



# Newsletter

**Arguments for 'Stop ReArm'**  
True Security instead of Militarisation

**Protests in Georgia**  
Against Corruption and for EU Membership

**Elections in the Netherlands**  
When Left Turns Right

**Conference 2025**  
Central and Eastern European Experiences of Transformation



*Buildings in Advitka after attacks with Russian rockets – Photo: Donetsk Regional Military Civil Administration*

## The things Ukraine can teach us about the gaps in peacebuilding

By 1994, the Kremlin had already made several statements questioning the legitimacy of Ukraine's borders and existence as a state. And, in negotiating the Budapest Memorandum, all parties prioritized good relations with Russia over the long-term security of Ukraine. In giving up the third largest nuclear arsenal, Ukraine understood it was giving up its greatest deterrence to possible Russian aggression.

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, Ukraine drastically reduced its inherited military complex, preferring to sustain its sovereignty through economic development. In the 2004 Orange Revolution, and the 2013-2014 Revolution of Dignity, Ukrainians pursued non-violent civil resistance to push their country towards a liberal democracy. They achieved a new constitution, new elections that were internationally

deemed free and fair. These signaled an ideological rift with Russia. In return, they received foreign interference, annexation, invasion and war.

To be clear, a demilitarized world is an absolute good. Getting there is the challenge. Peace-oriented strategies have accomplished seemingly impossible things over the last century. However, current world events reveal gaps and blind spots where these strategies fell short with devastating results. This has caused a knee-jerk reaction, where countries around the world are defaulting to military defense and deterrence, because these feel familiar and offer predictable results. So where have conventional peace strategies failed?

**Bad actors:** Experienced negotiators know the importance of building a deep understanding of all involved parties.

Assuming all actors are rational, honest, would prefer mutual benefit over mutual destruction, and are open to finding common ground, can, in some instances, be wishful thinking. Experts on Russia's political mindset confirm concepts such as democracy, freedom of civil society, and rule of law are interpreted as existential threats to Russia's destiny. Obliterating these concepts is deemed a higher priority than the economic prosperity of its own citizens. Viable peace processes need to recognize and develop strategies to contain actors that benefit or delight in the demise of others.

**Cultures of war:** A lot of peacebuilding focuses on teaching skills that build cultures of peace. The opposite also exists. Children are being taught war is a virtue. Churches are struggling to engage a patriarchy that is decidedly preaching

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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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## Dear friends of Church and Peace,

Since I began my time at Church and Peace the whole of European society has focused on the question "Rearmament, yes or no?" Almost every panel, every invitation to give a talk, boils down to this question – isn't nonviolence capitulating in face of the most brutal warfare? Church and Peace, too, has already spoken out about this on many occasions.

On the way back from my last panel discussion I had a chat with Michael Zimmermann, the former peace secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony. He started at a point which I had not come to during the panel discussion – and where, for reasons of time, most of these conversations end; the positions on militarization have been outlined but drawing the conclusions is left up to each one. Since I believe that these questions bring us closer to constructive solutions I'd like to pass on the questions Michael and I discussed in the car. While they only relate to the German debate about rearmament the thrust of the questions is transferable to most European contexts.

Assuming we approve of an army (e.g. on grounds of solidarity with those attacked), we have to equip it.

But why do companies and shareholders have to earn money from it? What about 'over-production'?

What will happen when fewer weapons are needed again? How can the companies be downsized?

What thinking is there about what happens to weapons after a war? Thousands of small arms

disappeared after the war in Iraq.

How can there be guarantees against spiralling costs? The renovation of the Gorch Fock tall ship was planned to cost €9.6 million, in the end it cost €135 million and the state paid, in spite of the corruption case. How do we assess the distribution of the federal budget among the various ministries? How much should we save at the expense of our own population and democracy (e.g. on education, transportation, culture and health) in order to raise the budget for military defence? What solutions occur to us?

If defence is necessary, why is the main discussion about the military share and how to finance it? You know as well as I do how much we need peace services, civil defence and infrastructure in general.

Can you think of more questions that go beyond the moral issue of rearmament and can deepen further discussions? (Send me an email.) It is always hard to argue about values – but when it comes to asking "how" I have often found surprising points in common.

In this newsletter you will not only learn about the new board and our new members but I will bid you farewell as general secretary as well. Of course, you will also hear the latest from the many corners of our network.

I hope you enjoy reading it.

**Juliane Prüfert**  
(she/her)  
General Secretary



*The things Ukraine can teach us about the gaps in peacebuilding ...*  
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a theology of war. Current peace negotiations are not discussing how to take on the 1.4 billion dollar propaganda machine designed to amplify fear, distrust, and hatred, so to destabilize and numb civil society.

**Power, economic and military imbalances:** Ukraine gave up its nuclear and military complex. Russia did not. Protesting against Ukraine receiving the means to defend itself while mostly ignoring the military complex causing the war is not constructive. Mechanisms are needed that can truly provide security to less powerful nations; and demilitarizing the major powers has to be a part of a coordinated global strategy.

**Death by war is not the worst thing:** I've heard peace advocates say the war should end at all costs because it kills people. By the most generous estimates, casualties from four years of war are less than 1/8 the casualties from two years of Soviet sanctioned famine.



Photo: Jim Forest

Ukrainians hate the war, but a majority prefer to actively prevent their children and grandchildren from experiencing subjugation, systemic oppression and acts of genocide.

The most dangerous thing we could do is pretend these shortcomings don't exist, and fail to apply our best efforts to address them. Peace

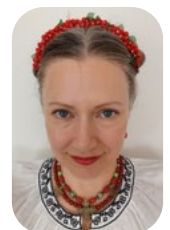
is creative, dynamic and adaptive, so the current state of the world is not proof that peace cannot work, but that we still have more work to do to develop a system that can provide peace, justice and security to all. Until we can provide a framework, and develop a sense of trust and security around it, military defense and deterrence will likely remain the default.

*A monk is taking a confession by a protester in the middle of the Revolution of Dignity in 2014*



Photo: Tim Mossholder (Unsplash)

**Andrea Shalay** (she/her) strengthens the capacities of peace-oriented organizations, and has worked and volunteered alongside Ukrainians since 2021. She lives in Uzhgorod, Ukraine, where she teaches egg-decorating as a mental health practice, and is learning to paint icons.



*Painting Eggs is one of Ukraine's traditional crafts*

# A farewell and many welcomes

## *Juliane Prüfert ends her employment as general secretary of Church and Peace*

Dear friends,  
I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the privilege of shaping your network for two years. On 11 February 2026 my contract expires and I have decided not to extend it. Church and Peace is an incredibly rich network that is growing and building bridges in times in which politicians are again standing up more for national interests and breaking relationships. You create a counter-presence, a reality that shows how security arises through trust and courage.

With all the diversity you represent, I was able to experience the many facets of working for peace through direct contacts with you in Brussels and Herrnhut. They will go with me on my further journey, when I will concentrate on working with social movements. Thank you for everything!

**Juliane Prüfert**

## *New members*



*Members of the Mennonite church in Strasbourg, part of the AEEMF*

### **AEEMF**

*Association des Églises Évangéliques Mennonites de France / Association of French Mennonite Churches*

The Association of French Mennonite Churches (AEEMF) has about 2,100 members meeting in 31 communities. Mennonite congregations exist primarily in eastern France, in Alsace-Lorraine and in the border regions with Switzerland.

The Mennonite congregations of Switzerland and France go back to the Anabaptist movement of Reformation times in the early 16th century.



*Iris offers to hold workshops on nonviolent communication, climate anxiety, militarisation and conscientious objection.*

### **Iris Speckmann**

Iris comes from the Netherlands and is coordinator for peace and sustainability for the national office of the Mennonite Church. From 2013 to 2023 she was a delegate for the Dutch Mennonites (ADS) to the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches. In addition, she is a pastor and has a doctorate in theology.

She would like to be part of a network of people working for peace and forming the peace line through Europe.

## *Introducing the new board*



During the annual general meeting on 25 October 2025 the members present elected a new board and farewelled the retiring board members Antje Heider-Rottwilm and Elisabeth Freise.

Anja Vollendorf (Germany, Protestant) was elected the new chair. She is supported by Maria Biedrawa (France, Roman Catholic) as deputy chair and Mike Zipser (Germany, Quaker) as treasurer. The various regions and denominations are represented

in the board by Étienne Chomé (Belgium, Roman Catholic), Martin Tiller (United Kingdom, Baptist) and Siniša Klem (Croatia, Baptist). Sadly, Salomé Richir-Haldemann (Switzerland, Mennonite) had to withdraw from the board in January 2026 for family reasons. We thank her very warmly for all the years in which she has been actively supporting us.

# European Conference 2025

## Learning from Central and Eastern European Experiences of Transformation

The 2025 Church and Peace conference in Herrnhut, Germany, had the theme “Don’t let yourself be hardened in these hard times... resist, reconcile, transform”. Around 120 peace activists from over 18 countries met there to network, learn from one another and recharge their batteries together.

Bishop Friedrich Kramer from the Evangelical Church in Central Germany, who is the peace spokesperson of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), commented on the song ‘Encouragement’ (1968) by singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann from the perspective of the Beatitudes. He named the challenge of not hardening our hearts as peace workers today, either; there is a daily job to do, clearing away hate and lies.

Natallia Vasilevich told us about the revolution with a female face in Belarus. She coordinates the “Christian Vision” initiative of Orthodox women who expressed their faith through nonviolent demonstrations against war in an artistic way. Yet in Belarus this civic engagement is regarded as ‘extremism’. Repression and arrests followed. This has still not stopped the initiatives from documenting human rights violations and supporting conscientious objectors.

Ieva Rūkė from Lithuania spoke about democratisation processes and possibilities of political advocacy. She asked us: “Do you think you can influence local policy-makers in your country?” We were to reply with our thumbs – up, down, middle. Regarding those with their thumbs in the



Photo: Juliane Prüfert

middle she said – “It’s in this space between hope and despair that the real work starts!” In Lithuania she works at helping people to have contact and trust in their institutions.

Marija Parnicki and Marijana Ajzenkol, two Serbian participants, reported at the conference: “In Serbia the greatest nonviolent resistance in Europe has been taking place for a year now. We need your support and your prayers.” They are concerned about freedom and justice in their country, which is a candidate for accession to the EU. The reaction of the government so far has been harsh: hundreds of people taking part in the protests have been beaten up and arrested. Yet the resistance has not been broken.

At the end, three thought-provoking reflections remained in my mind from this rich weekend: accept my hardenings and let go ... brush the dust off our shoulders and keep working so that our children will experience a just

system ... peace work is sometimes like housework: meekly clearing up every day.

**Annelie Möller**  
(she/her) is the peace secretary at the Ecumenical Information Centre in Dresden.



Participants of the European Conference in Herrnhut 2025

### Conference takeaways by other participants:

“We mustn’t do less than what is permitted.”  
(Friedrich Kramer)

“The wall didn’t fall, it was pushed.” (Marie Anne Subklew-Jeutner)

“How can I show solidarity with the victims of war and take an anti-war position at the same time?”

“Creative subversive resistance is fun – like, e.g., buying up all the beer before the neo-Nazis can get it.”

“Impressive to see mainly young people mobilising for protests in Serbia and elsewhere.”

# Arguments for Stop ReArm

*Stop ReArm Europe is a growing movement that advocates for disarmament in Europe (stoprearm.org). Its appeal states: 'We don't need more weapons... What we need is a completely different plan: genuine social, ecological and collective security for Europe and for the world.'*

Darius Rochebin's TV programme in Switzerland brings together military personnel and journalists to discuss the possibility of armed resistance to Russia. The aim of this resistance is to persuade President Putin to abandon his plans to invade Europe. These military leaders and journalists believe themselves to be in a position of strength that would allow them to avoid the capitulation of Ukraine. However intelligent this reasoning may be, it does nothing to deter the adversary but instead provokes an escalation of increasingly

sophisticated means of destruction, without considering the ultimate nuclear option.

Is this reasonable? So much expenditure, so many wounded and dead among soldiers and civilians. Admittedly, the adversary is not easy and takes the same view of the military balance of power. It is therefore illusory to want to defeat them on the field of armed force, because they are waiting for surrender and victory.

Why not consider another type of relationship based on emotional intelligence, which consists of understanding and reflecting the feelings and needs of people in conflict? President Putin feels betrayed by NATO, which is a threat to his country, and by Ukraine, which is seeking to join NATO. He would like to rebuild Greater Russia by incorporating

Ukraine into its borders. Europe is frightened and insists on respect for the borders recognised by the UN. Recognising the feelings and needs of adversaries does not mean that they will be satisfied, but they are the beginning of mutual understanding with a view to reaching a compromise. Negotiations can begin successfully.

Once the military has been removed, civilians will have every opportunity to make their voices heard in both Ukraine and Russia, to resist non-violently and demand democracy. There are several examples in history of civil resistance for the liberation of their countries. Gandhi liberated India from British rule by organising mass demonstrations of citizens. The citizens of the GDR brought down the Berlin Wall without firing a shot. During the Soviet occupation, the Czechs and Lithuanians got rid of the military occupiers through acts of non-violence. In 2022, during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, civil resistance broke out in cities across the country until the Ukrainian army took over. Let us therefore favour the option of non-violent civil defence, which will be more dissuasive to a potential adversary than nuclear weapons.

*Michel Monod (he/him) is member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR/MIR Suisse) and the Swiss Group Without an Army.*



*Poster of the movement "Stop ReArm Europe"*

# What Dignity are We Defending, Europe?

*“Believers for Peace” meet in Omiš, Croatia in the midst of rising nationalist threats*

In a fairly grey social context, there are hopeful stopovers. ‘Grey’ for us is the color of the violent protests in Serbia that have been going on for a year – they are all the more exhausting in that the current government is attempting to save itself with all machinations and lies. In Croatia, right-leaning hooded young men in black appear time and again in the streets, and violence among young people is surging as a consequence of the violent actions of veterans against cultural events in summer (the reason given: they are “defending the dignity of the homeland war”). Autumn saw a rise in the banning of cultural events run by the Serbian minority. This development seems endless and the listless reactions of the government leave no room for hope, quite the contrary: its disinclination to oppose this trend is feeding nationalist fantasies and increasing the fear in society.

And yet we are part of the events that bring hope. First, we think here of the “Believers for Peace” conference that took place in Omiš, Croatia from 9 to 12

October 2025. It assembled 60 participants: they mainly came from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. The topic was: what spirituality strengthens our will and courage to oppose war-mongering in a nonviolent way? “The presentations were good but the best thing for me was the conversations in small groups, at mealtimes”, one participant remarked. An important part of the programme was thematic discussions in small groups and workshops but also encounters in the breaks and on walks. People seek and enjoy these gatherings, which have been so rare since the war. The conference statement was drawn up in a participatory way in plenary.

The RAND association was responsible for the conference. RAND is known in the region through its training courses for nonviolence. The last ones were devoted to the topic of dialogue: dialogue as a tool of the courageous and the place of encounter and learning.

In cooperation with the



*Photo: Jakob Fehr*

*Ana Raffai speaking at the European Conference 2024*

educational organisation “Policies of Nonviolence” we are returning to the topic of dialogue and trying to find places where it can happen. We believe we can preserve ourselves from the attraction of violence and of polarisation in our societies. The theme of our invitation is “Dignity – What are we defending when we advocate for ‘the dignity of war’ and when we remember the police who, before the war started, got involved in talks with the rebel Serbs in the area around Osijek?” The believer members of the “Policies of Nonviolence” team are accompanying the preparation with their prayers, above all that we will “not let ourselves be hardened in hard times”.

**Ana Raffai** (she/her) is a trained peace worker and Roman Catholic theologian. She works for the RAND organisation in Croatia. She and her husband Otto are individual members of Church and Peace.

*‘Believers for Peace’ at their conference in Omiš, Croatia*



# Georgia rises up against corruption and to join the EU

*Serbia is not the only country in Europe where protests have been taking place for over a year. Further east, the Georgian population has been protesting since October 2024 against rigged elections and an authoritarian change of course.*

**M**y name is Mikheil Elizbarashvili. I live in Tbilisi, Georgia. Georgia is a small country in the South Caucasus, neighboring Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Armenia. Georgia is not a part of the European Union but a member of the Council of Europe.

Georgia is a fairly old country and the first mention of it goes back to the fourth century before Christ, under the name of the Kingdom of Kartli.

However, there is a western region of Georgia by the Black Sea, which was called Kolhida by locals and known by ancient Greeks as Iberia approximately 3,000 years back.

Geographically, the country lies between rival empires. This is why it was under the occupation or control of bigger states for ages. Georgia became a Christian country in 327 A.D. Before that, the state religion was Zoroastrianism.

The 20 percent of Georgian territory making up Abkhazia and South Ossetia are occupied by Russia. After the parliamentary elections in Georgia on October 2024 the opposition parties' leaders started protests claiming that the elections were stolen. The situation escalated on 28 November 2024, when Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze announced the suspension of negotiations on the country's accession to the



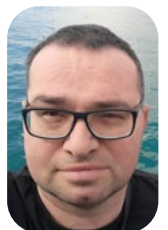
*Protests in Georgia in April 2024 (Photo: Jelger Groeneveld)*

European Union until 2028. He attributed this decision to the unacceptable actions of European politicians, whom he accused of blackmail. Georgian President Salome Zurbashvili joined the protests in Tbilisi, declaring that she would not leave her post even after her mandate expired. Thousands of Georgians went into the main street of Tbilisi to protest against Prime Minister's statement and stolen parliamentary elections.

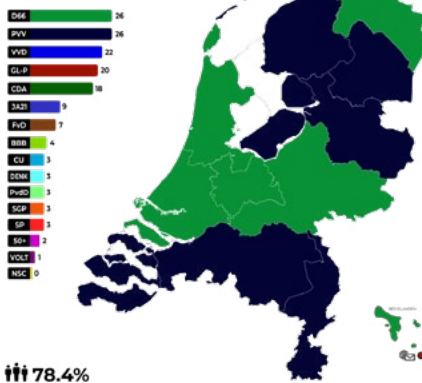
Security forces used water cannon and tear gas against protesters, who responded by throwing bottles and stones at police. Protesters also started a fire in the parliament building, which was extinguished. The clashes between protesters and police continued for weeks. Every evening protesters built barricades on the Rustaveli Avenue, the main street of Tbilisi. By next morning the barricades were dismantled by the special police officers. Hundreds of protesters were detained on administrative charges over days of protests. A number of police

officers were injured during the protests. For some period of time the protests were suspended since people got tired of protesting but after the presidential elections in autumn 2025 they escalated again. Part of Georgian legislation was changed in 2024-2025. These changes gave the state authorities the rights to strengthen their power. Many leaders of European countries expressed their support with Georgian people fighting for their rights.

**Mikheil Elizbarashvili** (he/him) is the coordinator of the sub-group for Conscientious Objection which is part of the Peace and Service Network of the Europe and Middle East Section of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (EMEC/FWCC). He is an experienced peace worker who is active in the field of conscientious objection.



# When left becomes right – how not to turn an election

**TK 2025**


78.4%

Winning parties in Dutch provinces:  
D66 (green) and PVV (blue)

Source: Jalapeño (WikiCommons)

## Diary

**24.-26.04.2026**

**Church and Peace European  
Conference**

**"Healing from Conflict"**

Milton Keynes, United Kingdom

Register via our website  
[church-and-peace.org/2026/01/  
konferenz-2026/](https://church-and-peace.org/2026/01/konferenz-2026/)

Organised with the Fellowship of  
Reconciliation UK, Anglican Pacifist  
Fellowship, Pax Christi UK, Christian  
International Peace Service (CHIPS)

**29.08.2026, 4-8 p.m. (CEST)**

**Annual general meeting**  
online



*Immediately after the general elections of 2025 in the Netherlands, people were relieved: the extreme right-wing didn't win! But there's cause for worry.*

The far right is actually even larger than during the last elections. Many parties announced they would not govern with Geert Wilders' radical right-wing Party for Freedom (PVV), so PVV voters moved to other radical right-wing parties. They did not lose support; they just spread.

The left-wing parties have lost again and have become smaller than ever. The party I voted for is the most left-wing party that exists. They did not manage to regain their lost seat. The other left-wing parties also lost seats, probably because people voted strategically for the winning party: Democrats '66. They believe this will counter the extreme right-wing votes. However, D66 is not a strategic vote: it means we are losing left-wing voices and now only have a right-wing left. D66 is often considered a centre party, but they've gradually shifted to the right over the past few years.

The left wing has fewer than 20% of the seats in parliament remaining. So, a turnaround? More like a continuous shift to the right. Over the past 14 years (the time since I was allowed to vote), I've seen migrants increasingly become scapegoats, while in reality, right-wing governing parties have dismantled our social welfare state. There is no turnaround there.

Now, two months after the elections (December 2025, editor's note), D66 will attempt to form a coalition on the right. D66 is trying to form a minority government with the Christian democrats and the liberal VVD. What they want: higher taxes for car drivers, without changing public transport prices. They are investing in NATO and war, and reintroducing military service through a lottery system if voluntary interest is lacking. They are also limiting employee rights, while big companies can keep doing business as usual. It is not a turnaround; it is a continuation of individuals, employees, and citizens bearing the burden while large companies and wealthy people can carry on with business as usual.

I see one option for a turnaround for left-wing parties: unite the people in a collective fight against the big money and a focus on social benefits. We saw the success of this with Zohran Mamdani during the mayoral elections in New York City, and I am hopeful about the Belgian PvdA, which takes a more straightforward socialist approach, dragging people away from populism.

**Geke van Vliet** (she/her) works for the Mennonite Peace Centre Berlin. She is a Dutch theologian working on her PhD on the influence of a Christian worldview on climate activism.





**United Kingdom**

***Practical Peacemaking: from global to local***

Right before our European conference, the Community of the Cross of Nails is organising a conference on this topic in Coventry Cathedral. On 22 and 23 April, you can learn more about peace spirituality and the link to peacemaking, inspired by the Cross of Nails litany. When the Germans bombed Coventry in 1940 and the cathedral was also destroyed, the provost wrote on the chancel wall "Father forgive". From that spirit grew what has today become the worldwide Cross of Nails Community.



**Germany**

***The Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) updates its understanding of Just Peace***

"Welt in Unordnung – Gerechter Friede im Blick" (world in disorder – just peace in view) is the name of the new EKD peace memorandum, which has caused some disorder in the world of peace activists, including among conscientious objectors from the former German Democratic Republic and Federal Republic of Germany. Armed service is now regarded as equivalent to conscientious objection as a way of serving peace and even if nuclear weapons continue to be banned, the "possession of nuclear weapons could ... still be politically necessary". Read it for yourselves – the memorandum (in German) can be downloaded free of charge from the EKD website ([www.ekd.de/friedensdenkschrift-2025-91393.html](http://www.ekd.de/friedensdenkschrift-2025-91393.html))



**Italy**

***CEC presents the new Charta Oecumenica***

On 5 November the Conference of European Churches (CEC) launched the updated Charta Oecumenica in Rome, together with the Council of European Bishops' Conferences. Church and Peace was also involved in the revision process. The document is available in PDF in English, French and German on the CEC website: <https://ceceurope.org/new-charta-oecumenica-marks-milestone-church-unity-europe>



## the Network

**Finland*****CEC positions itself on Russia's theology of war***

After its conference on 1-3 December, the Conference of European Churches (CEC) issued a statement named "Resisting Empire, Promoting Peace: Churches Confront the 'Russian World' Ideology". In it, CEC calls on European churches to offer hospitality to Russian and Ukrainian refugees, and to strengthen Ukrainian resistance to Russia's claims (see statement in PDF: <https://ceceurope.org/conference-statement-shares-how-churches-can-confront-russian-world-ideology>)

**France*****The Gospel as a story of peace***

Neal Blough, an individual member of Church and Peace and former director of the Centre Mennonite de Paris, published his latest book in 2025. "L'Évangile comme récit de paix. L'Église face à la guerre et à la violence" (The gospel as a story of peace. The church in face of war and violence) is available in French. It takes up questions of the (non)violence of God and the church in history, and concludes by dealing with nonviolence in practice.

**Serbia*****Protests against corruption and abuse of power continue***

On 1 November 2025 tens of thousands of people gathered in Novi Sad for 16 minutes' silence to remember the dead and to protest against the government. That day the mother of one of the victims began a hunger strike. Although she has since had to end it on medical advice, she and hundreds of thousands of others have not given up.



*The Last Word*

# “Behold, I make all things new”

*The Moravian watchword for 2026 – encouragement from the Revelation to John 21:5*

These are good, heartening words from God in the last book in the Bible. God promises to make everything new. And we know that they can't remain as they are. We

She also writes that crowds of young men are being recruited by force and thrown into busses. That is called “busification” and children play at it: two of them hold a third boy fast so that he can't resist. The fourth child kicks and hits the one in the middle and together they throw him into a pretend bus. They imitate reality, about which little is spoken. The young “busified” men stay in the army and make good fighters because they are more frightened of their comrades in arms and commanding officers than of their enemies.

God's new reality is not yet completely visible and yet it is already dawning. We can sense the new reality in the world and work on giving it enough space. God encourages us to do so. Not least because God will, at some stage, make everything new.

“God, give us peace,  
Strength on our paths,  
Serenity in all the unrest,  
Firm ground under our feet  
and a goal – your goal ahead.”  
*(Mennonite Hymn Book 718)*

**Anja Vollendorf** (she/her) has been chair of the Church and Peace board since 2025 and a member of the Laurentiuskonvent since 2018. She is a pastor and deputy dean in the Evangelical Church in Hessen and Nassau, working in Herborn and living in Laufdorf.

Read Yevgenia Belorusets' essay, *The Demand for Silence* of 03.12.2025 at [www.equator.org/articles/the-demand-for-silence](http://www.equator.org/articles/the-demand-for-silence)

The **Board of Church and Peace** would like to thank General Secretary **Juliane Prüfert** for her very dedicated work and the time spent together. It wishes her all the best and God's blessing for the new paths she will take.



Photo: Holger Becker-von Wolff

Anja Vollendorf

need another, a new world, as the present, old world is senselessly cruel at many places.

Yevgenia Belorusets, an author and artist from Ukraine who has documented the Russian invasion since 2014, writes that 160,000 soldiers left their place of deployment in 2025 alone – they are absent without leave (AWOL). AWOL has now become a common expression in Ukraine.

The old world can be cruel, but Jesus says, blessed are the peace-makers. In his Sermon on the Mount he outlines the way God's new world will dawn and how that can already be shown in our world. And John, the visionary, takes up this concern. God makes all things new and we can already take part and make peace where we are. We can show children how active non-violence works. We can offer support to those who leave the armies. We can talk about what is happening in reality. We don't need to give the floor to those who gloss over truths and do not speak about them.