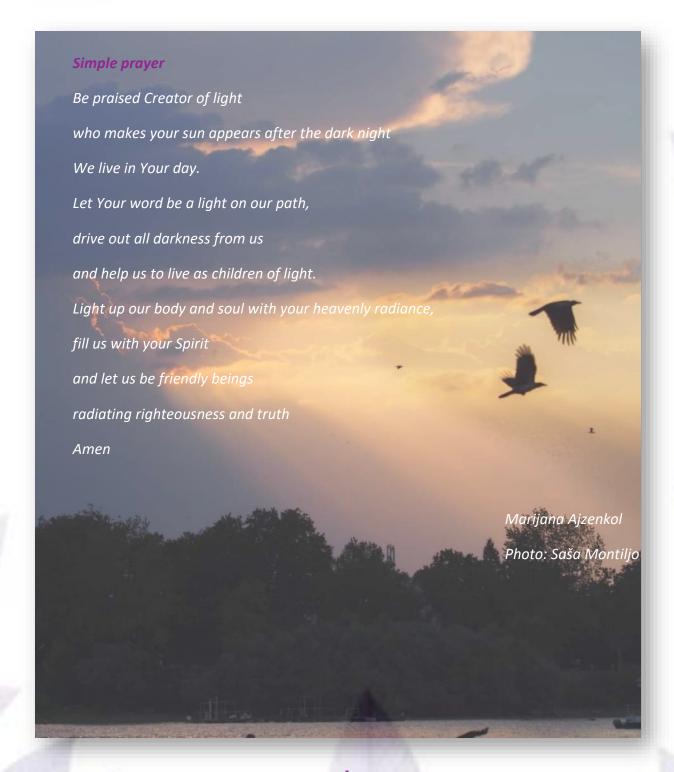
# NEWSLETTER

## **AUTUMN 2024**



#### **YOUNG WOMEN OPEN SPACE DISCUSSION**

### "Love & care for children - raising children"

#### 23 June 2024

As always our session started with an ice breaker where we had the chance to share thoughts about our favourite flowers and how we are doing. This opens our meeting's space for connecting with each other across Europe, for me this is powerful and special about EFECW's Open Space!

Jelena introduced us to the session's topic with Khalil Gibran's poem "On Children" with its famous pictures of parents as bows who aim behind their own horizon over which the children as arrows will fly. Hannah shared then her presentation with a special focus to the impact of (violent) behaviour of adults on children.



Photo: slide from PPT created by Hannah Wehner

In a first part she reminded us of all kinds of supportive programmes for women and families to prepare during pregnancy for raising children and stressed the importance of the parent's wellbeing to enable positive and loving parenting. Positive Parenting is though a high aim and ideal and consists of many different aspects: Raising resilient and confident children, developing bed- and mealtime routines and

handling disobedience as well as severer behaviour problems. To all of us in the group this appears like a huge challenge making us think about our own parents and how we might parent ourselves one day.

"The way we treat our children in the dawn of their lives and the way we treat our elderly in the twilight of their lives is the measure of the quality of our nation."

Hubert H. Humphrey

The second part of Hannah's presentation was strongly connected to several relationship topics we covered in earlier meetings. Especially violence and abuse within relationships and households endangers children growing up. A video informed us that – for us (as for most people) surprisingly – toddlers and infants are especially severely damaged by experiencing violence in their family. Violent parenting includes verbal as well as emotional, physical and sexual violence, the misuse of adult privilege,

isolation, economic abuse and threatening. An intense discussion followed: Not only parent's behaviour around their children but all adult's behaviour around children enables them to grow up safely or to find

at least safer spaces, a person to talk to. Raising children is therefore also for us a virulent topic: As current or going-to-be teachers, pastors, ... we were strongly reminded how important it is to work with our own difficulties in order to open safer spaces for those growing up.

We closed after a vibrant round of self-introduction after a new person joined our meeting (sadly a little late, but luckily there will be a next session!). So, if you are interested, you are warmly invited! "The most powerful way to change the world is to live in front of our children the way we would like the world to be."

Graham White

Hannah Kehrein

### "Finding the right job"

#### 21 July 2024

The July Open Space took place online on the 21st of the month. Hannah and Jelena, the leaders of the

WHAT WAS YOUR DREAM JOB AS A CHILD?

"Finding the right job." After discussing the basic guidelines of the session, there was a warm-up discussion about the dream jobs we had as children, providing inspiration and making it more fun with some images of different jobs. Learning about the childhood dream jobs of each opened up a new level of friendship.

sessions, brought a presentation about

During the presentation, we analysed the factors that affect the choices and decisions we make regarding work. We

discussed the visible and invisibles aspects, such as the work environment and fulfillment respectively. The presentation was aided by two short TED Talks, which highlighted the fact that we do have options and the possibility of changing, even if we feel like we do not. Finding the right job – and I am not saying the perfect job on purpose as there is no such thing – takes a lot of courage, reflection and work on the self, but it is worth it

ASPECTS THAT INFLUENCE OUR
CAREER DECISIONS

Job description, tasks, and responsibilities

Job requirements and qualifications

Fulfillment in job

Work environment, team, and management

Room for growth and encouragement of it

Available support as supervision, coaching, counselling, further training and education

Work conditions as work hours, location, flexibility and WFH, sick leave, holidays, pension scheme, parental leave etc.

Salary and extra payments

Job security

Contract duration

Conformity with other aspects of life as family

nonetheless. After a presentation filled with inspiring quotes, the attendees of the session had a very nice conversation, in which everyone accounted on the work-related experiences, struggles, and we appreciated each other's achievements, as well as strengthened and encouraged each other in upcoming decisions that affect our careers.

Zsófia Vincze

Photo: Slides from PPT prepared by Hannah Wehner

### Responsible tourism:

### "Take only memories - Leave only footprints"

#### 18 August 2024

Responsible Tourism is about "making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit" (Source: <u>Cape Town Declaration</u>, 2002). Responsible Tourism requires that operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists take responsibility, take action to make tourism more sustainable.



Photo: CBI, The Netherlands

There are many ways for destinations and visitors to make tourism more sustainable.

During the August Open Space discussion for young women, the topic *Responsible Tourism* was discussed. The participants had the opportunity to see a presentation with the positive and negative effects of tourism, sustainable tourism, ecological footprint etc.

The participants shared their experiences on this topic and with fruitful comments emphasized the importance of this topic in our lives, especially while we are on trips or planning trips. If we wish to travel sustainably it is important to: plan ahead and prepare, leave what you find, respect wildlife, be considerate of your hosts and other visitors etc. Unfortunately the development of sustainable tourism faces many barriers

to its implementation, which can include economic, social and environmental barriers, but with the common need for sustainability of tourism, we can contribute to its development.



Photo: Times of India

Jelena Ljubenović, CC member



Photo: www.keepcarrollbeautiful.org

### "Animal Ethics and Problem Breeding"

#### 22 September 2024

It is often said that dog is human's best friend. However, are we the best friends we can be to animals?

Young women gathered at the Open Space forum on 22<sup>nd</sup> September to explore the fascinating and challenging topic of animal ethics. Skilfully led by Agnes, the group learnt about the damage that beauty aesthetics can do to the health of cats and dogs, including many conditions which are preventable or treatable. One such example is the French Bulldog. Noted for their cute fat rolls and distinctive large ears, overbreeding has led many dogs to suffer from a collapsed snout, with their mouth and tongue too large for the size of their skull,

'Every act of animal abuse diminishes our collective humanity. We must work together to create a world free from cruelty and violence.'

Sangdeun Chailert

resulting in breathing and dental issues. Because these features are what qualifies a successful dog in show competitions such as Crufts, breeders are encouraged to breed dogs who already have these exaggerated features in an effort to produce winning puppies.



Photo: Slide from PPT prepared by Agnes Kienesberger

Following the engaging presentation, the discussion turned to a wider reflection relationship the between humans and animals. including farm animals as well as domestic pets. Although many people love animals and would never intend to do harm to them, many normalised practices can lead to inadvertent harm. Not only did the discussion encourage us to take practical steps towards caring for animals, such as sourcing pets from reliable and humane breeders, but encouraged

the members to contemplate how we can transform our cultural attitudes towards animals in order to protect and care for them.

As the calendar nears 4<sup>th</sup> October, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi (the patron saint of animals), it is apt to reflect on the Christian calling to be good stewards of God's creation. How may we show our love to other creatures who call this planet home? In the words of Assisi himself, "If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men."

Phoebe Parkin

### The importance of Open Space sessions

#### A personal reflection

The Open Space Sessions are highly valuable to me. Every time I join the group, I feel very safe, and I appreciate that all participants are honest when sharing their experiences or personal stories. Hannah and Jelena, the moderators, present photos, illustrations, and educational videos, and sometimes they recommend relevant documentary films that are often analyzed. Their presentations are carefully prepared and guided, but half of the online meeting is dedicated to interaction and sharing our own life stories.







One of the monthly topics we explored was self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and assertive communication. I believe that good mental health can lead to better physical health. Two years ago, I made the decision to prioritize my mental health by engaging in both group and individual therapy. This focus has helped me become a happier person with healthier relationships. Understanding the importance of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and assertive communication is essential for harmonious relationships and personal well-being. These elements significantly influence our social interactions and self-awareness.

Most importantly, healthy self-esteem promotes confidence. In my knowledge, building self-esteem helps individuals recognize their strengths and leads to changing negative thoughts about themselves.

At the end of each gathering, we address our insights and share our thoughts and expertise. I want to thank the organizers for their meaningful and hard work on the Open Space sessions. Productive discussions on such fundamental topics mean a lot to me, and I feel fortunate to be part of this fantastic team of young women.

Mariam Agladze

#### **REFLECTIONS**

### Together we will succeed in everything (Phil 4:13)

September is a month of many beginnings. It got its name from the Latin septum, "seven", because it was originally the seventh of ten months in the oldest known Roman calendar (calendar of Romulus 750 BC) In that calendar, the first month was March (Latin Martius). After the calendar reform, which added January and February to the beginning of the year, i.e. before the month of March, September became the ninth month, but kept its name. It had 29 days until the Julian reform, which added a day, so today it has 30 days, and it is the ninth month of the year, but also the beginning in a way.

In the Orthodox Church, September is the beginning of the church year. It is also the beginning of the school year in many countries of the Northern Hemisphere. Perhaps it is precisely because of the beginning of the school year that the month of September is the month of hope, where it is somehow "visibly" recognized.

Both children and parents hope that each new year will be successful, good, that they will learn a lot, etc. Both professors and educators hope that they will be able to prove the importance of education and help children find their way in growing up, maturing, understanding and accepting the world around them. It is not an easy path for anyone. But, somehow, children's hope is what always touches me and reminds me of God's presence. Why does a child hope that her or his parents will help her or him? A child believes, and thus behaves, what she or he hopes for, but why does child hope? There is only one answer: because child has the experience of love and special loyalty and affection.

Of course, there are also families in which there is violence and abuse of roles, but I am thinking of those families who live the family values of love and trust. And even where those values are violated for various reasons, often justified, the child still has hope. I met a lot of children, today virtuous and responsible people who went through a very difficult, challenging and dangerous path of growing up. It was that childish hope that sustained and brought them out. They had that experience of love and God's goodness inside them even when it was not visible from the outside.

I don't think there is a person who doesn't hope or at least didn't hope at some point in his life. It simply means that we all have an experience of love and trust somewhere deep down. In fact, we all have the gift of hope, but, some have preserved and nurtured it, and some have not. Everyone needs, especially at all beginnings, to recall the experience that there is a Reality that will not let us down. The one we hope for and trust. This is precisely the confirmation of God's presence, His omnipotence and goodness. Every September, in a special way, preparing for the new pastoral and school year, making plans and decisions, we nurture our hope and bear witness to God through our engagement in time and space. Let's not let fear hinder us on that path, because to our question; "I do not know how it will go on...", God says: "I will show you the way." (Proverbs 3, 5-6).

Marijana Ajzenkol, EFECW Co-President

#### REFLECTIONS

#### Rahab

# "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

"In the Book of Joshua, we learn about Rahab, a Gentile and a Canaanite woman who resided in Jericho in the Promised Land and assisted the Israelites by hiding two men who had been sent to scout the city prior to their attack.

Rahab was a woman with a bad reputation in the ancient city of Jericho, where two spies from Israel had gone to check out the land and see if they could conquer it. Rahab was a Canaanite, but she trusted in Israel's God. When the spies came to Jericho, she hid them on the roof of her house which was built into the city wall. When the king's messengers came to ask about the spies, Rahab misguided them, sending them on a wild goose chase down the road that led to the Jordan River. She told the spies that she knew the Lord had given them the land of Canaan. She had heard all that God had done for them at the Red Sea and the battles He had won for them. She asked them to spare her family because she had protected them, and then she let them down by a rope through a window. When Israel took over Jericho, they spared Rahab and her whole family just as they had promised. Rahab is, finally, the first Gentile mentioned in the genealogy. She became the mother of Boaz and the great-great-grandmother of King David. So Rahab, the foreigner and sinner became part of the line of Jesus Christ Himself, because of her great trust in God and faithfulness to His people.

Rahab, the prostitute who hid Joshua's spies from the authorities in Herico, became an example of conversion in early Christianity and Judaism because she and her family escaped the ban on Jericho and continued to live in Israel "to this day". She appears in the historical example lists of Hebrews, James, and Corinthians.

Rahab showed herself to be brave, bold, strong, and loyal to God despite great danger from the king of her city, Jericho. She recognized God's greatness just from the stories she had heard and chose whose

side she wanted to be on. Rahab chose to follow God when no one else in her city did and she was the only one in her city saved because of it".1

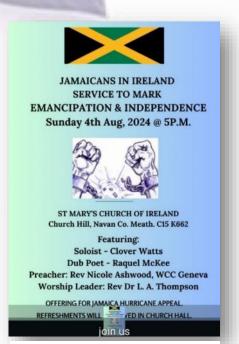
Reflection: Does God look at the people's reputation and title or does He look at the people's heart and strength to involve anyone in His plans? Is Rahab a betrayer of her country?

Dr. Marianna Apresyan, EFECW Co-President

<sup>&</sup>quot;Women in Scripture (Carol Mayers, oni Craven and Ross S. Kraemer), Tikva Frymer-Kensky, Amy-Jill Levine, p. 140-142

#### **NEWS FROM THE MEMBERS**

### Anniversary event: Jamaica's emancipation and independence



Invitation posted by Nicqi Ashwood (Screenshot by Hannah Wehner)

### Navan, Ireland, 4 August 2024

On August 4, 2024 I attended a service marking the anniversary of Jamaica's Emancipation and Independence in Navan, Ireland. Rev Nicgi Ashwood from the WCC came all the way from Switzerland to preach. After several words of greetings, some music and singing, prayers, an impressive poetry performance by Raquel McKee, and readings, Nicqi shared thoughts about one LUV, standing for one Lifestyle, one Unity in God's spirit, and one Vision, that resonated with the audience. The closing of the



Nicqi preaching (photo: Hannah Wehner)

ceremony was marked by a gathering of all attendees in front of the church and some singing. Afterwards we shared food and drinks and had the opportunity to get to know each other. It was a very interesting and fascinating event that allowed for enriching encounters. I am grateful I was able to be part of it and share some special moments.

Hannah Wehner, CC member



Photo: Bridgett Leslie

### The pilgrimage of the Armenian Forum to Instanbul

On 28 October 2024, a group of women of the Armenian Forum organized a pilgrimage to Istanbul to visit Christian churches and to pray for peace with local Christians.

The Armenian Forum was hosted by the Patriarch of Constantinople of the Armenian Church Archbishop Sahak Mashalyan. First, the national coordinator of the forum and EFECW Co-President, Marianna Apresyan introduced the EFECW and its activities. She, then, presented the Armenian forum, its members, and activities in Armenia.







There were visits to Armenian churches in Istanbul and meetings with women's associations of different churches. During these inspiring meetings, we learned about women's activities in the churches and their involvement in church life, about their involvement and engagement in spiritual, holistic, and administrative ministries. There were some interesting and wise suggestions for cooperation from women's associations and the Armenian Forum.

We visited the Saint Archangel church where is the holy relics of Saint Phebronia and Saint Artemios where we prayed for peace in all countries experiencing war. We also visited the St Stephan Bulgarian church.

Photos and Article: Dr. Marianna Apresyan, EFECW Co-President

#### **NEWS FROM INTERNATIONAL & ECUMENICAL PARTNERS**

### WCC statement on the escalating violence in the Middle East

The World Council of Churches condemns the escalating violence in the Middle East, including Israel's recent airstrikes on Iran and its ongoing military operations in Gaza and Lebanon. These actions not only endanger countless civilian lives but also constitute grave violations of international law, pushing the region closer to a wider and devastating conflict.

We urgently call on all parties to exercise immediate restraint. An immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon is essential to prevent further loss of life and suffering. Only through halting these hostilities can we pave the way for meaningful dialogue, which remains the only viable path to a sustainable and just peace.

Adding to the complexity of the situation is the recent vote by the Knesset to ban the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)'s operation in Israel, which could lead to the closure of its headquarters in East Jerusalem, a critical administrative hub overseeing its activities in the Palestinian territories. We strongly condemn this unprecedented legislation, which effectively targets a UN humanitarian agency, poses a severe threat to the crucial work of UNRWA—a body that has, for over 70 years, provided indispensable aid and relief to Palestinian refugees

In solidarity with those affected in Gaza, Lebanon, and throughout the Middle East, we appeal to the international community and faith communities around the world to join us in advocating for an end to this destructive cycle of violence. We call for a renewed commitment to international law, diplomacy, and respect for human dignity and sovereignty, which are essential for building a lasting and peaceful future for all people and nations in the region.

Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay, General Secretary, WCC

### Armenian churches urge the world to pray for hostages

H.H. Catholicos Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, asked for people to join the prayer for Armenian hostages [...] Answering this call, the World Council of Churches (WCC) is inviting all people of good will to join a prayer day for Armenia -for peace, for support for refugees, and the release of war hostages- on 10 November, the day before the opening of the COP29 climate talks in Azerbaijan.

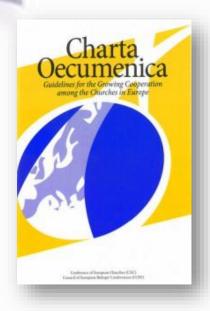
The military aggression against the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh in September-October 2020, followed by the ten-month-long total blockade of the Lachin corridor and the forced displacement of around 120,000 Armenians from their ancestral lands in September 2023, remains a critical concern.

COP29 presents a unique opportunity to advocate for the unconditional release of the 23 Armenian hostages, as well as the Azeri political prisoners and journalists detained in Azeri jails.

WCC general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay invited all churches to join the call to prayer, and also urged continued support from the international community.

Source: www.oikoumene.org/news

### **Revision of the Charta Oecumenica**



The <u>Charta Oecumenica</u> is guidelines for the growing cooperation among churches in Europe, published in April 2001 in Strasbourg by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Catholic Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE). It should mark the beginning of the century, and it is a document of inspiration, it was said.

The Charta is a working document, not doctrinal, meant to be a process in progress-an Emmaus pilgrimage. The Charta is translated into thirty languages.

During 2017, CEC set up a questionnaire about the churches and organisations experiences. A variety of experiences were shared. Please read and find your countries in "The Local Impact of the Charta Oecumenica: The current stage of the evaluation process".

The revision: The Charta has played a crucial role in shaping the European ecumenical agenda. In 2022, CEC and CCEE decided to revise this landmark document to ensure that it remains relevant in our current times. A joint CEC-CCEE Working Group is updating the document, considering the changing circumstances in European society and among Christians.

The Consultation Process: The Joint CEC-CCEE Working Group has prepared a first draft to update Charta Oecumenica (Read <a href="here">here</a> the first draft). The decision-making bodies of both CEC and CCEE respectively approved this draft for a consultation process, which will lead to further updates and improvements of the text. The consultation period is open until **31 December 2024**. All contributions will be evaluated by the Revision Group, which will then update the text based on the outcomes of the consultation. The aim is to adopt and sign the updated Charta in the next year.

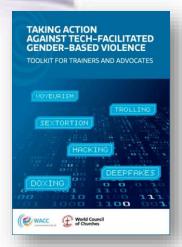
The EFECW CC has initiated a process to contribute to this revision, by:

- coordinating the revision work of the EFECW national members;
- reaching out to EFECW individual members with expertise seeking their contribution;
- organising an online meeting to discuss and finalise EFECW's proposals for revision.

The online meeting is planned on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024. For more information on EFECW contribution and/or if you are interested in joining the process, kindly send an email to <u>info@efecw.net</u>.

Carin Gardbring and Marianna Apresyan, EFECW Co-Presidents

### "Taking action against tech-facilitated gender-based violence"



#### A toolkit for trainers and advocates

The Toolkit equips trainers and advocates to plan and facilitate training sessions on monitoring misogyny on social media, co-published by WACC and the World Council of Churches in August 2024. It is <u>available</u> in EN, FR, DE, ES (PDF).

Taking Action Against Tech-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence outlines key concepts, with practical exercises, to raise participants' awareness of gender cyberviolence. It presents the tools needed to conduct social media monitoring, report on the results, and plan further monitoring. The Toolkit notes include slides from the inaugural workshop (12<sup>th</sup> September 2024) than can be used during training sessions.

Source: WCC news

### Young people and climate change

### Council of Europe urges measures for young people and climate change

Climate action is a top priority for most young people in Europe. The Council of Europe has therefore proposed a set of measures on climate action dedicated to young people. In a new <u>Recommendation</u>, the

first international text on this topic, the organisation's Committee of Ministers underlines young people's freedom of expression and the importance of judicial review in environmental matters.

The principle "no punishment without law" should be applied. States should respect, in particular, the rights of vulnerable youth, including marginalised and indigenous young people, when they express their concerns about environmental degradation in public discourse. European states should also strengthen youth participation in climate-related decision-making processes and raise awareness, including through financially supporting youth organisations working on climate issues.



Investing in green jobs, education and skills is another recommendation. Member states should provide dedicated funding to young green entrepreneurs through micro-financing schemes and to Research and Development projects in the green tech field. Youth workers should receive tailored support; buildings and facilities provided by the authorities (youth clubs and centres, schools, and youth centres) should be resilient to climate change, so as to ensure optimal working and living conditions. [...]

Source: Council of Europe

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### Save the date!

## Monday 25th November, morning

EFECW is leading the morning prayer, on 25 November 2024, first day of the international campaign, "16 days against sexual and gender-based violence", as one of the events offered by the World Council of Churches.

### 16 Days against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

The 16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that begins on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and ends on 10 December, Human Rights Day.

Read more about the events <u>here</u> and/or contact <u>info@efecw.net</u>

#### Please support:

The **Ruth-Epting Fund (www.efecw.net)** - which is essential for supporting financially the participation of women in EFECW events!

and The Fellowship of the Least Coin (http://www.flc.net.ph)

#### **Bank details:**

Oekumenisches Forum Christlicher Frauen in Europa

Bank: Schelhammer Capital

IBAN: AT64 1919 0000 0026 9688

SWIFT/BIC: BSSWATWW

Website: <u>www.efecw.net</u>

Email: info@efecw.net

Facebook: EFECW-Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women

Instagram: efecw\_official

Podcast: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/@EFECW-Podcast">https://open.spotify.com/show/3IfSvAWDEJguyAmEXZtTkO</a>