



Bishop's Post

August September 2020

Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done, in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mother's arms has blest us on our way
with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

2. O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
and keep us in his grace, and guide us when perplex'd,
and free us from all ills, in this world and the next.

(Verse 1&2 based on Sirach 50, 22-24)

3. All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns with them in highest heaven:
the one eternal God, whom earth and heav'n adore;
for thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

“During the 30-year war (1618-48) the flourishing economy of Eilenburg almost came to a dead stand still. Only few citizens survived the war, pests and hunger.”

This is a short sentence from the chronicles of Eilenburg in Saxony, where Martin Rinckart was pastor from 1617-49. It tells of one catastrophe following the other - small pox, pest, war, murder, raids. Rinckart composed this song as a prayer at meal time in about 1630 - in the middle of these catastrophes. It was not composed by a theologian hiding behind his desk, but by a pastor fully involved affected by the catastrophe. When he invites to thank and praise God, he knows how challenging the circumstances are.

The second verse did not pray for current good times to continue, but written in most adverse times, prays for protection and for good times to return. Large parts of Europe had been hit; millions of people had died.

It is amazing how this table prayer spread throughout Europe in this time of misery, so that, when the war finally ended in 1648, it was sung all over as a hymn of praise.

Our world is in a crisis of yet unknown proportions. Each day globally thousands of people die from COVID 19. The world economy has been hit hard. Suddenly I hear these words in a completely new way - not as “feel good verses

for happy times”, but as encouragement under most adverse circumstances. I learn to thank God that I can breathe, that I am alive, that there is food for today. Amidst the fear, worries and growing need this song gives me strength and courage to continue. And if I am one of those who will not survive? Then this song will help me to die in peace.

“O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us, with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us” - this a wonderful gift from our Lord in these difficult times!

Yours, *Host Müller*

News from the Church

The General Pastors’ Convention will take place from 17 to 21 August 2020. Due to the Corona crisis it will be a virtual convention. Although it is sad that we cannot interact person to person, it does also create new possibilities. We will be having guest speakers participating from other countries with no travel costs!

The theme is: **Discovering Church in the New Normal**. On Tuesday 18 and Thursday 20 August we will invite congregational councils and synod representatives to join us “virtually” to deliberate on what it means for our congregations.

The pastors will thus be “absent” during this time, even if they participate from home.

The annual **eQuip** is also affected by the virus. The planning team decided to hold **eQuip 2021** as a virtual event, between 3 and 6 January 2021. This will give you an opportunity to “taste” what eQuip is about, so that, hopefully in 2022 many will make use of the “real” experience!

A report on eQuip 2020 is published separately to whet the appetite!

Pastor Frank Schütte (Augsburg) has accepted a call from East London, and the family will be re-locating there in December 2020. The congregational council of Augsburg is busy with identifying a successor.

We thank Pastor Schütte for his work in NELCSA, and hope that the last months in Augsburg and the relocation will be a blessed time, albeit strenuous. May the Lord also guide the process of filling the post.

If you missed out on the **NELCSA Winter series services** you can still catch up at www.nelcsa.net.