



Newsletter

Britain and Ireland
The real cost of war

Eyewitness report
No faith in war

Schoorl 2020
Images of God
and nonviolence



Photo: Barbara Forbes

Lasagne, cabbage, and the real cost of war

2020 Britain and Ireland Regional Day in Birmingham

'The layers of conflict are like layers of lasagne, which start to penetrate each other as soon as you put them into the oven.' This striking description is only one of the memorable moments of Maria Biedrawa's keynote talk at this year's Britain and Ireland Regional Day, organised in collaboration with Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR).

Maria, a member of FoR and the Church and Peace Board, started the day by telling us about her experiences in the Central African Republic (CAR). The French post-colonial power described the violence which erupted in 2013 as an 'inter-religious conflict close to genocide' and sent in troops 'to protect civilians'. Fighting locally really stopped after leading religious figures walked into the fight unarmed to underline their trust in nonviolence. A closer look, however, revealed that political reasons and corruption were another layer of

the conflict. UN troops came in – again 'for civilian protection' – but fighting continued. There were thousands of refugees and internally displaced people, reports of child prostitution in the refugee camps, and recruitment of vulnerable youth.

Then comes the economic layer attracting American, Arab, Chinese, French and Russian interests. The CAR is rich in oil and minerals and geographically important for east-west transit. Human rights and freedom of speech are vanishing, the education system has broken down. The effects of war become the causes of new conflict and, as always, it is the 'ordinary people' who bear the biggest burden. Big and rich NGOs step in and life becomes very expensive, even unaffordable. A woman from a village whose markets had collapsed, was delighted to find presents for her children in a town with a market –

two cabbages and a kilo of potatoes. This, said Maria, is 'the real cost of war'.

So why should this concern us? We feel helpless, but we are part of the tradition of religions who can broker peace because they know the local situation intimately and they are trusted. Maria works with local faith-based groups who want to bring about truth telling, prevention of new violence and, one day, reconciliation.

In workshops, participants could go into more depth in conversation with Maria and could also look at other costs of war. Bridget Walker (Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network) examined the way borders around the world are being militarised to stop refugees from seeking safety; Europe's borders are being 'protected' by arms-trading corporations with EU contracts. She challenged

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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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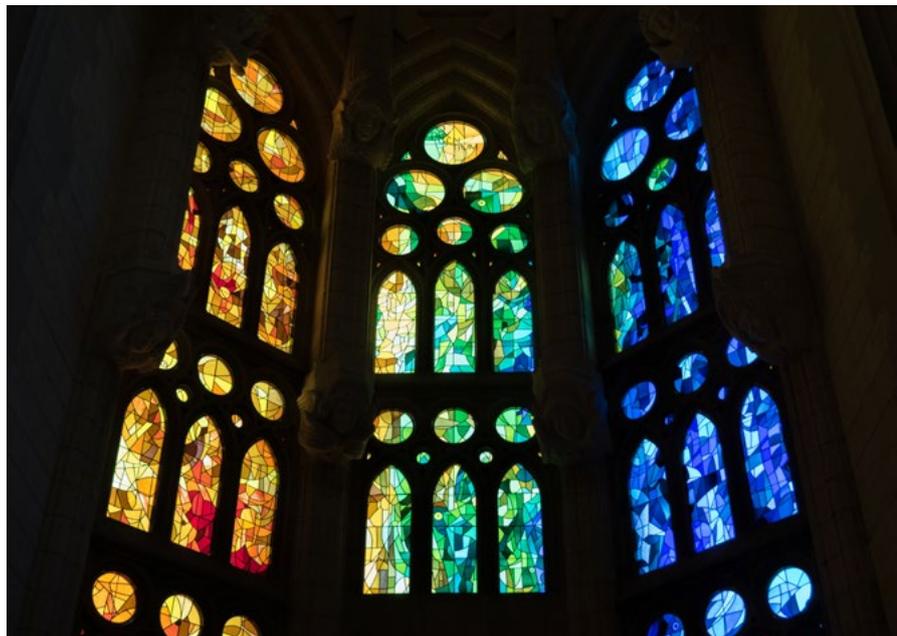
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Dear Readers,

Time and again I am surprised by the beauty of mosaic windows. How the individual pieces of glass are each such a different size and colour. How they each add their own part to a larger whole. How rays of light shine through the glass and create a joyful play of colour on the ground.

This reminds me of the colourful peace witness of Christians in Europe and worldwide which lets the light of God shine into the present and creates a warm diversity. Each individual, each church and community, through their engagement for peace, is a mosaic piece. All of these come together in a wonderful work of art which makes visible God's presence.

In this issue of the newsletter you'll learn about some examples of this engagement by Church and Peace. About the Britain and Ireland regional day exploring the real cost of war, a peace theology seminar about the relationship between Church and State, an encouraging

protest against arms fairs in Europe. We look back on the witness of Brethren Service, which closed its Geneva office at the end of 2019, and on inter-religious encounter in Taizé.

An interview with Antje Heider-Rottwilm gives an introduction to the topic of this year's international conference, 'Images of God and nonviolence', on 15-17 May in the Netherlands.

Happy reading! As always, comments and feedback are welcome.

With best wishes,

Lydia Funck

Thank you!

We would like to thank you for all your support! Our work is financed primarily through donations and we are grateful to all of our donors, both old and new.

The real cost of war
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us to resist the discourse of fear and containment and to protect people, not borders – reminding us of the injunction in Numbers 15:15, 16.

Stuart Parkinson (Scientists for Global Responsibility) shocked us with the statistics of the carbon footprint of the military – the UK produces an estimated 13 million tonnes of CO₂e annually and the USA 340 million tonnes, while the ‘War on Terror’ produced an estimated 3 billion tonnes. This is without taking into account the CO₂ emissions of digital technology and cyber-warfare. Stuart also reminded us that campaigning to reduce the military’s carbon footprint could accelerate the move towards remote warfare.

So what did we take from this day filled with images, stories, facts



‘As people of faith and networks of intentionally religious peacemakers we are part of something bigger.’

and figures? Participants variously commented that there is a spiritual benefit to being part of a minority, and that looking into dark corners of the system can bring light. We must make a commitment not to collude by being silent. Great energy can be produced by being

intentionally religious – we are activists *because* we are people of faith. And above all, through our networks and webs of friends and contacts, we are part of something much bigger.

Barbara Forbes

is a Quaker and member of the Church and Peace Board.

Download workshop handouts at:
www.church-and-peace.org/en/regional-conferences



Photos Barbara Forbes

Participants discuss the militarisation of European borders.

No faith in war

Last September, while the government and organisers in London set up the second biggest arms fair in Europe, many gathered to state that they have 'No faith in war'. The Fellowship of Reconciliation UK (FoR,) as well as many other Church and Peace members and friends were amongst them. John Cooper, Director of the Fellowship, recalls his experiences.



Photo: Church and Peace

Worship at the 'No faith in war' day continues while police begin arresting protesters.

Warfare in all its forms is an affront to a Christian understanding of how the world should be. Events that lead to businesses making a profit from weapons of war should not engender only lament, but also outrage and prophetic action. That wish to take action is what drew us, protesters from the UK and beyond, to the streets outside the ExCeL Centre in London. We wished to use our prayers and our bodies to stop lorries and trucks entering with the latest weapons and military equipment to display, sell and buy. Our presence was a reminder to the organisers that the cargo the trucks carried wasn't welcome.

UK civil society had organised a week of action, and we were there

for 'No faith in war', the day which brought together people of many faiths to speak out about their moral and religious reasons for objecting to the fair. At the core of the day was a powerful act of collective witness by the Quakers.

Few people who were there will ever forget that afternoon meeting for worship. As the police closed in and tried to shut down the worship, over 200 people sat in silence, broken only by the sounds of lorries and the police, and occasionally participants standing up to minister. The silence was enticing, but when the meeting was cleared a truly transformative moment happened. As people were taken into custody the gathering broke into song, upholding and cheering each

person as they made their personal decision to get arrested. Whether we ourselves ended up in chains, our wider witness was one of love and support.

United as believers that day, we spoke out against militarism, toxic masculinity, racism and the destruction of the environment as underlying cross-cutting oppressions that lay the foundations of violence and conflict.

Working for peace today it can feel like hope is in short supply. The nuclear clock ticks closer to midnight, governments are elected with manifestos based on fear of the other. However, on the streets last autumn hope was alive among the protest. By being there and being present we were helping keep pressure up that declares dealers in war were not welcome.

Are you finding hope in short supply?

Join us on 5-12 June 2020 in Paris, France, for a week of activities and inter-religious witness against European complicity in the arms trade.

More info at <https://t1p.de/zasq>.

Rejecting violence and religious extremism

From inter-religious encounter to standing against Eurosatory

Church and Peace Board member Maria Biedrawa attended a meeting of the Islamic-Christian Friendship Association in France last August – a milestone on the journey towards the ‘other’, with an unexpected call to action.

Our meeting focuses on the document ‘Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’, signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in February 2019. A result of encounter and friendship between the two authors, the declaration was published on the 800th anniversary of the meeting between St Francis and Sultan Malik al-Kamil.

We meet in Taizé in this same spirit, simple believers wanting to get to know each other better and see where this path might lead.

In a workshop, Church and Peace individual member and theology professor Josef Freise and colleague Christine Funke share their experiences of culturally and religiously mixed contexts in Germany and resultant attitudes. They note that discrimination goes hand in hand with fundamentalism and hostility towards religion. Instead of pointing fingers at the other’s extremism, the facilitators suggest that believers clearly oppose fundamentalist movements within their own religious community first and call on friends of other religions to do the same within their own faith.

In this same spirit, Nadežda

Mojsilović, speaker at the 2019 Church and Peace international conference, leads a workshop with Christian and Muslim colleagues from the Youth Centre John Paul II in Sarajevo. They share how encounters between young people who have little to no contact outside their own ethnic or religious group can lead them to let go of prejudices and fears and become bridge builders. And how their journey can spur their parents to learn to view others more open-mindedly.

This is the aim of Nadežda and her companions: to open minds and attitudes. They experienced this shift themselves. It is their own new open-minded attitude that inspires them to act today with such creativity and credibility.

Ideas flow in the final small group session. The Human Fraternity

document authors rebel at what they say could be called a ‘third world war being fought piecemeal’. They denounce the causes of war unequivocally – first and foremost the arms race.

Their wish is that ‘this declaration may be an appeal to every upright conscience that rejects deplorable violence and blind extremism’.

They and the meeting in Taizé challenge us here in France and in the wider Church and Peace network. In June the Eurosatory arms fair – the largest in Europe – is taking place once again in Paris. This is none other than a summons to all believers to take a stand against violence.

‘Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’ is available at: <https://t1p.de/hosr>.

Freise and Funke with their group of young people of different religious and cultural backgrounds



Photo: Maria Biedrawa

Church and State – a question of peace theology?

What is the relationship of Christians to the State? What does it mean to bear political responsibility? What about the demand for 'subordination' and the State's monopoly on the use of force? What does it mean to be Church in a globalized world?

A peace theology seminar was held at Laurentiuskonvent in Laufdorf, Germany, from 10 to 12 January at the invitation of Church and Peace and the Peace Working Group of the Lahn and Dill Evangelical Church District. The 14 participants explored the relationship between Church and State.

Five presentations on the current relationship between Church and State in different European countries showed a remarkable diversity in practical application. It also became clear how differently the Church is valued in society, from integration in the Constitution in Germany to anti-clerical sentiments in France and Italy.

Mennonite theologian Marie-Noëlle von der Recke gave an overview of Biblical perspectives on the State. The record of the history of salvation in the Old Testament focuses at first on the experience of being liberated from slavery. Through Moses, the people receive a 'constitution' (the Ten Commandments) for a life in freedom under God's direct guidance. Despite the warnings of Samuel, the last of the judges, the people demand a monarchy. Criticism of the State characterises the record of this era. It is the prophets who denounce injustice and the kings' policy of alliances and call for a return to God and his commandments. The history of the monarchy leads to decline, banishment and renewed foreign rule.

Criticism of the State is also present in the New Testament. For example, in Luke 22, Jesus is critical of the behaviour of worldly rulers and admonishes his disciples to act differently. In Revelation 13 the misuse of power by the Roman Empire is denounced.

Seminar participants received new insight from wrestling with the well-known text in Romans 13:1-7 and the question of which authority Paul is demanding that one subject oneself to. Jewish historian Mark Nanos's

interpretation contradicts the common interpretation that Paul meant the Roman State. Instead, Nanos argues that Paul wanted to avoid splitting the Gentile Christians from their Jewish fellow believers, and thus called for subordination to the authority of local synagogue leaders.

It is not possible to derive a theory of the State from the Bible. Any form of government can be corrupted. It is not possible to transfer the Biblical texts verbatim into today's democratic society.

It became clear that respect for God and obedience to his commandments must take priority – in addition to keeping a critical distance to the changing systems of State and their rulers. What is important today, as in the past, the seminar participants noted, is that no matter the form of government, the Church of Christ considers itself as a servant of God and fellow humanity. The Church seeks 'the welfare of the city' (Jer. 29), while guarding its freedom in relation to the State.

Ernst von der Recke
is a member of the
Laurentiuskonvent, a Church and
Peace corporate member

Seminar participants



Foto: Church and Peace

End of era for Brethren Service in Europe

Future focus on Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland following Geneva office closure in December 2019

The Church of the Brethren established an office at the Ecumenical Center in 1947 in conjunction with its post-war relief and rehabilitation work. Staff coordinated the Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) programme in Europe, as well as participating in historic peace church forums in Europe and engaging with global ecumenical leadership.

Kristin Flory staffed the office for more than three decades before retiring at the end of last year. During her ministry Kristin arranged placements for and accompanied over 310 BVS workers across Europe. She was a familiar presence at Church and Peace representing Brethren Service, a founding member of the network.



Photo: Brethren Service

Kristin said the Geneva office closure had been a long time in

coming due to decreasing finances – her fulltime position was reduced to 20 hours a week in 2003 – visa difficulties and a slow, steady decline in volunteers, reflecting changing trends in volunteerism.

Legacy of presence

‘What an amazing job, ministry and privilege this has been,’ Kristin said reflecting on her nearly 33 years at the Geneva office. She noted that Brethren Service had a long legacy in Europe – one not necessarily reflected in numbers but in accompaniment and lived experience.

‘It was celebrating Thanksgiving in 1989 with our Polish friends and BVSers in Skierniewice; seeing the Berlin Wall breached and placing a BVSer in East Berlin a few years later; sharing BVSers with NGOs in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

‘Sadly, too, it was watching the slow fall and wars of Yugoslavia. And then being part of peace and women’s groups in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo, sending BVSers to the newly formed Balkan Peace Team, to youth organizations in Mostar. It was also about [supporting] peace groups and communities in the heart of the continent, from Geneva to Brussels to Rome, France, Germany, and the Netherlands [...] and England.’

The BVS presence in Northern Ireland and the Republic has made a similar impression, from the first volunteer in Belfast in 1972 at the height of the Troubles, to those



Photo: Kristin Flory

serving today with projects with children and people with disabilities in both the north and south parts of the island.

Happily, this specific legacy will be carried on through the new BVS Europe. Sara Cook, a former volunteer in Northern Ireland, will coordinate placements and accompany BVSers in Ireland and Northern Ireland on a part-time basis of 8 hours per week.

‘I am pleased that we can continue to send volunteers to work with communities and groups [there],’ Kristin said.

Photos of volunteers over the years show the diverse face of Brethren Service’s long-time presence in Europe.

BVS Europe projects

Northern Ireland, UK
Quaker Cottage, Belfast | IncredABLE, Richhill, Co. Armagh | Corrymeela Community, Ballycastle | L’Arche Belfast | Camphill Community Mourne Grange, Killeel

Republic of Ireland
L’Arche Kilkenny | L’Arche Dublin

Images of God and nonviolence

Church and Peace chair Antje Heider-Rottwilm on the theme of the AGM 2020

'Images of God and Nonviolence' is the theme for the 2020 AGM and international conference – a broad subject! What exactly will the meeting be about?

We want to become aware of how much our images of God and our language about God are shaped by our traditions. Do images of God promote violent structures and claims to power? How do images of God relate to a theology and spirituality of nonviolence?

The topic is new for the network. Why this theme, now, for Church and Peace?

Church and Peace has repeatedly explored different aspects of the image of God, for example, the meaning of vulnerability. In recent years there has been appalling news of sexual violence in Christian communities and churches, even in groups which put peace theology at the centre of what it means to follow Jesus.

Therefore, we want to take a closer look: Has peace theology overcome the patriarchal image of God? How do we contribute to our groups, communities and churches developing a more (gender-) just peace theology, more just (liturgical) language and the corresponding attitudes?

What is the connection to the wider ecumenical movement?

I myself worked for seven years for the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998). During this time, it became clear that there

is a close connection between an authoritarian theology, patriarchal images of God and liturgy, as well as violence in churches, communities and families. And that all churches worldwide have to wrestle with these issues.

The World Council of Churches' campaign 'Thursdays in Black – Towards a world without rape and violence', which many churches have since joined, emerged as an initiative where the churches could find mutual support and take action against sexual and gender-based violence.

We (also) consider the conference theme as a contribution to putting into action UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and later UN resolutions in the context of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

What awaits AGM participants? Is there any way to prepare for the conference?

We can prepare for the conference by paying particular attention

in the coming days and weeks to such questions: What images of God do I have? How do I talk about and with God? How does this shape my work for peace? What understanding of God do the liturgical language and traditions of my church or faith group express? What impact is there on relationships and power structures in my community?

We want to explore these themes during the conference. Through workshops we'll delve into various aspects of the topic, such as the radical equality between man and woman in Genesis; links between images of God, nonviolence and language; peace theology and sexual violence; connections between power, patriarchy, racism and sexism; and, together with guests from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the role of women in armed conflicts and peace processes.

To learn more and to register, visit: www.church-and-peace.org/en/2020/02/international-conference-agm2020/



Diary

15-17 May 2020

Annual General Meeting and international conference

Images of God and nonviolence

'And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus' (Phil. 4:7)

Dopersduin, Schoorl, Netherlands

5-7 June 2020

Francophone regional conference

'Rethinking security'

Paris, France

30 October-1 November 2020

Church and Peace Board meeting

Wethen, Germany

27-29 November 2020

German-language regional conference

'When they say, "There is peace and security"...

Thomashof, Karlsruhe, Germany



Web Resources

'Europe's Peace Vocation and the Role of Security and Peace'

Antje Heider-Rottwilm, CEC Peace Conference, 10-12 September 2019

'Church and Peace joins ICAN and United4Rescue'

Church and Peace press release, 11 February 2020

More Church and Peace press releases

Download and share in your networks!

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

EKD synod and peace

The synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) took place on 10-13 November 2019, under the theme of being on the path towards a church of justice and peace. Church and Peace, together with network members such as EIRENE and *gewaltfrei handeln*, was involved in preparatory discussions and took part in the synod as an observer, together with several other peace organisations. Church and Peace Chair Antje Heider-Rottwilm takes stock.

In a press release a few days before the synod, the Church and Peace Board called on the EKD's governing body to raise its voice clearly against the progressive militarisation of the EU; to advocate for Germany to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; and to exclude war or military intervention as last resort, and instead move step by step towards nonviolence as first and last resort.

After heated plenary and committee discussions, the synod adopted a declaration which hopefully will indeed determine church words and actions more consistently than before!

Given how global problems have intensified since the EKD's peace memorandum of 2007, fortunately there is no longer talk of nonviolence as *prima ratio* and military options as *ultima ratio*. Instead, the synod declares: 'There is no military solution to the important global challenges. They need to be resolved through balanced policy-making, consideration for law, and



concern for the well-being of all stakeholders.'

The result is a strong political demand that at least two per cent of Germany's GDP be allocated to combating the causes of violence, to crisis prevention, nonviolent conflict resolution and post-crisis aid and reconstruction in conflict regions.

We welcome that the synod recognises that the 'EU's strength (...) lies in anticipating crises by civil and diplomatic means, contributing to settling violent conflicts and supporting the reconstruction of societies devastated by war'. Although the declaration makes no reference to concrete developments supporting militarisation of the EU, it does mention the need for strict control of arms exports at national and European levels.

Disappointing, on the other hand, is the synod's avoidance of a clear call for the German government to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The Church and Peace press release of 7 November 2019 is available in German at: <https://t1p.de/oop8>.

Read the full text of the EKD declaration in English at: <https://t1p.de/4rly>.

Europe/Global

MCC turns 100

Mennonite Central Committee, a Church and Peace founding member, is marking 100 years of service 'In the name of Christ' this year. Commemorations have already begun and will continue in Europe with events in the Netherlands in April, Germany in May, Austria in June, Switzerland in August and France in October. For more information contact European Centennial Assistant Coordinator Réjane Gerber-Tanner: rejanegerber@mcc.org.



Germany

Michael Sattler Peace Prize 2020

The German Mennonite Peace Committee (DMFK), a Church and Peace corporate member, is awarding its Michael Sattler Peace Prize in 2020 to nonviolent activists in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Under the name LUCHA - 'Lutte pour le changement' (Struggle for change) - the group champions human rights, democratic participation, social justice, principled politics, ecology and nonviolence. More information: www.michael-sattler-friedenspreis.de



Germany

Hinrichs executive director of new peace institute

Church and Peace individual member Karen Hinrichs was installed as executive director of the new Peace Institute at the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Freiburg on 24 January. The Institute promotes research, teaching and transfer of knowledge in peace education and peace work, with an emphasis on conflict transformation, peace ethics and peace theology. Different modules fostering a culture of nonviolence and peace are available to students and other interested groups.



Switzerland

Peace is possible – also in Palestine

Over a period of one month, 188 visitors responded to the invitation of Church and Peace individual members Heidi and Bruno Sägesser to visit the exhibition 'Peace is possible – also in Palestine' in their house in Münchenstein, Switzerland. Seventeen display panels and related events made it possible to engage visitors at a personal level. The Anabaptist Forum for Peace and Justice, a Church and Peace corporate member, supported the event.

Croatia

Inclusive podcast launched

The INTero Centar in Rijeka, Croatia, has launched a podcast series titled 'Neprocjenjiva' ('Priceless') which provides a safe space to talk about LGBT and faith. Centre directors Neda Popovic and Mihael Secen, both Church and Peace individual members, say Neprocjenjiva offers an affirming message of God's love because Christ is all-inclusive. Tune in at neprocjenjiva.com/podcast



the Network

Europe***European Quakers appoint new staff***

The Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) of Friends World Committee for Consultation will have a new staff team following the retirement of Marisa Johnson at the end of April. Jez Smith has been appointed Assistant Secretary of the Church and Peace founding member. Michael Eccles will take over Johnson's role as Executive Secretary, subject to approval by the EMES Annual Meeting in early May.

**Germany*****Airbase trespassing appeal dismissed***

Church and Peace individual member Herbert Römpp's appeal of his conviction for trespassing on the Büchel nuclear airbase in Germany's Eifel region has been dismissed by the regional court in Koblenz. Römpp and four other peace activists entered the base in July 2018 to protest on the runaway with music and song against the nuclear weapons stationed there. Although the court acknowledged the defendants' aims as honourable in view of society, it rejected civil disobedience as a measure against the dangers of nuclear weapons.

Switzerland***New leadership for FoR Switzerland***

The secretariat of the Swiss branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation is under new leadership. Charlotte Bhattarai took over the reins of the Church and Peace corporate member from Hansuli Gerber in November 2019. Bhattarai has headed up the organisation's peace education project since last spring.

**Switzerland*****Quakers at Night of Religions in Bern***

Switzerland Yearly Meeting (Quakers), a Church and Peace corporate member, took part in the Night of Religions on 9 November 2019 in Bern. An event co-organised with Bern Mennonite Church offered visitors Quaker and Mennonite perspectives on the connection between 'Peace, Silence and Science'. The gathering in Bern provided people of different faiths space for encounter, dialogue and celebration.

Croatia***Raffais receive religious freedom award***

Church and Peace individual members Ana and Otto Raffai and their organisation RAND Association (Regional Address for Nonviolent Action) have received the 2020 award of the Religious Freedom Association in the Republic of Croatia. The Association recognised Raffais' efforts since 1995 to teach nonviolence; bring together people of different nationalities and different or no faiths; build peace; and nurture and preserve tolerance and human rights in Croatia and beyond.



The Last Word

The ministry of presence

Can you imagine being jolted awake in the middle of the night by a massive earthquake? The ground moves, objects fall down, the walls around you crack and collapse. This is exactly what happened recently in Albania, one of the poorest countries in Europe.

On 26 November 2019, at 3:54 a.m., the ground shook with a magnitude 6.4 quake, the strongest in decades. The port city of Durrës and the town of Thumana, some 40 km north of Tirana, were hit particularly hard. The tragic result: 50 dead, more than 650 injured and thousands who lost everything and were now homeless.



Photo: humedica e.V.

Vjollca (2nd from left) and humedica colleagues speak with people affected by the earthquake.

Two hours later that same morning, my sister in Kosovo called me, crying, to say they had felt the earthquake too and how worried they were. I could only try to comfort her and promise to pray for her.

Immediately after I hung up the phone, I went in to work, at the international humanitarian organisation humedica. As I am familiar with Albanian culture and speak the language, I was asked to be part of a team from Germany and Kosovo being sent to assess the situation on the ground and

‘That was our task: simply to be there for them’

offer concrete assistance together with our partner organisations on location.

When we arrived in Durrës, we saw how such an unexpected natural disaster can wreak destruction not only in the environment but also in human beings – the people there were in shock.

What does one do when thousands of people have lost their homes, have to spend the night out in the open for fear of aftershocks and their personal belongings are

buried under rubble?

It was very sad, but right then there was no time to mourn. In such a situation, people needed comfort most of all and someone to listen to them, to hear their suffering and offer words of encouragement. That was our task: not only to provide material support and meet the needs of the people affected, but also simply to be there for them.

*Originally from Kosovo, Church and Peace Board member **Vjollca Racaj** has been working in the programme department of the Germany-based organisation humedica since last year.*