



Winter 2016

church and peace

# Newsletter

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**Spotlight on security –** Britain and Ireland regional day

**We do not wish to be cut off –**  
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Photo: Brot & Rosen

*"No one is illegal" – a vision for Europe's future from Church and Peace member Brot und Rosen*

## What future for Europe?

*Reaffirming the European project for peace and reconciliation*

### Europe is at a crossroads.

Tensions in the European Union have been rising. The financial crisis, particularly in the Eurozone, has ramped up tension between northern and southern Europe. The challenge to host increasing numbers of refugees fleeing war and poverty has caused serious strain between some eastern and western European member states. The narrow referendum vote in favour of the United Kingdom's exit from the EU has exposed existential questions.

Ordinary citizens are losing confidence in the European project, with growing mistrust of politicians and the institutions they serve. Populist and even nationalist movements are growing in several states.

And member states increasingly centre their policies around national interests.

In some cases this has led – literally – to drawing up bridges and building walls.

Yet member states are also facing enormous common challenges: the global economic crisis, climate and ecological crisis, international crime and terrorism, wars and armed conflicts at the borders of Europe, to mention but a few. All require coordinated, effective responses.

How can this obvious need for international cooperation and joint policy-making be reconciled with people's legitimate desire to have ownership of the policies that affect their daily lives? How can we work together to find solutions to our common problems? How can we develop a vision for Europe that builds on our rich past and guides us into the future with renewed hope and confidence?

I participate in the Economic and Ecological Justice working group of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) on behalf of Church and Peace and we have realised that the first step is to emphasise the European project's origins as a peace and reconciliation project based on common values. Seeking closer unity in Europe means much more than merely coordinating economic policies or a narrowly defined European economic union.

CEC is inviting its member churches and partner organisations – including Church and Peace – to reflect on Europe as a common home both within and beyond the boundaries of the EU.

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## Church and Peace

The European ecumenical network of peace churches, and peace-church oriented congregations, communities and service agencies.

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## Support Church and Peace

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Send Sterling cheques to the order of 'Church and Peace' to Gerald Drewett, 39, Postwood Green, Hertford SG13 7QJ or alternatively make a transfer by BACS to sort code 08-90-78 and account 50342831 and send email notification to gerald.drewett@ntlworld.com

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# "Do not be afraid!"

(Luke 2:10)

Dear Friends,

Everyone is talking about Europe. We are too! We are joining in the debate about a vision for Europe. Our vision can only be of a Europe which overcomes war and builds bridges of understanding, promotes reconciliation and practises solidarity. What does this mean in the current context of today?

Our Administrative Committee member Kees Nieuwerth is a member of a Conference of European Churches (CEC) working group. He reports that CEC, in an open letter, is calling for a public debate about the key challenges facing the churches and the responsibility which they share for a Europe built on solidarity. The "EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace" is a major issue which shows how important it is

to be vigilant, in order to prevent the EU going under the table to take the dangerous path of militarisation.

We are encouraged by the biblical affirmation, "Do not be afraid!", and are getting involved. Don't be afraid to be vigilant, to be a nuisance, or on the other hand to recognise your own vulnerability and warn against false kinds of security. Through all the troubling events of these times, this biblical affirmation is a source of strength which enables us to keep going on the ecumenical Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace.

May God bless you throughout this Advent time and in 2017.

*Antje Heides-Rothorn*



## Please support Church and Peace!

As in previous years, we are once again making a strong appeal for your support, so that we can:

- strengthen the network and encourage each other
- organise conferences on key political issues and facilitate theological reflection on peace
- support action, such as the vigil which was held at the entrance to the Eurosatory arms fair in Paris in June 2016
- strengthen our members in South-East Europe, where the situation is still fragile, through activities such as the planned joint conference in March 2017 with "Believers for Peace"
- continue to produce our newly redesigned newsletter which will enable us to reach many more people

All of this is only possible with your support!

Prayers and financial support – we have been dependent on both in the past and are especially dependent on them both in these increasingly challenging times. Our **bank account details** are to be found in the left-hand column.

Thank you!

*P.S. The Church and Peace newsletter can be ordered as a pdf or as print copy from the international office (address in the left-hand column).*





### What future for Europe?

*continued from page 1*

Under the heading *What future for Europe? Reaffirming the European project as building a community of values*, the Church and Peace Administrative Committee is reflecting on our network's renewed vision for Europe as a community of core values such as peace, reconciliation, the rule of law, democracy, human rights and human dignity, equality, freedom of opinion and religion, mutual solidarity and, last but not least, sustainability.

A particular concern is the recent number of EU initiatives – possible arms subsidies, supporting armed forces in Africa at the cost of development, the development of a European Defence Agency - which seem to contradict the original aim of fostering peace and reconciliation. We also want to advocate for inclusive security policies which result in

more support for UN Sustainable Development Goals in the global South.

Our response, together with those from other CEC members and partners, will feed into the next CEC Assembly in 2018, where European unity will be a major theme.

Yes, the fundamental tenets and achievements of the EU are under threat, but the crises facing us actually offer an opportunity to re-imagine Europe, celebrating our unity in diversity and our connection to the world beyond our borders.

**Kees Nieuwerth**

*Kees is a Quaker from the Netherlands and a member of the Church and Peace Administrative Committee.*

*Banner at the vigil with members of Church and Peace at the Eurosatory arms fair in June 2016*

### Learn More

- The open letter from CEC to its member churches and partner organisations is available in English, French, German, and Russian at [www.ceceurope.org/open-letter/](http://www.ceceurope.org/open-letter/). The letter outlines the history of the European Union – its original aims and its many achievements – and takes a look at recent tensions, as well as outlining the potential inherent in this crossroads moment.
- Church and Peace's response to the open letter can be found at [www.church-and-peace.org](http://www.church-and-peace.org) following the submission date of 31 December 2016.



On 5 July this year, just as the parliamentary summer recess was about to begin, the European Commission presented a proposal to extend the “Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace”, intended to cover non-military measures, in order to include the strengthening of military capacity in third countries – possibly using funds allocated to development projects. At the time the proposal was highlighted as problematic by the international and German press but was barely noticed otherwise. In the autumn, national parliaments considered the issue – some paying it more serious attention than others. Now it is the turn of the European Parliament.

Church and Peace issued a press statement about this in October alongside other organisations such as AGDF (Action Committee Service for Peace), Bread for the World, VENRO (Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs), CEC (Conference of European Churches). We asked our members in various European countries to engage in public debate about the issue and the associated move towards militarisation of the EU. It must be made clear to parliamentarians that they cannot approve the EU's proposal out of the public eye, but that their votes will make a difference as to whether or not the proposal gains parliamentary approval and Europe goes on down the path of dangerous, one-track military “security” thinking.

This seems to us to represent a fundamental paradigm shift which could have irreversible legal, political, and financial repercussions regarding the nature of the EU.

**Antje Heider-Rottwilm**

## European peace network Church and Peace warns against extension of EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace to include military support to third countries

“The EU Commission must not be allowed to go ahead with its proposal to extend the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) to include the aim of strengthening the military capacity of third countries”, according to the Administrative Committee of the Church and Peace network.

“Given the huge number of tasks in the field of civilian peace building, the EU Commission's proposal for military capacity building to be funded in future from the very limited budget for civilian measures, which took a lot of political work to establish, is unacceptable. And the 100 million Euro which the EU Commission

wants to spend on this over the next four years will very probably be taken out of the Instrument for Development Cooperation (DCI)”, observes Antje Heider-Rottwilm, chair of Church and Peace.

Church and Peace warns: “This proposal is formulated in such broad and general terms that it is unsuitable for combatting instability, conflict and other causes of flight and migration. On the contrary, it has the potential to strengthen rogue regimes and their armies and militias. In addition to this, the extension of the IcSP is a back door to the creation of an EU defence budget.”



“The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded.” – Photo: Olivera Savic



According to the Commission, ammunition and weapons are excluded. But services are defined so broadly that the EU would become an exporter of military goods and services, e.g. through construction of military bases, and provision of communication systems and real-time situation analysis - facilities which play an equally decisive role in warfare as lethal weapons do.

“This policy is very much in line with initiatives for upgrading armed forces which some European governments have been promoting for several years. We are horrified to see that this approach is now part of the EU’s Global Strategy which was presented by Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, end of June 2016. We are especially critical of the idea that development policy should be more flexible and aligned with strategic priorities (see Church and Peace press statement on the EU’s Global Strategy, issued on 1.7.2016).

We issue a strong warning against such a fundamental paradigm shift. This proposal is a further step towards funds for peace and development being used for other

goals such as military capacity building or control of migration. This undermines the credibility of a foreign policy which talks about good governance, and social and economic development. And the use of military force to deter refugees replaces measures to combat the causes of violent conflict.”

*When realities differ so sharply,  
stability and peace suffer.*

*Photos: Davorka Lovreković*

**Press release by  
Church and Peace,  
Schöffengrund,  
12 October 2016**

### **Background**

The **Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)** was created in 2007 and revised in 2014 because the EU lacked an instrument which filled the gap between security policy and development policy with a civilian approach. The legal basis for the IcSP is found in the articles in the Lisbon Treaty on development (Article 209 TFEU) and technical cooperation (Article 212 TFEU). This means that all measures must be in pursuance of development goals. The budget of 2.3 billion Euro for 2014-2018 serves both the strengthening of EU policy in the field of civilian rapid crisis response, especially support for humanitarian measures, and civilian conflict prevention and peace building through support

of the UN and capacity building through civil society initiatives, especially mediation, dialogue and support for reconciliation processes. It also includes training and preparation of police for international missions and demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, including child soldiers. IcSP is the only budgetary instrument for civilian crisis prevention and conflict management. An extension to include military purposes would be illegal according to the assessment of various EU legal services; it would seriously damage the special civilian nature of the IcSP, and would threaten to dominate or even supersede the civilian approach entirely.

# Spotlight on security

*Britain and Ireland regional day*

Church and Peace has had a fairly low profile in the Britain and Ireland region recently. This is now set to change, after a meeting in Birmingham at the end of October.

Under the heading of *Rethinking Security: the moral and theological challenge*, keynote speaker Simon Barrow, director of the web based think-tank Ekklesia, looked at security at local and global levels, at how strength is valued, economically, politically and militarily, and how fear is used, turning the threat of insecurity into a political weapon.

Christianity disarms this form of security by offering a new way of living – sharing rather than hoarding, offering shelter, valuing vulnerability, speaking and living truthfully in a dissembling culture, which rests on the lie Walter Wink called the “myth of redemptive violence”. We are clear that our ultimate security is with God; the Christian way of revenge is called resurrection, death is not the final word.

A panel discussion looked at these issues in particular contexts. Trevor Williams described the fear

Simon Barrow



Photo: Terri Miller



Photo: Terri Miller

in the strongly contested society of Northern Ireland, and the work of Corrymeela over 50 years of creating safe spaces to hear different and difficult stories.

For Pat Gaffney of Pax Christi, there is a challenge to lift up that non-violent action is central to moral and pastoral thinking in the Catholic Church.

Pat Nimmo, a United Reformed Church minister in Birmingham, reflected on how to act in the face of “-isms” in her church - racism, nationalism, islamophobia and xenophobia - and now the divisions caused by Brexit. She asked, what is the “strong man” we need to bind as individuals, communities and as a nation?

Paul Maxwell-Rose of Christian International Peace Service is based in Brixton, south east London, and talked of the challenge of addressing fear and powerlessness in this inner-city context.

Alan Pleydell described peacebuilding work in the former Yugoslavia, with which he had engaged at Quaker Peace and Social Witness. He has struggled

*General Secretary Davorka Lovreković introduces the panellists.*

with pacifism - how can we deny protection to those who lack safety? The perennial imperative is to love.

The discussion groups were lively as we addressed questions around identity, language and the role of the churches and Church and Peace. Identity is many layered, carries power and is formed by class and education as well as nationality. And it can be used positively or negatively. Can we celebrate difference and community, and work to repair the damage to inclusivity which has come with post Brexit Britain? We have one common heritage – we are all citizens of heaven.

An exciting day, pointing the way to future activity and hard work for Church and Peace!

**Bridget Walker and Barbara Forbes**

*Bridget is from Oxford & Swindon Area Meeting and Barbara from Central England Area Meeting, which hosted the meeting. Simon Barrow's talk can be heard at <http://bit.ly/2fDwDEa>*



# “We do not wish to be cut off”

## Post-Brexit vote reflections

Those who didn't realise, or didn't accept, that Britain is a deeply divided society became brutally aware of this reality following the EU referendum on 23 June.

When I told other Church and Peace members at the Annual General Meeting this year on 10-12 June that I predicted a “leave” majority, the reaction was mild horror; when I said the same to friends in the UK, they said I was being too negative and that the “sensible” vote would surely win. The announcement of initial results did nothing to allay our shock when the final outcome was confirmed.

It became clear that the public was lied to in the run-up to the referendum and that some politicians used the referendum to further their own careers. Now, we have an unelected Prime Minister already notorious for anti-European, anti-refugee, and anti-human rights attitudes when she was Home Secretary, and the pound has plunged dramatically against the Euro and the US dollar.

Possibly worst of all, there has been over 50% rise in hate crimes when compared with the previous year. Polish people have been murdered simply for being Polish; shops owned by Eastern Europeans have been attacked and set on fire; people feel empowered to express deeply racist and xenophobic opinions which they had previously been ashamed to speak aloud. Now, there is no shame. It is

as if the referendum result has legitimised the dark undercurrents long swirling below a civilised veneer. Politicians and the tabloid press have for years colluded in creating a climate of hostility towards “the other”, and of “pride” in “British achievements”, reflected in slogans such as, “We want our country back”, and “Let's put the ‘Great’ back in Britain”.

Amongst Quakers, there was and is a similar division, although naturally expressed in more measured terms, and the debate amongst us continues. We are fortunate in having the Quaker Council for European Affairs in Brussels, which we hope will continue to be a

strong presence no matter what happens in the UK.

I would like to give a clear message to our non-UK friends: we need you now, more than ever. We do not wish to be cut off. We need your support, and your love.

**Barbara Forbes**

*Barbara is a member of Bull Street Quaker Meeting in Birmingham and serves on the Church and Peace Administrative Committee.*



Photo: Abi Begum - flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

# Transitions

## *Farewell to Davorka Lovreković as General Secretary of Church and Peace*

Photo: Margrit Kruber-Arnold



### **Antje Heider-Rottwilm, Church and Peace Chairperson:**

Davorka will be leaving Church and Peace at the end of four years of intensive and reliable teamwork. Davorka brought to Church and Peace her many contacts within a large international network and she has continued to develop these contacts together with and for us. As a Quaker she has faced the challenges of these times with a combination of serenity and active commitment, and faith and political acumen.

When it came to strengthening Church and Peace's contacts with people in South East Europe, and the international conference in Pristina, Kosovo, in 2015, her intimate knowledge of the region and the language was a great asset.

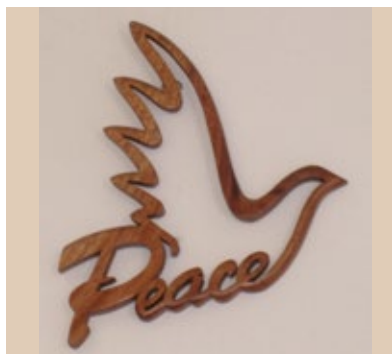
We wish Davorka God's blessing as she continues her life journey. We know we will continue to work together for a just world and for global solidarity, trusting in the way of nonviolence which we follow as disciples of Jesus. The bonds of friendship will remain.

### **Davorka Lovreković:**

At the end of this year I shall finish working for Church and Peace as General Secretary, in order to take on new tasks. I look back with gratitude at enriching encounters, joint projects, and a growing network. The vision of peace in Europe has become more real to me because I have been able to experience – and make my own contribution to – building spiritual and committed community across all sorts of borders and barriers.

Four years ago, when I was on my way to my interview with the Administrative Committee of Church and Peace, I noticed a poster on a pillar: "If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast." (Psalm 139:9-10). This promise of being carried has accompanied me through the four years with Church and Peace and enabled me to tackle our tasks with confidence.

I would like to thank everyone for all the good cooperation. I'm sure I will meet many members again in other contexts and I look forward to that because I will continue to take an active interest in the work of Church and Peace.



### **Events**

*30 March – 2 April 2017*

#### **Believers for Peace regional meeting in South East Europe**

"Re:Action – Believers for peace in times of nationalism and xenophobia"  
Omiš, Croatia (tentative)

*9-11 June 2017*

#### **Church and Peace Annual General Meeting and conference**

"Be not afraid" (working title)  
Strasbourg, Centre culturel St. Thomas

*7-10 June 2018*

#### **Church and Peace Annual General Meeting and international conference**

High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom

### **For more information:**

Church and Peace  
International Office



### **Web Resources**

#### *Keynote speeches and sermon*

Contributions by Dr Christine Schweitzer, Maria Biedrawa and Dr Neal Blough at the Church and Peace conference 2016 in Loisy are available at [www.church-and-peace.org](http://www.church-and-peace.org).

#### *Vacancy notice*

Coming in December: vacancy notice for the position of Church and Peace General Secretary.



# Peace is at the heart of the Gospel

## Evangelical Church in Germany consultation "How to become a just peace church"

What does it mean to become a church of peace with justice - a "just peace church"? How should the church in Germany and individual congregations be organised so that we can live out the call of the Gospel to nonviolence and reconciliation?

In order to address these questions, the peace secretary of the Evangelical (i.e. Protestant) Church in Germany (EKD), Renke Brahms, had put out a joint invitation together with Evangelical Action for Peace and the Protestant academies in Villigst and Berlin. Eighty-two participants came, including 20 ecumenical/international guests, several of whom were members of Church and Peace. Our European ecumenical network had been invited in advance of the conference to participate and share peace church experiences.

The consultation was seen as a milestone on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. In order to highlight this and to make clear the connection with dialogue and challenges throughout the ecumenical world, the moderator of the World Council of Churches Central Committee, Agnes Abuom, Kenya, was invited. One of her messages was that the churches in Germany cannot live a comfortable

life as long as sister churches in countries such as Congo are suffering because of conflict and exploitation.

Using various methods, the participants were brought together in different combinations to discuss various aspects of peace and violence. From time to time throughout the day spiritual impulses brought us to the wellsprings of our faith. So our discussions were not just a theoretical discourse along old dividing lines or about misleading epithets such as "pious" and "political". This was a great achievement of this meeting.

Coming to terms with the legacy of Apartheid in South Africa; (post)-conflict societies such as Sri Lanka, Croatia, Kosovo, and Ireland; partners from Belarus, Ukraine, South Korea, and from churches in Europe and the USA – the list of guests matched the topics of discussion. Special attention was given to examples of witness and theological reflection of churches and congregations in situations of violence and oppression. Guests described how their faith helped them through difficult political developments and enabled them to take action. When congregations and churches become communities which are able to develop the power to resist, they can contribute to de-escalation and reconciliation in times of crisis.

The difficult questions were not ignored. Can the churches continue to support the doctrine



*Agnes Abuom: "We are no longer discussing concepts and theories, but we are moving forward together, working for just peace through social change and renewal of the churches."*

of "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P), even though military intervention tends to create greater instability? What do we do about the fact that alternative instruments (civilian peacebuilding, etc.) are not being properly funded and developed? Should not the churches now, after all the theological reflection of recent years, come up with a clear denunciation of military action as a tool of foreign policy and increase our own efforts at peacemaking and peacebuilding? What role do congregations play in these deliberations? And how can the witness which is lived out at the local level be supported within a broader but clearly defined peace church context? The consultation was an important milestone on the way of justice and peace. There must and will be more such milestones.

**Davorka Lovrekević**

Agnes Abuom's lecture is available at: <http://bit.ly/2fTUING>



(centre, right) Panellists René August (South Africa) und Raghu Balachandran (Sri Lanka) with moderator Rolf Zwick

Belgium

***"Jihad of the heart"***

In her book, "En mosquées en églises", we join Isabelle Eliat-Serck on her walk, without any money, across France to Assisi in Italy, the city of Francis which is now a centre for inter-religious dialogue. Each evening Isabelle asks to be given hospitality. In towns and cities she knocks on the door of the mosque, seeking to be welcomed as a guest by Muslims. They encourage the Christian pilgrim to continue her journey, which one of them describes as a "jihad of the heart". The vulnerability which she has chosen and amazing encounters enable her to question social norms. It is a unique, extraordinary, gripping experience which Isabelle shares with us. Isabelle is a trainer with the Belgian organisation "Sortir de la violence" (Breaking away from violence), which is a member of Church and Peace. The book is available from the publisher at: <http://bit.ly/2fYSCm1>



Germany

***"Anyone who engages in service for peace, inevitably comes close to injustice and violence in the process."***

EIRENE, an international Christian peace and development agency based in Neuwied, Germany, which has been a member of Church and Peace since 1984, will celebrate 60 years since its foundation at its annual Whitsuntide gathering next year. There are also plans for a conference on "Peace Education and Training for International Solidarity" in the autumn. Together with partners in Latin America, the USA, and Europe, volunteers and experts are working around the world to create a culture of nonviolence and to promote social justice and the integrity of creation. Each year the volunteer programme places about 90 volunteers in other countries, where they work in social or ecological projects or take part in reconciliation work. Since 2015 international volunteers also come to work in Germany. The expert programme supports peace and sustainable development projects in Africa and Latin America, projects which are concerned, for example, with human rights, rural development, and peace education.



Photo: EIRENE

***World Day of Prayer for Creation website launched***

The Eastern Orthodox Churches proclaimed 1 September as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in 1989. Since then, many other Christian churches have taken up this initiative and the Day of Prayer has become a month-long "Season of Creation".

The "Season of Creation" website aims to make materials produced by various churches on this theme easy to find and readily available. Local churches can enter their events onto a map online. Recent church statements on creation can be found on the website. The website currently exists only in English. Volunteers are being sought who would be willing to help with translation into other languages. <http://seasonofcreation.org>

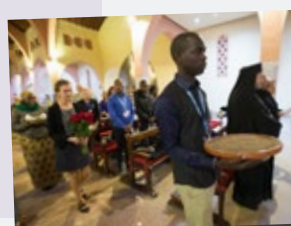


Photo: WCC



## the Network

## Germany

***Bread and Roses - A lived, political and Christian witness***

...since 1996! For 20 years, a group of people in Hamburg – inspired by Christian communities in the USA, especially the “Catholic Worker” communities – have been living together as the Brot und Rosen (Bread and Roses) community. They offer hospitality to refugees whom the state refuses to protect or provide for. The spiritual life of the community provides a basis of support which enables them to offer people temporary accommodation, accompaniment, and space to find new prospects, without bureaucracy getting in the way. Brot und Rosen is also politically active: campaigning for humane asylum laws, and combating the factors which drive people to flee by promoting social justice, nonviolence and care for God's creation. They have been a member of Church and Peace since 2007.

## Germany

***Sermon prize goes to Marie-Noëlle von der Recke***

Marie-Noëlle von der Recke, former general secretary of Church and Peace, was awarded this year's Menno Simons Sermon Prize by the Institute of Peace Church Theology at the University of Hamburg. In her sermon she reflects on the parable of the weeds (Matthew 13:24-30) in the context of current conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. The biblical text warns us against the temptation to use violence in an attempt to root out evil from the world and exhorts us not to make hasty judgements as to which people are “good” and which are “bad”. The text is available on the Church and Peace website in late 2016.



Photo: Matthias Barck

## Greece

***South Eastern Europe member attends CEC summer school***

Church and Peace Administrative Committee member Vjollca Racaj took part in the third Conference of European Churches (CEC) human rights summer school earlier this year in Thessaloniki, Greece. The summer school focused on women and children's rights, as participants discussed ways to promote gender equality and the dignity of all as children of God. Racaj shared about the work of her church, the Fellowship of the Lord's People in Pristina, Kosovo/a, which is a Church and Peace corporate member.



Photo: Margrit Krüger-Arnhold



*The Last Word*

# The moral and theological challenge of 'security'

*Where and how does the Church seek security?*

In a world torn apart by conflict, division, inequality and environmental destruction that might appear a selfish question. But it isn't. Rightly understood, it concerns how Christians receive and share life with their neighbours, not how they look for safety in the world.

The word 'security' means, in its most popular usage, "the state of being free from danger or threat". But in what does such freedom subsist? This is the question confronting followers of Christ as they are baptised into his Body.

The promise of baptism is not that we will gain access to privileged protection against harm, but that just as we are taken down into the waters of death, so we will be raised to new life.

Resurrection, not revenge or armed superiority, is God's answer

***"The biggest threat the Church faces is that it talks about resurrection but actually seeks its own security through privilege, possessions and the protection of corporate or state power"***

to death-dealing. To inhabit a community that teaches and enables us to believe that at the very core of our being is to begin to develop practices of security which are the polar opposite of what is enshrined in nuclear deterrence or in any other offer



Photo: Leon County Schools Office of Communications

*Schoolchildren celebrate  
World Peace Day*  
(<http://www.lcsnews.com/?m=201209>)

of 'peace' secured by the threat of killing.

The difficulty for Christians is that, in a world where war is promoted as a solution and the refusal to kill can be a threat to received order, the path to resurrection may be by way of the cross – the willingness, if necessary, to endure unjust death for what is right and for the sake of those who suffer, as Jesus did.

In this context, baptismal ritual – being taken physically down into the waters of death before being brought up again to inhale the breath of life – signals "getting our dying in first".

It is a subversive moment. It means that our outlook and decisions are no longer controlled by those who would wield the threat of death as a way of protecting their own monopoly on power. Instead they are liberated for the purposes of doing justice and making peace.

The biggest threat the Church faces is therefore not destruction by outside forces, but the

possibility that it is living a lie. That it talks about resurrection (the gift of life, which God's alone can bestow), but actually seeks its own security through privilege, possessions and the protection of corporate or state power.

Christ's way shows us that it is the power of love that will finally overcome false security rooted in the love of power. But what does this mean for those who daily suffer at the hands of forces that kill, torture, maim and starve? That is perhaps the biggest practical, moral and theological challenge facing the Church today.

***Simon Barrow***

*Simon is director of the UK-based Christian think-tank Ekklesia and was the keynote speaker at the Church and Peace Britain and Ireland regional day.*