



# EFECW News

December 2021

## Advent

Hope is central in our faith. We often talk about being carried by Hope, but Hope is also carried by people. People who dare to stand up for their faith and take leadership to care for others. Hope is action for change and gives life and life gives Hope.

For this period 2018-2022 of EFECW the spiritual theme is Hope. When we met in Soko Grad in August 2018 for the General Assembly, nobody could think about a breakout of a pandemic, like what we are living in now. The Covid-19-pandemic is stopping us from what is the nerve in EFECW, the opportunities to meet one another. Nevertheless, we are in communication at all levels in new formats. The national Forums have found ways as well as CC among them the Webinars earlier this year. The CC meets regularly on Zoom. Much of the discussions and decisions have been on how we can meet and planning for the next General Assembly in August 2022. Very important is the sharing of local experiences of life.



*Photo by the Rev. Carrie N. Ballenger, "Amanda, April 28, 2020, in the Lutheran Church in Jerusalem"*

Advent is a time of vigil in waiting for the coming of God. Advent is also the time to strengthening the Hope. Time to prepare for Christmas. Time to reflect over what life means. Yes, we wait every year for God to come. In Spanish *esperanza* means both Hope and waiting. Advent comes from Latin *Adventus*, which means arrival. *Adventus Domini*- the Advent of the Lord.

In our different traditions we have different ways of preparing for Christmas and different times for celebrations. Eagerly we can learn from one another. Our ways of expressing tradition is over time changing. The tradition needs to be reinterpreted in order to survive. The stories are told again and again, year after year. What is the core that gives the tradition its sustainability and resilience, i.e. the ability to accommodate change without collapsing?

Hope is a central in our faith. With that comes also suffering and showing patience. One of the texts in the Advent in the Lutheran tradition is from the James 5:10-11: "Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

*Carin Gardbring, EFECW Coordinating Committee member*

## EFECW XI<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

Strasbourg, 5 – 9 August 2022

### Hope & Responsibility

**" ... and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have." 1P 3,15**

One of the themes that we have been developing, since 2018, in each of our local Forum groups, in different ways according to their sensibilities, is the theme of HOPE, a crucial theme for today's world, in our disenchanted world made unstable by major crises.

We Christians, like everyone else, question this world in crisis and change. But we have the certainty of the risen Jesus who nourishes our hope, giving meaning to our lives.

For us Christians, hope is life to the fullness in the Easter light of the kingdom of God.

Christian hope does not promise a rosy future. It is certainly not a stupid optimism or a blindness to human difficulties, it is not a feeling but is immersed in the concrete. Our hope is lucid and dynamic.

God continues to write the history of salvation today. The God whom Jesus incarnates is totally immersed in our lives. Even today, He wants to make known His love for humanity and entrusts to each of us, in the diversity of each of our lives, the mission of announcing His word of Life and bearing witness to charity and solidarity.

He invites us, more than ever, to change the order of our emergencies, to share our time and resources better by redirecting them towards the needs of others, to rethink our values in order to put the suffering human being at the centre, to go without fear to meet our neighbour, known or unknown. Christian hope leads everyone to build society in respect for all of creation.

Hope is a personal experience, but it also has a collective dimension, since it is about the salvation of all, brought by Jesus Christ.

And we have the enormous responsibility of being transmitters of Hope, of articulating hope and action, hope and responsibility.

The wonders of God accomplished in the history of humanity and that continue to happen in the world, in our lives, through women and men, Samaritans, sowers of joy and hope, is a source of joy and thanksgiving, a "key" to grow in shared Hope.

Responsible Hope and responsibility for Hope!

We, Christian women, have the mission to bear witness to this Hope that dwells within us.

Living one of the greatest challenges of our humanity, we, as women, have a major role to play in a commitment to solidarity and ecology, a major role in reenchanting the future.

Re-enchanting the future means giving life to Hope.

*An invitation will be sent to EFECW members soon!*



## News from EFECW members

### A farewell from the Swiss branch of EFECW

Basel, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2021



It was on Saturday, 28 August 2021 that 20 women, members and guests gathered at the “Crescenda” in Basel for the very last assembly of the Swiss branch of EFECW. The atmosphere was special, on the one hand, we all were sad; on the other hand, we all were so happy to be able to meet once again. Besides many faithful members the presidents of the confessional women’s organizations were also present and the CC of EFECW was represented by Anne-Marie Schott who brought us warm greetings from the whole CC (our Swiss CC member

Evelyne Zinsstag was busy with her newborn daughter).

The assembly started with a short moment of remembrance. Ruth Barmet who has gone through many files of the Swiss Forum reminded us of past activities and events. Afterwards we went swiftly through the ordinary agenda and then came to the crucial point. The assembly has unanimously decided to dissolve the association. We deeply regret that this decision, which has been apparent for a long time, has become necessary. We have not been able to recruit new board members from our ranks for some time. This was not surprising in view of the age structure of the association. The previous board members wished to resign after years of service.

The task of the Swiss branch was above all an outward one, towards Europe. There our delegates have reported the manifold experiences of ecumenical living together, which are almost a matter of course in Switzerland. Ecumenical church services are regularly celebrated in most parishes; common religious classes are not only a result of financial considerations, churches give hospitality to each other, women's groups merge, children’s and youth’s work is done together. Our Orthodox friend told us a special story. When the Serbian-Orthodox church planned to construct its own church in the industrial outskirts of Berne, people there opposed it. Therefore, the local catholic priest and the protestant pastor asked the Serbian-Orthodox priest, if he agreed to celebrate a common service. After this service the opposition had vanished, the church got constructed.



However, Switzerland will not become a "wasteland" for the European Forum. The two umbrella organizations SKF Swiss Catholic Women's League and EFS Swiss Protestant Women will maintain contacts with the EFECW and be contact persons. The "Forum" was handed over to the two presidents in a symbolic act; they both received a Forum brooch (the one we got at the GA in Serbia). The boards of the two organizations will include the topic of "ecumenical cooperation" in their joint agenda. However, this is not new; the ecumenical cooperation between the two organizations goes far back. Already in 1971 the Swiss confessional women's organizations founded the ecumenical periodical "Schritte ins Offene" (sadly enough it ended in 2013 for financial reasons). And this is just one project of many, perhaps the most outstanding.

After the official assembly, we all gathered for a festive farewell lunch served by the women of "Crescenda", a project for migrant women helping them to build up a professional career.

So for the board members still active until the end of the year, Esther Janine Zehntner, Catherine Zeerleder, Agathe Stotz and Eva-Maria Fontana, it is now time to express our gratitude and say goodbye.



## On behalf of EFECW Coordinating Committee...

"You, my sisters from Switzerland, the Forum owes you a lot.

You have brought the Forum to its baptismal font.

The foundations of a common ecumenical work were laid in 1977 in Glion, Switzerland, by 80 delegates from organisations of different Christian denominations.

A first seminar for Christian women took place in Gwatt in 1981, and in May 1982, 125 women from 25 European countries approved the statutes of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women.



Here in Switzerland, after many antagonists, since the eighteenth century, the century of the Enlightenment, meetings between the different Christian confessions have not ceased to multiply (doesn't the World Council of Churches have its seat in Geneva?)

In the polyphony of your languages (German, French, Italian) in a federalist country where cultures and religions live in harmony, for you, women from German, French, Vaud and Ticino, ecumenism is part of your DNA.

In a country that is resolutely turned towards the international arena while having strong local traditions, you are concerned with a solid European construction that gives women their full place.

You, dear sisters of Switzerland, have "rolled up your sleeves" and contributed greatly to the Forum "growing in age and wisdom".

You have been active as participants, members, speakers, co-presidents and members of the coordination committee.



You have opened your doors and welcomed us in your homes many times.

In many places in Switzerland you have held GAs (in 1982 in Gwatt the first one and in 2006 in Murlen the 6th one), CC meetings (in 2006 in Fribourg and then in Löwenberg/Murten), NC meetings or meetings between neighbours (in 2011 in Geneva and in 2017 in Crêt-Bérard, and I forget some) and other meetings of different commissions in which the Forum has participated (in 1985 in Boldern, in 1989 in Basel, in 2007 in Zurich etc...).

You have produced many articles, the fruit of your reflections in the religious, political or societal fields. They have nourished us and helped us to move forward.

You have also been, through your donations and your commitment, the driving force behind the FLC and the Ruth Epting Fund.

Special thanks to Nicole Fischer, the first president of the Forum, to Roswitha Ebner-Golder, to Catherine Gyarmathy, to Carla Maurer, to Ruth Baumann, to Eva-Maria Fontana, to Evelyne Zinstag.

Allow me to have a special thought for one of our founders: Ruth Epting, Honorary President of the Forum. A woman of faith, visionary and committed to building a reconciled Europe, an apostle of peace, ecumenical dialogue and the dignity of women.

In sisterhood and sharing your work has been fruitful for the Forum and for each of its members.

And it continues to be both a breeding ground and a beacon for the future of the Forum.

The Swiss Forum has just dissolved but you remain in the hearts of all of us.

We are sure that the Christian feminist spirit of the Forum will continue to animate you, and that you will carry forward in action and prayer many programmes for peace and justice for a strong European fraternity.

We invite those of you who wish to do so to become extraordinary members of the Forum as individuals.

May each of your roads be paved with joys great and small, with beautiful encounters and with wonder at the beauty of creation.

Take care of yourselves and may God bless you. With all our gratitude.”

*Anne Marie Schott, member of Coordinating Committee*



## General Meeting, German EFECW

### “Combat poverty with courage”, 15-16 October 2021

This was the topic of the general meeting of the German Forum in October 2021.

To begin with we had a very interesting discussion as to whether material poverty is the kind of poverty that makes people ill and from which people on the lowest position in society suffer.

Is not a lack of encounters, of hope, of respect, of recognition and solidarity – often as a result of material poverty – a challenge of our times? Is choosing to renounce possessions as in some religious orders or the decision to live simply at all comparable with persistent material poverty and its consequences?

Here it was helpful to distinguish between poverty and misery. Some of us have experienced poverty in our lives but not the misery caused by continuous extremely precarious living conditions.

In a workshop on the topic ‘Poverty in Europe – taking migratory workers in Germany as an example,’ we ventured a look at those experiencing poor living conditions.

The main driving force behind permanent or temporary work migration are the extremely unequal living standards in the EU and the massive difference in wages. Both in Romania and Bulgaria 33% of the population are classed as poor. At the same time the legal parameters encourage this: the EU borders seal it off from the world outside, migration from east to west in search of work, employment agencies across the borders within the EU, the so-called commuter migration i.e. temporary work in Germany while retaining one’s centre of life in the country of origin. It may be unclear how many migratory workers there are in Germany, but their huge significance for much of the German economy is very obvious.



Most migratory workers in Germany come originally from Poland, Romania and Bulgaria and work in agriculture, the meat industry, in nursing care, in the construction industry, in logistics and in (compulsory) prostitution. Their exploitation through low wages is the basis for the growing profits in these branches. 12 – 14-hour shifts on 6 to 7 days a week and/or being on call for 24 hours in home care are not seldom. In addition there is frequently the problem of degrading work and living conditions, inappropriate deductions from wages, the manipulation of work hours, lack of protection

at the workplace, harassment, threats, racism, (sexual) violence, often no healthcare provision, the lack of privacy.

Lack of knowledge of the German language and of German employment laws, as well as threats and isolation make individual resistance much more difficult. It was not until the last 8 to 10 years that gradually support for migrant workers has arisen, e.g. 11 advice centres for 'Fair Mobility' with information in the workers' native language on how to assert one's rights. Alliances such as 'Fair Agriculture' and 'Fair Care' have arisen, but all in all public perception and inspection through the German work protection law need to be greatly increased.

In the workshop it was hard to have to realise that serious exploitation and slave-like working conditions are a pillar of the German economy, in the midst of our society and known to politicians. It takes courage to combat and stand up to this poverty, to this lack of respect and fairness and humanity, but also this great material need, and then in a second step to ask what we can do outside these structures which promote exploitation.



We can pass on information in our groups and make it public in our neighbourhoods. We can organise meetings and church services on the topic, making the living conditions in Germany and in Europe public.

Moreover the lack of encounters and of respect exacerbates material poverty. And therefore we can sensitize ourselves to see men and women, regardless of where they are from, and to encounter them in everyday life in a dignified and friendly way. That is quite a lot! Many tell me that this is not something they can take for granted here in Germany.

We closed with among other things the question of to what extent we as individuals, as church congregations, as groups can open our houses and our hearts and our ears and our attention so that these men and women who carry out difficult work here can at least experience dignity. We must see them as human beings, must talk to them, if need we must support them in their claim for fair wages, we must know where they can get help. We can give them space and show an interest, we must lower the barriers. Perhaps set up a café corner in church or maybe a second-hand exchange stand in a corner of the church. Trusting that God is with the poor and he wants us at his side.

*Translation: Jane Klatt*

## Representation of EFECW

### Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe

EFECW has been granted participatory status with the Council of Europe as of 1 February 2021.

...Ruth Epting's vision of a reconciled European cohabitation and our common European identity is one of the cornerstones of the Forum

...For 40 years, the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women has gathered together women from many different Christian denominations across Europe at seminars, conferences and assemblies.

...EFECW strives to be a recognised voice of Christian women in Church and public life in Europe.



...Furthermore, working together, sharing our knowledge, our different cultures, the way we live our Christian faith in our different environments strengthens our unity in ecumenism and reinforces us in building "our common house" Europe more fraternal and to make our voices heard as Christian women.

The Coordinating Committee, is particularly sensitive to this European dimension. It seemed important, at a time when we are seeing the rise of nationalism in several countries and when turning in on oneself is seen as protection in this period of major crisis, to strengthen our European openness and to do our bit to build a better way of living together.

This is why, on behalf of the Forum, I submitted a request to the Council of Europe in 2020 for our organisation, EFECW, to become member of the Conference of INGOs to the Council of Europe and we were accepted in the beginning of 2021.

The Council of Europe's work benefits extensively from contacts and co-operation with the dynamic elements of society, as represented by NGOs. One of the main challenges the organisation (Council of Europe) is currently facing is to develop participatory democracy.

The voice of civil society is heard at the Council of Europe thanks to the Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations (INGOs).

The Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe (CoE) brings together international NGOs with participatory status invited to collaborate in the work of the Council of Europe.

This voice of civil society in the CoE represents multiple organisations active in many sectors and in many countries, all committed to the values of the Organisation, namely democracy, human rights and the Rule of Law. The INGOs Conference actively contributes to the decision-making process at the Council of Europe and to the implementation of its programmes, thus ensuring their relevance to the expectations of Europeans.



More than 300 INGOs enjoy participatory status and make up, since 2005, the Conference of INGOs which constitutes civil society's pillar in the Council of Europe "quadrilogue" with the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. Through this status, the Council of Europe includes INGOs in intergovernmental activities and encourages dialogue of members of parliament and local and regional authorities with associations on challenges facing society. The Conference of INGOs is now recognised as an institution of the Council of Europe. The Conference of INGOs is presided over by its President-in-Office, whom the Conference elects every three years. The current President, elected in April 2021, is Mr Gerhard Ermischer who succeeded Ms Anna RURKA.

The proposals made to the Council of Europe by the Conference of INGOs are the result of work done in various officially accepted committees.

Substantive work on particular issues is carried out by Committees.

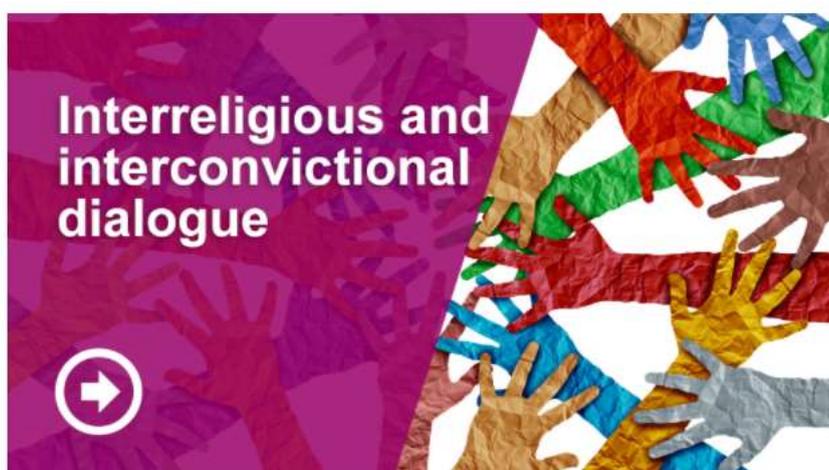
Committees have a defined duration and are a forum for discussion and research on a particular issue relevant to the work of the Council of Europe. They prepare reports on their findings and, where appropriate, draft declarations, recommendations and resolutions for consideration by the General Assembly.

On behalf of the Forum, I am also member, following EFECW Coordinating Committee decision, of the following two Committees:

- 1) Committee of "Interreligious and inter-convictional dialogue"  
Co-chairs: Gabriela Frey (European Buddhist Union) and Sören Lenz (Conference of European Churches -CEC)
- 2) Committee of "NGOs as advocates for gender equality and women's rights"  
Co-chairs: Bettina Hanne (Sorooptimist International) and Anita Schnetzer-Spranger (Zonta International)

The names of these two committees are quite clear as to their aims and these aims are in line with those of the Forum.

*Anne-Marie Schott, member of the CC*



## International Religious Freedom and Peace

Etchmiadzin, 9-10 September 2021

On 9-10 September 2021, it was organised a conference on International Religious Freedom and Peace, at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, in Armenia, based on biblical message: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Co. 3:17).

It has a special focus to the promotion of freedom of religion and preservation of spiritual, cultural and historical heritage.

On this conference took part different Churches, NGO’s, religious and ecumenical organisations.



Topics addressed at the conference included access to places of worship in conflict zones, protection of religious and ethnic minorities, and preservation of cultural heritage. The conference also discussed the recent Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) conflict, an area in the Caucasus between Armenia and Azerbaijan whose international status remains unresolved. The speakers reported many incidents of desecration of churches and monasteries, as well as destruction of Armenian religious and cultural heritage sites.

The conference also brought together religious leaders, scholars and experts from around the globe to reflect on the preservation of the world’s spiritual, cultural and historical heritage, which all too often comes under threat from ethnic and religious intolerance, especially during conflicts.

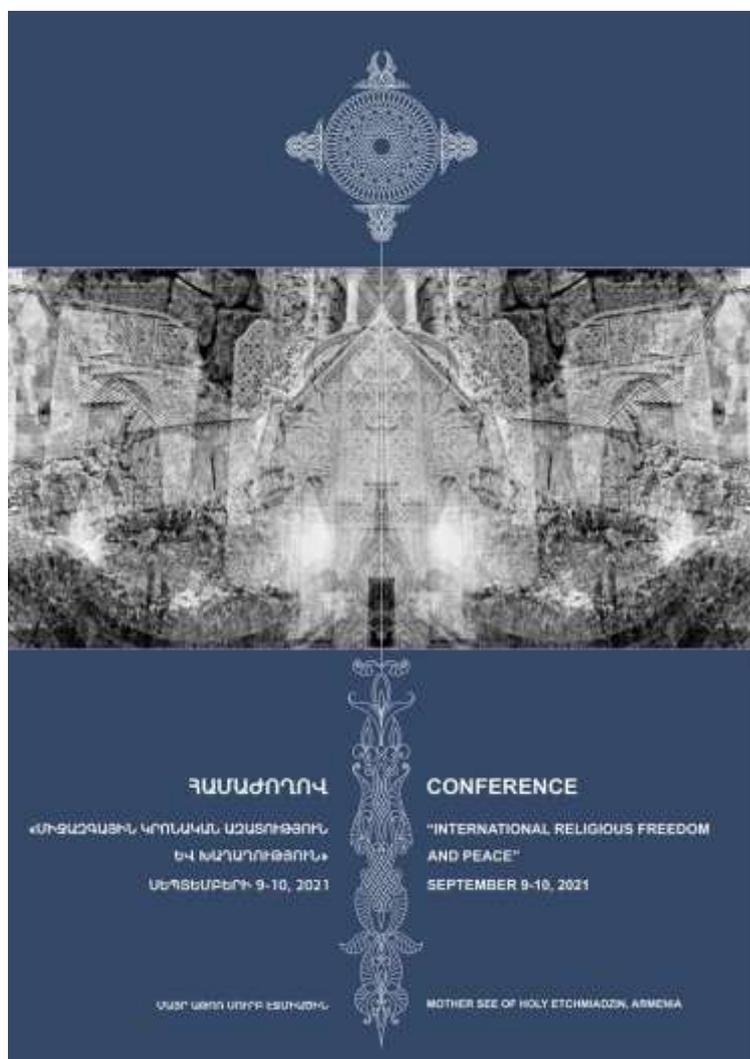
The conference’s key conclusions are the following:

- The principles of the right to freedom of religion or belief were re-affirmed, as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent international and regional human rights treaties. They claimed this right, equally, for all people, of any faith or none, and regardless of nation, history or political circumstances.
- The protection of holy sites, places of worship and religious heritage was stressed for the effective realisation of religious freedom, and for the promotion and preservation of peaceful relations among nations and communities. Protecting places of worship and safeguarding free access to them is essential for guaranteeing the exercise of religious freedom. Moreover, holy sites, places of worship and items of religious heritage are representative of the deepest identities of people

and communities of faith. Precisely for this reason, in situations of conflict, they are often deliberately targeted in order to inflict maximum collective trauma on a particular community. Any attack on any religious community, whether on individuals who are members of that community or on places related to that community, is an attack on religious freedom in general, and therefore an attack on all religious communities. And because religious buildings and sites are bearers of religious identity, damaging a place of worship is an act of real violence against the personal and collective religious identity of believers, wounding their identities and memories.

- Urge UNESCO to make an assessment mission to these areas an urgent priority.
- Encourage proactive and regular engagement in dialogue and cooperation, and vocal and active solidarity when religious sites and worshippers from other religions and faiths are targeted.
- Appeal for solidarity and action from all members of the international community to assure Armenian people and communities of the same rights to which all are entitled as a matter of international law and moral responsibility, including the rights to life, to freedom of religion or belief, to cultural expression, and to self-determination.
- Express their deep Christian solidarity, and the solidarity of the global ecumenical fellowship with the Armenian Church and people in their lives, ministries and witness to the world.

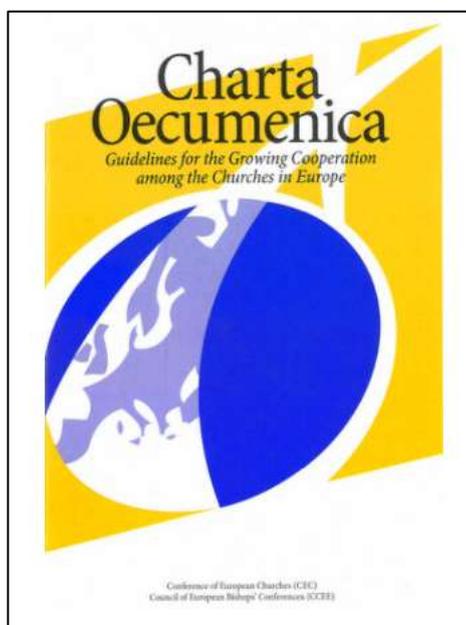
*Marianna Apresyan, EFECW Co-President*



## News of ecumenical and women's organisations

### 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Charta Oecumenica

Joint statement by the Presidents of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) and of the Conferences of European Churches (CEC), April 2021



For the past twenty years the European continent has experienced a relatively peaceful period, along with an improvement of ecumenical relations. This was demonstrated in areas of daily life such as joint witness and action in local ecumenism, as well as inter-church marriages. Several theological agreements have been reached and a new generation of theologians has been ecumenically trained and formed. Several interfaith initiatives have flourished. Churches have strengthened their work towards a just and peaceful world, not least because of the increased movement of people from other continents, and have increased their efforts towards the care for creation. The message of the Charta Oecumenica has contributed and given new vigour to all of this growth and transformation. For the peace we have experienced and the achievements of the global ecumenical movement, we rejoice and give thanks to God our Creator!

As we strive towards the Reign of God, our societies and churches continue to be challenged by our human sin and all kinds of division. Old and new church divisions are in need of healing, societal and economic inequalities call for the transformation of our attitudes and structures. The continued threats to democracy and the natural environment demand a renewed attention to the wholeness of life. The resurgence of armed conflicts and terrorist attacks in some parts of the continent in recent years require repentance, forgiveness and justice. In the face of these realities, as churches redefine their ministry in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, we reaffirm together and in a spirit of unity our commitment to witness to Christ as our Saviour and to his promise of a transformed life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Following the testament of our Lord expressed in John 17 and the Charta Oecumenica “that they may all be one”, we are aware that the unity of Christians does not result only from our human efforts. At the same time this unity, for which Jesus has prayed and suffered, must be perceptible in this world. In this sense we desire to be instruments for this unity and commit ourselves anew to the strengthening of church fellowship through common prayer and action, whilst offering our service to the world in promotion of justice and peace.

*Rev. Christian Krieger, President of CEC and  
H. Em. Card. Angelo Bagnasco, President of CCEE*



## Images of God and (Non) Violence

Church and Peace, 3-5 September 2021, online



From 3 to 5 September 2021, the annual general meeting and international conference of Church and Peace dealt with the topic of Images of God and (Non) Violence. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference took place online with more than 100 participants from all over Europe, and from Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Togo, and India. The participants explored manifestations of hierarchy, dominance, oppression, and violence - whether structural, spiritual, or personal.

The aim was to determine the extent to which religious traditions and attitudes are linked to violence, racism, and sexism, to explore the connections between images of God and language, and to look at how language opens up or dictates how we think.

It became clear that there is a close connection between authoritarian theology and patriarchal images of God, liturgies, and language patterns, on the one hand, and violence in churches, communities, families, and politics, on the other hand. Churches and congregations worldwide clearly have to grapple with these issues.

The conference made a contribution to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and other resolutions concerned with the protection of women, the prevention of violence, and the establishment of gender issues in all areas related to peace and security.

In the closing worship, Nicole Ashwood from Jamaica, programme executive of the Just Community of Women and Men programme of the World Council of Churches, made a passionate plea for us all to take seriously the radicality of the biblical statement that God created human beings in his/her image and commissioned them to take care of the whole of creation. God is “an equaliser of all inequalities”. All the differences between people are secondary. And the dignity of every human being and of all creation must be protected from destruction. Ashwood invited Church and Peace to become part of Thursdays in Black, the global ecumenical campaign to end sexual and gender-based violence, and thereby to take a stand week by week for a world free of violence.

“There can be no discriminating hierarchy in a theology that places at the centre of its faith the conviction that all human beings are images of God. All such hierarchies and forms of discrimination are a challenge to be overcome by the theology, spirituality, and practice of nonviolence – and therefore also a challenge for Church and Peace,” chairperson Antje Heider-Rottwilm concluded at the end of this year’s conference of the European peace church network.

The annual general meeting, which preceded the conference, reappointed the following to serve as members of the Board: Antje Heider-Rottwilm (Protestant) from Germany as Chairperson, Kees Nieuwerth (Quaker) from the Netherlands as Deputy Chairperson, Elisabeth Freise (Roman Catholic) from Germany as Treasurer, Barbara Forbes (Quaker) from the United Kingdom, and Maria Biedrawa (Roman Catholic) from France.

The following were appointed to the Board for the first time: Salomé Haldemann, a Mennonite theologian from Alsace, Ruben Sečen, Baptist, representing Youth for Christ Croatia, and Étienne Chomé, a Catholic theologian from Belgium.

Bruno Sägeser, Swiss Mennonite, who was leaving the Board after serving for 20 years, and Vjollca Racaj from Kosovo, who had served for five years, were thanked very warmly for their service.

The speeches and presentations, and the video of the closing worship will shortly be made available on the Church and Peace [website](#).

## Creating opportunities: Generations in Dialogue

World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy, Lindau, 4-10 October 2021

This year's conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy, October 4-7, 2021, in Lindau and on-line, was a hybrid conference centred on intergenerational dialogue, how to give and take space and give respect to all actors in society. A strong message of loving and caring for the other.

The conference was jointly convened by [Religions for Peace](#) and [Ring for Peace](#), supported by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany as last year in November. Around 1700 participants, mostly participating on-line from 86 countries.

A conference in the shadow of the Covid-19-pandemic and 20 years after September 11, 2001, in New York, focusing on the nexus of generations, faith and diplomacy.

### Who gives added value to peace building?

Why should religions be involved? This is a repeated question in various contexts. Because faith is a central part of thought, belief, and behaviour across the world. People of faith are at all levels which means we are part of the problems; the religions as well, are part of the problems among people. Those who are part of the problems need also to be part of the solutions. The other way around is not leading to just peace. Women of faith is a force for just peace said Dr Agnes Aboum from Kenya, one of the key-note speakers, one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches. Ms Irmgard Dain Fellner, Deputy-Director General for cultural and communication from the German Federal Foreign office emphasised the multiplication of forces to include the younger generations. The young generation is instrumental in peace building she said.



### The young generation and diplomacy

We can't do anything alone. We need to create spaces for peace building. The young people must be a part of the leadership. Different actors need to work together. Normally we think that professional

diplomats are doing diplomacy, but in this context in the conference diplomacy again opened the perspective on informal structures and multiple strategies of negotiation and mediation, in which young people need to play essential roles to build peace, advance human development and uphold and protect human rights. Young people can learn from the multi religious literate diplomacy and add competence to peace building said Professor Azza Karam the Secretary General for Religions for Peace.

### **What was the conference more about?**

Witnesses and stories were told, and voices were heard during the conference from many women and some young people around the world on how they work taking leadership together in all kinds of communities for peace, for a healthy planet and co-existence. Many religious leaders were involved as well as diplomats and representatives of UN organizations. The younger generation has set the tone in many discussions. 130 participants were on site in Lindau. Due to the hybrid format not only, the local participants enjoyed being reunited after 18 months of the pandemic. It has also enabled collaboration in plenary sessions and workshops between the virtual participants and the people in Lindau. 22 percent of the participants were younger than 35 years and 45 percent were women. 11 plenaries and 14 diplomat roundtables were held. The focus was on the three main themes of Peace and security, Environment and Humanitarianism – always with a view to the extent to which young people can and must be involved as multipliers in global peace processes. In view of globally active youth movements, the questions arise: How do activists become the next leaders and where are they already today? The discussions at the round tables were very concrete, for example on the topic of gender-based violence and the environment and climate change. And with the pilot projects of the Ring for Peace foundation in Kenya and South Africa to protect women from sexual violence, as an example taking up exactly these points. The young people present were thrilled to be in dialogue with all the participants and a bit confused since most of the participants were elder people than themselves.

### **Lessons learnt for the future**

Many were the young people participating in leading the conference and participating the round tables and workshops. An effort to really include the young people, women, and men. But the need of young people in decision making had been said so many times in so many situations. I wonder are really the adults ready to give the power to the young people. The voice was raised that the young people are not sufficiently prepared. When will they be that?

Hopefully, there will be a conference to continue the discussion with the young generation especially on the environment – hopefully in October 2022.

Leadership is about to build trust. All generations need to be there to do that.

Please, find more for reading [here](#), and

#rfpgenerationsindialogue #faithanddiplomacy

<https://vimeo.com/ringforpeace>

<https://ringforpeace.org/projects/generations-in-dialogue/>

<https://www.rfp.org/event/conference-of-the-world-council-of-religious-leaders-on-faith-and-diplomacy-generations-in-dialogue/>

To be engaged in interfaith networking if not already are, please look for the national interfaith networks.

*Carin Gardbring, EFECW Coordinating Committee member*

## Equipping Public Theologians for the Common Good

Open-Access International Public Theology Resources, 15 October 2021

This Open-Access International Public Theology Resources was officially launched in a webinar on October 15, 2021. The aim is to be equipping the global Church in the work of transformative engagement for the common good.

The open-access resource is a lecture series of 20 sessions, around the topic of public theology and is the result of the international cooperation of the Berlin Institute for Public Theology in Germany, the Beyers Naudé Institute for Public Theology in South Africa, and the Lutheran World Federation. It brings together leading experts from all over the world delivering lectures on different aspects of public theology.



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Recorded during the Covid-19 pandemic in various contexts, each lecture contains a presentation (both in video and audio formats), accompanying slides, and additional study material and supplementary reading. The lecture series was first offered to graduate students in Berlin and Stellenbosch; the series is part of the Lutheran World Federation learning modules but is also designed to benefit all students in areas where study material and travel are difficult due to lack of funds or opportunities. Many participants from all over the world have been involved.

### Why a Public Theology?

The, now, former Secretary General Rev. Dr. Martin Junge of the Lutheran World Federation, introduced the background to the effort of a Public Theology. He observes that the sense of the common good is losing and the common ground is shrinking. This leads to fragmentation, violence, and mistrust. The Churches are a part of this. Nevertheless the Churches have resources, personal, spirituality, faith, not for private use, but to strive for community building, which means that faith is public. The Churches can't withdraw the responsibility in the society. The Churches must maintain and give Hope to the world and to the peoples.

Prof. Dr Simone Sinn, Academic Dean of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, World Council of Churches talked about the need for expanding theological imagination, sharpening theological discernment and strengthening theological interpretation. Good public theologians expand the horizon for the community as well as for everyone.

### Public Theology is a challenge

The material was presented and commented by the participants around the world. The Webinar is a good opportunity for many to participate from different parts of the world. Even though this material is a positive resource for many to use for capacity building, there are challenges in many countries for the Churches to be too public in the society.

Please read more on the following links and ask for the material for your use.

<https://www.theologie.hu-berlin.de/de/professuren/institute/bipt/lecture-series-public-theology>

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/open-access-public-theology-resources>

*Carin Gardbring, EFECW Coordinating Committee member*

## Rev. Anne Burghardt: the new General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation

Press Release, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) welcomes its new General Secretary, Rev. Anne Burghardt from the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC), who takes up her new role on 1 November, All Saints Day 2021. She is the first woman and the first person from the Central Eastern European region to hold this leadership position.

Burghardt was elected by the LWF Council on 17 June to lead the global communion of 148 member churches. The 45-year-old theologian and pastor was previously working as Head of Development for the EELC's Institute of Theology in Tallinn, as well as advisor to the church for international and ecumenical relations. She succeeds Rev. Dr Martin Junge who served as LWF General Secretary from 2010 to 2021.

Reflecting on the task ahead of her, Burghardt said: "The life of the LWF is a life of communion, of churches witnessing and working together for justice, peace and dignity for all people. I pray that my work can contribute to the growing together of these churches as they gather around Jesus Christ, the one who unites us all in our mission in the world."

As she prepared to take up her new role, she thanked her predecessor Junge for "a good and detailed handover process" which enabled her to understand more about "the different areas of work in different regions and the different priorities of LWF's member churches."

Among the top priorities for the new General Secretary will be overseeing the implementation of LWF's strategy entitled 'With Passion for the Church and for the World.' She will also be setting the direction for the next LWF Assembly to be held in Krakow, Poland, in September 2023.

LWF President Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa welcomed the new General Secretary, saying he is "looking forward to working together with her and supporting the witness of the churches in their many contexts." He added: "Rev. Burghardt brings her valuable experiences and gifts and I am grateful to be walking alongside her on the road to Krakow 2023 which will focus on the theme 'One Body, One Spirit, One Hope'."

Among her previous positions at the LWF Communion Office, Burghardt has served as Study Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, as well as coordinator for the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and content coordinator for the Twelfth LWF Assembly in Namibia in 2017. Her installation service took place in the chapel of the Ecumenical Center in Geneva on 17<sup>th</sup> November.



## Andante calls Catholic Women to active participation

A letter of the European Alliance of Catholic Women, November 2021

Dear Andante members,

As the European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations, Andante is closely observing what is happening in "our Church". We realise: it is moving after all!



At the moment there are various possibilities to speak out in different places, to let your own thoughts flow in.

1. Information on how women in particular are working for change in the Church can be found on the website of the [Catholic Women Council](#), which aims at networking for women from all over the world.

2. Pope Francis has called on everyone to engage in the 'synodal process' as preparation for the Synod 2023. A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together:" How is this "journeying together" happening today in your particular Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our "journeying together"?

In order to respond, you are invited to:

- a) ask yourselves what experiences in your particular Church the fundamental question calls to mind;
- b) reread these experiences in greater depth: What joys did they provoke? What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds have they brought to light? What insights have they elicited?
- c) gather the fruits to share: Where, in these experiences, does the voice of the Spirit resound? What is he asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our particular Church?

All Andante members are encouraged to join and facilitate the process in their local settings, for as Rome says, 'It is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.'

A once in a lifetime chance!

For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission. Read the whole text:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2021-09/text-read-in-english.html>

We would be pleased if as many women as possible could contribute their thoughts, concerns and suggestions in an appropriate form in order to help shape a sustainable church in which everyone can find their place.

## 'A Prostitution is not freedom': 16 days to overcome violence

Federation of Evangelical Women in Italy, 25 November – 10 December 2021

The arduous theme of female prostitution has been chosen by the FDEI National Committee for these 16 days in an attempt to start a reflection on this social scourge in our environments, or at least to provide initial information. We prepared for this publication also through some webinars organized together by FDEI and OIVD\*.

Attention to prostitution seemed all the more urgent to us as the phenomenon took on worrying dimensions, especially because of its link with the trafficking of women and girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition, various parties are proposing the abolition of the Merlin Law, currently in force in Italy, and the introduction of new legislation that would regulate both street and indoor prostitution, To this perspective, which is already a reality in some European countries (Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, etc.), with devastating effects and an exponential increase in prostitution, we feel like Christian women that we must clearly oppose it not only for ethical reasons, but above all because we consider prostitution as a very serious form of violence exerted on the body of women by males who believe they can dominate with money, who (according to their perspective) would be inferior, as body and not a person.

We are not convinced by the position of those who support the "right to prostitution" as a form of freedom in the use of one's own body, which would be consequent to the emancipation of feminist struggles, especially since the so-called free prostitution concerns a small percentage of women, but it also feeds the trafficking of human beings and is resolved in the reduction of a human body to a commodity and therefore to a loss of dignity of the person.



The data tell us that the vast majority of women and girls are prostituted, put on the road by force and rape, or in mega-brothels by exploiters and exploiters for their own gain; they are the victims of a situation of economic, social and cultural poverty, often raped in the family or by herds of adolescents at a young age, often enslaved by blackmail.

The unbearable lightness of the happy ending with which many films represent the events of prostitutes hide the drama of women in the flesh subjected to one of the most aberrant and humiliating forms of

violence perpetrated on the female body and soul and are unbearable to those of them who have managed to get out of this diabolical circle, sometimes at the risk of their own survival.

Let's think about it, let's reflect that behind prostitution there is a problem of sexuality lived as power and not as exchange, a sick (or immature) sexuality which is afraid of the true encounter that men and women can build and live.

The notebook is completed with the proposal of some films and a bibliography and websites linked to the contents of the various days.

This year the 16 Days will be translated not only in English (Annie Marcelo), but also in German (Rete delle donne luterane) and French (Nathalie Seilaz Fraschina). We thank all the volunteer translators for their difficult work.

*Claudia Angeletti*

## War is contrary to the will of God

### An appeal for Peace for the 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council of Churches

In 2022, the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Assembly is to be held for the first time in Germany. Representatives of approximately 350 churches will meet in Karlsruhe from August 31st to September 8th 2022. They represent more than 500 million Christians from over 120 countries.

As the signatories of this appeal, we call on the inviting churches:

Make use of the public awareness that the WCC Assembly will create in the context of your church. Affirm your commitment to Just Peace in Germany, Europe and worldwide, within the Church, the state and society!

In particular, we expect the inviting churches to promote in public and with political decision-makers the calls to:



- Immediately join the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), in order to ban the most dangerous of all weapons from this world and overcome this permanent threat to humanity,
- Stop exporting arms (especially small and light weapons), because they exacerbate the suffering in the wars of this world and make peaceful negotiations more difficult,
- Redirect the billions spent on military armament each year towards rebuilding societies in ways that mitigate climate change and promote social justice and peace.

First signatories: Prof. Dr. Ulrich Duchrow · Prof. Dr. Fernando Enns · Ulrich Frey · Karen Hinrichs · Prof. Dr. Margot Käßmann · Prof. Dr. Konrad Raiser · Konstantin Wecker · Aktionsgemeinschaft Dienst für den Frieden (AGDF) · Deutsche Franziskanerprovinz · Deutsches Mennonitisches Friedenskomitee (DMFK) · Church and Peace – Europäisches Friedenskirchliches Netzwerk · Ev. Treuhandstiftung Friedensarbeit in Württemberg · Mennonitisches Friedenszentrum Berlin (MFB) · Ohne Rüstung Leben · pax christi-Diözesanverband Freiburg · pax christi-Regionalverband Limburg-Mainz · Pro Ökumene – Initiative in Württemberg.

Sign the appeal: [www.ohne-ruestung-leben.de/friedensappell2022](http://www.ohne-ruestung-leben.de/friedensappell2022)



*Please continue to support:*

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

The Ruth-Epting Fund ([www.efecw.net](http://www.efecw.net))

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

All 2020 projects have been cancelled / postponed.

Please find how to apply to Jacqueline Stuyt Fund on our [website](#).

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*[info@efecw.net](mailto:info@efecw.net)*