



# Newsletter

**Conference 2022**  
Signs and Stories of  
Hope

**Conscientious  
Objection**  
In Times of War

**World Council of  
Churches**  
Call to Conversion



Photo: Church and Peace

## When the Dove Returns with Empty Beak

An olive branch is planted in a small pot on Martin Tiller's desk. The co-chair of the Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has watered it twice daily since carefully transporting it by train back to the UK from the 2022 Church and Peace international conference in Crikvenica, Croatia – a tangible symbol of the hope he and others in Europe carry with them as they work for nonviolent conflict transformation as a way to peace in these conflict-ridden times.

The conference 'Division. War. Nonviolence.' on 20–23 October brought together from 17 countries over 100 people who are committed to introducing into society the primacy of nonviolence. The participants gathered to share experiences of their resistance to hatred, violence and war, and to learn from faith-based peacebuilders in the

Southeast Europe region about their nonviolent action for peace during the war and the need for their ongoing reconciliation work.

Words of greeting from Archbishop Mate Uzinić (Roman Catholic) and Fr Vedran Obućina (Old Catholic) from nearby Rijeka underlined that a credible commitment to active nonviolence in the midst of crises, wars and conflicts is the challenge of ecumenical actors in Europe today.

Three members of the regional initiative Believers for Peace shared stories of faith-based nonviolence amidst and after war: Otto Raffai, Catholic from Croatia, who experienced flight, migration and return, and found his vocation to work for peace, reconciliation and justice in his own country and among different religions. Dragica Aleksa, Catholic from Croatia,

who embodies the empowerment of women for peace. Emir Džidić, Muslim from Bosnia-Herzegovina, who impressed participants with how he roots his peace work in the call for reconciliation in Islam. (Ed: Regretfully, due to illness, the invited peacemaker from Serbia was unable to share their story.)

Using examples of mediation and group processes from different conflict situations, Étienne Chomé from Belgium and Maria Biedrawa from France explored how dialogue can serve as a method of active conflict transformation.

Creativity, music and laughter marked the conference's evening of fellowship – a time to reaffirm the bond of shared hope and a reminder of the need for peacebuilders to practise self-care.

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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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## Packing Hope for the Journey?

Dear readers,

'For Noah, the olive branch was a sign of the end of misery. For people today, it is a sign of peace. And I, I frantically rummage in my suitcase and can't find it anymore.'

This is what Denis Jurić wrote to me when I asked him if he still had the olive branch we received at the closing service of our international conference last October.

I too am always looking for signs of hope for peace and an end to misery. In the various activities of the Church and Peace network, such signs can be experienced in the mutual encouragement, the cooperation and the continuous commitment to addressing issues and challenges despite the many setbacks.

In this issue you can read about our conference in Croatia, which encouraged peacemakers in

Europe to persevere in work to build peace. Bruno Sägeser reports on his conscientious objection to military service 50 years ago and how this decision shaped his life. Today, the right to conscientious objection remains relevant, as the International Fellowship of Reconciliation is underlining with campaigns and a webinar series, among other things.

What still resonates from the World Council of Churches Assembly is, for Antje Heider-Rottwilm, the need for individual and collective conversion.

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

Best wishes,

*Lydia Funck*

## Conference 2022

### *When the Dove Returns with Empty Beak*

*continued from page 1*

The closing service, led by three women from Croatia, France and Germany, centred on the promise from Ephesians 2:14: 'He has destroyed the hatred that was like a wall between us.' Participants noted their own actions on the path of peace on a paper 'wall' of nonviolence. Each person received an olive branch from the nearby island of Krk with the call to carry hope with them in their own lives and actions, even when the end of the brutal war in Ukraine and of many other conflicts worldwide is not in sight.

Participants expressed this hope in their message from the conference: 'The Bible tells that Noah had to



Photo: Riamma Isaac-Krauß

send out the dove twice for it to return with an olive branch, the sign of hope for a new beginning. The dove has not yet brought back an olive branch! We are hoping and praying and will not let ourselves be discouraged from our trust in the God of peace.'

It is a message which continues to resonate with Tiller, who feels the olive branch from Krk has come to symbolise his work for nuclear disarmament. 'I really don't know whether that work will bear fruit, but I keep hoping because the alternative, giving up hope, is, well, hopeless! And as Christians we can never be that.'

*Emir Džidić, Dragica Aleksa and Otto Raffai.*

### Workshops

- Politics of nonviolence in times of war: Utopia or necessity?
- Transformation of (religious) divisions in post-war times
- A new European security architecture including Russia?
- Solidarity creates security: Europe and its borders
- Images of God, patriarchy, racism – Challenges for peace theology
- Rethinking security – How can we imagine a security policy that is no longer military based?

### Open Space Sessions

- Exchange on trauma-sensitive work for peace
- Significance for ecumenical peace work in Europe of decisions of the World Council of Churches Assembly
- Networking meeting of participants from the Southeast Europe region
- Networking meeting of francophone participants
- Music workshop
- Exchange between younger participants about the future of the network

Find the full programme, reports and contributions from the conference at <https://www.church-and-peace.org/en/documents/2022-international-conference/>.

*Conference travels: Martin Tiller and Sr. Christine on the night train.*



Photo: Martin Tiller

Conference 2022

# Trauma Counselling as Work for Peace

*'Open Space' sessions at the conference in Croatia allowed participants to explore topics of interest in more depth. Here Maria Biedrawa shares some impressions from the Open Space workshop on trauma-sensitive peacebuilding.*

For 20 years I have worked with groups in sub-Saharan Africa who, in the face of armed conflicts, choose nonviolence to build peace. I am always deeply moved by their witness. Although they have often been through the hell of violence, they meet me and others with a reconciled, compassionate heart and 'a new spirit' (Ez 36:26) of a refined sense of justice, an earnest search for truth and respect for all people, including enemies.

bearing the scars of trauma draw not from them but from a well in the depths of their lives, where the human likeness bubbles with an incarnate, wounded, crucified and resurrected God. They are a sign of hope that there is life after trauma. And they are credible as wounded healers.

It is the task of nonviolence to free people from the consequences of violence, to heal them, to release them from the vicious circle that turns wounded people into those who then wound others. Only those who stand upright can also lift up a society.

Becoming free(er) from trauma depends on many things. As well as medical, psychosocial and spiritual support, reparations and personal safety, traumatised people need to encounter people who strike deep chords of hope and to find new

meaning in their trauma, not in the event itself but in a personal, often future-oriented interpretation of what they have experienced.

The numerous personal stories within the bigger picture and what of this becomes the common narrative can either paralyse, or inspire and transform a community, a society. How truth is dealt with can act as shackles or wings, and leads to a crossroads between post-traumatic stress syndrome and post-traumatic growth. The path that is taken will determine whether there is war or peace in the future.

It is the task of peacemakers to believe in the human capacity for post-traumatic growth and to nourish and deliberately create space for such growth.

One does not have to study for years to be able to shepherd such encounters. As 'barefoot practitioners', wounded healers bring much experience and a feel for a situation and can learn other necessary skills through training courses.

Trauma counselling is work for peace, carried by God's Spirit. I am reminded of this every time I see how, unexpectedly, a face distorted by pain slowly eases, how hope flashes in a person's eyes and how words of life come from their lips, or I see how hostile groups embrace each other.

**Maria Biedrawa**  
is a Church and Peace member from France and serves on the Board.

*Open Space workshop on trauma-sensitive peacebuilding*

Thoughts of revenge and mistrust in people, life and God would be understandable reactions to such trauma. Yet these people while



Photo: Kiamma Isaak-Krauß

AGM 2022

# Meet the Members

*At its Annual General Meeting on 20–21 October 2022, Church and Peace elected Tony Weekes as Board representative for the Britain and Ireland region and welcomed four new members to the network.*

## Janie und Neal Blough

*Mennonite, live in Créteil, France*

We are now retired from the Paris Mennonite Centre, which is a Church and Peace member. In that role, we participated in various meetings of the network. Neal has both spoken at gatherings and written articles used by Church and Peace; Janie has helped to plan worship services. We desire to continue participation as we have strong interest in peace witness and ecumenism. We both teach in various schools of theology and congregations, with an effort to include peace theology in what we teach.



## Peter Jörgensen

*Baptist, lives in Berlin, Germany*

I have been an ordained Baptist pastor since 1990 and have worked with a half-time position in the Baptist church in Berlin Wedding since 2003. From 2007 to 2020, with a second half-time position in addition to my congregational work, I served the Union of Evangelical Free Churches (VEF) in Germany as head of the liaison office at the seat of the federal government, where I was involved in the working group 'Gospel and Social Responsibility'. I'm excited to be involved in Church and Peace in order to help shape and raise the profile of the churches' responsibility for peace.



## Rianna und Benjamin Isaak-Krauß

*Mennonite, live in Frankfurt, Germany*

As pastors at Frankfurt Mennonite Church, we are both active in peace and nonviolent movements and actions, peace prayers and demonstrations. Climate change, trauma healing, nonviolent direct actions and embodied resilience and play are themes which we have both studied and want to learn more about. We have facilitated various trainings on topics like Wild Church, interplay, nonviolence, trauma healing and resilience (STAR), Bible and theology. It is good for our pastoral work and as a family to be networked with other peace-oriented Christians.



## Augustin Nkundabashaka

*Baptist, lives in Villiers le Bel, France*

I am pastor emeritus of the Federation of Evangelical Baptist Churches of France. My particular commitment to peace is within the French branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (MIR France), where I am currently co-president. I participate in training and education in the culture of nonviolence and peace through seminars and conferences. For several years, I have been active and involved in the establishment of the IFOR movement in Burundi in Africa. I periodically organise and lead training sessions for young people and women in conflict resolution and in becoming peacebuilders in their environment.



# A Courageous Choice

*Church and Peace individual member Bruno Sägesser celebrated a very personal anniversary in February: 50 years ago he refused to do military service in Switzerland and was court-martialled. Here is his story.*

On 2 February 1973, I stood as a 22-year-old before the military court in Aarau, Switzerland, as a conscientious objector. This was the most emotional, intense day of my life.

At least three years of intensive preparation had led to this day. A non-Mennonite at the time, I listened to sermons by Swiss Mennonite leaders Paul Hofer and Samuel Gerber and became more and more impressed by Anabaptist theology and history.

Intensive Bible study and conversations with Christian soldiers and Christians critical of the army – the thinking of the 1968 Movement was also certainly an influence – as well as experiences in my recruit school had solidified the decision that there was no

longer a place in the army for me as a follower of Jesus Christ.

I faced seven uniformed judges. To my right was a high-ranking officer as prosecutor. To my left was a 22-year-old theology student and friend as defence counsel. Behind me were several rows of seats filled with friends accompanying me on this path.

“Three months prison, unconditional,” was the sentence.

During my time in prison, I dreamed that if I and my wife Heidi ever had sons and they decided as I had, they would be able to do alternative service.

That was the beginning of a long road. As a Christian and a Mennonite, I could, and wanted, to

fight for the right to do alternative service. I, Heidi and many others invested enormous amounts of time, money and energy. Heidi and I were privileged to meet people in war zones and areas of crisis – members of all denominations as well as people critical of religion who were living in an exemplary way – and hear about their hardships and lives.

Switzerland finally established alternative civilian service in 1996, 23 years after my conviction. This was again a highly emotional moment.

Now, a cruel war rages in Ukraine, a new government with dubious members in Israel is enacting untenable laws and conflicts are escalating in at least another 50 places around the world.

Politicians and the military continue to tell us the lie that with more weapons there will be peace. At the start of every war weapons are used, and at the end of a war there is talk of a catastrophe.

My dream continues: As Christians, our lives should become more like the life Jesus Christ modelled for us.

*This reflection first appeared in German in Mennonews.de and in English in Anabaptist World. It has been lightly edited for clarity and brevity. Used by permission.*

*Bruno und Heidi Sägesser-Rich*



*Photo: Courtesy of Bruno Sägesser*

# Conscientious Objection in Times of War

Church and Peace member the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), together with Connection e.V., the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and War Resisters' International (WRI), has launched a webinar series on the right to conscientious objection to military service in times of war.

'Times of war can present additional challenges and exacerbate stigma for conscientious objectors (COs). [We want] not only to inform but to try and strengthen solidarity and the global movement of those supporting COs,' said Laurel Townhead of QUNO, at the first webinar on 9 February.

Conscientious objection is a right recognised by international law which applies even in times of war and includes authorities not recognised as States, noted Rachel Brett of War Resisters International.

Yurii Sheliashenko of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement said that his government's policy is total mobilisation, and leaders view conscientious objection in a time of war as a threat to national security. He pointed to the case of Vitaly Alekseenko, a Christian who was sentenced to prison after refusing military service. IFOR is among the international organisations supporting a call for charges to be dropped.

Sheliashenko reported that there is active resistance to military service in Ukraine, with over 100 petitions calling the government to stop forcing people into the army.

Mariceley Parada from Colombia highlighted how international involvement had helped to drive change at a national level and protect local NGOs. 'We need [not only] to keep such tools and mechanisms [which have been effective] but to improve them.'

Eritrean Helen Kidan said civil society outside the country is vital in holding the government to account. 'If it is happening outside, it will happen inside.'

According to Rudi Friedrich of Connection e.V., claiming asylum as a CO is not straightforward due to criteria determining what qualifies as persecution and to differing country practices. He said current advocacy efforts are calling for recognition of COs as a social group facing persecution and thus entitled to protection under the Geneva Conventions.

Zaira Zafarana, IFOR CO project manager, urged participants to join international advocacy efforts like the #ObjectWarCampaign, which calls European leaders to protect deserters and conscientious objectors from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine.



## #OBJECT WAR CAMPAIGN

Kriegsdienstverweigerer und Deserteure aus Russland, Belarus und Ukraine brauchen unsere Solidarität!

#ОткажиВойне  
#ВідмовВійні

### TAKE ACTION

Support COs and military deserters from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine! Sign the call to the European Commission, European Council and European Parliament to grant protection and asylum to those who refuse military service.

<https://t1p.de/mijsi>

The signed petition will be delivered to policymakers in Brussels in May.

*Further webinars in the series focused on the situation in Belarus, Russian and Ukraine, and in Ethiopia.*

# Global Ecumenism Calls for Conversion

*The World Council of Churches Assembly was held in Karlsruhe, Germany in late summer 2022. Many months have passed since the gathering. Chairperson Antje Heider-Rottwilm was there as an observer for Church and Peace and answers the question: What remains?*

I remember with fondness wonderful encounters and powerful experiences of the diversity of ecumenical spirituality. But what remains for me above all is the urgent call to repentance, the impatience, disappointment and even anger of those who have been waiting for decades, who are supposed to trust in change brought about by discernment and small steps. They experience first-hand that life-threatening crises are becoming more and more acute.

## Laments and Impatience at Pre-Conferences

This impatience and disappointment were most palpable to me in the pre-conferences. The youth, people with disabilities, Indigenous people and participants of the conference Just Community of Women and Men expressed it with passion in Bible studies, dance, heated discussions and moving worship services.

The frustration of the Black women was overwhelming. How much longer are we to put time, energy and money into changing Church and society? Where are those who caused the escalating crises being named? Enough is enough! No cheap unity! were their cries.

I learned once again how important the Thursdays in Black

### Strengthened Relations between Church and Peace and the WCC

At its recent meeting the WCC Central Committee approved our application to become a partner organisation.



Photo: Church and Peace

*Church and Peace encounters at the WCC Assembly. (l.t.r.) Lydia Funck, Ana Raffai, Gordon Matthews, Davorka Lovrekovic, Antje Heider-Rottwilm*

campaign is as a global sign of solidarity and resistance against sexualised violence, especially for women from all continents.

At the end of the pre-conferences, everyone shared their results. Everywhere abuse of power, violence, exclusion were the key experiences. The litany of laments from the youth was shocking: All the issues that many of us have been dedicated to addressing for decades – now they threaten the future of young people with unceasing severity.

## Resolutions Call Urgently for Conversion

The documents of the Assembly, which we have taken back to our churches, countries and continents, therefore call for conversion. They reflect the crises that threaten the existence of people in all parts of the world, and they challenge us as Christians to repent and become much more radically active in working for reconciliation and justice.

Church and Peace referred to the declaration 'War in Ukraine, Peace

and Justice in the European Region' at our conference in Crikvenica in autumn 2022. We agree with the call for 'much greater investment by the governments of Europe and the entire international community in searching for and promoting peace, and in strengthening non-violent conflict resolution, civil conflict transformation and reconciliation processes, rather than in escalating confrontation and division.'

In addition to Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, this declaration addresses other points of pain in Europe: migration, xenophobia and racism. In the 'Statement on Confronting Racism and Xenophobia, Overcoming Discrimination, Ensuring Belonging,' I find very concrete analysis and action steps for both the international and local C/church/es.

At our next European conference – in Baarlo, the Netherlands, at the end of September 2023 – we will work out what this means for us as the Church and Peace network.



## Diary

20 May 2023

*Britain and Ireland regional day*

**'Countering Strongman Politics –  
Learning from Women Peacebuilders'**

*Leeds, UK*

24–26 May 2023

**Church and Peace Board meeting**

*Frankfurt, Germany*

14 September 2023

**Annual General Meeting**

*Online*

29 September–1 October 2023

**European conference**

*Baarlo, Netherlands*



## Web Resources

*Impressions from the WCC Assembly  
and suggestions for action*

Lydia Funck, Antje Heider-Rottwilm  
and Kees Nieuwerth

*Resources from the 2022 international  
conference*

*'The European Peace Church Network  
and the WCC Pilgrimage of Justice and  
Peace'*

Antje Heider-Rottwilm and Lydia  
Funck

*'Conference and AGM: First take the  
plank out of your eye'*

Press release, 26 October 2022

*'Peace groups call for action on  
anniversary of Russian attack on  
Ukraine'*

Press release, 30 January 2023

*More Church and Peace press releases*

Download and share in your networks!  
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*Church and Peace YouTube Channel*  
[www.bit.ly/ChurchandPeaceonYoutube](https://www.bit.ly/ChurchandPeaceonYoutube)

# A Spirit of Nonviolence

## Four Conferences, Four Countries

What a blessing that after over two years of pandemic we were finally able to meet again in person and strengthen our Europe-wide network.

We held four conferences in 2022. We saw that the firm trust in God's Spirit, which enables change in ourselves and the world, sustains and strengthens us. And we saw how much this sustaining Spirit is needed by those who think differently, who opt for paths other than what appears to be the only choice, that of the spiral of violence – the debate about the war in Ukraine makes this very clear.

During the conference 'Rethinking Security in Europe' on 11 June in Paris and Strasbourg, French-speaking members looked at the courage needed to practice nonviolence and determined ways to continue the conversation.

At the day conference 'The work of our hands? Reconciliation in

turbulent times' in Birmingham on 2 July, members and friends in the UK underlined that peace is a 'doing word' and that Jesus inspires us to take action for reconciliation and justice.

At our international conference 'Division. War. Nonviolence.' from 20 to 23 October in Crikvenica, Croatia, members from the region made clear how they have experienced and lived nonviolence in war as an alternative to the escalation of violence.

The German-speaking regional conference from 25 to 27 November in Karlsruhe explored how prejudices, enemy stereotypes and racism act as challenges for peace work. Participants reflected on their thoughts and actions and took away from the gathering many practical ideas for their own work for peace.

*Discussion at the conference in Croatia.*



Photo: Juliane Priftjer



**Europe**

***CEC Announces Pathways to Peace Initiative***

The Conference of European Churches (CEC) announced a new initiative to promote justice, reconciliation and peace, especially in the context of war in Ukraine. 'Pathways to Peace', part of CEC's new strategic framework, will strengthen the fellowship of churches' role as a dialogue partner for European institutions, advocating with a Christian voice on key political concerns.



**Netherlands**

***Mennonites and Quakers Discuss Responses to War***

A joint study day in February with Quakers and Mennonites in the Netherlands explored responses to the war in Ukraine. Participants, including Mennonites with Russian and Ukrainian background, shared personal perspectives on the current conflict and reflections about Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The day strengthened participants' resolve to stay true to their peace testimony.

**Germany / Switzerland**

***Launch of German-Language Resource on Peace after Trauma***

The Protestant Church in Baden, Karen Hinrichs and Benjamin Isaak-Krauss supported the Study and Conference Centre Bienenberg in its publication and launch of the German version of *The Little Book of Trauma Healing* by Carolyn Yoder in January in Freiburg, Germany. The launch highlighted the interdisciplinary insights which the book's approach offers for personal and societal reconciliation. Watch the launch at <https://youtu.be/BQPHbbA9A3w>.



**Portugal**

***Mennonite Organisations Envision Peace for Europe***

On 17–19 March Mennonite Central Committee brought together Mennonite peace organisations in Europe, including Church and Peace members in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, to connect and share about their ongoing work. The theme 'Envisioning Together Peace for Europe' guided discussion on peace church responses to the war in Ukraine.

## the Network

## France

***Peace Barn Opens Its Doors in Normandy***

The House of Peace has opened its doors in Sainte-Mère-Eglise in Normandy, France, under leadership which includes a sister from the Grandchamp Community. Located on the site of the 1944 Allied landings, the former barn offers educational and practical experience for day-to-day peacebuilding in a space combining history and spirituality.

## France / Germany

***Learning Social Defence***

As a member of 'Paths of Peace' ('Friedenswege – Chemins de Paix'), Le Soc introduced the new campaign 'Wehrhaft ohne Waffen' ('Defence without Weapons') in France in March. The cross-border region of the Upper Rhine is one of three model regions which aim to popularise and put into action the concept of nonviolent social defence in high-risk situations. Another model region is the Reformation Campus of the Community at the Reformation Church (REFO Moabit) in Berlin-Moabit. <https://wehrhaftohneaffen.de>

## Ukraine

***Orthodox Icons as Sign of Resilience***

An online prayer hosted by the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship in February offered the opportunity to reflect on unique Orthodox icons as a sign of resilience. Nicholas Sooy of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship showed how Ukrainian Orthodox Christians are creating icons on the wooden lids of ammunition boxes to deal with the brutal consequences of the war. Watch the prayer at <https://youtu.be/p-G7llkD5k?t=929>.



## Croatia

***Local Authorities Discover Dialogue as Form of Nonviolence***

A workshop weekend in February facilitated by peace educators Ana and Otto Raffai and Goran Božičević brought together local authorities and politicians in Zadar, Croatia, to discover dialogue as a form of nonviolence in politics. The training weekend was the latest in a series by the Institution for Peace Education and Action introducing policies of nonviolence to local administrators. <https://politikenenasilja.org>



*The Last Word*

# Making the Dream of Social Cohesion Reality

*'Social Cohesion' (Zusammen:halt) was the theme of the German Ecumenical Peace Decade in 2022. In her sermon during the national closing worship in the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin, Church and Peace General Secretary Lydia Funck reflected on the readings from Matthew 5:3-12 and Wisdom of Solomon 1:7-15.*

The hope for life in a society based on solidarity, where structures and systems are people oriented, remains a dream. Worries,

perspective, to ask ourselves where we can have a wholesome impact.

Social cohesion needs people who are there for one another. We are held by God and can remind ourselves of this and of the values that Jesus exemplified and taught us. In this way, we can encourage each other to face together the many challenges we have. God is present and holds everything together.

Social cohesion requires that we say a firm 'Stop!' to all injustice. It requires people who take a stand and don't sit motionless when other people, living creatures or our planet are trampled upon. We all can take action where we are and contribute to this dream!

Oh, there are so many ideas! I personally find inspiration time and again in the people who are active in the Europe-wide ecumenical network Church and Peace. They work for justice in the spirit of Jesus: each in a different way and each focusing on a different piece of injustice in their respective contexts.

They support conscientious objectors, draw attention to the myths of the arms industry and the arms trade or the injustices experienced by people on

the move. They campaign for sustainable climate policy and put alternatives into practice. They offer courses to learn what it means to treat each other nonviolently on a small and large scale.

Many small threads of commitment form a fabric that brings encouragement and contributes to social cohesion.

My wish for all of us is that, in the face of the many crises and pain points today, we may be encouraged anew to work for solidarity and the realisation of the dream of social cohesion.

## Ecumenical Peace Decade

In 1980, churches in West and East Germany, inspired by Peace Week in the Netherlands, begin organising a Peace Decade in the ten days from the third-last Sunday in the church year to the Day of Penitence and Prayer (Buß- und Betttag).

The Peace Decade has served to deepen the Christian peace witness of German churches.

Learn more at [www.friedensdekade.de](http://www.friedensdekade.de).



Photo: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen Deutschland

*Lydia Funck preaches in Berlin at the closing worship service of the German Ecumenical Peace Decade 2022.*

problems, conflicts, injustice and violence can be found everywhere and fray the fabric of social cohesion.

Our readings today offer suggestions of what we can do so that the dream of social cohesion becomes reality.

Social cohesion needs people who are willing to pause and exit the rat race. People like you and me who have the courage to change