



EFECW Special Edition

July 2022

XIth General Assembly 2022

Strasbourg, France, 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***



*The members of the FRENCH FORUM, and especially the women of the Strasbourg branch, are looking forward to welcoming you in a few days in Strasbourg and to sharing with you, in sisterhood and in our common faith, this time of meeting which is so important for us all. We have prepared everything so that this moment will be a joyful time, a time of celebration. Have a good trip. We are thinking especially of those of you who cannot come and we will carry them in our prayers.
We embrace you.
Anne-Marie Schott*

In few days, around 80 women from 17 to 84 years old, from 24 European countries will be meeting for the first time, or after a very long time (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) physically, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women! We are all very excited and looking forward to a meeting full of constructive discussions evaluating the past while building the future work. We want to get inspired, to actively listen and empower each other instilling hope while assuming our individual and collective responsibility in a turbulent time in Europe.

Presentation of guest speakers

Marie Fontanel



Ambassador, Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe (since July 2020) at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. Since February 2022, Mme Fontanel is the chair of the Committee of the Parties, which the political body of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) monitoring mechanism. The Committee of the Parties is tasked to elect the members of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO). The Ambassador will receive us at the Council of Europe on 8th August 2022.

Experienced Advisor and Manager with a demonstrated history of working in the government administration. Skilled in Public Management, Program Evaluation, Writing, Project Management, and Public Relations. Strong healthcare services professional graduated from Ecole nationale d'Administration.

Etudes et diplômes :

- Ecole nationale d'administration, Promotion Senghor, 2002-04
- Maîtrise de droit public, Paris II, 1995-99
- LLM in International and European Law, University of Utrecht, 1997-1998
- Institut d'Etudes politiques de Paris, Service public, 1994-97

Expériences professionnelles :

- 2017-2020 : Conseillère Solidarités Santé, cabinet du Président de la République
- 2016-2017 : Directrice générale déléguée, Agence régionale de santé Grand Est
- 2010-2015 : Directrice générale adjointe, Agence régionale de santé Alsace
- 2007-2009 : Directrice des Publics, Musée du Quai Branly
- 2004-2007 : Inspectrice, Inspection générale des Affaires sociales

Publications :

- 2014 : Rapport relatif à la définition d'un protocole national pour l'amélioration de la prévention et de la prise en charge des femmes victimes de violences, avec Dr Annie Soussy, Dr Patrick Pelloux, remis à Marisol Touraine, Ministre
- 2007 : Le modèle social français, avec Nicolas Grivel, Valérie Saintoyant, La Documentation française
- 1998 : EC sex equality Law : is the concept of indirect discrimination a good and effective legal instrument to achieve substantive equality between men and women ? Mémoire final de LLM.

The Permanent Representation of France to the Council of Europe is the French diplomatic mission to the Pan-European Organization for the defence of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, based in Strasbourg. As such, it reports to the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and more specifically to the United Nations and International Organizations, Human Rights and Francophonie Department.

Under the authority of its Ambassador, Mrs Marie Fontanel, the members of the Representation promote and defend French positions, in particular during the weekly meetings of the Committee of Ministers. More specifically, the Representation participates in monitoring the execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. The Representation maintains close working relations with the Organization's Secretariat, at all levels, and dialogues with all the players involved in

the decision-making process, first and foremost the Representations of all the Member States. It contributes to the animation of the inter-ministerial coordination by maintaining contacts with all the French experts taking part in the work of the Organisation. It also maintains regular relations with French parliamentarians sitting in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) as well as with elected representatives of French local authorities, members of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CPLR).

Christine Aulenbacher

Born in Forbach (Moselle, France) in 1963, Christine Aulenbacher obtained a master's in theology and religious pedagogy at the University of Metz in 1987.

As a certified teacher of religion, she taught religion at Lycée Poncelet in Saint-Avold from 1987 to 2003.

Trained in psycho-corporal analysis, she accompanied for many years adolescents and adults in search of meaning.

In 2003, she continued her studies in Catholic Theology in Strasbourg and defended her thesis in 2006: "Catholic adults in search of meaning: process of cultural change, human maturation and spiritual conversion." She obtained her Doctorate in Catholic Theology at the University of Strasbourg.

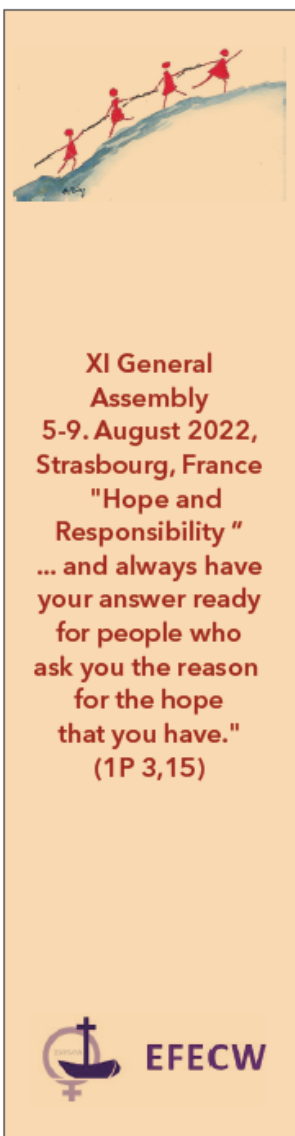
She became Lecturer and Director of the Institute of Religious Pedagogy.



Jane Stranz



Reverend Jane Stranz is an ordained minister of the United Reformed Church (Great Britain) and of the Église Protestante Unie de France. She is the daughter of a refugee from Hitler's Germany. She has worked as a parish or student minister in former East Germany, Great Britain, and France. A committed ecumenist, she worked at the World Council of Churches in Geneva for nearly a decade and was the national ecumenical officer of the French Protestant churches for six years. She is part of the Groupe Orsay collective of feminist theologians. A former managing editor of *The Ecumenical Review*, she is on the editorial boards of *Perspectives missionnaires* and *Foi et vie*, and a member of the Groupe des Dombes. She currently serves a small French Lutheran parish part-time near "La Défense" in Paris. She enjoys origami and calligraphy, reading detective fiction and dreaming about tidying her office. Jane has been living with multiple sclerosis for 25 years.



Jane Stranz and Christine Aulenbacher in dialogue

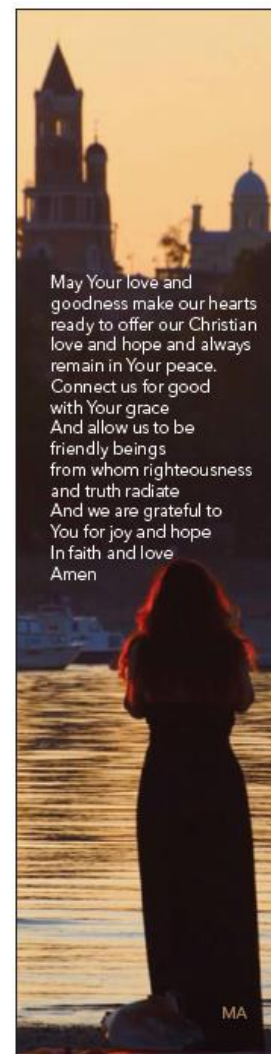
Jane Stranz and Christine Aulenbacher will discuss "Hope" on 7th August 2022: "Hope may be a theological virtue, but we want to propose it is less a theory and more a visceral daily practice of life, renewal, and survival. This work of hope is also often overlooked and undervalued in our societies. How can women and men embody and live out hope in today's fractured yet still beautiful world? Faced in society and in our churches with ongoing crises - of governance and democracy, of ecological violence, sexual abuse, war, and the systemic exclusion of women from decision-making - developing a hope-filled practical and pastoral theology of responsibility becomes ever more urgent. How do we read the Bible and Tradition, who is the God of hope for us in these contexts? How do we build resilient, inclusive communities of hope and responsibility?"

In dialogue, Christine and Jane will begin with some personal, political, and theological fragments of hope and responsibility. This will then evolve into more of a conversation, ending with some questions to involve all participants in reflection and discussion in the second part of the morning.

L'espérance est peut-être une vertu théologique, mais nous aimerions proposer qu'elle est moins une théorie et bien plus une pratique viscérale et quotidienne de vie, de renouveau et de survie. Ce travail de l'espérance est aussi souvent négligé et sous-estimé dans nos sociétés. Comment peuvent des femmes et des hommes incarner et vivre l'espérance dans notre monde fracturé mais beau d'aujourd'hui ? Face aux

crises actuelles dans notre société et dans nos Églises - de gouvernance et de démocratie, de violence écologique, d'abus sexuels, de l'exclusion systémique des femmes des processus de prise de décision - il devient encore plus urgent de développer une théologie pratique et pastorale de responsabilité qui témoigne pleinement à l'espérance. Comment lisons-nous la Bible et la Tradition, qui est le Dieu de l'espérance pour nous dans ces contextes ? Comment construisons-nous des communautés d'espérance et de responsabilité qui sont résilientes et inclusives ?

En dialogue, Christine et Jane commenceront avec des fragments d'espérance et de responsabilité personnels, politiques et théologiques. Ceci évoluera ensuite plus vers une conversation, et terminera avec des questions pour inclure toutes les participantes dans la réflexion et discussion lors de la 3ème partie de la matinée. »



Workshops (on 7th August 2022)

Manufacturing Ornaments with Ana Slačanac

Participants will be invited to become students and follow instructions step by step in crafting one single completed angel either for hanging on the Xmas tree or as a gift. The leader will demonstrate and explain each step. Everybody waits until all participants finish – with patience and love- having a good time assisting each other. It will be possible to write down the instructions for applying the same activity back home.

Two Biblical women inspiring us with courage and hope

with Roswitha Golder & Martina Heinrichs

Looking at two or more examples of women in the Bible, who exemplify hope for us, special emphasis on “foreign women” cf. the genealogy of Jesus: e.g. Hagar in the Old Testament, and Lydia in the New Testament.

Moments of Hope: Women’s experiences of ecumenical cooperation in the shadow of Charta Oecumenica in 20 years with Carin Gardbring

20 years of the Charta Oecumenica - Guidelines for the growing cooperation among churches in Europe, published in April 2001 by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Roman Catholic Council of European Bishops’ Conferences (CCEE). It marked the beginning of the century, and it is a document of inspiration. What does it mean in practice? What roles do the women have taken? What role does dialogue play at the local level?

Paragraph 8 says: ...As churches we intend to join forces in promoting the process of democratisation in Europe. We commit ourselves to work for structures of peace, based on the non-violent resolution of conflicts. We condemn any form of violence against the human person, particularly against women and children. ...



Dress of Hope – Interreligious dialogue with Jelena Ljubenović

Observing the “dress of hope”, we see that they are all part of ONE. Interreligious dialogue occurs on four levels: knowledge, action, spirituality, and beauty in diversity. It is a dialogue on religious subjects by participants who acknowledge one another as part of different religious traditions and groups. Divided into four groups, we will discuss these topics. After that, each representative of their group will try to answer one of four important questions connected to art, hope, creativity and the role of woman in God’s creation.

Ordinary women with extraordinary hope: how women from the Gospels and Christian history challenge our witness today with Mary Cotes

How can women from the Gospels and Christian history inspire us to be pro-active as Christian disciples in society today? What have they to teach us and how often do we hear their stories? In this workshop, Mary Cotes shares the questions which led her to write ‘Women Without Walls’ (French title: Quand les femmes se mettent à l’oeuvre) and explores how Biblical and historical women strengthen our hope as we seek to build community and become the significant players in mission God calls us to be.

How to be involved with the monitoring of the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention in your country with Michelle Lefevre

Council of Europe - Istanbul Convention: Action against violence against women and domestic violence

During the workshop, we will discuss ways to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the convention at national level.

(a) Each participant can find out whether there is a report of the group of experts (GREVIO) in her country as well as about the content of this report

(b) Discuss 2-3 points that we can support at national level on legal and/or policy level to take steps towards the legal protection of women.

(c) Try to make a synthesis of the current situation on this matter in Europe and possible ways to act at national and /or European level.

Women bringing hope during war with Kristine Voskerchyan and Marianna Apresyan

Audio-visual material about women of different ages and social groups experiencing the results of war: great loss; incredible pain; grief. Women forcibly displaced from their homes, as well as widows and mothers of killed soldiers, women who lost their husbands, sons, brothers, who lost their houses and all the properties and everything they had in this life, everything that was giving them a reason to live.

Women in desperate situations but filled with hope given by God:

Widows found ways to work, make money and feed their children; displaced women created their own start-ups; mothers of killed soldiers gave birth... With God's help, these women forced themselves to find hope and faith in God to overcome desperation, loneliness, helplessness, poverty, and they gave hope and a reason to live to their desperate husbands and other members of their families.

The Internship programme for young women

This year's General Assembly in France will be accompanied by young women that will support the preparations and the vision of the Assembly. The programme, previously known as Stewards programme, is now called Internship programme. 16 young women aged between 17 and 32 years from different European countries as the UK, Austria, Germany, Croatia, Greece, Malta, Armenia, Romania, Ukraine and Georgia are going to work together in five different groups to make the procedures as smooth as possible.

The social media and photography team contains five women who will ensure that photographs are taken, and that content is regularly posted on Instagram and facebook.

The spiritual life team of two women is in charge of the preparation of the prayer and worship sessions during the assembly.

Two internship programme leaders will lead introductory and team building activities. They will look after the interns' needs and facilitate the communication between the interns of the different groups as well as the interns and the participants at the assembly.



Young women's programme at the 10th General Assembly, Serbia, August 2018

The administration and finance team, that contains two women, is responsible for assisting with the participants' reimbursements, the presentation of the financial overlook of the forum during the Assembly and the contribution of relevant documentations.

Two strategy and leadership assistants will participate actively during the discussions as well as workshops and contribute to the final message of the General Assembly.

Originally, there was also a team of three women as hybrid meeting facilitators for the digital participants planned. This group is no longer required as the assembly is only taking place in person. The assigned three women have now joined other available teams.

All the interns are already very much looking forward to their participation in Strasbourg and excited to be involved with the EFECW this year. Feel free to get in touch with any of us at any time during the Assembly!

Hannah Ayissou, Internship Programme Leader

Participants reflect on the Assembly's theme

"... and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have."

Carla Maurer

I live in London. London is an amazing place. People can be whoever they want to be. It is an inclusive society where people can freely explore their identity and spirituality and manifest their personality the way they want. I am amazed every day by the diversity of this city which attracts people from all over the world. For many people the move to London signifies the liberation from the repercussions they experience at home because of who they are.

London is a highly secularised city. Although the Church of England plays a major role still in governing structures and the public opinion, many individuals have turned their back on institutional religion, either exploring their own spirituality or not getting involved with faith matters at all.

As a Christian and Church Minister I stand out in my social circle. It is definitely not the default position. People are surprised to hear what I do, and that I identify with such an old-fashioned institution (or what they believe to be an old-fashioned institution). They think I am an illusionist. They think God is a farfetched idea for irrational people who have lost touch with reality. I often get asked: why do you believe in God? Why are you in the church?

What is the reason for the hope that you have?

When I saw the Assembly's theme, I was taken off guard. Do I have my answer ready? It took me back to many places in London when I was asked exactly this question, and I was put on the spot to giving an answer. In a city like London that celebrates life and diversity, the cracks are visible everywhere. People are held slaves behind our doors. No one can hear their cries. In a city ruled by money, people sleep in the streets, left out and excluded from mainstream social life. The fences around our gardens are built high and neighbours don't know each other. People are lonely. Young mothers struggle along without support network. Asylum seekers are held in limbo for months or even years. The list is long, and the cracks are many.

What is the reason for the hope that I have? That there is no alternative. The cracks are not only around us and deepening every day, but also within us, in each one of us. Behind every glittery façade there are deep cracks. We all want to be seen. We all crave salvation. Perhaps our hopes are illusional. Perhaps our faith in God is irrational. But what is the alternative? Hope and faith open doors where we cannot see any. Hope and faith transport us to a place where we can find the strength to carry on in this earthly life and believe in a better future. We owe each other hope. It is the wave that carries us through the storm.

Do you have your answer ready?

Carin Gardbring



Pictures of Hope : 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 others. Hope is action for change and gives life and life gives Hope. Ecumenical cooperation is about Hope and Trust. In the upcoming General Assembly in August 2022, we will create pictures of Hope from our experiences of local experiences of life. Pictures to share and create new together. The General Assembly will give time to reflect over what life means.

Srbuhi Movsisyan

I am Srbuhi Movsisyan, a child psychologist and art therapist by profession. I joined Christian Women's Forum of Armenia in 2016. The forum is very important to me, for it has had great influence on my life. While working with the incredible women of our forum I realised how important I am and how many great things women can do to help their country grow. It also made me a more responsible person.

While being a member of the forum I have been taking part in almost all the organised programs and it made me feel like a complete person.

I really hope that cooperating with women from other countries will connect us, especially in the current state of affairs, when we need to give each other a helping hand.

I am so grateful for being a part of the forum and being able to make my contribution to its work.



Agnes Kienesberger



Hi everyone!

My name is Agnes, I'm 20 years old and just returned from Ireland where I was an AuPair for the past year. I'm looking forward to interesting conversations and debates about gender roles, climate change and justice, as well as the political situation all around the globe. Let's support each other and tackle our problems together!

Greetings from Vienna :)

Meditation on resurrection

Coordinating Committee meeting, Strasbourg, May 2022

"We are between Easter and Ascension - Pentecost and the question of the power of death vs life is more pressing than ever in these days.

So, I would like to share with you what I discovered during my Easter meditation this year. Usually, as Christians, we speak about resurrection in spiritual terms and avoid the question of the resurrection of the body. Because as people living in modern times, we know that we cannot really pretend to believe in such a strange thing as the resurrection of the body of Jesus, I mean the real body, and even less that we believe in the resurrection of our own bodies, our imperfect, scarred and often suffering bodies.

The church father Tertullian said that it is easier to believe in God than in the resurrection of the flesh. So even in the Church, I think that most people don't really believe that after death, we will rise with our same bodies that we have now, as Jesus did according to the Gospels. I can say for myself that I never even considered to take seriously this message in a material way. Instead, I immediately tried to interpret it in a different way.



However, the gospels really insist that Jesus rose and left the tomb after three days. This is the core of the Good News that we believe in as Christians! and the more I think about it, the more I feel I can see why this is really good news for us and for all of humanity in so many ways!

It is the most revolutionary news ever to be announced because it announces a resistance against all powers in the world that can tie down and dominate our bodies, our minds, our souls. To speak of the resurrection of the body in the face of these powers, means to defy them entirely. It announces the reign of a different order than the order of nature and civilisation that we live in.

Rationally, we may seem like crazy people to believe in a thing that according to the law of physics or biology is impossible. To believe in the resurrection is even more crazy than to confess Christ crucified, which Paul in I Corinthians calls "a foolishness for the Greek and a stumbling block for the Jews". It goes beyond, or rather beneath what we expect that a God can and should do. But to affirm that Christ rose, took off the linen cloths from his body and walked out of the tomb, goes beyond the laws of nature itself. It shows that the kingdom of God is really the kingdom of life. And all who follow Christ belong to it, no matter what kind of bondage they experience now. Since Christ's resurrection we can live as citizens of God's kingdom starting today! Death has no power over us anymore.

In biblical times, and until very late in human history, the ownership of the body of another, in slavery, was a normal and accepted thing. Nowadays, human bondage, even slavery still exist, even though they are now no longer considered acceptable. We now have the human rights, we have treaties against human trafficking, war crimes are punishable, we have conventions to fight against rape and violence... And yet there are still many ways that we live in bondage today. We are all affected, body and mind, by racist and sexist structures; our age and ability will influence how we are seen and how we see ourselves. Beauty standards and health also affect our self-love.

Christ's resurrection is an answer even to these questions that appear less important than obvious violence. This good news says to us that we are loved and wanted by God entirely, our body and soul can't be separated. We are loved with the scars on our skin, with our excess fat and our wrinkles. As children of God, our only duty in this world is to love God and celebrate God's grace and glory. Christ rose with the marks of the cross on his body. To me, this means that the life we live now is really and entirely valuable to God. In Heaven, God will not first make us look perfect before we will join the choir of angels. We are now already in this choir!

The only new thing we will get will be the clothes of his glory and grace – clothes that will not rot and not be torn for eternity. Amen.”

Evelyne Zinsstag, EFECW Coordinating Committee member

Photos: CC meeting at CIARUS, 1st May 2022



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