



Newsletter

AGM 2019

Future and Hope

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New Members

Appeal

World without
Nuclear Weapons



Photo: Ruben Sečen

Future and Hope

Anniversary Celebration and International Conference 2019

This summer some 150 people from ten different Christian traditions and 14 countries met to mark the 70th anniversary of the European ecumenical network Church and Peace. Representatives of peace churches, organisations, communities; friends; guests – all gathered on 18 May in the Reformation Church of Moabit in Berlin to celebrate the network's past, present and future.

Under the theme, "I will give you future and hope" (Jeremiah 29:11) - 70 years of living nonviolence and resisting militarisation, Church and Peace gathered in Berlin. The challenges have changed since the founding era but peace work is needed just as urgently.

Eight member organisations presented their work for a more just and peaceful society and added flowers to a bouquet in a symbolic act highlighting the

network's rich diversity of peace witness across Europe.

Past general secretaries recalled some of the association's key moments during their respective times in office. There were heartfelt greetings from German political dignitaries, ecumenical friends and peace organisations recognising Church and Peace's commitment to peace and reconciliation over the past seven decades.

Three reflections during the ecumenical worship service explored the gathering's biblical theme. Martina Basso, Berlin Mennonite Peace Centre, highlighted the challenge of needing stamina to wait for fulfilment of the text's promise; Mihael Sečen, Intero Centar Rijeka, the encouragement not to be slowed down or stopped by the fear of not being adequate but rather to take heart in the promise that God makes to Jeremiah;

and Maria Biedrawa, International Fellowship of Reconciliation France, the experience that encounters between people of different opinions, religions, denominations or worldviews bring future and hope and can lead to living in peace (read more on page 12).

The evening programme focused on what is needed for peace in Europe and beyond, and the role peace churches can play. Six speakers highlighted the following points:

- Broadening alliances: In times of increasing secularisation we should explore new partnerships in our action for peace and justice and fresh ways to step up our campaigning;
- Climate justice: We are the last generation that can change the course of ongoing climate destruction, so we need to fully commit to the cause with our lifestyles

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Church and Peace

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

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Be the Change

Dear readers,

How are we to move forward in the face of climate crisis, the (nuclear) arms race, bleak job prospects (in particular for young people), exclusory centres of power and increasingly divided societies? These were the questions the Church and Peace Annual General Meeting wrestled with this summer. Yet, despite the many challenging and often overwhelming issues, we are called not to give up hope, but to commit ourselves to, and work at building, God's just future.

'Do not worry', Jesus says in chapter 6 of the Gospel of Matthew. He does not mean that we should not concern ourselves with the sorrows of the world, but rather he encourages us to continue walking forward, trusting in God. One of the speakers at the anniversary celebration also encouraged the listeners, with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi: 'Be the change you wish to see in this world!'

In this issue of the newsletter you will read how we, members and friends of Church and Peace, have set out and are setting out, in confidence in God's promise in Jeremiah 29 and full of hope, to shape our common future and change it for the better. Whether engaging in peace education, protest against weapons including nuclear arms, interreligious dialogue or the ongoing work needed to challenge power structures and stand up for justice, Christians are called to be guided by the nonviolence of Jesus.

Happy reading! Comments and feedback are most welcome.

With best wishes,

Lydia Funck

Berlin 2019

continued from page 1

- Opposition to nuclear weapons: Seeing the long-term harm and suffering caused by nuclear weapons in the past pushes us as peace churches to increase efforts to protest against nuclear arms (and militarisation in general);
- Interreligious dialogue and cooperation: Peace churches can play a vital role by being in dialogue with other groups in society with a focus on our common values and commitment to peace;
- Building an inclusive peace church: To build a church with a culture and identity of peace, a church which is living out a costly identification with the oppressed, we must model a more inclusive narrative and peace movement by practicing solidarity with others.

Workshops unpacked these topics, proposing future steps for the network and European peace churches. These action points are to shape discussion to guide

continued action for peace and justice in Europe today.

At the end of the gathering, Church and Peace AGM participants joined the '1 Europe for All' demonstration in Berlin as a sign of their commitment to the European peace project, speaking out against nationalism.

Read more from the anniversary celebration at www.church-and-peace.org/en/documents/international-conference-2019/.



Photo: Ruben Sečen

Henk Blom, Kerk en Vrede, adds to the bouquet symbolising the diverse witness for peace within the network.

Speakers, 'What is needed for peace in Europe and beyond?'

- Steve Rauhut, REFO Moabit, Berlin
- Rebecca Froese, research fellow, Peace Academy Rhineland-Palatinate, Hamburg
- Yasser Almaamoun, Centre for Political Beauty, Berlin
- Nadežda Mojsilović, interreligious projects coordinator, Youth Centre 'John Paul II', Sarajevo
- Andreas Zumach, journalist, Geneva
- Andrew Lane, Quaker Council for European Affairs, Brussels

Guests bringing greetings

- Dr. Volker Berresheim, Ambassador for Religion and Foreign Policy, Federal Foreign Office, Berlin
- Dr. Dr. h.c. Markus Dröge, Bishop, Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia, Berlin
- Catherine Tsavdaridou, Ecumenical Patriarchate, Conference of European Churches
- Jan Gildemeister, Executive Director, Action Committee Service for Peace, Bonn



Photo: Uwe Hlksch

Rounding off the weekend with a display of solidarity across borders, languages and faiths at the '1 Europe for All' demonstration. 'That, after all, is what Church and Peace is all about,' said one participant.

Berlin 2019

For a World without Nuclear Weapons

On the 74th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945, Church and Peace issued the appeal 'For a world without nuclear weapons'. As proposed by conference participants in Berlin, it called on Christian churches and communities throughout Europe to advocate to their governments to adopt a strong stance in favour of the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty.



Photo: DFG-YK

historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW, Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty), adopted on 7 July 2017 and since signed by over 70 states, needs continuing and unequivocal public support from worldwide ecumenism and as many churches and denominations as possible.

Therefore, in its appeal Church and Peace calls on Christian churches and communities throughout Europe to:

- Call their respective government to become a party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW);
- Strengthen individuals committed to peace and disarmament and related church, civil society and political initiatives through prayer, public statements and active participation;
- Support people of goodwill committed to complete nuclear disarmament for humanitarian reasons, e.g. ICAN, Mayors for Peace, the medical organisation IPPNW, and the Red Cross;
- Assist victims of the Balkan wars who are ill due to exposure to radioactive uranium ammunition and raise awareness of this issue;
- Call on their national governments to work within the European Union for a new multilateral agreement involving the United States and Russia to ban the deployment of short- and medium-range missiles in Europe.

Read the full text of the appeal, including extensive background information: www.church-and-peace.org/en/2019/08/appeal-world-without-nuclear-weapons/.

Peace festival against nuclear weapons on 7 July 2019 in Büchel, Germany

The appeal notes how non-proliferation agreements are being cancelled and a new nuclear arms race is on the rise, stating: 'We are alarmed by the current dangers posed by nuclear weapons and radioactive munitions in Europe and the risks of a nuclear war.' It highlights that 'the doctrine of nuclear deterrence has nothing to do with national defence or violence sanctioned by the state, forms of violence which, in most churches, are recognised as ethically legitimate. Nuclear deterrence constitutes an extremely inhumane threat, contrary to international law.'

The network lifts up the work of the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), supported by many church and civil society organisations, for an international agreement to fill gaps in international law by prohibiting 'the development, testing, production, transport, storage, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons'. The network underlines that the resulting

Church and Peace Member Activities

- Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, UK, provides a focus for Christians who want to witness on the basis of their faith against nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, while also positively advocating for peace within the broader Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.
- Different members, some directly affected, give eyewitness reports on the still visible consequences of the use of radioactive uranium ammunition in the former Yugoslavia.
- Churches and peace groups held a particularly vibrant protest against nuclear weapons on 7 July at the peace festival they organize annually in Büchel, Germany. Church and Peace members also took part in speeches, an ecumenical service and other activities.

Berlin 2019

Daring to Get Personal?

Interreligious Dialogue in a Changing Europe

The workshop on interreligious dialogue at the 2019 Church and Peace conference resonated deeply for me. What left the biggest impression was how differently the level at which we engage such challenges depends on our country, and how much this determines our approach – activist or personal.

For us in the South Eastern Europe region, interreligious dialogue is not a question of activism, but is foremost a question of interpersonal relationship – with a neighbour, co-worker, family member. The strong impression I got from the workshop was that this is only now becoming a topic in Western Europe.

How can we be in dialogue, friendship or love with those who are so different from us?

I guess this question is easier to answer if it doesn't concern me personally, my neighbourhood or family. It is easier to stand behind

an organisation or church and carry out the programme it has.

In our region, this is a possibility we never had. So, how much can we connect within Church and Peace to better understand everyday life? It's the same with the topic of future and hope which was the overarching topic of the conference, and which can be of substantial help for us. It seems that we can have the greatest chance for a peaceful future, and the biggest hope for a better tomorrow, if we take into consideration all of those who are around us.

It sounds so simple, but is it?

It seems easier to fight for human rights if these do not concern me personally. It gives the necessary detachment to be as little emotionally involved as possible. But is this something we can afford within interreligious dialogue while the face of Europe is changing, while what was, is no longer, while



Neda Popović

people of different faiths, like Muslims, are becoming members of our families, our neighbourhoods?

Understandably, the first answer is fear. But what we are afraid to acknowledge is our fear of those who are different because we are not sure how others will react, if we will be judged because of our fear. We are often afraid to face this fear; we don't ask questions that we agonize over, we don't admit there are things we don't understand. As a consequence, fear grows. It loves silence.

How much am I prepared to face this challenge, how much are we as an organization ready to face it? Do I, do we have the courage to express our fear and ask the tough questions? Or is this question too hard and brings fear?

Neda Popović,
a Church and Peace individual member, works with the Intero Center in Rijeka, Croatia.



Workshop on the topic of interreligious dialogue

Photos: Ruben Sečen

Berlin 2019

Meet the Members

At the AGM 2019 Church and Peace welcomed two groups and three individuals as new members.

Stop Fuelling War

Stop Fuelling War/Cessez d'Alimenter la Guerre (SFW) was welcomed as associate member.

Stop Fuelling War/Cessez d'Alimenter la Guerre is a Paris-based open membership association founded by concerned European Quakers. We aim to raise awareness about the disastrous consequences of the worldwide arms trade through all types of media and peaceful protest.

At the same time, we promote peacebuilding alternatives to ensure long lasting and just peaceful solutions, which we believe will not only save lives but is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. As France is the world's third largest arms seller, our primary focus is on Eurosatory, which hosts the world's



Photo: Kim Chevalier

Engaging members of the public.

largest arms fair in Paris.

The individuals who are at the core of SFW feel led to do this work. We cherish our faith contacts to keep us grounded in the Spirit and to stay optimistic. At Church and Peace, we found like-minded allies for

our concern and witness for peace across Europe.

The next Eurosatory will take place 8–12 June 2020. SFW is already planning for activities there and invites the network to join this work for a world without arms. For updates and resources, visit www.stopfuellingwar.org.

Societal transformation in practice

At the end of May, REFO Moabit organized the Néapolis Festival. Through the festival's vibrant marketplace, workshops, seminars on wellness and reflection, and the 'Podium Party Peace' visitors had a taste of what life together in diversity, shaped by personal freedom and successful cooperation, could be like.



Photo: Johanna Lehmeier

REFO Moabit

The Reformation Campus - Community at the Reformation Church (REFO Moabit) was welcomed as corporate member.

As a young community of 35 people, REFO Moabit creates a place where culture, faith and lived solidarity are closely linked. Since 2011 we have been bringing new life into the abandoned

Reformation church of Berlin's Moabit neighbourhood and are developing new approaches to living and rethinking Protestant spirituality in the urban context.

We come together monthly to nurture fellowship and faith. On the basis of our faith we also want to work on the REFO campus and in the neighbourhood beyond to transform society and overcome social, cultural and religious barriers. This is our peace witness.

As changing perspectives beyond our local community and networking are also key in this endeavour to live and worship as an urban peace church, we have sought a European connection with Church and Peace.

Visit REFO Moabit's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/RefoMoabit or website at www.refo-moabit.de for Néapolis Festival highlights and information about worship services and other events.



Photo: Ruben Sečen

Maria Biedrawa

Roman Catholic, lives in Compiègne, France

'A social pedagogue and graduate of the peace diaconate training programme of *gewaltfrei handeln*, I have been working in Sub-Saharan Africa for 15 years with churches and interreligious groups in nonviolent conflict resolution and reconciliation, as well as accompanying populations traumatised by armed conflict. I am a member of the French branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Ark Community and currently serve on the Board of Church and Peace.'



Photo: Ruben Sečen

Kristina Bulling

Evangelical Church of Bremen, lives in Bremen, Germany

'Since 1988, I have been in touch with Church and Peace and [have] tried to put the nonviolence of Jesus into practice in my life. As a member of the Threshold Foundation – *die Schwelle*, I have accompanied people and projects in Croatia and Bosnia since the war ended. From 2004 until 2009 I was a member of the Board of Church and Peace. In my church I am actively involved in work against armament and for people on the margins of society.'



Photo: private

Tony Weekes

Quaker, lives in Belfast, Northern Ireland

'A retired academic economist, I teach an adult education class in Dublin on "demystifying economics". I work with the local Methodist church to promote Public Theology – the idea that our religious life must inspire our responsibilities to creation and to civil society. The Quaker heritage of "speaking out" and active community engagement are a great encouragement to me.'

Peace for a New Generation

Church and Peace is a meeting place, a space to support and learn from others on the peace church journey – sometimes a lonely path. Here Quakers Diana and John Lampen from the Britain and Ireland region tell of a peacebuilding visit to South East Europe which resulted from one such network meeting place.

We met Faton and Kajmelina Berisha, leaders of Victory Church in Gjakove, Kosovo, at the Church and Peace International Conference in the UK in 2018, where we gave a workshop on teaching peace skills to children.

Victory Church was started by a small group after the Kosovo War. It belongs to Kosovo Protestant Evangelical Church, now officially recognised as a religious community.

Victory Church's ministry to the dispossessed, regardless of their faith, has won acceptance in their community. They run a dynamic youth programme in the city and surrounding villages. After attending our workshop at the Church and Peace conference, Faton and Kajmelina invited us to visit and offer new and practical ways to include peace education and conflict resolution in their programme.

We first worked with the Youth Team and the interpreters to give them an understanding of our approach. Then, for four days we engaged with enthusiastic groups of youngsters aged between six



Photo: John Lampen

Children in Victory Church's youth programme use the Tree People drawing to talk about their feelings.

and 16 from different faith groups, including Muslim Roma.

We use active fun games to practice the skills of communication, co-operation and mutual respect. For example, we ask pairs to link hands and try to bring one another across a line. Invariably they begin to tug at each other, resulting in stalemate or a sole 'winner'. Once this is pointed out, they don't find it difficult to discover a win-win solution. One exercise demonstrates the toxic effects of blame; another enables people to understand their opponent's point of view.

We were astonished how often even the youngest children, new to this way of learning, could pinpoint the significance of each game. When we put them in pairs, one blindfolded and one a guide, a six-

year-old spontaneously told us that it was all about trust. And when we used a bottle of fizzy water to talk about anger, they were able at once to explain the connection.

Kosovo is still grappling with many problems and tensions. We hope we have given the Victory Church Youth Team models to contribute to a brighter and more harmonious future. We had great fun with them, and the best of welcomes and support.

Diana and John Lampen have been involved in peace work in many places, including Northern Ireland during the Troubles, the former Yugoslavia and USSR, and England's West Midlands region.

#NonviolenceWorks

The German Protestant Kirchentag (DEKT) took place on 19-23 June in Dortmund under the motto, 'What confidence is this' (2 Kings 18:19). A focus of Church and Peace participation was the International Peace Centre, which emphasised that nonviolence works.

The #NonviolenceWorks campaign aims to collect stories showing how nonviolence makes a difference in conflict resolution. Drawing on this premise, the International Peace Centre featured peace church voices from Europe and around the world, including members of Church and Peace.

A Peace Centre panel discussion showcased successful nonviolent action for peace, justice and reconciliation. In other events, Stop Fuelling War lifted up the link between global conflict and (European) arms exports, while Christian Peacemaker Teams presented their work on Lesbos, Greece, and their strategies to undo oppression and overcome structural violence.

Church and Peace members also engaged participants at the Market of Opportunities: Laurentiuskonvent, German Yearly Meeting (Quaker), EIRENE, the base community Wulfshagenerhütten.

On 22 June, network members joined 2,500 people who, in a long human peace chain, took to the streets at DEKT to call for disarmament, implementation of the UN Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty and stronger instruments of nonviolent, civilian conflict resolution.

Are you convinced that nonviolence works? Share your experiences with us and on social media using the hashtag #NonviolenceWorks! And check out the campaign video (https://youtu.be/7i6T_XloKUK) which features Church and Peace member Ana Raffai reporting on her work with RAND in Croatia.

In Other News:

- From 27 to 30 June, 200 Anabaptists met for the **Second Global Mennonite Peacebuilding Conference (2GMP)** in Elspeet, the Netherlands. Participants explored theological, academic, practical and artistic aspects of peacebuilding and launched the Global Anabaptist Peace Network. Dutch Church and Peace members also met to begin planning the AGM 2020.
- Did you know **Church and Peace is on Instagram**? Follow us at www.instagram.com/

church_and_peace to see DEKT and 2GMP photos.

- You can now read and share the **Church and Peace newsletter in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian!** Download the last two issues (PDF) online or order them from the International Office and spread the word in your networks.

Diary

5-7 November 2019

Church and Peace Board meeting

Laufdorf, Germany

5-7 February 2020

Church and Peace Board meeting

22 February 2020

Britain and Ireland Regional Day

'The real cost of war' (working title)

Bull Street Quaker Meeting House, Birmingham, UK

15-17 May 2020

Annual General Meeting and international conference

Dopersduin, Schoorl, the Netherlands

27-29 November 2020

German-language regional conference

Thomashof, Karlsruhe, Germany



Web Resources

2019 Anniversary Celebration documentation

Greetings and sermon reflections

Church and Peace press releases

Download and share in your networks!

www.church-and-peace.org/en/documents/



Human peace chain in Dortmund Photo: Julia Freund

The Netherlands

Playing for Peace

A new resource from Church and Peace member Doopsgezind WereldWerk is assisting young and old to learn nonviolence and practice peace in a fun, playful way. The toolkit, for home use and with schools, churches or other groups, includes non-competitive games, instructions and workshop materials. Request an informational flyer with links to the games or borrow the complete toolkit in English or Dutch for a modest fee: secretariaat@dgwereldwerk.nl.



UK

No Thanksgiving for Nuclear Weapons

Church and Peace members and friends in the UK co-organised an alternative witness to the National Service of Thanksgiving hosted by Westminster Abbey on May 3 to celebrate 50 years of nuclear sea weapons. Participants prayed for the UK to disarm its nuclear weaponry and support global disarmament efforts. Associate member the Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (Christian CND) coordinated a statement of concern from Anglican clergy worldwide.



Germany

2019 International Bremen Peace Award

Church and Peace member the *schwelle* Foundation is awarding its 2019 International Bremen Peace Prize to Olga Karatch (Belarus), Vilma Nuñez (Nicaragua) und Women Wage Peace (Israel and Palestine). The biennial award honours extraordinary work to promote justice, peace and integrity of creation. Members and friends of the network are warmly invited to attend the award ceremony in the Bremen Town Hall on 15 November. Contact: petra.titz@dieschwelle.de. More about the prize winners: www.dieschwelle.de/en/peace-award/peace-award-2019



France

Quakers Urge Review of French Arms Exports

Church and Peace member France Yearly Meeting (Quaker) has called for a stop to French arms sales to Saudi Arabia in light of the UK court of appeal ruling in June that such British arms exports are unlawful. French Quakers are urging a general review of the arms industry in France and in particular of French policy of arming the Gulf state. Communique in French: www.quakersenfrance.org/nos-communiques-2



the Network

**Europe*****Save the European Peace Project***

A broad alliance of peace groups, including co-initiator Church and Peace, is submitting the appeal 'Save the European Peace Project!' to new European Parliament members on 19 November. Eight Church and Peace member groups are also among the more than 20,000 individuals and 110 organisations from 12 European countries calling legislators to support a Europe that stands for peace and human rights rather than militarisation.

**Germany/Global*****Churches Show Solidarity with Fridays For Future***

Church and Peace has signed the 'Churches for Future' appeal launched by the Ecumenical Network Climate Justice in Germany in May in solidarity with the global 'Fridays for Future' movement. Churches are asked to pray and offer support to students striking on Fridays to demand concrete action on climate change from their governments. Read the call online : www.t1p.de/churches4future.

Europe/Global***Religions for Peace***

The peace church voice was raised as some 900 religious leaders gathered for the Religions for Peace World Assembly in August in Germany. Church and Peace General Secretary Lydia Funck, Andrew Lane (Quaker Council of European Affairs) and Fernando Enns (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) contributed to exploration of the theme, 'Caring for our common future – Advancing shared well-being'. Read Assembly commitments in the final declaration: www.t1p.de/RfPeace2019.

Religions for Peace 

Germany***Dresden Peace Declaration***

Ecumenical Information Centre Dresden, a Church and Peace member, co-authored the Peace Declaration 2019 issued by Dresden churches this spring. Linking to commemoration of the start of the Second World War in 1939 and the end of the Ecumenical Assembly for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in the former East Germany in 1989, 'On the Way to a Church of Justice and Peace' calls for peace education, civilian conflict resolution and peace witness by churches. Declaration in German: www.friedenswort.de

**Europe*****CEC Peace Conference 2019***

Church and Peace Chair Antje Heider-Rottwilm spoke on 'Europe's Peace Vocation and the Role of Security and Peace' at the Conference of European Churches (CEC) Peace Conference in Paris on 10-12 September. 60 participants from CEC member churches and organisations in partnership – including Church and Peace – met to mark CEC's founding 60 years ago as a reconciliation project of the churches, initiated by the Orthodox, and the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty in 1919. Download conference contributions: www.ceceurope.org/documents-from-2019-cec-peace-conference-2.



The Last Word

Encounter Brings a Future with Hope

Four days ago I returned from the Central African Republic. I've been there regularly since the crisis in 2013 which brought the country to the edge of genocide. Even today 80 percent of the country is still exposed to armed violence daily. While naturally the crisis had political and economic causes, it triggered massacres by militia who invoked their mainly Christian or Muslim background. How do the biblical texts in Revelations 21:1-5a and Jeremiah 29:11 resonate for me with these impressions of the past weeks?

It seems to me that the texts are talking about four phases.

First comes the time of violence: death, mourning, crying, sorrows and then the painful awakening: The horses and wagons, all of the weapons were an illusion – an illusion to think they would bring peace.

Next comes the hour of truth: Violence has been multiplied, sorrow deepened; we have been led to the edge of the abyss. And many fall into this abyss. Where weapons – the majority from Europe – are taken up, people recognise the failure of violence. It is the phase in which we must denounce this violence. But what guarantee do we have that the hope and future which the living God promises us are not also an illusion, a product of our own despair and longing?

The third phase: plucking up our courage and proclaiming in word and deed. The Roman Catholic



parish, Our Lady of Fatima in Central African Bangui is only a few steps away from the large Muslim market and mosque. Since 2013 the church grounds have been a constant sanctuary for internally displaced people, Christian and Muslim. There are Islamic radicals in this neighbourhood for whom this solidarity is a thorn in the flesh. The church has experienced three terrorist attacks, the latest on May 1st, 2018 during a mass; 20 people were killed and 200 severely injured. Yes, this was the hour of crying, suffering, mourning and then the time of fear, which still paralyses some today. Yet, despite these experiences of violence, a House of Encounter will be inaugurated there this autumn to give space for traditional music, dance, literature, art and film.

Fourth phase: the foretaste of God washing away all tears, death being no more, all mourning, crying and pain passing away. A Central African friend of mine – an imam – and I were discussing this day on which there will be no more death or

violence. I told him, 'I would like to be able to share this Paradise with you.' 'Do you know what Paradise is for us?' he responded. 'Another name for Paradise is "House of Encounter".'

It is such encounters which tear us away from hopelessness and a belief in the fate of violence. These encounters are what bring hope and the future to life.

Encounter – this is the holy city, the new Jerusalem. The foretaste of the wedding, the celebration of mutual love, the covenant. Encounter is God dwelling among the peoples (Rev. 21:3).

Maria Biedrawa is a peace deacon and a Church and Peace Board member.

Abridged version of a sermon reflection given at the anniversary celebration in Berlin. The complete text is available at: www.church-and-peace.org/en/documents/international-conference-2019/.