

SIX CANDIDATES - ONE BISHOPRIC

5 men and 1 woman face a May election for the vacant Copenhagen diocese

The six candidates for the Copenhagen and Bornholm diocese vacated by Bishop Erik Norman Svendsen have a month left to persuade their electorate that they are the man (5 of them) or the woman (one of them) for the job. In alphabetical order (and with a brief manifesto from the *Christian Daily*) they are:



Kaj Bollmann (55), general secretary of the Church Foundation, seeking “to create a clear role for the Copenhagen churches and greater openness, while emphasising that I wish to be bishop *in* the diocese, not *of* it.”



Andreas Christensen (39), pastor of Frihavns Kirke, who wishes “to promote the Danish Lutheran Church by using the people’s history and by changing the Danes’ stereotypical view of their church.”



Anders Gadegaard (56), dean of Copenhagen Cathedral, who will “work for a conspicuous church with a focus on faith, our view of mankind and fundamental values, as well as on the relationship between church and state.”



Tine Lindhardt (51), general secretary of the Danish Bible Society, who wishes “to ensure that the church’s message is spread throughout the church and society.”



Peter Skov-Jakobsen (49), pastor of Holmens Kirke, who will be ‘quick to make decisions and create dialogue between the Christian faith communities and other religious traditions.’



Asser Skude (39), pastor of Kapernaums Kirke, who wishes “to involve lots of young people who have not otherwise been active in the church, to get volunteers to join in at their local church, and to get a better grip on the diocesan finances.”

The electorate in question are pastors, parish council members and representatives of the ‘independent’ churches (*valgmenigheder*) in the bishopric, who will receive a voting slip towards the end of April which must be returned by noon on 14th May. Candidates need more than half the votes to win outright, otherwise the two leaders go into a second round – as was the case with the vote in Roskilde (see *Church News* April 2008).

- ▶ The army chaplain writes home, P2
- ▶ The Danish Church may join the Brussels lobby! P2
- ▶ Pastors back church-state separation, P3
- ▶ Darwin project for schools and churches, P3
- ▶ News in brief, P3
- ▶ The Danish Seamen’s Church of Buenos Aires, P4
- ▶ Pastoral faith-groups support their colleagues, P4



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THE ARMY CHAPLAIN WRITES HOME

Pastor Oral Shaw holds a 'church tent' service with a difference

"Dear St. Clemens, Thanks for your greetings, it warms the heart to hear that you haven't forgotten me completely! How can I be so busy as a forces chaplain? Well, with my fellow-chaplain we're pastors for 700 soldiers in all. They sometimes find it difficult to be away from home, and although I too have a wife and two children back home, I serve here as someone who is part of it all and yet outside it all. I'm here as a pastor, sometimes as a social worker and a psychologist – but not as a soldier.

I have my own office in the biggest camp, Camp Bastion, where there are some 10,000 troops from many different countries, but I also have a desk and a computer in my day-to-day job in Camp Price. As I said before I left Randers, since our country has sent our soldiers down here, they deserve a decent service, and that means from the church too.

Before I left, one of the children in our children's club back home asked if I have my own church, and the answer is yes! In fact I even have two churches, but they're 'church tents', as we call them here. Last Sunday evening we held a service with about 30 soldiers, all in camouflage dress and with camouflage bibles. We sang some Danish hymns and said prayers for the safety of the soldiers and for the wisdom of the politicians and military leaders.

After the sermon and the eucharist I ended the service by playing a recording of "Viva la Vida (or Death and all his friends)". The Coldplay song takes on a different meaning here – a roadside bomb had just injured one of our men. So after the service, off we went in an armoured vehicle wearing bullet-proof waistcoats, and me with my camouflaged Bible."



Pastor Oral Shaw, the army chaplain, and his 'church tent'.

THE DANISH CHURCH MAY JOIN THE BRUSSELS LOBBY

6 bishops join study-tour on a fact-finding mission

Not least in response to the strong Roman Catholic lobby in Brussels, six Danish bishops formed part of a 23-strong delegation for a 3-day political study-trip to the EU capital last month. Bishop of Funen, Kresten Drejergaard told the Ritzau news agency: "Lobbyism makes sense in a number of areas. Church institutions can deliver both the language and the inspiration for political decisions, for example on the climate question. You can do this whether you're an atheist, a social democrat, a churchgoer or anything else. We need to make our voice heard in the EU, otherwise the Danish church risks becoming a little allotment garden in the north of Europe."

"We need to make our voice heard in the EU"

"The church has a richer language"

Bishop Drejergaard stresses the importance of keeping abreast of what is happening in the EU: "Also because there are political initiatives coming the other way, in some cases influenced by lobbyists from the other European churches. We can offer a richer language to society than the one the technocrats make use of. We see no need to be afraid of such a dialogue, even though we have no wish to be a political power factor," says Drejergaard.

Conference of European Churches (CEC)

Opposition to the bishop has been voiced by the Danish European MP social democrat, Britta Thomsen, who does not accept the comparison between the Catholic Church and the Danish Lutheran Church. "In Denmark the bishops cannot be lobbyists, that's the job of the NGOs," she says. "If the church and state were separate, there would be no problem, but as public employees bishops are not employed to missionize in Europe, they're employed to keep the churches in Denmark open."

But another European MP, Karin Riis-Joergensen (Liberal), rejects the argument that a public institution has no right to lobby. "That's against freedom of expression," she argues. "There are also Danish values which I think ought to be out in the European area. We live in a democracy. Already the Swedish, Finnish and German Protestant churches are influencing the agenda, and if the Danish church has no presence in Europe, it will simply miss out."

PASTORS BACK CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION

A recent poll by the popular daily, Jyllands-Posten, showed that 20% of the 500 responding pastors supported the separation of church and state. This marks a change in attitude over the last 10 years, but appears to be the direction in which many pastors are gradually moving. Some appear to be tired of politicians interfering in their work, others of registering all new births in the country, but for Per Buchholdt Andreasen, chair of the Pastors Union the church-state relationship is a marriage of reason: "At present there is one tree with branches everywhere, also in thinly populated areas. This integration will be difficult to maintain if the church splits from the state."

Religious freedom, but not religious equality

As expected, the political parties take up various positions ranging from the left-wing Unity List/Red-Green Party, who state, "A consolidation and deepening of democracy presupposes that we continue the process towards a total division of church and state" to the Conservative Party, which argue that "since Christianity is a fundamental part of the Danish identity and cultural heritage, church and state should not be separated. Conservatives believe in religious freedom, but not religious equality."

DARWIN PROJECT FOR SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES

In 1995 a national network was introduced to link schools and churches via Religious Education (RE). The school is the initiator and the church the facilitator. In this bicentennial year of Charles Darwin's birth the church-school network has produced a teaching project under the title "Faith and Knowledge – the Facts and Marvels of Life" with the following areas, especially for the subjects of RE and Biology.

Grades 1 – 3: The world seen with two eyes
Grades 4 – 6: Bits and pieces of heaven!
Grades 7 – 10: You and me and Darwin

The idea is that "pupils should acquire a more faceted picture of how the world and life can have come into being and how they have developed".

No patent on reality

John Rydahl, educational consultant on the project, tells the *Christian Daily*, "Often the RE teacher and the Biology teacher teach the same things but in different ways. Now we want them to work together – and at the same time. Pupils should realise that no science or faith can take out a patent on reality."

Chair of the National Association of Biologists, Anders V. Thomsen agrees. "Children need to understand the nuances in defining the difference between knowledge and faith. Natural science has no opinion about the *meaning* of life."

The material is free and can be used throughout the school year 2009-2010. In November there will be a joint event for which schools can register to celebrate the publication of *On the Origin of Species* in 1859.

News in brief from church life in Denmark

Losing money in the crisis. Largely as a result of the financial crisis, no fewer than 3,171 Danes left the national Lutheran church in the last quarter of 2008, an increase of 42% on the previous quarter and costing the church DKK 3.5 million in lost tax revenues. Meanwhile, a 50-year-old atheist, Magnus Eg Borregaard, who due to a clerical error and his own oversight has been mistakenly paying church tax for 29 years, is due for a large refund.

Collecting money for Africa. When DanChurchAid held its annual national collection in the parishes in March the surprising result was DKK 16 million (€ 2,15 million), or a million more than in 2008. A record number of collectors, 20,000 in all, included 4,000 youngsters. DanChurchAid general secretary, Henrik Stubkjaer, said it showed that despite the financial crisis Danes could still show a concern and commitment for the less fortunate in other parts of the world.

Withdrawal from Durban 2? A number of pastors and theologians have joined a demand that Denmark withdrew from the UN's Durban 2 conference in April in protest against an agenda which included proposals to ban criticism of religion and to attack Israel by name. The Danish signatories to the protest document argued that all citizens should have the right to criticise the implementation of religion on society, be it Muslim or Christian. Blasphemy as a legal term should be abolished.

THE DANISH SEAMEN'S CHURCH OF BUENOS AIRES

“Our newsletter reaches 700 homes”

The Danish Seamen's Church in Buenos Aires, established in 1924, is supported mostly by 3rd generation bi-lingual expatriates, like their leader, Pastor Andrés Albertsen, who spoke to *Church News* this month:

“Our services are in Spanish, but now and then we sing hymns in Danish. We hold Danish services 5-6 times a year using the Danish liturgy, but Christmas Eve and Easter Day are totally Danish and very popular with Danish tourists. The other two big festivals are Lent, when we knock the cat out of the barrel, and St. Hans in the middle of the Argentinian winter, when we eat Danish doughnuts and drink gløgg!

“We work together with the other Danish churches in Argentina in Necochea, Tandil and Tres Arroyos, as well as with the Swedish church here. Last year we had a visit from Steen Skovsgaard, Bishop of Lolland-Falster. We also co-operate with the Catholic Church on social work in the local area, such as providing lunches for homeless men, and we have a diaconal project in our own home for 15 seniors. During the Mohammed cartoon crisis we held a meeting at our church with a local imam and a rabbi to help the dialogue. We're a small but lively congregation and quite visible!”



Pastor Andrés Albertsen.



The Danish Seamen's Church.



The Danish Seamen's Church in Buenos Aires

PASTORAL FAITH-GROUPS SUPPORT THEIR COLLEAGUES

Help to self-help for pastors under pressure

The idea of supporting pastors in need of help with a faith-group of colleagues has its roots in the diocese of Haderslev, since when it has been extended to the diocese of Lolland-Falster and now to Viborg. The originator of the project, hospital pastor Preben Kok, suggests that pastors under pressure need to ask themselves: “Are you defending God, or is God defending you? The problem often turns out to be that they preach a gospel that they themselves are not listening to.”

Conversations in the faith-group take the pastors' own faith history as their starting-point – whether they most resemble Martha or Thomas or Job or Noah? “Noah wasn't just the man who built the ark and saved the world,” says Preben Kok. “After the flood

he also planted a vineyard, got drunk and made a fool of himself in his family's eyes. Being a ‘child of God’ is the fundamental relationship for all Christians, so our overall aim is to re-establish this with the pastors in question.”

Please send us your feedback

We would like to hear your opinion about Church News from Denmark - whether favourable or critical. Reactions are welcome by e-mail:

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