



BISHOPS POST



One of the most famous statues of Luther is the one in Worms, Germany. He is portrayed, standing in front of the emperor, hand on Bible, proclaiming: “Here I stand; I can do no other. God help me. Amen!” This is the statue of a true hero, firm, unmovable, nothing and no one is going to make him withdraw his writing or change his opinion.

Reality however was quite different. Luther did not answer immediately, but requested a day to give him time to think. His answer then was as follows: *“Unless I am convicted by the testimony of Scripture or by evident reason - for I trust neither in popes nor in councils alone, since it is obvious that they have often erred and contradicted themselves - I am convicted by the Scripture which I have mentioned and my conscience is captive by the Word of God . Therefore I cannot and will not recant, since it is difficult, unprofitable and dangerous indeed to do anything against one's conscience. God help me. Amen.”*



The first part of Luther's answer is crucial. He was prepared to recant, even burn his own books, if proven wrong from Scripture and evident, clear reason. His theology was not engraved in stone, but grew out of the study of the Bible, his reflections on the Church and the world he lived in and shaped by his conscience.

Yet for some reason only the last part of his response became famous, and it was changed in the process. As a result it seems as if Lutheran Theology is firm, unmovable, and cannot be altered.

Firm - that is true. We need to know where we stand. But unmovable, not to be altered? - definitely not. Luther emphasised that he is human and prone to erring. An integral part of our theology is that we allow ourselves to be questioned and challenged. We need to re-formulate and re-describe our theology as time changes and “evident reason” confronts us with new challenges. We need to know where we stand, but we also need to embrace the fact that we are on the move, constantly learning and growing.

God, and the gospel of Jesus Christ, is much bigger, vast, and no single theologian or denomination can claim to have fully understood and formulated this mystery. That is why we need to be eager to learn - from Scripture, from Christians of other denominations, from science and research. All this will help

us to express the Gospel in a clear, fresh and relevant way, in this time and place.

“Firm - and eager to learn” will be the topic of our Synod (20-23 October 2011 in Harburg). We hope that it will help us to live as Church and Christians and impact on our country and society - based on Scripture, whilst making full use of our intellect, and obeying our conscience.

News from the Church:

The Northrand Congregation has elected the Pastor's couple Heiko und Katrin Zürn-Steffens, and Midrand/Kelvin elected Pastor Michael Diezun, all from the EKD. We hope that they will be able to start serving in their respective congregations as from 1. September 2011.

Pastor Werner Harms is retiring at the end of September. For almost 28 years he served in our Church - in Augsburg-Braunschweig, Verden-Dundee and as Youth Pastor KZN. We thank him and his wife Ilse for their dedication and diligence. May God bless them in their retirement. At the same time we hope that Werner will still have many opportunities to help out as retired pastor.

From Germany we received the news of the death of Pastor Klaus Vollmer, aged 80. For many years he visited our Church and conducted seminars that had a profound influence on many lives. May God comfort his family.

God bless you!

Your brother in Christ,
Horst Müller (Bishop)