



## ***Church and Peace***

**International Office**

***Church and Peace - the ecumenical peace church network  
of communities, training centres, peace organisations  
and peace service agencies in Europe***

### **Reformation 2017: Freed from fear, empowered to nonviolence**

*Church and Peace AGM urges reformation step of faith towards committed nonviolence*

SCHOEFFENGRUND, Germany, 14 June 2017 – Church and Peace is calling churches and government leaders to make decisive choices for nonviolence and to turn away from putting trust in military-based security concepts.

At its Annual General Meeting on 9-11 June in Strasbourg, the European peace church network explored the theme “Freed from fear, empowered to nonviolence” through the lens of an ongoing call to (R)reformation 500 years after Martin Luther proposed his theses for debate in Wittenberg, Germany.

The encouragement “Do not be afraid”, found throughout the Bible, was the basis for a sermon by Ana Raffai, Roman Catholic theologian from Croatia and co-founder of the interreligious group Believers for Peace, during the AGM’s closing worship, and formed the common thread between workshops on a variety of topics including security in Europe; just policing and a logic of security versus a logic of peace; Church and Peace, the Bible and sexual identities; fear, populism, nationalism and the return of fascism; and addressing personal fears in a constructive manner.

Church and Peace Chairperson Antje Heider-Rottwilm took a closer look at what “500 years of Reformation” means in the face of the many personal, societal and global challenges in today’s world and came to the conclusion that experiencing God’s love and mercy freed Martin Luther from his self-destructive fears.

She noted that though Luther in 1522 first warned against imposing reform with violence, just four years later he would praise “worldly authority and its sword” as the work of love. In this way, through his authority, instead of reform through nonviolence, violence would become the shadow side of the Reformation.

Heider-Rottwilm contrasted Luther’s perspective with the reformation insight and practice of the historic peace churches which reject the use of violence.

It was time for the churches to take the reformation step of faith towards the freedom from fear rooted in God’s love and, as a result, towards committed nonviolence, she said.

“This means embracing God’s love which is given to us in Jesus Christ in all vulnerability, and accepting our own security in God’s love and our own human vulnerability.

“This means denouncing false powers and principalities, false security and, as a consequence, the use of violence as a means of protection and security.

“And this means living out nonviolence in all areas of life – personal, societal, global – and advocating for policies which affirm life.”

*Antje Heider-Rottwilm’s presentation is available in English on the Church and Peace website at <http://wp.church-and-peace.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Eröffnung-der-Tagung-finV-Eng.pdf>.*

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