



ECUMENICAL FORUM OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN  
FORUM OECUMENIQUE DE FEMMES CHRETIENNES D'EUROPE  
ÖKUMENISCHES FORUM CHRISTLICHER FRAUEN IN EUROPA

## EFEWCW News

April 2020



*Photo: "Les femmes au tombeau", Christiane Boone, winter 2011, Cathedral of Troyes*

Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Matthew 28:7-8 (NIV)

Then they remembered his words. When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. Luke 24:8-10 (NIV)

When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went

and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. Mark 16:9-10 (NIV)

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her. John 20:18 (NIV)

Jesus the Risen One chooses women with confidence to tell the Good News of his Resurrection.

He chooses as messengers - what a beautiful symbol! - women who give and transmit life to announce Life, to say the triumph of life over death.

It was they who, braving their fear and their taunts, announced the Resurrection to the other disciples. The four evangelists report it: that the four speak of it in the same way, or almost, it is exceptional enough to be underlined.

Already in the Old Testament women called prophetesses, were chosen to be the link between God and human beings like Myriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4-10 and Judg. 5), Houldah (2 Kgs. 22:14-20).

Many women mark out the New Testament route. The important role that Jesus gives them is a total reversal: these women doomed to silence, are called to announce and proclaim like the Samaritan woman after her meeting with Jesus at the well (Jn. 4:28-30).

The decisive words of Jesus about the wife of Bethany restore their dignity and place to those who have no place in society : "Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." Mk. 14: 9 (NIV)

By jostling all the codes, Jesus puts forward women to say that God does not take into account religious or societal prohibitions.

Pauline Jacob, a Canadian feminist theologian, wrote in 2011 in the review "Prayer Call of dawn" about women on the morning of the Resurrection: "for these messengers, the Resurrection they announce is not only that of Jesus Christ but theirs too. Jesus raises them with him. He does so by recognising that they are truly full human beings with a dignity similar to that of their brothers and a freedom that opens doors for them and does not lock them in a shackle because they are born women. "

These women, in total break with the cultural sexism of their time, make a decisive contribution to the history of believers. It is indeed they who, by their gestures and their words, make Salvation appear to the eyes of humans.

They are part of our history, of our own history, they lead us on the daring path of proclaiming the Good News through our actions and our words. They push us out of our shackles.

The women in the tomb and their sending on a mission lead us to question each of us about our mission as Christians in our churches and in society.

Particularly today, in this time of major health crisis affecting the whole world, what is our mission?

What do we have to show and say around us as Christian women?

First, I am convinced, that we need to break the morbid psychosis around us by saying and applying the saving protective gestures to better protect others.

"The fear of being infected is normal, it is rational, everyone is afraid of developing the disease and the risk of dying has increased... The anxiety is more complex, it is irrational fear. While it is possible to protect oneself by taking relatively simple measures, the individual anticipates the worst in a disproportionate way... That is to say in an extreme anxiety of the contamination which would exceed the explanations of the scientific world and the fear reasoned... Anxiety can in extreme cases invade thought... In the psychosis of contamination (...) the other and all that is different in him become dangerous and it is necessary to guard against it, or even make it disappear as in the case racism or anti-Semitism... A form of suspicion that can lead to a paranoid mechanism of destruction of the other..." Marie-Frédérique Bacqué, Professor of psychopathology at the University of Strasbourg

We can and must relay clearly around us the clear and trusted information we receive from governments and health officials, without gossiping and dramatising. Let us also make gestures of solidarity by protecting ourselves, by scrupulously following the instructions given, by worrying about isolated people, by calling them regularly to break their loneliness.

And despite everything, and as CC member Evelyne Zinsstag reminds us, "Let us not forget to rejoice in the colours of spring that we see at our window".

United forever by this Risen Christ and by the affection we have for each other, pray for one another, that our prayer will support all the sick, their families, carers and all those who are in charge of our well-being.

Do not look for the body of the Risen One who has disappeared... we find it in the others, in our neighbour!

Hope is lived there!



*Photos and text: Anne-Marie Schott member of the CC*

## EFECW Coordinating Committee meeting

26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> March 2020, online

The physical meeting of the Coordinating Committee planned for the same dates in Hannover prior to the National Assembly of the German Forum, was cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A virtual meeting with a shorter agenda was organised, where it was decided to cancel the National Coordinators' meeting (Armenia, August 2020) because of many uncertainties, caused by COVID 19.

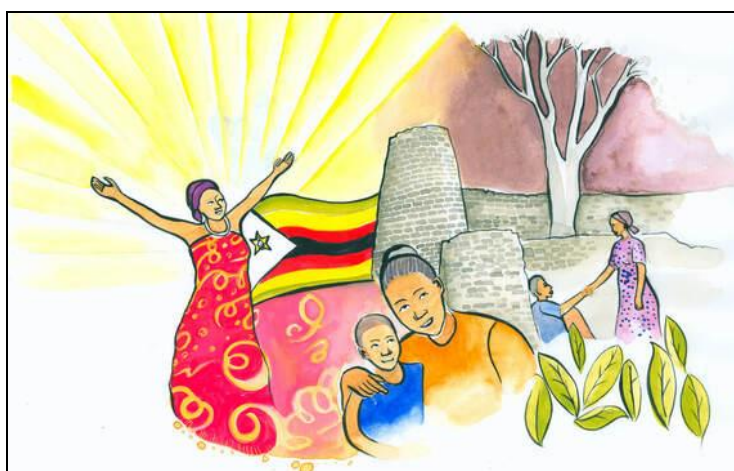
While many known world realities and practices are being challenged and redefined, the Coordinating Committee reflected on alternative ways to continue working towards the vision "EFECW envisions to be a living Christian community of sisters by creating an open and safe space where all women – beyond their differences – are empowered to share their spirituality and to experience faith. EFECW strives to be a recognised voice of Christian women in Church and public life in Europe."



## World Day of Prayer 2020, 6<sup>th</sup> March

**"Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk" (John 5:2-9a)**

The WDP 2020 programme is based on Jesus' encounter with a person who, although positioned for healing, had not acted upon the opportunities given. Jesus asked –"Do you want to be made well?" You are faced with this life-changing question. What are you going to do? "Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk," said Jesus. Our sisters from Zimbabwe are taking Jesus' encounter to be a call to act in love for peace and reconciliation. "The action verbs suggest that we should not be afraid to act on the word of God. God is offering us the steps for personal and social transformation."



The country of Zimbabwe continues its search for peace during its political transition. The change in government, that occurred when the WDP materials were written, continues to bring Zimbabwe to the frontlines of the media. The economy crashed the dreams of many, Mugabe died at 95 years old, protests are met with violence, and a massive cyclone has flooded some communities.

However in all moments, WDP women, churches and ecumenical organizations have not lost hope.

“Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk,” said Jesus. Our sisters from Zimbabwe are taking Jesus’ encounter to be a call to act in love for peace and reconciliation. “The action verbs suggest that we should not be afraid to act on the word of God. God is offering us the steps for personal and social transformation.” This is the time for change!

May we hear the words of this compassionate God and the Prince of Peace to act upon the healing of ourselves and our communities to bring peace and reconciliation into the world.

We are empowered to take up our mats. No more waiting powerlessly on the mat. As expressed in the WDP 2020 painting by Nonhlanhla Mathe, let us give a healing hand to the needy, let us embrace children with love as their future is ahead, and let us open our arms in joy as the time to rise up has come. This is the time for change!

### **The WDP Zimbabwe Committee**

In 1962, Mai Rev. Kachidza of the Methodist Church and Mai Major Nhari of the Salvation Army Church formed the first interdenominational prayer committee meeting. These two leaders saw the need for the reverends, bishops, ministers and pastor’s wives to meet, pray, know each other and strengthen one another in doing God’s work. We have seen the growth of World Day of Prayer Zimbabwe from churches to schools, from universities to girls’ and women’s organizations. It is with deep gratitude that the growing power inherent in World Day of Prayer and the Mibatanzwa prayer meetings are recognised.

To this day, World Day of Prayer and Mibatanzwa Madzimai follow the tradition of praying and helping the needy in their communities rotating the giving to the needy in the different provinces as identified by the local women in the provinces.



### **World Day of Prayer celebration in Malta**

On Friday, 6th March Malta Catholic Action joined the rest of the world in celebrating the World Day of Prayer organised by the Ladies’ circle in Malta and with the other churches in Malta. This was an hour service held at the Scots Church in Valletta Malta in which several members of the churches participated. After the service the Scots Church hosted the participants with refreshments.

In the picture: Ivy Fleri, president of Central Council Adults/Women for Catholic Action Malta reading from John 5, 2-9a.

Catholic Action Malta is a participant of World Day of Prayer and not the organiser.



## World Day of Prayer celebration in Czech Republic

The photos are from the preparation of liturgy from Zimbabwe in November 2019. The preparation attended the emeritus ambassador of the Czech Republic in Zimbabwe, Mrs. Imbrova, who informed us knowlidlgy.

We offered her cooperation with her foundation, which supports children from the sculptural village Tengenenge and works together to improve the conditions of the whole community.



[www.hedvabnastezka.cz/aktuality/klub-pratel-tengenenge/](http://www.hedvabnastezka.cz/aktuality/klub-pratel-tengenenge/)

More about WDP in Czech Republic on our FB  
[www.facebook.com/Světový-den-modliteb-český-výbor](https://www.facebook.com/Světový-den-modliteb-český-výbor)

*Mira Poloprutská, Czech Republic*

## World Day of Prayer in Ukraine



Ukrainian Forum's World Day of Prayer celebration in the Lutheran church in Lviv.

## World Day of Prayer in Armenia

Women's World Day of Prayer in Armenian Evangelical Church in Yerevan, Armenia



## World Day of Prayer in Austria



World Day of Prayer in St. Stephens Cathedral in Vienna, Austria



## World Day of Prayer in Serbia

This year our Forum managed to get blessings of Serbian Orthodox Patriarch to have Zimbabwe prayer in Orthodox Church.



## 25 years after Beijing – UN world conference

### The Superpower Gender Equality Year of Beijing 25+

#### Background

The United Nations has organised four world conferences on women. These took place in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995. The last—one of the largest-ever gatherings of the United Nations—was followed by a series of five-year reviews. This 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing marked a significant turning point for the global agenda for gender equality. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, adopted unanimously by 189 countries, is an agenda for women's empowerment and considered the key global policy document on gender equality. It sets strategic objectives and actions for the advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality in 12 critical areas of concern.

The plan was to celebrate the 25 years in September 2020. Preparations are ongoing, but for the moment we don't know when this will happen. There have been regional consultations during 2019 to prepare for the Commemoration. Read more <http://www.unece.org>

All States are called upon to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and of the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly held in 2000. Read about your countries. [https://www.unece.org/b25\\_national\\_reports.html](https://www.unece.org/b25_national_reports.html)

#### Commission on the Status of Women

The 64th edition of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was planned (but postponed due to Covid-19 pandemic) to take place in New York from 9<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> March. It is the largest UN gathering after the General Assembly and the single largest international summit focusing on women's rights. This year's CSW will specifically celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing platform.

A broad ecumenical coalition of faith-based actors have come together under the name "Faith in Beijing" will participate. The members include ACT Alliance, Lutheran World Federation, World Council of Churches, Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid, Anglican Communion, International Girls Brigade and World Evangelical Alliance among others.

In conjunction with CSW, the Ecumenical Coalition had organised a series of side and parallel events; Act Church of Sweden had also planned to launch a global family law campaign together with UN Women and other actors such as Musawah, Equality Now and Muslims for Progressive Values. The purpose of the campaign is, among other things, to mobilize various actors from, for example, civil society, Member States and the UN to work together against discriminatory family law.





## **Generation Equality Forum in Mexico and Paris**

The Generation Equality Forum is a civil society-centred, multi-stakeholder, global gathering for gender equality, convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France. The kick-off event in Mexico City was planned for 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> May 2020 (postponed, new dates will be announced) and culminate with an event in Paris, France on 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> July (to be confirmed). Read more <https://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/beijing-plus-25/generation-equality-forum>

### **Ecumenical women**

There is a rich history of women in the ecumenical movement undertaking advocacy with and on behalf of marginalized groups and of Christian women acting together to transcend boundaries in order to seek and defend the rights of women and girls. After the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi (1985), the World Council of Churches promoted an Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women which ran from 1988-1998 and was a response to the UN's Decade for Women from 1976-1985. The Ecumenical Decade focused on themes such as women's participation in the work and life of churches, violence against women in church and society, and global economic injustice and racism as related to the lives of women.

Throughout the Beijing Conference, women of faith and ecumenical and church-based bodies advocated for the inclusion of a faith voice and a truly prophetic agenda for the empowerment of women and girls. For example, the Anglican United Nations Office, the World Council of Churches, the Christian Peace Conference, and the United Church Board for World Ministries submitted a statement titled, "A Statement on Gender by Communities of Faith." A strong delegation of "Ecumenical Women United" was in full-force at Beijing and even led to the creation of the Ecumenical Women at the United Nations, a coalition of ecumenical and church-related entities working for gender justice at the UN and beyond.

### **Context**

Since September 1995 the context has changed. We are living in changing global, regional, and national environments. Countries are faced with increasing polarization, the rise of populist nationalism, and contestation, both within and between societies. There has been an increasing threat to multilateralism as a critical platform for global collaboration, and a shrinking space for civil society, including faith actors. Among those countries who then fought for the Platform are some today against it, which means they are not implementing the action plan.

### **Future**

For the moment we don't know when events will happen. It depends on how the pandemic Covid-19 evolves. In September 2020 was planned a high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly to commemorate the 25 years. What will that occasion give for the future efforts of gender equality?

In October we will commemorate also 20 years of the UN Security Resolution 1325 for Women, Peace and Security. Governments committed to establish National Action Plans on the inclusion of women (and in nowadays also young adults Resolution 2250 and 2419) in peace work. 83 countries have done that. <https://www.securitywomen.org/united-nations/unscr-1325-and-national-action-plans-nap>

In addition to the anniversaries of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Resolution 1325, this year we have only 10 years remaining until the 17 Global Sustainable Development Goals are to be achieved. Goal five deals specifically with gender equality, but the issue of women's rights also permeates the other goals. We have still a lot to do!

*Carin Gardbring, member of CC*

## Message from the French Forum

### Information about measures combating violence against women in France.

During the meeting in Corfu, (March 2019), the EFECW national Fora were asked to keep an eye on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, which was ratified by the French government.

As a member of the CLEF (French Coordination of the European Women's Lobby-ELW), we were notified that a European experts' group named GREVIO will come to France in January 2020 and meet the High Council on Equality (HCE) between women and men.

During the last meeting of our group in Paris, we studied the conclusions of the GREVIO report, which underlines many dysfunctions of the Convention in our country.

Here are the main priorities defined by GREVIO to improve preventing and combating violence against women in France:

1. On the legislative field, France has to base the definition of sexual violence - as many European countries have already done- on the absence of free consent from the victim.
2. On the judicial field, we have to reconsider the judicial practices, often qualifying rape as sexual violence, currently considered as an offence instead of a crime, which means unsuitable punishment for the attacker.
3. Procedures of protective orders must be revised so that the orders could be used in a more systematic way.
4. The interest and security of the child must be better considered by improving the conditions of revocation of parental rights for the violent parent, included within the framework of a protective order.
5. On the social field, more emergency help-centres and shelters are needed for the victims of rape or sexual violence as well as more specifically dedicated housing, for women only
6. On the administrative field, it is necessary to make easier the delivery of an autonomous residence permit to foreign women victims of violence
7. On the financial field, our government has to increase the budget dedicated to prevent and combat violence against women and give more support to the associations bringing assistance and protection to the victims

It also has to carry on supporting the High Council of Equality (HCE), which is in charge of evaluating politics regarding violence against women by giving it sufficient means to develop its mission.

In the next months we will be very keen to pay attention to our government and its implementation of the GREVIO's recommendations. In case of no change, we will be sure to question the services in charge, with the support of the CLEF.



## Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE)

50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> October 2019



EYCE celebrated its 50th anniversary last year in October – 50 blessed years of EYCE! And I had an opportunity to be there to celebrate with all the guests.

The meeting took place in a wonderful venue located on a small island in Berlin from 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2019, the anniversary itself was celebrated on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> October together with EYCE Alumni, Member Organisations and guests. It was a wonderful opportunity for everyone whose heart once touched by EYCE to look back on five decades of the history with photos and personal memories, pray, eat, celebrate together and discuss the EYCE's future.



I was actively involved in EYCE first as a Member of the Campaign Coordination Team between the years of 2013 – 2015, with further progress in to the Executive Committee from 2015 to 2017, and I was really looking forward to all generations from 1969 till 2019 coming together, sharing the stories of how the organization worked in the past, the challenges and obstacles it faced due to political situation in Europe, and the stories of friendship and fellowships made for life. As I was preparing for the meeting, I was contemplating on what the organization gave me, how it changed my life and what the challenges were that I faced during my time with EYCE. I can definitely say I wouldn't be the same person if it wasn't for EYCE. I wouldn't be such a passionate volunteer with many exciting memories, lifetime friendships all across Europe, and changed perspectives on quite a few subjects.



The anniversary celebrations were fully packed with sessions, workshops, panel discussions and networking that gave a chance to provide guests with the current EYCE situation look back at the history and discuss ideas for future development of the organization. The day was concluded with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations that were spectacular. The evening was moderated by Olga Richterova, member of the Czech Parliament with a keynote speech given by John Alderdice, Baron Alderdice a Member of House of Commons. They both were once part of EYCE.

I particularly enjoyed one of the sessions - "Five decades of EYCE history" as it was truly amazing not to just hear all the interesting stories and how people coped with circumstances under various political regimes, but mostly to see that the feeling of being involved in EYCE that people had across Europe and denominations and times hasn't changed. It's the sense of fellowship & friendship, sharing and praying together, and power to change the world. That hasn't changed a bit over the last 50 years.



And I do wish that all great ideas and inputs discussed during the celebrations will not be lost and with everyone's effort we will see at least another 50 years of EYCE☺.

*Vendula (Vendi) Pavlikova*



## International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin (ICFLC)

14th – 19th October 2019, Ghana



Women in Ghana, women of Africa – The international committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin ICFLC met in Ghana, 14th – 19th of October 2019

‘Where I live, I share the land with a coco tree, a cinnamon tree and other plants. I water them. I feed the birds in my garden. Taking care of nature keeps me calm and disciplined.’ These are the words of Mama Mercy Amba Oduyoye (born in 1934

when Ghana was still under colonial rule), as they call her respectfully here in Ghana. She gives the sermon during the opening ceremony of the 39th ICFLC Annual Conference, October 14th 2019 at the Abokobi Women’s Training Center, Accra. Mercy was the first woman president of the ecumenical association of third world theologians EATWOT. Also had she worked at the World Council of Churches for many years. She is called one of the mothers of African feminist theologies. Today she speaks about the difference between husbanding and dominion of Mother Earth. ‘Husbanding is equal, dominion is exploitive. Thanks to colonial behaviors based on the translation of Genesis 1,26 by ‘dominion’, peoples and nature have been exploited and ruled over in Africa. Most African countries have forest reserves, which are no go areas. The ancestors and elders were buried there. But now the tropical forests are burning in Brazil and some other places in the world. We should all care for them. If not, one day God will kick us out. When I was young I had to walk from Accra to Cape Coast to fetch water. The hills were green, but now they are dark and full of houses. Ghanaians depend on fish, we love it. But fishers are not interested in little fishes and leave them traumatized in the net. They will not become part of the food chain. When you are dying to give life you are part of god’s plan. But when you are dying for nothing, it is a shame and a sin.’ We are losing our integrity and the integrity of creation. And God depends on us to keep the integrity of creation.



*Martina Heinrichs and Mercy Amba Oduyoye before the opening ceremony, Abokobi Women’s Training Center*

### What is FLC?

The Fellowship of the Least Coin is a worldwide women’s prayer movement which started in 1957. Shanti Salomon, a woman from India, was on a peace mission together with American Presbyterian women in post war Asia. According to the biblical story of the widow who gave her least coin which was much more in the eyes of Jesus than the rich young men had given, each woman can participate by setting aside the least coin of her country every time she prays. Quickly the movement spread out through all the other continents. From the collections projects throughout the world as well as scholarships for young women and emergency grants can be given out.

### The place

Our Annual Meeting is hosted at an important place of Ghana’s Women’s Her-Story, the Abokobi Presby Women’s Training Center which was established in 1992 by Rev. Rose Akua Ampofo (1948 – 2003). She was the first woman to be ordained in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Later she moved to Switzerland to become the director of Mission 21 in Basel. The Abokobi center is for women in particular and has the vision to foster women’s fellowship and empowerment. It

facilitates guest groups like us, the ICFLC, but has also an own program, targeting at women, youth, agents of the church and elderly people.

### Women's studies and education in Ghana

Another highlight of the stay in Ghana was the visit to the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture at the Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon, one of the oldest in West Africa and the oldest in Ghana. In 1999 Mercy Amba Oduyoye and other women, including a Muslim, founded the Center with the name "Thalita Qumi" coming from the biblical story of the little girl rising up. 'We women empower ourselves by telling our own stories and by learning to speak up. Normally we are trained not to do so, this behaviour would be considered as disrespectful.' The center is a baby of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians which has meant a lot to women. Some members got a high position in society or became a professor. It aims at doing research as well as integrating the grassroots through education. Women from all religions and cultural backgrounds, also Muslims come to visit the courses. The work is mainly done by volunteers. Items are: migration and girl child trafficking; violence against women through language; domestic violence; women's health; HIV/aids and women; violence against women and girls connected to traditional practices; Female Genital Mutilation; Trokosi (an African traditional slave system which is still present in some rural areas and in the Volta region: girls are taken for the sins of an elderly family member, an uncle for example; cross generational marriages: a young girl of ten years old has to marry an elderly man); widowhood rights (traditionally the heritage goes to the man's family, so widows are poor. In some traditions they suspect her to have killed her husband. They leave her in the room with the dead body until she confesses); comprehensive sex education to prevent teenage pregnancies (when a child is hungry, she gives her body for something to eat); raising awareness trainings for the parents and the children (the elderly generation was brought up with many taboos not to discuss these things at home)... Rape and incest are important issues to tackle. Girls don't want to report because it brings shame to the family. The centre encourages them to speak out about what has happened to them. This project received an FLC grant in 2011 which helped to publish a book about Gender Based Violence.



### Bible studies from the perspective of African women



Lydia Mwaniki, the African representative round the ICFLC table, leads a bible study based on her PhD research "Gender and Imago Dei – a postcolonial African reading Corinthian 11:1-16." Which is a Pauline text about Christ being the head of everyone and man being the head of a woman. She should cover her head, a man ought not. This is one of the most difficult passages in the bible: Paul and women, a very complicated and controversial relationship. The context of Lydia herself: her grandparents were among the first Christians when the missionaries came. Her grandfather became an evangelist. Women had no leadership roles. The bible was used as reason why women cannot be leaders. As women they were only allowed to become deaconess, a lay ministry, not ordained. After her PhD Lydia offered herself for



the position of bishop. But she did not even get at the point of the interviews. The elected one was a man and a student of hers. Nowadays there are three women bishops in Africa. In the constitution of the Anglican Church of Kenya there is no discrimination, nor a gender difference. In theory! Lydia researched how these difficult Pauline texts were taken up by Church Fathers and later on in the colonial Church history. When the missionaries came in 1844 to Kenya, they kept the rules of the church of England: no ordination of women. But they also did good things, e.g. acting against cruel traditional practices like the killing of twins who were seen as a bad omen and thrown in the forest to be eaten by the hyenas. The missionaries worked with men. They realised only late that women should participate. Now women rise up in Africa claiming that they are also pastors. In 1978 women could be ordained in Kenya, in 1992 in Lydia's diocese. It is a slow process. There are still less women than men. There is no woman Archbishop. There is still quite some resistance. A moratorium of five years was installed not to discuss the issue anymore. There is a postcolonial feminist approach saying that the Pauline texts have also potential. Paul has a struggle because of his culture. He was confronted with a context where women could not be equal to men.

The second issue tackled by Lydia is about widows most of them living in poverty and bad conditions. In 2 Kings, 4:1-7 there is the powerful story about a woman whose husband was a scholar of the prophet Elisha and had died. A creditor wanted to take her two sons as slaves. Elisha gives her the advice to fill jars with oil. A miracle happens, she has enough oil to start a business and become economically independent. The AACC started an empowerment campaign for widows to support them with shelters and safe spaces in their vulnerable situation. The 23rd of June was proclaimed as International Widow's Day. In some African countries widows are not treated well. When a husband dies, they assume that the wife has killed her husband. She has to prove that she did not.

### **African women and slavery**

Being a country of the West African coast Ghana had to suffer enormously from slavery. The excursion of ICFLC to Cape Coast and Fort Elmina – places where captured men and women were brought to be shipped to the receiving countries - shows how this big injustice effected people's lives deprived from any dignity, becoming a number as their names have been wiped out, having to walk in chains all the way from the inner land to the coast, starving from hunger, thirst and complete exhaustion or dying in the dungeons or on the ships during the long transatlantic journey to the America's. Especially women's lives have been effected by sexual violence, by rape and forced sex slavery to the colonial white masters.

### **Business**

Like many other faith based organisations, the Fellowship of the Least Coin has to struggle with declining donations coming from the collections. In 2019 only fewer applications were granted compared to former years. The maximum amount for a grant had to be cut. Because of high shipping costs the bi-annually sent Circle of Prayer will be only on the website and can be downloaded from there.

Probably from next year on the Annual Meetings will change into Bi-Annual Conferences. And more measures were decided.

But the commitment will go on: to pray and be in solidarity with women and children around the world for the cause of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation with human beings and the whole creation!



*Martina Heinrichs, ICFLC Regional Coordinator for Europe*

## **“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.” (1 Corinthians 15:17)**

Conversely mathematical statement of this would be: Our faith is not in vain, because Christ is raised. With the resurrection actually begins Christianity and everything in it. If it were not witnesses of the Raised Christ, there would be no Christians, no churches, and who knows whether it would be even known for Christ. We, ordinary people are usually worried and selfish sometimes, and it would not be enough just the fact of Christ's resurrection that it is not a guarantee for our resurrection. So, it seems that we can grow in faith. Christ and our resurrection is inseparable and as such makes sense, but in a way and justification our faith.

Those familiar with the early Christian thought suggest that the first Christian thinkers, in a dialogue with Hellenistic culture, rather Christ portrayed as the divine Logos (Ratio), but as the final revelation of God's love for man. They were confident that we can meet their sense of God's existence and some of God's attributes, but not to God, a Trinity in himself, loves His creatures so that was able to self-sacrifice for them. It is also believed that our minds can prove the immortality of the human soul (with the arguments of the Greek philosophers), but not the resurrection of the body. Christ and our resurrection are considered strictly revealed truth, which is intelligible and acceptable only supernatural faith. Belief that the resurrection is not rationally knowable, allocated resurrection as an eschatological reality of the real life of man and nature. It was hard to understand resurrection from that perspective. It's not easy even today. Here raises the question of the soul and the body and the possibility of the existence of an immortal soul without a possibility of the resurrection of the body.

The modern approach to evolutionary-dynamic image shows the world and sees man as unfinished, or for further transformation capable of being. In this sense, the resurrection of a new stage goes towards the development of man and the cosmos. Does this bring a hope? According to this theory, it is believed that today's man is on the threshold of the third - the spiritual era, and that will emerge in the new spirit as it used to homo sapiens emerged from the cosmic life over billions of years. French Catholic philosopher Jean Guittton says: "According to many converging and complementary characters, it seems that humanity is preparing for a new stage. After homo sapiens, to stage comes homo spiritualis". In our time we can recognize first signs of change, especially in period or state of emergency. We have to make a step and go under the threat of the death of the human species.

If we look at St. Paul representations of Christ's resurrection, he distinguishes three levels of reality: physical, mental and spiritual. There is a way of life that is immersed in the physical and material and so the cosmos. The psychic life that characterizes intelligence and reflection is different from it. But there is a third way of life - a life in spirit. By Paul, the structure of the first Adam (Homo sapiens) is a mental – physical (psycho-somatic), whereby the structure of Christ –second Adam is spiritual (pneumosomatic), as homo spiritualis.

Maybe the representatives of mystics can see this future stage, and a new era of humanity, which may be announcement of Christ's resurrection. Christ's resurrection is not a unique phenomenon (although it is a miracle), but the actual discovery and prefiguration unimagined possibilities and the future of all humanity and the cosmos.

This is just a reflection about the future, and let us not forgets that everything is realized with God's assistance. In this sense, Christ's resurrection is not to our mind totally meaningless. On the contrary, it is reasonably possible, or at least as a prerequisite for the vision of a possible end of the world and the fate of men accustomed to who we are. The men do not know what it is able to be and do until they found in an emergency situation, which puts them in front of the question: to be or not to be. Therefore, I believe in the resurrection!

*Marijana Ajzenkol, EFECW Co-President*

## A prayer-poem from Armenia

On the roads of troubles,  
Through the ways of clouds,  
In the deep of darkness Full of fearful lies,  
Looking back for reasons Seeing devil's eyes,  
I ain't got no fears, God keeps me alive...  
My God, my Saviour promised me He'll pay the debts of mine,  
He is the one who set me free His Love knows no space and no time.  
Be true, be grateful, just be kind,  
It's not the highs you'll always climb,  
It's not the tears you'll always find,  
Life's not to live it with your fears,  
It is to share His Love that heals...  
Bring Joy to those who need it most,  
The Joy of Lord may be your host,  
Pray out your heart, as nothing costs,  
Don't yearn for World, but for a Holy Spirit.

©Anna Gharibyan

---

***Please support:***

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

and the **Ruth-Epting Fund** ([www.efecw.net](http://www.efecw.net))

---

*Thank you for reading our newsletter!*

*Follow us also on [www.efecw.net](http://www.efecw.net) and facebook @efecw.net.*

*Please make our newsletter more informative and inclusive.*

*Send us articles, stories, news, pictures, poems... Email: [info@efecw.net](mailto:info@efecw.net)*