

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is considered one of the foremost Protestant theologians of the twentieth century. He was a German Lutheran pastor, best known for his active part in the German Resistance movement that sought to remove Hitler from power during the Second World War. At the time of Bonhoeffer's execution by the Nazis in 1945 at the age of only thirty-nine, he was writing groundbreaking theology. He had also been a university teacher, youth leader, church leader, and director of an "illegal" seminary and other programs to train pastors for the German Protestant Confessing Church under the Nazi regime, and he was active in the international ecumenical movement.

Very close to his heart was the desire to serve his church as pastor of a local congregation. However, he only found time for a year and a half of full-time parish ministry, besides his preparatory year as a pastoral assistant in Barcelona and some months of part-time youth work in churches in Berlin and in Harlem, New York. But the sermons he preached, even as a young pastor and chaplain in his twenties, show how passionately his heart went out to ordinary people and their life struggles and search for meaningful Christian faith. This book is a selection of Bonhoeffer's sermons in English translation. The personal faith they reveal was the foundation for all his work.

Bonhoeffer was born in 1906 in the town of Breslau in the German province of Silesia, now southwestern Poland. He and his twin sister,

Sabine, were among the youngest of eight children. In 1912, their father, Karl Bonhoeffer, became head of the psychiatric clinic at the University of Berlin. Their mother, née Paula von Hase, was a pastor's daughter from a family descended from German nobility. She taught her children at home instead of taking them to church or Sunday school and prepared them herself for confirmation in the Lutheran church.

Bonhoeffer's schooling grounded him in the Latin and Greek classics, which was then still considered the finest education and preparation for university. But as a child in wartime Berlin, he also helped the family's cook search out the best buys in the market, and during holidays in the country, he gathered and dried wild berries and mushrooms and gleaned wheat and had it milled to take home to Berlin. He loved walks and outdoor games and family vacations in the Harz Mountains and along the shores of the Baltic Sea, later taking his confirmands and students there as often as he could. He was also a talented pianist and all his life enjoyed making music with family and friends.

Bonhoeffer's family remained a very strong influence in his life. They exemplified the best qualities of the German upper class, as intellectual and cultural leaders with an abiding sense of responsibility for public affairs and generous hospitality and care for anyone who was in need. This was partly the source of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's early, unquestioning willingness to be a leader in his generation. His family also supported the church resistance under Hitler as well as Dietrich's and his friends' participation in it, and later supported and participated in the conspiracy against Hitler himself.

Toward the end of the First World War, the Bonhoeffers' two oldest sons volunteered to join the infantry. Walter, the younger one of the two, died of wounds received in battle, and the family's grief, especially Bonhoeffer's mother's, was overwhelming. It deeply affected twelve-year-old Dietrich and may have influenced his decision to study theology, in contrast to his older brothers, Karl Friedrich, a physicist and chemist, and Klaus, who was studying law.

Bonhoeffer took his university entrance exams early, at age seventeen, and attended first the University of Tübingen and then the University of Berlin. Times were hard under rampant inflation in Germany, but Bonhoeffer's father was able to send him and Klaus to Rome for the Easter holiday in 1924. They visited the Forum, the Colosseum, and other classic

Roman sites, but what fascinated Bonhoeffer at age eighteen was the world-embracing grandeur and piety of the Roman Catholic Church. He kept going back for another Mass in St. Peter's.

After studying both philosophy and theology, Bonhoeffer earned his doctoral degree in 1927 with a thesis on the church as community, *Sanctorum Communio*. By 1930, he had also written his postdoctoral thesis, titled *Act and Being*, which qualified him to lecture at the University of Berlin. He always he thought for himself and was not intimidated by sometimes strongly critical reactions from his teachers at the university.

Even though Bonhoeffer was well schooled in theology, his friend Franz Hildebrandt, a Luther scholar, told him he needed to know more about Luther and about the Bible. Bonhoeffer went to work on both. He had not been a churchgoer but rather an intellectual studying theology. Now he became a believer—a deeply convinced Christian. From then on he planned not only an academic career but also one in parish ministry, taking the examinations required for ordination by his Prussian regional church. Bonhoeffer's Sunday school class at his local church was so popular that he started an evening seminar for those who outgrew it. In 1928–1929, as pastoral assistant (*Vikar*) in a German-speaking congregation in Barcelona, Spain, he also learned Spanish and got to know different sorts of people.

Bonhoeffer concluded his studies with a year at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, where he was impressed with the social gospel being explored by the students. When Frank Fisher, an African American fellow student, recruited him to work with parish youth at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, Bonhoeffer was appalled to discover the discrimination against blacks in American society.

On returning to Germany, he went to hear the Swiss theologian Karl Barth, then teaching at the University of Bonn, whose fundamental criticisms of the church interested Bonhoeffer. Barth likewise found in Bonhoeffer someone who could have a real dialogue with him. Conversations with Barth, over the years that followed, stirred and encouraged Bonhoeffer, though he kept to his own theological path.

Back in Berlin, before he began lecturing at the university, his supervisor recommended Bonhoeffer for ecumenical work, since he had already had some experience in the United States and spoke English. At a meeting

of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches in Cambridge, England, Bonhoeffer was appointed youth secretary for central Europe. He participated in ecumenical organizations for years but always kept a critical stance, challenging them to make public statements only after thorough study, especially after doing their theological homework on what they wanted to say.

As a very young lecturer in theology, Bonhoeffer soon had a growing reputation, with students flocking even to his 8:00 a.m. lectures. He was highly regarded not only as a thinker who dealt with each theological issue in his own way but also as a teacher who was friendly and available in evening seminars every semester and who went on hikes and weekend retreats with his students. Bonhoeffer's third book, *Creation and Fall*, grew out of a semester's lectures and was published in 1933 at the urging of his students.

Meanwhile, in November 1931, he was ordained as a Lutheran pastor and pursued his ministry as chaplain to students at the Technical College in Berlin and by teaching a confirmation class at Zion Church in working-class north Berlin. The following autumn, Bonhoeffer helped to start a club for working-class young adults, some of whom were in the Communist labor movement. But after a few months it had to close, and he helped these young people find shelter from the fighting in the streets.

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power. Hitler never won a majority in a national parliamentary election. His party's plurality in summer 1932 was 38 percent. It was the Republic's elected conservatives, fearing social unrest and disorder in the country and hoping to control Hitler and his popular movement, who appointed him Chancellor, head of the government. But Hitler soon started a step-by-step plan for getting real power into his hands, breaking numerous laws along the way and rapidly dispensing with constitutional rights such as freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial before imprisonment. This would open the way for the concentration camps that followed. Meanwhile, the force of his personality and his gift for public events, such as rallies and torchlight processions, turned public discouragement into hope and enthusiasm.

The German church, following the teachings of Martin Luther, considered the authority of the state as being established by God. While the church alone had authority over its proclamation of the gospel, the state provided the legal order to which the church, along with the rest of society,

owed allegiance. But what if an unjust government broke state laws? Hitler wanted either to control the German Protestant Church, particularly its influence on education and its popular youth organizations, or get it out of his way. Every aspect of society had to be bent to his single will as *Führer*. Most church people didn't grasp this at first, and they supported Hitler's National Socialist nation-building program. But fanatical "German Christians" in Hitler's party soon invented an Aryan (Nordic) Christ and wanted ethnic Jews removed from church leadership and eventually from its membership, just as they were being driven out of the civil service. For Dietrich Bonhoeffer, this discrimination immediately came close to home. The mother of his Lutheran pastor friend Franz Hildebrandt was Jewish, as was the father of his sister Sabine's husband, a professor of law. When Bonhoeffer and Hildebrandt both applied for pastorates in Berlin, Bonhoeffer realized that Hildebrandt would not be accepted, so he withdrew his own application. He eventually helped both Hildebrandt and his sister's family to emigrate to England.

Even more important to Bonhoeffer was the fact that Jesus was a Jew, and his beliefs that the Old Testament is an integral part of the Bible and that the very act of discrimination is unchristian according to the New Testament. In April 1933, he published an essay that became famous—"The Church and the Jewish Question." It declared boldly that the church must stand up against interference by the state, must aid the victims crushed by the state's relentless wheel of oppression, and ultimately must seize and stop the wheel itself. In Hitler's Germany, the victims included not only ethnic Jews and political opponents of the regime but also mentally ill and disabled people, gypsies, homosexuals, and other minorities.

Hitler illegally called a church election so the "German Christians" could put compliant church leaders in place, an election he won through pressure by local Nazi organizations. Bonhoeffer and his students and friends, calling themselves the "Young Reformation," had campaigned in vain for opposing candidates. Bonhoeffer then helped Martin Niemöller to form a Pastors' Emergency League for mutual support, which soon had thousands of members. Crude and inept "German Christian" statements did offend many. With other theologians, Bonhoeffer worked on a new confession of faith and a new catechism for those who put Christ first, ahead of patriotism.

In the midst of all this, he was offered the joint pastorate of two German-speaking congregations in London. The situation in the German Protestant Church was becoming very complex, and Bonhoeffer hoped the time abroad would give him a chance to think things through. However, while in London he spent much of his time on the telephone, encouraging like-minded friends back home to stand firm. During this time, Karl Barth and others put together the famous Declaration of Barmen, which explained the ways the German Protestant Church had become anti-Christian. Following the publication of the declaration, crucial opposition church assemblies were held, and the German Confessing Church was founded. For his part, Bonhoeffer met with other German pastors in England, and eventually most of their German-speaking congregations declared their secession from the established German Protestant Church and solidarity with the Confessing Church.

None of this activity stopped Bonhoeffer from ministering to his two small churches, however, and he especially enjoyed reviving their Sunday schools and choirs and holding Christmas pageants. His sermons were always carefully prepared, and while not explicitly political, they revealed his deep concern for what was going on in Germany. In London, he also found that he was well placed to inform ecumenical colleagues in the churches outside Germany about what was really happening under Hitler, especially to the church. Bonhoeffer's most important contact and friend was George Bell, bishop of Chichester and head of the Ecumenical Council on Life and Work (of the Churches). As bishop, Bell had resources to help German refugees who were beginning to arrive in London. However, despite Bell's support, most others in ecumenical office showed little sympathy for Bonhoeffer's viewpoint that the Confessing Church was the real Protestant church in Germany, rather than the unchristian, government-approved German Protestant Church.

Bonhoeffer took the Sermon on the Mount seriously, and he longed to found a Christian community that would seek to live according to its commandments. An opportunity came in 1935 when he was urgently called back to Germany to help the Confessing Church train its pastors. At Finkenwalde, a country manor near the Baltic port of Stettin, Bonhoeffer set up a Confessing Church seminary. For two years, he directed five semester courses, with the able help of seminarians who stayed, especially Eberhard

Bethge, who became his close friend. The “House of Brethren,” the small spiritual community they established at Finkenwalde, provided continuity of leadership and a space for Bonhoeffer to try out his ideas, later described in his book *Life Together*.

Meanwhile, with help from the state, the established German Protestant Church began to crush the Confessing Church. New laws made the work at seminaries like Finkenwalde illegal and forbade Confessing pastors, on pain of prison, to raise funds, circulate publications, and even announce names for intercessory prayer. Bonhoeffer actively involved his students in resisting these rules and in ministering to many small rural parishes, which they sometimes reached by bicycle, that could no longer support pastors. Another book, *Discipleship* (first published in English as *The Cost of Discipleship*) took shape out of his lectures and discussions with the Finkenwalde students.

After the Finkenwalde seminary was closed by the Gestapo in 1937, Bonhoeffer and Bethge carried on pastoral training with small groups of students in village parishes further east, in Pomerania. Here they also managed five semester courses, under increasing difficulties. In the end, most of the students were arrested afterward or drafted into the army, and the majority died during the war. Determined to keep in touch pastorally with those who survived and even with widows of the fallen, Bonhoeffer circulated an illegal newsletter in hand-addressed envelopes. He had by now been forbidden to lecture or to publish in Germany and could stay in Berlin only at his parents' home, but he remained involved in the struggles of his colleagues in the Confessing Church. He also accepted a much less comfortable lifestyle than the one to which he was accustomed, in order to give up much of his income to help the church, his colleagues, and their families who were in need.

Bonhoeffer himself was eligible for the draft. Pastors were not exempt, and the Nazi penalty for refusing to serve was death. Bonhoeffer felt compelled to refuse. Paul Lehmann of Union Seminary and other American friends tried to save him, as war approached in 1939, by arranging for him to be offered teaching positions in the United States. He agreed to consider a one-year appointment and traveled by ship to New York in June, but he returned to Germany a few weeks later, convinced that his vocation lay in his homeland, despite the dangers.

When war broke out in August 1939, Bonhoeffer was still working in Pomerania. He applied for a military chaplaincy but was turned down. His brother-in-law, Hans von Dohnanyi, a brilliant lawyer who had worked in the justice department where he secretly documented every Nazi violation of Germany's laws, was now an assistant to Admiral Canaris, head of German Military Intelligence. Canaris and his colleagues arranged to have Bonhoeffer join the military intelligence service, within which a group was secretly planning to have Hitler arrested and put on trial for multiple offenses, including war crimes in Poland and elsewhere.

A number of high-ranking military officers objected to Hitler's conduct of the war and were in the conspiracy to take power immediately and sue for peace with the Allies. They wanted Bonhoeffer to use his ecumenical contacts to approach the Allied governments, especially Britain and the United States, regarding peace terms and willingness to allow time for a coup d'état. Canaris would send him on "intelligence-gathering" missions abroad in order to meet with these contacts. It was late 1940 by the time they had Bonhoeffer in place, based in Munich but hosted for a time by a Benedictine monastery in the Bavarian Alps, where he became one of the first modern German Lutheran pastors to have cordial and meaningful contacts with Catholic churchmen. Because Hitler was constantly shifting his military chiefs around and micromanaging their work, the plan to have him arrested became no longer possible. The objective of the plot then became assassination.

At this time, Bonhoeffer was writing a book on ethics. It was never finished, but we know the soul-searching he went through over committing himself to this conspiracy. He seriously believed it was against the Sermon on the Mount to participate in taking anyone's life, but to allow Hitler to continue his regime and his war, in which many thousands were already dying, was to deny that Germany was committing mass murder, and as a citizen Bonhoeffer shared in responsibility for it. He could help "stop the wheel" of oppression by taking upon himself the sin of disobeying the Bible and God's commandment. In his sermon on November 4, 1934, he had already spoken of "the love that . . . even gives up its own salvation in order to bring it to brothers and sisters. . . ."

Once Bonhoeffer decided that this was what he was called to do, he accepted the conditions of being a conspirator, including deception when necessary. He kept his involvement secret from most friends and

colleagues, especially those in the Confessing Church, so that innocents could not be accused because of their association with him. On the face of it, the conspiracy represented treason, as did some of Bonhoeffer's own actions, notably a meeting with Bishop Bell in 1942 in Sweden; Bell was by then a member of the House of Lords. Bonhoeffer also undertook trips to the Vatican in Italy and to Norway and Switzerland, and if he had the opportunity, he continued to help Jews who were to be deported to camps to escape from Germany.

Though no signs reached the conspirators from abroad that any Allied government was willing to work with them, they remained hopeful and patient and maintained detailed plans with the utmost discretion. Still, the conspiracy had to keep regrouping after several different assassination attempts failed, including an aborted suicide bombing. The last attempt was made on July 20, 1944, when the bomb famously planted by Count von Stauffenberg in Hitler's headquarters went off but failed to kill Hitler.

By then Bonhoeffer and Dohnanyi were both in prison. They were arrested in March 1943 on charges of treason not directly connected with the plot; it remained undiscovered until it was carried out. In Bonhoeffer's case the charges included evasion of military service. The interrogations produced little evidence and were eventually suspended, but both men were kept in prison. Dohnanyi was tortured by being denied needed medical care. Bonhoeffer was only threatened with torture. He was always courteous and respectful even when his judges were not. He had been well coached by Dohnanyi, and he never revealed anything that would endanger fellow conspirators.

During his year and a half in Tegel military prison, Bonhoeffer quietly maintained a discipline of physical exercise and prayer, using the Moravian book of daily Bible texts—his childhood governess had been a devout Moravian. He read widely and he also spent time writing, especially letters. He was treated with contempt at first, until the prison staff discovered that his mother's cousin was the city commander of Berlin. From then on he was allowed regular visits from family and friends. He received care for illness in the infirmary and was soon allowed to help out there. Staff and fellow prisoners alike came to him with pastoral needs; thus, along with official prison chaplains, he quietly helped to minister to this grim community. Bonhoeffer tried to help in cases that he found especially unjust,

and he got to know people he would never have met socially. Three of his guards became fast friends, and they smuggled many letters in and out for him uncensored.

Bonhoeffer's dear friend Eberhard Bethge was now a soldier on the Italian front. Their correspondence, later published in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, is the source for our knowledge of the new theology Bonhoeffer was developing. He envisioned a new church after the war that would not reach people by exploiting their weakness and suffering but rather speak to them as adults, in their strength. For Bonhoeffer, God does not meet humankind in the gap where modern science ends but rather in all our understanding, in all that we achieve. The concept of "religionless Christianity" recognized that much "church religion" had become meaningless to contemporary people. The church had to interpret its faith in new ways.

Not long before his arrest, Bonhoeffer had become engaged to eighteen-year-old Maria von Wedemeyer, but because of her youth they had not yet made wedding plans. She made many brave visits to Bonhoeffer in Tegel prison and moved into his parents' home in Berlin to help out, especially with the efforts to support family members in prison. After Bonhoeffer was moved to a Gestapo prison where letters were forbidden, Maria nevertheless managed to receive three more from him through the actions of sympathetic staff; his famous poem, "By Powers of Good," was enclosed in one of these letters. She was the inspiration for him to begin writing poetry. Their touching correspondence has been translated in the volume *Love Letters from Cell 92*.

The end of the war brought chaos, with massive bombing of civilians in Berlin and other cities. In February 1945, the Gestapo headquarters was destroyed by a direct hit, which Bonhoeffer experienced packed into the underground bunker with other inmates. From the reports of fellow prisoners who survived, we now know what happened after the bombing. But Bonhoeffer's family and friends knew nothing until long after his death. He was deported to the concentration camp at Buchenwald, where he was confined in a cellar with other political prisoners. At the time, he was still working on the manuscript of his new book on theology, and it subsequently was lost. Always he is described as a calming influence, serene in his faith and kind to everyone. One of his last acts was to lead fellow deportees in worship, at their request, on the Sunday after Easter.

One of Hitler's last acts, in his bunker on April 5, 1945, was to order specifically the executions of the conspirators around Admiral Canaris. These now included Bonhoeffer's brother Klaus and brother-in-law Rüdiger Schleicher, who had become involved at later stages. They were shot in Berlin; Von Dohnanyi was shot in the concentration camp Sachsenhausen. Bonhoeffer was taken to another concentration camp, Flossenbürg, where a sham trial was held for him, Canaris, and other conspirators. On April 9, 1945, they were hanged, cremated, and buried in a mass grave.

In postwar Germany, Bonhoeffer was considered by many to be a traitor to his country, because of his resistance activities and his execution as a conspirator against Hitler. But more than sixty years later he has come to be regarded as a martyr by countless Christians in Germany and around the world; that is, he was a witness to Jesus Christ at the cost of his own life, an example of courageous faith in action, a Christian leader who lived the ethical convictions that he proclaimed.

A reader of Bonhoeffer's sermons should expect to be challenged in his or her own ethical assumptions. For Bonhoeffer, the church was to proclaim the will of God as clearly as possible and with the greatest possible relevance to what was going on in people's lives, right now. One might study systems of ethics or catechisms from the past, but what God expects of Christians at any particular moment is to be found less in set rules than directly in the current moment itself and God's judgment upon it as revealed in Scripture. As Christians, we must read the Bible not only "for" ourselves, for nourishment and encouragement, but also "against" ourselves at times, to hear what God in Christ is really saying.

However, Bonhoeffer did not thunder threats of hell at the congregations to whom he preached. As Bonhoeffer scholar Keith Clements has pointed out, he did not shake a moralizing finger at them from his pulpit on high, but used the word "we," including himself on the same level as his hearers in terms of standing under God's judgment. Even though he was brought up with the aristocratic attitude of benevolence toward those who were poor and in need of help, as a young man Bonhoeffer in his twenties allowed his experience of other cultures and levels of society, of learning to honor human beings as he found them, to enter his heart. He had learned from the Gospels to see the need for repentance in everyone, perhaps especially the church and its leaders.

And he believed that we must learn to know and love the world in which we live, the earth that God loves to which we are to bring the message of love as well as judgment. For him, to preach a sermon was to make a way for Christ to enter the world in which his hearers were actually living. In the years between world wars—when people were trying to heal from the damage the First World War had done; struggling in poverty; pessimistic and distrustful of new and different ideas, movements, and forms of government that were emerging in the postwar chaos—Bonhoeffer spent much time listening to the people. He loved to get his students or confirmands out in the country for a walk or share a meal with them and hear what they were thinking. Often it was harder to begin a trusting pastoral relationship with their parents and with older parishioners who had suffered so much, who through war had had to give up their beloved world of the past and many former guideposts of their lives. Where was God? they asked. How could a supposedly loving Lord allow so much to be destroyed?

While Bonhoeffer mourned along with his family and friends the past good that had been lost, he fervently believed in the future. He believed the church could change and take up new tasks in a future after World War II, when all the world would strive to make and keep peace. However, in order to accomplish this, the churches had to repent that they had withdrawn and encouraged people to turn inward and to reject the wartime world of violence and suffering. Bonhoeffer believed that when Christians grow up and become able to face a changed society with all its evil as well as good, when we go out to meet that world “come of age,” God is with us and in fact goes ahead of us.

Bonhoeffer himself set a Christlike example in the way he treated people wherever he was, even in the military prison and the concentration camp. But he did not preach to people there unless he was asked and unless he felt sure that he would not be taking advantage of them in their state of loss, confinement, weakness, and discouragement. The church must never do that. Bonhoeffer once said that preaching a sermon was like holding out a juicy red apple to a child and saying, “Do you want this?” The child must be in a position to refuse or accept, otherwise Christ’s gift is not really a gift.

The sermons in this book were among those carefully preserved after his death, mostly as handwritten manuscripts but sometimes typed up

by friends. A number of the London sermons were preserved because he sent them to a friend, Elisabeth Bornkamm, and they became part of her estate. All Bonhoeffer's surviving handwritten manuscripts were later patiently deciphered by Eberhard Bethge and prepared for publication—a true labor of love. These sermons were written in the midst of an amazingly brief and busy life, with care and concentration and often many self-corrections. The last few sermons in this book appeared in Bonhoeffer's newsletter to his former students, to encourage them in their own efforts as parish preachers.

In the decades since his death, some sermons, often excerpts, appeared in early translations into English and other languages. Beginning in the 1990s, a new English translation has been made of Bonhoeffer's entire works, based on his annotated complete works in German published by Christian Kaiser Verlag, Gütersloh, and has been published by Fortress Press, Minneapolis (see page 211). This is the source of the translations offered here. As with any book in translation (including the Bible), a reader in English must make some allowances for the fact that the author belonged to another time and a different culture from our own. In this case, the various translators themselves belong to different cultures and have brought their wealth of individual gifts and sensitivities to their work, so that the writing style may seem a bit different between one sermon and another.

For a twenty-first-century translator of Bonhoeffer, what we now call “inclusive language” becomes an issue. Though important issues in the early twentieth century included the right for women to vote and to have fair treatment as workers, the honoring of equality between women and men in language had not yet been elaborated. In German as in English, “he” was the default gender, for God and for any person not specifically identified as female. These new sermon translations as published in the Complete Works have preserved Bonhoeffer's now dated language. We know, however, that Bonhoeffer valued and honored women as members of his family, friends, coworkers, and students, although no established church in Germany at that time ordained women to the ministry. Therefore, I have felt that he would want to speak to women of the future in language that we would find respectful of us. This is consistent with his vision of a new church that would treat people as adults and also with the

fact that we now have inclusive translations of the Bible. Since inclusive language is still a work in progress, however, my efforts will no doubt go too far for some readers and not far enough for others; I ask only that they be received in the ecumenical spirit in which they are offered.

As a teacher of future preachers, Bonhoeffer devoted time to making written comments on students' manuscripts, but he did not allow negative criticism in class when a student had just presented an early effort at a sermon. The future preacher too must feel accepted, must receive Christ's hope and love, in order to go forward and take them to others. Wherever that person's ministry might lead in the future, Christ's church-community must surround with prayer, sustain and uphold his servant, beginning in the seminary.

In preparing this book of Bonhoeffer's sermons, I too have felt surrounded and sustained by the community of those who devote themselves to Bonhoeffer's legacy. I especially want to thank Victoria J. Barnett, who wrote the foreword to this book. She is the general editor with whom I worked for many years as a translator for the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works in English, and along with Clifford J. Green, executive director of the DBWE, gave me much friendly help and encouragement in working on this collection of sermons. I am honored, through them, to be associated with the International Bonhoeffer Society. I also thank my translator colleagues, especially Nancy Lukens and Martin Rumscheidt, for their friendship, and the editors I worked with on DBWE, Keith Clements, John de Gruchy, and Larry Rasmussen. My thanks to the publishing team at Fortress Press, especially Susan Johnson and Marissa Wold, with whom I worked most closely. Fortress Press made most of the sermon texts available to me, having already published them in DBWE. And I thank and bless my husband, Tom Best, who gave of his editorial and computer experience, his time, and his love. This is the kind of support that allows dreams such as this one to come true.

A sermon is an event that takes place in real time, in the actual presence of people. Bonhoeffer believed that, through the sermon, Christ is seeking entry into the world; in such a moment, the incarnation can happen anew. Bonhoeffer would pray that his words might let it happen for you, wherever you are.