



EFECW News

February 2021



Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you.

All things pass. God does not change.

Patience achieves everything.

Whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world.

Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good.

Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people.

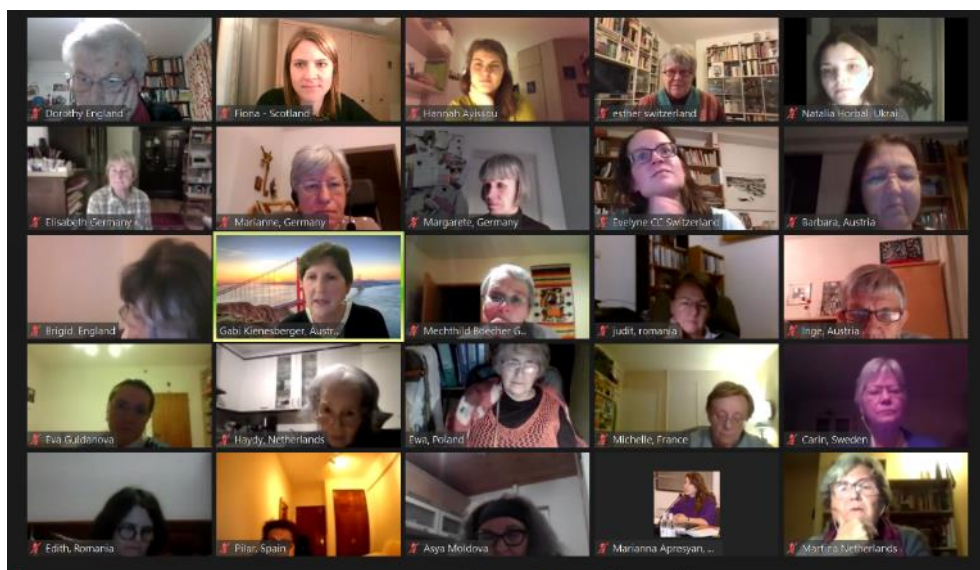
St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

National Coordinators' meeting

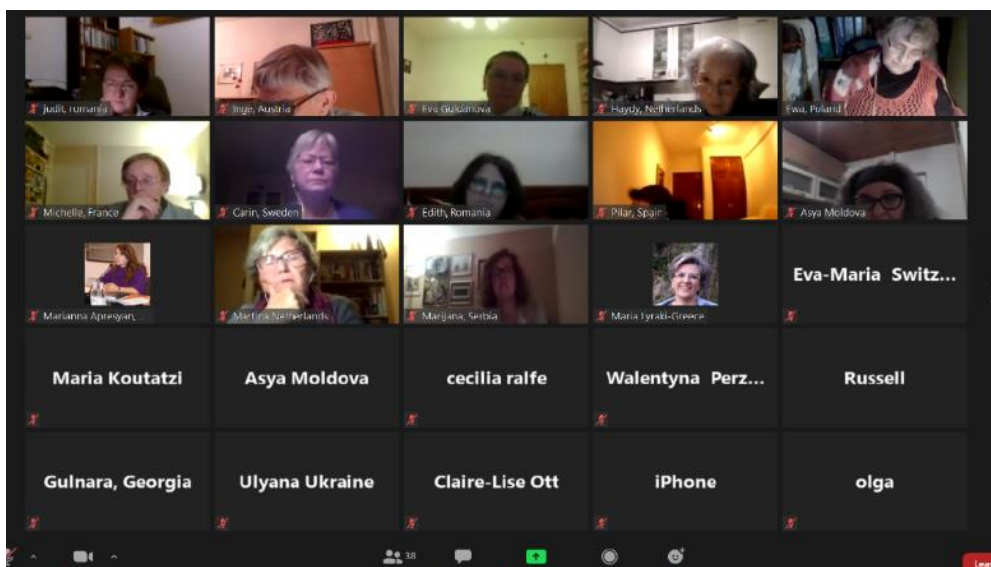
14th December 2021, online

"Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25, 13)

56 women from 20 European countries joined the online meeting of EFECW National Coordinators, on the 14th December in the evening. After our ever first online meeting in September, it became clear that EFECW should continue meeting online as long as the Covid-19 pandemic persists and beyond... Women of the Forum need to meet and refresh the strong links of our community.



This time, the meeting served as a spiritual preparation for Christmas "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25, 13). Evelyne Zinsstag, member of the Coordinating Committee led a bible reflection on the passage of Matthew 25, 1-13; this was followed by small group discussions. Then, the Armenian Forum presented some facts about the recent war in Nagorno Karabach and acts of solidarity to conflict-displaced families and the meeting concluded with a prayer and Christmas wishes.

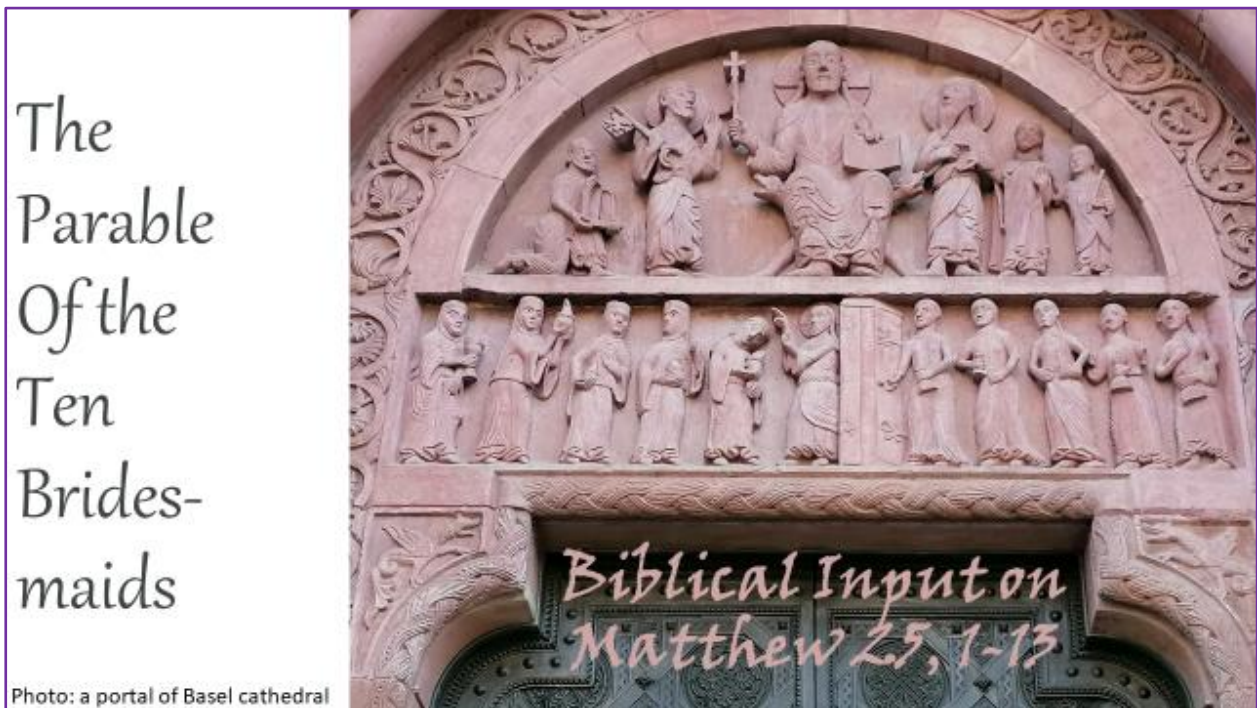


Photos: Fiona Buchanan

The parable of the ten bridesmaids, Matthew 25, 1-13

A mysterious parable

1. Why 10 virgins, bridesmaids, young women... for just one groom?
2. Why do they wait for the groom in the night?
3. Why the lack of solidarity between the women?
4. Why is the door of the wedding celebration closed for the latecomers?
5. And why is there no bride mentioned?



Some explanations

Large procession of the groom and bride at night from his parent's house to the place of celebration

→ *Genesis 2:24: That's why a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife.*

Bridesmaids as "ladies of honour" to represent zeal and purity

→ *In the parable, the groom (=God) does indeed want to marry (=be close to) each of the bridesmaids (=each of us).*

The wedding lasts all night! So why the door would be closed?

→ *It reminds us that "there is a time for everything" (Qohelet), and that we need to be prepared.*

Jesus makes a parable that the people easily understood then. There are similar parables in rabbinic literature that use exactly the same symbols. You may also remember that there are other parables of Jesus that talk about a wedding or a feast invitation. Symbols are clear: King / host = God, nice clothes = good deeds, oil = a just life, feast/celebration: an intimate relationship between god and his guests.

Importance is given to: be on time; be prepared; be well dressed; and ready to enter.

This parable is not about...

...sleepiness – *both the wise and the foolish bridesmaids sleep!*

...lighting the way for the groom – *this could be done with fewer lamps!*

This parable is about self-love and self-care!

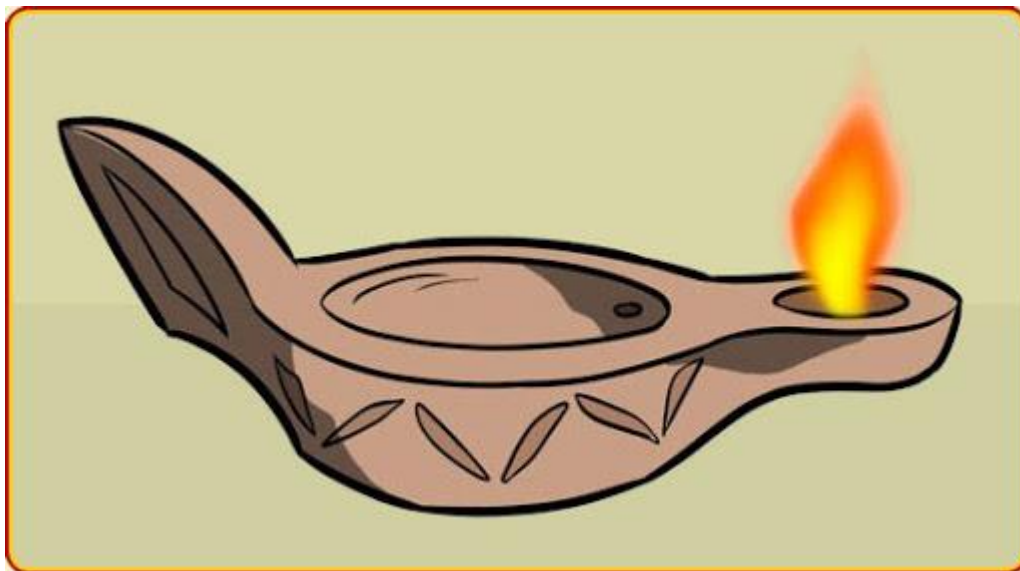
“Love your neighbour as yourself.”

To put Christ in the centre of one’s heart means to take care of what He loves. In daily life, times of rest, of prayer, of listening to scripture are equally important as our good works and our care of others.

Women need their individual lamps to light their own faces so that the groom will recognise them. This explains the lack of solidarity of the wise bridesmaids. The foolishness of the others is highlighted as they run out into the darkness to buy oil, in the middle of the night, with no thought for their own safety.

To be prepared for the kingdom of heaven means to put this in the centre of one’s actions, and taking care of oneself as one does of others.

That’s why this parable is about women, who often forget this part of the command “love thy neighbour as thyself.”



Discussion in small groups

What does this parable mean today for us: as women; as Christians; as Europeans?

1. How do we manage our inner resources as women in these times of crisis?
2. How can our nations heal in these difficult times, and how can they be strengthened in their mission to become safe spaces for all? How can we and do we contribute as European Christian Women?

Evelyne Zinsstag, EFECW Coordinating Committee

Armenian Ecumenical Forum of Women serving displaced people

The Armenian Ecumenical Women's Forum has launched an active team of psychologists, medical doctors and social workers, who collaborated with the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian Evangelical Church, the Baptist Church of Armenia, and the Armenian Catholic Church and was involved in missionary work in the camps where displaced women and children from Nagorno Karabach were located.



We learn from the Bible, especially from the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, that compassion without deed and sharing, pity without action is a half religion, is a half way of mission.

Just remember the passage of Matthew 14:14: "He saw a great crowd, and he was moved with compassion for them to the depths of his being, and healed their sick" and gave them bread. Being encouraged by the mission of our Lord, we tried not to be only moved with compassion, but to render our emotions into action. In this context the Armenian Forum express its thankfulness to its Christian

sisters of the big European family, who were with us during these hard days by their prayers, thoughts and e-mails.

We will remember especially the spiritual presence of the Coordinating Committee and Elisabeth Bücking from the German Forum.

The Armenian Forum appreciates a lot the extended hand of the French Forum who helped us to offer winter boots for 43 people: women, children and disabled men. It is a case when compassion became a deed. It was very touching when one or two pairs of boots brought back a smile to a child and its mother who lost its childhood, home and future. They were forced to leave their homes suddenly sometimes only in slippers at the end of September... Most of them could not leave the refugee camps, because they needed shoes and boots.

Marianna Apresyan, EFECW Co-President



News from EFECW members

A very special annual general meeting of EFECW Germany, 23-24 October 2020



Because of Covid-19 pandemic, even very few days before the fixed meeting the board was divided: shall we meet or rather not? We decided to meet!

The group was smaller than usual: 15 women. We met in Bamberg, in the house of Franciscan sisters. Another seven women participated online.

One half of our meeting time, we traditionally dedicate to a seminar on an important topic in society, Church, or politics.

Last year we had met in Halle, a few days after the attack on the synagogue. In addition, there was the experience of the last part of the Egeria pilgrimage in Palestine. That's why we chose to

have this year a look at antisemitism and the background of the conflict between Israel and Palestine from an ecumenical women's perspective, "with empathy and discrimination". We succeeded to invite Aleida Assmann as lecturer, Egyptologist and, up to 2014, professor of English and Literary Studies at the University of Konstanz. Since the 1990s the focus of Aleida Assmann's scientific work is the "cultural and collective memory", and together with her husband Jan Assmann she established an "anthropology of remembrance". She has long been known by her contributions to the discussion about antisemitism in Germany.

On this Friday afternoon, Aleida Assmann was connected via video. She was excellent; she gave us a very new perspective why the conflict between the two peoples cannot currently be resolved. Her lecture with the key-note "The future begins with commemorating" helped us to understand the situation. It is very complex, since both parties deny the other important memories, and as a third party Germany with its history is involved also. Accordingly, our attitude towards Israel and Palestine can't be clear-cut. Escalate or de-escalate? Look at the conflict in a wide or in a narrow perspective? Solidarity with whom?



In the evening we discussed in two groups how, what we have learned, affects our everyday attitude towards conflicts between people and nations, based on the speaker's material.

The work of one group resulted in: We have to listen to the personal life stories and to understand and accept the wounds of others. If we do this, wounds can heal, even wounds inflicted by nations on one another.

A second group looked at everyday situations where others get hurt by anti-Semitic statements.

The question was: How can I react appropriately?

The seminar left as well prepared to recognize and confront antisemitism wherever we encounter it.

But this was not the only important subject we dealt with during this annual meeting: Ten years ago the German Forum had adopted ecological guidelines. We considered updating them. In preparation of this, a survey had been carried out: What has been done by members and member organisations in recent years? Were the guidelines of any use? The assembly was in favour of adapting the guidelines according to new developments in environment and society and appointed a small task group to update the guidelines.



After an ordinary business session on Saturday morning, our meeting ended with a worship, where what we had dealt with was summarised once more in the story about Sara and Hagar. In very moving words the two women from the Old Testament were set in relation to each other as symbols of the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Marianne Milde CJ, National Coordinator and Elisabeth Buecking Ex-National Coordinator



News from Serbia: "Years of courage"

2020 was hard year for all of us. Also, it was a year of challenges. Our Forum was faced with a lot of problems; not just everyday fear which was present and still is present, but also with problems of the way of existing. The main question was how to meet, how to work, what to do... if we are still healthy. So, we continue to work, as we use to say, for our staff.

Svenka Savic and her team (Association "Women's Studies and Research", Novi Sad) during the first six months 2020 did a research titled "What can 65+ women (not) do in Serbia today?"

Numerous studies on ageing and old age have confirmed that patriarchal society (in which we live today) is discriminatory in many ways towards the elderly. At the same time, discrimination against women is more pronounced, compared to men of the same age, so their focus is on the population of women. However, their focus is also on what older women can do. A population of highly educated university professors with the title of professor emeritus was selected. These data show extreme creativity, commitment to vocation and education of young generation in science in order to create scientific and educational continuity, then serenity of spirit and many positive emotions while denying that old age exists as a problem.

Ivana Kronja wrote a book "Aesthetics of avant-garde and experimental film: body, gender and identity". The promotion of the book took place on 4th November 2020.

Marijana Ajzenkol wrote a drama "Owl mirror /Adventure of Til Ojlenispigel," which was adapted for children puppet-theatre play, and the premiere was on 9th March 2020.

The Forum continues to have Monday gathering in the garden of the Franciscan monastery during summer time, and Wednesday meetings during winter (starting from October) in the office, in Zemun.



Being aware that this year, and years to come, will ask our courage, we decided to be more creative, more active and more supportive to each other. So, after prayer we start our meeting with a moment of sharing on the following questions:

1. What beauty I noticed today?
2. Is there anything that I am proud of?
3. What makes me, or what could make me happy?

Being aware that situation in whole world is not easy, and that all countries are facing specific problems, we decided to fight that bad spirit with our positive way of thinking and searching for beauty in everyday life, thou it does not seem that there is a beauty at all.

Marijana Ajzenkol, EFECW Co-President

In memoriam

Dr. Ioanna Sahinidou (1947- 2021), Greece



We are sorry to announce the death of our friend Dr. Ioanna Sahinidou, who was one of the first women in Greece who have found the local branch of the EFECW. Her deep faith to God, her ecumenical life, her wonderful spirit, her theological knowledge will always be a part of all the members of the Forum in Greece and of all her ecumenical friends in Greece and abroad. She was a member of the Evangelical Church of Greece, an excellent theologian, a woman of faith and also practice. We will remember her with respect and love and we wish her to have her place in Paradise and her Resurrection by the side of our Christ! Farewell Mrs. Ioanna!



Ruth Clarke (1935-2021), England



Ruth with her daughter, Charlotte

Ruth Clarke, who died suddenly on January 11th has been an active member of the Forum since before the 3rd EFECW Assembly in York where every morning she would tell us World News from the BBC!

In the early 90s, eager to continue the momentum from the Assembly, the England NCs met regularly and planned Annual Forum Days with invitations to the Church women's organisations. Ruth retired as NC to prepare to become the first lay woman Moderator of the United Reform Church. She took on the role of Treasurer and Membership Secretary of the England Forum. She continued this until 2018. Every

year she wrote to the friends about our activities and in the early days there were more than ten organisations and over a hundred 'Friends'.

Ruth was much appreciated as chairperson at European meetings and worked with both the Jackie Stuyt fund and the Ruth Epting fund.

For nearly a year the England Forum including Ruth, has 'met' monthly on zoom and we shall all miss her very much. Ruth was an encourager at every level, an impressive role model and such an advocate for women's ministry and for ecumenical relationships. Charlotte, her daughter writes that she was as bright, intelligent and funny to the end.

May she rest in Peace!

Nuclear Weapons are Banned – a Historic Day

Church and Peace, 22 January 2021



The ban is here! Church and Peace members across Europe are celebrating the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#) (TPNW) finally entering [into force](#) on 22 January 2021. And they are pushing for even more ratifications.

The TPNW is a great success story. And it is also a story of continuing efforts by a broad coalition of actors and supporters with the goal of creating a world without nuclear weapons.

In 2017, ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for securing a motion at UN level to ban nuclear weapons worldwide. From then on, numerous countries, cities, and organisations joined the movement until, in October 2020, the threshold of 50 ratifications by UN member states was reached. Today, 90 days later, the ban treaty is entering into force and thereby creating binding international law.

Church and Peace members across Europe have supported the cause for many years and are continuing to regularly organise vigils and other events to highlight the dangers which nuclear weapons pose to peace in the world. Church and Peace has been a member of ICAN since early 2020.

“It is a truly historic moment which we are witnessing now,” says Antje Heider-Rottwilm, Chair of Church and Peace. “While we are celebrating, we are also aware that many NATO countries where our members live - such as Germany - have not yet joined the Treaty and further efforts are urgently needed.”

Church and Peace, together with NGOs such as ICAN Germany, Greenpeace, IALANA, Friedenskooperative, Naturfreunde, DFG-VK, and IPPNW, is co-organising an act of witness in Berlin. The alliance has sent a letter to the ambassadors of the 51 states which have ratified the TPNW so far, congratulating them and inviting them, together with the press, to the Federal Chancellery on 22 January at 10 a.m. with the motto “Nuclear weapons are banned. 51 states have ratified - Germany is missing.”

In the UK, Church and Peace Board member, Barbara Forbes, will moderate online thanksgiving celebrations organised by the Network of Christian Peace Organisations.

Church and Peace members in France are encouraging citizens to urge their local authorities to bring the Treaty to the attention of the wider public and to continue winning the support of political leaders.



Commitment and solidarity network on violence against women

Federation of Evangelical Women in Italy

The “Federazione delle Donne Evangeliche in Italia” (FDEI), established in May 1976, is a network of connection between the women of the various existing evangelical realities. It includes the women’s organisations from the Baptist, Methodist, Waldensian, Lutheran, Adventist, the Salvation Army churches and the Reformed church of Ticino. It would be difficult to make a list of what each organisation has done, I will limit myself to sharing what we have done and do together as federation in recent years.

In 2007, the FDEI published for the first time "[The 16 Days Against Violence](#)", a compilation of statistical data, biblical texts, reflections, prayers and questions for each of the days that the UN dedicates each year to the fight against violence: from November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to December 10, the anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. Since then, the initiative has been repeated every year. In 2019 some articles of the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe were compared with the so-called ‘Shadow Report’ of the Association of Anti-Violence Centers (DI.RE) highlighting the distance between the rules adopted and the application on the national territory.



Since 2014, FDEI has joined the "Posto occupato" campaign designed by the journalist Maria Andaloro to raise awareness of feminicides. A chair with a red scarf and bag on it that highlight the absence of the body of the women to whom that place has been unjustly taken. Those empty chairs have remained in our communities for a longtime.

The FCEI Studies Commission together with the National Office for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue have developed an appeal involving the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI), and the Orthodox Patriarchates. The appeal signed in the Senate on March 9, 2015 calls the churches to pay particular attention to the topic, in what is specific to them: in preaching, in explaining the gospel, in catechesis and in all the training activities that belong to it. This is not a mere opinion against violence against women but rather a commitment to promote, in training areas, a culture that fights such violence, reaffirming that there can be no violence or discrimination implemented in the name of God.

In 2017, an FDEI delegation, received by the President of the Chamber Laura Boldrini, delivered 5,158 signatures collected through two petitions against violence against women: one referred to women and the other to men, indicating the co-responsibility of the sexes in front of a phenomenon to be stopped.

During our last conference "Gender Justice, Rights of All. The contribution of women in a society in search of direction and hope" we have amended an article of our Statute by adding a phrase that represents the synthesis of the obligation assumed towards women, that is, to commit ourselves "with continuity to the issue of gender-based violence, both through the production of information and training materials and through concrete actions to promote a debate, even in evangelical churches, on the cultural origin of such violence".



In 2019, the FDEI adheres to the CEC's "Declaration on Sexual and Gender Violence", once again condemns sexual and gender-based violence in all its forms, and declares such violence a sin. It promotes the Worldwide Black Thursday Campaign in support of the global movement that opposes all forms of injustice and abuse. Every Thursday we wear something black along with the pin with the words "for a world without rape and violence" with the aim of raising awareness by considering the fundamental cultural change.

Since 2019 at the International Evangelical Hospital of Genoa there have been training courses for the women and men of our churches on the prevention, protection and safeguard and pastoral care of women victims of violence; as at the Evangelical Hospital of Naples 'Ponticelli - Villa Betania', for women in central and southern Italy. These two poles will give us people capable of playing a listening role, which requires both networking and working with associations already active in the territory.

During the period of confinement due to the pandemic, the FDEI invited churches to promote safe, physical and virtual spaces for those who do not find a place of protection at home, encouraged women to seek pastoral assistance, to turn to social centers and territorial associations. We wrote to the women and the officers of the churches, to the Minister for Equal Opportunities, offering concrete proposals for a social, economic and cultural revival that starts with women, expressing the need to support reception facilities for abused women and their children, and to facilitate the birth of new ones on the national territory.

For 2020-21 we have a project in the pipeline (funded by the 8⁰/₀₀ of the Baptist, Waldensian, and Methodist churches), which will see us engaged at a national level and will allow us to activate days of awareness and discussion between women and men. The presence of men, as allies of the female gender, is fundamental in the revision of the patriarchal hierarchical structure, in understanding the foundations of gender inequality, in the evolution of the male ideal, and for an empowerment that leads to a necessary change of model to future generations.

Aware that male violence against women is not an individual act of a man against a woman but a problem related to the social structure of masculinity and aware that religions have their responsibility.

In this line of commitment, since 2019 some women of FDEI are founding members of the Interreligious Observatory on Violence against Women (O.I.V.D) born in Bologna on March 14, 2019 with the signing of a memorandum of understanding by women belonging to religious faiths (Christian [Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox], Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu) united in the common goal of working against all types of violence against women and for their promotion within faith communities and in society.

The interreligious observatory on violence against women, has among its aims, to promote aware-ness that violence against women is not an emergency but a structural problem, pertaining not only to ethics but also to theology, the teaching of religions and more generally to the sphere of man, it affects everyone, men and women.

"An alliance between women in religions", as stated by Paola Cavallari, president of the OIVD.

Pastora Gabriela Lio - FDEI President

“Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit” (cf. Jn 15:5-9)

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 18-25 January 2021¹

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2021 was prepared by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp. The theme that was chosen, *“Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit”*, is based on John 15:1-17 and expresses Grandchamp Community’s vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity in the church and the human family.



In the 1930s a number of Reformed women from French-speaking Switzerland who belonged to a group known as the “Ladies of Morges” rediscovered the importance of silence in listening to the Word of God. At the same time, they revived the practice of spiritual retreats to nourish their life of faith, inspired by the example of Christ who went apart to a lonely place to pray. They were soon joined by others who took part in regularly organized retreats in Grandchamp, a small hamlet near the shores of Lake Neuchâtel. It became necessary to provide a permanent presence of prayer and welcome for the growing number of guests and retreatants.

Today the community has fifty sisters, all women from different generations, church traditions, countries and continents. In their diversity the sisters are a living parable of communion. They remain faithful to a life of prayer, life in community and the welcoming of guests. The sisters share the grace of their monastic life with visitors and volunteers who go to Grandchamp for a time of retreat, silence, healing or in search of meaning.

The first sisters experienced the pain of division between the Christian churches. In this struggle they were encouraged by their friendship with Abbé Paul Couturier, a pioneer of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Therefore, from its earliest beginnings prayer for Christian unity was at the heart of the life of the community. This commitment, together with Grandchamp’s fidelity to the three pillars of prayer, community life and hospitality, form the foundations of these materials.

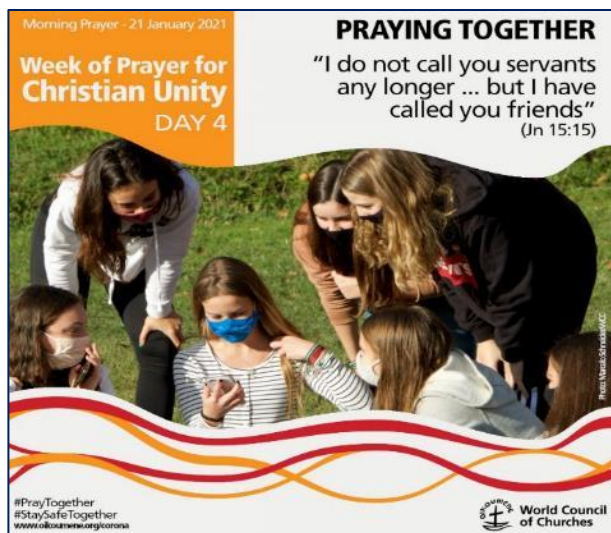
To abide in God’s love is to be reconciled with oneself

The French words for monk and nun (moine/moniale) come from the Greek *μόνος* which means alone and one. Our hearts, bodies and minds, far from being one, are often scattered, being pulled in several directions. The monk or nun desires to be one in his or her self and united with Christ. “Abide in me as I abide in you,” Jesus tells us (Jn 15:4a). An integrated life presupposes a path of self-acceptance, of reconciliation with our personal and inherited histories.

Jesus said to the disciples, “abide in my love” (Jn 15:9). He abides in the love of the Father (Jn 15:10) and desires nothing other than to share this love with us: “I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father” (Jn 15:15b). Grafted into the vine, which is Jesus himself, the Father becomes our vinedresser who prunes us to make us grow. This describes what happens in prayer. The Father is the centre of our lives, who centres our lives. He prunes us and makes us whole, and whole human beings give glory to the Father.

¹ <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/worship-and-background-material-for-the-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2021>

Abiding in Christ is an inner attitude that takes root in us over time. It demands space to grow. It can be overtaken by the struggle for the necessities of life and it is threatened by the distractions, noise, activity and the challenges of life. In the turmoil of Europe in 1938, Geneviève Micheli, who would later become Mother Geneviève, the first mother of the community, wrote these lines which remain relevant today: We live in a time that is both troubling and magnificent, a dangerous time where nothing preserves the soul, where rapid and wholly human achievements seem to sweep beings away



... And I think that our civilisation will die in this collective madness of noise and speed, where no being can think ... We Christians, who know the full value of a spiritual life, have an immense responsibility and must realize it, unite and help each other create forces of calmness, refuges of peace, vital centres where the silence of people calls on the creative word of God. It is a question of life and death.

Abiding in Christ until we bear fruit

“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit” (Jn 15:8). We cannot bear fruit on our own. We cannot bear fruit separated from the vine. It is the sap, the life of Jesus flowing through us, that produces fruit.

Remaining in Jesus’s love, remaining a branch of the vine, is what allows his life to flow through us.

When we listen to Jesus his life flows through us. Jesus invites us to let his word abide in us (John 15:7) and then whatever we ask will be done for us. By his word we bear fruit. As persons, as a community, as the entire church, we wish to unite ourselves to Christ in order to keep his commandment of loving one another as He has loved us (Jn 15:12).

Abiding in Christ, the source of all love, the fruit of communion grows

Communion with Christ demands communion with others. Dorotheus of Gaza, a monk in Palestine in the 6th century, expressed this in the following way: Imagine a circle drawn on the ground, that is, a line drawn in a circle with a compass, and a centre. Imagine that the circle is the world, the centre is God, and the radii are the different paths or ways people live. When the saints, desiring to draw near to God, walk toward the middle of the circle, to the extent that they penetrate its interior, they draw closer to each other; and the closer they draw to each other, the closer they come to God. Understand that the same thing applies conversely, when we turn away from God and withdraw toward the outside. It then becomes obvious that the more we move away from God, the more we move away from each other, and the more we move away from each other, the more we also move away from God.

Moving closer to others, living together in community with others, sometimes people very different from ourselves, can be challenging. The sisters of Grandchamp know this challenge and for them the teaching of Brother Roger of Taizé² is very helpful: “There is no friendship without purifying suffering. There is no love of one’s neighbour without the cross. The cross alone allows us to know the unfathomable depth of love.”³

² The Community of Grandchamp and that of the brothers of Taizé in France are bound together first of all in view of the history of their origins, but also by the fact that the sisters of Grandchamp based their Rule on the book mentioned in footnote

³ Frère Roger de Taizé, *Les écrits fondateurs, Dieu nous veut heureux* (Taizé: Les Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 2011), 95.

Divisions among Christians, moving away from one another, are a scandal because it is also moving further away from God. Many Christians, moved to sorrow by this situation, pray fervently to God for the restoration of that unity for which Jesus prayed. Christ's prayer for unity is an invitation to turn back to him and so come closer to one another, rejoicing in the richness of our diversity.

As we learn from community life, efforts at reconciliation are costly and demand sacrifice. We are sustained by the prayer of Christ, who desires that we might be one, as he is one with the Father so that the world may believe (cf. Jn 17:21).

Abiding in Christ the fruit of solidarity and witness grows

Though we, as Christians, abide in the love of Christ, we also live in a creation that groans as it waits to be set free (cf. Rom 8). In the world we witness the evils of suffering and conflict. Through solidarity with those who suffer we allow the love of Christ to flow through us. The paschal mystery bears fruit in us when we offer love to our brothers and sisters and nurture hope in the world.

Spirituality and solidarity are inseparably linked. Abiding in Christ, we receive the strength and wisdom to act against structures of injustice and oppression, to fully recognize ourselves as brothers and sisters in humanity, and to be creators of a new way of living, with respect for and communion with all of creation.

The summary of the rule of life⁴ that the sisters of Grandchamp recite together each morning begins with the words "pray and work that God may reign". Prayer and everyday life are not two separate realities but are meant to be united. All that we experience is meant to become an encounter with God.

For the eight days of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2021, we propose a journey of prayer:

Day 1: Called by God: "You did not choose me but I chose you" (Jn 15:16a)

Day 2: Maturing internally: "Abide in me as I abide in you" (Jn 15:4a)

Day 3: Forming one body: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12b)

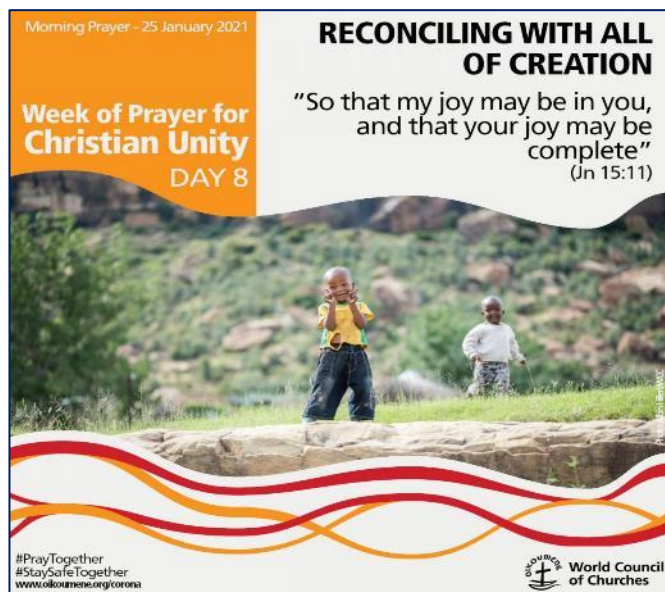
Day 4: Praying together: "I do not call you servants any longer ... but I have called you friends" (Jn 15:15)

Day 5: Letting oneself be transformed by the Word: "You have already been pruned by the word..." (Jn 15:3)

Day 6: Welcoming others: "Go and bear fruit, fruit that will last" (Jn 15:16b)

Day 7: Growing in unity: "I am the vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15:5a)

Day 8: Reconciling with all of creation: "So that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete" (Jn 15:11)



“Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a Covid-19 world”

UN Women announces the theme for International Women’s Day, 8 March 2021 (IWD 2021)

The theme celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is also aligned with the priority theme of the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, “Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”, and the flagship Generation Equality campaign, which calls for women’s right to decision-making in all areas of life, equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end all forms of violence against women and girls, and health-care services that respond to their needs.

Women stand at the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, as health care workers, caregivers, innovators, community organizers and as some of the most exemplary and effective national leaders in combating the pandemic. The crisis has highlighted both the centrality of their contributions and the disproportionate burdens that women carry.



Women leaders and women’s organizations have demonstrated their skills, knowledge and networks to effectively lead in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Today there is more acceptance than ever before that women bring different experiences, perspectives and skills to the table, and make irreplaceable contributions to decisions, policies and laws that work better for all.

Majority of the countries that have been more successful in stemming the tide of the COVID-19 pandemic and responding to its health and broader socio-economic impacts, are headed

by women. For instance, Heads of Government in Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand and Slovakia have been widely recognized for the rapidity, decisiveness and effectiveness of their national response to COVID-19, as well as the compassionate communication of fact-based public health information. Yet, women are Heads of State and Government in only 20 countries worldwide.⁴ In addition to persistent pre-existing social and systemic barriers to women’s participation and leadership, new barriers have emerged with the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the world women are facing increased domestic violence, unpaid care duties, unemployment and poverty. Despite women making up a majority of front-line workers, there is disproportionate and inadequate representation of women in national and global COVID-19 policy spaces.

To uphold women’s rights and fully leverage the potential of women’s leadership in pandemic preparedness and response, the perspectives of women and girls in all of their diversity must be integrated in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes in all spheres and at all stages of pandemic response and recovery.

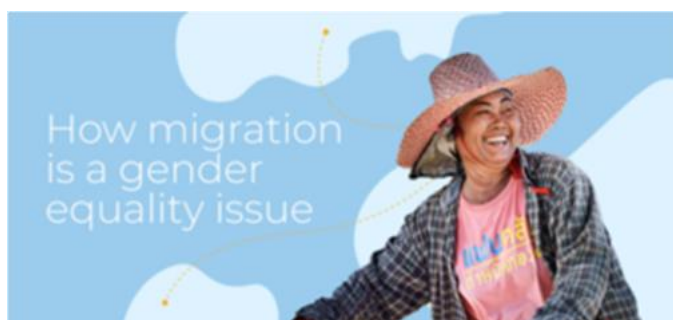
⁴ As of 8 November 2020. These data are compiled by UN Women based on information from UN Permanent Missions; only elected Heads of State are taken into consideration

Human rights and gender equality at the heart of migration policies and programmes

UN Women statement, International Migrants Day, 17th December 2020

Today on International Migrants Day, UN Women recognizes and celebrates the vast contributions of migrant women around the world, many of whom are working on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, supporting their communities as skilled health and care workers, cleaners, food delivery providers and agricultural workers.

For many migrant women around the world, pervasive gender inequalities coupled with systemic racism, violence and other forms of discrimination mean the pandemic has had a devastating impact on their livelihoods and health. Many have lost their jobs while others face an increased risk of infection because remote working is simply not an option for them. Too many migrant women work in low-paid and vulnerable jobs without labour protections, where they are at greater risk of human and labour rights violations including of being trafficked before they reached their destination. And with only around 22 per cent of migrant workers around the world covered by social protection, the financial safety nets put in place by some countries to mitigate lost income are often not available to migrant women and their families.



With borders closed and travel restrictions in place, many women migrants have been unable to leave the countries in which they work, while rates of sexual and gender-based violence have intensified and the economic vulnerability and desperation of migrant workers places them at an increased risk of trafficking.

Despite these challenges, migrant women continue to bring vital benefits to their countries of origin, transit and destination. Every year, some 100 million migrant women send remittances back home; and in spite of the persistent gender pay gap they tend to send a larger portion of their wages than men and to do so more regularly.

These contributions help sustain the economies of many countries around the world and provide a lifeline for families and communities, something which is especially vital during times of crisis. Now, with more than 495 million jobs estimated to have been lost since the start of the pandemic – many in the service sector where some 74 per cent of migrant women are employed – households that depend on these remittances are facing increased vulnerability.

Along with the significant financial contributions that migrant women make, they also bring important social benefits, including the acquisition and transfer of skills, knowledge, ideas and social norms. Dok Samuon, a construction worker in Thailand, returned to her native Cambodia after the COVID-19 pandemic halted her work prospects. Now she is a member of a peer networking group of returnee women migrant workers who share resources, information and migration experiences. “We help future women migrant workers be informed about services available in case of violence, safe contact numbers and what to do in case something happens in the countries of destination,” she says.

The considerable impacts on the health and wellbeing of migrant women during the COVID-19 pandemic underline just how critical it is that all migrants, irrespective of migration status, have access to gender-responsive services. The cost to migrant women's mental, emotional, health and social status associated with isolation and loneliness, which leads to higher risks of human rights violations, is too often overlooked. To address this, access to comprehensive services, including essential psychosocial support, must be prioritized for all migrants.

With the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration underway, covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive way, countries have a renewed opportunity to place human rights and gender equality at the heart of their migration policies and programmes.

Together, we must ensure that the specific needs of migrant women are fully addressed, both during the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/12/statement-un-women-international-migrants-day>

Announcements

CONFERENCES

Please continue to support:

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

The Ruth-Epting Fund
(www.efecw.net)

The **Jacqueline Stuyt Legacy fund** is now accepting applications again.

All 2020 projects have been cancelled / postponed.

Please find how to apply to Jacqueline Stuyt Fund on our [website](http://www.efecw.net).

Thank you for reading our newsletter! Follow us also on www.efecw.net and facebook. Please


make our newsletter more informative and inclusive by incorporating news/ info from you: info@efecw.net

The Centre for Catholic Studies' Study Series 2020-21

Heeding the Spirit

New Horizons in Receptive Ecumenism

Thursday 17 June 2021, 12noon-4pm BST, online



Looking towards the Fifth International Conference on Receptive Ecumenism, to be held in Sigtuna, Sweden in 2022, the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University has partnered with the Christian Council of Sweden, University College Stockholm, and the Sigtuna Foundation to deliver an online "pre-conference". This is intended to be both a preparation for the 2022 conference, and as a standalone introductory event for anyone interested in the idea of transforming churches through learning from each other.


This one-day digital event will include a short introduction to Receptive Ecumenism, a series of short, highly accessible talks by leading voices in the field, and time for discussion and sharing. There will also be chance to hear about the Sigtuna conference in more detail, and some exciting forthcoming publications for CCS projects in this field.

Speakers


Mathew Chandrakunnel (India)	Antonia Pizzey (Australia)
Sara Gehlin (Sweden)	Cecil M. Robeck (USA)
Cyril Hovorun (USA)	Gregory A. Ryan (UK)
Paul D. Murray (UK)	Gabrielle Thomas (USA)

Registration


All are welcome! Registration is £15 (GBP) (voluntary donation). Please register via <https://centreforcatholicstudies.eventbrite.com>




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