



Spring 2018

church and peace

Newsletter

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Britain and Ireland
regional day 2017

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new members

**Let us be on
our way!** – The
Pilgrimage of
Justice and Peace



Peace Church in a world of conflict?

Britain and Ireland regional day 2017

For the second time a group met at the Quaker-led Priory Rooms in Birmingham for a Church and Peace Britain and Ireland day gathering. The nearly 30 participants - a mix of Quakers, Anabaptists, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, independent, and "ecumenical" - struggled with the question of how to be true to our vocation as peace churches in a world where we sometimes feel that our message is not being heard and is regarded as impractical.

How can we lead faithful lives when all around us we see violence and conflict? How can we encourage and support one another to link belief and practice, to bring the Biblical call to nonviolence from the margins to the centre of the churches? And how can Church and Peace support this?

During the morning session, ably chaired by Marisa Johnson (General Secretary of the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation) we heard presentations from different religious traditions and each with a different focus.

Sue Claydon, Anglican Pacifist Fellowship (APF), focused on how cooperation with established churches is especially necessary in today's world. Contrary to the question posed for the day, her experience tells her that "our message is heard and it is practical".

Alexandra Elish, Anabaptist Network, concentrated on how to be a disciple of Jesus by elaborating on the core convictions of the network.

Retired Methodist minister Clive Fowle

shared about the practical and spiritual work involved in reconciliation in the Balkans where he often experienced that mentioning a church background would already trigger division.

Discussing the nature of our peace-making work in the UK, whether done in our denominational congregations, or through new structures, the speakers' responses emphasised the need for an ecumenical and interfaith approach. Nurturing connections to our supporters within the established church can be helpful for our peace work, but also some disillusionment with established churches was voiced and the feeling that we need to work with people who "catch the vision" and can inspire positive reactions.

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Church and Peace

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

Editorial team:

Lydia Funck, General Secretary, and
Terri Miller, Administrative Committee member

Church and Peace International Office

Mittelstraße 4, D-34474 Diemelstadt-Wethen
Tel: +49 5694 9905506, Fax: +49 5694 1532
IntlOffice@church-and-peace.org
www.church-and-peace.org

Translation and proofreading:

Gordon Matthews, Terri Miller

Layout: Benji Wiebe, mennox.de

Production: Marion Wiebe, mennox.de/it

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Pulling together

Dear friends of Church and Peace,

Various facets of the Church can be seen within the Church and Peace network. The members are bound together across Europe in their diverse engagement for peace and justice, in spite of differences in emphasis in their work and service.

In these pages you can get a sense of the individual threads which are woven together into a strong peace witness:

Participants in the Britain and Ireland regional day grappled with the question of how to answer the Biblical call to nonviolence and how to be a peace church in a world of conflict.

For 60 years EIRENE has been nurturing the peace spirituality of young people and promoting their active involvement in service for peace throughout the world.

Four new members from Belgium, Croatia, and Switzerland introduce themselves.

We take a look at Serbia, where TABITA, through a pre-school programme, promotes peace in the lives of the little ones, so that a "big" peace can grow.

Church and Peace is involved in ensuring that peace work in the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland goes beyond words and becomes concrete and practical.

Bound together in an ecumenical community, we celebrate the God of peace, justice, and reconciliation. And together we seek ways in which we can follow the call to peacemaking. So – holding onto the various threads running through the network – we join in campaigning against nuclear weapons and cycling for nonviolence, for example.

As we look forward to the 2018 international conference in the UK, we invite you to join us on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. We will then be able to strengthen local places of peace and weave them together into an even stronger network. And we will all pull together.

With best wishes,

Lydia Funck

*Peace Church in a world
of conflict?*

continued from page 1

Rather than ignoring the institutional church, we should persevere in engaging with it and not allow ourselves to become disempowered. The local congregations are possibly more important than a hierarchical institution.

Given that Remembrance Day was coming up, the White Poppy pin campaign supported by peace groups across the UK was discussed. Traditionally, a red poppy pin is worn in memory of armed forces who have died on duty in past wars. The White Poppy, an alternative symbolising pacifism, has now come into the mainstream, even being discussed on breakfast television. It was noted how irritating the aggressive and violent language used by critics of the White Poppy was, given the convictions the alternative pins express.

Participants agreed that the UK is not a peaceful country: we foment war and join in. But also in civil society, increasingly there is an underlying feeling of violence which offers many opportunities for peace churches to become active. In the middle of all activism, one should not forget the power and encouragement of prayer.

After small groups continued the conversations, the final plenary highlighted that in this time where it seems like less Christians in the UK are interested in peace, the upcoming Church and Peace international conference is a way

to build up momentum for a rich dialogue on just peace. And given the current situation in the UK, Church and Peace's pan-European dimension was welcomed.

Conflicts should not be avoided but transformed by relationships and we are looking forward to building more of these relationships when meeting again in June 2018.

Barbara Forbes

*Barbara is a member of the
Administrative Committee.*



The White Poppy

Since 1926 white poppies have been a pledge to peace that war must not happen again. The pins represent remembrance for all victims of war, a commitment to peace and a challenge to attempts to glamorise or celebrate war. They symbolise the conviction that there are better ways to resolve conflict than through the use of violence.

*Sue Claydon,
Marisa Johnson
and Alexandra
Ellish*



Photos: Barbara Forbes

Profile

Meet the members

At the Annual General Meeting in 2017, Church and Peace welcomed four new members. Learn about their hopes for the network and why they wanted to join.



Photo: YFCC

The YFCC team: Melanie Ivančević, Siniša Klem and Ruben Sečen

Youth for Christ Croatia

Find your way through an almost impenetrable Advent labyrinth or print the Bible with Gutenberg. In the city Rijeka, Youth for Christ Croatia (YFCC) is well known for its creative ideas, which make it possible to experience God through all the senses.

There was a lot of lively activity on YFCC's social media channels in October: Walls were being built, lighting installed, and display cases filled up. After everything was finished, project coordinator Melanie Ivančević led a video tour (see <http://bit.ly/REFOTour>) through the brightly-lit rooms of the interactive exhibition "REFO 500". On the occasion of the fifth centenary of the Reformation, YFCC was informing people in Croatia, which is mainly Roman Catholic, about Protestantism and the legacy of the Reformation.

School classes in particular could read the smallest Bible in the world under a microscope, listen to classical and contemporary church music, or – together with Gutenberg – print a verse from the Bible.

The progress made from copying the Bible using pen and ink to the printing press is now being overtaken by smartphone apps in the digital age. But the encouraging content of the Biblical message – calling us to work for peace and justice – remains the same. The exhibition includes a representation of the Church as a family tree, with various branches representing the different churches. Melanie sums up the presentation of the "tree": "Although we each have a different way of expressing our faith, we all share the same values."

YFCC brings believers of different denominations together in this way, works against stereotypes, and contributes to peace in the city. YFCC, which is firmly rooted in the local ecumenical environment, seeks and promotes exchange between Protestant and Catholic congregations and works together with other organisations such as Believers for Peace and the Intero Center, both of which have close links with Church and Peace.

Over the years young people from various churches have become friends and cooperated

with each other. "Observing this gradual growth of a new spirit and becoming aware that we, as YFCC, have contributed to this, is a very special gift," says Melanie. They feel encouraged to live out their peace witness through new projects and to organise spiritual journeys, such as an ecumenical football tournament during the ecumenical Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January.

Interested in organising a similar event? YFCC would be happy to advise you. Further information: mladizakrista@gmail.com.



Photo: Courtesy of Isabelle Eliat-Serck

Bruno Eliat und Isabelle Eliat-Serck

Isabelle Eliat-Serck and Bruno Eliat

*Walhain, Belgium
(Roman Catholic)*

We feel deeply inspired by Jean Goss's thoughts on nonviolence. We try to live our daily lives in a spirit

of nonviolence: chosen simplicity, hospitality and sharing our everyday life with Syrian refugees, concern for the environment, spiritual life that we try to embody in our commitments. In writing, giving workshops, conferences, involvements in the local Catholic church, several organisations and interreligious fellowships, we try to be present where the Lord calls us.

It is important to us to be members of Church and Peace because we are convinced of its prophetic meaning. To belong to a Christian, explicitly nonviolent movement is on our hearts, it motivates us, strengthens us and encourages us in our lives and involvements.

Julianne Funk

*Horgen, Switzerland
(Anglican and Mennonite)*

I am pleased to be part of the network because of the



Julianne Funk

communion, cooperation and discussion with like-minded peace activists. Church, to me, is both fundamentally community/family and also those who journey towards a shared destination.

Church and Peace provides the latter and is a group with whom I can share a goal and witness that I hope resonates with Jesus' - to undo systems of oppression and stand up for the most vulnerable and silenced.

As I have been working in the Western Balkans for more than a decade - first graduate research, then volunteering with local organizations via Brethren Voluntary Service -, I have much to share from my experience in the region, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina and with Muslims.

Neda (Nedeljka) Popović

Krk, Croatia

In me, there remains the need for a church, a community of people who share my values and are willing to receive and provide support and love for all.

Through my work at the Intero Center, together with my colleague, Michael Sečen, I learned that acceptance in love and nonviolence for all people are the way I want to go.



Photo: Ruben Sečen

Social justice, equality and inclusion is what I am working for and what I want to live for.

*Neda (Nedeljka)
Popović*

I have recognized these values in Church and Peace and that is why I want to be a part of this community and contribute to it.

Building “small peace” in Novi Sad

Just as the face of the Church is multifaceted and colourful, work for justice and peace takes different forms throughout the Church and Peace network. For TABITA, an organisation in Novi Sad, Serbia, this has meant helping to transform lives for members of one of Europe's most marginalised communities.

Of all the activities at the Mirić preschool in Novi Sad, Serbia, singing is Melisa's favourite.

The three-year-old lives in one of two Roma settlements next to the kindergarten. She and her friends spend four hours each day playing games which target their language and social skills.

Storytelling, reading, crafts, music, acting, outdoor activities, prayer and Bible stories interweave with fun games teaching about basic

hygiene, communicating politely and expressing emotions.

The Mirić project has emerged through the organisation TABITA's longtime work in the community.

Founded in 1992 by Church and Peace members Branka and Zelimir Srnec to distribute humanitarian aid indiscriminately to those in need in the war-stricken former Yugoslavia, TABITA has expanded its ministries over the years to include summer camps, seminars and peace-building and nonviolent communication courses for children and adults of different backgrounds.

During many years of distributing aid and giving training courses, a particularly vulnerable group came to TABITA's attention.

“We noticed that there was little

change achieved among the poorest people, namely, the Romani people who make up five per cent of Novi Sad's population,” says Kornelija Ceran, TABITA's project coordinator.

The Romani community, Europe's largest ethnic minority, experiences discrimination and marginalisation in many European countries including Serbia, according to Kornelija. One of society's most vulnerable groups, Roma are often blocked from accessing social services such as health, employment and adequate housing.

Education is a particular challenge. Barely a third of Romani children in regular elementary schools complete this level of education, and there is a high illiteracy rate among young adults.

Education as key

TABITA felt that early educational intervention could be key to transforming lives and breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation. “We decided to do something that would create a more lasting change for the Romani people in Novi Sad,” says Kornelija.

Enter “Mirić”, which means “small peace”. The preschool offers Romani children an equal educational start in life. Other activities such as football camps and workshops round out the programmes. In 2015 TABITA added an after-school programme for homework and studies.

Children
at TABITA's
football camp



***“Following Jesus’ example in living life in nonviolence and love brings transformation for oneself and the community.”
– Branka Srnc***

TABITA hopes that in the future more Romani young people will be able to finish school and earn a decent living, and that more educated Roma can take on leadership roles, bringing hope and change into their families and communities. They also hope to see more Roma transformed by the love of Jesus.

The project’s vision has an important core aspect, says Kornelija, that of working towards peace.

The Mirić project is central to TABITA’s peace witness as Kornelija and her colleagues build relationships in the community and accompany families in their day-to-day lives in this multi-religious context.

Though TABITA is an organisation rooted in Christian values and beliefs, people from any religious and ethnic backgrounds are welcome to benefit from their programmes.

TABITA hopes to enlarge its after-school programme.



“Many of the children come from Muslim families. Despite the differences, their parents have heard recommendations for our kindergarten and decided to trust us with their children, rather than having them attend public preschool.”

Life-changing dreams

Melisa’s older sister, Samanta is now in the after-school

programme and makes her mother very proud: “I never believed Samanta would be an A student, but now she is. Everything she knows, she’s learnt here.”

Singing is one of the activities at the Mirić preschool.

Such feedback encourages TABITA to continue its special brand of peace witness and to dream bigger life-changing dreams for the community.

Did you know?

Other Church and Peace members are serving Roma families as part of their peace witness:

- The Fellowship of the Lord’s People in Pristina, Kosova, runs the “House of Hope” for children and families. It aims to create a safe environment that builds the capacity of different social groups.
- Bread of Life in Belgrade, Serbia, provides home and health care for the elderly and improves children’s access to education.



60 years of nonviolent service for peace

"Just discussing theology wasn't going to be enough. What we learned had to be put into practice. That's why the international Christian peace service, EIRENE, was founded in 1957. The aim was to give young Christians the opportunity to undertake long-term voluntary service for peace." These words can be found in German in the history of Church and Peace published in 1999 and they underline the roots the two organisations share: active engagement in peace theology, advocacy for peace, and practical peacemaking.

In 2017 EIRENE celebrated 60 years of existence. The organisation has grown from small beginnings – when it even shared an office with Church and Peace for a while – into a peace service organisation which currently runs development cooperation and peace service projects in 17 countries. 29 staff work in the international office in Neuwied. And each year about 120 volunteers and specialist workers go to placements in various parts of the world.

"The opposite of war is not peace, but service for peace"

"The opposite of war is not peace, but service for peace." The work of EIRENE has always been guided by this motto coined by the sociologist of religion Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy. Nonviolence and respect for human dignity and for our global world are core values of service for peace which EIRENE personnel aim to live out in daily life and turn into practical reality through the organisation's programmes.

In recent years nonviolent conflict management has become a key



Photo: EIRENE

EIRENE has been sending out peace service volunteers and specialist workers for 60 years.

component of EIRENE's work in cooperation with partner organisations. The various areas of practical work include providing training for organisations which are promoting nonviolence in situations of escalating conflict; initiating dialogue; promoting human rights; and conflict-sensitive reporting.

Issues in peace education were the main focus of a specialist conference in October attended by representatives of partner organisations: How can we help children and young people who grow up in violent surroundings to understand alternatives to violence and gain relevant experience? The presentation of numerous practical examples led to intensive sharing. And as a result the participants took away valuable new ideas for their own work.

Given the large number of voluntary service organisations, EIRENE strives to keep enhancing its profile as a peace service organisation.

EIRENE has made a point of promoting the development of personal peacemaking skills. One key to this is peace spirituality – a personal attitude, lived out in

practice, which can be expressed in various ways and may be inspired by a variety of religions or worldviews. Peace spirituality can take many forms: meeting in silence, singing, praying, seeking mutual understanding through lively discussion, and wrestling to find common approaches to important issues.

One of EIRENE's main roots continues to be reflection on the nonviolent peace spirituality of the New Testament. This is a source of encouragement for all the various kinds of work which is done, and is spelled out in EIRENE's 2017 policy paper:

"Jesus says, 'Love your enemies'. (Mt 5:44) Our enemies are the people who pose the biggest threat to our lives. ... When he challenges people to love their enemies, he banks on the possibility of relationships being transformed. ... Jesus does not promise that such a transformation will take place. In his own experience, he was killed by the violence of his enemies. He nevertheless remained steadfast in loving his enemies."

Elisabeth Freise

Elisabeth is the treasurer of Church and Peace.

Diary**9-11 March & 25-27 May 2018****German-language peace theology seminar series***"Peace and justice embrace"**Laurentiuskonvent Laufdorf, near Wetzlar, Germany***21-24 June 2018****Church and Peace Annual General Meeting and international conference***"Justice and peace shall embrace" (Ps 85:10) - Journeying together for reconciliation in a fractured Europe**High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, UK***23-25 November 2018****German-language regional conference***"The way is the goal – Engaging with the UN Sustainable Development Goals"**Thomashof, Karlsruhe, Germany***Web Resources***Britain and Ireland regional day 2017***"Peace Church in a world of conflict?"**

Contributions by Sue Claydon and Alexandra Ellish

Church and Peace press releases

Download and share in your networks!

www.church-and-peace.org

Peace statement: "On the Way towards Just Peace"

In January 2018, on the occasion of the centenary of the end of the First World War, the Synod of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (EKiR) in Germany adopted a peace statement entitled "On the Way towards Just Peace". Congregations, church districts, and the regional church are called on to discuss the peace statement between now and 2021. The aim of the EKiR is to become a "just peace church".

The peace statement explains what this means: "To be a just peace church means working step by step to overcome the idea of war and military methods as a means of conflict resolution, as the 'ultima ratio'. Nonviolent solutions are possible. They are painful, since they affect our own interests, and especially our economic interests. They are lengthy and tedious and need to be painstakingly learned. But these are the resolutions that form a central theme throughout the Bible and are indeed a Biblical command." (Page 8)

Church and Peace is involved in the discussion process and is represented in the EKiR's peace working group by General Secretary Lydia Funck. So that the peace statement does not just remain a form of words, it includes a list of concrete recommendations for action. Two of these recommendations are: cooperation with the umbrella organisation Action Committee Service for Peace (AGDF) and also with Church and Peace; and support for the work of Church and Peace against increasing militarisation of the

European Union, e.g. through the re-allocation of funds for overseas development to military purposes.

Read the EKiR's peace statement (in German): <http://bit.ly/2Dy23nC>.

See Church and Peace press releases on the militarisation of the EU: <http://bit.ly/CPpress>.

Did you know?

Since the 1980s individuals and the Church and Peace network as a whole have significantly shaped the peace work of the EKiR's Braunfels Church District, where Laufdorf, long-time home of the International Office, is located. A lecture given in 1980 by Wilfried Warneck, the "founding father" of Church and Peace, led to the creation of the church district's peace working group.

Until recently, the working group was chaired by Martin Schuler, who was the executive director of Church and Peace for many years. The cooperation between the working group, the Laufdorf group of the Laurentiuskonvent, and Church and Peace has given the church district a distinctive profile within the regional church.



Stations of the Cross organised by the Braunfels Church District Peace Working Group.

UK

Event to explore Anabaptist pioneer's legacy

The UK Anabaptist Theology Forum on 11-12 April is exploring the writings and legacy of Alan Kreider, who played a key role in spreading the peace church vision in Britain. Alan, co-founder of the Anabaptist Network, died in May 2017. He and his wife Eleanor co-directed the former London Mennonite Centre for 16 years. Event host is Church and Peace member the Community of Reconciliation. Information: linda.wilson@blueyonder.co.uk, booking: administrator@menno.org.uk.

France

New MCC West Europe representatives

Mennonite Central Committee has new representatives for West Europe, based in Strasbourg. Since May 2017 Naomi and Douglas Enns have been drawing on MCC experiences in Chad, Lebanon and Syria to nurture relationships, facilitate spaces for dialogue and understanding, and encourage everyday peace builders in West Europe. Mennonite Central Committee, a founding member of Church and Peace, also has representatives in Europe in the Ukraine, with personnel in Bosnia- Herzegovina.



Network members part of Nobel Peace Prize winner ICAN

Church and Peace members are among the over 450 partner organisations of 2017 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Fellowship of Reconciliation branches in France and Italy, the Arche Community's nonviolent action coordination group CANVA and the Evangelical Church in Baden's Peace Ethics Forum (FFE) contributed to ICAN's efforts to achieve the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons adopted by the UN in July. Congratulations for this recognition of your work!



the Network

Germany

Cycling for a nonviolent Confessio Augustana

A cycle tour linking several way stations commemorating persecution of Anabaptists since the 16th century led to Wittenberg in mid-September last year. The cyclists symbolically returned Article 16 of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 to its origin, calling on the Evangelical Church in Germany to revise the article and remove historical legitimacy of persecution of Anabaptists. The German branch of the International Fellowship for Reconciliation, a Church and Peace corporate member, organised the tour.



TFFG FAPJ

Täuferisches Forum für Frieden und Gerechtigkeit
Forum Anabaptiste pour la Paix et la Justice

Switzerland

Christian responsibility for human rights

Speakers and participants at a day conference on 18 November organised by Church and Peace member Anabaptist Forum for Peace and Justice (TFFG) explored the topic "Human Rights and Christian Faith" from different perspectives. One conclusion was that it is our responsibility as Christians to protect human rights and ensure that they are respected. Download conference presentations and reports at: <https://friedenundgerechtigkeit.ch/?p=827>

Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia & Serbia

Signs of peace in South East Europe

On International Peace Day in September, youth from the organisation Ravangrad in Sombor, Serbia, took part in a peace march in Tuzla together with young people from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia to demonstrate the possibility of living together in the region without violence. Through the organisation they are active in their communities and work for peace, tolerance and the strengthening of civil society. Associate members Manda and Ivan Prising represent Ravangrad at Church and Peace.



The Last Word

Let us be on our way!

The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

The World Council of Churches' General Assembly in Busan (2013) called churches worldwide to embark on a shared Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, inviting "everyone of good will" to join. This endeavour builds on experiences of the Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation since the 1980s, the Ecumenical Decade - Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), the Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010) and the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation on Just Peace in Kingston (2011).

This Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace is the road we need to travel, this is the Way we are the people of, this is the path we walk on because of our faith. It requires a spiritual journey that enables churches to be transformed – in order to be equipped to bring about change in an unjust and violent world.

We are called to action in four contexts identified in the

ecumenical dialogue on just peace:

- Peace in the community (local level)
- Peace in the market place (economic order)
- Peace with creation (sustainability)
- Peace between the peoples (international level)

There is work to be done to build the Kingdom here and now!

Antje Heider-Rottwilm and I will participate in the General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) on 30 May-6 June 2018 in Novi Sad on behalf of Church and Peace. There we will share about the just peace witness and the nonviolence commitment happening across the network. Also, we will contribute to hearings on the work of the two CEC working groups we are members of: "Peacebuilding and Reconciliation" and "Economic and Ecological Justice".

Under the General Assembly theme, "Witness, Justice and

Hospitality" CEC's 2016 Open Letter on the future of Europe, which we responded to as Church and Peace, will also be discussed.¹

There are obvious tensions around justice, solidarity and hospitality between different parts of Europe today. Moreover, there is growing concern whether Europe remains a peace project. Churches must address these questions by asking: "Are we consistently witnessing to just peace?"

The next Church and Peace AGM and international conference on 21-24 June 2018 near London will focus on the ecumenical perspective on just peace and its role in a fractured Europe in need of reconciliation. We will reflect on the promise in Psalm 85:10: "Justice and peace shall embrace."

With these way stations, both CEC and Church and Peace journey together and become part of the wider Pilgrimage. Let us be on our way as pilgrims of just peace!

Kees Nieuwerth

Kees is a member of the Administrative Committee.

¹ Read Church and Peace's response to the Open Letter on the future of Europe: <http://bit.ly/2DZmydP>.



Photo: Albin Hilbert/WCC