**St Andrew’s on The Terrace, Sunday 15 October 2017 Pentecost 19**

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| **HEBREW BIBLE Deuteronomy 12:32**32See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it. |
| **THE EPISTLE Romans 8:24-28**24For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?25But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. 26In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27And the one who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. 28And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love God, who have been called according to divine purpose. |

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| **GOSPEL Luke 19:36-40**36As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.37When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 38“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” 39Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” 40“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.” |
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**Contemporary reading from** *Argula von Grumbach: a Woman’s Voice in the Reformation, pp 176*

by Peter Matheson

*Part of a reply in verse by Argula von Grumbach to a member of the University of Ingolstadt (1524)*

… Loudly Christ, our Lord, cries out:

‘Come to me now, whoever thirsts!

From those who follow my decrees,

Living waters will flow free.’

Tidings of the Spirit he did preach

Who each of us will truly teach.

God’s word stands here, as plain as day.

Are peasants or women excluded here?

Show me where that’s said, good sir!

Who were the apostles – after all

What higher learning could they recall?

Though John was but a fisherman

So profound yet clear is no other man;

And Peter was of identical breed,

A fisherman, as we can read,

And furthermore, as Paul makes known,

God sent the Holy Spirit down

To help us in our poor, weak state

It’s there in Romans, Chapter Eight:

We do not know how we should pray

Unless the Spirit shows the way.

So listen, as all Christians should,

The Spirit leads us to the truth.

In First Corinthians you will see –

That’s once you’ve read it properly….

…Let the stones cry out today!

While you oppress God’s word and – Shame!

Consign souls to the devil’s game

I cannot and I will not cease

To speak at home and on the street

As long as God will give me grace

I’ll tell my neighbour, face to face.

We’ve considered the *what* of the reformation and its *context* . Now we look at *who.* Remember we’re describing the 16th century Catholic and protestant churches, not today’s churches, with no assumption either side had monopoly on good manners!

Martin Luther, whose acts in 1517 are the focus this year, liked to talk over dinner table. Eager students made notes later compiled *Table Talk,* publishing them between 1531 and 1546. So let’s create a dinner party, in 1530, in Lutherhaus, home of Martin and Katie, meeting the reformers, face to face, fork to fork. 1530 is busy. Luther’s been excommunicated for 9 years. These male leaders at our table are hard at work re-writing prayer books, translating scripture, writing confessions of faith and disputing Protestant theology.

First, let’s invite the four men of the Reformers’ Wall in Geneva – John Knox and Theodore Beza, John Calvin and William Farel. They can sit on one side. Luther, aged 47, and his wife Katharina von Bora, aged 31, our hosts, preside at the head and foot of this long board. The date in 1530 we choose for this dinner should be their seventh wedding anniversary in April. On Katharina’s left we’ve placed Argula von Grumbach a noblewoman whose letters to Catholic leaders up until 6 years previously were direct and demanding. Can we find out why she stopped writing in 1524? On Argula’s side of the table we’ve seated Ulrich Zwingli, major reformer in Zurich, Switzerland; called the Third Man of the Reformation after Luther and Calvin. This is a somewhat dodgy invitation. Zwingli and Luther are presently involved in disputing the theology of the Eucharist – Luther believing Christ was *really* present in the elements, Zwingli believing this was a metaphorical or spiritual presence. For him, eucharist was a Last Supper commemoration. Later in 1530, the two sides will agree 14 of 15 points on eucharistic theology, each thinking they have won! However, *two* Protestant confessions will emerge – Lutherans remaining with Real Presence and more Calvinist positions in reformed churches believing Spiritual Presence. (including Presbyterians). Luther and Zwingli did agree on infant baptism, opposing Anabaptist believer’s baptism together. Next I’ve invited another German reformer, Martin Bucer, from Strasbourg. Originally a Dominican, Bucer applied for annulment of vows 12 years ago. It’s a good idea to place Bucer between Zwingli and Luther; he’s acting as mediator during the communion dispute – all friends so far!

Some discussion might concern the command of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V that protestant reformers present their views to him at Augsburg in June of that year; 2 months after our dinner. They will find they cannot agree. Charles will demand in September they reconcile to the Catholic faith In September and October later this year Bucer will travel south Germany and to Swiss cities, Basel and Zurich, negotiating hard for an agreed confession – a task he will fail. By February 1531, the friendship between Bucer and Zwingli will finally crack under the strain of reformation and Luther will resume his polemical attacks against Bucer the following year in 1532. Fortunately our dinner party has caught them at a time when they were still speaking to each other, even if vigorously! Though 1530 is busy, we need to have our dinner party then, because by 11 October 1531, Zwingli will be dead, killed in one of the two Kappel wars between Protestant and Roman Catholic cantons of the [Old Swiss Confederacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Swiss_Confederacy). Reformation was not only intellectual, but a matter of life and death for many. [[1]](#footnote-1)

Organ Solo: A musical break after that sobering news – something that will be written in a century and a half’s time from this dinner party. The piece Peter has chosen is based on a [Lutheran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheranism) [hymn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hymn) written by [Philipp Nicolai](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philipp_Nicolai) in 1598, 68 years after this dinner. Of our guests, Beza might get to hear it.

We need a 10th person to keep numbers even. Balancing genders around the table is impossible, though I’m sure had we been present in the 16th century we would’ve seen fine women speaking and acting bravely. A possibility is Andrew Melville an architect of Presbyterian governance, but he won’t be born until 1645! Among Catholic reformers, Erasmus of Rotterdam; Dutch Renaissance humanist, Catholic priest, social critic, teacher, and theologian might be a candidate. He shared Luther’s desire for reform, but remained within Catholicism. Born 1466, he is 64 years of age. But, relationships with Luther and most of the others have become untenable by 1530. It’s doubtful Erasmus would eat in the house of an excommunicate. Let’s take the 10th seat ourselves!

Look at the four men from the Reformer’s Wall. Timing is a little early for Knox and Beza. Knox is only 17 years old, still at university studying for the priesthood. It’ll be another 16 years before he’ll convert. Convinced of Reformation ideals through George Wishart’s martyrdom, Knox will get into hot political bother very quickly; (embracing new theology automatically meant treason.) He will flee to England, then to Europe. Knox will be too hot for Calvin to handle and he’ll be sent to Frankfurt to cut his teeth as a reformation minister with a Frankfurt English speaking congregation. He’ll then spend two years in Geneva with Calvin before being recalled by Scottish lairds. With four other men called John he will write the Scots Confession and First Book of Discipline which will be adopted by the Scottish Parliament in 1560, achieving political reformation of the Scottish church thirty years after this evening’s dinner. Thoedore Beza is even younger, aged 11. Let’s not stay up too late for him! Born in Burgundy, France, son of the royal governor of Vézelay, Theodore comes from a family of distinction. One uncle is a Cistercian abbot and another an MP in Paris. Uncle Nicholas took young Theodore to Paris for education and two years prior to our dinner party, Beza followed his German teacher [Melchior Wolmar](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Melchior_Wolmar&action=edit&redlink=1) to Orleans then to Bourges, focal location of the French Reformation movement. In four years’ time, as Francis I rules against ecclesiastical innovation, Wolmar will return to Germany and Beza to Orléans to study law. Even at 11 the young Beza had already encountered reformation ideas. He will later succeed Calvin in Geneva. A very young Calvin, sits alongside - just 21 in 1530. Farel, 41 years of age, sits beside him. Though both Frenchmen, at this stage they will hardly know each other. Calvin transferred universities the previous year from Orleans to Bourges. He might have known the young Beza and his teacher Wolmar. Calvin’s father favoured a shift from priest training, believing his son would make more money from law. Calvin is fascinated by classical studies and humanism. It will be three years after our dinner before Calvin’s conversion experience which will precipitate his break with the Catholic Church. This will lead to exile from France. After travelling and working in Switzerland and Italy, Calvin will follow a detour caused by local war to Geneva and will meet Farel. William will persuade him to stay – of which Calvin will write later:

Then Farel, who was working with incredible zeal to promote the gospel, bent all his efforts to keep me in the city. And when he realized that I was determined to study in privacy in some obscure place, and saw that he gained nothing by entreaty, he descended to cursing, and said that God would surely curse my peace if I held back from giving help at a time of such great need. Terrified by his words, and conscious of my own timidity and cowardice, I gave up my journey and attempted to apply whatever gift I had in defense of my faith.

Twenty years between them, ‘mentor’ is an appropriate role for Farel. He has already spent time with Zwingli in Zurich and Bucer in Strasbourg and in 1530, the year of our dinner, his crowning achievement will be persuading the city of Neuchatel to become protestant. We are fortunate he’s had time to socialise!

Which leaves the two fascinating females in our party. Katarina von Bora’s poverty stricken aristocratic origins resulted in her father entering her into the convent aged 5. She was 15 when she took her final vows in the same convent as her aunt. On the 500th anniversary of her birth, an article in the Lutheran Journal presented this account:

It is known that during the night of April 7, 1523, twelve nuns secretly escaped from Convent Marienthron. Nine of them, who could not return to their families, escaped in a delivery wagon via Torgau to Wittenberg. Among the escapees was Katharine who hid under a fish barrel in order to avoid punishment for escaping which was death. With Luther's help all of the nuns found husbands with the exception of Katharine von Bora. She wanted to marry an aristocrat from Nürnberg, but his family was against such a union and prevented it. Luther (41 years of age) suggested Katharine (in her early twenties) marry a 60-year-old pastor. Katharine refused and said that if she could not marry Nikolas von Amsdorf (46 years of age) or Martin Luther, she would rather remain single for the rest of her life.

Only six to eight months before the marriage, Luther had no intention of marrying any one, let alone this determined young lady, who since the age of five had spent all her life in a convent. He thought surely she would know little else than singing and praying.[[2]](#footnote-2) He certainly was not in love with her. However, he thought that what he preached to others, he ought to practice himself… Luther learned to love Katharine and the couple had six children. In the beginning, the couple was so poor, they couldn't even afford to buy a wedding ring. Katharine used a ring, which the king of Denmark, Christian II, had given her as a present during his stay in Wittenberg.[[3]](#footnote-3)

We are told: “Katharine von Bora was Luther's companion and equal partner; she was the picture of a self-assured, self-confident, liberated woman at the side of her husband.”

Argula von Grumbach is another remarkable woman. A noblewoman, her outstanding letters to bishops, princes and academics have been recently rediscovered. Her first and most successful writing from 1523 had circulated first in manuscript and reached “a remarkable fourteen editions in less than two months.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The woodcut of Argula on the front of the order of service is of her debating with Ingolstadt academics . Parents, a guardian uncle and a brother were all killed by the time she was 30. She married Friedrich von Grumbach who seems less distinguished and literate than she, fourteen years ago and has four children, one of whom a student in Wittenberg in the year of the dinner, probably known to Luther and staying with Luther’s strong supporter Philip Melanchthon. Seven years earlier, Argula had began an intense period of a year or so of letter writing to Catholic academics, civic and church leaders. Her letters, printed as pamphlets, achieved wide circulation, one printed in 29,000 copies on the eve of the Peasants’ War.

She wrote to Luther during this period and though he did not write back he sent messages of encouragement to her through others. Her ability to use Scripture in argument was disturbing to academics and church men alike, as she saw no barrier to women and peasants being able to read and dispute theology. Her ceasing writing in 1524 may have coincided with a general reduction on pamphleteering, though may also been due to being restricted. Her husband was instructed by authorities to use violence to silence her if necessary. There are signs he may have been capable of that, especially since *he* lost his position as administrator at Dietfurt because of her outspokenness - he was considered responsible for her and her behaviour. Argula is known to the Luther’s through her son, through Argula’s writing to Luther including not only theology but advice to marry as quickly as possible. In a couple of months’ time she will travel to Augsburg to the Imperial court where Luther will make an exception of meeting with her. They will eat together, their discussion ranging from the timing of weaning Katie’s children to preparations for the imperial welcome in Munich. Augsburg, later this year, will be her last public involvement in the reformation scene, though locally she and her family will encourage formation of reforming churches in Bavaria. Her understanding of Scripture was deep and broad, she was fresh and original but obviously had read quite an amount of reformation literature as well as Scripture. She had intentionally studied Scripture and saw herself as “part of a new women’s movement, which had its own ethos and bank of experience.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Scripture for Argula was the rule for life. She was fiercely anti-Roman. She links Scriptural happenings with the present moment interpreting Scripture through the eyes of a 16th century woman. She developed her own interpretation as a lay person. She read inclusively – the words of God for her apply to all. Those led to the light are obliged to bear witness. Ironically Argula and other women may find as the Reformation progresses that the new Protestant will tend to limit their options. As Matheson writes:

The disappearance of the nunnery and other religious associations, the new centrality of the family, with the patriarch set firmly at its head, the critique of popular culture and its replacement by a piety under the word, all tended to disadvantage women.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

However, the emphasis on the role of laypeople, the priesthood of all believers and the availability of the vernacular Bible as well as an emphasis on the importance of education so people could read the Bible were freeing elements. Argula was not a sole female reformer, though a remarkable one. Even her voluminous correspondence has been largely lost and it does not seem any of the leaders to whom she wrote ever replied. Her primary justification for what she did was one of faith. ‘Argula spoke as a ‘Christian’ because she had to.”

That would be true of all our dinner guests. They spoke out of conviction, with courage, into a hostile world where to speak and act differently was to risk loss of livelihood and death. Do we deserve a seat at this table?

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1. For example, “The Reformation led to a [series of religious wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_wars_of_religion) that culminated in the [Thirty Years' War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years%27_War) (1618–1648), which devastated much of [Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Modern_history_of_Germany), killing between 25% and 40% of its entire population.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Katharina had in fact learned the management of estates through her convent duties. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ten years after the wedding, the Luther family was so well off that it was able to renovate their living quarters and make the rooms more comfortable. Of the rooms renovated by Katie, only Luther's room remains today. From its windows on the second floor, Katharine was able to see the entire courtyard below. There was the brewery, a building for taking baths, and stalls for domestic animals such as cows, pigs, chicken, and goats. There was a bench with drawers along the windows which served as a work place for Katie. Here she could sit, knit, or read, and especially observe the activities in the courtyard below. Luther called Katie "The Morning Star of Wittenberg", because she began her duties with the first light of day. She took care of the animals, her large garden, the brewery, and the large tracks of land she bought in order to raise grain for the animals. Some of her property was located as far away as Leipzig. In addition to that she participated in Luther's "Table Talks" and took care of her husband, children, numerous guests, and students that stayed in her house. <http://helios.augustana.edu/~ew/des/illustrated-articles/su53.html> “500th anniversary of Katharina von Boras *The Lutheran Journal* Vol 68 #2, 1999 Erwin Weber [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Peter Matheson *Argula von Grumbach: A Woman’s Voice in the Reformation* T & T Clark, Edinburg, 1995, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., p.40 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)