



# Building Bridges



## Newsletter of the Institute for Ecumenical Research STRASBOURG

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*Dear readers,  
There is much to report to you in this edition of "Building Bridges" after a very eventful year! Since July the Institute Board has welcomed three*

*new members: Bp. Dr. Frank July (Stuttgart, Germany) as the chair, Bp. Dr. Ndanganeni Phaswana (South Africa), and Bp. Oi-Peng Lok (Malaysia). According to the constitution of the Institute, three of the eight members of our board must belong to the Council of the Lutheran World Federation. Their position on our Board is coterminous with their position on the Council, so these new members will be with us until the next Assembly of the LWF. During the last board meeting in April, the First Vice-Chair, Bishop Dr. Johannes Friedrich (Munich, Germany), showed his heartfelt thanks to the former Chair, Prof. Dr. Niels-Henrik Gregeresen (Denmark), and board members Dr. Mariette Razivelo (Madagascar) and Bp. Dr. Julius Filo (Slovakia) as well as Bp. Dr. Ragnar Persenius (Sweden) for their work with a festive dinner in the name of the board and of the Institute. To replace Bp. Persenius, the board elected Bp. Dr. Matti Repo (Finland). I would like to express my own warm welcome to the new board members. We at the Institute look forward to working with them!*

*In the name of the Institute, I would also like to congratulate the newly-elected president of the LWF, Bp. Dr. Munib Younan, who for 7 years served as a member of our board. We extend our warm wishes also to the new General Secretary, Rev. Martin Junge. We*

*(continued on page 2)*

### **45th International Ecumenical Seminar 2011: From Dialogue to Communion? Fruits and Challenges of the Ecumenical Dialogues**

Half a century ago, in 1961, there was a decisive turning point in the then still-young ecumenical movement.

At its third assembly in New Delhi, the World Council of Churches adopted a trinitarian constitution as well as a vision of unity in which the churches—including the newly joined Orthodox churches—committing themselves to bilateral dialogue. In the same year, Pope John XXIII convoked a council. The Second Vatican Council was also a turning point in the attitude that the Roman Catholic Church had had toward the ecumenical movement up to that time. From then on, this church was not only an official dialogue partner but also a decisive initiator of multiple international ecumenical dialogues. While the Reformation churches (Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Methodist) had already been in dialogue with one another, in this year flourishing bilateral and multilateral, national and international dialogues developed that have lasted to this day.

In the past 50 years, nearly all churches have engaged in bilateral dialogue with one another. The goal of these efforts was and is the common formulation of the Christian

faith, which is a basic prerequisite for the unity of the church. The yield of this half-century's labor is considerable. Many questions that have been divisive up till now have been defused, and wide-reaching consensus has been worked out. The still open questions have not only been identified, but also numerous long-standing conflicts now appear in a promising new light.

A decisive step along the path of doctrinal dialogue was the declaration of consensus by the Faith and Order Commission entitled *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM), which was adopted in Lima in the year 1982 and whose 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary approaches. On the basis of the doctrinal dialogues, various declarations of church fellowship emerged that permitted a new experience of common life together as church. In the discussion between Lutherans and Catholics, the dialogues made possible the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (1999).

Naturally, there were also criticisms. Many doubted and still doubt the methods and results of consensus ecumenism. One can indeed question whether the accumulation of new dialogue results is the appropriate answer to the pressing question of the unity of the church. It is necessary to

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wish them both all of God's blessings on their work for the LWF.

For the Assembly of the LWF this past July in Stuttgart, the Institute prepared two publications. The first booklet presented the ecumenical work of the LWF since the last Assembly. Staff of the Institute have served as consultants to all the dialogues in which the LWF has been involved. Based on their observations and comments, Sarah Hinlicky Wilson put together a very good and readable little book called "Lutherans in Ecumenical Dialogue: 2003-2010." This book received many affirmative reactions both during and after the Assembly. The second book, entitled "Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue," describes the fruit of the five-year-long dialogue of the Institute with a group of theologians from various Pentecostal churches. The first three parts of the book were composed during a joint meeting in Tampere, Finland, where we at the invitation of Bp. Dr. Matti Repo met for a week. The last part is comprised of three papers that were presented at previous meetings. The book was jointly published and financed by our Institute, the David Du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality (Pasadena, California), and the European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association (Zürich, Switzerland). The Institute pioneered this dialogue on behalf of the LWF. We hope that this book will contribute to an official dialogue with the Pentecostals to begin in the next years. We are very happy about our work over the past several years with our Pentecostal colleagues; a deep trust and mutual esteem developed between us.

The outstanding event of the Assembly that we will always remember was the request for forgiveness by the LWF to the Mennonite community on account of the Lutheran persecution of Anabaptists in the 16<sup>th</sup> century—you'll read more about that later in this newsletter.

The Institute had its own infor-

mation booth set up at the Assembly, conceptualized and realized mainly by the efforts of Pr. Wilfried Braun. We are extremely grateful to Rev. Braun for that. On the fourth Sunday in Advent he will be installed as Dean in Backnang (in the region of Württemberg, Germany). We congratulate him on this appointment and wish him all of God's blessings.

From the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, a meeting with Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed theologians took place at the Institute as part of the ecumenical observance of the "Calvin Year" (see the report from André Birmelé, who organized the meeting for the Institute).

During the summer, our colleague Sarah Hinlicky Wilson together with her husband Andrew Wilson walked from Erfurt, Germany, to Rome, in the footsteps of Martin Luther in commemoration of his 1510 pilgrimage. She has written a report for the newsletter about this innovative project, which combined the most ancient form of transportation with the modern communication of the internet.

In September, the Institute hosted a meeting of ecumenical specialists at the Château de Klingenthal (in the Vosges Mountains outside of Strasbourg), organized by André Birmelé. We discussed the book "The Eucharist and Ecumenism" with its author, Prof. Dr. George Hunsinger (Princeton Theological Seminary) and explored various perspectives on its argument. In the same way we thoroughly debated the book "Harvesting the Fruits" by Cardinal Kasper, an assessment of the ecumenical dialogues of the Roman Catholic church with Protestant churches (see the report). Beginning on Reformation Day, October 31<sup>st</sup>, the Institute (in particular Profs. Dieter and Wilson) led two weeks of study in Wittenberg, Germany, for the second international seminar "Studying Luther in Wittenberg," in cooperation with the LWF Center located there. Once again the 14 participants from 12 different countries approached the

topic with great enthusiasm (see report). I am very happy and thankful for the excellent cooperation with Rev. Hans Kasch of the LWF Center. He was indefatigable, energetic, effective, and cheerful while being so busy at arranging all the elements of a successful and pleasant seminar.

There's much left to tell about (for example, seminars on Luther's theology at Aarhus in Denmark, Leipzig in Germany, and the Benedictine Abbey of Fiecht in Austria, and the renovation of the interior of the Institute, which after 30 years was urgently needed); however, so that there will be room enough for the individual reports that I have mentioned, I'll stop here and wish you a blessed Christmas.

*Theodor Dieter* ✧



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## Here I Walk: An Ecumenical Pilgrimage

2010 was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Edinburgh conference, but it was another anniversary too—the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther’s pilgrimage from Erfurt to Rome. Seven years before his Ninety-Five Theses, Luther and a companion from the Erfurt priory walked about 1500 km on foot to Rome (and then back!) in order to appeal a decision to unite the more- and less-observant Augustinian houses. Of course, it was also an opportunity for the still-obedient friar to collect indulgences and see the eternal city, “dripping with blood” from the martyrs, as he said.

For some years, my husband Andrew and I dreamed about recreating Luther’s pilgrimage ourselves. But the dream didn’t become a reality until I came to work at the Institute. We wanted to celebrate Luther’s theological contribution, but not at the cost of the slowly-growing reconciliation between Lutherans and Catholics. So we finally hit on the idea of recreating Luther’s path as an ecumenical pilgrimage: walking in the footsteps of a Luther who was still a good son of the Western church, still a friar, as a way of drawing attention to how much has developed and changed between us in the past 500 years.

Though most of the roads that Luther used are now super-highways, we could follow his path through the cities we know he visited: from Erfurt to Coburg, Bamberg, Nuremberg, Ulm, Memmingen, Kempten, Bregenz, Vaduz, Chur, Chiavenna, Milan, Pavia, Piacenza, Florence, Siena, and finally Rome. We left on August 22, expecting beautiful summer weather and getting instead 4 weeks of cold and rain as we crossed Germany. The very day we were supposed to cross Septimer Pass in the Swiss Alps, the first snowstorm of the year struck, with 11 cm on the ground by early morning: we ended up taking the bus. (Luther wouldn’t have had that option!) In Italy the weather was much nicer, but the walking was much more dangerous—fewer side-walks, more walking along highways, and aggressive dogs. We arrived in

Rome on October 29, and concluded our trip with a visit to the tombs of St. Paul and St. Peter.

A critical part of the pilgrimage was sharing the experience with others, so we took advantage of recent developments in social media to do so. We recorded our daily adventures on a blog ([www.hereiwalk.org](http://www.hereiwalk.org)), along with excerpts from Luther’s writings and ecumenical documents. Andrew took nearly 12,000 photos, 2,000 of which are posted on the website. We also had a Facebook page and sent a Twitter feed of our movements during the day. In the end we had over 800 followers on Facebook and



*Andrew und Sarah Wilson after their pilgrimage in Rome*

nearly 2,000 visitors to our webpage. And along the way we met many warm and wonderful people, both Lutherans and Catholics eager to see our churches reconciled at last.

*Sarah Hinlicky Wilson* ✧

## Second Annual Seminar “Studying Luther in Wittenberg”: The Doctrine of Justification in Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon

Fourteen pastors from 12 countries (Australia, Chile, the Czech Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Liberia, Madagascar, Suriname, and the U.S.) took part in this seminar from Oct. 31 to Nov. 13. The goal of these seminars, which our Insti-

tute together with the LWF Center in Wittenberg offers and which are planned to continue every year through 2017, is to gather Lutheran pastors from various places to study Luther and Melanchthon’s theology and so to strengthen their Lutheran identity and the unity of Lutheran churches around the world. Wittenberg itself offers a unique opportunity for this project because of its history, churches, excellent museums, and its very streets and buildings. The participants were, this year just the same as last year, enthusiastic about the possibility of reading Luther’s texts in this environment. They devoted themselves every morning to the hard work of reading Luther and Melanchthon’s not-always-easy writings. For many, this was their first encounter with Luther texts; before they had only learned about his theology second-hand. In the early afternoon there was time for study or visits to the Lutherhaus. Later in the afternoon everyone gathered again to ask questions pertaining to their own church situation, and to discuss whether local practice was compatible with Luther’s teaching. High points included the evening meals, in which the participants prepared dinner according to recipes from home with great energy and care. They warmly and willingly got to know each other and formed a fantastic community, enabling in those two weeks something like a culinary world tour. The evenings were filled with a colorful program of events (movies, slideshows, lectures by experts from the Lutherhaus, meetings with the regional bishop and the mayor, and best of all visits to the local congregations). It was and is for me almost impossible to believe that people from such diverse contexts and with such diverse experiences could get so deeply involved in reading and probing the old texts of Luther and Melanchthon—and with energy and enthusiasm, at that! “Studying Luther in Wittenberg” is not only a theological enrichment: it is an experience of joy.

*Theodor Dieter* ✧

(continued from page 1 — 45th International Ecumenical Seminar 2011)

find new ways to push forward with the results of the dialogues toward the lived fellowship of the churches. The 2011 Summer Seminar of the Strasbourg Institute of Ecumenical Research (a close associate of the Lutheran World Federation) will pursue this question.

The question of how to assess the development of the ecumenical movement can begin in many ways. We've chosen the way of consulting witnesses to the ecumenical movement as it has unfolded.

We will first consult the people who accompanied the dialogues in significant ways over the past years. Walter Cardinal Kasper (until recently the leader of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity) and Dr. Ishmael Noko (until 2010 the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation) will offer an evaluation of the current ecumenical situation.

The yield of the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue will be surveyed by Bp. Eero Huovinen (until 2010 the bishop of Helsinki), Prof. Hervé Legrand (a Dominican who for many years was a member of the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue), and Prof. Wanda Deifelt (Brazil/USA, currently a member of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity).

The general ecumenical situation and the meaning of the theological dialogues will be commented on by the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit. The Anglican theologian Dr. John Gibaut, Director of the Faith and Order Commission, will explore the effects of BEM 30 years after its publication. Prof. Dr. Turid Karlsen Seim, former co-moderator of the Faith and Order Standing Commission, will give a response.

As for the future of the dialogues, their contents and methods, we will hear reports from Prof. Mel Robeck, professor at Fuller Seminary in the U.S. and the leading ecumenist of the Pentecostal churches; Dr. Gottfried Locher, the new President of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches and Vice-President of the World Communion of Reformed Churches; and Dr. Larry Miller, the General Secretary of the Mennonite

World Conference.

We are delighted that these leading experts on contemporary ecumenical dialogue will take part in our Seminar. Their foundational reflections will be illustrated and supplemented by Seminar participants, who join us from every region of the world.

Our seminars are not only about formal theology and scholarship. They are also a chance for personal exchange, for participants to get to know each other and each other's different backgrounds. The fact that our participants come from such a variety of countries and churches makes these opportunities that much more fascinating. The seminar affords ample space, both in the plenum and in the workshops, for such exchange. Not planned, but all the more important, are the many spontaneous conversations at exquisite French dinners, in the cafeteria or over wine in one of the many restaurants in medieval Strasbourg.

**Dates:** June 30—July 7, 2011, Strasbourg, France. For further **information** please contact the Institute for Ecumenical Research, [strasecum@ecumenical-institute.org](mailto:strasecum@ecumenical-institute.org). ✧



*St Thomas Church and the Stifft: this is where our Summer Seminars take place*

### **44th International Ecumenical Seminar 2010: Mission and Ecumenism in the Global Village: 100 Years after the Conference of Edinburgh**

How easy it is to forget that ecumenism has its roots in mission! But the truth is that the modern ecumenical movement considers the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, to be its own birthday. So it seemed only right and

proper to devote our 2010 Summer Seminar, exactly one hundred years after Edinburgh, to the question of mission and ecumenism. Why did they start out together? How have they gone their separate ways? Do they still belong together now?

We began with an overview of history. After Prof. Dieter introduced us to the topic, Prof. Wilson raced us through a hundred years of ecumenism, and Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Richebächer set the Edinburgh conference in the context of the whole history of mission.

From there we turned to mission within the various church families and across the world. Prof. Dr. Allan Anderson described the missionary drive in Pentecostalism, Dr. Tony Peck explored the Baptist commitment to mission in light of its ecumenical relationships, and Dr. Cyril Hovorun discussed the building of Orthodox identity both in traditionally Orthodox lands and “new” territory. We also had three local case studies: Dr. Martin Sinaga of the LWF considered Indonesia, Prof. Dr. Luis Dreher looked at Brazil, and Bp. Ndanganeni Phaswana explored South Africa. The Institute's Prof. Elisabeth Parmentier pulled these two themes together in analyzing the challenge of migrant churches for mission and ecumenism.

The Seminar also heard more theoretical and theological treatments of the topic. The newly-elected General Secretary of the LWF, Martin Junge, compared mission as diakonia with mission as evangelization. Prof. Dr. John Flett explained how mission got left out of systematic theology and how to put it back. And Dr. Werner Neuer compared and contrasted ecumenical dialogue with interreligious dialogue in the light of mission.

As usual, the fascinating lectures were interspersed with morning and evening prayer, wonderful meals at the Séminaire Protestant, and discussion groups daily. Our excursion into the Alsatian countryside took us to Colmar to see the Unterlinden Museum with the famous Grünewald altarpiece, followed by a classic dinner of tarte flambée.

*Sarah Hinlicky Wilson* ✧

## Action on the Legacy of Lutheran Persecution of Anabaptists at the LWF Assembly

The international Lutheran-Mennonite Study Commission, appointed by the LWF Council and the Mennonite World Conference, spent



more than four years from 2005 to 2009 examining the con-

demnations of the Augsburg Confession (1530) against the Anabaptists. In the course of study it became clear how great even today is the spiritual wound left in the Anabaptists and their followers, the Mennonites, on account of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century persecutions, which are connected to the condemnations of the Augsburg Confession. For this reason the Commission decided to investigate the history of the relations between Anabaptists and Lutherans in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and, for the first time, to write down this history together. Lutheran authorities did indeed persecute and execute Anabaptists; Melancthon and Luther even theologically justified these actions, includ-

the Lutheran members of the Commission. On the other hand, it was found that Johannes Brenz, the Swabian reformer, consistently opposed the persecution of Anabaptists. The Commission also discovered that the Lutheran authorities were generally less harsh toward the Anabaptists than was the case in Catholic or Reformed regions. Still, the weight of this history is heavy, and it seemed to us Lutherans in the Commission ever more urgent not simply to regret what happened to the Anabaptists but to take the Christian approach to dealing with guilt: to ask for forgiveness. The Commission presented in the report "Healing of Memories: Reconciling in Christ" the common representation of history as well as reflections on dealing with it. The Council of the LWF carefully discussed the suggestions of the Commission, especially the proposal to request forgiveness, during its meetings in Arusha (Tanzania) and Geneva (Switzerland), examining the pros and the cons—for example, Can Lutherans today ask forgiveness for something their forebears did 500 years ago? Can Mennonites forgive for something that happened not to them but to their own forebears?—and finally decided in favor of the public request for forgiveness. As the General Secretary of the LWF, Dr. Ishmael Noko informed the 2009

ing ovations and tears of joy. The Assembly of the LWF in Stuttgart still needed to adopt the Council's decision as its own, so in the end the highest authority of the LWF voted unanimously in favor of the request for forgiveness. The president of the Mennonite World Conference accepted this request in a very touching address and responded positively, with reference to those Anabaptists martyrs who died with the words of Jesus, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," on their lips. So the granting of forgiveness on the side of the Mennonites can be understood as the fulfillment of the final wishes of the martyrs. Forgiveness and reconciliation were joined together in a festive worship service later that day. All of the International Study Commission's meetings took place at the Institute; its work has been a central focus of the Institute's work over the last five years. I translated the report of the Commission from English into German. Therefore we are very pleased that this work came to such a good conclusion and will mark the beginning of a new period in the relations between Lutherans and Mennonites.

## The Ecumenical Yield of the Calvin Year

The anniversary year of 2009 awoke a new interest in the theologian John Calvin (1509-1564). In many colloquia, lectures, and publications, the inheritance of this reformer's theology was appreciated afresh. Not only Reformed theologians but also researchers from the Lutheran, Catholic, and Methodist traditions studied Calvin in new ways. So there were many fresh approaches that placed this reformer of the second generation, and in particular the ecumenical orientation of his theology, in a new light.

In order to lift up the ecumenical yield of the Calvin Year, a consultation in Strasbourg (10-12 July) was organized by four ecumenical institutes: the Seminar for Re-



*Bishop Mark S. Hanson (left), President of LWF, and Rev. Dr. Danisa Ndlovu from Zimbabwe, President of the Mennonite World Conference, in Stuttgart*

ing the killing of Anabaptists, in a 1536 statement. Discovering this report was particularly painful for

Assembly of the Mennonite World Conference about the LWF's intentions, he encountered a very moving reaction from the Mennonites: stand-

formed Theology at the University of Münster, the Ecumenical Institute at the University of Bochum, the Johann-Adam-Möhler Institute for Ecumenism in Paderborn (all 3 located in Germany), and the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg. Fifteen specialists from various church traditions were invited, in particular those who made contributions during 2009 to Calvin's understanding of the church and drew ecumenical conclusions from it.

It won't be possible to describe each individual contribution here. Starting with Calvin's christology and doctrine of salvation, we dealt especially with Calvin's ecclesiology and his understanding of the office of ministry and the sacraments, with his resulting view of the church. All of the papers will be published in a volume so that these new insights will be available to a wide public audience.

Altogether it became clear that Calvin's contribution to the understanding of the church as well as the office of ministry had a much wider scope than what was received in the following centuries in Reformed theology. So, for example, Calvin emphasized the meaning of the believed church as the mother of the faithful, not only providing the setting for the knowledge of salvation but essentially belonging to the content of the faith. This community, extending to each visible form of the church, can only be perceived in the visible church, which despite all imperfections is the place where God gives Himself to those who belong to Him. Thus it is that God gave to His church the ordained ministry. This latter point is decisive, even if this ministry is always understood in a close connection to the other offices of the church. In view of the unity of the church, Calvin developed already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century a concept of unity in diversity. Not only a common structure but a common consensus in the basic confession of salvation given in Christ is the guarantee of God-given unity.

This conference, which the Strasbourg Institute played a leading role in organizing, was not only an appreciation of the reformer in the context of the Calvin year. It opened up new ecumenical perspectives that are essential for today's bilateral dialogues.

*André Birmelé* ✧

### Harvesting the Fruits: A Consultation of the Institute at Klingenthal

In the fall of 2009, Walter Cardinal Kasper, the leader of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, published a volume entitled *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of the Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue*. This book weighed the dialogues that the Roman Catholic church undertook in the last several decades with Lutherans, the Reformed, Methodists, and Anglicans. In order to review the result of these dialogues, in February 2010 the Cardinal invited five representatives of each tradition to a consultation at the Vatican. On the Lutheran side, Kathryn Johnson, the Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs of the LWF, was



*Celebration of Prof. Dr. Hervé Legrand's 75th birthday: from the left— Prof. Dr. André Birmelé, Prof. Dr. Hervé Legrand, Prof. Dr. Marie-Paule Stintzi, Prof. Dr. Henk Witte*

invited along with Theodor Dieter, Harding Meyer, André Birmelé, and William Rusch.

The Cardinal's assessment is impressive and requires now a precise theological evaluation and indeed an answer from the various Christian world communions. To take the first

steps toward such a response, the Strasbourg Institute devoted a portion of its September 2010 Klingenthal consultation to this topic. For



*From the left: Prof. Dr. Theodor Dieter, Prof. Dr. George Hunsinger, Prof. Dr. Joachim Track*

15 years now, the Institute has invited a group of ecumenical experts to the Château de Klingenthal every 18 months. This group with its longstanding tradition and inclusive team was an ideal body to take up a scholarly analysis of the book.

After first examining the theme of the eucharist in the new work of the American Reformed theologian George Hunsinger, each individual chapter of *Harvesting the Fruits* was considered. First of all the significant yield of 50 years of ecumenical dialogue was appreciated. It is impressive and presented objectively and matter-of-factly in Kasper's book. This applies not only to the chapters on the basics of the faith, namely justification, but also in the areas of the sacraments and ecclesiology. A few qualms were expressed especially by the Catholic participants regarding the chapter on the office of ministry. In this area, the statements of the book lag behind the results achieved in the dialogues.

The decisive open question is the vision of unity and the necessary transition from dialogue results to lived fellowship. The book provides the foundation but doesn't go much beyond it. At this point further work is necessary. The Klingenthal group understands this as its own future task. It will meet again to pursue this work early in 2012.

*André Birmelé* ✧