

church and peace

Newsletter

Finding alternatives –

"No" to nationalism, consumerism and militarisation

Profile – Meet the new General Secretary

Empty graves (of encouragement)

AGM sermon, abridged



Freed from fear, empowered to nonviolence

500 years (R)reformation

Church and Peace came together this year around the theme, "Do not be afraid!" A chance to deepen relationships, reflect, worship and encourage one another.

Reformation today means being freed from fear and empowered to nonviolence in a world marked by personal and societal violence.

The Annual General Meeting on 9-11 June in Strasbourg dared to take a closer look at fear through the lens of an ongoing call to (R)reformation, 500 years after Martin Luther proposed his theses in Wittenberg.

In her introduction, Church and Peace Chairperson Antje Heider-Rottwilm noted that fear has been a reality for every generation. Indeed, the words, "Do not be afraid!" appear frequently in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.

Yet people have also known God as the One who helps to face and overcome fears. Only by experiencing God's love and mercy was Martin Luther freed from his self-destructive fears.

Heider-Rottwilm noted that though Luther in 1522 first warned against imposing reform with violence, the next year he would praise the "temporal sword" as the work of love. In this way, through his authority, violence would become a shadow side of the Reformation and of the powers which used it as a means to political ends. In contrast, Radical Reformation Anabaptists and later peace church reformers have chosen to practise nonviolence and non-hierarchical ways to organise society.

The words of ecumenist Dietrich Werner remind us that reformation is not limited to a particular period in history, rather that the Body of Christ is called to ongoing "re-formation".

It is now time for the churches to take the reforming step of faith towards fearlessness grounded in God's love and therefore also towards nonviolence in all areas of life, she concluded.



Church and Peace

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

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"I am about to do a new thing"

(Isaiah 43:19)

Dear Church and Peace friends.

Can our alternatives to the prevalent economic, societal and security policy paradigms truly lead to a more peaceful and just world?

Church and Peace members are engaging with this question in their respective contexts and advocating for feasible alternatives. Our common reflection about economics challenges us as disciples of Jesus to think about sustainable and just consumption in our daily lives and to open up alternative spaces for economic activity.

While the justification of nationalism and xenophobia with religious arguments seems to have become acceptable in our societies, participants of the regional meeting of Believers for Peace in South East Europe have taken a clear stance against this trend, labelling it as "profoundly wrong and unacceptable". Their declaration is an example of the form alternatives can take when people of different religious traditions come together and find a common basis for peace building.

The European Union, founded as a project of understanding between peoples and of peaceful cooperation, is developing into an

increasingly militarised security alliance. Church and Peace as a European peace church network has taken a firm stand numerous times against this development, most recently in a press release in June, and continues to call for a coherent, and accordingly funded, politics of peace.

God's Word is a source of encouragement in our striving for nonviolent and just alternatives to the prevailing paradigms of our world. In Isaiah 43:19 - "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" - God reminds us that he is the doer, the agent, and through this we are empowered to act. As Chairperson Antje Heider-Rottwilm said in her opening address to the conference in Strasbourg 2017: "It is now time for the churches to take the reforming step of faith towards fearlessness grounded in God's love and therefore also towards nonviolence in all areas of life."

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue of the newsletter! May you be encouraged and challenged by the Church and Peace network's journeying together on the way of justice and peace to follow the example of Jesus.

Best wishes,

ydia Funck

See http://bit.ly/CPpress for press releases.

AGM 2017

Different faces of fear

AGM participants had the chance to engage various facets of fear through eight workshops

Individual member Isabelle Eliat-Serck invited participants to enter into relationship with their fear, dialoguing with it as they would a person with whom they were in conflict. This act of welcoming and engaging the fear opens a door enabling us to stop the cycle of reactionary violence.

With Andrew Lane, Quaker Council of European Affairs, participants named steps churches can take to address fears of migration, terrorism and militarised security in Europe.

Karen Hinrichs, Evangelical Church in Baden, explored differences between a logic of security and one of peace through the example of just policing. Resolving conflict is difficult and high-risk, and a recent study shows the need to move away from intervention, whether military or police, towards community-rooted prevention in order to stop genocide.

Quaker and Administrative Committee member Barbara Forbes and her husband David reflected with participants on how churches are – or are not – resisting nationalism. The line between populism and fascism is crossed when "the party" sets one group to hate and attack the other. As citizens of the "republic" of God, we are charged to bring its values into our everyday world.

Participants had a chance to explore biblical texts guided by Kjeld Renato Lings, author of Love Lost in Translation and, after a period of silence, listened to three moving personal testimonies in the workshop on the Bible and sexual identities moderated by Quaker and Administrative Committee member Kees Nieuwerth. Meeting others as vulnerable persons who need peace, love and a church community is important to deconstruct fear and build trust. We are challenged not to be afraid to create safe spaces for difficult. open conversations, rooted in God's loving presence.

A workshop by Michel Monod, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, role played the use of nonviolent communication in post-war situations such as Kosovo.



This way of encountering one another helps to leave behind fear and live together in diversity.

Participants talked about past and present fears with a woman of the Reformation, Katharina Zell, portrayed by Gudrun Tappe-Freitag, gewalt*frei* handeln. To remember the contributions of those history excludes is an act of nonviolent action, as is the readiness to struggle for those on the margins to be part of the conversation.

James Jakob Fehr, German Mennonite Peace Committee, looked at the power of the W/word through Martin Luther's "sola" pillars of Scripture, faith, Christ and grace. Is Jesus' command not to be afraid already fulfilled in its utterance? We create paths of transformation into the "upside-down Kingdom" of God when we actually walk them.

Discussion during the exhibition of workshop results



AGM participants find out more about workshop focuses. AGM 2017

EU funds for civilian, not military instruments

AGM opposes European shift from reconciliation and peace to militarisation

hurch and Peace is urging the churches in Europe to advocate for EU funds to be used to strengthen civilian, not military instruments.

At this year's AGM in Strasbourg, network members voiced clear opposition to recent security and defence recommendations that would move Europe further along the path of militarisation, away from its origins as a project of peace and reconciliation.

On 7 June the European Commission announced the launch of a European Defence Fund, proposed establishing a programme to support the European arms industry and outlined possible future scenarios for European defence.

The proposals would mean that instead of coordinating member state armament plans, Commission funds would be taken from the

current - civilian - EU budget. More than EUR 600 million budgeted for civilian purposes through 2020 would be diverted for military instruments. Two of the three future scenarios build the case for moving towards a European Security and Defence Union.

The AGM noted with alarm that this would not only be a major shift in the EU budget but would also change the fundamental character of the European Union itself, reinforcing the trend towards militarisation set out last autumn with the proposed expansion of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), a decision still pending.

Members are calling churches to advocate instead for a coherent and adequately funded politics of peace based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Church and Peace chairperson Antje Heider-Rottwilm spoke for the AGM: "We are taking a stand as Church and Peace that Europe does not enter down this path."

See the Church and Peace website for related press releases: http://bit.ly/CPpress.

More from the AGM

Can empty graves bring encouragement? See "The Last Word" (page 12) for an abridged version of Ana Raffai's AGM sermon about the hope that comes from engaging in the resurrection struggle against injustice, violence and cynicism.

How do Church and Peace members across Europe experience the call "Do not be afraid"? Contact the International Office (address page 2) to learn about ways that the Gospel is bringing freedom from fear in members' diverse contexts, as well as about different network engagement around Reformation remembrance, and the relationship with Europe and the EU.

"Do not be afraid": Participants from South East Europe note that the Gospel message has to be a call for us to initiate change.

AGM Highlights

- Church and Peace members urge governments' participation in the 15 June-7 July UN negotiations on a nuclear weapons ban treaty
- New corporate member Youth for Christ Croatia. Čavle
- New individual member Isabelle Eliat-Serck and Bruno Eliat from Walhain, Belgium
- New individual member Neda (Nedeljka) Popović from Krk, Croatia
- New individual member Julianne Funk from Horgen, Switzerland
- New staff Lydia Funck as General Secretary, from 1 April 2017 (Interview page 8) • New staff - Ramona Thuneke as Administrative
- Assistant, from 1 September 2017
- · New International Office location Wethen, Germany, from 1 September 2017 (More on page 9)



Which game shall we play?

Some thoughts about economics and justice

80 people were both encouraged and challenged by the German-speaking regional conference, "There was no needy person among them", in November 2016. Three inputs – along with many personal encounters – made a strong impression on Bruno and Heidi Sägesser, who are individual members of Church and Peace.

A delheid Biesecker, former professor of economics at the University of Bremen, combined enthusiasm and expertise as she outlined some ideas about just economics. There are a lot of losers in our society, because the (re)distribution of wealth isn't working. These losers feel marginalised. They are more and more likely to vote in elections and to elect populists.

If our economic activity were to become truly sustainable, we would leave a productive natural environment to future generations, ensure that the basic needs of the world's poor are met, stop causing more pollution than the Earth can handle, and ensure that wealth is justly distributed to everyone.

Biesecker encouraged us to start here and now in our own society. Everyone can start a "second game", so to speak, and refuse to play the "usual game". Many of the conference participants have already started doing this. And the network was encouraged to go on together, raising our voices whenever circumstances arise in our lives which make it necessary to speak out.

Anthony Gwyther is co-author of *Unveiling Empire*: Reading



Revelation Then and Now and a member of the Basisgemeinde Wulfshagenerhütten. He helped us to become more familiar with one of the more difficult books of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, and showed us some of the ideas about alternative economics which it promotes.

The Book of Revelation was written during the Roman Empire and describes the empire in graphic terms. Since we too live in an empire, in which the capitalist economic system flourishes, we should read Revelation from this standpoint. When the book is reduced to a schedule for the apocalypse, the Church misses out on a text which offers not only a critique of the current economic system but also an alternative.

Towards the end of the conference we heard a sermon by Alejandro Zorzin, a Mennonite theologian and church historian, on the parable of the talents in Luke 19:11-27. In our religious socialisation we've learned to see the king in this story as God, who praises and rewards us when

we make profitable use of our talents, but tells us off and punishes us when we don't put them to good use. This caused us to ask ourselves a long time ago: "Is God really as brutal as this?"

Zorzin's exegesis enabled us to see that the text, when understood in context, takes a very different approach. Money is used to make money; the rich get richer; and the poor get poorer. This is the "usual game", which Biesecker described. But Jesus plays no part in this system! He refuses to play the "usual game" and invites us to refuse to take part as well.

The conference stirred up quite a few thoughts and feelings inside us both. Which game are we playing?

Bruno und Heidi Sägesser

The conference was organised jointly by Church and Peace, the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Germany, the German Mennonite Peace Committee, the Mennonite Peace Centre Berlin, and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

Sowing the seeds of peace

Declaration from Believers for Peace conference calls for nonviolent responses to nationalism and xenophobia in South East Europe

The conference "Re:Action - believers for peace in time of nationalism and xenophobia" was held in Lužnica, a centre for spiritual renewal, near Zagreb, from 30 March to 2 April 2017. There were more than 70 participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia; Muslims and Christians of various denominations took part, as well as agnostic humanists.



Azra Ibrahimović, conference keynote speaker and member of the organisation team

We, believers for peace, notice that in our faith communities and societies there is a growing tendency of intolerance, exclusion and hatred towards each other, other ethnic and religious groups, and also foreigners - refugees. Nationalism and xenophobia are two forms of violence that are often justified by one's affiliation to a faith community and religious tradition: then it becomes the business of all believers to respond to them.

Who are Believers for Peace?

The Re:Action conference was organised by "Believers for Peace", which comprises various peace organisations in South East Europe, including Church and Peace members and friends.

These Christians and Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia have been working tirelessly for more than a decade to reduce religious, ethnic, and political tensions in keeping with the motto: "By building peace we glorify God".

Following conferences in Krk, Croatia in 2006, Blagaj, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2008, and Andrevlje, Serbia in 2010, this fourth Believers for Peace gathering again aimed to empower people from the Abrahamitic traditions in the region to build a more just and peaceful society through nonviolence.

Since 2013 more than 200 people have signed the Believers for Peace declaration which aims to strengthen the bonds between people's personal faith life, active involvement in the praxis of nonviolence, and methods of social action - thereby strengthening the peacemaking potential of the various faith traditions.

We, participants of the conference "Re:Action - believers for peace in time of nationalism and xenophobia" firstly want to declare to each other and to the public that we are convinced that any justification of xenophobia and nationalism by faith arguments or religious traditions is profoundly wrong and unacceptable.

Peace building, on the basis of equal rights and the worth of each individual, requires a constant search for freedom and justice, which are the main messages of the Holy Scriptures in all our religions. Our faith communities and churches deny the validity of any national supremacy and hatred towards people of other identity groups, and repudiate provoking fear of other and different people.

The basic message of our faiths is expressed in God's exhortation: "Do not be afraid". Staying true to that calling we appeal to the hierarchies and the faith leaders of religious communities and churches to stay away from any attempt to connect faith and religion to nationalist intolerance, hatred or fear of others. At the same time we emphasise our

individual personal responsibility to build a culture of positive peace, in our more local and wider communities, which is much more than a mere absence of war.

We share our faith in God and our belief in the importance and the necessity of the personal contribution of every person to achieve peace in society versus the prevalent practices of direct, institutional and cultural violence. This path is not easy. Moreover, in the version of history that is presented to us as a continuum of violence, for instance violence and aggression dominate our daily news, so the effort of peace building may seem futile and utopian. Hence we want to encourage one another and everyone not to cease from a constant advocacy for peace and nonviolent resistance to violence, nationalism and xenophobia.

In democracy every citizen is responsible for the state and events of his or her society and country. Instead of having only our faith leaders articulating the messages and actions of their own faith community and church, we invite each individual to recognize their own power and to take on their own responsibility for peace building.

Our motto is: "By building peace we glorify God!"

Agreed by the participants of the conference: "Re:Action - believers for peace in time of nationalism and xenophobia" on 2 April 2017.

"Any justification of xenophobia and nationalism by faith arguments or religious traditions is profoundly wrong and unacceptable"



Did you know?

Church and Peace relationships with peace builders in South East Europe have existed since the 1990s. Friends and organisations from the region have participated in international conferences and regionally-focused seminars since 1995, with several becoming formal

members of the network. The wish for closer regional, interreligious cooperation for peace developed further after the international conference in 2005 through Believers for Peace, leading to the first-ever interfaith regional conference in South East Europe in 2006.

Profile

Meet Lydia Funck, Church and Peace's new General Secretary

What brought you to this new role? What excites you most about it?

Growing up in a small Mennonite church, connected to ecumenical friends, the Christian faith and its relation to social topics as well as other believers have shaped my path during travels and education.

I attended a Christian discipleship training in the UK, volunteered in Israel and Palestine, completed degree programmes in Middle Eastern Studies and Political Sciences, and Peace and Conflict Studies. I was a German Mennonite delegate to the World Council of Churches Assembly in 2013



Isaiah 43:19

and during the preparation time joined the ecumenical young adult network MEET (More Ecumenical Empowerment Together).

All these steps brought me to apply for this position as General Secretary.

I am excited about being able to join a network of people engaged in peace work rooted in a faith conviction, bringing together peace theology and practice, living out Jesus' invitation to nonviolence and love of one's enemy.



Lydia Funck at the AGM 2017

Church and Peace is the only **European ecumenical peace** church network. What is our calling today?

The ecumenical movement is rich in experience in struggling for peace and justice. Vigils, protests, accompanying the vulnerable, changing the world by small steps. The younger generation profits from these past struggles but hardly knows about them.

The Church is called to show how life in peace with God and each other can look. So, let us focus on this task. We need to highlight where this is already happening, where every individual, community or church can contribute to a more peaceful world.

How do you see the 2017 AGM theme "Do not be afraid, I

am bringing you good news" guiding the network?

The good news that God is with us in all our fears and failures is an encouragement for the network. Every context and individual is facing different kind of fears. The words "Do not be afraid" are not to belittle fears but to encourage us not to be paralyzed by them. With the knowledge of God's and each other's accompaniment we can continue our journey towards just peace, always in expectation of the good and new things God is preparing to do.

Since my first days in the office a phrase from Isaiah 43:19 has become an inspiration for me and maybe can become one for the network: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

Interview by Terri Miller

Diary

1 September 2017 Church and Peace International Office Move

New address on page 2.

28 October 2017

Britain and Ireland Regional Day

"Peace church in a world of conflict? Answering the Biblical call to nonviolence"

Bull Street Quaker Meeting House, Birmingham, UK

1-3 November 2017

Church and Peace Administrative Committee Meeting

Wethen, Germany

21-24 June 2018

Church and Peace Annual General Meeting and International Conference High Leigh Conference Centre

High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, UK

23-25 November 2018
German-language
Regional Conference
Thomashof, Germany



Web Resources

Recent conference keynote speeches and sermons Including contributions in English by Simon Barrow, Antje Heider-Rottwilm and Ana Raffai.

Church and Peace press releases

Download and share in your
networks!

www.church-and-peace.org

New office location – Welcome to Wethen!

On 1 September 2017 the International Office moves from Laufdorf – a place linked like no other with Church and Peace's origins and history – to Wethen/Diemelstadt, where a new chapter awaits in the form of an office share with two associations. gewaltfrei handeln (acting nonviolently) is one of them and welcomes the new logistical, thematic and collegial collaboration with Church and Peace staff.

As staff in the office of gewaltfrei handeln, we are looking forward to Church and Peace enriching our office community.

We have been working here for a long time in an office partnership with the Ecumenical One World Initiative, the German coordination office for the international Earth Charter Initiative.

We are small associations with "big issues". We experience again and again that sharing experiences and ideas strengthens, enriches, and challenges us. "How can we successfully make our vision of a just and peaceful world more appealing?""How do you reach young people?""Do you have any experience with these particular funding agencies?""How do you successfully involve volunteers?" - these are some of the questions which arise in our conversations. And it is often good just to hear during a shared tea break what the others are planning, or which conference has been successful, and to share in the joy and excitement.

We believe that such sharing with Church and Peace will be equally

beneficial and are looking forward to new people, and new and stimulating ideas.

When, in addition to the two existing associations, a third, European network is based here, this will enrich our peace education, training, and campaigning work. We hope that your coming here will strengthen our profile as an organisation which offers training in constructive conflict management and nonviolence. We're especially excited about the international dimension which you bring. gewaltfrei handeln is a member of Church and Peace and some of our "graduates" play an active part in your network. Might the new office share now give rise to joint projects?

We wish you a good new beginning and a warm welcome to Wethen!



gewaltfrei handeln staff

The Netherlands

Call to ban arms fairs in Rotterdam

Church and Peace member Kerk en Vrede participated in a protest against ITEC 2017, the international forum for defence training, education and simulation, in May in Rotterdam. Organised by the Franciscaanse Vredeswacht (Franciscan Peace Group), the inspiring vigil called for a ban on arms fairs in Rotterdam and stressed that arms trade is fuelling conflict around the globe.



United Kingdom

NCPO urges UK participation in nuclear weapons ban

The Network of Christian Peace Organisations has renewed its call for the UK to participate in UN nuclear weapon ban negotiations. The network's 19 June press release highlighted the British government's "gross failure of duty" in refusing to join the meetings. Church and Peace and several of its members in the region belong to NCPO. Download the related NCPO briefing paper: http://bit.ly/2tl8Mdp.



Stop Fuelling War plans witness at Eurosatory 2018

Stop Fuelling War, a European Quaker-led initiative, has set up its base at the Centre Quaker International in Paris to organise a witness around the 2018 Eurosatory weapons fair on 11-15 June near the city. In 2016, Church and Peace joined the group's efforts to present nonviolent alternatives to Eurosatory visitors and de-legitimise the biannual industry trade show. To get involved, contact stopfuellingwar@gmail.com.



CEC calls for European policy based on SDGs

The EU should remain committed to peace and reconciliation, and build a more just, forwardlooking Europe by shaping the economy around the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This was the message of the Conference of European



Churches at a recent "Reformation Summer" event in Wittenberg, Germany. Church and Peace Administrative Committee member Kees Nieuwerth represented CEC on a panel on the future of Europe, also a current focus of CEC reflection.





the Network

Germany

Magdeburg Peace Manifesto makes radical call to nonviolence

Church and Peace members the Evangelical Church in Baden and the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Germany have joined a radical call to active nonviolence. The Magdeburg Peace Manifesto 2017, published in May at the German Protestant Church Congress, urges churches to follow Jesus' path of nonviolence in all aspects of life and to work for lasting peace. Read the manifesto online (in German): http://bit.ly/2vo8qFB.

Switzerland

New director at Bienenberg

The Study and Conference Centre Bienenberg, a Church and Peace member, has a new director. Swiss Mennonite Conference copresident Lukas Amtstutz was installed as successor to Frieder Boller at a festive worship service on 12 May. Amstutz has led Bienenberg's German-language theological seminary since summer 2016. Boller, a Church and Peace individual member, is retiring after eight years as director.

Ukraine

Living peace in a conflict zone

Mennonite Central Committee is bringing together partner

organisations for peace training and dialogue in response to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Participants from "Light of the Gospel" churches have been serving people in need and working for peace. Half of these churches are in territory under government control and half are under a self-proclaimed independent republic. In living out their faith, they demonstrate nonviolence and peace building as the path to reconciliation and unity.

Germany & Switzerland

A childhood "away from arms"

Two Church and Peace members are supporting efforts by former child soldier Junior Nzita, Democratic Republic of Congo, to end

underage military service. With backing by the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Switzerland, Nzita has spoken in churches and schools, and featured in the documentary film "Loin des armes" (Away from arms – http://bit.ly/2u3Kjej). The schwelle Foundation has named Nzita one of the 2017 winners of its International Bremen Peace Award, to be conferred in November.

The Last Word

Empty tombs (of encouragement)

About the hope which arises out of confrontation

n the last chapter of Matthew's Gospel (28:1-10) two women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who were visiting Jesus' tomb, are encouraged: "Do not be afraid." These words of the

"Mary Magdalene and the other Mary are confronted by this place of death (tomb). This helps us to grasp that hope arises out of confrontation, not from looking away."

> angel and of the risen Christ were addressed to them when they found the empty tomb. The words are also addressed to us, because we repeatedly find ourselves in "empty tomb" situations: relationships which have died, social conditions which

are full of violence, or a graveyardlike atmosphere at church. The encouragement is found in the message that these empty tombs do not have the last word.

The message comes to us through the communication between the angel/the Risen One and the two women. The women are key figures in the mediation of the message. The trustful relationship the Risen One has with the women is part of the good news. Gender equality and trust in the women as messengers should set the standard for the quality of life and for trust in the competence of women today - a correcting factor in the face of misogynist attitudes in society and also in the Church.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary are confronted by this place of death (tomb). This helps us

to grasp that hope arises out of confrontation, not from looking away. The resurrection as truth is discovered during the time between day and night. This means that the truth is not black and white, but takes shape through a process of seeking which leaves room for doubt.

The tomb is empty; but when understood in the context of resurrection, suffering, emptiness, and death appear in a different perspective. The resurrection means that there is an "afterwards". This we hope for in faith, in the hour of suffering and death. Our hope rests in the promise of the Risen One. There is an afterwards; this is part and parcel of our faith and confidence in Jesus' promise. This perspective allows us to perceive and interpret suffering and the empty tomb as stages on the way through to the Light.

Seen in this light, work for peace and for a nonviolent future in the face of continued structural violence is good and right, meaningful and full of promise for the future.

Ana Raffai

Ana Raffai is a nonviolence trainer and an individual member of Church and Peace.

Abridged version of a sermon given during the AGM in Strasbourg. The complete sermon is available on the Church and Peace website: www.church-and-peace.org

