



General Synod of the Church of England

Greeting

Word of Salutation

of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)

Bishop Ralf Meister / Hannover

05 July 2018

Mr Chairman, members of the Synod of the Church of England,
dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

It is a great honour to attend this General Synod of the Church of England and to convey to you today the cordial greetings - in the name of the ecumenical and other guests - and of the Evangelical Church in Germany.

I bring to you the greetings of the Council of the EKD; of the chairman of the council Bishop Professor Heinrich Bedford-Strohm; the greetings of the presidium of the Synod and personally from the chair of the presidium Mrs Schwaetzer.

It is a great pleasure to visit you again.

I want to express as the co-chair the relevant and fruitful relationship in our Meissen-Commitment. In the name of the EKD I say: We are and we will be strong partners of the Church of England.

We live in unpredictable times in national life in Europe and in the world. It is easy to list crises that affect the world – migration crisis; climate-crisis; Brexit-crisis. We are in a time of uncertainty.

A few years ago, if you had asked a politician for a vision of the future they would probably have spoken of a future of unity, particularly within Europe. However the language of unity has to some extent been replaced by populism and nationalism; by separation rather than reunion.

But we as Christians have to oppose these tendencies.

We don't count our lives in the calendar of separation.

We are not only living in the third year after the Brexit referendum,

we are living to bridge the gap between our churches.

We are not only living in years of uncertainty and unpredictability.

We are "saved by hope". As we read in the letter to the Romans:

"... Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." (Romans 8. 24-25)

We do hope! Constantly, deeply and with patience. "... The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight – indeed, he is coming ...", so we read in the prophet Malachi. (Malachi 3. 1)

We have to manage these days. But we have another vision, since we have another promise. We are empowered by God and liberated by His grace.

Albert Einstein, said: "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."

As Christians we approach life in the second way. Our attitudes are not bound by the limits of the world, but set free by the wonder and presence of God.

T.S. Eliot, one of the twentieth century's major poets wrote:

*Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries
Bring us farther from GOD and nearer to the Dust.*

T.S. Eliot, "The Rock"

Giving up is not an option. My generation started 40 Years ago in a church, which was a strong, established and a broadly accepted religious institution. These days are gone in all European countries. Society is now more plural and fragmented. But the Church is about more than statistics. Our mission follows that of one man, Jesus Christ. On Easter Day he walked and talked with just two disciples on the way to Emmaus. We walk that journey with him and we follow his command to go and make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28. 19).

The Church of England and the Protestant Churches in the EKD are side by side on the path to Emmaus, with burning hearts, while he talks with us on the way. (Luke 24. 32)



Martin Luther once wrote:

It is not up to us to maintain the church. And it was neither the role of our ancestors nor the work of our successors. But it was Him, our Lord, and he will maintain the church, when he says: 'I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

God bless your synod and your work for the Kingdom of God.