

## **The Parish Administrator visited the German Protestant Church Festival in Stuttgart between Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2015 and Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

On Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June I had to leave the parish Office earlier to get with my luggage to Gatwick Airport to fly to the big German Protestant Festival, which is called in German “Evangelischer Kirchentag”. It takes place every two years in one of the bigger towns of Germany or in a region. Each of this festival has a theme. This years theme was “That we may become wise” (Psalm 90:12)” I can’t count anymore to how many of these festivals I have now gone.

This year we had the Festival in Stuttgart. It is a town famous for Mercedes and Porsche, but has a lot of other very interesting buildings and areas to visit. In the last years I was also involved in running the stall of the “Synod of German-Speaking Lutheran, Reformed and United Congregations in Great Britain” at the Market of Opportunities. We have six “Parochial Areas” in Great Britain except for Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is supported by Ireland. From each of the areas we tried to bring representatives, who would stand at our stall for three hours to talk about our parishes. So in my luggage was material, which I took for our stall.

I arrived safely even after an extreme long wait at the baggage drop in Stuttgart. I was kindly collected by my host. Most of the accommodation for younger people is in schools or church halls, us older people asked for accommodation with people, from the region, who offered to give their spare bedrooms to the visitors. My host took me by car to my accommodation, which was in the neighboring town called Esslingen. I would have to share our accommodation with our assistant vicar Rev. Waldemar Radacz. For four days you do not mind as long as you have a bed.

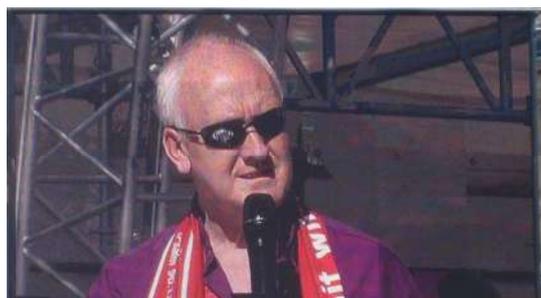
After I had a shower and refreshed myself, I made my way in to the center of Stuttgart by “S-Bahn”, which is similar like the Overground in London. With your ticket as a participant, you have free travel on all the public transport. A lot of events are all over the town or in neighboring villages or towns, so you travel a lot. In the center of Stuttgart was an Evening of Encounters. I met up with my friend Immo Hüneke (son of one of our previous vicars) from London and we strolled together through the town and participated in an open-air evening service with a lot of singing. Earlier was the big opening service in the middle of the town, but I couldn’t participate as I only just arrived at Stuttgart Airport.



The next morning after a very early breakfast with our host, I participated at a bible study (“The parable of the dishonest manager (Luke 16: 1–13)” with Immo’s brother Edzard (Eddi) Hüneke, who is very famous in Germany as he belongs to the biggest A-Cappella Group in Germany called “Wise Guys”.



If you do not understand or speak German, you still can find bible studies, which either been translated in to English or all been done in English. There is a complete book for the English-speaking participants, where you can find things to do in your own language. Afterwards I got my own program booklet as this was not send to England as it costs to much money. Then I went to an event about the Reformation Jubilee in the year 2017. After this I found my stall and dropped all my information leaflet off, which I had in my luggage. In the afternoon I went to the event with the title “Ecumenism among friends”. At this event I saw The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds, who speaks fluently German.



In the evening I got my “fix” of the A-Cappella Group the Wise Guys. At the same time I could have participated at the Meissen Service with The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds and co-chair of the Meissen Commission (The Meissen Commission, which oversees the relations between the Church of England and the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD)), or a world premiere of church music in the Liederhalle of Stuttgart. The first full day eventually ended at nearly midnight as it took some time to get to my accommodation.

The next Morning after again a nice breakfast together with our hosts, I went off to do my duty at our stall. At the stall you meet a lot of people, who have lived in Great Britain and have still fond memories about their time and also the German Protestant Church, but also young people, who want to be Au Pairs or just want information about the possibilities in Great Britain. Some previous vicars came past our stall or we had also vicars, who want information about how our churches works and what type of activities we do. On our stall we had a map of Great Britain, which showed all our congregations and the parochial areas. A lot of people were amazed how big sometimes the areas are, which our vicars have to cover. I had a lot of interesting conversation on this Friday Morning. One big attraction was our Great Britain Quiz. The price was a stay at the German YMCA Hotel Lancaster Gate in London. A lot of people couldn't answer all our questions correctly. But I will return to this later in my report.



After three hours at our stall in a tent, which got very hot, I left for some singing with again Immo's brother Edzard Hüneke und Daniel Dickopf. At this singing you

sing songs from the song book of the festival, which you get with your pack. This was in one of the parks in Stuttgart.



After getting quiet hot and heat exhausted. Immo and I decided to do our next program in a church. We went to a service called “Spirit. Passion. Joy – Caribbean Anglican A liturgical festival”. At this service again we heard the sermon from Bishop Dr h. c. Nicholas Baines, Leeds, UK. The musician of the service were Judy Bailey and Band, Germany – United Kingdom – Caribbean and Pundamilia – The Corporate Choir, Breklum – Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It was a complete different form of service and we enjoyed the coolness of the church and the uplifting message from Bishop Nick. The whole service was mostly spoken in English and translated in to German. This gave me inspiration for things we could try in our services. After the service Immo and I managed to have a few words with The Rt Revd Nick Baines.



Then we made our way to another service in another part of Stuttgart, where the hostess of Immo Hüneke Heidi Wucherer was participating in a choir. We heard a choral work from a not very know composer. This gave us a different service, which Immo and I are more used to in our German Church tradition.

After this we all felt quiet exhausted and needed something to eat and have a rest. Originally I planned to attend another event about the previous German President Richard von Weizsäcker, who was also the president of the German Protestant Church Festival. But I was very tired and I needed urgently something different. So ended the Friday.

So after a very restful time I started on Saturday again after a very good German breakfast. I went this time to the talk called “The world is spinning out of control” in one of the biggest halls (Arena of the Hanns-Martin-Schleyer-Halle) in Stuttgart. At this talk the guest speakers were Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier MP, federal foreign minister, Berlin, Dr Kofi A. Annan, former general secretary of the United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland and Bishop Nicholas Baines, Leeds, UK. The moderator was Arnd Henze, a journalist from the radio and television station WDR studio in Berlin. You can read a lot of it in the Blog of Bishop Dr h. c. Nicholas Baines, Leeds, UK (<https://nickbaines.wordpress.com/>) This talk was for me extremely interesting and gave me some new perspectives. Especially I liked the speech of Dr Kofi A. Annan. At this Festival could hear not only a lot of people with theological background, but also a lot of the major politician came as well. You could hear the German Chancellor Angelika Merkel or the German President Joachim Gauck as well as a lot of ministers of the German Government or other politicians. You have so much joyce that you can't do everything. After this inspiring talk I went back to our stall and dropped my backpack. I wanted now to have a look through the Exhibition Area (*Messe im Markt*). I visited a few stalls, which interested me. As all of the stalls were in tents, I got quiet exhausted. I also found a few stalls with food, which reminded either of London or my home country Austria. The best stall for me was the cold water stall, which I used during these days very often to refill my water bottles with fresh cold water. It didn't cost you anything.

In the late afternoon I had my other duty on the stall again. Again I had a lot of interesting conversations. Now we had this quiz and in the meantime we found about half a dozen of people, who had answered all our questions correct. We collected about 300 filled out quiz sheets. Now we needed a “Glücksfee” or in English an independent person, who could draw the winner. Opposite our stall was the Anglican Lutheran Society and also the Meissen Commission. On the Anglican Lutheran Society we had not only two previous vicars from the German Church, but also The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave, Bishop of Woolwich. Immo kindly asked him to draw our winner.



After three days we had to dismantle the stall. Four of us took our stall apart and had to take all the borrowed items back to a collecting point in the tent. All the items we wanted to keep for the next Festival ended up with me and in my luggage. It took us a while to dismantle it and also to say good-bye to all our neighbors. So in the evening we were all very exhausted and didn't want to go very far. I ended up again in the Hanns-Martin-Schleyer-Halle. The theme was courage and healing in faith. Here I met a very good German comedian, who is not only a comedian but a fully qualified doctor. I never have seen him as I now live since 25 years in Great Britain. All the speakers at the evening were thought provoking. After this event I was now very tired, so I made my way home with our vicar from Manchester Olaf Burghardt, who lived in the same town.

On Sunday after again a very good breakfast, I went back to Stuttgart to participate at the Closing Service. I met up with Immo again. You stood with thousands of other people to celebrate the Sunday service. It is a service with Holy Communion. Now you think how can you distribute to so many people Holy Communion, but there are a lot of little alters and a lot of helpers to distribute the Holy Communion.



After the service I had to make my way back to my accommodation as I had not managed to pack my luggage as I was so tired and didn't get up as early in the Morning as I wanted. After packing all my luggage, our host kindly gave us a short tour of Esslingen.

I will come back to Stuttgart one day with my husband and will look at all the other interesting buildings and Museums, which I didn't manage to do. But one thing is definitive in two years time, I will travel to Berlin and Wittenberg for the next German Protestant Festival. It is between 24th and 28th May 2017. Please speak to me, if you would like to come as well. I hope next time also our own vicar Canon Simon Butler comes along, as he had an invitation to visit this year. I got so many information and new impulses for my work at the German Church, but also for the Anglican Church.

Sunny Walker-Kier

Pictures by Sunny Walker-Kier and Immo Hüneke