



# *Church and Peace*

## International Office

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

## **Recognising the signs of the times**

### *Business as usual or What are we learning and how do we go forward?*

We are indeed living through a special moment.

Already before the global coronavirus outbreak, there was a noticeable increasing sensitivity to environmental issues, social and economic justice, democracy and peacebuilding. This stood in unfortunate contrast to the norm: denial of imminent ecological catastrophe, growing social and economic injustice in Europe and other parts of the world, responding to migration by sealing off borders, growing populist and nationalist tendencies reinforced by fake news.

The coronavirus is an occasion for many to reflect upon the world we live in and the world we want to care for. Today, not just some activists, but a broader spectrum of society seem to become aware of

- How interdependent we are as one humanity in face of this ‘virus without borders’
- How fragile we are individually and as states and that it is not weapons that will save us
- How all the above mentioned subjects are interlinked and that we need to add even new ones to the list, like a just and efficient worldwide public health care
- How much we need a really sustainable and just economy.

As a Church and Peace network we are also affected. We had to cancel our Annual General Meeting in the Netherlands in May as well as the meeting of the French speaking members in June. In addition to the coronavirus, our members in Croatia lived through an earthquake and those in Kosovo through a US-manipulated overthrow of their government. Both of these events have gone next to unnoticed. We just mention two of many examples in countries where Church and Peace does have members.

The risk for us all is that ‘the day after’ we try to pick up our former habits again, to ‘catch up on things’, or to be absorbed again by ‘business as usual’ and that we miss out on what we have learnt or what we could learn.

**We want to know what moves our members in the different regions at this moment. How did we live through these past months? What are the challenges waiting for us now, personally and as Church and Peace network?**

We suggest that, whenever it is possible again, we come together, either as regional meetings or as smaller groups of individuals and that we share about how all this affects us as corporate, associated and individual members. And should this not be possible in a foreseeable future, let us have an online

communication. What are our experiences, what comes to our minds, what are our questions and the seeds of meaning, change and acting we find?

**The objectives for these meetings are:**

- **To name the signs of the times:** put words on the experience and insights of these last months
- **To discern the signs of the times:** see what is specific to regions and what we share in common; what are the themes challenging us as a Church and Peace network?
- **To take responsibility for the signs of the times within our scope:** what can our members do and how can the members of the network support each other in the realisation of what we have discerned as a call for us?

**We propose a simple methodology,** linking in with the Word of God that will lead us through times of deep sharing of

- What we have become aware of on a personal, intellectual, political and spiritual level?
- How perhaps our lives and commitments are changing in the light of this experience?
- How we feel challenged to go forward together?

**We call upon our members who are interested in bringing this process to life.**

Let us discover what the Spirit wants to say to us today! As a network, we want to hear all voices and take them into account. We may take up themes at our Annual General Meetings and conferences; they may connect us to new people or initiatives; the answers may inspire new input on our website and for a revised leaflet. Who knows?

And we may feel that Paul is speaking to us too when he writes: 'My prayer for you is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that in all you may recognise what is best.' (Phil 1:9-10)

# ***THE QUESTIONS GUIDING THE DIALOGUE***

## **1<sup>st</sup> part: Start from personal, lived experience and share it with your peers**

### **What is at stake in this part 1?**

- **Speak in your own name and listen to what others say in their own name**
- **Come to know each other better**
- **Root the process in real life rather than ideas, concepts etc.**
  
- What have we lived through over these past months in the various regions, covering a period of 2 months before the lock-down, the lock-down and coronavirus crises itself and the time since: as individuals, as communities (family, church, neighbourhood, town, country ...)
- What have I become aware of on a personal, intellectual, spiritual, political level?
- What did it change in my, in our way of life?
- Can you share a passage from the Word of God or spiritual act, symbol or writing that has sustained you over these months?

## **2<sup>nd</sup> part: Discern**

### **What is at stake in part 2?**

- **Move from your personal experience to what moves the group as if it were one body**
- **Discerning is not discussing: it is listening to what the Spirit may be telling your group today and how the Spirit may call you. So, speak and listen in a spirit of prayer.**
  
- As Church and Peace members and in tune with our mission, what are the subjects mentioned here that challenge us? Are there any important subject missing?
- Which passage from the Word of God, spiritual act, symbol or writing calls you to choose a certain commitment?

## **3<sup>rd</sup> part: Acting together and support each other**

### **What is at stake in part 3?**

- **Free up the energy of a common concrete commitment**
- **Call forth and draw upon the talents of the network**
- **Let the network become a living reality**
  
- For whom do we do this; what is the message we want to give to who; who do we need to address; what are our ideas about how we get this message out; who do we need to work with to achieve our goals?
- How can we as a network support each other in this?