

# GENEVA LUTHERAN

June 2011

The English-Speaking Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva

"To venture into the unlimited, you've got to leave behind your limits." This is the text accompanying the nice imagery displayed in our windows on the rue de la Fontaine. Have you looked at the windows and the video screen? If not, please take some time after the worship service to see how artistically our church is being presented to the general public passing by on the rue.

"Leaving behind our limits" is an important value for Christians and an atavistic longing for humanity. Easter places us right there, "leaving behind our limits." Death is overcome and life prevails in a not-yet-known format. Pentecost also encourages us "to leave behind our limits" when the Spirit "fills us" and "makes us speak in languages we have never spoken before;" when the Spirit propels us to communicate in ways we had not yet conceived. (See Acts chapter 2.)

According to our liturgical calendar, we will be celebrating Pentecost soon – June 12th. Pentecost stands as an experience of true communication; what is said is understood exactly as it should be. The words pronounced and the intentions carrying the words are clearly comprehended. The message reaches the point. The message brings about life, enthusiasm, transformation, commonality.

Pentecost stands opposite to the Tower of Babel (Genesis chapter 11). There, God confused the language and people did not understand each other any more. The words became unclear. The intentions were misinterpreted.

Suspicion was the order of the day. No communication was possible, and people were "scattered on the face of the earth." "Confusing their language" and "scattering them" was God's way to intervene in a situation that was going wrong. Sometimes God does that to us. What remains important is to ask ourselves, why? Why has God "confused our language" and "scattered us"? What needs to be corrected?

Although there are lessons to be learned by "being confused" and "scattered," the Tower of Babel is not where God wants us to remain. God wants us to move towards Pentecost. God wants us to be open to the life-giving Spirit that will empower us to understand each other, to not be suspicious of the other's intentions, to welcome the message the other wants to communicate.

The Spirit of God is ready to "descend upon" us and to re-establish the communication channels that have been blocked and the trust that has been broken. The Spirit is ready to encourage us "to leave behind our limits" and to unveil before our eyes new ways of connecting, ways that we have not yet imagined or dreamed of. As we prepare for our Congregational Assembly this Sunday, let us pray that the Spirit of Pentecost fill us, move among us, and give us the words that will build unity in our community and in our church. May we "venture into the unlimited," carried by the Spirit.

## **Congregational Assembly**

Sunday May 29, 2011.

Please take note that our Congregational Assembly will take place on Sunday May 29 after our worship service. We need a quorum to conduct the business of the congregation, so all members are encouraged to attend. Our Annual Report is already available.

As we will meet over the lunch hour, families or individuals whose family names start with the letters A-L please bring sandwiches to share; and those with family name from M-Z please bring fruit or something sweet to share. Thank you.

*Pastor Lusmarino*



**TO VENTURE INTO THE UNLIMITED  
YOU'VE GOT TO LEAVE BEHIND  
YOUR LIMITS**

## **Confirmation Class photo exhibition**

"In the beginning God created..." Come to the Sanctuary and enjoy the photo exhibition organized by our Confirmation Class students, inspired by the first story of creation in Genesis. Our artists are: Clarissa Lohmann, Jared Camaddo, Julia Barbe, Julia Siebel, Oliver Prove and Pavi Simpson. The images are colorful and capture the diversity and beauty of God's creation.

## **Fête de la Musique news**

Greta Köhler is coordinating the sale of baked good, savories and drinks on 17, 18, 19 June. Feel free to contact her.

## Rendez-vous with Tobias Koehler

*When did you come to Geneva? Why?* I came in August 2009 to do a master's in international humanitarian and human rights law.

*Three adjectives that describe who you are? Do you resemble your friends?* Calm, careful, comical. I think I resemble my close friends very much; there are many I look up to and who had a substantial influence on my upbringing. Today, turning to them for advice and critique is still very important to me.

*From whom have you learned the most? What is it that you have learned from her? Can I talk in plurals?* My parents have certainly taught me a lot. Definitely more by being an example than by micro-managing my life. They taught me the importance of family, the value of empathy and modesty.

*Which traits do you appreciate in the opposite gender?* The mere fact that it is the opposite gender. I appreciate that women often have different views, approaches and assessments. For better and for worse... but certainly indispensable to get the whole picture.

*Our Congregation.... Our Sunday service...* A diverse anthill. To name just a few, we have busy ants, hardworking bees, strong bears, quick antelopes, meticulous beavers, funny parrots, beautiful peacocks, playful chipmunks. The Sunday service is, accordingly, something like an anthill-business-meeting: busy, a swarm of ideas, histories, languages and cultures; never finished.

*A strong childhood memory? What did your Sundays look like in those days?* My Sundays: bike tours, breakfast in the garden. A strong memory: a rooster biting me in the butt in Denmark. I tried to feed his chicken, not him... bad idea. But not only for me. After the incident, the owner decided the rooster was too aggressive. We had chicken-stew the same night.

*Your prettiest landscape... where?* Impossible for me to say! I am easily excited by any landscape. Be it overlooking Lac Léman, swimming down the Rhône, hiking in Abel Tasman National Park in New Zealand or the Norwegian tundra.

*The perfect dinner? The perfect dinner company?* The company is easy: my wife. Or our friends and loads of time! Garlic-mushrooms with chiabatta, a small salad with avocado and goat-cheese, and asparagus soup, lamb filet, green beans, mashed potatoes, vanilla ice-cream with hot red berries, an espresso with a dash of milk, an Aquavit, a small cigar, a whiskey.

*God? Prayer?* He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken (Psalm, 62, 2). I have this quote in my agenda on a post-it.



The German translation reads something like this: only in God is my soul coming to peace. Prayer is the means for coming to peace and rest by sharing with God. By clarifying priorities, my faith helps me taking a lot of pressure out of my life.

*In love for the first time...* I really loved my scooter when I was little (it was green). Was that the question?

*Your greatest virtue? And vice...?* Virtue: modesty. Vice: amazing looks. Noooo! Rather: virtue: thoroughness (Gründlichkeit); vice: I can be very selective in what or who I pay attention to. Up to the point of blatant rudeness. The two seem to interact a lot.

*Your best decision?* Marrying Greta!

*At the highest summit: which painting? Which book? Which movie? Which music?* I don't even have a favorite color, how can I now choose only one of each? OK, I will try: Painting: Munch, Melancholy; Book: Cees Nooteboom, All Souls Day. Movie: The Dreamers. Music: Open Souls; I have to add a sculpture: Michelangelo's Pietà (I think his third one) in St. Peter, Rome.

*Secondary school, what was that all about? And what did your country look like in those days?* My big transition from childhood (playing the violin and basketball) to being at the YMCA full-time. Many new friends, many new influences, long nights and discussions; always organizing something and generally very busy. Germany in the later 90ies was still stuck in the in-between: reunified and post-Soviet, but it felt like the "end of history". Our generation was still looking for its mission.

*Your greatest fear?* Hornets. A destroyed planet Earth.

*After secondary school, what was your next step? Did you have a 'master plan' for your future?* I did not have a "master plan", but vague ideas: see a bit of other countries and cultures. I wanted to live abroad for some time, so after I finished my compulsory "civil service" (substituting military service), I applied for a visa to New Zealand, booked a flight and left for a year.

*Going out, friendships, relations, how did you do that in those days?* Never a huge fan of clubs, but of concerts and of music, I spent a lot of time with my friends. We were outside a lot. We got on our bikes, got some beers, a football, a guitar and the rest happened just like that.

*If you would be Prime Minister for one day...? Our leaders, what's the point they're missing? Is there hope for our world?* There is always hope. I am not sure if "our leaders" are missing the point. But I ask myself, in order to live in a world that is more fair, that shares its wealth more equally, am I ready to share, to make my contribution (by, e.g., accepting a significantly different standard of living)? If I was Prime Minister for one day, I would become crazy.

*Geneva, what is that for you?* A beautiful lake; abstruse traffic; too expensive; a bubble city (international business vs international humanitarian/UN vs Genevans); amazing weather; a transit point.

*How do you relax?* Being outside, in the quiet of nature; going for a walk, being in or on the lake; listen to music; read a book.

*What is your motto in life? Where did that come from?* Bit by bit. Leave old bits be, savor the current bit, look forward to the next bit. The poem "Stufen" (I think it would say: "Steps", Hermann Hesse), says it nicely and precisely.

*Life... do you think you have figured it out now...? No. Can one? Is one supposed to? I love living with my wife, and in faith. I am not sure if I need to figure out more than that.*

*(respectfully submitted by Maarten Wilbers)*

## **Meditation on the Trickster**

by Kristine Greenaway

In the traditions and myths of aboriginal people worldwide that explain the foundations of society, there are animals who are responsible for the order of the world. Yet this natural order is at the same time in constant change. It is a cycle of formation and destruction. Change only happens when the basic order is broken. So there are animals and birds who break social roles. Those are the Tricksters.

The rabbit is a Trickster in many traditional cultures - from the Aztecs and the Mayas in South and Central

America through to the Micmacs in the northern half of North America. The coyote is another Trickster common to many cultures. It is the raven who plays that role in the traditions of the First Nations peoples on Canada's northwest coast. These nations include the Tsimshian people in whose land I was born when my father was a minister there.

The stories about Raven and others are of various types. Some are myths about the origins of the world and life in it that are told only in special circumstances where the formalities of who can tell those stories are strictly established. Some are morality stories about how to behave that are told mainly to children. Others are raucous and crude stories told during parties or among men.

The world for aboriginal peoples emerged from a progressive process of putting order to chaos. A great force is needed to maintain that order and certain animals represent that force and keep that order. But a fixed, unchanging order brings rigidity and death. It's here that Raven and other tricksters help by disrupting or even destroying parts of the established order in order that something new can be created. Raven and other Tricksters play the role of Prometheus in Greek mythology - disobeying the gods by bringing fire to humans, light to the night sky and being mischievous.

The Trickster shows the need for contesting the natural order and power. The Trickster is always breaking natural and social laws - frequently to the greater good of humanity - and is often punished for that role. The Trickster shows people the risks and the paths towards liberty.

Jesus in his parables often told Trickster stories where the natural and social order were disrupted for the betterment of all. These include the story of the shepherd leaving 99 sheep and searching for the missing one and they include the story of Jesus encouraging healing on the sabbath. Jesus - like Tricksters - was punished by society for breaking the rules. But his stories of Middle East Tricksters broke open traditions and forms of power that created death.

May we today continue to listen to Jesus' example and seek to follow it like the modern day Tricksters such as Gandhi, Bono, Angelina Joli, Mandela - people who are doing what their class, background or occupation would not lead us to expect of them. Like the Trickster in aboriginal stories, they make us mad, they make us crazy, they make us think, they provoke change. And so, in places around the world, room is made for a new order.



## Beer and Hymns comes to ELCG

Friday, May 27, 20h00.

Are you getting your voices tuned up? An event from the Greenbelt Festival in England comes to the Geneva Lutheran Church. On Friday night, May 27, beginning at 20h00 we will sing the top twenty hymns of our congregation according to the amount of money given for that hymn.

The proceeds go to painting the sanctuary. Now the top 20 hymns have been identified. (Actually the top 22 because of ties.) We have wonderful things to sing. The final order of the hymns will be decided as we go on Friday night. We will start with number 22 and you can keep bidding to change the order of those left.

The current order of the hymns (Monday 23) is as followed:

- 01) Lift High the Cross
- 02) A Mighty Fortress/Ein Feste Burg
- 03) Now thank we all our God/Nun danket alle Gott
- 04) Pelas does deste mundo
- 05) Oi, Jumalan Karitsa
- 06) You are Holy/Du bist heilig
- 07) Great is thy faithfulness
- 08) I heard the voice of Jesus say
- 09) Amazing grace
- 10) Momento Novo
- 11) Siyahamba
- 12) Nita Mwimbiya Bwana
- 13) On eagles' wings
- 14) We are a gentle, angry people
- 15) Beautiful Savior/Schönster Herr Jesu
- 16) Bwana awabariki
- 17) The Servant Song (Brother, Sister, let me serve you)
- 18) If thou but trust in God to guide thee/Wer nur den Lieben Gott
- 19) Hamba Nathi
- 20) Bwana Uterernu
- 21) Give thanks to the Holy One
- 22) When he shall come

On Friday we will begin at the bottom of the list. There are several songs tied, so the order could be determined by further support for one song or another.

Even if you don't contribute to supporting the songs, you can contribute with your voice. Invite your friends and neighbors, who maybe

## Refreshment after Worship

Every week a neighbourhood group prepares refreshments after worship.

If you are not sure which group you belong to, please contact the church office.

5 June, H (Lancy, Onex, Bernex, France Haute Savoie, etc.)

12 June (Pentecost), A (Nyon, Coppet, Crans, Gex, Ferney, etc.)

19 June, B (Versoix, Bellevue, Chambesy, etc.)

26 June, C (Meyrin, Vernier, Chatelaine, Lignon, etc.)

## Regular Activities in our Church

**Sunday Worship** at 11h00

**Christian Education Programme**

Adult Forum, 10h00 (at the Spaghetti Factory)

Church School, 3-12 year old, 11h00

Sunday Play, under 3 year old, 11h00

Confirmation class, every Wednesday, 16h30 (third floor)

Thursday morning bible study, at the Open House of the Ecumenical Center, 09h30

**Adult choir**, every Thursday at 20h00.

**Prayer group**, every other Monday at 20h00.

**Worship in French**

First Saturday of each month at 18h00 at the church (cave vouée)

**Concerts for Peace**

Second Friday of each month.

**Our Church is open**

Monday to Friday from 12h00-17h00.

haven't experienced the joy of communal singing in a long time.

While we sing we will have snacks and drinks to keep the voices free.

Surely we'll have a moment or two when we raise the roof.

Terry MacArthur

## Contact Information

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