contact the Executive Council! Synod re-solved to redirect the congregational contribution (£50/quarter) for LRUK to the E. George Pearce Memorial Fund (for home missions).

**The British Lutheran** reported on its year. It is our magazine and needs our news and pictures. Pastor Tapani Simojoki thanked everyone who worked on the magazines during his editorship. As he is stepping down from that role with his new role as ELCE Chairman, the Executive Council approached Mrs Hanna Mitchell whether she would consider being the new Editor. It was announced at Synod that she had accepted.

### Missions Home and Overseas

Both the **Board for Youth** and the **Congregational Life Committee** presented their reports of the year's events. Always encouraging! Thank you! Synod adopted a resolution to amend the Terms of Reference of the BfY and CLC with the main effect being that for all residential events one of the board/committee will be a Designated Safeguarding Lead for that event.

The **Board for Overseas Missions** presented the report and work done supporting work in Ghana and Ireland (Cork). The **Lutheran Women's League of Great Britain** reported on their Workshop and Convention and the projects they supported. We are enriched by their work at home and overseas!

### Change of Guard

The day concluded with the Divine Service and the Installation of Pastor Tapani Simojoki as ELCE Chairman by Pastor George Samiec (who was the celebrant for the Divine Service). Pastor Simojoki then installed the newly elected Synodical officials. Pastor Simojoki preached:



Outgoing chairman, Rev. George Samiec, assisted by ELCE and LCMS pastors, installed Rev. Tapani Simojoki as the new chairman of the ELCE.

“It’s easier to say than to feel that the joy of the Lord is our strength. The good news for the ELCE and for all Christians is that this joy does not describe our own cheerful feelings, but rather the unquenchable joy that we have in the Lord at all times: the joy of Christ’s death for our sins and the gift of eternal life by His resurrection. Since Jesus is Lord, we have this joy always, and no one can take it away from us.”

## Summer Youth Rally

ONCE AGAIN, THIS YEAR'S SUMMER YOUTH RALLY TOOK PLACE AT TREAGO Castle in Herefordshire over the August Bank Holiday weekend (22–25 August). Continuing this year's theme on the Means of Grace, the focus of the Youth Rally was the Word of God.

Luke Williams, member of the Board for Youth and a pastoral candidate in the



ELCE, took responsibility for preparing the teaching. Over three Bible studies, the youth meditated on what God's Word is, what it does, and how it comes to us.

Each day began and closed with a devotion or a service, and on the Sunday, the youth joined several congregations of the ELCE for a day of fellowship, study and worship at Wells (see below).

As always, the weekend was made memorable by the beautiful setting of Treago, some competitive mini golf, delicious and plentiful food (courtesy of Sarah Simojoki), and epic minibus journeys across Southwest England.

Warm thanks are due, as always, to the Stephen and Alex Herbert for allowing us to invade their home every summer!





*In order to make Youth Rallies accessible to all young members of the ELCE, the Board for Youth subsidises the cost to a significant degree. For this, the Board depends on donations from congregations and individual ELCE members.*

*To support the work of the Board for Youth, donations can be made via the ELCE website, or directly through CAF Donate: <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/1547>*



## A SHEPHERD FOR GOOD SHEPHERD

**G**OOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH IN COVENTRY CELEBRATED THE GIFT of a shepherd of their own, as the Rev. Dr. Wade Bellesbach was installed as their pastor on 3 August 2025.

The congregation had been vacant continuously since their previous pastor, Rev. Paul Landgraf, returned to his native USA in 2008. The recent redevelopment of the church site has helped the congregation to reach sufficient financial security to be able to call their own pastor once more.

The service of installation was conducted by the ELCE Chairman, Rev. George Samiec, who had been serving as the vacancy pastor of Good Shepherd throughout the long interregnum. Pastors Tapani Simojoki (Our Saviour, Fareham) and Claudio Flor (Luther-Tyndale, London) assisted.



Following the rite of installation, pastor Bellesbach led the congregation in the Service of the Sacrament and distributed the Sacrament of the Altar to his new flock for the first time.

Dr. Bellesbach, a former student at Westfield House, has recently received a doctorate in theology from the university of St. Andrews. While studying and teaching, he has served as part-time vacancy pastor, together with Rev. Jon



Ehlers, at St. Columba Lutheran Church in East Kilbride, and also conducted regular Lutheran services at St. Andrews.

Dr. Bellesbach, a native of Wisconsin in the United States, was called jointly by Good Shepherd and Westfield House, where he will be a part-time tutor. He was installed at Westfield House at the beginning of term, on 20 September, by the ELCE Vice-Chairman, Rev. Jon Ehlers.



### OUR SAVIOUR SAVIOUR CELEBRATES HALF-CENTURY

**O**N 22 NOVEMBER, MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF OUR SAVIOUR LUTHERAN Church, Fareham, gathered for a Service of Thanksgiving on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the congregation.

Since the usual home of the congregation was unavailable on the day, the service was held at Holy Trinity Church, Fareham. Rev. George Samiec, the former chairman of the ELCE, preached, and Rev. Tapani Simojoki, pastor of Our Saviour, led the liturgy. A festival choir sang an anthem based on Ps. 113.

Fareham Borough was represented by the Deputy Mayor of Fareham, Councillor Tina Ellis (a one-time member of the Our Saviour Sunday School!) and the Deputy Mayor's Consort, Mr. Rob Ellis.

The service was followed by a delicious and plentiful lunch reception. Throughout the day, the theme was one of gratitude for God's faithfulness for the past half-century, and a joyful expectation of future mercies.

The Fareham Mission began in late 1971 when Rev. Robert Bruer and his family moved to Fareham from Plympton. The church was consecrated in 1972, and the first confirmations took place in December 1975. The congregation was received as a member of the ELCE at Synod the following year. Although the church building was sold (and demolished) in 2002, the congregation has maintained a continuous presence in Fareham. Thanks be to God!



## SYNOD ELECTIONS

*Delegates elected the following people for a synodical term of 3 years (when replacing a vacancy):*

### **Executive Council:**

*ELCE Chairman* – Rev. Tapani Simojoki begins his term as Chairman  
(elected at Synod in 2024)

*Treasurer* – Dr. Cynthia Lumley

### **Committee on Worship**

Mrs Erica Orchard

### **Congregational Life Committee:**

Rev. Dr. Wade Bellesbach, Mrs. Doreen Rosser

### **Board for Overseas Mission**

Miss Roseline Isaac Moon, Rev. Jon Ehlers

### **Nominations Committee**

Mr. Ishaka deBessau

### **Board for Youth**

Mrs. Dorothea Sutherland, Rev. Dr. Wade Bellesbach

### **Salary Review Committee**

Mrs. Rosana Kriger, Mrs. Azania Aitken, Rev. Dr. Didzis Stilve (one year)

*Delegates ratified the following people nominated by the Barnes Conference to serve for 2 years (or 1 year when replacing a vacancy):*

### **Commission on Theological and Social Concerns**

Mr. Aleksander Berezyanchuk, Rev. Dr. Didzis Stilve, Rev. Jon Ehlers (one year)

## NEW TWINNING AGREEMENT

Beginning on 1 February 2026, Resurrection Lutheran Church (Cambridge) and Ascension Lutheran Church (Brandon) will enter into a twinning agreement. Pastor Jaime Kriger will serve both congregations, as well as Ipswich Lutheran Mission.

## BARNES CONFERENCE

**T**HE PASTORS OF THE ELCE gathered for the Autumn Barnes Conference on 14–15 October at Luther-Tyndale Memorial Church in Kentish Town, London. The agenda contained the usual mixture of study, reports, sharing of news and Synod preparation, all built around a framework of daily worship.



*Photo: Tapani Simojoki*

On the first day, the ELCE clergy were joined by the Rev. John Fiene (*left*), a retired pastor of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, before his departure for Cork to serve the Lutheran Mission in Ireland for a month (see below).

## Planting a Lutheran Mission Congregation in Ireland



*Rev. John Fiene, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*

**I** WISH TO THANK THE MINISTERIUM of the ELCE for their warm reception and prayerful support, most especially Rev. Tapani Simojoki for his advocacy and leadership in making it possible for me to engage in this mission over the past month. I believe that a foundation has been laid for future mission outreach to Ireland.

Today we have a base of people coming to Ireland from Lutheran churches throughout the world. They are the diaspora of our modern age. By forming a Lutheran congregation they have made it possible for native

Irish people to hear a different Gospel, one that is free from the cultural baggage of Irish Catholicism and one that stands in contrast to modern ecclesiastical liberalism incapable of speaking to Ireland's secular society. It is, however, a monumental task.

### **Initial stages**

When we reflect back on how this mission came to be, we have to thank God because only the Holy Spirit calls, gathers and enlightens, yet He does so through people. Some of our mission folk simply started searching for

answers on their own as they saw contradictions between their denomination's teachings and the Scriptures.

For one family it began with a search on the internet and listening to Rev. Brian Wolfmueller on the internet. They went to make inquiries to the LCMS headquarters. They were referred to the director of LCMS missions in Europe, Rev. Dr. David Preus, who corresponded and shared the Gospel and our Lutheran beliefs, and in the interest of their future spiritual care, referred these souls to the ELCE.

We must also mention the presence of a Lutheran missionary stationed in Spain but staying temporarily in Cork, sorting out his visa, Rev. Alison Henn from Brazil. He gathered a group of Brazilians and Venezuelans, Spaniards and local Irish and provided worship and pastoral care. This became the base from which the mission took off.

### **Getting Started**

I first heard about the need in Ireland for pastoral outreach through correspondence between Pastor Simojoki and my son, Pastor Hans Fiene. Hans encouraged me to get volunteer to help a dn to get in touch with the ELCE.

The LCMS and the ELCE worked together to provide the needed funds

and administrative support to make my trip possible.

My mission to Ireland began with visiting Pastor Simojoki and his wife Sarah in Fareham. Tapani's support and help in the gathering of these saints in Ireland has been immense. I would not have been able to do mission work without his insight and oversight and passionate desire to see this mission succeed.

### **Gathering and Calling**

Having prior experience as a mission pastor, it became my top priority to get to get to know the parishioners. I wished to enter the homes of these Christians and to draw them into a community with each other.

After initial teething troubles, a place for regular worship was found in a community centre. One great advantage is that the centre has an immense TV screen, and it should be possible for the group to gather and share in the worship services of Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Fareham on Sunday mornings via their livestream. *[Editor: This is indeed what now happens.]*

### **The Future of this Mission**

The people of this little Cork group are concerned about the future of their mission. It is my belief that mission congregations can only grow through the personal and regular contact with a mission pastor doing out-

reach to the best of his ability, tirelessly evangelising and teaching. The members of a congregation most often evangelise like Andrew the Apostle, who simply said to his brother, “Come and see.” A pastor must lead the charge by equipping the sheep, but also by defending them and watching for their souls.

There are many obstacles to having a full-time pastor. I am confident that if there is anyone who can keep the flame alive over the next few months (hopefully, not years), it is Pastor Simojoki, but he is assuming new duties and, unlike his Lord, he cannot be at multiple places at one time.

In the last Sunday of my service, I was privileged to welcome into communion fellowship nine souls. The group at this point consists of 26 souls. There are some Lutherans also in Galway and Co. Mayo. Dublin is yet to be explored.

## Conclusions

I want to thank our Lord, and also all His servants in the ELCE and the LCMS, for this great opportunity to serve the faith in this very limited capacity. I will continue to pray for you all and ask that the Lord of the Harvest continue to send labourers into the harvest. For although it seems at times like our work is a fruitless endeavour, Jesus did not lie when he said that the harvest is plentiful. We presently have two young men of Irish descent who are extremely serious about entering the Holy Ministry. They are bright and capable. By God’s grace, we pray they may be our future missionaries to Ireland. God’s peace to you all.

*This is an edited version of Pastor Fiene’s report to Synod.*

## CALL NEWS

### **Calls extended:**

Rev. Dr. Wade Bellesbach, to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Coventry (50%)

Rev. Dr. Wade Bellesbach, to Westfield House (50%)

Rev. Jaime Kriger, to St. Peter’s Lutheran Church, Plymouth

Rev. Jaime Kriger, to Resurrection Lutheran Church, Cambridge (60%)

Rev. Jaime Kriger, to Ascension Lutheran Church, Brandon (40%)

### **Calls declined:**

Rev. Jaime Kriger, to St. Peter’s Lutheran Church

### **Calls accepted:**

Rev. Dr. Wade Bellesbach, to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and Westfield House

Rev. Jaime Kriger, to Ascension Lutheran Church & Resurrection Lutheran Church

New Members for the Kingdom of God and for the ELCE



St. David's  
Cardiff,  
November  
2025



Our Saviour, Fareham,  
December 2025



# NEWS FROM THE WIDER CHURCH

## Is the Christian faith too foolish for our young generation? — 28<sup>th</sup> European Lutheran Conference —

**A**T THE INVITATION OF THE PORTUGUESE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN Church (IELP), the European Lutheran Conference (ELC; [www.euluth-conf.org](http://www.euluth-conf.org)) was held in Lisbon (Portugal) from 21 to 24 May 2025. The main theme of the conference was the question, inspired by 1Corinthians 1:18, ‘Is the Christian faith too foolish for our young generation?’ After lengthy discussions, the answer was a resounding ‘No!’ The Christian faith enables us to live the best life on earth, blessed by God. Young people go through a process of maturing in which they seek guidance for their lives. Adult Christians can and should accompany them on their journey.

The report by Bishop Ivan Laptev (pictured) from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in St. Petersburg (Russia) received special attention. He reported on large, very impressive art installations on biblical themes. Young people love new, strong visual impressions. Visitors to the exhibitions, for which they even paid admission, took photos of them and shared them on social media. The church is not allowed to do mission work, but people are open to new impressions. They begin to ask what it means that they see.



Pastor Markus Nietzsche (SELK, Germany) gave a presentation on the topic: ‘Reaching out by providing a strong biblical foundation.’ He named the needs of young people and misses their questions when they leave the church. In an increasingly uncertain world, they seek to belong to a group. Pastor Nietzsche emphasised that Christ is our righteousness when we make mistakes or fail. Young people should also hear this promise and internalise it for themselves.

Pastor Garry Heintz (EELSF, France) addressed the topic, ‘Reaching out by dealing with ideologies (questioning our faith)’. He addressed a whole range of ideologies that one should be aware of in order to be prepared to counter them. But the goal of the debate is not to win an argument, but to win a person. It is about arguing and asking questions gently. Jesus also asked people

questions so that they would think things through. When asked why Christianity is not an ideology, the discussion revealed that ideology is enforced by violence. But Jesus loved people without violence and even went to the cross and to his death for it.

Chairman George Samiec (ELCE) spoke on 'Reaching out by incorporating examples of best practice'. He argued that it is not so much a matter of a person's age, but whether someone is a Christian or not. Coming to faith and living in it is the work of the Holy Spirit. We can only accompany other people, walk with them, stay by their side and practise love in the certainty that God uses this interaction to bring them to Him. Pastor Samiec emphasised that it is the relationship with one another that matters, that we should listen more than we speak, always listening to understand the situation of the other person. Our teaching should be clear, understandable and personal, and we should not forget intercession and blessing. Interaction between young and old should be encouraged so that they can learn from each other. "The church is the largest intergenerational organisation on earth, a large family of many generations."

During the conference, the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church in Switzerland with Pastor Guillermo Herigert was accepted as a new member. It has only two congregations and is dependent on close ties with other confessional Lutheran churches and their cooperation.

A total of 34 delegates travelled from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Russia, Switzerland and the USA.

*The Steering Committee consisting of Pastor Claudio Flor (Secretary, England), Pastor Philippe Volff (Vice-Chair; France) and retired Pastor Klaus Pahlen (Chair; Germany) was confirmed for another term. It is preparing the next ELC conference, which is to take place in Strasbourg, France, in 2027.*



## UNITY IN CHRIST: THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

**T**HE INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL (ILC) HELD ITS 28TH (13TH) triennial World Conference took place September 14-19, 2025, in Panglao, Bohol, Philippines. In total, more than 130 people representing more than 60 different church bodies and 55 nations participated in the event.

During the conference, Bishop Juhana Pohjola of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland (ELMDF) was re-elected as chairman of the ILC. Bishop Pohjola was first elected to the position in 2022 during the ILC's World Conference in Kenya. Elected or re-elected to serve alongside Chairman Pohjola were the following church leaders:

- Africa – Bishop Charles Bameka (Lutheran Church of Uganda)
- Asia – President Matt Anker (Lutheran Mission – Australia)
- Europe – Archbishop Rinalds Grants (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia)
- Latin America – President Alceu Alton Figur (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Paraguay)
- North America – President Timothy Teuscher (Lutheran Church–Canada)
- Secretary: President Omar Garza (Lutheran Synod of Mexico)



*L to R:  
ILC General Secretary Klaus Detlev Schulz and the new board of directors: LCC President Timothy Teuscher (North America), SLM President Omar Garza Martínez (Secretary), IELP President Alceu Alton Figur (Latin America), ELMDF Bishop Juhana Pohjola (Chairman), LCU Bishop Charles Bameka (Africa), and LM-A President Matt Anker (Asia). Archbishop Rinalds Grants (Europe) was unable to attend in person.*

The conference also saw six observer member churches received into full membership in the ILC: the Confessional Lutheran Church – Malawi Synod (CLCMS); Lutheran Mission – Australia (LM-A); the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kazakhstan (ELCK); the Istanbul Lutheran Church (ILK)/Evangelical



*Representatives of church bodies received as full members during the ILC's 2025 World Conference. Pictured are ILC Chairman Juhana Pohjola, Bishop Denis Rakotozafy (Madagascar), President Davis Robert Wowa (Malawi), President Matt Anker (Australia), Bishop Alexander Burtsev (Kazakhstan), Rev. Mikko Tiira (Istanbul/Bulgaria), and ILC General Secretary Klaus Detlev Schulz. Photo: T. Winger*

Lutheran Church of Bulgaria (ELCB); the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti (ELCH); and the Malagasy Lutheran Church (FLM).

### **Unity in Christ**

The theme for the ILC's 2025 World Conference was "Unity in Christ: Confession and Co-operation in a Fragmented World". The keynote speaker for the event was Rev. Dr. Thomas M. Winger of St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada,



*Photo: T. Winger*

[and one-time tutor at Westfield House], right, who gave a three-part presentation entitled “The Spiritual Temple,” focused on Ephesians 2:11–22.

The conference also featured several sessions with a regional focus, including an Asia Regional Focus on Shamanism and Syncretism; a Latin America Focus on migration; a European Regional Focus on church planting; and an African Regional Focus on the charismatic movement. The ILC’s General



Secretary, Rev. Dr. Klaus Detlev Schulz, gave a presentation entitled “Affirming Constants in an Ever-changing World,” and the conference also heard presentations on history, Bible translation, and Christian publishing.

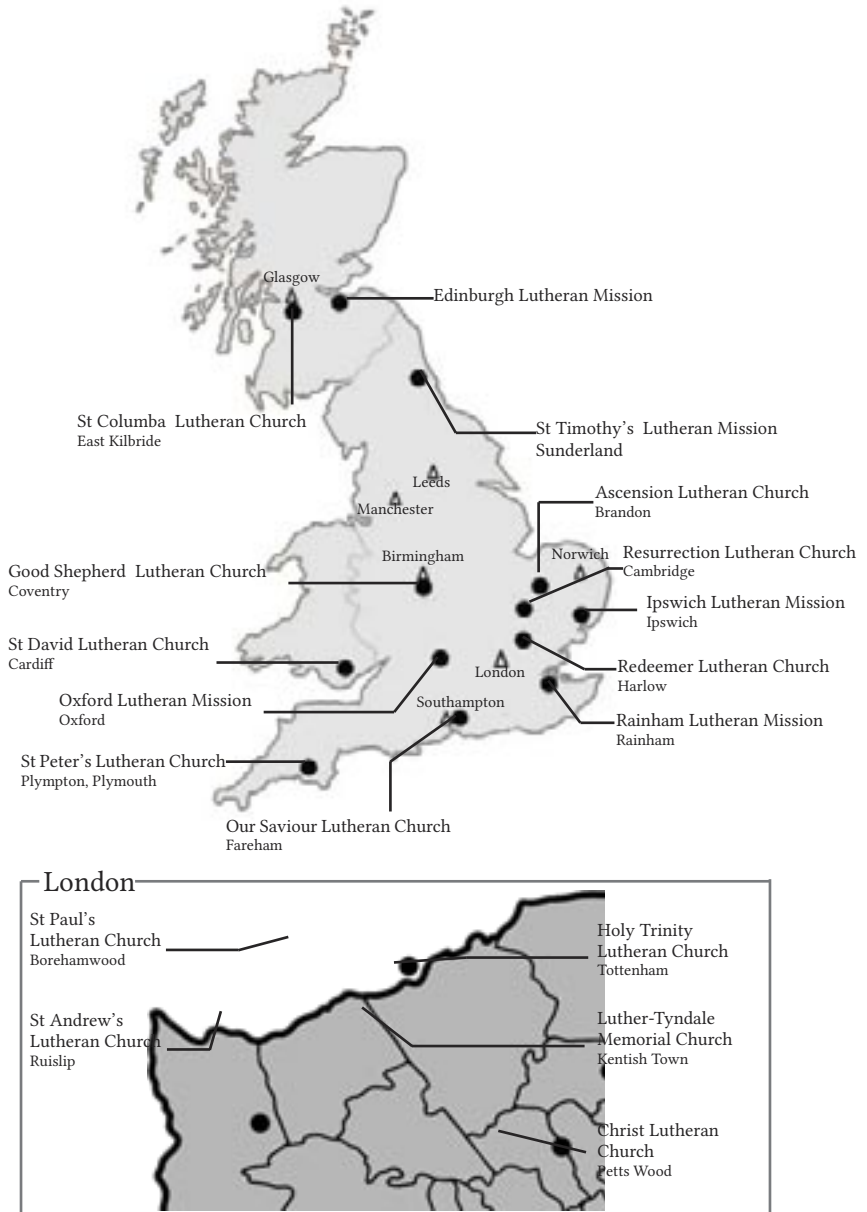
On the final day of the ILC’s world conference, participants adopted two statements: one on the Nicene Creed and the other on unity in Christ. The first of these—An Affirmation of the Nicene Creed—was adopted in light of this year’s anniversary commemorations of the Council of Nicaea. The second statement adopted—Unity in Christ and His Gospel—reflects on the theme of this year’s ILC World Conference.

The ELCE was represented at the conference by Chairman George Samiec, who stepped down from his role as European Regional Representative, and Chairman-elect Tapani Simojoki. *ILC News/Mathew Block*



*The ELCE representatives with some of their many hats*

# Map of ELCE Congregations and Missions



<i>Congregation</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Service Time</i>
Ascension Lutheran Church	Brandon Methodist Church, London Road, Brandon, Suffolk, IP27 0EL	8 am
Belfast Lutheran Mission	Contact Our Saviour Lutheran Church for details	
Bristol Lutheran Mission	Contact St. Peter's Lutheran Church for details	
Christ Lutheran Church	227 Poverest Road, Orpington, BR5 1RD	10.30 am
Edinburgh Lutheran Mission	Contact Christ Lutheran Church for details	
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church	49 Eastern Green Road, Coventry, CV5 7LG	4 pm on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church	53 Antill Road, London, N15 4AR	11 am
Ipswich Lutheran Mission	St. Luke's Church, 78 Cliff Lane, Ipswich, IP3 0PJ	6 pm on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month
Luther-Tyndale Memorial Church	9 Leighton Crescent, Kentish Town	10 am
Our Saviour Lutheran Church	10th Fareham Scouts, 20B Highlands Road, Fareham, PO16 7XN	10.30 am
Oxford Lutheran Mission	Marston United Reformed Church, 352 Marston Road, Marston, Oxford, OX3 0JB	4.30 pm
Rainham Lutheran Mission	Contact Christ Lutheran Church for details	
Redeemer Lutheran Church	22 Tawneys Road, Harlow, CM18 6QS	11 am
Resurrection Lutheran Church	25 Westfield Lane, Cambridge, CB4 3QS	11 am
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	Whitby Road, Ruislip, HA4 9DY	11.30 am
St. Columba Lutheran Church	151 Westwood Hill, East Kilbride, G75 8QA	11 am
St. David Lutheran Church	St. Fagans Road, Fairwater, Cardiff, CF5 3EU	11 am <i>except 6 pm on the last Sunday of the month</i>
St. Paul's Lutheran Church	St. Paul's Close, Cranes Way, Borehamwood, WD6 2DB	9.30 am
St. Peter's Lutheran Church	21 Larkham Lane, Plympton, Plymouth, PL7 4PG	11 am
St. Timothy's Lutheran Mission	Queen Alexandra Road, Sunderland, SR2 9AA	11 am on the 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month

## A SONG FOR SIMEON (excerpt)

Grant us thy peace.  
I have walked many years in this city,  
Kept faith and fast, provided for the poor,  
Have taken and given honour and ease.  
There went never any rejected from my door.  
Who shall remember my house, where shall live my children's children  
When the time of sorrow is come?  
They will take to the goat's path, and the fox's home,  
Fleeing from the foreign faces and the foreign swords.

Before the time of cords and scourges and lamentation  
Grant us thy peace.  
Before the stations of the mountain of desolation,  
Before the certain hour of maternal sorrow,  
Now at this birth season of decease,  
Let the Infant, the still unspeaking and unspoken Word,  
Grant Israel's consolation  
To one who has eighty years and no tomorrow.

According to thy word,  
They shall praise Thee and suffer in every generation  
With glory and derision,  
Light upon light, mounting the saints' stair.  
Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer,  
Not for me the ultimate vision.  
Grant me thy peace.  
(And a sword shall pierce thy heart, Thine also).  
I am tired with my own life and the lives of those after me,  
I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me.  
Let thy servant depart,  
Having seen thy salvation.

This excerpt imagines the reflections of Simeon when he encounters Jesus in the temple. With some weariness, but still unshaken faith, he looks back on his life of steadfastness, and forward to the sufferings which await the Christ-child. Thinking of the generations which will follow, he knows that he will die before the 'ultimate vision', yet having encountered Jesus, he knows that he has seen salvation. The peace which he asks for in light of the promise of salvation foreshadows the ultimate peace which Christ will win, and so he is positioned between the appearance and the fulfilment of the promise. At this time of the liturgical year, after Christmas and before Lent, we too are caught between the joyful celebration of Jesus' Incarnation, and sombre reflection on his coming suffering to win salvation for us. But both Jesus' coming to us and his dying for us ultimately grant us peace. Through our reconciliation with God in Christ, we are enabled both to rejoice in God's goodness and be comforted in our suffering. So despite the weariness and complexity of this world, may we, like Simeon, be granted the peace of God in this and every season. — **Hanna Mitchell**

*T.S. Eliot was an Anglo-Catholic modernist poet writing in the 20th century.*