



## **Church and Peace Newsletter Fall 2009**

Dear readers,

We are approaching the end of Church and Peace's anniversary year, in which we were able to look back over 60 years of peace witness and ecumenical dialogue. With the invitation to the International Conference from 11 to 14 June 2009, we expressed a basic conviction of Church and Peace: „Guide our feet into the way of peace“ - in saying this we emphasize that peace is not something we can possess or create. Peace is a gift of God who desires to lead us into his way. Peace arises from longterm struggle, prayer and action. Peace is the fruit of personal and communal transformation.”

This Newsletter is mostly about the conference at Bienenberg in Switzerland. That was an opportunity to recall the original idea, back in 1949, of founding the European network known today as 'Church and Peace'. It now has 50 group members and as many individual members in 12 European countries. It is a place of reflection, dialogue and a catalyst for common projects. The 60th anniversary was celebrated with members and friends from all over Europe. It was an intensive time of encounter and renewal, of sharing experiences and common worship. There was room for both looking back and looking to the future of peace-building. We would like to give space here to old friends - volunteers and committee members - and report on the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

With every good wish on the path of peace,

*Marie-Noëlle von der Recke*

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## General Assembly 2009 of Church and Peace: Election of a new Administrative Committee and Welcome to new members

The new chairwoman is Antje Heider-Rottwilm, protestant pastor from Hamburg. She has belonged to the Laurentiuskonvent for 30 years now, and has been director of the Europe Department of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). She is leading now the project „Brücke – Ecumenical Forum of HafenCity“ which is supported by 18 Christian churches in Hamburg.

Re-elected are: Bruno Sägesser, Swiss Mennonite, as vice-chairman, Brian Tracy, Quaker and Brigitte Mesdag, catholic, member of Arche Community of Lanza del Vasto, France. The new members in the Administrative Committee are: Elisabeth Freise, individual member of Church and Peace, Catholic, working as Southeastern Europe volunteers program director at the international Christian Peace Service Agency EIRENE; Janna Postma, Mennonite pastor in the Netherlands active in the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR); Branka Srnc, a Baptist from Serbia, has been working since 1992 for Tabita, a humanitarian organization in Novi Sad; Hans Häselbarth, member of IFOR and former pastoral and spiritual director for the Gemeinschaft Christusbruderschaft Selbitz; Ian Ring, reformed pastor from England, member of the Community for Reconciliation.

Last year, Bread of Life from Belgrade, Serbia had already been welcomed as new member, Its representatives could share their work personally. Other groups and individual members have joined the network:

Tabita, a humanitarian organization from Novi Sad, Serbia is working with the victims of the war since 1991 and especially with the minorities in former Yugoslavia ; Ana and Otto Raffai from Croatia, partners of Ecumenical Service (OeD) who organize trainings for peace and conflict transformation in all of Southeast Europe; Brigitte Wedderburn, Member of the reformed Church in Munich with long lasting contacts to Church and Peace; Harry Schram, member of a Mennonite Church in Baarn, Netherlands and chair of Eirene International and Terri Miller, Mennonite, former staff member of Church and Peace.



*Ana and Otto Raffai announce their candidacy for Church and Peace membership*

All the new members are an enrichment and enlargement to the network which now goes beyond the borders of the European Union and symbolizes more and more the confessional diversity of peacemakers.

## Declaration by Church and Peace on the Concept of Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

Church and Peace, the European network of Peace Churches, has considered at various meetings (1) the Concept of R2P as well as the position of the World Council of Churches at Porto Alegre in 2006 in respect of R2P. We submit the following reflections to the World Council of Churches:



*meeting of the Drafting group of the Church and Peace Declaration  
on the Responsibility to Protect*

**1.** Our peace is in Jesus Christ. "Jesus met his own violent death with nonviolence, and his way remains the model for Christians to follow in overcoming violence."(2) The call to be his disciples means putting his nonviolence into practice. He is the heart of the Church. His nonviolence brings about the Kingdom of God where peace and justice reign. Rooted in this vision, all Churches are called to walk the path of nonviolence which

Jesus defined in the Sermon on the Mount and which he put into practice.

**2.** Church and Peace understands the need to stand alongside people whose lives are threatened and who call for security and protection.

**3.** Church and Peace appreciates that the United Nations' Organization and some regional organizations are seeking to accomplish these tasks by taking measures which pre-empt the causes of conflicts as well as assisting in the reconstruction and reconciliation process after violent conflicts have ceased.

**4.** Based on our understanding of Christian discipleship and peace making, we oppose that section of the Concept which allows the use of military force to ensure the protection of threatened peoples. Even if military force is held only

(1) At the General Assembly at Barchem in May 2008, at the anglophone regional meeting in Ammerdown in July 2008 and at the German-language regional meeting in Thomashof in November 2008.

(2) From the WCC's Initial Statement on Just Peace, par. 56

in reserve for use as a measure of last resort, this influences the planning of civil action during the earlier phases of conflict by consuming a disproportionately high share of the resources available for aiding civilians. Also its availability strengthens the traditional attitude that military force is the inevitable answer.

**5.** We maintain our rejection of using violent means to attempt to create good outcomes, even when under the guise of policing. In conflicts referred to under R2P, the use of military weapons is assumed and these weapons would kill and wound without distinguishing between those people involved in the violence or those not, and their use has nothing in common with procedures governing police interventions under national law.

**6.** Even in situations where no solution seems possible and where violence is so endemic that a call to counter it with further violence rises amongst victims and within us too, we persist in recommending the use of non-violent means towards every human being, means which we as disciples of Christ have in abundance. We plead for strengthened commitment of OSCE missions (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) as well as substantial support for nonviolent intervention organized by the state as well as by churches, inspired by the models of Alternative Service for Peace, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel and Peace Brigades International. Violence in any form can never serve to bring about lasting peace with justice. Only the path of loving one's neighbour and loving one's enemy holds any promise. We invite all churches to resist together with us the temptation of justifying the use of deadly weapons even as a last resort.



*, DOV coordinator Hansuli Gerber,  
welcomes the Church and Peace declaration  
on the Responsibility to Protect*



**One of the highlights of the International Conference at Bienenberg has been the lecture of Maria Biedrawa: „Discipleship, Community and Nonviolence“.**

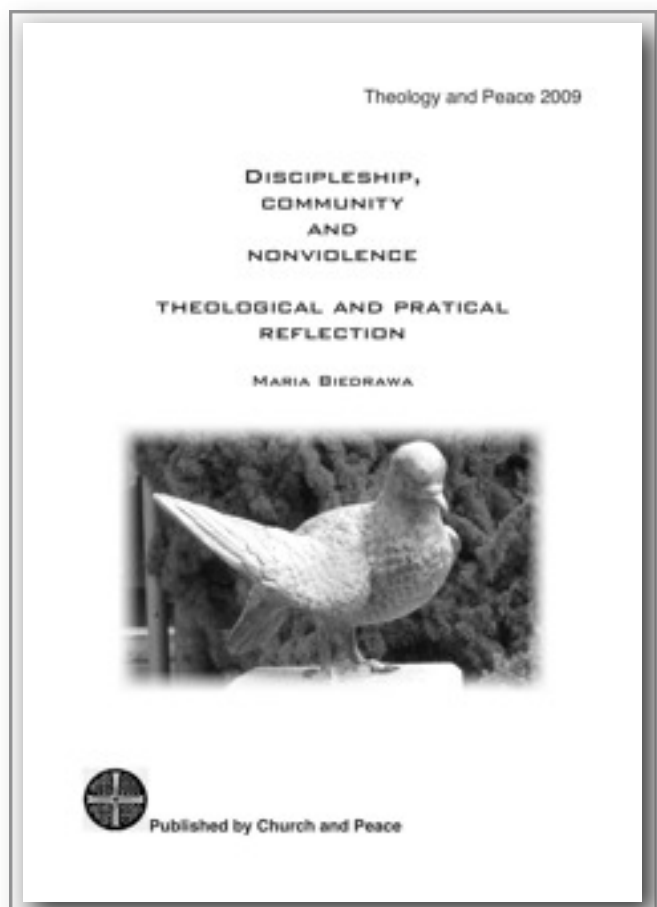
In her lecture, Maria Biedrawa demonstrates that nonviolence is the very expression of discipleship, of walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ: an engaged commitment in the midst of societal conflict that is inseparably linked to a supportive community. Based on Scripture and on her own experiences alongside nonviolent Christian movements, especially in Africa, Maria Biedrawa invites us to grasp the full extent of committed faith, at once deeply spiritual and resolutely political. Her purpose extends beyond academic discussion and lays the foundation for prac-



*Maria Biedrawa*

tised nonviolence here and now. This nonviolence is based on a comprehensive vision of partnership with victims of violence and its relevance is not measured in the conventional terms of effectiveness.

The brochure (32 pages, A5) with this inspiring lecture is available from the International Office at a price of 4,- €, 3,50 £ or 6 \$ additional postage. (The German or French version can be ordered as well.)



The international conference at the Bienenberg was an opportunity to recall the story of Church and Peace. Terri Miller worked on a timeline of the most important steps.

**1949 - 1968   Origins – Historic Peace Churches  
European Continuation Committee: response to the  
catastrophe of WWII**

**1948** – Founding of the World Council of Churches (WCC) with the assertion “War is contrary to the will of God.”

The North American Historic Peace Church (HPC) Continuation Committee requests that a similar committee be formed in Europe in order to develop a European peace church community and engage the mainline churches in theological discussions on war and peace.

**22 February, 5-7 May, 2-4 August 1949** - At the invitation of Dr. M. Robert Zigler, Church of the Brethren, the first meetings are taking place in Geneva, Présinge Abbey and Heerewegen. British Quakers and European members of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) join the Mennonites and Church of the Brethren. The movement, later to be named “Church and Peace” is born.

**1953** The Continuation Committee issues the statement “Peace is the will of God.”

**15-19 August 1955** - “The Lordship of Christ over Church and State” (Puidoux I)

The European HPC Continuation Committee co-organizes this first in a series of theological dialogues that will come to be known as the “Puidoux Conferences”. Professors from mainline churches join peace church scholars for debate on the interdependence between ecclesiology and peace ethics.



*One of the first Puidoux conferences*

**1957** - French IFOR members André and Magda Trocmé and WCC general secretary Visser 't Hooft call for nonviolent Christian peace witness in light of the war in Algeria.

**12 August 1957** – Eirene, International Christian Peace Service, is founded as a mean to give peace theology a practical expression in solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed.

**2-7 August 1960**, Bièvres, France – Theologians from Eastern Europe join the Puidoux reflections for the first time. Peace church critique of the symbiosis between church and state resonates with those from churches in communist regimes.

**July 1965** – Fundamental tensions emerge during the Puidoux conferences: support for military intervention as a last resort vs. a categorical refusal of violence; commitment to nonviolence as an individual vs. as a community or a church. Further reflection is entrusted to a smaller study commission.

### **1968 - 1975 Eirene Studies and Liaison - What does a peace church look like?**

**1968** - The European HPC Continuation Committee becomes Eirene Studies and Liaison. Continued study and dialogue emphasize the interconnection between peace theology and nonviolent witness for peace. A key question: what form does a church take that lives as a peace church?

**1969**, Bienenberg, Switzerland – On the heels of global student unrest, Eirene Studies and Liaison organizes a European youth conference. Participants explore “third way” alternatives to resignation or violent revolution in the face of societal inequities. Clear is that “church” must be a tangible expression of community in prayer and action.



*John Howard Yoder*

**1973** – Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder identifies intentional communities and similar groups within the main-line churches as partners for renewed peace church dialogue in Europe.

## 1975-1983 "Church and Peace" - Finding expressions of peace church



*prayers at the Arche community of Lanza del Vasto*

**June 1975**, Malteserhof near Bonn, Germany – Meetings at the Eirene Studies and Liaison office result in a blueprint for networking between HPCs, IFOR and peace church-minded groups within the mainline churches. Church and Peace begins assuming its current form

**1976** - The former Eirene Studies and Liaison secretariat becomes the Church and Peace liaison office. It aims to continue theological reflection and dialogue with mainstream churches, and to develop forms of peace church witness.

Wilfried Warneck, co-founder of the Laurentiuskonvent is appointed Church and Peace coordinator. He and his wife Ruth embark on visits to potential peace church-minded groups and communities.

**17-20 February 1977** – The first Church and Peace international conference takes place in Bendorf, Germany. The diverse group of participants - tensions notwithstanding - recognizes their commonality and their need to experience the other's way of being peace church.

**29 June 1978** - Church and Peace is founded as an association of "Christians, churches and Christian communities working among churches for the diffusion and realization of the conviction that the peace testimony belongs to the characteristic of the Church of Jesus Christ."

**August 1978** – A seed is planted for the later realization of the Cells of Hope project. The aim is to send teams from member communities to ensure a presence of prayer, nonviolent action and hospitality in areas where peace is threatened.

**15 December 1980** - Nobel Peace Prize laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel inaugurates the Plowshares Fund in Alkmaar, Netherlands. The Fund is to offer individuals and churches "the opportunity to convert energy and resources, which up to this time have been geared towards warfare, into instruments of active peacemaking."



## 1983-1990- Peace Church and the Conciliar Process

**1983** – Resolutions from the Sixth WCC Assembly in Vancouver initiate the Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC)

**June 1985** – At the German Protestant Church Congress in Düsseldorf, Church and Peace argues for the creation of a worldwide peace council. For Church and Peace, justice is linked to dismantling structural violence. The church is to transform unjust systems and offer healing for wounds caused by injustice by following the path Jesus modeled of diakonia, or service.

**18-22 June 1986**, Braunfels, Germany – The First European Peace Church Assembly is a living embodiment of a Eucharistic peace community. The gathering emphasizes yet again the centrality of active nonviolence and hints at East-West connections that will shape the network in the future. A Network of Fasting and Prayers is created.

**15-17 April 1988** – The Church and Peace Annual General Meeting in Heverlee, Belgium, identifies the development of a “peace diaconate” as a priority for the network.

**6-12 August 1988** – Together with IFOR, Pax Christi International and the Franciscan European Working Groups for JPIC, Church and Peace organizes the European Ecumenical Dialogue for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in Assisi, Italy. Contacts intensify with Catholic and pre-Reformation groups such as the Franciscans and Waldensians.



*Peace Church assembly Braunfels 1986*

**15-21 May 1989** – First European Ecumenical Assembly, Basel. A message drafted at the April 1989 Church and Peace members meeting forms the basis for a peace church minority vote that garners widespread support among Assembly delegates. Church and Peace organizes a Peace House during the Assembly.

**March 1990** - Church and Peace initiates a daily peace church discussion group during the World Convocation on JPIC in Seoul, South Korea. The consultation's final document speaks of a common obligation to practice gospel-based "active and life-giving nonviolence" to bring about justice and liberation, and calls for the development of a worldwide justice and peace diaconate.

**1990s** - The effort to maintain contacts and implement projects at local and regional levels results in the semi-regionalization of the Church and Peace network.

**Autumn 1990** - Regional office opens in Strasbourg, France

**12-14 October 1990** - First international conference in Eastern Europe held in Leipzig, Germany. Contacts are made with the Hungarian Bokor Movement.

**March 1992** - Church and Peace is involved in the founding of 'Oekumenischer Dienst im Konziliaren Prozeß' (Ecumenical Services), providing training and accompaniment for "shalom deacons."

**December 1992** - The Liaison Centre for Ecumenical Services for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation opens in Geneva. Brainchild of the 1988 Assisi meeting co-organizers, the Centre informs about voluntary service options, and maintains a directory of church-related voluntary service agencies worldwide.

**27-30 April 1995** - A Eastern Europe seminar and the international conference in Pécel, Hungary, reflect increasing connections to East and South-east Europe. Representatives of the WCC's recently launched „Program to Overcome Violence" attend the gathering.

**1997** - Regional office opens in Székesfehérvár, Hungary.

**14-16 March 1997** - The European Peace Church Consultation in Wetzlar, Germany, formulates a peace church memorandum for delegates at the upcoming European ecumenical assembly.

**23-29 June 1997** - Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, Austria. Church and Peace organizes a Peace House together with IFOR and Pax Christi International.

**30 June - 4 July 1997** - Assembly of the Conference of European Churches (CEC). Church and Peace joins CEC as an associate organization.

**28-30 May 1999** - Church and Peace's 50th anniversary celebration during NATO bombings in Serbia and Montenegro and adjacent territories. In the Bienenberg Declaration, participants commit themselves as peace churches to "costly ecumenism" that both loves the enemy and stands by those in danger.

## 2000 - ... European Peace Church Witness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**24-29 April 2001** -- A Balkans seminar held prior to the international conference in Elspeet, Netherlands, is an indication of the emerging network in Southeast Europe.

**1-4 May 2003** – The first Church and Peace international conference in Southeast Europe takes place at the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Osijek, Croatia.

**28 April – 1 May 2005** – Participants at a Southeast Europe meeting held in conjunction with the international conference in Selbitz, Germany, decide to plan a regional conference in the area.



*Bruno Bauchet, chair from 2000 to 2006.*

**20-24 September 2006** – Church and Peace is co-organizer of the first regional inter-religious conference to be held in Southeast Europe, on the island of Krk, Croatia.

**13-17 June 2007** – Church and Peace meets for the first time in Northern Ireland, hosted by the Corrymeela Community. The message from the conference emphasizes the peace church's commitment to building true security by unarmed vulnerability and working towards creating justice locally, nationally and internationally.

**4-8 September 2007** – Church and Peace issues a joint message with the Assisi coalition and organizes a hearing on the topic of true security during the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Rumania.

**2008-2009** – Two regional conferences and two annual general meetings debate the concept of "Responsibility to Protect (R2P)" and the statement of WCC. A declaration of the General Meeting 2009 is submitted to WCC (see page 3). An international theological working group is finalizing a reaction of Church and Peace to the 1st draft "Glory to God and peace on earth" of the DOV in view of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation to be held in 2011.

**Over the decades more and more groups joined the Church and Peace network. The Grandchamp community is one of them.**

"Church and Peace is part of the Community", a sister once said. How true that is!

When Wilfried Warneck came to Grandchamp in autumn 1977 to talk to us about Church and Peace, he could not have found a better moment. Three months later we were voting to hold our first Council on "the violence of the peaceful" and the spirit of the Beatitudes. We were in the process of fully discovering the active non-violence of the Gospel, as it was about that time that



*1999 the Grandchamp sisters lead prayers at  
the international conference at the Bienenberg 1999*

we were deeply challenged by the message of General de Bollardi re and, above all, of Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr. Here was a way of going further in our relationships in the community, and refining our calling to be agents of reconciliation

in the places of brokenness where we were present, both in Algeria and Israel. In order to prepare for this Council, we studied two books by John Yoder and read Thomas Merton during meals.

Wilfried became a pilgrim to seek allies in his aim to help the mainline churches build on the links with Peace Churches that had begun at Puidoux. He was convinced that communities were particularly good at doing that, in view of their common life based on prayer. He surprised us and won us to his cause by declaring to Sister Minke that our community was a peace community! "Yes, that is what we want to become," she responded. How could we have hesitated to accept his invitation to participate?

Thus, from the start we have accompanied those who went ahead to form Church and Peace. One of our sisters was a member of the first steering committee. At the time, we were visited by many people involved in civic movements and for non-violence. But the visit by Professor Yoder had a particularly strong impact. He spoke to us of the great outreach of Mennonites in the world, which was new to many of the sisters. Then he suggested that we



start an exchange between Elkhart, a Mennonite theology seminar in the USA, and Grandchamp. So two sisters followed courses for a semester and two young Mennonite women lived with us in Grandchamp. They were very interested in our liturgical and community life. In the same period. Sister Vreni was in London and found her place of worship in the Mennonite Centre. There she wove bonds of friendship with Alan and Eleanor Kreider, which remain to this day.

During the following generations, many sisters benefited from the teaching they received at Elkhart. Thanks to the reports from sisters who were also able to participate more actively in the annual meetings of Church and Peace, the Community was able to explore questions concerning peace in the Bible and its implications for the present. With several different movements, we are all tied up in the same web of seeking peace, justice and the integrity of creation. Prayer and celebration with Christians from other churches and cultures is a source of strength. Through Church & Peace, we have been able to broaden our horizon towards the English-speaking countries, and towards the North and the East. It does us good to know that we are on the same path in the Gospel, each according to his or her own special gifts. Our contribution as a community is more to sustain and hold up in prayer those involved in active service, offering them a place of refreshment in prayer and silence. Hildegard Goss-Mayr always tells contemplatives: "Pray - and do all you can to keep up to date."

How many sisters have been marked by landmark conferences through the years! The one in Leipzig just after the fall of the Berlin Wall, or the one in Croatia (2003). Thanks to Church & Peace we have been able to participate in the major events of Basel (1989) and Graz (1997) and, as delegates of the member communities of Church and Peace, the pilgrimage of the peace movements to Jerusalem, with Hildegard Goss-Mayr in the middle of the second Intifada.

Several of us attended the first European meeting of peace churches in Braunfels in 1986, one year after we joined Church and Peace. Sr Minke gave a message entitled: How can we become a peace Community? Indeed, are we not always in the process of doing so? It is even a principle of life.

In the same period, we discovered how much violence we still bear in ourselves – almost without knowing – due to wounds and traumata from our personal and collective history. And that was thanks to the retreat session on the spirituality of non-violence, first with Larry Miller, then with Joseph Pyronnet, aided for a time by Simone Pacot, who inspired the Bethesda sessions that still take place at Grandchamp and elsewhere. We need a path towards inward reconciliation, a truly profound evangelization, in order to become peacemakers. We were thus enabled to talk about our past – first as sisters from Germany, France and the Netherlands – and then also among sisters from Switzerland, elsewhere in Europe, and Indonesia and the Congo. Then we were able to place all that might weigh on our relations at the foot of the cross.

Our calling is to pray and work for reconciliation, and Christian unity. It has been deepened to include the quest for reconciliation, unity and peace in our innermost hearts, extending this quest to include the peoples, cultures, colonizing and colonized countries, rich and poor. Belonging to the Church and Peace network remains important for the community even if there are fewer opportunities for us to participate more actively in its meetings and events than before. Today we feel a sense of great gratitude for all the ground we have covered together, and for the next gathering at Bienenberg, where we will celebrate together 60 years of an adventure in faith!

**During the 60th anniversary celebration of Church and Peace, members of the network, former members of the administrative committee and former members of the international office team had the opportunity to participate in spontaneous interviews. A video interview with Wilfried Warneck was presented in which he underlined the thrust of the Church and Peace vision since 1949. In the following pages we print some of the contributions by former Team and Administrative Committee members.**



*Vic Thiessen and Marie-Noëlle von der Recke interview former team members and former members of the Administrative committee*

## Ruth and Wilfried Warneck

Ruth and I are extremely sorry not to be able to attend the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Church and Peace at Bienenberg this year. I (Wilfried) have Parkinson's disease and a stroke condition. So from a distance we wish you all a gathering guided by God's good Spirit, the willingness to listen to and learn from one another, and ever new joy that God has chosen us to be ambassadors of his peace.



*Wilfried Warneck*

We like to remember the Bienenberg Conference ten years ago. We were particularly impressed by the "Bienenberg Declaration" that emerged under the impact of the war in Ex-Yugoslavia and described the five features of a peace community. These memo-

orable features of the peace community of Jesus Christ seem to us a useful aid to ecumenical exchange. The final paragraph of the Bienenberg Declaration stated: „We seek to be a social expression of God's new world, alternative societies in whose climate justice, peace, mercy and truth will flourish We invite others to share this vision with us and to discover its reality in their own congregations and communities“. This eschatological goal seems to us to be missing in many confessional texts. Instead of prophetic promise they often just contain the exhortation to make a moral effort.

Something else needing to be underlined is that the call of Jesus to discipleship is a call to a committed common life in a congregation or community. The Peace Church ethic is also a statement about the structure of the group in which it can be realized.

We are convinced that Church and Peace has the mission to continue working in this direction. And here it will be equally important to accompany the member communities and to assess the experience they have gained in the past.



*Ruth Warneck*

## Hansuli Gerber

„Church and Peace“ is the place where I discovered ecumenism, not only as a conviction, and not as an organizational setup, but as a spiritual and communal movement.

On a warm day in 1984 I was setting up my office as pastor of the Mennonite congregation in Bern, after having returned from seminary in the USA. I received a letter from Church and Peace, asking whether I wanted to join the board of Church and Peace. Two things were important to me as I said yes: increasing the witness and commitment to peace among Mennonites in Switzerland and expanding the ecumenical horizon, knowing that there were incredible treasures out there...

Joining Church and Peace meant discovering ecumenical encounter, spirituality and engagement. It was exciting, demanding, and fun. Seminary had made me realize that my own Mennonite Church did not teach the theological significance and the priority of peace and nonviolence. Church and Peace was the space to learn, experience and practice this. We grappled with



*Dutch „choir“ at the Saturday night party at the Bienenberg conference*

issues related to the conciliar process on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC). But Church and Peace was more: it was a reflection, an embodiment of the peace church movement, and while inviting other Churches to join the journey, peace churches and peace communities were discovering each other, which greatly contributed to the enthusiasm and sense of celebration and hope. I recall with gratitude the prayer and worship services, and also the Saturday night parties, with circle dance, games, and a lot of laughter.

Church and Peace was a network in expansion. One particular memory is a trip to the Netherlands with Church and Peace volunteers, to visit friends and members. Many hours in the car, weaving the network in our minds, meeting with veterans in peace work, skeptical pastors, busy church bureaucrats and many curious and interested people was a fabulous privilege.

Church and Peace began as a movement. The early church began as a movement. The ecumenical family began as a movement. What has been left of the movement character in each of these? At the 50th Anniversary of Church and Peace I pointed to the trajectory of human institutions described



by some as Movement - Machine - Monument. Meanwhile the trajectory is expanded to Moment - Movement - Machine - Monument - Mausoleum or Memory. I am convinced that the movement of nonviolence and peace does remain a movement, as long as nonviolence is not mainstreamed and peace not yet established. The question is whether the inevitable machine part of Church and Peace (which has never been big enough to become a monument, but significant enough to become memory) is able to keep in tune with a movement that is universal and incredibly challenging at the same time. Times and contexts change. Instruments are born out of specific contexts at given times. As these change, instruments may become obsolete, unless they have the creativity, strength and courage to change.

I think that the end of the Cold War and the Internet have made institutions of the post-WWII era not obsolete, but fragile and often in competition with each other and with other initiatives. They were not in the first place equipped to do what is required today, nor to do it in ways required today. Add to that the crisis of the institutional Church in Europe. Many have already placed the institutional church on the mausoleum spot. Church and Peace is an association of people convinced that peace and nonviolence are the way and that we need to be on that way together. The movement of nonviolence and peace makes its way, sometimes a little because of us, sometimes independent of us, and sometimes in spite of us.

Glory to God and Peace on Earth!

### **André Gingerich**

I worked in the Church and Peace office for three years from 1984 to 1987 as a Mennonite Central Committee volunteer. It was a very formative experience. I had just graduated from college and was young, far from home, sorting out questions of faith and identity, and fully of ideas, idealism and energy. As I look back, I am thankful for the hospitality, patience and graciousness with which I was welcomed and received into the Church and Peace office, the Laufdorf community and the broader network.

It was a privilege to work closely with Wilfried Warneck for these years. His wide-ranging experiences and relationships were a wonderful and fascinating source of insights and stories about the witness and call of the church to be peace church. He helped me see gifts and strengths in my own Mennonite tradition that I had either taken for granted or never noticed – as well as some of the challenges. He also helped me see and value how God's renewing Spirit has been and continues to be at work in many traditions and many places. I discovered how mutually beneficial and fruitful it can be for the "geriatric" peace churches and new, young peace communities to be in relationship with each other.

I remember sitting in on a conversation Wilfried was having with a prospective staff member. After some time of getting acquainted, Wilfried asked about this person's commitment to Jesus' way of peace. The next question was: Do you love the church? This question has remained with me. It captures a tension many of us, no doubt, feel. On the one hand a yearning for the church to more faithfully follow Jesus' way of peace and solidarity with the poor, on the other hand a profound sense that it is especially in those communities of people gathered around the cross of Jesus, as imperfect as we



*André and Cathy Gingerich Stoner  
with their children Toby, Miriam, Matthew and Martin*

are, that God breaks into history in decisive ways. At times deep disappointment and impatience with the church, but also a deep gratitude for the witness of the church, which is the body of Christ. I quoted Wilfried's question at my ordination service, and it is part of what has inspired me to continue pastoring in a local congregation for more than fifteen years.

I treasure the opportunities I had to visit numerous communities in the Church and Peace network and to develop friendships in the network. I think of a week at Wulfshagenerhütten, a life changing foot washing experience during Holy Week at Imshausen, a remarkable few days organized by the Fellowship of Reconciliation before the "Wende" with Christians in the peace movement in East Germany, visits in Bammental and participating in DMFK meetings, an Anglican Peace Fellowship meeting and gatherings of the Initiative Shalom, retreats at Grandchamp, the chance to meet and hear Hildegard Goss-Mayr, an Eirene gathering in the Hunsrück, and many other encounters. Annual meetings and large gatherings in Braunfels and Assisi were remarkable opportunities for meeting incredible people and learning about the rich variety of peace church life. Friendships with other volunteers have continued as well.

My years in the Church and Peace office led directly to spending another three-and-a-half years in the Church and Peace network, living in an ecumenical peace community in the Hunsrück relating to US military personnel.

It also strengthened my interest in pursuing theological studies at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. During my work as Pastor of Missions at Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend, Indiana, I often have drawn on experiences from my time in the Church and Peace network. But the experience at Church and Peace has been especially significant and valuable for me since I began in a new part-time position as Director of Interchurch Relations for Mennonite Church USA four years ago.

I am deeply grateful for those who have given of themselves through Church and Peace and for all the communities and fellowships who continue to seek to live as peace churches and to invite the broader church to live into this calling.

### **Sharon Erickson Nepstad**

I vividly remember my first visit to the Church and Peace office in the spring of 1987. I had been in West Germany for nearly a year with the Intermenno Trainee program and I was planning to return to the U.S. in several weeks. But through a series of serendipitous events, I met the Mennonite Central Committee director for Europe, who encouraged me to consider the position at Church and Peace. He bought me a train ticket and sent me off to meet with Wilfried Warneck and Marie-Noëlle von der Recke. Afterwards, I got back on the train with a queasy feeling in my stomach. My mind was oriented to returning to the U.S., but I knew I was going to join the Church and Peace staff. I wasn't

sure at that point if I wanted to – since a three-year commitment seemed like a very long time to me as a young 22 year old – but I had a very clear sense that this was the right thing to do. My instinct was right.

I worked with Church and Peace from 1987 to 1990. What a phenomenal time that was! The peace movement had grown in response to the expanding arms race and I had the tremendous privilege of visiting Church and Peace communities throughout Europe who were committed to addressing these issues nonviolently. From British Quakers to Italian Franciscans, I had never been exposed to such a rich, diverse, and engaged set of religious traditions. Then, in the fall of 1989, we witnessed the remarkable transformation of the German Democratic Republic. When the Berlin wall came down, I knew that I



*Shari Erickson with her daughters*

needed to learn more about nonviolence. So, as my term of service came to a close, I applied to graduate school in order to study the dynamics of protest and the role that religion can play in social change.

This commitment to learning about religion and nonviolent social movements has become my life's work. After completing my Ph.D. in sociology, I created a Peace and Justice Studies program at Regis University in Denver. Since then, I have taught at Duquesne University's Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies program and served as director of Religious Studies at the University of Southern Maine. This year I am a Visiting Scholar at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at Notre Dame University, while my permanent position is Professor of Sociology and Director of Religious Studies at the University of New Mexico. I have written two books: *Convictions of the Soul: Religion, Culture, and Agency in the U.S.-Central America Solidarity Movement* (2004, Oxford University Press) and *Religion and War Resistance in the Plowshares Movement* (2008, Cambridge University Press). In my scholarship, I hope to not only document important movements, but shed light on the ways that committed citizens can constrain militarism and forge peace.

My commitment to peacemaking has grown more ardent since I adopted two girls, Linnea and Malaya, from Central America. My children's Salvadoran and Guatemalan heritage is a reminder of the devastation that war has brought to so many nations and peoples. It is my hope that my daughters and all children can grow up in a world where humankind rejects war as a method of dealing with conflict. I'm grateful for all that Church and Peace does to achieve that goal and I am especially thankful that I had an opportunity to be part of this organization.

### **Doris Reymond-Ziegler**

I discovered Church and Peace when trying to find a place to improve my German. When I received the documents on Church and Peace, I thought that it was an evangelical sect that would end up putting me off Christianity for ever! But when I went along to present myself at Laufdorf, I had the shock of my life. Everything Wilfried Warneck and Marie-Noëlle von der Recke said to me was amazing and turned me upside down. These were the committed, consistent Christians, turned towards the world, that I had despaired of ever meeting. The non-violence of the Gospel immediately made sense to me. I wanted to stay and learn more and get involved in this fantastic network.

In September 1987 I spent a month in the Wulfshagenerhütten community. This community is very radical in its choices, in its trust in God, even regarding practical aspects of life. It astounded me, shook me up and I was afraid that my vocation might be to stay right there, in the most northerly part of the north! But I returned to Laufdorf and started my office work, doing translations, answering correspondence, helping to organize conferences, coached by Marie-Noëlle, who had to teach me everything, even French spelling!



Finally, I stayed in Laufdorf for three years that were unbelievably rewarding thanks to the team there at the time and the members of the Laurentiuskonvent. I travelled more than I ever had before, amazed to discover Anabaptists, Quakers, Brethren and the different communities that are part of the network... There in Germany I discovered IFOR; I re-



*Doris Reymond-Ziegler and Jean-Jacques Widmer,  
former French-speaking volunteers*

learned to pray in German; in Germany I realized that I understood women talking about theology better than male theologians, and that there should be more woman theologians and that – one of them could be me!

Thanks to Dorothee Reutenauer (a member of IFOR France), who lent me an apartment, I was able to study theology in Strasbourg while continuing to work for Church and Peace. It was there that I met my husband; we then left for the area around Montbéliard. I worked there for a while as a Bible study leader then I gave that up: raising two children who were bundles of energy (we had waited for them for two years and they came from the other end of the world, so they had to take up a lot of room in our lives) with both parents working as pastors, that was very risky for the balance in our family.

Since 2005 I have been working at the social and cultural centre of Lure. My son often tells me that I do a job that does not exist! It is aimed at providing a social link for lonely people and those of foreign origin, with social, family or personal difficulties. It is a sort of lay chaplain's work. I meet people that I never met when working for the church: people living on unemployment benefit, undocumented migrants, recent or long-time immigrants, Muslims... I am part of an interfaith dialogue group – and am learning to be a story-teller and to write stories inspired by the Bible. I try to live out the non-violence of the Gospel, in the daily routine of my work, my family, my parish, my town.

Thank you to Church and Peace for the immense opening that it brought me through its ecumenical and international dimension. Thank you for its way of drawing from the Bible and theology not just theories or dogmas but practical commitments, a way of life, a demand for one's choices in daily life, and strength to struggle against injustices. All that sustains me in my life and everyday choices.

## Christian Hohmann

Every so often, I think back to the 50th anniversary of the Church and Peace movement. Two moments haunt me, in particular: the discussion with Christians from Belgrade in the shadow of the war in Kosovo and in Serbia and the moving communion service at the end of the Bienenberg symposium. I would like to report on some experiences from the last few years, illustrating how the time I was privileged to spend working for Church and Peace has accompanied me as a source of encouragement in my ministry:

In summer 2000 I took on the special ministry of Ecumenism and Adult Education in the Koblenz church district. This was a place where people had protested against NATO's intervention in 1999. Now they were looking for a project to build bridges between the people in Serbia and in Germany. Remembering the Bienenberg encounters with Jasmina Tosic from Bread of Life, I suggested that the church district make contact with this organization. Three of us visited Bread of Life at the end of September 2001. It was my first opportunity to visit people in Serbia.

The destruction caused by the NATO attacks was still visible. But I sensed that many people still had particularly deep and painful memories of the wounds caused by the crimes committed by Germans against Serbians during World War II. During my visit I had the feeling that Serbia was isolated in Europe and also sometimes isolating itself. By contrast, Bread of Life tries to open a window to the outside world and to be a place where people of different origins can meet, share their life stories and place them in God's hand. People who had had to flee had found a new home and were now helping others who had lost their homes and become refugees. These are today the Roma and Sinti people, in particular, who have to live, or rather vegetate, on the margins of Serbian society.



*Christian Hohmann with his wife Elsie Joy*

Later there was a return visit, when young Christians – mostly kindergarten teachers - came to see us in Koblenz. Today contacts with Belgrade are kept up by a small group of people in Koblenz, but this with a deeper and growing sense of awareness. There are regular visits between Koblenz and Belgrade and the support for one another is sensed to be mutual.

Other headlines – above all since 11 September 2001 – have caused the memories of the war and genocide in former Yugoslavia and the NATO war to gradually fade in public awareness. But the post-11.9.01 period also saw the question of Church and Peace's witness for peace become extremely relevant. There was a deepening of existing contacts between a number of German members of Church and Peace and the Evangelical Church in the Rheinland. The Peace Church witness is taken very seriously by the church leaders – particularly after the experience of the NATO engagement against Serbia.

However, it seems to me that Peace Church witness and a corresponding – also spiritual – life practice within the structures of a nationally constituted church is often not so clear and is much more difficult to implement than it often seems to be in communities, ecumenical networks or Historical Peace Churches. The decisive question arising for all of us, independently of our church context, is to what extent do we mirror the Gospel, or do we just mirror our society?

This question also emerges for me from discussion about ecumenical relations: the way we worshipped together at the close of our symposium at Bienenberg will always remain in my mind. We were there as Christians from different churches, communities and countries, very close together, and did not have to argue about liturgical details. God's spirit allowed us all to have such a sense of intense fellowship with Christ present in bread and wine that the question of denominational and liturgical convention receded into the background. That was an unforgettable experience. Also the pain at the war and the suffering of people in the *whole* of former Yugoslavia was shared, in the certainty that God gives us power to achieve reconciliation and allows us to hope for God's shalom.

Since summer 2004 I have been working in the Evangelical Church of Westphalia as a pastor for mission, ecumenism and church responsibility for the world. I sometimes hesitate to introduce myself in this capacity as it describes a mandate that I can hardly do justice to in daily practice. Often in my work I feel how I lack the fellowship and spirit of community of Church and Peace, and it really does me good when I can talk to and meet friends from Church and Peace on different occasions. Each year I look forward to the Christmas Newsletter from the Laurentiuskonvent in Laufdorf. The experiences recorded in this newsletter reflect for me much of what Peace Church witness means in everyday life.

It is not a matter of high-flown goals but of turning to God and others in the awareness that we depend on one another in this one world and can only live a meaningful life together. Peace Church witness remains a constant challenge because our churches – and often we ourselves – are always at risk of mirroring society more than the Gospel

**The International Conference did not just take a look at the past history of Church and Peace. The future of peace work was at the center of twelve multilingual workshops aimed at bringing representatives of organizations, communities and different movements into dialogue.**

Recent developments with peace service agencies and the peace deaconate have been presented by Elisabeth Freise (Eirene) and Stefanie Bruckmeir (OeD). Maarten van der Werf (Christian Peacemaker Teams) and Karin Laier (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel) introduced two similar forms of non-violent interventions. Ana Raf-fai (Rand, Croatia) and Marijana Ajzenkol (Center for Religious Dialog, Serbia) shared experiences about inter-religious dialogue in Southeast Europe with believers as well as with representatives of different faith communities. Paul Lansu (Pax Christi International) informed participants about the peace witness to intergovernmental institutions in which Pax Christi is involved. Maria Biedrawa (IFOR and Jean Vanier's Arche) and Daniel Geiser-Oppliger (Swiss Mennonite Conference) as well as Matthias Hofer (MCC, Switzerland) pointed out the challenges beyond Europe, (in Africa resp. in Iraq). Hansuli Gerber (DOV) and Father Patrick Edou (UN-Decade) led conversations as both decades - "Decade to Overcome Violence" of the WCC and



*Daniel Geiser in conversation with  
Angela Schnepel*



*Kim and Ulrike Comer*

"International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the children of the World" of the UN - are coming to a close. Madeleine Bähler (Compax, Bienenberg) and Benoît Thiran (Sortir de la Violence) presented two training models for Peace and Conflict Transformation, while Ulrike and Kim Comer (Darvell Community) informed about the programme "Breaking the cycle" to raise awareness on conflict transformation in schools, universities and among soldiers worldwide. "can life in community contribute to peacemaking and sustainability ?" brought people together living in a community and

those who dream of doing so with Barbara Ruthardt-Horneber (Guggenhausen community) and Ulrike and Kim Comer informed about the life at Darvell Community.

Many different aspects of peace witness were presented and it is to be hoped that new forms of cooperation will come into life from these conversations.



**The international conference at the Bienenberg ended with an ecumenical worship. Marie-Noëlle von der Recke's sermon was based on the theme of the meeting: „Guide our feet into the way of peace“ (Luke 1:67-79):**

The idea of a unified Europe has been pursued in different ways throughout history. Someone who wanted to make this dream come true, in his own way, was Napoleon, through his policy of military conquests. Known for brilliant victories and disastrous defeats, his name has remained engraved in our memories. Napoleon's dream of a united Europe ended in a fiasco. But who remembers those other Frenchmen, Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann? Their concern was reconciliation by economic partnership on an equal footing with Germany, the former enemy. Chancellor Adenauer understood this gesture and together the two countries that had confronted one another so often on the fields of battle gave the initial start to a great adventure, the prime goal of which was building peace. And their horizon extended beyond the bounds of Europe.

The collective memory has put them both on the shelf. And yet they were the true inventors of the united Europe that we know today: they were workers for peace.

And who remembers Zechariah, apart from nuns and monks who sing his canticle every day? Who remembers John the Baptist, apart from the Community of the Arche, who celebrates him every year on 21 June with a great festival? The name of his mother, Elizabeth, has been given to many little girls and queens have borne the same name, but she herself is little known. One can say that those characters too have been relegated to oblivion. And yet, in Chapter 1 of Luke's gospel, from which comes the text of our meditation, we touch upon the essential of what makes history, a history no doubt unknown to historians and society in general: it is history seen from the standpoint of faith.

The smallest detail is pregnant with meaning in this text: the name of the priest Zechariah, which means "God remembers", and that of his wife Elizabeth, which means "God is promise" and who has just had a child. Like other births at decisive moments in the history of the people of Israel, and like the coming of Jesus announced a few verses earlier, this birth is unusual : Elisabeth is fairly old, and the child will not bear the name of his father, as is the custom but will be called John, "God is mercy". Zechariah, struck dumb since the announcement of this birth, is able to speak again in the power of the Holy Spirit, in a hymn that is today sometimes called the "Benedictus".

This hymn starts like all Jewish prayers: Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu and continues like a prophecy – embracing in a few phrases both the past of the people of Israel and imminent events that will shape the future. Curiously, although the hymn is situated on the threshold between former times and those to come, it presents the events announced as though they had already

happened: God has visited and redeemed God's people! Certain of what is to come, the priest who has become a prophet presents the promise he bears as if it had already happened. Visiting, redeeming, are two terms occurring in the first testament to evoke God's works among the people of God. As in the past, God is personally interested in this people and comes, indeed, **is already there**, to change the course of its existence.

What must come is at first sight somewhat hazy, literally the text refers to a "horn of salvation" (verse 69) but most translations avoid such an unusual image in our context and translate the metaphor – which evokes strength – by saying quite simply : "a mighty saviour" has been raised up.

The double view of the past and the future also characterizes the following verses: the expected saviour will bring liberation, and that liberation proves that God is faithful to the commitments undertaken in the past towards the great figures in the history of the People of Israel. The hymn mentions almost all of them: David, the prophets, the Fathers and Abraham, the father of the nations, the one who received the initial promise: they are all there, to highlight the will of God, which is salvation, deliverance.

The song is then directly addressed to the child John, announcing his role of forerunner, he will go before God, and he will show the way, the means of salvation.

Finally, the hymn ends by affirming again that God has visited his people, that his goodness is the origin of all that the forerunner will announce, and by repeating in other terms what God wants for his people: to "guide their feet into the way of peace". The last image of the text is that of a sun rising in the morning to fetch human beings out of the night and the grip of death. It is a quote from one of the very last verses of the very last prophet, Malachi, who had announced the day when "the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings" (Malachi 4:2).

My friends, we are coming to the end of a celebration of 60 years of peace witness and ecumenical dialogue. Such a commemoration permits us to situate ourselves in a story. But it is a different story from the one usually told. There is nothing in common between our gathering and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NATO, except for the same post-war context in which it all began. Zechariah's hymn makes us look differently at history: in a context of foreign occupation, of economic exploitation by the occupier, it says that deliverance is already there and he makes us join up with all those who are so readily crushed and forgotten by official history and the politics of the great powers. He does not speak from the point of view of the conquerors, of those who hold power and impose it on others. Nor does he encourage the setting up of a violent counter power as some of his contemporaries would have liked. He speaks from the perspective of those who cannot save themselves and who expect everything of God. The history evoked by the song of Zechariah is neither the history of generals, nor that of kings, nor again of those who bring them down in order to set themselves in their place. The history that unites us in Church and Peace is a history in parallel to the other one, a history seen

from below, lived by men and women without recognized power but who deeply yearn for the healing of a sick world. Those who were here at Bienenberg at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Church and Peace, celebrated during the NATO bombing of Serbia, will understand what I am trying to say... And I am convinced that each of us could give other examples of that history. We heard some splendid stories in the presentation by Maria yesterday.

At the time when we are about to separate I would like to leave you with three key words, easy to remember, which are the first names of the main characters in the story told in Luke 1.

**God is promise:** the name of Elizabeth sums up in itself all the sense of the history of salvation. On the threshold of a new stage in relations between God and God's people, what matters is the promise made to Abraham and the ancestors, passed on by the prophets. We who have met here are only a handful of people but we represent groups, communities, congregations which have made their own the promise made to Abraham and the prophets. Luke 1 announces that this promise is going to manifest itself through the coming of the Messiah. It is a promise of life, a promise of healing, a promise of salvation. Not a promise of power or a promise of victory. There is no question of annihilating the enemies of the people of God but of being delivered, snatched from their grasp. It is God himself who is committed to bring the liberation for which God's people yearn. This certainty, affirmed in the name Elizabeth, ought to make us more relaxed in our commitments and efforts. All that we do, whether it be in the humanitarian or social field, in conflict transformation, in protest campaigns, in training, we are invited to do under the promise, for it is God who shapes history. It is his plan, a project bringing life and not death.

**God remembers:** the name of Zechariah is equally evocative and almost merges with that of Elizabeth. It recalls God's faithfulness in a context in which there was good reason not to believe in it too much. We, too, are living through dark days: the silence of God weighs upon us, hopelessness is gaining ground at all levels of society, violence is becoming an everyday occurrence, the effects of human greed are becoming obvious even for those who have denied them so far. Today as in the past, it is good to know that God is faithful, that God does not forget us. God remembers. Relying on this assurance, the Benedictus dares to say – even before the coming of the Messiah – that God has visited and redeemed God's people as if it had already happened. God's remembering opens the prospect of a future. It is because God remembers that we can advance in hope. One may be amazed at this memory of God, as it is incredibly selective: nowhere is there reference to the failures and unfaithfulness of his people. What God remembers is the commitment made to them. We here have experienced crises and ruptures in our communities and movements and in our families. Taking an honest look at our past cannot turn a blind eye to the breakdowns, the conflicts, separations and disappointments. If a future is possible it is not

because we are exceptional people convinced that non-violence is an essential characteristic of the Gospel, sure that all would be better if everyone was like us and thought like us. No, it is because our God remembers, faithful to God's own promises. Well aware of our unfaithfulness and relying on God's faithfulness, we can only pray to be made faithful in our turn.

Working for peace, the commitment to living as a Peace Church is a long-term project that calls for stamina and a good dose of stubbornness, the ability to pick oneself up after a failure. God remembers. God is faithful and seeks to give us the necessary stability not to throw in the sponge when we do not see the results we would like to see.



*Ecumenical worship service at the end of the conference*

**God is goodness: or again: God shows mercy, or again: God forgives.**

The name John can be translated in various ways but the idea is clear and repeated in other terms all through the hymn. The forerunner of the Messiah bears in his name that which will manifest itself in the person and work of Jesus: the love and grace of God, his mercy, his forgiveness. That explains

the mystery of God's memory, which intrigued us a few moments ago. A new beginning may be envisaged because God is faithful to himself and God's covenant and faithfulness consists, amongst other things, in forgoing punishment, not claiming his due where human beings have not been able to meet their commitments. The dynamic of the history of faith runs counter to human logic, which functions according to simple, foreseeable patterns: retaliation, repression against opponents but also the psychological repression of crimes committed by our camp, the refusal to repent...

Here we touch upon a very sensitive subject. The Armenian genocide, the Shoah and the horrors committed since then in Rwanda, and in the Balkans have decimated cities and villages and traumatized whole populations for a long time to come. There is no question of forgetting, of acting as though nothing had happened. On the contrary, the work of truth and memory is necessary so that those things do not repeat themselves. What happens when God forgives? Our text uses a term that means to leave, let go, abandon, send away. That is a motif dear to the Gospel of Luke and that does not just suggest a psychological and spiritual easing of tension to put an end to my



personal guilt feeling. Rather it also sends us back to the great Jubilee when all debts will be cancelled and each one will receive the opportunity to make a new start (see Luke 4 on this point). That is the path of healing, the path of salvation. All of Jesus' ministry, his death and resurrection will demonstrate that.

It is a unilateral declaration of peace, an absolutely free gift that we are given. And it is offered us so that we in turn can live from it and share it. The horizon of John's ministry mentioned in the last phrase of the hymn of Zechariah "to guide our feet into the way of peace" is our marching orders, our roadmap: the peace given us by God's forgiveness and mercy is not a state of harmony, an ideal, it is a path on which we must "walk before God". Our friends from Southeast Europe, who have been working for almost 20 years to reconstruct their region, to heal the wounds and to enable new relationships know about all the obstacles that may block this path. In Western Europe, where the ruins of past wars are no longer visible to the eye, the challenges are no less enormous, be they the rise in xenophobia and arbitrary violence, the return of the ghosts of fascism or the justification of military interventions with barely disguised economic motives. There is plenty left to do! That is why we can afford to turn this affirmation into a prayer: "Guide our feet into the way of peace". We are the ones who have to walk, and we leave it up to God to guide us on our path.

### **God is promise, God remembers, God is goodness.**

Our conference is nearly over, and we will soon part, but we remain united by these three convictions and this common prayer: Guide our feet into the path of peace. Probably people will continue to talk of Napoleon in the history books and probably Jean Monnet, Zechariah, Elizabeth and John the Baptist will not emerge from collective oblivion. But let us continue to live as a small scattered, fragile people, without any complex about our parallel history, the history of divine mercy, and let us continue to meet periodically to regain our strength for the road.

Amen



*Blessing at the end of the worship service*

The Bienenberg 'Peace Path' has developed during recent years, and the 60th anniversary of 'Church and Peace' offered an excellent opportunity to dedicate a new station on the path. Dutch artist Jan Piet van den Berg presented one of his works for display on the Bienenberg Peace Trail. He writes about it as follows:



*Bruno Sägesser unveils  
Jan Piet van den Berg's work*

on a shelf, held upright by bookends. The stones themselves are meant to convey 'love', while the books are 'about love'.



*Participants contemplating  
Jan Piet van den Berg's work (2nd from left)*

For me, this station on the Peace Trail is similar to being at a monument. We commemorate all those who have died in wars and acts of violence. There is only one response possible for us: to live in love and to strengthen that love. For this reason we need books of love, which describe our experiences in expressing our love. Let us live in love with one another. Let us leave the dead to bury the dead. And let us face each other and find the courage to continue together. Our gathering came to a close with these sung words.

Dear friends,

It is a great joy for me to write to you in this Newsletter as the new Chair of Church and Peace.

60 years of Church and Peace – that means a myriad of impressive stories and a great commitment for the future. The previous pages have documented that in fascinating memories, images and names.

How many people from the Church and Peace network have, over six decades, made credible personal witness, at so many places, to the nonviolent love of Jesus in their daily lives! In how many communities has this been lived out daily in prayer and work, in commitment for the group and in fields of social conflict! A costly treasure to be shared and increased!

Where do I come into this story? As a young family, my husband Martin and I, along with others, founded a house community of the Laurentiuskonvent 30 years ago, and lived there for over 20 years. One important reason for this step was our yearning to put justice, peace and the integrity of creation (JPIC) into practice through sharing spiritual life, everyday life and our commitment. Ruth and Wilfried Warneck were co-founders of the community and living witnesses to the history of Church and Peace. In that project, they were (and are) convincing and encouraging in their personal spirituality, political clarity and availability for a binding peace witness. And founding the 'Shalom ministry' was for me a practical contribution following from this commitment and political clarity.

Involved in this way in the Laurentiuskonvent community, I have always tried to live out the spiritual and political consequences of Jesus' peace imperative. This took place in my work areas as a Protestant pastor in the Student Christian Movement at Paderborn University, in the office of the Ecumenical Decade – Churches in Solidarity with Women, and in the last eleven years as director of the Europe Department of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). My function at the EKD included promoting dialogue with European churches of all denominations, an intensive commitment in the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and participating in developing the Charta Oecumenica. An important activity was e.g. enabling some steps to be taken with churches, NGOs, young and older people towards reconciliation in former Yugoslavia. Another important point for me was dialogue with the European institutions, e.g. on the understanding of human security and vulnerability; another topic was the significance of nonviolence and the experiences and skills of people who champion it.

Now I am working again at the 'grassroots', in an exciting ecumenical project that Hamburg churches have entrusted to a group from the Laurentiuskonvent. Peace-building work and European commitment is still an essential concern of mine – in Hamburg too. European Security and Defense Policy is – in my view – a major challenge for Church and Peace, which we shall address at the Annual General Meeting in 2010. Demands are being made on the churches and the churches need our contribution and our dialogue with them.

So it is very important to strengthen the network in the East and the West, in the North and the South, perhaps even to extend it even further. We must accompany each other mutually in prayer and in dialogue, making our competences visible at home and abroad. as disciples of Jesus, we must raise up the nonviolent path with its capacity for dialogue and political action – and thus live the spirit of the Gospel in this world.

I look forward to tackling these challenges, with friends in the newly elected administrative committee, with Marie-Noëlle von der Recke, Helga Amelung and Martin Schuler in the international office and with all those who have built up and support Church and Peace. I hope to get to know you in an intensive, in-depth way and to have a fruitful dialogue.

But now, at the end of this Newsletter, I must add something:  
Church and Peace can only fulfill its commitment for the future - for us as members, for the churches, for nonviolence in Europe - if people, groups, congregations and churches secure the financial basis for that. And the financial basis is so slim that every gift is necessary. So I warmly invite you to give your donation and support, so that Church and Peace can continue to survive and remain able to act. Your gift is essential for that; may God bless it!

In the next few weeks we are privileged to be able to open up to the miracle of the birth of God's son. God becomes a human person, a child, tender and dependent on the miracle of love. A miracle that dissolves all our images and expectations of God time and again. A miracle that allows us to sense God's tenderness and love.

Wishing you a blessed time of expectation,  
Yours,

*Antje Heider-Rottwilm*



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**Church and Peace** is a European, ecumenical network of peace churches and peace church-oriented congregations, communities and service agencies.

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