



Church and Peace

Schöffengrund, 10 June 2013

Press Release

**Church and Peace International Conference,
held in Selbitz, Germany, 31 May – 2 June 2013**

"Seek the Welfare of the City – the Prophetic Mandate of the Church"

Two key themes at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches, which will be held in Busan, South Korea, in the autumn, must be: 1. peace education; and 2. the development of credible alternatives to the UN doctrine of military intervention in accordance with a responsibility to protect. This was the call from the international conference of Church and Peace, the European network of Christian communities, churches and peace organisations, which was held 31 May to 2 June at the Christusbruderschaft Community in Selbitz, Germany. The Community is a long standing member of the network. The title of the conference was: "Seek the Welfare of the City – the Prophetic Mandate of the Church". And the participants, who came from 11 countries, criticised the feeble efforts of governments to develop alternatives to military violence and translate them into actual policies and programmes. When there is conflict or civil war, as now in Mali or Syria, military intervention is often portrayed by the media as the only effective course of action as an alternative to "doing nothing". Instead of this, according to the conference participants, active conflict prevention and exposure of the interests behind arms production and the global arms trade should be put at the centre of public debate.

When churches and religious communities uphold the nonviolence of Jesus as the only alternative, this is a conscious decision to reject war. The church of Jesus has a prophetic mission to take this stand.

"We refuse to pray at the altar of the military industrial complex, which drives so many of the world's economies." the conference was told by the British New Testament scholar Lloyd K. Pietersen. During his address he tackled the question as to what the apostle Paul's attitude would be to the Occupy Movement of today.

Alen Kristić, a theologian and scholar of religious studies from Bosnia, regards unquestioning cooperation between the dominant religious community and the state as a cause of the on-going lack of capacity for building peace and democracy. On the other hand there are, in his view, many independent individuals and groups who are often motivated by the peace message of their faith. And it is they who undertake sustained peace work and thus become the focus of people's hopes.

The conference participants shared experiences of practical grass roots action and gave each other much encouragement. The contributions from the participants from South Eastern Europe were particularly important.

It will soon be possible to read the lectures on the Church and Peace website at www.church-and-peace.org

Church and Peace is a European Ecumenical peace church network made up of communities, training centres, peace organisations and peace service agencies. It participates in the ecumenical dialogue of the conciliar process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation and is a catalyst for common initiatives and projects. The teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are at the core of Church and Peace's vision. The network's overarching commitment to active Gospel nonviolence finds expression in various forms of peace church community, taking inspiration in particular from the Early Church, the Anabaptist movement and the Historic Peace Churches.

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