

ANGLICAN-LUTHERAN SOCIETY

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SESSION FIVE : 'The Cathedral of Hope'

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Thank you for the invitation. You should really be in Fredrikstad, where Hope Cathedral is being created because it's an amazing project but sadly that wasn't possible, though we talked of trying to get it to the harbour here. My link is as one of the Ambassadors. Solveig Egeland, the Artistic Director and Bishop Emeritus Atle Sommerfeldt, Diocese of Borg, and other key persons could not be here so I am here to represent them.

I am the Deputy International Director and heading the unit working for Ecumenical and Interfaith work in the Church of Norway and also within the international sphere and context. I have for many years tried to see bridges and combine ecumenical work with themes including interfaith dialogue. You often gain more if you are

actually doing things together - *diapaxis*.

Hope Cathedral is sometimes described as a colourful journey and this project has brought together people from different generations. Confirmation Classes and school classes gathered the plastic from our beaches that now actually forms part of the building. It is handicraft workers, carpenters and people with skills on maintaining churches and building boats who created the structure. We have refugees serving coffee. We have Imams working and sweating together with Sikhs and Hindus and people from the City Mission where they are helping people get back to work and to do training. Sometimes you can smell old alcohol as alcoholics try to get back into work. So just imagine, in this camp there are people from children to old environmentalist grandparents, activists and carpenters smoking their old pipes. You have some religious people in their suits! So it is a fantastic mix, so colourful! I think this is something that our Church needed as a lot of things we do are in boxes – for the children here, retired people there, old people somewhere else. But here it is integrated, connected.



I will show you a video. You can find it for yourself at : <https://youtu.be/8n8S7O6gbY8> Here is the commentary – ‘In Fredrikstad a unique building is taking shape. It bears the name of the Hope Cathedral and is an interfaith, sustainable project. Inspired by Norway’s famous stave churches, the structure rises majestically on its 120 square metre barge made of timber and roots and built in a traditional fashion. The roof is a 300 square metre colourful work of art made from plastic taken from the ocean which has been formed into tiles. More than 1000 fish boxes have been washed, granulated, and turned into 4000 roof tiles in more than 50 different colours. The project has a remarkable contribution of voluntary work - over 9000 hours so far. Our point of departure is the ocean which is borderless and binds us together – nations, continents and people, regardless of our religion. The ocean gives life and is our common inheritance. This inheritance is our investment. If we are to save the ocean we must do so together Hope and the ocean belong to us all.’

The vision to combat plastic in the ocean is one vision, but the artist, Solveig Egeland, had another vision. She lives in the very south of Norway, and had walked thousands of hours along the beach, the sea’s edge, picking up garbage, plastic, being irritated, longing for something new. She had a kind of a dream, a vision of this cathedral literally coming up from the ocean, to transform this garbage, this plastic, into something beautiful (go to <https://www.hopecathedral.no/about> for a short video of explanation). She took the idea to Bishop Atle and he encouraged her to go on with it. Bishop Atle said this should be very broad and they should do it together with people from different faiths, so it has been an interfaith journey from the beginning in 2018.



Just a little bit on the context: it is a huge challenge these days with the waste and the plastic in the ocean. One dumper truck full of plastic waste enters the ocean every minute. That’s around 8-11 million tons of plastic impacting marine and wildlife and people every year, and the amount is increasing. It’s a huge problem. At the same time we have the climate problem with warming up of the oceans. Just focusing on life in the oceans, many species are becoming extinct. The World Wildlife Fund said two years ago that, since 1970, 68% of global wildlife population has been lost. It’s more than two-thirds of the populations of animals, fish, birds and insects. Think about that. That is as big a challenge in the oceans as it is on the land. So this makes me think of the theological concept of sin, something I

think we should find and start using again. The Churches talk about conversion, but here is an area where we urgently need conversion because this cannot go on. This is our generation. It’s our duty to do something about it.

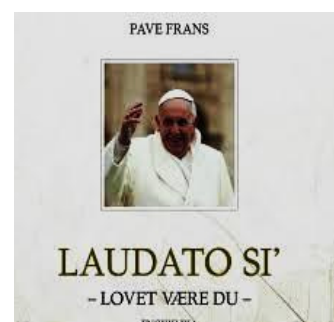
This fits in with what the United Nations has said about sustainability goals in



This is the goal that Hope Cathedral is working towards; we're trying to do our bit. And there are some good signs. For instance, this year, as you may have heard, the United Nations Assembly in Nairobi has agreed a mandate to negotiate an instrument to end plastic pollution (UNEA5). And this could be a kind of Paris agreement about plastic in the oceans, but it's a long way to go because this is a mandate to negotiate and it needs putting into practice.

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However, in the global sphere a lot has happened since 2010 with an inter-faith climate summit in Uppsala with Religion for Peace and the World Council of Churches which was quite important and, of course, *Laudato Si*. All that happened around the Paris agreement on climate. For the Church of Norway and other organisations, co-operation has been broader, strengthened and been more holistic. The Church of Norway has been talking more about climate change and in particular the political part of it. I think we have learned from our indigenous people in Norway, and from the ecumenical committees, and we are thinking more broadly and in a diverse way. So we now are engaging about the ocean, the forests and, of course, the climate. We need to see these things together and include the social and justice elements too.



In the current decade we can see that the UN is asking for assistance from faith traditions. They see that we have ecological values based on theology which, together with the

indigenous people's wisdom, can lead to the work becoming broader. The interfaith dimension has been part of Hope Cathedral from the very beginning and I'm heading Norwegian Interfaith Climate Network which started off in 2014 and includes activists from several different faiths. We've been working together on Hope Cathedral but there are also more locally established forums.

Now, when it comes to ownership of the project, last year the Buddhist Society in Norway came in as an owner together with the Church of Norway, the Catholic Church, Caritas and some others, so we have a very broad ownership. Even more important is that outside the formal religious networks there are different religious colours, among the refugees, for instance. So *diap Praxis*, co-operating together, not only talking, is our main activity – we are actually doing advocacy, we're doing very concrete work together. This is explained in another short video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RsTVaVsQjU>

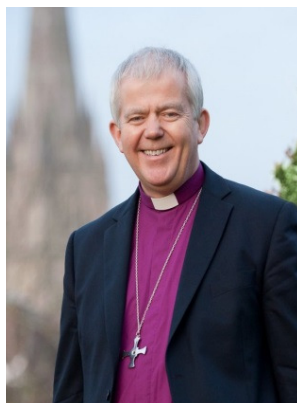


But we also have our unique contributions to make because the project does not try to mix everything into one soup, as it were. We try to establish places on board the Cathedral of Hope so that, for example, prayer for the ocean can be offered from a Buddhist or Islamic perspective. Sometimes we do it together as well, but we also do it side by side.

We have also made some pilgrimages connected to this project. For instance, an interfaith group walked from Oslo to Fredrikstad over two days with input, discussions, silence on the way, and ending up with

a powerful ceremony sharing resources from their different traditions at Hope Cathedral.

The project has gained some international interest from the European Environmental Christian Climate Network who have sent delegations. The United Nations have been involved through one of the Ambassadors from their Faith for Earth Initiative which tries to engage with faiths in different



countries and launch advocacy campaigns on the role of religion and the environment.

The project has Ambassadors from the Church of England, among them a retired 'green' bishop, Nicholas Holtam, the former Bishop of Salisbury, who has used his place in the House of Lords to speak out on green issues and plastic. 'Hope Cathedral is a symbol being created in response to the environmental challenges of our day,' he says. 'The spirit in which we respond to these will be as important as the actions we take. I am pleased to become an Ambassador of this important project.'

Here is a picture of a Bishop's cope made by an artist, Sarah Wilson, out of plastic from the River Thames. It is being worn by the new Bishop of Borg, Kari Mangrud Alvsvåg, at her inauguration ceremony. This gives a link to the Church of England – it is the same ocean, the same water.

Sarah Wilson said, 'I live on the water. I saw this rubbish every day, and I decided to do something with it.' She collected more than 6 kilogrammes of plastic waste to make it, and she called her project '*Profane to Sacred*'.

And this is the same sort of vision that Solveig Egeland had as she walked along the seashore and thought of creating Hope Cathedral. The cope had also been worn several times, for instance by the Rev Roger Hall, Canon of the Chapels Royal, on Easter Day, 2018.



Hope Cathedral is very much linked to Sustainability Goal number 14, 'Life below water', and birds living on the shore and over the sea. But goal number 17 is obviously also very important for this. If you remember, we started with this multi-faceted ownership and workshop engagement, and 'Partnership and co-operation to fulfil the goals' is the last of the 17 goals. I think that building Hope Cathedral together is an expression of an awesome need in the more global context.

We have to do it together. We cannot do this from the political side alone, or from the business side alone, or from the NGO side alone. We have to co-operate more and more. I think that under Goal 17 faith institutions and groups and churches and religions are so important and have also been given more and more value. Building hope together.

I end with this quotation from Job 12.7-10 : *'Ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.'*