



EFECW

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

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2025

Welcome to the Autumn 2025 Newsletter of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW)!

As the seasons change, we bring you news, reflections, and stories from across Europe that celebrate our life together as women of faith, friendship, and action. In this newsletter, you'll find highlights from our Coordinating Committee meeting in Marburg, where preparations are already under way for the 2026 General Assembly. You'll also discover thoughtful reflections on pilgrimage, inspiring reports from our national forums, and moving accounts of how women across traditions are working for justice, peace, and equality in church and society.

We are honoured to share tributes to voices who have shaped our Forum, to highlight the creativity and passion of young women through their study sessions and Open Space discussions, and to draw attention to campaigns and initiatives that call us to solidarity.

Whether you are reading about women's voices for change, the GARDEN project on climate justice, vigils for peace, or stories of faith lived out with courage, we hope you will feel encouraged and connected with all women in the forum.

May this newsletter, nurture hope, faith, and action on our pilgrim journeys.

Anthea Sully, EFECW CC member



*"Haus Sonneck" botanical garden, venue of
EFECW GA 2026 - Photo: Maria Koutatzi*



EFECW

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

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

CC Meeting, Marburg, Germany

28-31 August 2025

From August 28 to 31, 2025, members of the Coordinating Committee of Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW) gathered in Marburg, Germany, for a productive and inspiring working meeting in preparation for their upcoming General Assembly. Marburg, a historic city known for its theological heritage, will also serve as the host location for the General Assembly scheduled for September 2026.

The primary focus of the meeting was to lay the groundwork for the 2026 assembly. However, the gathering also provided valuable time for fellowship, spiritual reflection, and meaningful engagement with the local community.

The meeting began with participants sharing updates from their professional and ministry contexts, creating a strong foundation of mutual understanding and encouragement.



Pilgrimage and Community Building

On Friday, August 29, the group embarked on a pilgrimage, exploring local routes and sights, likely to be used during the next General Assembly, around Marburg. The hike provided an enriching opportunity to connect with one another, enjoy the natural beauty of the area, and exchange personal and professional experiences. After the hike, the group reconvened in the evening to continue their working sessions.





EFECW

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

Workshops and Local Engagement

Saturday opened, as always, with a moment of shared prayer. One of the highlights of the day was a meeting with representatives from the Queer Centre of Marburg. Participants took part in a workshop on queerness, which fostered an open, respectful dialogue and deeper understanding of inclusion and diversity within the faith community.



Following the workshop, the working meeting continued with notable progress. The group also had the opportunity to tour the venue that will host the 2026 General Assembly, allowing for practical planning and logistical assessment.

Closing Reflections and Planning Ahead

On Sunday morning, the final day of the gathering, participants reviewed the accomplishments of the previous days and finalized the distribution of responsibilities moving forward. The meeting concluded with a sense of achievement, purpose, and shared commitment to the mission of the EFECW.

The Marburg meeting not only strengthened the foundation for the upcoming General Assembly but also deepened the bonds among participants, affirming the EFECW's commitment to dialogue, inclusivity, and ecumenical collaboration across Europe.

Marijana Ajzenkol and Jelena Mladenovićs, EFECW Coordinating Committee members



Photos: Maria Koutatzi



EFECW

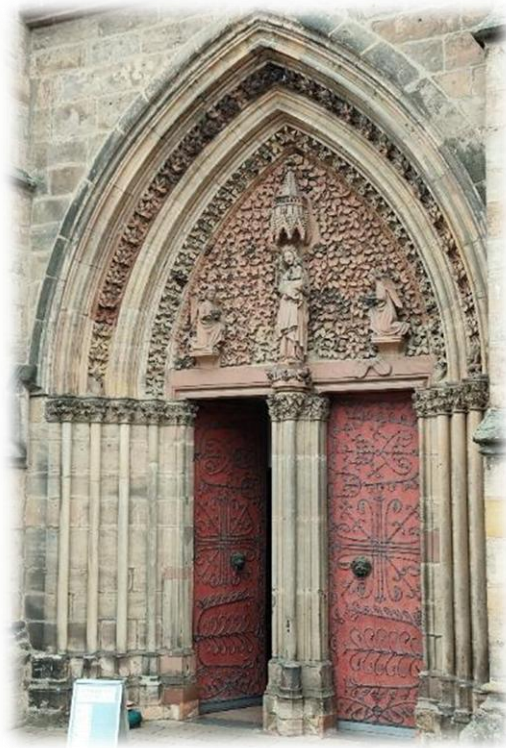
ECUMENICAL FORUM OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN
FORUM OECUMENIQUE DE FEMMES CHRETIENNES D'EUROPE
ÖKUMENISCHES FORUM CHRISTLICHER FRAUEN IN EUROPA

“The traveling people of God”

A reflection on what is a pilgrimage

On September 17, 2023, the pilgrim George, who walked for 40 years in the name of Jesus, passed into eternity. He traveled more than 40,000 km in his lifetime to bear witness to Christ on his way to Heaven. He was born on July 25, 1941. in Pennsylvania, and after high school, wanting to become a priest, he spent four years studying at the seminary of St. Vincent in Latrobe. In 1963, he finished philosophy at the Athenaeum in Ohio, and in 1967 he graduated from the seminary of St. Vincent. He wrote two books: "A Pilgrim Finds the Way" (1988) and "The 40 Thousand Mile Man: Odyssey of a Pilgrim" (2019). In an interview, he stated that God called him to walk and pray.

When asked what a pilgrimage is, most will answer: a pilgrimage is a devoted walk to a place for religious reasons or motives. It seems to me that pilgrimage is more prevalent in practice than in theory. Little has



been written about this topic, although there are many texts about shrines to which people make pilgrimages. As stated by p. Ivan Koprek in the text PILGRIMAGE IN THE LIGHT OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY, published in the magazine Obnovljeni život: "Pilgrimage, as a pious, individual or collective attendance of a shrine or other holy place to perform certain devotions there, is a specifically human thing. The subject of a pilgrimage can be and is only a human being. It is grounded in our deep transcendental experience. By its metaphysical construction, a human being is essentially a traveler, a pilgrim, a seeker and a stranger in this world that surrounds him. The impermanence of life guarantees him that he is passing away. Thus, the foundation of pilgrimage is hidden in man himself, in his metaphysical construction. The practice of pilgrimage is based on this, after all, all religiosity is based on it." Therefore, "Pilgrimage is seeking God and meeting him in a religious atmosphere."

The Voice of the Council survey established that the motives for the pilgrimage are mainly these: "To get rid of the burden of sin, to sing from the depths of the soul, from the juices of childhood. Take off masks and fears, be yourself among your own, joyful. To bear witness that the Church is not an illusion, but a reality that must be reckoned with." Appearance and reality can be a special topic, especially in times of challenges that we are increasingly facing in the age of information technology.

Throughout history, we find that every religion more or less includes pilgrimages in the sense that they were originally understood as a penitential practice, ie man's aspiration for purification and liberation from some inner turmoil, anguish or sin. With such a trip, one wants to get in touch with the other world,



EFECW

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

seeking peace and joy in that community. The story of Ava Dorothea is well known about the old woman who walks to the church for service and refuses to go with the bishop because she has nothing else to offer God except her walk. Many pilgrims make long and dangerous journeys because of their burning desire to be with their God. Buddhists make pilgrimages to places that the Buddha consecrated with his presence during his lifetime. For Muslims, Mecca is the place where millions of pilgrims worship each year. This pilgrimage is considered one of the five pillars of faith - one of the fundamental duties of every believer, Muslim. It is important for every Muslim to go on Hajj, alone or through his deputy (bedel), and to see the Kaaba (House of God) - the place of God's exalted presence - during his lifetime.

We find the Old Testament confirmation that the pilgrimage is a thanksgiving preceded by purification in the words: "God said to Jacob: 'Get up, go up to Bethel and stay there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you were running away from your brother Esau!' And Jacob said to his family and to all who were with him: 'Put away the foreign idols that are in your midst; clean yourself up and change your clothes. We are going up to Bethel; there I will make an altar to God, who heard me when I was in trouble and was with me on the way I walked!'" (Genesis 35, 1-4).



The custom of religious gathering visits to various shrines remained for a long time, but when Solomon built a luxurious temple, pilgrimages to Jerusalem took on a decisive meaning. "The Old Testament man lives on pilgrimages; he also sees the messianic time in the vision of the movement of all nations towards the mountain of Yahweh's house." And Jesus made a pilgrimage to the temple when he was 12 years old (Luke 2:41), and throughout his mission he travels to Jerusalem with his disciples. His followers take a different attitude towards pilgrimages. The cult of Christ's followers after the resurrection is no longer directed to a certain place, but is directed to the new temple - Christ's glorified person.

The destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the focus on the Lord, who will come again, among the first Christians somehow undermined the previous pilgrimage tradition. The Church as a community of pilgrims "is too historical to deny any value of pilgrimage to the places of Jesus' earthly life or the places of his manifestations in the lives of the saints: it sees in these gatherings at the places of Christ's activity an opportunity for believers to share in faith and prayer; it tries above all to remind them in those places that they are on a journey towards the Lord and that he is leading them." But, as in everything, there is also a danger hidden in countless pilgrimages and journeys. That's why Toma Kempijski wrote in his book *Inherit Christ*: "...those who often go on pilgrimages are rarely consecrated." The congregation of the council issued in 1936 special norms regarding the pilgrimage, related to the approval of the church authorities,



EFECW

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

the participation or presence of the clergy, good preparation, moderate costs... In short, the Church considers that the pilgrimage is a suitable means for the growth and promotion of the Christian life only if it really takes place as a sign of faith and does not become an end in itself, turning into trade or tourism, which is what is happening.

But pilgrimages are important not only in the religious but also in the cultural field. Maybe today is more than ever before us is the challenge of encountering the shrines. Due to the development of informatics and technology, it is possible to plan and "visit" desired destinations with one "click". Today, that "click" allows us to even light a virtual candle in the metaverse at the place where Jesus is believed to have risen from the grave; it is possible to join the pilgrims around the Kaaba or to hear and experience (in a special way) the prayers of the Jews at the Western Wall or the thousands of believers saying Amen at the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, as well as to visit the Vatican and the papal chapels. The number of visitors (believers and tourists) to these places is increasing. Due to the pandemic, there was a faster development of such experiences, so it is possible to build entire relationships and experiences in an impressive virtual world through your avatar. Information technology allows and enables the display of a 360-degree projection, which "draws" the visitor into the virtual space. Thus, students of the University of Miami for a course called Religion and Sacred Spaces in the Era of Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence "attended" a Haitian voodoo ceremony, a Hindu funeral rite and Christian baptisms and "explored" the Sagrada Familia Basilica in Barcelona, the Parthenon in Athens and Mecca.

Such experiences are challenges at the same time. Matthew Rossi, a 21-year-old mathematics student, raised as a Catholic, now, after the mentioned experiences, counts himself as "religiously unaffiliated". The course experience, he said, gave him a new understanding of religious traditions and rituals. "You feel like you're walking with the crowd, and I thought: This is incredible," Rossi said of the 360-degree video of pilgrims circling the Kaaba in Mecca. Students created their own virtual sacred spaces, as an exercise and a work assignment. One team created an island retreat where students, through their avatars, could observe a smiling, rotating Buddha statue in silence. Another team built a stone-like labyrinth leading to a place where earth and sky seemed to meet. Is this experience an introduction to reflection and analysis of past experiences, theories, definitions? Does the interweaving and "clicking" of reality frighten or enrich us?



William Green, professor of religious studies and chair of Judaic studies at the University of Miami, says that faith should involve concrete actions: from prayer and/or singing to meditation and/or fasting. "Religion engages your mind and also your body," Green says, "And you can't do that in two dimensions, but you can in the metaverse." Perhaps this is the moment when we could reflect and ask ourselves about



EFEWCW

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

the motives of the pilgrimage and the pilgrims? What is it that attracts and motivates people to make a pilgrimage? In which reality/realities do we spend more time? How and where is our spirit and the spirit of the times shaped? If we look at the places of pilgrimage with the eyes of believers, it is an unavoidable fact and motive for the religious gathering of pious people who seek help in various life problems. "The direct cause of the pilgrimage practice is our gray everyday life: worries, troubles, diseases..." But the Pilgrim can also give thanks for his blessed journey. In many places, we find the gifts that pilgrims offer, from those most necessary to the most specific and sometimes understandable only to the pilgrim.

The theology of the Second Vatican Council emphasizes that the liturgy is "the pinnacle of the Church's activity, and at the same time the source from which all its strength derives." The Church is a community of believers who are by faith and baptism became God's children - the traveling people of God. They meet and praise God gathered around Christ present in the Eucharist. "With the earthly liturgy we participate in the heavenly liturgy that is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem, where we, as travelers, aspire, where Christ sits at the right hand of God as the servant of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle; with all the companies of the heavenly army we sing to the Lord a song of glory; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope to gain some place in society with them; we await the Savior of our Lord Jesus Christ, that when he appears, our life, and we together with him appear in glory." The liturgy and the Eucharistic sacrifice are the center of the pilgrimage. The people who travel and make up the community of believers gather around Christ. In the Catholic editions, we find that the Eucharist is always at the center of the fraternal communion. In short, the people of God, the Church, as it is, is the testimony of one pilgrim. The Eucharist is a sacrament of double gifting: on the one hand, God offers himself to man as a gift, and on the other hand, man must give himself to God. By self-gifting God and his complete acceptance of God, giving himself to God as a gift, man fulfills his full meaning. The Eucharist thus penetrates deeply into man's everyday life, transcends it and sanctifies it. It is precisely this act that is the greatest challenge of



the metauniverse for now. How will the liturgies of this reality come from "below" and they are an expression of a kind of religious devotion? People always seek to get closer to Him.

It is possible to go astray in holy places, they seek the vigilance of pilgrims, which will protect them from the danger of slipping into some different, and often magical, spheres of spirituality. That is why it is important and necessary to review and even purify (if necessary) the motives of the pilgrimage. It is a fact that large pilgrimage gatherings of believers who experience mutual unity around the same (religious) ideas still occupy souls today. This is confirmed by various sanctuaries - places where thoughts and feelings different from everyday ones are born. There, a man offers his everyday troubles on the altar and calls upon God. Pilgrimages and shrines reveal the irrational side of the



EFECW

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

soul, its need and cry for peace and unity in community. As it is in the tradition and spirit of Christian practice that pilgrimages were a reflection of piety and penance, and shrines where pilgrimages are places of spiritual renewal and conversion, it would be advisable to think about how today, in the light of the development of information technology, in the time of shortage of time and facing the challenges of everyday life, one could make a pilgrimage and grow in one's faith.

Pastoral workers have a great responsibility both in terms of organization and the ability to organize pilgrimages that will contribute to the spiritual renewal of the people entrusted to them. Perhaps today is precisely the time when we should design places of pilgrimage and make them oases of peace, community and trust in the Spirit who speaks louder in those places. Whether and how to experience and use the zeitgeist and the possibilities of information technology today and how to include the pilgrimage in that spirit because "God has given us the imagination to find more suitable forms!" Time will tell what we gain or lose with that imagination.



From the first cry to the last sigh, a person remains a traveler and a seeker. the constant change of life shows us that we are pilgrims on the journey.

What else do you need? Keep your burden while your mind is silent. It's always time to go on the journey with nothing, MAH-Klub vavalaca Summary of Pilgrimage springs "from below", from the people and are mostly an expression of private piety. Their origin is in fellowship and trust in the Spirit who speaks louder in those places. Whether and how to experience and use the zeitgeist and the possibilities of information technology today and how to include the pilgrimage in that spirit because "God has given us the imagination to find more suitable forms!" Time will tell what we gain or lose with that imagination.

From the first cry to the last sigh, a person remains a traveler and a seeker. the constant change of life shows us that we are pilgrims on the journey.

*Marijana Ajzenkol, EFECW Co-President
Photos: Marburg, August 2025, Maria Koutatzi*



EFECW

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

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL EFECW

England Forum

Women's Voices for Change in the Catholic Church

At a meeting during Lent the forum met to discuss the call for the ordination of women to the Priesthood in the Catholic Church. During Lent Catholic women worldwide joined the Catholic Women Strike, withholding their labour and resources for 40 days to demand equality in ministry and leadership, declaring that their place in the church could no longer be denied.



Our speaker from Catholic Women's Ordination shared her journey of stepping away from the institutional Catholic Church after many years of service. She described how this had given opportunities for her to explore worship across traditions, and how she found encouragement through groups such as Catholic Women's Ordination. Lockdown had unexpectedly expanded ecumenical horizons for her, as she was able to join many different services online, and this deepened her conviction that women's ordination is central to wider church renewal.

The discussion highlighted the long history of women's exclusion from leadership in Christianity, while also affirming the prophetic contributions of Catholic women theologians and campaigners. Forum members reflected on the ways feminist biblical interpretation has reshaped understandings of scripture, and how ecumenical solidarity can sustain those striving for change. Women who had campaigned for ordination in the Church of England expressed both gratitude for the solidarity shown by Catholic women during that struggle, and

sorrow that equality has still not been achieved within the Catholic Church.

Equality in the church, it was agreed, is not only about justice for women but also about the integrity of the gospel itself.

Hearing from Serbia: A Movement of Hope

At our February gathering, we were really pleased to be joined by CC member Marijana Ajzenkol, to hear directly from one of our members in Serbia about the extraordinary student-led protests taking place there. Young people had been standing up for justice, democracy, and accountability following the corruption that led to the tragic collapse of a train station canopy in Novi Sad that killed 15 people. What began as a silent vigil had grown into the largest student movement in recent Balkan history.



EFECW

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

We heard how the protests have brought together farmers, doctors, pensioners, and many others - an inspiring picture of solidarity across generations. The new Archbishop [Cardinal], the Orthodox leaders have gradually shown support. Despite intimidation and attempts to silence them, the movement has remained peaceful and determined.

It struck many of us how little this story has been reported in the UK. Yet the courage of these young people, and the way communities are standing beside them, is a powerful reminder of what it means to work for truth, justice, and hope. Their witness is not only for Serbia - it speaks to us all.

Since our meeting we have continued to follow the news from Serbia as the protests continue. Our thoughts and prayers are with the young people of Serbia, the churches and our EFECW sisters.



First steps into the GARDEN project



In May, members of the England and Serbian forums came together to reflect on how traditions, stories, and daily practices connect us with the land, the seasons, and the care of creation. Anthea from the England forum and Marijana from the Serbian forum, both members of the CC, are working on an exploration and expression of climate justice that will be shared and presented at the EFECW General Assembly in 2026. Called GARDEN this meeting was part of the process of gathering material to inform the development of the project.

We began by exploring traditional customs and festivals in our cultures. In Britain, these included Plough Sunday, well dressing, and maypole dancing; from Serbia, the old practice of dancing and music to bring rain - rituals that weave community life into the rhythm of the seasons. We also considered how these traditions intersect with faith.

The discussion then turned to the ways women have been linked with the land in both cultures - through work, care, and ritual, from preserving food to tending gardens. The making of rose jam in Serbia and rosehip and apple jelly in Britain highlighted shared practices, as well as the joy found in our gardens.



EFECW

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

Our conversations revealed a spiritual awareness of the earth as both gift and responsibility, reminding us that creation care is rooted deeply in culture as well as in faith. This led naturally to today's climate action, with participants sharing examples such as awareness gardens, community clean-ups, and simple daily acts of stewardship.

Finally, we asked: What kind of world do we hope to leave for future generations? and What small acts of care for creation do we feel called to in daily life? The responses were both practical and spiritual, grounded in gratitude for the earth and a commitment to safeguarding it.

This gathering offered rich connections between past and present, Serbia and Britain, tradition and responsibility. Above all, it reminded us that care for creation is both a shared heritage and a shared calling.

Peace Vigil

With the ongoing war of Russia against Ukraine and the desperate news from Gaza the England forum extended an invitation to all forum members to join them in a vigil for peace. Taking as a text Psalm 139: 17,18 'How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them they would outnumber the grains of sand on the beach. And when I awake, I am still with you.' We called to mind the children of the world considering the importance to God of every child:

- > Over 473 million children—more than one in six globally—now live in areas affected by conflict.
- > The total number of children displaced by conflict and violence rose to 48.8 million by the end of 2024,
- > More than 50,000 children reportedly killed or injured in the Gaza Strip

In Ukraine 669 children were killed and 1,833 injured.

(Note: Figures Unicef and UN)

We prayed for the nations to be gathered together by the breath of God's Spirit, that all nations would be kept from hatred and war, for all those in trouble and distress and victims of injustice and for us each to be granted the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and faithfulness. Together we made the declaration 'We – the women of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women, we will not turn away. We will stand together.'



Anthea Sully, EFECW CC member



EFECW

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

Rev. Kathy Galloway (1952-2025)

Obituary



Photo: Rev Kathy Galloway (far right) with members of the Forum at the General Assembly in Novi Sad, Serbia, in 2018.

Rev Kathy Galloway was known to many forum members and we were all deeply saddened to learn the news that Rev. Kathy Galloway has died.

Her story is genuinely significant, as part of the development of women's place in the churches, liturgical renewal, hymn writing, and the promotion of justice and peace, among many other things. Kathy was one of the first women ordained to the ministry of the Church of Scotland. She served in parish ministry, led the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre, and, through her long association with the Iona Community, became its first woman Leader. She later served as Head of Christian Aid in Scotland.

Kathy's ministry reached far beyond Scotland. She was widely recognised as a theologian, writer, poet, liturgist and campaigner for peace, justice, and equality. She also worked with international church bodies, and in 2005 was among 1,000 women collectively nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Kathy was a significant member of the Gender and Leadership consultation (funded through the Jacqui Stuyt legacy), a partnership between the England Forum and The Women's Justice Group of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. This led to the publication of *The Leading Question* a report that captured women leader's experiences and made recommendations to all churches for the future. Kathy memorably spoke at Forum's the Novi Sad General Assembly in 2018.

She had so much more to give. We will mourn and celebrate her in equal parts, but the celebration will outlive the mourning in the legacy she leaves.

Anthea Sully, EFECW CC member

OPEN SPACE DISCUSSIONS

“Guilt, Shame and Self-Blame”

15 June 2025

Can you remember a moment in which you felt a strong sense of guilt, shame or self-blame? All of us make mistakes, take decisions that turn out less well-working than expected, react from anger, fear or anxiety. And, all of us are shaped by the underlying concepts of guilt, shame and self-blame which we pick up from the grown-ups around us. Impressions of guilt, shame and self-blame can effectively hinder us from thriving in our lives, privately, in the forum and at our workspaces. So, let's tackle this important topic together!



Photo: PPT slide prepared by Hannah Wehner

First of all, especially guilt is important in the process of realizing chances to do better. The difference between guilt and shame is therefore crucial. Brené Brown, a known speaker on this topic puts it the following way. Guilt says: “I did something bad”, while shame says: “I am bad”. Guilt leaves space to do better or at least try something else the next time. Shame leaves us all alone for if we are bad how are we to change that?! Additionally, shame is huge when it comes to traditional gender roles. Trying to break them up can cause shame as well as trying to fit in and failing many times because expectations to that perfect housewife, mother, woman are incredibly high and inhumane. But also, guilt can turn out rather unhealthy, leading us to feel guilty without reason or for others outside or responsibility. Discerning our actions, feeling guilty and then strife for doing better, coping with mistakes – it is an act of balancing.

Taking responsibility for ourselves is an ongoing learning process. This is also true when speaking about self-blame. It gets us stuck in the past, self-centred and afraid of new mistakes. But, to say it theologically with Paul Tillich or also Martin Luther, we need courage that includes the option of mistakes and sin. We are human beings and therefore limited in our ability to oversee every consequence of our actions in detail (but of course we shall try to do our best). Courage and a gently realistic view on our actions help to move forward and stay active.



EFECW

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

Brené Brown pushes the meaning of empathy as antidote to shame and this also applies to self-blame. Being gentle with ourselves and others creates an atmosphere in which we feel safe enough to be vulnerable and in close contact with our hearts, bodies and minds. What can help us on the way? The idea of the growth mindset. It encourages us to re-shape our automated thoughts and teaches us to be gentle with ourselves and others (and if you want to look for some biblical evidence on that, try Matthew 11 among others). We continue to exist as learning creatures with wonderful brains and hearts with evermore capacity to grow. So, when was the last time there was this strong sense of empathy and growth in your life? Why don't we multiply such situations?

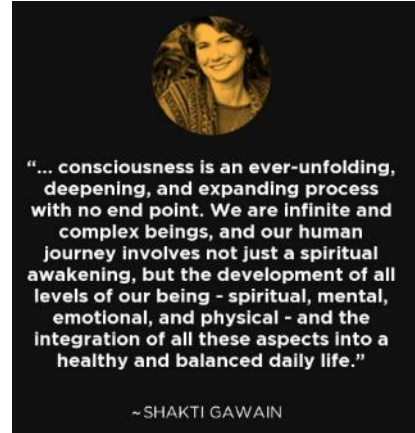


Photo: libquotes.com

Hannah Kehrein

“Constitutional changes”

13 July 2025

During the July Open Space Discussion for Young Women, we discussed the topic of EFECW Constitutional Changes. Below are some of our suggestions and thoughts. We're excited to share some key developments shaping the future of EFECW. At the heart of these changes is a renewed commitment to inclusion, representation, and a shared European identity.

✓ A Stronger European Identity

As we look ahead, we ask an important question:

Do we want to foster a European identity or national identities?

Our answer is clear — we prioritize building a European identity, one that brings together our diverse cultures, experiences, and faiths under a common vision of unity and peace.

✓ Rethinking Participation: A Fairer GA Structure

A new approach is being developed for the General Assembly (GA) to ensure broader representation. Here's what's proposed:

✓ Quota-based participation, reflecting:

•Country of residence •Age •Denomination•Years of engagement (including space for new voices)

✓ Voting rights for all members who have paid: through their National Forum or directly to EFECW as individual members.

✓ Adjusted membership fees based on age and region, making EFECW more accessible to all.

✓ Inclusion That Works

The inclusion model isn't just symbolic — it's supported by structure and action. We are making sure that everyone, regardless of background or time in the Forum, has a meaningful voice in our shared journey.

We believe these steps will build a stronger, fairer EFECW — one where every woman and voice matters.

Jelena Mladenovićs, EFECW CC member



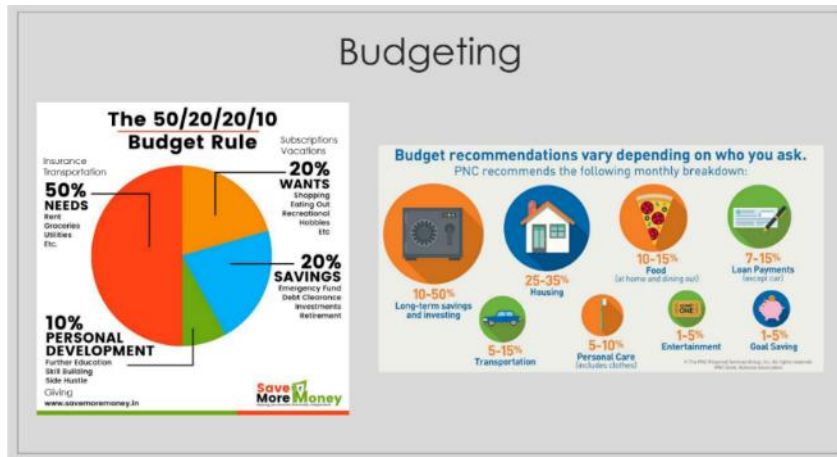
EFECW

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

“Personal Finances and Budgeting”

9 August 2025

Speaking about finances can make us feel quite diversly: awake and joyous, nervous and anxious, sad and worried, strong and brave. As women, some of us have learned unconsciously the lesson that finances are not a woman's business. Despite such patriarchal impact on us many of us have plans making financial knowledge and planning crucial. That is why we tackled the topic of personal finances and budgeting.



Managing personal finances means getting the education one needs, setting financial goals, tax and investment strategies, managing debts, saving and retirement options. No matter how much we earn, budgeting is an important tool to monitor and plan our money flows. To keep track of our financial situation we can use spreadsheets. Even though

finances are tight for most of us, we can find orientation in budgeting rules such as the 50/20/20/10-rule: 50 % for needs (insurance, transportation, rent, utilities, groceries), 20 % for wants (subscriptions, vacation, shopping, eating out), 20 % savings (emergency fund, debt clearance, investments, retirement) and 10 % personal development (education, skill building, giving and donating). More realistic might be a 75/10/10/5-rule – it can be readjusted to suit our individual situation and can be changed anytime.

Because money and finances are an immensely important aspect of our everyday life it can be helpful to reflect on our money autobiography. From childhood on, beliefs and experiences with money shape us and our financial life. Especially as women and young people who might enter partnerships which will also include financial partnership, it is indeed crucial



to be self-aware and self-conscious about our own goals and needs. The better we understand ourselves the better we can communicate with others about finances and develop goals suiting both partners. So, let's tackle hindering emotions and let's get started!

Photo: PPT slides prepared by Hannah Wehner

Hannah Kehrein



EFECW

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

“Love and love languages”

14 September 2025

Love. A huge topic that keeps humankind busy and intertwined. Romantic novels, films, assumptions and expectations are everywhere and shape us – and our understanding of intimate relationships. So, take a moment to ask yourself: What is love for you? Is love enough to maintain a healthy relationship?

When we talked about these questions sharing some of our personal experiences, we quickly agreed that love is one important ingredient to a healthy relationship but certainly not the only one. First, there are different kinds or intensities of love (towards neighbours, children, romantic partners, nature, pets...) Second, there are accompanying values and actions a relationship needs (respect, trust, honesty, having each other's back, being vulnerable with each other, eye level, arguing without violence, mutuality...) Third, we need to have criteria to find out if people misuse the term love to justify behaviour that violates others in different ways. Using love as a justification is a warning signal and love that someone can only declare but for whatever reason cannot live up to is love that can seriously harm us. We agreed that it is often worth giving it a go when feelings develop but reflection and critical assessment of relationships, behaviours and feelings are key to find out if we want to pursue or end this relationship.

Love is not enough... You also need;

- To feel seen and heard.
- Trust and respect.
- Vulnerability.
- Communication, and knowing one another's needs.
- Boundaries.
- Honesty.
- Being able to retain your sense of self.
- For them to understand how you like to be shown care, love and appreciation.
- To accept one another, but to also encourage growth.

Amna Amjad MBACP | @sonder.therapy

Photo: [Amna Amjad MBACP](#)

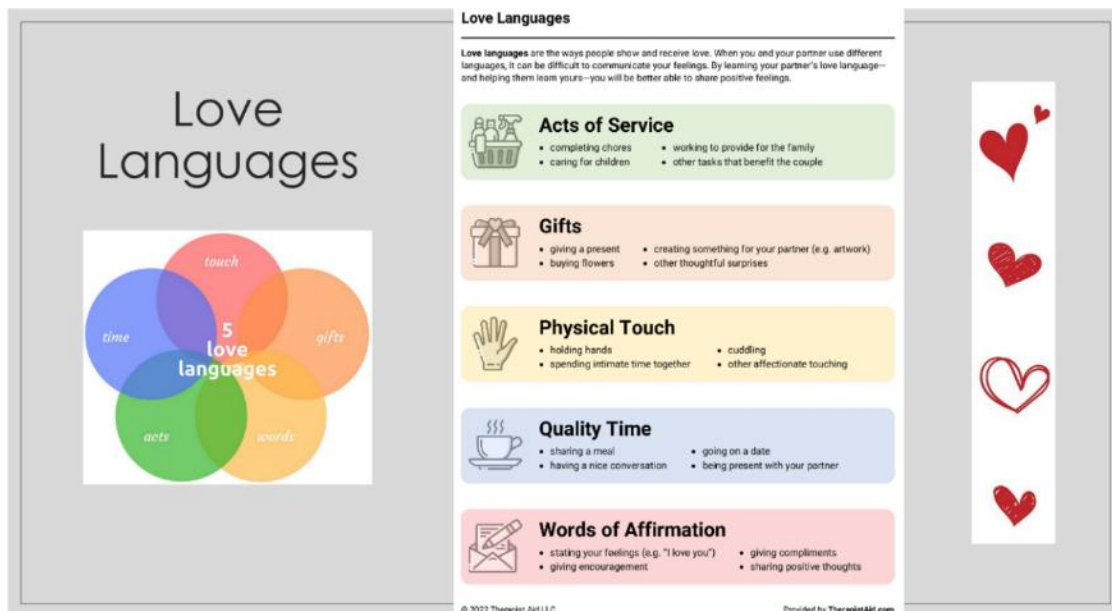


Photo: PPT slide prepared by Hannah Wehner



EFECW

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

When we enter relationships, over time it can be important to reflect on how we like to express and receive love. The concept of love languages can help us to reflect on ourselves and also on our friends and partners. Gifts, acts, time, affirming words and touch are basic ways to express and receive love. Each of us will need all but to very different extends. How do you enjoy showing other people that you love them? And when do you feel particularly loved by others? To understand this can help to constantly express our love to our partners and friends in a way they are fond of.

Caring about the expression of love is one often invisible way to participate in the care work every relationship needs. Equal care can be important to reflect on in a relationship to ensure that all partners feel valued, seen and taken care of in a way that suits them. It also provides different options for serving the relationship. To start reflection and conversation, material such as equal care assessment sheets are available online. They work for any kind of relationships, particularly in shared living contexts. Have a go yourself and see how equally you share care work with your loved ones!

If you enjoy reading our texts, join yourself, listen to the podcast #femalevoices and/or tell others about Open Space. We are happy to grow together with you!

Hannah Kehrein



Photo: PPT slide prepared by Hannah Wehner

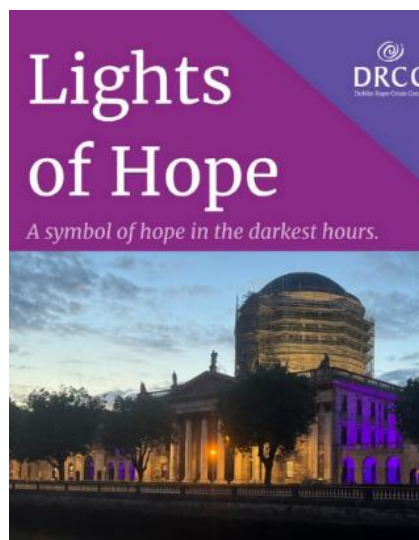
“Lights of Hope”

Campaign by Dublin Rape Crisis Centre!

In August 2025, the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre launched the Lights of Hope campaign in solidarity with and support of survivors of sexual violence.

For 15 days, 15 public buildings across Dublin were glowing in purple, the colour of dignity and courage, from dusk until dawn, symbolising hope in the darkest hours. The campaign also aimed to remind the wider public of the need for solidarity with survivors around them, and for awareness and action in addressing sexual violence.

The campaign was supported by a photoshoot with survivors in front of iconic buildings in Dublin city centre.



*Photos: Instagram Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
Hannah Wehner, EFECW CC member*



EFECW

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

YOUNG WOMEN STRATEGY

“Faith in Action”

Study session, Budapest, Hungary, 1-5 September 2025

From 1-5 September, the study session “Faith in Action: Addressing Climate Change and Strengthening Democracy Through Christian Youth Movements”, organised by the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE) and the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW) in co-operation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, took place in Budapest, Hungary.

Young people from across Europe, representing different denominations, spent five days together sharing knowledge, learning about theological approaches to climate change, exploring different Christian traditions’ views on “Care for Creation,” and engaging with various forms of activism. Three former EFECW interns participated in the study session, representing not only their denominations but also the EFECW community.

Highlights of the session included a visit to the Aurora Climate Garden in Budapest, participation in the Thursdays in Black campaign, and the final stage of the study session, titled “Climate Activism to Go.” During this last activity, participants worked in groups to design a campaign or program based on the knowledge they had gained, which could then be implemented in their home contexts.



Photo&Text:Manana Gyulzadyan, Armenia





EFECW

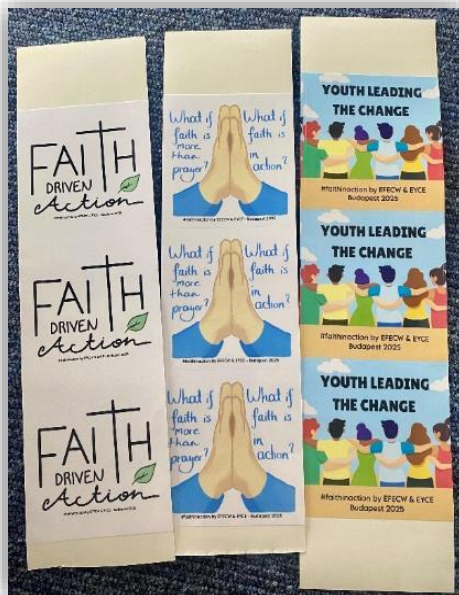
ECUMENICAL FORUM OF EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN
FORUM OECUMENIQUE DE FEMMES CHRETIENNES D'EUROPE
ÖKUMENISCHES FORUM CHRISTLICHER FRAUEN IN EUROPA

Our Study Session “Faith in Action” together with the EYCE was a wonderful opportunity for young activists connected by ecumenism to come together, share and expand their knowledge and inspire new projects. I particularly enjoyed the creative tasks: I designed stickers before the event and created (digital) activism art in the form of PowerPoints, videos and social media posts. After the event I returned home with many ideas and a feeling of hopefulness for our communities and our planet!

Text and Photos: Agnes Kienesberger, Austria



A group picture



The stickers



The entrance to the Auróra Klímakert, a so-called “climate garden” or “city forest”



EFECW

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

Coming together from diverse backgrounds of faith, countries, ages and professions is always a blessing. I was so happy to see our group form and share effortlessly from day one. I hope participants but also people who saw our work from afar can be inspired to work for climate justice in their communities and even further. - **Saara**

I'm very satisfied with the turnout of the study session. The group was very motivated, highly engaging, and very passionate. Very creative and impressive outcomes were developed. I'm grateful for the experience that leaves me with hope and motivation. - **Hannah**

Participating in the study session was a truly enriching experience. I gained valuable knowledge about how environmental issues are addressed in different countries, the role of politics in shaping responses, and the ways in which democracy is experienced — or not fully felt — in our societies. It was especially inspiring to exchange perspectives across diverse religious traditions, from Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Evangelical backgrounds, as well as from other faiths. The openness of dialogue, the depth of ideas, and the warm atmosphere made the session not only educational but also personally meaningful. I leave with new insights, new friends, and a renewed sense of connection between care for the environment, democratic values, and faith.

Photos & Text: Mirella Sava, Malta





EFECW

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

EFECW podcast #female voices

Season 2 is out on YouTube and Spotify!



#female voices
a podcast episode 7



'Unhealed trauma is behind our health, weight, addiction, sleep, and relationship issues.'
Doreen Virtue

This episode features a conversation about trauma with Hannah Wehner, a member of the Coordinating Committee of EFECW, and interviewer Eileen Corrigan.

#female voices
a podcast episode 8



Inspired by an Open Space discussion, this podcast episode explores the topic of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

#female voices
a podcast episode 9



In this episode, our guest speaker Zany and interviewer Hannah are discussing sexual pleasure, taboos that are linked to female sexuality, the female genital anatomy, orgasms, the gender-based orgasm gap and sexual self-exploration.

#female voices
a podcast episode 10



Join us in a crucial conversation about child rearing and parenting with Hannah and interviewer Eileen.



EFECW

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

WOMEN OF FAITH

Maria Gabriella Sagheddu

A woman who had a vision for Christians' Unity

Maria Sagheddu was born in Dorgali, Sardinia, in a family of shepherds. Witnesses from the period of her childhood/adolescence speak of her as a girl with an obstinate, critical, and rebellious character, but paradoxically with a strong sense of duty, loyalty, and obedience: "She obeyed grumblingly, but she was docile", it was said of her. "She would say, 'No,' but she would do the task at once." What everyone noticed was the change that came over her when she was 18. Little by little, she became gentle. Her outbursts of temper disappeared. She became more pensive and austere: more tender and reserved. The spirit of prayerful charity grew in her, together with a new sensitivity concerning the Church and the needs of the apostolate. She enrolled in "Catholic Action", a Church-sponsored youth movement. A new depth of receptivity was also born in her, one that hands itself totally over to the will of God.

At 21, she decided to consecrate herself to God. Following the guidance of her spiritual father, she entered the Cistercian monastery of Grottaferrata, an economically poor and culturally under-developed community, governed at that time by Mother Maria Pia Gullini. Her life in the monastery appears to have been dominated by a few essential principles. The first and most obvious of these was gratitude for the mercy which God had poured out on her, calling her to belong completely to him. She liked to compare herself to the prodigal son and could only say, "Thank you!" for the monastic vocation, her monastery, the superiors, the sisters, everything. "How good the Lord is!" was her constant exclamation, and this gratitude will pervade everything, even the last moments of her illness and agony. The second principle of her life is the desire to respond to God's grace with all her strength, so that what the Lord had begun in her might be completed and God's will fulfilled in her, because here is where her true peace lay.

Her abbess, Mother Maria Pia Gullini, had a precocious ecumenical awareness and a desire to work for Christian unity. She had communicated this desire to the community, so when she explained to the sisters the Church's request for prayer and offering for the great cause of Christian Unity, Sr. Maria Gabriella felt immediately involved and internally compelled to offer her young life. "I feel the Lord is calling me" she confided to her abbess. By the quick, straight road of her tenacious commitment to obedience, Gabriella attained the inner freedom to be conformed to Jesus, who "having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end". As a counterweight to the laceration of the Body of Christ, she realized the urgency of offering herself and carrying out that offering with faithful consistency until its final consummation. She was conscious of her own frailty, but her heart and her will had only one desire: "God's Will! God's Glory!" On the very day of her offering, tuberculosis appeared in her young body, which until then had been extremely healthy. It swept her to her death after 15 months of suffering, in April 1939. Gabriella ended her agony, totally abandoned to the will of God, while the bells were ringing the Vespers on Good Shepherd Sunday. The Gospel that day had proclaimed: "There will be one fold and one Shepherd."

Even before the consummation of her offering, her self-gift for the sake of Christian Unity had been communicated to the Anglican brethren and was welcomed by them. It has also sparked a deep response in the hearts of believers of other Christian confessions. The most concrete gift of Sister Gabriella to her own community has been the influx of vocations, who arrived in great numbers during the following years.

If you want to read more click [here](#)

Presented by Marianna Apresyan, Co-President of EFECW



EFECW

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

ECUMENICAL NEWS

Stockholm Ecumenical Gathering

Recalling Centenary of 1925 Conference that called for Peace

The Swedish Forum participated organising two seminars on the theme Peace and Justice. One seminar on “Raise your voice and act as woman work for peace in Palestine, Tanzania and Sweden.” The other seminar on “The truth shall set you free. With Jesus and the message as base for work for peace.”

An appeal for peace was heard not only on the last Service, but all the week. “In this time, God calls us – as churches, as siblings in faith, as fellow human beings – to be bearers of God’s peace.”



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

The service rounded off an Ecumenical Week in Stockholm from 18 to 24 August 2025 on the theme “Time for God’s Peace” to recall and be inspired by the 1925 Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work, which gathered in Stockholm in 1925 after the First World War organised by the Swedish Archbishop Nathan Söderblom.

The week’s activities, organised by the Christian Council of Sweden, included services, workshops, roundtable discussions, keynote lectures, concerts, book presentations, a summer academy for younger and emerging theologians, as well as a youth festival, “Reach peace,” with hundreds of participants.

This week was also a recalling of this year’s 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, which gathered in the year 325 to unite Christians.

More to read:

[Stockholm gathering recalls centenary of 1925 conference that called for peace | World Council of Churches](#)

[Building peace together - a promise of dignity which requires sacrifices | World Council of Churches](#)

Carin Gardbring, EFECW Co-president



EFECW

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

“Season of Creation”

Call for “peaceful habitation” amid climate crisis

The World Council of Churches (WCC) and ecumenical partners opened the 2025 Season of Creation with an ecumenical prayer service on 1 September. Faith leaders from across denominations worldwide called for “peaceful habitation” and healing of creation.

Speaking at the service were Rev. Dr Hyunju Bae, from the Presbyterian Church of Korea, and vice moderator of the WCC Commission on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development; Rev. Atahualpa Hernandez Miranda from Colombia, and Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu from the Democratic Republic of Congo. They called for immediate ecological transformation and climate justice.

Ecumenical partners work throughout the Season of Creation to engage Christians worldwide in prayer and action for creation care. Hundreds of participants globally joined the online service, which opened with the biblical promise from Isaiah chapter 32: “My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.”



Photo: Albin Hillert/Life on Earth Pictures

Speakers acknowledged the gap between this vision and current climate realities affecting vulnerable communities.

“Fear and anxiety have become daily visitors for many people. A growing number of children and young people suffer from anxiety. Climate inaction plunges them into silent despair about their own future on this planet,” said Bae during her reflection on peace. She called for urgent action: “People from all walks of life should develop climate solutions together and act upon them through radical collaboration for a just transition.”

She emphasized the role of faith communities: “Peace with creation is waiting for committed Christians who are motivated by God’s peace, rise above eco-anxiety and focus on action and advocacy, in contemplation and resilience.”

During the prayer, a collective confession acknowledged ecological misbehaviours and intercessions were offered for environmental refugees and communities affected by climate change.

The Season of Creation runs from 1 September until 4 October, with the theme “Peace with Creation,” engaging 2.2 billion Christians worldwide in creation care. A St Francis Day service led by the Season of Creation youth committee will conclude the season on 4 October, gathering Christian voices worldwide via Zoom and YouTube.

Learn more about the Season of Creation [here](#)

Source: World Council of Churches, [News](#)

**EFECW**

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Amendments to EFECW constitution

15th December 2025

A reminder and encouragement to take the opportunity to comment on the Constitution:

The Co-ordinating has since the last General Assembly, in 2022, developed a proposal for changes in the constitution, to adjust it to the time we live in now. Last time we worked together with the National Coordinators was in an online meeting on 8th May 2025. In the beginning of June 2025, the materials from the meeting were shared with the National Coordinators for consultation in the national Forums until **15th December 2025**. The materials can be sent again, if requested. In case you may have missed the communication, please let the Coordinating Committee know. You will be called to an Extraordinary General Assembly (virtual) in the beginning of May 2026, including 4-year activity reporting and changes of the Constitution.

Save the date!

EFECW General Assembly

8-13 September 2026

Haus Sonneck,

Marburg Germany

Carin Gardbring, EFECW Co-president

Please support:

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

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

Bank details:

Oekumenisches Forum Christlicher Frauen in Europa

Bank: Schelhammer Capital

IBAN: AT64 1919 0000 0026 9688

SWIFT/BIC: BSSWATWW

Website: www.efecw.net

Email: info@efecw.net

Facebook: EFECW-Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women

Instagram: efecw_official

Podcast: <https://www.youtube.com/@EFECW-Podcast>

<https://open.spotify.com/show/3IfSvAWDEJguyAmEXZtTkO>