

Come and celebrate our 300th anniversary!

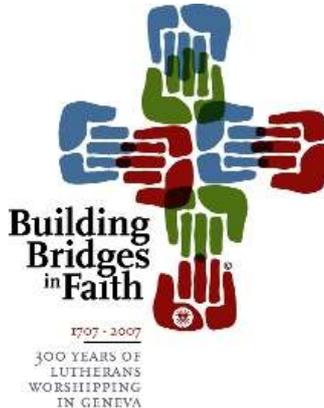
— This year, a number of events are taking place: concerts, a lecture series with the Museum of the Reformation, other theological lectures, and a theatre play about King David. In the autumn, a number of historic worship services will take us, musically and liturgically, back by 100-year periods to the time of the Reformation.

On August 25-26, festivities for our current congregations and former members are planned, including a “Fête de Paroisse” with special music, food from many countries and opportunities to meet former members and pastors. On Sunday, August 26, a celebratory worship with other congregations will be held in front of the church.

On August 27 a full-day guided tour of Reformation sites in Geneva will be offered, ending at the Bodmer Foundation in Coligny.

Original documents of Martin Luther will be on display.

On August 28 representatives of all churches in Geneva, city and cantonal authorities and the press will be invited to attend a historical exhibition—“The Lutheran Church in Geneva 1707-2007”—and an evening celebration marking the date of the first worship service.



Main events

Fête de Paroisse
25-26 August at 14h00

Anniversary worship service
26 August at 10h00

Story telling by former pastors
26 August at 14h00

Bodmer Foundation exhibition
27 August at 17h30

Historical exhibition opening
28 August at 18h30

Evening celebration
28 August at 19h30

Exhibitions

Bodmer Foundation exhibition
27 August-December

Historical exhibition
28 August-9 September

Concerts for Peace

See page 4 for concerts in the upcoming months.

Lecture Series

Martin Luther table speeches
31 October and 2 November

Historical worship services

2007: 26 August at 10h00
1907: 16 September at 11h00
1807: 30 September at 11h00
1707: 14 October at 11h00
1607: 28 October at 11h00

What was worship like back then?

There is an apocryphal legend about J.S. Bach. During the long sermon, which was normal at worship during his time, he would slip out of the organ loft and go to the nearby establishment to have a beer. He would have plenty of time before the start of his weekly cantata, which itself was usually not short.

Our worship services are not nearly as long as those in former years. I'm not sure when churches decided that one hour was long enough.

In some earlier eras one hour was the length of the sermon. In some traditions there were also evening services as well as morning ones. People spent much of Sunday in church. How preachers prepared that many good sermons is always a mystery to me, and they didn't have many extra resources to draw upon. There was no Internet to consult to find a quick illustration. Somehow the church survived. Sometimes it even flourished.

As part of the celebrations for the 300 years of Lutherans in Geneva, we are preparing, along with the German-speaking congregation, a series of historical services.

Don't worry—we are not going to replicate three-hour services nor hour-long sermons. Even we have our limits.

But we are trying to find some orders of worship, some songs, and some prayers which go back to former times.

We will start with the present time for the 300th anniversary. Then every couple of weeks we will go back another 100 years.

On September 16 we will try to

See “Worship time travel,” page 2

MORE INFORMATION

Visit the website for the anniversary celebrations at www.luther300.ch.

For contributions toward the 300th anniversary

Bank account UBS-Geneva: 02 40-287198.00U
IBAN code : CH15 0024 0240
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Worship time travel *continued from page 1*

catch not only the spirit of God, but also the spirit of 1907. On September 30 we will go back to 1807. October 14 will find us in 1707, and on Reformation Sunday, October 28, we will jump back to the time of Martin Luther.

The German- and English-speaking services will be connected to each other because of the history, but will have their own character. We are not going to sing everything in German.

This idea was proposed by our organist, Regine Kummer, who has also done much work finding music from the various periods. She and Ekkehard Lagoda, the German pastor, are researching liturgies with the help of some of the worship centers in Germany.

Before Easter we were singing some liturgical pieces from the time of Luther so that we would not have to learn them all new this fall. The choir has started practicing some music. It gives us a chance to explore some musical resources we would not have normally considered.

It would be fun if some of us could dress up a little for these occasions. As you travel this summer, or maybe get in contact with the chest of keepsakes that is stored someplace ("Let's see—what country did we leave that in?"), you might be on the lookout for something reminiscent of former eras: hats, suspenders, lace, mustaches, shawls, cloaks, boots, embroidery, wigs, vests, beards, toys—anything that might evoke one of these times. Don't worry—you will not be barred at the door if you are not appropriately dressed. But it would add to the occasion. Maybe you have been carrying around that old hat from great grandfather or great grandmother just for this moment.

We will probably not be able to repeat what it was really like. But we can let some of the treasures of the past inform us. Our worship has a tradition, which can reinvigorate our present and give us possibilities that we had forgotten for the future. We take a trip backwards because as we worship together God is leading us ahead.
—Terry MacArthur

Pastor's Reflection

Unspoken words, unlearned truths

What are the words we cannot bear? What were the words Jesus still had to say but he didn't?

By not saying all the words he still had left to say, Jesus opened the possibility for us to say them. That happened with the first Christian communities, with the apostles, with Martin Luther and other reformers, with every community of faith that gathers in worship, in fellowship and in learning together every Sunday, all over the world. It happens with us here, now. By not saying all the words he still had left to say, Jesus anticipated that we had more to learn. Teaching and learning were not established once and for ever. We are all participants in the process of teaching and learning about our faith, which are built as we live out our faith together, dealing with the issues emerging from our life as community and finding new concepts, new values and new words.

An example of this is the concept of the Trinity. The word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible. Tertullian, one of fathers of the Church, used it in the "last decade of the 2nd century, but it did not find a place formally in the theology of the Church till the 4th century" (*New Bible Dictionary*, J. D. Douglas & F. F. Bruce, Trinity, p. 1298). The concept of a Trinitarian God doesn't belong to biblical times. It is a later development of the Church in its effort to articulate its faith. The same type of process happened and happens concerning thousands of different issues. It is part of our common history as Christians to deal with issues related to our faith and to the life of the community of faith—us.

Some of us may believe that theology is a static field; that matters related to our faith are perennial, eternal, unchangeable. Is that so with economics? Physics? Social sciences? Psychology? Why should that be the case with theology? There are new theories being discussed all the time, there are new theologies emerging, there is research being done and new understandings being articulated. Those

who work in this area know that it is impossible to read all that is produced. So many books and articles and essays. Why do we have this understanding that matters related to our faith are perennial, eternal, unchangeable? Is it because in a world that changes so much we need something that remains the same to provide us some sense of stability? Is it because God doesn't change and therefore the way we understand and relate to God cannot change either?

Sometimes we resist opening space for new learning about faith-related matters because we believe the way we learned is the correct way. That happens especially in relation to the Bible. And often we end up mixing the concept of Word of God with our way of interpreting the Bible. In fact, most of the time, our interpretation becomes the Word of God for us. But, as professor Terence Fretheim says, "We must make a clear distinction between the text and our own interpretation of the text, for whatever we say about the Bible passage is never the same as what the Bible itself says."

What is written is not exactly what was written. Every translation carries in itself an interpretation. Interpretations are based on values and concepts of a given time, a given culture, and even given interests.

You may be thinking, "But if there are different ways of reading the Bible, then it is okay if I read by myself and have my own interpretation of it." The Bible is not to be read in isolation; it is to be read in community. Its interpretation is only applicable to the life of the community when read in the context of the community. Some of us

See Pastor's Reflection, page 8

Geneva Lutheran Team

Susan Steinhagen, editor
Federico Besnard
Carl Bjertnes
Jacinta Goveas
Stephen Padre

Regular Church Activities

(summer schedule)

Every Sunday morning

Adult forum, 10:00 *Spagheti Factory*
Worship 11:00

Monday-Saturday

Open Church, 12:00-17:00 *church*

Third Tuesday of each month

Japanese Bible study, 20:30 *home of Thomas and Koko Taylor, 11 chemin Gamay, Bernex*

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

Week 28: 8-14 July

Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela

Week 29: 15-21 July

Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama

Week 30: 22-28 July

Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico

Week 31: 29 July-4 August

The Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago

Week 32: 5-11 August

Canada, USA

Week 33: 12-18 August

Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia

Week 34: 19-25 August

The Pacific islands: Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa and the French Overseas Territories of New Caledonia (Kanak) and French Polynesia (Tahiti)

Week 35: 26 August-1 September

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

First Saturday of each month

Worship in French, 18:00 *cave voutée at the church*

Second Friday of each month

Concerts for Peace, 18:30 *church*

Every other Monday

Evening Reflection Group, 19:00 (*at various homes*)
For details, check website, or contact Jacinta Goveas (goveas@unhcr.org).

Refreshment Duties after Worship

Every week, a neighborhood group prepares refreshments after worship. If you are unsure of which group you belong to, please contact the church office.

15 July

(*Nyon, Coppet, Crans, Gex, Ferney*)

Group A

22 July

(*Versoix, Bellevue, Chambesy*)

Group B

29 July

(*Meyrin, Vernier, Chatelaine, Lignon*)

Group C

5 August

(*Grand-Sacconnex and Petit-Sacconnex*)

Group D

12 August

(*Servette, Paquis, Vermont, Delices*)

Group E

19 August

(*Centre Ville, Jonction, Carouge, Eaux-Vives, Acacias*)

Group F

26 August

(*Chene-Bougeries, Florissant, Cologny, Vesenaz*)

Group G

Refreshments schedule

When is your neighborhood group set to serve refreshments after worship? Now you can find out on the web at www.genevalutheran.ch/ministries/Refreshments_2007.pdf

Bible Readings

SEASON OF PENTECOST

July 15

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Genesis 18:1-10a
Psalm 15
Colossians 1:15-28
Luke 10:38-42

July 22

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Genesis 18:20-32
Psalm 138
Colossians 2:6-15, (16-19)
Luke 11:1-13

July 29

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23
Psalm 49:1-12
Colossians 3:1-11
Luke 12:13-21

August 5

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Genesis 15:1-6
Psalm 33:12-22
Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16
Luke 12:32-40

August 12

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Jeremiah 23:23-29
Psalm 82
Hebrews 11:29-12:2
Luke 12:49-56

August 19

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Isaiah 58:9b-14
Psalm 103:1-8
Hebrews 12:18-29
Luke 13:10-17

August 26

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Proverbs 25:6-7
Psalm 112
Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16
Luke 14:1, 7-14

Concerts for Peace

Concerts for Peace are held at our church on the second Friday of every month, starting at 18h30. These concerts are meant to be a moment of peace and reflection after a busy week and before the weekend begins.

Entry is free with a collection going to support the church and a project of the association Musique et Vie.

Coming up:

Friday, July 13 at 18h30

Chamber music for three saxophones

Trio Sinfoniko:

Maria Grand, soprano saxophone

Tadeo Kohan, alto saxophone

Eduardo Kohan, tenor saxophone

Pieces by Bach, Cherubini, Sax

Friday, August 10 at 18h30

A variety of music, from jazz to classic

Safer Sax:

Joaquim Baumann, baritone saxophone

Yóann Lopez, tenor saxophone

Andréa Villat, alto saxophone

Sita Pottacheruva, alto and soprano saxophones

Friday, September 14 at 18h30

Domenico Ciminò, classical guitar

Agnès Perret, voice

Spanish songs, Britten: Folk songs

Castelnuovo-Tedesco: Le Divin

Villa-Lobos: pieces for guitar

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays and anniversaries have been removed from this space for the web version of the newsletter for reasons of privacy.

Members come together to discuss 'How we read the Bible'

On May 13, about 24 people gathered for the first session in a series of presentations and discussions that are part of the process our congregation is undergoing to discern if we should bless same-sex unions of members who make such a request.

Aruna Gnanaason began by describing the different associations she had with the Bible as she was growing up in India. In small groups this topic was discussed, with each of us sharing our personal associations with the Bible.

Bill Strehlow continued by providing some overall perspectives on what the Bible is—a library of 66 diverse books that together shape the mission of the people of God. He then shared some insights that have emerged over nearly eight years of Sunday morning Bible studies at the Spaghetti Factory restaurant. These include:

- The Bible has been commonly read by people only for the past 500 years; before then they heard the Bible.
- The Bible points to the past, present and future acts of God, which cannot be contained in a book.
- The lens the church has for reading the Bible is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- We get in trouble if we read only snippets of a text without the paying attention to the whole text and its context.
- The Bible is a five-act play: creation, the fall, Israel, Jesus and the Church.
- It is important that the Bible be read and heard contextually, within worship, devotionally, and with good scholarly insight and teaching.

Questions/points of discussion following the presentations:

- We need to beware of using select passages manipulatively or to prove our point.
- The Bible is like an onion: When we peel away one layer, we discover new layers.
- The context is important for our understanding: Both the

context in which the text was written and our own context in which we read it.

- The Bible is a living document and still growing in our time.
- Reading a familiar text at different points in our lives may result in it having much different meanings.
- We may need to “unlearn” certain interpretations we have of texts and that we take for granted.
- The Bible empowers the church, gives it life, and we find our lives in the text.
- It is difficult to discern what God may be saying to us in Scripture on our own; we need others and their viewpoints to check our own perspectives and get a fuller picture of the text. We understand more fully when we put together all our perspectives, in order to make sense out of it.
- How do we find out God’s will about things that are not mentioned in the Bible? What about missing parts and other writings that were not included in the Bible? What we read is not the whole story.
- The Bible alone is insufficient; we need the Holy Spirit to help us discern.
- We seem to agree on the authority of the Bible for us, even though we may have different understandings of what that means.
- What we call authoritative—does it really come from the Bible, or is it our own interpretations that become authoritative? Reading the Bible on our own can be dangerous if our own interpretation prevails; sharing and exchange are necessary.
- There is a difference between a literal or plain reading of the Bible (which Martin Luther favored) and a literalistic reading.

Karen Bloomquist read a passage by Diane Jacobson in a recent Lutheran World Federation publication titled *Witnessing to God’s Faithfulness: Issues of Biblical*

Authority, which emphasized that for Luther, the Bible is “the swaddling clothes and manger in which Christ lies.” Christ is the living Word of God, and Scripture is the cradle which holds the living Word.... With this understanding we are never enslaved by a narrow biblicism that claims that every word of Scripture is true (the excerpt from this article can be found on the website—see box below).

Papers that were distributed at this session (and that are available on our web page—see box below):

- “How we read the Bible”
- Web-based resources for Bible study
- “The Authority of the Bible and Churchly Debates Regarding Sexuality”

The book *Facing Our Differences—The Churches and Their Gay and Lesbian Members* by Alan A. Brash can be borrowed from the church office (several copies available).

At future sessions, we will examine the relevant texts, so please bring your Bible (preferably *New Revised Standard Version*).

On our website

A section of our congregation’s website has been created for this process of dialogue and discernment regarding whether the ministry of our congregation should include the blessing of same-sex unions of our members who make such a request.

At www.genevalutheran.ch/blessingdialogue you will find a guide to the process—a timeline of events and links to resources that are distributed during each step of the process.

At www.genevalutheran.ch/blessingdialogue/resources.html you will find a listing of all resources together.

For Maureen Gumbe, home is where the heart is

You could say Maureen Gumbe has an enormous heart. By heart, she can name events in her life, down to the month, day and year, or the exact prices of things she purchased many years ago. Besides numbers, the words of poetry flow from her heart. Dreams from long ago, some acted upon, others still unrealized, are held there. And in her heart is a deep consideration for other people, whether those close to her in Geneva, her family overseas, or refugees.

July 13, 1980—the exact day Gumbe arrived in Geneva to fulfill a childhood dream of learning to speak fluent French. The summer language program at the University of Geneva was to last only six weeks, but she extended her stay for nine more months to perfect her French. Then she landed a temporary job with UNHCR that turned into a career.

Gumbe says she intended to stay here no more than five years, but her heart fell for Geneva. “I feel so comfortable here. I feel at home here,” she says.

Guyanese by birth, Gumbe came here from Brooklyn, a borough of New York City. While she visits her friends and family—her mother, siblings, and two daughters and three grandchildren—there regularly, she finds Geneva a much more pleasant place—easier to get around and fewer crowds to contend with at concerts or in queues.

Visiting Africa was another one of her dreams, and her job at UNHCR, the U.N.’s refugee agency, has allowed her to work with refugees there and in other regions and work in Africa on occasion. Since beginning with UNHCR, where she has worked in administration in the program, finance and personnel areas, she



has grown to like humanitarian work.

She has found field work the most fulfilling part of her job. “Having gone to the field and seen refugees in a camp situation—not pictures on the wall, actually seeing them—made me see the work differently,” she says. “Going up close to see what UNHCR does—then it comes home to me.”

At the heart of her life is her faith. “My faith is very central to me,” she says, crediting God for her position in life. “I’ve never doubted His rule in my life, never questioned why something has happened.”

Although she grew up in a very religious family and as a Lutheran in Guyana, Gumbe didn’t start attending the ELCG until she had lived in Geneva for several years and became a member a few years later in 1994. The congregation is “spiritually challenging and engaging for me,” she says.

What Gumbe appreciates the most about the congregation is its diversity and that it is taken into account in its liturgy. “I found a vibrancy in the church.”

Although its membership is very transitory, Gumbe believes there is an upside to this high turnover. “It brings new energy to what we do,” she says. “People have brought their gifts and made it a rich religious and ecumenical environment.”

Because every week’s worship is different, she says, when she cannot attend, she wonders what she is missing. “I don’t think I could go to a church that’s different from this,” she adds.

Gumbe is also known by her various Geneva “families”—at work, church, and her circle of friends—as a poet. She has a gregarious nature and speaks at length about memories, feelings or opinions, but it’s a written

genre that uses economy of words that Gumbe chooses to express herself at times.

Her first poem was written as a farewell to a friend at UNHCR in 1994, and most of her poems since then have been written for similar occasions as well as birthdays and weddings.

But occasionally she writes poetry for less happy occasions. The first free-verse poem she wrote, and the first time she wrote from her gut, from a sense of “frustration and anger at the world,” was in reaction to the Rwanda refugee crisis, which UNHCR was involved with. She recalls seeing pictures of refugees, whom UNHCR had “lost,” coming out of the jungle after fleeing from rebels. “I couldn’t get those images out of my mind. I wanted to do something.” So she wrote a poem. “This came right out of me.”

While the poetry can flow freely at times, one dream remains inside Gumbe’s heart: opening her own tea shop. She wants to be both in the kitchen, making cakes and pastries, but also out front, talking to customers. And there would be poetry readings, of course. If she fulfills this dream, you could drop in at her tea room and get some conversation and culture from her. And in doing this, Gumbe might take you into her “family”—and into her heart.

—Stephen Padre

Youth group makes video about inequalities and exclusion in Geneva

The youth of our congregation are producing a video documentary about the social and economic inequalities and exclusion in Geneva.

The idea for this project arose during our thinking about how we could contribute to the STAND UP Against Poverty Campaign in October 2006. We decided to make this documentary to raise awareness about social exclusion and inequalities, not only within the youth group but also in the church and in the city. We also realized that this would be a good way to be more inclusive of others and more empathetic toward others' needs and suffering.

In this process of making the video we committed ourselves to helping to prepare the meal at the soup kitchen at the Jardin de Montbrillant a couple of times.

We have done this, and it was a great experience for all of us who participated. Helping others is not only good for those who receive the help but also nurtures one's spirituality.

While making the video, we have interviewed people from



workers unions, social workers, pastors, people who live in precarious conditions and random people on the street. We have also videotaped many places in Geneva and have searched for statistics and information that can help provide more content for the video. We usually run the interviews in groups of two or three. The youth ask the questions while Paul Nilsson or I operate the camera.

Right now we have enough footage to start editing some parts of the video that are ready. The video is shaping up nicely, and I believe there will be a good out-



come. However, this is a very long process. A five-minute part can take up to four hours to edit. We need to go through the interviews, select the best parts, find music, images, translate from French to English, and make sure we are following our script.

We have already met once to record Michael Frerich's voice for the video. It was a very cool session. We felt like we were in a real studio making a movie. Michael was great. Aditya Manchala and Dayalan Martin were in charge of recording his voice. It was so much fun. "One, two, three... now. Again. Not good. Very good. Too fast. Too loud. You didn't say this part. Do it again." It was just great.

There is still a lot to do. We hope the video will be ready by the end of summer and that it can be shown on the Internet, at church, in schools and why not during the next STAND UP Against Poverty Campaign in October 2007? If you can contribute to this project (sharing informa-

tion with your expertise on the topic or putting us in contact with someone else), don't hesitate to contact me at marialucia.uribe@gmail.com.

Finally I want to thank the youth—in addition to those already mentioned, Vivienne Moore, Anuka Bathija, Duran Bathija, Ruben Schep, Marina de Faria and Tarun Bathija—for their commitment and contributions to this project. Special thanks go to Paul Nilsson for his technical, logistical and moral support.

—Maria Lucia Uribe, on behalf of the youth leadership team



Snapshots of congregational life



Members prepare food for a Chinese-Indonesian lunch that was held alongside a bazaar in May to raise funds for the 300th anniversary celebrations.



Members enjoy an evening of African food and culture in April as part of a series of cultural nights celebrating the diversity of our congregation's members.

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The newsletter may also be downloaded as PDF files from our website:

www.genevalutheran.ch/newsletter

Pastor's Reflection *continued from page 2*

read the bible devotionally at home. That is good. But it is not good when we want it to become the regulating tool for our common lives.

What are the words we cannot bear? Which are words that we believe don't belong in church?

The Spirit of truth accompanies us in our journeys. This is what the Gospel says, 'the Spirit will guide you into all the truth', which literally means, he 'will lead in the way.'

By not saying all the words he still had left to say, Jesus opened the possibility for us to say them. May the Spirit guide us.

— The Rev. Lusmarina Campos Garcia