

'What has Porvoo done for me?' A Presentation by Johan Dalman

Bishop Dalman has provided this summary of his presentation

What has 'Porvoo' – or the Porvoo communion, getting its name from the ecumenical agreement of 1992 (www.porvoocommunion.org) between the Anglican Churches of the British Isles and the Lutheran Churches of the Northern European (Scandinavian) Countries – meant for the signatory Churches? What is its potential for the future?

After giving a brief introduction to the agreement as such, including a few fly on the wall memories from the initial stages of the process, I sought to single out a few beneficial consequences of this fellowship.

The idea, already from the beginning, was not to create another world wide or even regional ecumenical organisation, but to build on current work within the Churches, getting as many different people together for mutual exchange of ideas, experiences and resources.

This meant that Porvoo cooperation, and experiences of life within the Porvoo Churches, was something a wide range of officers, officials and other church members were touched by.

The Porvoo report as such might have dealt a lot with the office of bishop (which was only natural, this being the final item on the agenda for Anglican and Lutheran Churches discussing the four criteria of the Chicago Lambeth Quadilateral of 1888). Over and above this I argued that Porvoo has strengthened our confessional identity. It has encouraged us to revisit our understanding of Holy Scripture, as containing all things necessary for faith. The Creeds (in particular the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds) as the sufficient statement of Christian faith. The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, and the historic episcopate in apostolic succession, locally adopted.

Porvoo has liberated ecumenism. Broadening it to involve people within our Churches (with special interests and competences other than ecumenical theology) such as Canon Lawyers, IT- and Communication officers, Youth officers etc.

Porvoo has helped us remember that differences in churchmanship between Churches are mirrored in the differences within Churches. Standpoints coming from one party within a Church might resonate with another party within another Church without them otherwise having much in common.

I said that Porvoo provides a common focus, builds no walls, and seeks to involve and interact with other than only the signatory Churches.

Porvoo is very much a communion in the making with a strong emphasis on cooperation on all levels.

Having given my audience a few minutes to stretch their legs I ventured into a field where I believe the Porvoo Churches has a precious gift to value and develop – the gift of being

rooted in Scripture, Tradition and Reason, and at the same time open to a more sensually oriented (not sure if this a workable term), experientially oriented, spirituality.

In opposition to a reductionist understanding of the world, where religion and "ordinary life" are perceived as belonging to different spheres and where the world is described as a place where individual rights has to be protected – the alternative being the war of all against all.

A Christian understanding would oppose that. Creation is not at war with itself – it is at peace, if only we humble ourselves and subject ourselves to the loving will of its Creator.

Moving on from that I introduced the Beads of Christ as a tool for connecting our "ordinary life" with our "spiritual life", an ecumenical rosary which today is worn/used by several hundred thousand Christians (there are currently well over a million sets sold) in Scandinavia, Germany and on the British Isles.

And I concluded: It is my firm belief – my absolute conviction – that when tens of thousand, perhaps hundred of thousands Swedes (our own Queen Silvia among them) carry their Beads of Christ either around their wrists or in their pockets, into their ordinary, so called secular everyday life, they slowly, but effectively, break down the invented and unhelpful barrier between secular and sacred. They re-sacralise the world – they bring worship, in a wordless way, back into society.

And that to me is, as a fearless Anglican once said, like picking up the torch from the ditch. The torch of Christian belief with a flame intense enough to light up every corner of our life – of every life.

Johan Dalman