



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

Encouraged by Pentecost: Upholding the vision of a just and nonviolent world

Message from the Board of Church and Peace

Wethen, 01 June 2023

At its meeting a few days ago in the Mennonite Church in Frankfurt, the Board of Church and Peace noted with disappointment that the G7 summit in Hiroshima had missed the opportunity to take a decisive stand for nuclear disarmament at this historic site.

Earlier, Church and Peace, together with other supporters of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), had sent an open letter to Chancellor Scholz calling for the G7 summit to be the starting point for new nuclear disarmament negotiations, including the demand to end all nuclear bases on the territory of other states.

The current plans for stationing Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus show how urgent such an initiative would be. Moreover, the decision of the G7 summit to deliver fighter jets to Ukraine has increased the danger of a further escalation to the point of using nuclear weapons in the Ukraine war.

Russia's brutal attack on Ukraine, which is contrary to international law, cannot be justified by anything. We are deeply concerned that there have so far been no noticeable efforts to negotiate and that all sides are opting for military solutions. Also, with regard to the conflict between China and Taiwan, the search for non-military solutions is vital.

Instead, throughout Europe we are witnessing that people who do not trust in military solutions and demand negotiations for an end to death and destruction are being discredited and ridiculed.

Members of Church and Peace in Southeast Europe provide us with an insight into what it means to live with the memory of a war, even 30 years later. Traumatic distress from the war years resurfaces, such as the experience of being arbitrarily left at the mercy of others. Fake news unsettles people and limits their ability to act. As is currently evident in Serbia, acquiring firearms in the private sphere is dramatic and with it violence in society and the family, especially against women.

Pentecost reminded us of the prophetic promise:

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young will see visions. Your elders will dream dreams." (Acts 2:14ff)

At Pentecost we reassure ourselves that prophecy happened then and is happening today, that visions and dreams have become and are becoming a reality. This means:

- instead of hopelessness and discouragement, a culture of life and renewal,
- instead of Babylonian confusion of languages, a culture of understanding,
- instead of power and exploitation, a culture of just sharing,
- instead of discrimination and violence, a culture of equality and reconciliation.

It is even more painful that churches continue to be complicit in distorting language and thus truth, in polarising and demonising, in legitimising discrimination and obstructing reconciliation, and so allow themselves to be instrumentalised by political interests.

We call on churches and religious communities to keep alive the visions and dreams of a just and non-violent world and therefore

- to do everything in their power to finally stop the hundreds of thousands of deaths in wars and at Europe's external borders,
- to unmask selective truths, fake news and hate speech between people and in the media,
- to encourage a culture of sharing that includes people on the margins of societies as well as refugees,
- to enable the overcoming of enemy stereotypes and create open spaces of understanding,
- to vigorously advocate for conscientious objectors and deserters from all crisis areas, including Ukraine, Russia and Belarus,
- to demand the primacy of nonviolence through civil conflict transformation, nonviolent forms of action and social defence in political action.

Pentecost encourages and commits us all not to destroy the visions of the young, the sons and daughters, of a future worth living, but to share and strengthen them.

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