

THE WINDOW

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LUTHERANS AT LAMBETH 1988

by Eugene Brand

To be ecumenical observers at the 1988 Lambeth Conference was a great privilege for three Lutherans: Bishop Sebastian Kolowa (Tanzania), who together with Anglican Bishop David Tustin (Grimsby) chairs the Anglican-Lutheran International Continuation Committee; retired Bishop Paul Erickson (Illinois), who with Episcopal Bishop William G. Weinbauer (North Carolina) chairs the Lutheran Episcopal Dialogue (USA); and Dr. Eugene L. Brand who is Secretary for Inter-confessional Dialogue in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). During the opening days of the Conference, the Lutheran delegation was led by Dr. Gunnar Staalsett, LWF General Secretary.

WINDOW readers will already have seen many news stories about the events at the University of Kent in Canterbury, and the proceedings will be published in due course. This article has a different purpose: to record some of the impressions of one Lutheran observer, especially where Anglican-Lutheran relations are concerned.

Though our two Communion are approximately the same size, they are quite differently ordered. The Lutheran Communion has no counterpart to the Archbishop of Canterbury, nor has it periodic meetings of all its bishops. Though it would seem logical to compare the LWF to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), they are actually dissimilar in significant ways. The LWF combines many of the functions of all four instruments of Anglican unity worldwide: the Archbishop of Canterbury,

the Primates' Meeting, the Lambeth Conference and the ACC.

The Lambeth Conference is like an Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in that in both all member churches are represented and neither can legislate for members. But since the Lambeth Conference consists solely of bishops, its decisions carry the weight of the leaders of all the churches. The LWF has always been presided over by a bishop, but a bishop elected by the Assembly to be its president. The Archbishop of Canterbury, however, presides over the Lambeth Conference by virtue of his office. All this produces a different ethos in Lambeth compared with an LWF Assembly.

Lutheran and Anglican agendas, however, are strikingly similar. Lambeth 1988 struggled with the question of structure and authority, a theme not unfamiliar to the LWF. It called for a deeper investigation into the implications of being a communion. Lutherans are involved in such a study too. At Lambeth 1988 this struggle tended to be focussed on the question of women priests and bishops. That is not - or is no longer - a burning issue for most Lutherans. But both bodies struggle to discover how a world communion can exercise the authority which an authentic proclamation of the Word and a right celebration of the Sacraments requires without becoming authoritarian and without destroying legitimate diversity.

One unexpected feature of the Lambeth debate on authority was the unchallenged acceptance of the complete autonomy of the provinces. How does one justify that theologically? It is ironic that the Executive Committee of the LWF is struggling to rid the LWF Constitution of the terms "autonomy" and "free association of churches", finding that they no longer correspond to the reality

of world Lutheranism and are inadequate for today's global tasks.

Agendas of social issues and of mission and ministry are almost identical - we do live in the same world, after all - and both our communions are undergoing an obvious shift in centres of gravity from the "north" to the "south". In debates on the various issues at Lambeth one noticed the absence of a continental European voice, just as in an LWF Assembly debate one would notice the absence of an Anglo-Saxon voice. Resolutions on human rights, for example, which simply assume the Anglo-Saxon model of jurisprudence would not arise so self-evidently in a world Lutheran gathering.

Ecumenical agendas also have their points of similarity. Both Lutherans and Anglicans hold their dialogues with Roman Catholics in high regard; both accept a special obligation to heal the breach of the 16th century. Lutheran efforts with Roman Catholics tend to focus primarily on theological issues. One has the impression that Anglican efforts with Roman Catholics tend to be centred more on ecclesiastical structure. Both are ways of getting at the issue of authority, and the difference between the English and continental reformations as well as the "catholic transformation" of much of Anglicanism over the past 175 years.

It was the Anglican-Lutheran resolution at Lambeth, however, which proposed concrete, realisable steps toward full communion. The Niagara Report was hailed as showing the way, and the 1982 Agreement between the Episcopal and Lutheran churches (USA) held up as a model.

Anglicans already exist in a richer ecclesial mix than Lutherans by virtue of full communion with such churches as North and South India, Pakistan, the Old Catholics, the Philippine Independents and the Polish National Catholics. Nor have Lutherans tended to cultivate special relationships with all the Orthodox churches the way the Anglicans have. In this area the "catholic structures" of Anglicanism are clearly an advantage.

As a Lutheran one was edified and impressed by the space given to corporate worship, prayer and Bible study. The liturgical forms are virtually identical with Lutheran forms, but they seem somehow more firmly anchored in Anglican self-consciousness. It is clear that Anglican spirituality centres in prayer. Less evident at Lambeth, on the other hand, was solid biblical preaching.

Many more contrasts and similarities could be noted, but one article cannot contain them all. Reflecting on the experience of Lambeth 1988 has reinforced my conviction that Anglicans have much to offer Lutherans and Lutherans, in turn, have gifts which could enrich

The Window is sent quarterly to Members and Associate groups of the Anglican-Lutheran Society. Information about the Society and membership applications are available from the Secretary.

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MORE OBSERVERS - Joining Archbishop Runcie are some of the ecumenical observers from dozens of Churches.

Lutheran World Federation representative Dr. Eugene Brand said that the presence of observers benefits the Anglican Communion, too: "There is a tendency in the Church of England, for example, to see Western Christianity in terms of Rome and Canterbury and those Protestant Churches which are found in England. Since the Lutheran presence in England is very small, it tends to be overlooked. Our presence at Lambeth makes the Church of England in particular, and the Anglican Communion in general, aware of our voice, our interest, and our presence."

Anglican life and praxis. If it is received, the Lambeth Anglican-Lutheran Resolution offers more possibilities for reciprocal giving than either communion is likely to be in a position to implement. But that is a grace-filled situation for both.

We must remain open to the Holy Spirit who will illumine the right path to Anglican-Lutheran communion, and we can be sure that the Spirit's path will not jeopardise our relationships within the Una Sancta.

We apologise for the delay in the publication and distribution of this issue, which has been caused by a postal dispute in England which was especially prolonged in London. This dispute has also made it impossible to run our intended feature on Finland.

L W F GENERAL SECRETARY
GREETES LAMBETH CONFERENCE

(The following greeting from the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, Dr. Gunner Staalsett, was prepared for the 12th Lambeth Conference)

As the Anglican Communion is gathered here from the ends of the earth, represented in the persons of its bishops, it is a privilege and a high honour for me to bring you the greetings of your sister churches in the Lutheran Communion. The Lambeth Conference has, in the past, given direction to the Anglican churches worldwide, but its influence has been far wider. It has also given guidance ecumenically, and therefore has had a crucial role in bringing all the churches to an ever deeper realisation of the unity given us in Christ.

Our two communions share a parallel history. By God's grace we have been spared the doctrinal strife which still today impedes the relationships between many Christian communions. We have never unchurched each other. The Church of England has traditionally been especially close to the Nordic Lutheran churches and those in the Baltic area. Both Anglicans and Lutherans are committed in bilateral relationships to the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox churches and several of the Protestant world communions. Both our communions have been deeply involved in and committed to the World Council of Churches.

In this decade and the two immediately past, moreover, Anglicans and Lutherans in many parts of the world have rediscovered each other, and this has led - and still is leading - to increasing church fellowship on official levels. I think especially of "interim eucharistic sharing" in the United States, of the "Meissen Paper" completed by representatives of the Church of England and the Evangelical Churches in East and West Germany, and of the new dialogue being formed between Nordic Lutherans and the Church of England. One could go on to mention conversations in Canada, Australia and elsewhere, and the participation of Bishop John Savarimuthu in the consecration of the Rev. Julius Paul, the new Lutheran Bishop of Malaysia.

Our fellowship is not just on official levels, however. At the recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Federation in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Bishop Charles Mwaigoga brought us the greetings of the Anglican Communion and spoke movingly of the many instances of an almost instinctive church fellowship in Tanzania between Lutherans and Anglicans.

I was also moved when reading a message from the Rev. Ed Morrow of the Namibian Chaplaincy in Europe about the evidences over the years of Anglican-Lutheran communion in Namibia. He spoke at the annual meeting of the Anglican-Lutheran Society here in England. Regarding Namibia, I also gratefully remember how in 1986 our two communions together with the Roman Catholic Church were able to bear joint testimony to the continuing tragic plight of the people of that distressed land.

Now, at this Lambeth Conference, you have on your table The Niagara Report, the report of the 1987 Anglican-Lutheran consultation on Episcopate. In my opinion and that of my colleagues in inter-confessional affairs, the Niagara Report has the potential to enable a breakthrough on the major issue between us: the historic succession of the episcopal ministry.

"Breakthrough" in this connection is not mere ecumenical rhetoric. I venture it because the Niagara Report is based squarely on the consensus of biblical and historical scholarship, because it echoes and reflects earlier Anglican-Lutheran statements, because it corresponds to the World Council of Churches' document, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, and because it builds on statements both our communions have made in dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. The significance of the Niagara Report, then, is not that it breaks new ground but rather that it makes a compelling appeal to our churches to act on the consensus we have achieved. Nothing less could hardly qualify as obedience to the will of Christ for the unity he has already given the Church through his own obedient death and his glorious resurrection.

Our prayers for the Holy Spirit to assist us in clearing away the impedimenta which separate us are clearly being answered. Now let us pray for yet another spiritual gift - the gift of risk-taking. Not fool-hardy risking, but risking all on Christ's promised future, so that the church may become a more credible sign of the kingdom of God in our strife-torn, suffering world.

Your Grace, sisters and brothers in Christ: may the Holy Spirit illumine your path and guide your feet as you journey through the challenging agenda of this Lambeth Conference.

[LWI]

ANGLICAN - LUTHERAN COMMITTEE'S
 'QUESTIONS IMPLYING REFORM AND
 RENEWAL OF EPISCOPE'

An excerpt from the report of the Anglican - Lutheran International Continuation Committee. A series of 'questions which imply reform and renewal in the area of the episcopate ['pastoral leadership, coordination, and oversight'] to both of our churches.'

Are those exercising pastoral leadership and oversight in our churches given the time and space to reflect on the priorities for mission in their regions, or have they become absorbed in and overloaded by administration? Is the administrative unit over which they preside frankly too big, so that their time and energy is all spent on the maintenance of a system, rather than on the discernment of opportunity. Does the scale of their responsibilities make them inattentive to the experience of those whose daily witness involves their standing on the edge of church life? Has over-familiarity with committee work, which indeed has its proper role, bred a lack of vision and of courage?

Are those in the episcopal office accessible enough to clergy and their families, not only in times of crisis but in an ongoing pastoral relationship? Do they take care not to foster an immature dependency, but rather encourage clergy to take responsibility for appraising their own ministry periodically, for reviewing their ministerial priorities, and for pursuing their own continuing education and spiritual refreshment? Do they also ensure that adequate resources are provided for offering personal help to clergy and their families in times of sickness, bereavement, domestic stress and financial difficulty?

Can those who exercise pastoral leadership and oversight escape the danger of being occupied too much with the affairs of the clergy, and also offer effective leadership in releasing and drawing together the talents of many individuals within the whole people of God? Can they set an example of

leadership which is not autocratic but truly shared, facilitating collaborative styles of ministry and enabling the skills and insights of lay persons in every walk of life to be contributed to the church's common life?

Has the Anglican and Lutheran view of what it means to be in apostolic succession whether of pedigree or pure confession become such a matter of pride that the mission of the church has ceased to be a criterion by which the church is judged? Do those exercising episcopate ... consider they 'possess' the apostolic entitlement, or do they see themselves challenged and outstripped by its demands and responsibilities?

It is really the case that those exercising episcopate consult with each other? Have they substituted the goal of denominational coherence for the wider vision of the unity of all Christians? Have they become so absorbed in consultative or legislative problems and procedures within their own nation or province that they have ceased to care how their actions might influence other Christians in other parts of the world?

Has mutuality ceased between those exercising episcopate in the church and their own local communities? Have leaders ceased to understand the changing needs of congregations? Have they become so remote from the poor and those on the margins of society that they can no longer represent the ministry of one who was the friend of, and host to sinners? Or conversely, do local congregations keep those who exercise episcopate at bay, as though their ministry were thought to be an intrusion upon, or competitive with the self-sufficient organisation of a parish?

Do those exercising episcopate in the church expound and commend the Christian faith in a sustained way, not just by preaching or special occasions or during isolated visits to congregations? Do they take real care to enlist the advice and help of those skilled in communications in the modern world, and to address those issues which are of urgent concern to people? Do they make the most of their corporate teaching role as a conference of bishops, and provide collegial support to one another in the exercise of their teaching responsibilities?

Do those who exercise episcopate understand their liturgical role to be central to their responsibilities, and do they carry it out in a creative way? Do they lead the offering of prayer and praise with a sense of awe and reverence, inspiring clergy and congregations to offer well prepared and heart-felt worship to God? Do they maintain a proper balance between work and sacrament in their programme of public worship events? Do they encourage the renewal of liturgy, and hold together diverse styles of worship within the church's life? Do they take care to retain those skills which they now exercise less often than they did at an earlier phase of their ministries? Do they perform their liturgical tasks in a manner which symbolises that all ministry is shared with others?

Do those exercising episcopate show in their own personal lives Christ-like qualities? Do they give an example of holiness, love, humility and simplicity of life? Are they generous and hospitable? Is their style of life influenced too much by the patterns of leadership that are dominant in the culture where they live? Is it evident that they are dedicated to unselfish service, and are open to be touched by the sufferings of others? Do they find the time and space needed for prayer, study, rest, recreation and family life, and avoid being devoured by unreasonable public expectations of their office?

Are those chosen for leadership given the ceremonial trappings of prominence, but denied the ability to exercise their responsibilities? Is effective leadership vested in reality in persons who, by reason of their obscurity in a bureaucracy, are not accountable to the whole church? Are the realities of the exercise of power effectively disguised from view, and it is silently presumed that power can only be exercised competitively and never cooperatively? Are churches so frightened by the danger of authoritarianism that their systems of checks and balances destroy and capacity to respond in moments of special challenge and danger?

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These are but some of the enquiries which follow from the argument we have advanced. They are based in the account we have given of the requirements for the mission of the church, on the understanding that the apostolic ministry must be a ministry engaged in, and facilitating the mission of the whole church.

Episcopate is a ministry of service, exercised with the cooperation of the whole community. Leaders are to 'manifest and exercise the authority of Christ in the way Christ himself revealed God's authority to the world, by committing their life to the community' (BEM, M16).

When we ask whether leaders in communities other than our own do this with faithfulness, we are engaged in a process which inevitably involves self-examination. Our conclusion is that both our communions are called in the first place to penitence....

- THE NIAGARA REPORT -

Report of the Anglican - Lutheran

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LAMBETH COMPROMISE

ENDORSES RIGHT TO

CONSECRATE FEMALE BISHOPS

By an overwhelming majority, bishops of the worldwide Anglican Communion meeting at the Lambeth Conference have approved a measure supporting the right of churches to decide for themselves whether to consecrate female bishops.

The conference's actions end another chapter in the heated debate over ordination of women that has preoccupied the Anglican community for years.

The adopted resolution, which passed by a margin of 423-28, was a compromise offering a measure of satisfaction to both proponents and opponents of female bishops. Neither side gained a full endorsement of its position. But the measure encourages "respect" between the provinces which disagree on the issue of female bishops and the exercise of "courtesy" between bishops with differing opinions.

In passing the resolution, the conference re-affirmed the historic Anglican view of church autonomy, and, in effect "opened the door" to female bishops in the Provinces. The Episcopal Church in the United States appears on the verge of consecrating its first female bishop, the first in the Anglican Communion.

Resolutions of the Lambeth Conference are not binding on member churches. But the resolutions are given great weight by member churches and are considered significant barometers of Anglican thought.

The resolution, proposed by the conference's Mission and Ministry Section, calls on the Archbishop of Canterbury to form a commission to examine relations between member churches and offer pastoral guidance to encourage continued communication. It concludes: "The conference recognises the serious hurt which would result from the questioning by some of the validity of the episcopal act of a woman bishop, and likewise the hurt experienced by those

whose conscience would be offended by the ordination of a woman to the episcopate. The church needs to exercise sensitivity, patience and pastoral care toward all concerned."

The resolution even gained the support of well-known opponents of female ordination, such as Archbishop Donald Robinson of Sydney, Australia, and Bishop Graham Leonard of London, who pointed out that the resolution acknowledged the principle of provincial autonomy and did not force provinces to accept the principles of female ordination.

Only five of the Anglican Communion's 28 independent member churches worldwide permit the ordination of women.

[LWI]

ANGLICAN BISHOPS

SHAPE ECUMENICAL AGENDA

PONDER ANGLICAN IDENTITY

The world's Anglican bishops have approved resolutions outlining an Anglican ecumenical agenda for the years ahead. They also dealt with issues of Anglican 'identity and authority'.

Bishops meeting at Canterbury, England, for the 12th Lambeth Conference (16 July - 7 August) came from the world's Anglican dioceses (numbering approximately 450). The conference meets once a decade.

The Archbishop of Canterbury urged the bishops to show 'real enthusiasm as a signal of our renewed commitment to an all-round ecumenism.' Anglicans, he observed, are always in danger of 'partisan ecumenism' - favouring some parts of the church at the expense of others.

Reflecting reactions from the world's 27 Anglican provinces to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM) published in 1982 by the World Council of Churches, the bishops called the text a 'contribution of great significance in the search for the visible unity of the church.' They said Anglicans can recognise in it 'to a

large extent the faith of the church through the ages.'

An explanatory note outlines 'three underlying issues of a more general nature that need continuing exploration' - the relation between scripture, tradition, and traditions; the nature of sacraments, their efficacy, and their relation to the word; and teaching about the church.

It also sets forth challenges BEM makes to Anglican life and practice in areas such as preparation for baptism and nurture of the baptised, the eucharist as 'the centre from which Christians go out to work as reconcilers in a broken world', theology and practice of the diaconate, complementarity of women and men in ministry, and exercise of episcopacy.

On Roman Catholic relations, the bishops described texts on eucharist and ministry from the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission as 'consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans' - a 'sufficient basis for taking the next step forward towards the reconciliation of our churches grounded in agreement in faith.'

But they were more cautious on ARCIC-I's third set of texts, Authority in the Church. These they judged to be a 'firm basis for the direction and agenda of the continuing dialogue on authority.'

An explanatory note to the resolution notes continuing Anglican concerns in all three areas, especially questions of 'primacy, [papal] jurisdiction and infallibility, collegiality, and the role of the laity.'

However, the bishops rejected a proposal that the main body of the resolution incorporate a phrase 'noting and respecting the continuing anxieties and conscientious convictions of many Anglicans', an oblique reference to evangelical Anglican unhappiness with parts of the ARCIC texts.

Acknowledging the official Anglican-Roman Catholic disagreements on the ordination of women, the bishops spoke about the 'serious responsibility' they placed upon Anglicans 'to weigh the possible implications of action on this matter for

the unity of the Anglican Communion and for the universal church.'

The resolution on Lutheran relations judges that the Niagara Report of last year's Anglican-Lutheran consultation on bishops reflects a 'substantial convergence of views'. Bishop David Tustin, co-chair of the continuation committee, observed that this dialogue was 'much further ahead' on the road to full communion than any other Anglicans are part of.

The Anglican/Lutheran International Continuation Committee (to be renamed the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission) is 'to explore more thoroughly the theological and canonical requirements... necessary in both churches to acknowledge and recognise the full authenticity of existing ministries', and to 'produce a report which will indicate the degree of convergence of views on the ordained ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons.'

Concern about Anglican identity and authority was reflected in two resolutions. Between them, they ask for an urgent inter-Anglican review of 'the meaning and nature of communion' (a reflection in part of concern about the impairment resulting from the ordination of women), an enhanced role for the Anglican primates (heads of Provinces), regional Anglican conferences, an Advisory Body on Prayer Books to be a kind of liturgical and doctrinal watchdog, and consideration of a 'common declaration' which might be approved for occasional liturgical use as an outline of fundamental Anglican beliefs and principles.

[EPS]

The Anglican-Lutheran Society was established in 1984 with the following aims:

- To encourage a wider interest in and knowledge of our respective traditions and contemporary developments within them;
- To develop opportunities for common worship, study, friendship and witness;
- To pray for the unity of the Church, and especially between Anglicans and Lutherans.

LAMBETH BISHOPS

READILY ENDORSE

ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN PROGRESS

by Roger Kahle

(Roger Kahle is managing editor of The Lutheran, the magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He wrote this article for the Lambeth Daily, the on-site newspaper at the Lambeth Conference July 17 - Aug 7.)

Late last week, in the crush of bishops gathering to pick up the ecumenical relations resolutions, a visitor asked why the Anglican-Lutheran one was so long. An English bishop replied, "We're just hoping that by the next Lambeth they'll be here."

Though Resolution 04 fell short of declaring Lutherans in full communion with Anglicans, the unanimously adopted resolution did advance the progress towards full communion. It asked the Provinces to provide for "interim eucharistic sharing," with 19 specific suggestions for implementation, and endorsed the call of the Niagara Report for the fullest possible ecclesial recognition and the goal of full communion.

The Niagara Report, summarising proceedings of an Anglican-Lutheran consultation on episcopate and published earlier this year, suggests specific changes that Anglicans and Lutherans can each make in their worship practices. And it lists practical steps to be taken, such as affirmation of certain faith statements, creation of structures to effect full communion and public celebration of Anglican-Lutheran eucharists by leaders of both bodies.

Worldwide, Anglicans and Lutherans each claim about 70 million members. This makes them the largest world communions after Roman Catholic and Orthodox. The Anglican-Lutheran conversation has gone further than any of the bilateral dialogues to date.

Eucharistic fellowship between the two churches goes back a long way. For example, Lutheran churches in Sweden and Finland have shared various levels of eucharistic fellowship with Anglicans since the 19th century. And this year the Lutheran churches of Latvia and Estonia are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their agreement of intercommunion with the Church of England.

Formal international conversations began in 1967. In that year, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation created a committee to explore possibilities of dialogue. After the committee met and recommended dialogue, the 1968 Lambeth Conference endorsed the recommendations.

Then during 1970-72 the first round of international dialogue took place. Among the recommendations made were: eventual intercommunion between Anglicans and Lutherans; joint ministries and even organic union in some countries; and shared local mission and social witness.

The Lutheran-Anglican conversations were then continued for a decade on the regional level. These went so well in the United States that Lutherans and Anglicans there approved interim eucharistic sharing. In Europe the consensus was such that the churches declared there were no serious obstacles to full communion.

After reviewing the regional conversations, an international Lutheran-Anglican group in Cold Ash, England, in 1983 urged the two world communions to continue working toward full communion.

[LWI]

ANGLICAN APPOINTED

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

OF L W F INFORMATION BUREAU

David W. Bramley, 42, has been appointed editor-in-chief of the Information Bureau of the Lutheran World Federation. He will take up his new responsibilities during the second half of this year. Lodged in the LWF's Department of Communications,

the Information Bureau is responsible for the publication of weekly and monthly editions of Lutheran World Information.

David Bramley, who is a British Anglican, has been responsible for the information service of the United Bible Societies (UBS), an international organisation concerned with the translation, publication and marketing of Bibles. In his work with the UBS, he has had extensive contacts with Bible societies and churches in the Far East, the Middle East, Africa, North and South America, and both Western and Eastern Europe.

LUTHERAN NEWS
ON ANGLICAN
COMPUTER NETWORK

Lutheran World Information, the weekly news service of the Lutheran World Federation, is available on the first worldwide Anglican computer communications network, IAIN, an acronym for Inter-Anglican Information Network. IAIN was initiated by the Anglican Consultative Council and the Parish of Trinity Church, New York, and was demonstrated at the recent Lambeth Conference.

[LWI]

GERMAN EVANGELICAL
MONASTIC COMMUNITIES

(This is adapted from material provided by the Evangelical Church in Germany, which groups Lutheran, Reformed, and United Landeskirchen (regional churches) in the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin.)

One cannot fail to notice them any more, those spiritual communities which have emerged in the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin.

With the exception of deaconesses, the Evangelical Church in Germany has never had communal life as a part of its

tradition. It was the shock of World War II and concern over the dismal situation of the 'Volkskirche' and its 'religion without decision', the absence of fellowship, and the church's general lack of missionary impact that gave rise to the founding of these new communities.

The communities - there are about two dozen of them - differ very widely in their outlook. What unites them is their willingness to find new ways of obeying their own calling.

Apart from regular daily times of prayer, monastic vows are also considered helpful for this purpose. These are the three traditional rules of monastic life: renouncing property, marriage, and the right to self-determination. All this is meant to make the Christian free to serve God and other people.

The spiritual roots of the new communities are to be found either in pietistic-revivalist circles. Others take Roman Catholic orders as their examples. The Evangelical communities are convinced that the split at the Reformation did not reach right down to the roots of the church.

Besides the monastic communities, there are quite a few groups which can be subsumed under the general heading of 'new movements'. Their members do not commit themselves to celibacy, but take upon themselves the obligation to live together according to spiritual rules.

Almost all the groups have preserved an open mind towards their church, although they clearly realise its weaknesses. 'In the church, with the church - vis-a-vis the church' is the way the monastic groups have described their position. And the conference of Lutheran bishops in the Federal Republic recommended as long as ten years ago that church members should regard the communities as practising 'a possible form of Christian discipleship'.

There is no doubt about it: the Evangelical Church in Germany is being greatly enriched as it overcomes its long negligence of the monastic life.

(EPS)