



# Convocation Quarterly

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## Bishop's Corner - John: The BD's Eyewitness Account?

### Special points of interest:

Bishop's Book Review

Spiritual Life Conference

YAE Annual Weekend

Nafuma Refugee Center

Orvieto's New Home

Church and Home

Origin of our Episcopal Flag

Chapel of the Holy Family

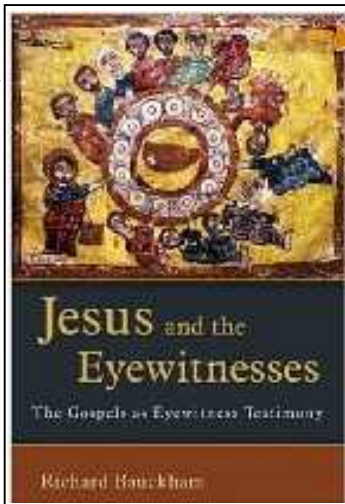
A View from Palazzola

Equipping for Mission in Rennes

It has already been reviewed, by no less a reader than the Archbishop of Canterbury, but here goes...

Richard Bauckham, a New Testament scholar retired from teaching at the University of St. Andrew's, in Scotland, has written a stunning new look at the Gospel of John, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*. In this book, published in 2006 by Eerdmans, he argues that eyewitness accounts of various kinds underlie the Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, he posits, are collections of various materials, including eyewitness testimony relayed to the evangelists. Standing alone is the Gospel of John. Basing his

thesis on a closely-argued analysis of the earliest historical references to the writing of the Gospels, Bauckham concludes that John the Elder (not to be confused with John, one of the "Sons of Thunder" composed the Gospel of John. This John, writing as the "Beloved Disciple," created in his old age the spectacular account of the life of Christ that has inspired billions of people for two thousand years.



Convincing? Well, read the book. While I am not 100% convinced, I can't say why not, other than the habit of thinking of the Gospels in terms of the "Documentary Hypothesis": Mark wrote first, after 70 AD, when the Temple was destroyed; Matthew and Luke wrote around 80, and used Mark, a second unknown source of sayings they have in common beyond Mark, (called "Q" from the German for "source"—*Quelle*), plus their own particular materials; and finally, John, written after 90 by several hands.

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## A View from Palazzola

### Spiritual Life Conference Invites Quiet Prayer

As ever, whether in the eyes of those who have been before, or as discovered by those visiting for the first time, the view from Palazzola is breath-taking. The trees, the cool breeze – with even a very light touch of snow on arrival – the expanse of Lago Albano and the unmistakable features of Castel Gandolfo on the horizon all make for a feeling of serenity, time and space, simplicity and beauty.

About 30 individuals from the Convocation, from a parish of the Armed Forces, and a guest from Scotland, gathered in this peaceful setting of the Villa Palazzola outside Rome during the weekend of 20-22 March. Participants travelled to Italy for the Convocation's first Spiritual Life Conference, an event sponsored by the Commission on the Ministry of the Baptized (COMB), with planning and leadership undertaken by the Rev. Clair and Rainer Ullmann.

#### Centering Prayer

The programme, so expertly led by the Rev. Barbara Crafton, interim rector at St. James', Florence, included a session on the practice of Centering Prayer. This ancient form of Christian meditation is about quieting ourselves to listen for the word of God when we pray.

Prayer is something that many of us feel compelled to do, but in our modern world, and because of our quest to "do things right", we can easily miss the point. An action-focused approach, endearing and



*The Conference offered time for quiet meditation alone*

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## YAE in Geneva and at Taizé

For those of you not familiar with Taizé, it is an ecumenical community of brothers founded during World War II by a monk, Brother Roger. Today, the community counts about 100 members. Since its founding, Taizé has become a Mecca for young people, mostly between the ages of 17 and 30 years old. Most participants spend a week there to seek communion with God, in study, in prayer, singing, or in silence and reflection. The brothers' tranquil garden and woods offers an inviting place for praying and for reading. The program encourages participants to carry their experience into the world; to their local churches and communities, undertaking a "Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth."

The Convocation annual youth gathering, *Youth Across Europe*, met in Geneva this year over Ascension weekend. Part of the event included a two-day trip to the Burgundy region of France. Helena Mbele-Mbong, Emmanuel Church Geneva, joined the young people, serving as one of the drivers for the trip to France.

"I was one of the lucky adults who was asked to drive. I had spent a couple of hours at Taizé in January. It was the coldest day of the year, and only a dozen or so others were there, just a few students from Chicago. I looked forward to the Taizé experience and getting to know our Convocation youth. During some weeks in the summer, there are over 5000 people at Taizé, with 90% of them under the

age of 30 years old. All are provided a place to sleep, many in tents, and all are fed, in an amazing well-organized chain production for the service and clean-up.

When we arrived, we were sorted by age, and I was to join a group of about 400 other adults for the meetings and meals. We heard a couple of powerful presentations on Job and the Gospel of John, emphasizing an important parallel; God doesn't want us to focus on suffering, but rather on what it means – God reaching out to us where we are and our receiving fully who He is. We gained a new understanding of "glorified" (John 17). Through Jesus' glorification, God became transparent, fully visible to us. Both Job and John are talking about an unconditional love, sought by God and by us. He went on to say that the greatest sign of the resurrection is the community – an emphasis I noted throughout the Taizé experience.

The days at Taizé center on worship, joining the brothers in sitting on the floor of this huge, simple church. The most powerful moment for me was the Eucharist. Looking out across the crowd of 4000 young people, it occurred to me that this was not much of a testimony for the secularization of Europe. I thought, these are the people that Jesus spoke to – the disciples to be fed – and I could imagine Jesus speaking to the crowds on the hills beside Galilee, where he began his work. Today, at Taizé's Church of the Resurrection, the brothers are carrying on that work."

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## ITALY: In Rome, roads lead to Nafuma refugee center

In a typical weekday the Rev. Michael Vono, rector of St Paul's within the Wall in Rome, encounters Afghans, Sudanese, Ghanaians, Turks, Congolese – and few Italians or Americans. That's because the Joel Nafuma Refugee Center in St. Paul's is the only day center in the city for refugees in Italy's capital city.

A staircase from the garden takes you into the musky air of St. Paul's crypt, a cavernous space filled with about 100 men. At one end, about two dozen are gathered in front of a television, others are playing ping-pong while several have pushed a couple of chairs together for makeshift beds and are catching some sleep.

"The center is a place of refuge. Some kids who came here from Afghanistan said people there told them, '[In Rome], look for St. Paul's, the American church,'" Vono said in an interview. A man from Afghanistan, pulled out a cell phone and displayed videos of vehicles and buildings exploding from bomb attacks in his home country, when asked why he came to Rome.

"Some of them are on the streets and have nowhere to go at night," said Vono, gesturing to the sleepers. "In the morning we serve tea and biscuits," he continued, opening a door leading to a room with food supplies. "Today, we sent out for 240 bag lunches. We also have razors, soap, toothbrushes, and a barber comes in once a week," he said.

In another room off the main area, about a dozen men are settled in a classroom, where a middle-aged male volunteer is teaching basic Italian phrases. "We have English and Italian lessons, all provided by volunteers," said Vono. Near the classroom, a student from Sudan, asked anyone within reach how to pronounce a list of English vowels he had written on a scrap of paper.

The center, which has received a \$25,000 grant from the United Thank Offering, a grant making agency of the Episcopal Church, sees 1,000 to 1,500 people a year. Vono said he and center coordinator Akbatan Abdulla, who came in 1999 from Iraq as a refugee, offer information on finding places to live, preparing paperwork for immigration authorities and navigating a large, busy European city.

Few women use the center since many come from Muslim countries where they are not comfortable in the proximity of groups of men, said Vono. Also, it isn't always smooth sailing when different ethnic and national groups share a space. "If there is any fighting, I close the center for the day, and they know that," he said; however, 10 years ago he ended up in the hospital for

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*In the Nafuma Refugee center all races and creeds mix.*

## New Worship Space opened in Orvieto

On Easter Sunday, the Anglican-Episcopal Mission in Orvieto, Italy celebrated its first service in its new home in the city's Centro Storico (historic center). Easter has always been especially meaningful for the congregation; the congregation's very first service was held on Easter Sunday 2005 in the Cappellina San Lodovico Monastery. Later, during Bishop Pierre's official 2008 visit, the mission was named *Church of the Resurrection*, a name befitting of the mission congregation, and in remembrance of their first official Sunday Eucharist.

Since 2005, when St. Paul's-Within-the-Walls first planted the mission, the church has moved several times to different worship spaces, first to various sites provided by the Vescovo of Orvieto, and later to a worship hall at Gordon College. The congregation was always grateful to be received in someone else's home, but the reality of finding their own worship space in the center of Orvieto is an exciting event in the life of the small worship community. The gift of a generous benefactor has made it possible for the Orvieto community to lease the new worship space, and of course, the leadership at St. Paul's, and its rector, the Rev. Michael Vono, continue to support the community's endeavor.

The new worship space is simple-white



and elegant. It is lovely, pure space. Its rusticated, barrel-vaulted ceiling and subtle cove lighting help to create a quiet air of spirituality, of sacred space. There is an additional, multi-purpose room which the group plans to use for Sunday school meetings, adult education, as well as other projects and needs yet to be "dreamed-up."

The Rev. Russell G. Ruffino, serving as vicar of the Orvieto mission since December 2008, is pleased with the new space and its location. He is equally enthusiastic about the potential of the mission and its ability to draw worshippers from the Orvieto area. He describes the mission church as a spiritual community working to "make our embrace as wide as God's."

Resurrection continues to prosper, having over the years a well-established core group. As with other churches in Europe, the membership is constantly changing. Parishioners often move away, and the church also serves as home for many visitors or part-time residents in Italy. Father Ruffino notes, "God continues to add new families to our community, and this means that the ministry of hospitality will always be central to our worship life. We are fortunate to have found this new, welcoming sanctuary in the heart of our village."

## Food for Thought: What makes a Church a Home?

It is probably true to say that in every city where the Convocation has a church there is at least one other church offering English language worship, often far more than one.

This raises the question of why we need to have churches in these towns, or what we have to offer which the other existing churches either cannot or do not offer.

At a recent retreat, led by the Bishop at the Church of St. Augustine of Canterbury, all present were asked to tell the story of how they came to be attending our particular church, and what kept them coming back. Having analysed the replies, an interesting pattern emerges which could help us to see where our ministry might be taking us, or where we might be more conscious of what we are doing right.

The most common reason for returning after the first visit was a feeling of being welcome, physically and/or spiritually, which was followed by positive comments about how they were quickly involved in Parish life "drawn in" as several put it.

Again and again phrases such as "Comfortable with the service", "At home with the style of worship" came, sometimes linked to the mention of an Anglican or Episcopalian background, sometimes with the comment that the person came from a different background and liked our way of worship.

The comment that our Church bridges the gap between Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions was heard several times, especially in the context of marriages involving one partner from each tradition. The fact that we offer "open communion" (i.e. where all baptised Christians are welcome to receive) was also noted positively.

"Spiritual opportunities for the children" or "I thought it time to start taking my children to church" was also a frequent reason giving for coming to church, especially from those who admitted that their own church going had lapsed.

Of course, the chance to meet other English speaking people when living in a foreign environment was also clearly present in many cases.

So what can we learn from these comments?

- Firstly it is important to remember how strange and unsure we ourselves felt when first we entered what is now "our" church and be sure to offer strangers a genuinely warm, friendly welcome, without crowding them!
- Our high transition rate, often seen as a challenge, can also be an opportunity to involve people in our various ministries and "suck them in" to our community.

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## Refugee Center

*Continued from page 2*

surgery when an attempt to break up a fight resulted in an accidental hard punch to his shoulder, tearing tendons.

Constructed in 1873, St. Paul's was the first non-Catholic church built within the walls of Rome. Today, the refugee center fits with a multi-cultural congregation. In addition to English-speaking parishioners, the church also hosts Latin American and African congregations.

Vono, who arrived at St. Paul's in 1992, said the center was started in 1984. "In those days, it was people from Uganda. [Dictator Idi] Amin was chasing them out and they

were coming to Rome," said Vono. The church is located several blocks from

Fr. Vono sees the centre's mission as "restoring human dignity" and acting as a place of reconciliation between religious groups

Rome's main Termini railroad station and Nafuma was a young Ugandan priest who invited his desperate countrymen off the streets and into the church.

"They are so broken, these people. When I first arrived, part of the effort was to work them through the immigration channels in Rome, and we'd try to get some Africans to go to Canada, America.

Those doors closed within the first five years of my time here. The Catholic charities have dwindled; the government has been closing things," Vono observed.

He sees the center's mission as "restoring human dignity" and acting as a place of

reconciliation between religious groups often at war in other countries.

"I was always interested in trying to secure a place where Muslims and Christians could have a common space. The Sudanese Muslims and Christians would say, 'Why do you have them here?' (referring to members of the other faith). At first, they won't sit next to each other, then they have to get in line for tea. Then they are hanging on to each other. It's a ministry of reconciliation that emerges in the most profound way.

"We celebrate Ramadan, we celebrate Christmas. If there's anything I'm grateful to the Lord for, [it is to] take away the trappings of religiosity and create the most genuine of religious experiences. They are making room for God in their lives," said Vono.

*Credit: Episcopal Life*

## The Origin of our Episcopal Flag

In a showcase in the undercroft of the Cathedral of the Incarnation, Garden City (Diocese of Long Island, NY), is what is thought to be the original Episcopal Flag. The flag was designed in 1918 by a member of the Cathedral, Mr. William M. Baldwin, who envisioned a great procession as part of the Cathedral's fifth anniversary. To heighten the color of the procession, he arranged with heraldic experts to design processional banners. Three banners were designed: a diocesan banner, and banners for each for the two archdeacons. Each parish and mission also had their own banner. Altogether, the 170 banners were said to have been a "picturesque sight."

Mr. Baldwin, who was the Cathedral's General Convention delegation, was conscious of the lack of an Episcopal flag, and decided to petition the next General Convention to address the matter. The Convention established a Commission with Mr.

Baldwin serving as its appointed chair. At the next General Convention, held in Kansas City that year, Mr. Baldwin presented his model for an Episcopal flag.

The Convention found the flag to be too small, and asked him to make a full-size replica. Gathering the appropriate materials in Kansas proved to be challenging. A shopping trip yielded some "turkey red" cotton fabric, some pale blue material – a child's crib sheet, in fact. That evening, in his hotel room, he and the Rev. Hubert S. Wood worked diligently with scissors, needles and thread, to fabricate the replica. The following day, they triumphantly presented the new, larger flag to the Convention. It is this flag that is on

cross is the oldest Christian symbol, dating back to the third century. The white represents purity and the red is the blood of the martyrs. The blue is ecclesiastical blue, light in color, which was used for the clothing of the Blessed Virgin Mary and, on this flag, represents the human nature of our Lord. The nine cross-crosslets or Jerusalem crosses represent the nine dioceses that convened in Philadelphia in 1789 when the Constitution of the Protestant Episcopal Church was adopted along with the House of Bishops and House of Clerical and Lay Deputies and the Book of Common Prayer. The nine cross-crosslets are set in the form of a St. Andrew's cross in memory of the fact that, to avoid swearing allegiance to the British Crown, Bishop-elect Samuel Seabury of Connecticut had to go to Scotland to be consecrated by Scottish Bishops."

It is, of course, interesting that most Episcopalians today identify the red cross as St. George's Cross...the symbol first adopted in 1190 by England and the City of London for its flagships. Later, it was adopted for the uniforms of British soldiers in the Crusades in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, and in particular, by the Knights Templar!

*Credits: The Diocese of Long Island, Louise M. Baietto.*



*Ladies from the Diocese of Long Island display the flag*

display at the Cathedral in Garden City.

Mr. Baldwin described the design of the flag and its symbolism to be: "The red

## Chapel of the Holy Family

### A Very Special Retreat Centre in Mühlbach am Hochkönig

The Rev. Clair and Rainer Ullmann moved to Austria in 2001 to be nearer to his mom who was 85 years old at the time. There, they realized their dream of finding a place that lends itself to retreats.

When the tool shed was converted to the Chapel of the Holy Family, Bishop Pierre and the local Roman Catholic priest, Pater Hager, were invited to bless this chapel as an ecumenical place of worship and prayer. It was a very special occasion; Bishop Pierre wowed the locals with his regalia and his sermon in German. They never met a Bishop like him! People came from as far away as Belgium to share in this joyful celebration and thus the Chapel of the Holy Family was born.

Rev. Clair and Rainer have studied together and developed a program called MAP: Marriage an Adventure in Progress. This is a program that is designed individually for each couple that comes for refreshment, honing their skills of communication, time management, personal issues, transition, parenting, etc. Since 2003, they have had about one or two couples every month from around the Convocation.

Eventually, their retreat center has included singles and those outside of the Convocation. The languages used are English, German, and French.

A very special activity that has evolved is hosting the youth group from Church of the Ascension, Germany once a year. Rev. Clair works there as an assisting priest.

They have also had the pleasure of hosting a women's retreat of 12 for the weekend. It was quite amazing, and is one weekend that is still talked about! Now this retreat is too big for their home, so they use other facilities.

Nestled against the woods on one hand and against the steel gray of Hochkönig, on the other, the sense of being away from the busy world permeates one's whole being. If you find yourself needing some time alone in a quiet corner of the world, this is the place to come!

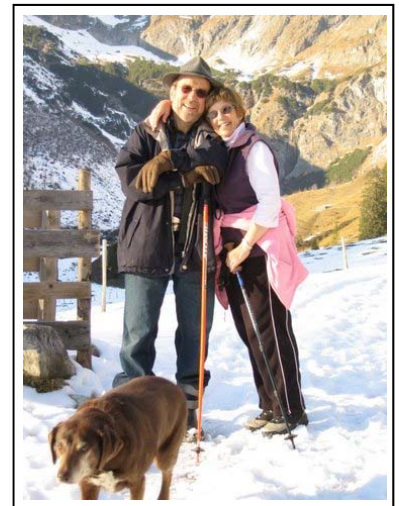
If you have not had the chance to do so, check out their web site: [www.members.aon.at@map-ullmann](http://www.members.aon.at@map-ullmann). There you will find the monthly reflections for women and couples. (actually anyone can read any of them and find something to carry them through the month) You will also find their contact details.



#### Pictures:

*Left: The chapel of the Holy family nestles under the Hochkönig mountain.*

*Right: The Rev. Clair and Rainer lead the MAP ("Marriage, an Adventure in Progress") course in this beautiful setting.*



#### Church and Home?

*Continued from page 3*

- The ministry to teach our children, valuable in and of itself, can also be a form of evangelism and outreach to adults as well!
- Our liturgy, which we sometimes take for granted, is a valuable part of our heritage: a part in which we can take pride. Often this is enhanced by beautiful music, which is also a great gift.
- A noteworthy reason for visiting the church at all, especially for the first time or for those who had come back having not felt inclined to do so after a first visit was "I came because xxxx invited me to come." It can sometimes seem a little intimidating when we are called to be Evangelists, but mentioning to a friend or colleague that we enjoy worshipping at our particular church and inviting them to come and see can be a valuable gift to both the person invited and the church itself.

*Raymond Hodgkinson,  
St Augustine of Canterbury, Wiesbaden*

## Opportunity to be a partner in mission!

Support the Mission Episcopal de Rennes by underwriting the cost of items needed for their new worship center and offices

Items needed include: paint, office supplies, etc.

Contact: [Canon@tec-europe.org](mailto:Canon@tec-europe.org) for more details.

## A View from Palazzola

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worthy as it may be, too often simply does not recognise, as Rev. Barbara pointed out, that prayer is a gift from God – not a job.

As we are all different, our style and practices in prayer life will inevitably not be identical. There are, however, certain tools, skills, and approaches that one can develop which offer the opportunity for enriching our lives and helping us draw closer to God. Centering prayer is one of these methods. Centering prayer is about getting out of the way of ourselves. It allows us to reflect against the backdrop of God's infinity. This "nobody" - me - is "somebody" because of God. Centering prayer can provide a sense of waiting for and listening to God. During the weekend, participants had plenty of opportunities to practice centring prayer, in the communal rooms, in their own space, on the terrace. Most found the practice of centering prayer to help one to come closer to God.

Daily prayer requires a certain discipline. Members of monastic orders spend possibly 4½ to 5 hours per day in prayer, but most people would have difficulty with that level of commitment. Time for prayer is more limited in modern life, but this need not undermine the quality of one's prayer. Prayer is the gift of attention; it's not the job of paying attention, and in developing our prayer life, one needs to we ask God: "Give me the gift of prayer you want me to have."

As humans, we operate as conditioned animals, and as part of our conditioning, it can be very helpful to go to a specific place of prayer, in your home, at the office, wherever. Somewhere set aside; a desk, perhaps with the Bible, Prayer book, or other books. This is ideal for our principal time of prayer, but don't forget that we can pray anywhere and at any time.

### Contemplation of Life and Death

Although perhaps not conscious of it, death is something that most humans fear, and it is a fear that can pervade our whole being. At Palazzola, participants discussed death. The discussion was neither morbid nor fearful, but rather about making oneself trustful and forgiving. In Western culture, people normally refer to time in a linear construct – the time line – and so death is often recognised as a final event at the end of our time. But our limited, transient time on earth is one part of

eternity and death rather than being a dramatic event – a singularity – is part of the continuous and continuing whole; we are and will remain connected with the saints of all ages. There is no past and future in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is now! The spiritual life

Palazzola; "Actually, the Spiritual Conference was not a conference at all, at least not like the ones with which most of us are familiar: no presentations, no PowerPoint, no Q&A sessions. Instead, each to his or her own needs, we spent a fair bit of time in reflection and silence, in our rooms, in the communal spaces



prepares us for a holy death. While we don't get to choose when or how we will die, we can choose who it is who will die: a faithful, trusting friend of the living Christ?

### Spiritual Direction

What help is there and how can we develop our spiritual life? Spiritual Direction is one option. It is a friendship focused on the spiritual growth of one person. Classical spiritual direction is not a normal friendship, it is not intended to be bi-directional. The right spiritual director for you can be difficult to find. One alternative is the formation of a spiritual direction group, meeting perhaps once a month for about 2 hrs. It needs to be a carefully selected group of people because the arrangements need to be intimate and safe. Such groups will only succeed if there is a plan and there is structure to what is carried out, e.g. prayer, followed by questions: What was the last period like? What did you learn? What effect has this had on your relationship with God? When were you nearest to/furthest away from God?

### Conclusion

David Case, Ascension Church, Munich, describes his weekend experience at

including the terrace, on a walk through the trees, although things were definitely quite lively during meals and in the evenings. The stillness and calm in centering prayer was contrasted by the vibrant energy at other times. We are all now a little bit different, transformed. The final Eucharist was a joyous time in the presence of the risen Christ. We sang, we prayed, we shared, we rejoiced in having had time to revel in the company of such a group of people, different in many ways yet alike, from all over the world but living in Europe, we reflected on deepening our spiritual life and we broke bread together. The final exchange of the Peace was very special."

"Brother, sister, let me serve you  
Let me be as Christ to you;  
Pray that I may have the grace to  
Let you be my servant, too."

*The Rev. Barbara Crafton is a well-known priest in the Episcopal Church, serving at parishes in NY' City, and as chaplain at Ground Zero after 9/11. She is a Spiritual Director, author, and founder of Geranium Farm, an institute for the encouragement of spiritual growth. See [www.geraniumfarm.org](http://www.geraniumfarm.org).*

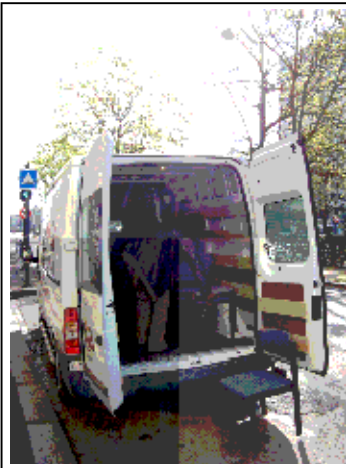
*Contribution: David Case/The IKON*

## Equipping for Mission — Rennes outfits new Home

This spring, some of the more observant members of All Saints' Church Waterloo likely noticed some extra empty space at the back of their church's sanctuary. The day before Palm Sunday, Stephan, the church's handyman, and lay-leader Felicity Handford loaded a set of 35 chairs that had been stored there into the back of a rented transit van. The van was bound for the Mission Episcopale de Rennes (MER), in the Bretagne region of France. In early 2009, All Saints' outreach committee, with the support of the congregation, had voted to give some of the chairs from their own sanctuary to help furnish the MER's new worship space.

MER, an extraordinary group, was originally founded by a group of Rwandan refugees who resettled in Rennes after the Rwandan genocide. After arriving in Rennes, its leaders created various programs designed to meet the needs of an uprooted community, many of whom were traumatized, suffering from post-traumatic stress. In speaking of this resettlement period, they described themselves as a community of people who had lost all hope, but also as people of God who were called to be witnesses to the life of Jesus. "Despite our own loss and sadness, we found that we also had much to share with others in need."

In the beginning, they didn't have a master plan; they simply analyzed the needs of the community and dedicated themselves to creating the necessary structures to meet those needs. For example, to serve people in need of short-term emergency assistance, they created a common micro-loan fund. The group's members -- largely immigrants of modest means themselves -- each donated 10 Euro per month to create a pool of funds. Over the years, the fund has grown, allowing them to serve more people. More recently, Emmanuel Church in Geneva made a contribution in support of this program.



This group has undergone much change since its beginnings. The mission has begun to attract new people to include people of other nationalities, notably even a few French members. Today, they count some 100 members.

Just before Christmas, with the help of a grant from the Convocation and Christ Church Royat, MER was able to lease a small apartment that includes two through rooms. These rooms will serve as worship space and meeting rooms. The chairs from All Saints' will be used in the worship space. Three smaller rooms will serve the needs of UCAE-MER's (their umbrella organization) community programs.

It was in mid-April that Felicity Handford set off for Rennes with the chairs for Rennes' worship hall. Later that same day, she met the Convocation's Canon Missioner, and MER's lay leaders. Together, they unloaded the chairs, and the following day, they visited IKEA to secure other essential items. By Palm Sunday afternoon, rugs were placed on the floors, chairs were arranged in neat rows, candles were put in place, and the altar was covered in white linen. All was completed in time for the visit for the first service, to be held on Easter Sunday, when the ministry team of the Rev. Dr. George and Mrs. Victoria Hobson would visit from Paris.

A week and a half later, the Bishop shared a message from Théophile and the MER community. "The same day we celebrated Easter, we received our newborn -- born the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2009 at 12h35. He is a son and his name is Exaucé. So thank you for being with us, and may God bless you." Bishop Pierre added a note reminding us that the French word "exaucer" means "to grant," usually as in answering prayers. He had added his own blessing, "Que le Seigneur bénisse Exaucé et toute sa famille!"

## From our Bishop

*Continued from page 1*

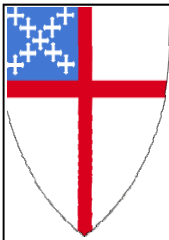
Without dismantling the DH, Bauckham pushes back on the dating of the three synoptics. No problem. He also reminds us that Bishop John A. T. "Honest-to-God" Robinson (as my professor [Reginald Fuller](#) called him) shocked the New Testament world by arguing that John wrote [well before](#) the Temple's fall, and that his Gospel contains early material by the Beloved Disciple or "BD", an argument which I accepted in my studies under Dr Fuller years ago.

But to go from there to accepting the Gospel as the creation of one disciple writing in his old age? What does it mean, in terms of my preaching and teaching, which I try—as must all preachers and teachers of the Word—to be as faithful to the Scriptures as I can be?

When I first became acquainted with Kenneth Bailey's work (which Bauckham quotes extensively), I had to change significantly the way I understood the parables (and I strongly recommend his [books](#)). Bailey argues at great length for the reliable oral transmission of gospel materials from Jesus' teaching to the texts. But he discusses John much less than the other three Gospels.

If we are to accept that one writer, the BD, is at the origin of John's Gospel, then we have to consider that several of the wonderful accounts in which Jesus is seen in private moments with someone—the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, Mary Magdalene in the Garden, Peter on the shore of Galilee, for example—were collected from others, and worked into the framework of the Gospel in that elliptical style characteristic of this text. Well, I suppose if we can and should accept Bailey's thesis of the reliability of oral transmission, and the BD is a contemporary of these people, then it stands to reason that these are also eyewitness testimonies.

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## YAE at Taizé

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Deborah Cole, of St. Augustine's, Wiesbaden, offers her perspective on the YAE Geneva Weekend 2009 and Taizé. "I know what I am not because I know I am." What does that mean? "I am" is the Old Testament name for God. Our theme for the weekend was based on the fact that we are not the center of the Universe, but God is. He is always with us, and can help us through life if we let Him."

We met the youth from Christ the King at the Frankfurt train station to travel to Geneva together. We were to make great friends among all of the youth groups of the Convocation and their leaders, taking time to learn, contemplate, and pray. Every day, we had prayer meetings, lessons, small groups, games, music, outside events and plenty to eat! Some of the questions that we dealing with were: What makes you have doubts? Do you blame God more than you thank him? Do you think that there is pain in the world? How can you organize your time to make room for God?

### YAE at Taizé

On our arrival, the youth and adults were quickly divided into age groups for various Bible studies. Three times a day, there was a Taizé service – Taizé chants, scripture, silent prayer, and finally chants to close the service. There were times for tea, for Bible study, workshops, as well as free time for walks, meditation, or ice cream. We concentrated on a letter from Kenya, describing the problems and injustices there. Our group focused on how modern society needs to be more open and sympathetic to the needs of the people there and not just our own needs. How do you communicate your faith to someone who does not have the same belief? Our group responded in this way: "Through debating, we learn to respect our differences," and "The courage to have conversation can lead to friendship, understanding, and agreement."

After our return from Taizé, we each wrote a letter to ourselves, which was to be sent to us in three months time, to remind us of what we learned and to encourage us to continue to follow the personal goals we set. Bishop Pierre was in Geneva for a confirmation service. It was very moving, especially the testimony from one of Geneva's youth, Jessica. We closed the YAE event with a rousing rendition of our theme song for the weekend, *Blessed be Your Name*. "Every blessing you pour out, I'll turn back to praise, When the darkness closes in, Lord I will say, Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be your name."

## From our Bishop

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With the distinctive Johannine stamp.

And then we have to ask what the difference is between the public teachings of Peter that underlie Mark's Gospel (and I Peter), and the perspective of the BD? You will remember, Gentle Reader, how the BD always seems to get things right before old Peter. He even beats him to the tomb in a footrace (John 20:4)! As Bauckham points out, it means that there is an alternative source of Jesus materials that is as reliable historically as the Petrine materials.

To put it another way: it is of fundamental importance to me that we should emphasize the obvious, namely, that we are Christians and followers of Jesus for only one reason. That is that, in some sense or another, we trust the original disciples' accounts, however we believe they are transmitted to us. Our faith is based on that trust. Our moral responsibilities as Jesus' disciples rest on what they said. Without their testimony, our faith is null and void.

The Gospel of John was pushed to the bottom of the pile in terms of reliability by earlier New Testament scholars. The great German scholar Rudolf Bultmann, for instance, called it a "late Hellenistic romance" in his commentary, even re-ordering the gospel narrative, which to him seemed to have been mistakenly put together, as if its pages had been blown about by a breeze in the evangelist's study. The work of many people since Bishop Robinson, and now Bauckham, have put John back on top.

So accepting the thesis of the BD's eyewitness biography of Jesus, written by John the Elder, means that the theological point of view of the Gospel needs to be restored in its importance, as well. The German scholar Ernst Käsemann posited in his 1968 *Theology of the New Testament* that John's theology is an antidote to the "early Catholicism" of the Petrine school. The BD—a *Lutheran*? Time to rethink all that—and much much more.

Read "Jesus and the Eyewitness" for yourself, Gentle Reader, and see what you think. In any event, in its very careful approach to sources, close argumentation, accounting for other perspectives, and philosophical grounding, it is an antidote to a lot of the second-rate stuff filling the bookshelves in seminary libraries and clerics' studies. Whether Bauckham is right or not, that alone is precious.

And there is the word of the BD himself: "These things are written that you might **believe**..." (John 20:21). So—do I? Believe him? Do you?

Bishop Pierre

[originally on my blog at <http://bit.ly/12tPzE>]