



# Newsletter

**Corruption Kills**  
Serbia on the move

**Just Peace**  
„For whom?“ asks a  
consultation in  
Warszaw

**Conference 2024**  
Nonviolent  
alternatives to war



Photo: Juliane Prüfert

## “Do not let your heart become hardened in these hard times...”

*The end of an era. And a song that is more apt than ever.*

**A**t a recent Board meeting we asked ourselves: What should be the theme of the Church and Peace conference in the autumn of 2025? – at this time when we are facing so many crises, wars, and disasters. While we were thinking about this, the following verse suddenly came to mind:

“Do not let your heart become hardened  
In these hard times.  
Those who are too hard will break.  
Those who are too sharp, will stab and  
break off at the same time.”

This song has been with me for almost all my life. The songwriter, Wolf Biermann, was living in the GDR (German Democratic Republic, “East Germany”) when he wrote it. He

expressed the feelings of many people of my generation at a time when we were being confronted by the Vietnam War, the Cold War, looming ecological crises, and horrendous global injustice. He gave voice not only to our deep anxiety but also to our determination to resist and bring about a transformation.

This song is now once again more apt than ever before, which I find depressing. But on the other hand, the song also tells us exactly what needs to be done today: We need to see clearly these “hard times” and all that they might bring. We need to be aware of our own vulnerability and the fragility of the world that we’re living in. And we need to recognise that we need each other:

“Don’t let yourself be used.  
Use your time.  
You can’t go underground.  
You need us. And what we need  
is just your cheerfulness.”

The European Conference in Herrnhut, 24-26 October, will be the last that Elisabeth Freise, as treasurer, and I, as chairperson, will plan together with the other members of the Board and the general secretary. It will be the sixteenth conference since Elisabeth and I first took on our work for Church and Peace in 2009. We’ve met in many different parts of Europe during the years and have succeeded in extending the network further. We’ve addressed a lot of burning issues and spoken out in press

*continued on page 3*



## Church and Peace

The European ecumenical network of peace churches, and peace church-oriented congregations, communities and service agencies

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BIC: GENODE33DKD

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## Dear friends of Church and Peace,

Authoritarianism is back. US president Trump and vice president JD Vance have no qualms about broadcasting their plans for expansion. Court judgements are being ignored by governments (not only in the USA, incidentally, but also in Germany). And, in response, Europe is rearming and aiming to build up a powerful army of its own. What are the churches supposed to do in this situation?

Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde made an internationally effective gesture with her sermon during Donald Trump's inauguration ceremony, in which she not only addressed the US president about the negative economic and social consequences of his sweeping deportation plans, but also asked him to show mercy for the children who are frightened that their parents might be taken away from them and for the "gay, lesbian, and trans children from democratic, republican, and independent families, some of whom fear for their lives".

Not every Christian has the office or status of a bishop. But we all have the prophetic task of speaking truth to power. In the USA, Quakers are taking legal action against the government to assert the right not to have their churches and meeting houses violated by officials who are looking for people to deport. These Quakers are following in the prophetic tradition.

Just like Professor Susan Lea Smith, a member of the WCC's Commission on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development, who

is calling on churches around the world to initiate legal action against governments for their criminal negligence as regards climate justice.

Christians around the world can stand in the way of growing autocratic tendencies: through biblical exegesis which is critical of power; by looking after people who are protesting against corruption (one of the things that can cause democratic societies to disintegrate – see Marija's article about the protests in Serbia.); or by giving financial support to sea rescue projects (e.g., United4Rescue in Germany) or groups in civil society who are subject to repression.

In this edition of our newsletter, we look back at the conference in Brussels and forwards to the coming months. We hope this newsletter will encourage you to stand firm in your faith in a God of peace and justice.

May God bless you!

**Juliane Prüfert**





<- Church and Peace 2019  
in Berlin at a peace protest

Photo: Uwe Hikschi

*Do not let your heart become hardened*

...

*continued from page 1*

releases, lectures, and sermons. And we've engaged in dialogue with many different partners as we have sought to discern the ways in which we, as disciples, are being called to follow Jesus.

During the 2011 Church and Peace conference in the Community of the Ark of Lanza del Vasto in the south of France, we sent a message to the WCC's International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Jamaica: "We reject the assumption that the goal of just peace leaves us with the dilemma of choosing between the call to nonviolence and the legally justified use of violence in order to protect threatened populations."

During the following years the conference themes included: "Europe: a peace project" (in Brussels and Paris); the prophetic mission of the church (in Selbitz); "Just Policing", dialogue and encounter, and opposition to the militarisation of Europe (in Pristina and Baarlo). We held debates, issued public statements, and protested in the streets.

In Berlin in 2019 many guests joined us in remembering the past and finding encouragement for the future as we explored the theme:



Photo: Church and Peace

"...that I might give you a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11): 70 years of living nonviolence and resisting militarisation."

In 2021, because of COVID and in the middle of the debate about sexualised violence in the churches, the conference could only be held digitally: "I am that I am: Images of God and (Non-)Violence". It became clear that there is a close connection between authoritarian theology and patriarchal images of God, liturgy, and language on the one hand and, on the other hand, violence in churches, communities, families, and society and politics. It also became clear that inclusive liturgy is an inseparable part of a spirituality of nonviolence. So it was only logical that the 2023 conference in the

Netherlands should address the theme "Overcoming Racism in the Church" with input from experts from the WCC and the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).

The Russian attack on Ukraine caused us to choose as our theme for the 2024 conference: "Resisting War Today – Preparing Collective Nonviolent Alternatives". The participants in the discussion, especially those who came from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, moved and challenged us.

In 1968 Wolf Biermann sang:

"We don't want to keep quiet about it  
In this time of silence.  
Green leaves are breaking out of the twigs.  
We want to show this to everyone  
So that they know about it."

This is what it was all about (for us) then and now...

**Antje Heider-Rottwilm** has been president of Church and Peace since 2009. She will leave her post this year and continue being part of our network as individual member.

*Antje Heider-Rottwilm during the 2024 conference in Brussels*



Photo: Dietrich Gerstner

*Worship during the 2017 conference in Straßbourg*

# Just Peace in Ukraine?

## *Seeking an Ecumenical Approach to Peace*

**W**hat does the concept of just peace mean in the current situation in Ukraine? I joined some 80 other people from many European churches, including from Ukraine, at CEC's invitation to explore the theological, ethical, and practical elements of the concept and reality of 'just peace' in the context of Russian military aggression on Ukrainian territory.

At the heart of the consultation was listening – we heard the Ukrainian voices which represent the Christian diversity of the country: the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Baptist Union, the Transcarpathian Reformed Church in Ukraine, the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches, the Bible Society of Ukraine, the Lutheran Church of Ukraine and the Institute for Religious Freedom.

One of the sensitive issues is the relationship between the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which is recognised by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate). There are numerous tensions between the two. Most Ukrainians would like to see a united Orthodox Church.

While just peace is supposed to encourage the churches to nonviolence, the Ukrainians pointed out the meaning of the word 'just' and in conjunction the injustice that their country is experiencing. Though Ukrainian

evangelical churches historically have shared a pacifist position, this is currently considered impractical, representatives reported, even though there are conscientious objectors within these denominations, albeit not legally recognized.

'Self-defence has become a reality for many churches and pastors from one day to the next. The church must continue to work for reconciliation and peacebuilding even in times of resistance. It must cultivate the possibility of peace for tomorrow,' said Baptist pastor Ihor Bandura. 'The commitment to nonviolence must be balanced by the duty to protect the most vulnerable and to fight injustice.'

'As Christians, we are called to speak the truth, deconstruct violent narratives and take the side of justice. Victory for the truth means protecting life, restoring justice and building solidarity. CEC remains committed to supporting the Ukrainian churches and promoting a vision of just and lasting peace,' CEC chair Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain said in conclusion.

As a Mennonite participant and member of Church and Peace, what can I say about this consultation? In my opinion, the resurgence of Christian nationalism in Russia or the USA must be combated by the global church

family. The issue of peace and nonviolence cannot be considered only as a peculiarity of Mennonites, Quakers or other peace churches. Without a serious ecumenical approach, Christians will not carry much weight on peace issues.

The mere fact that these churches, with their different traditions and views on the question of war, are meeting and approaching the matter seriously and with mutual respect is very important – something I see as a sign of hope.

**Neal Blough** is a historian of Anabaptist theology and a member of the Peace Commission of the Mennonite World Conference. His participation was financially supported by the Anabaptist Forum, also a member of Church & Peace.



Photo: Conference of European Churches

*Neal Blough gives an introduction into the topic of 'just peace' in Warsaw.*

# Resisting War Today – Preparing Nonviolent Alternatives

*A short review six months past the Brussels conference*

Organising the European Conference and AGM, 24-27 October in Brussels, was an exciting and challenging task for me. I had never been responsible for such a large and multifaceted gathering before, so I was very happy that so much of the conference worked well from my point of view.

Six months ago, the political climate was depressing because the whole world seemed to be rearming. So it was important to me that the conference participants should leave Brussels feeling encouraged – or at least strengthened in the conviction that it is not a total waste of time to be working for peace.

So I put a lot of energy into awareness-raising and interactive exercises which would enable the participants to get to know each other, to learn from each other, and, above all, to discover how much they themselves have to teach. The programme was varied and involved courageous and thoughtful resource persons who contributed a wide variety of perspectives and experiences.

Looking back over the past six months, I find it quite horrifying to observe how many basic rights we are now having to fight for (the right to conscientious objection to military service, the right to asylum, the right to freedom of opinion, etc.). But at the same time the backlash and the repression of peace activists shows how strong “we”, i.e., a peace-loving civil society, are. During her lecture, Olga Karach said: “Let’s believe



*Photo: Dietrich Gerstner*

*More than 120 participants from 23 countries took part in the European Conference in Brussels.*

what Lukashenko believes about us.” She was pointing out how much certain politicians fear the strength of civil society. And she’s right: Without the tireless work of all of us (and the vast number of people whom we’ve never heard of, because they can only operate under the radar), Europe would look very different today.

What impressed me was the participation not only of “big names”, such as Marie-Noelle Koyara, the former foreign minister of the Central African Republic, but also of unknown people, such as a Russian conscientious objector, and of longstanding members of Church & Peace, such as Ana and Otto Raffai, who combine practical experience with knowledge and understanding and personal spiritual insights.

When I think about it now, I still feel overwhelmed and very privileged to be able to play a part in the ongoing development of a network such as this. I’m grateful for so many deep insights – that

human security is about more than simply not being shot dead, for example, and that every war unleashes new cycles of violence... Only on rare occasions does so much passion come together with practical experience, insights, and scientific knowledge and understanding. And I want to thank you all for that.

Most of the contributions to the conference are now available online. I sincerely hope that we will be able to bring such a great variety of perspectives together once again in Herrnhut, 24-26 October 2025, because we need them. We need your insights into the theme of the conference: **“Do not let your heart become hardened in these hard times – Resist, Reconcile, Transform”** *I will take away your stubborn heart of stone and give you an obedient heart. (Ezekiel 36:26)*

**Juliane Prüfert** is serving as the general secretary of Church & Peace since March 2024.



# Hope for Peace in the DRC?

*Is there any hope for peace and reconciliation for the people of the African Great Lakes region?*

*A number of participants from African countries join the Church and Peace conferences via our French network. Quite a few of the conflicts on the continent are fuelled by neo-colonial structures and European governments and corporations. Last year in Brussels, Laurent emphasised that European solidarity is also essential for the transformation of these conflicts.*

Is peace an empty word for people who live in the Great Lakes region, especially for those who live in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)? They continue to experience the horrors of murderous conflicts that have been shifting from country to country since the 1980s, initially in Uganda, then in Rwanda and Burundi, and entrenched in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 1996. The M23, a Congolese Tutsi-led rebel paramilitary group, was defeated in 2012 and was accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. But the militias were allowed to flee unhindered to Uganda and Rwanda.

Since July 2022 there has been a resurgence of rebel violence. The M23 and the Rwandan army stand accused of looting and driving out and massacring the local population. According to local media reports, more than 3,000 people have been killed in the city of Goma alone since 26 January 2025. On 18 February 2025 the United Nations accused the M23 of recruiting and killing children in Bukavu and the other areas that they have occupied. With international backing (especially through Rwanda), the rebels are now bold enough to demand the withdrawal of international peace missions. The UN Stabilisation Mission in the DRC and the SADC (Southern African Development Community) Mission in the DRC have both been subjected to repeated attacks.

Ignoring calls for a ceasefire from the UN Security Council, the M23 and the Rwandan army have taken over the city of Goma, including the airport, and the city of Bukavu and Kavumu airport, thereby

aggravating further the precarious humanitarian predicament of people living in the entire region.

Planned negotiations between the DRC and Rwanda (sponsored by Luanda (Angola)) and between the various rebel factions and the DRC (sponsored by Nairobi (Kenya)) have come to nothing. Can we dare to hope that the ongoing attempt at mediation between the conflicting parties, initiated by religious groups in the DRC in February, will bring the war to an end? Anyone who wants to awaken hope among people in the wider Great Lakes region, will have to conduct an in-depth analysis of the lies that have been told and of the real reasons underlying the conflict. All the victims of the conflict, in the Congo and beyond, must be included, if the truth is to be revealed and the causes and driving factors behind the cycle of conflict are to be made transparent.

Although it will be difficult, this is the only way to make justice, reparation, and remembrance possible, paving the way for the wounds of the past to be healed. And it is the only way to overcome the institutionalised impunity of governments in the Great Lakes region.

**Laurent Munyandilikirwa** is from Rwanda. He has been living in France for many years where he works for peace and reconciliation with the *Mouvement International de Reconciliation (FOR) France*.



*One of many camps for internally displaced persons in Eastern Congo*



*Photo: Hugh Kinsella Cunningham*

# Corruption is killing us

## On the peaceful protests in Serbia

It all began on 1 November, when the canopy of the newly renovated train station in Novi Sad collapsed. Fifteen people lost their lives, including children. For more than 48 hours, a 24-year-old mother from my village of Kisač was trapped under the heavy concrete roof.

Kisač is a suburban settlement 20 km from Novi Sad. There, a well-organised farmers' association has been fighting for decades for a better position for farmers in Serbia. Why am I mentioning this? This association has mobilised the entire village to actively participate in the mass uprising against the corrupt system that has dominated Serbia for decades.

On the same day as the roof collapsed, peaceful protests began, with students blockading all universities and demanding the release of documents related to the reconstruction of the canopy as well as the punishment of those responsible. The well-organised actions gradually sparked a general rebellion among hundreds of thousands of people in Serbia who no longer want to accept corruption, cronyism and totalitarianism. Soon, schools shut down and joined in. Every Friday, at exactly 11:52 a.m., Serbian citizens observe a fifteen-minute silence in memory of the victims of this tragedy. Not only students, but also teachers, actors, hotel employees, taxi drivers, lawyers and more take part in the protests.

The protests have been going on for a long time and are threatening to completely paralyse Serbia and its economy. Several high-ranking state officials have resigned. But



Photo: Nadija Čelić

the students want more – they are demanding the abolition of the entire corrupt system that is killing us.

The residents of my village are very determined and persistent in their support for the protest actions, especially the farmers, who take part every day and support the students. My family is also standing with their tractors at bridges and busy intersections to protect the students from attack. Our farmers cook hot meals for the students almost every day and organise the collection of funds for the survivors. Our women prepare snacks.

Our fellow citizen from Kisač, who was under the canopy, survived, but she lost an arm and part of her pelvis. Isn't that reason enough to keep fighting for change? For ideas that stand above party politics? For healthy, stable and

functioning institutions, justice and transparency?

We are not alone in this fight. We feel supported by the prayers of believers throughout the region and in Europe. As the Apostle Paul says: 'As you help us by means of your prayers, so it will be that the many prayers for us will be answered, and God will bless us: and many will raise their voices to him in thanksgiving for us.' (2 Cor. 1:11).

**Marija Parnicki** is a psychologist and works for the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organisation (EHO). She is a member of the United Methodist Church.



*People from all backgrounds support the protests.*



# New members of Church & Peace

## **Antje Heider-Rottwilm**

*Germany*

Antje has been a member of the Laurentiuskonvent (a corporate member of Church & Peace) since 1980. She began her service as chairperson of Church & Peace in 2009. We now welcome her as an individual member. Antje lives in Berlin.



## **Marie Anne Subklew**

*Germany*

Marie Anne has been a researcher at the Centre for Peace Church Theology at the University of Hamburg since 2017 and is professionally engaged in addressing issues around Christian peace witness as a basis for creating a more peaceful world. She has a close personal connection to the Pankow Peace Group (in East Berlin) which was active between 1981 and 2021. Since February 2023, together with friends from the peace group, she organises a monthly memorial walk in Berlin to commemorate all those who have died in war, the cities that have been destroyed, the natural environment that continues to suffer, and the dreams that have not been fulfilled.



## **Ieva Rūkė**

*Lithuania*

Ieva is the coordinator of the Centre for Dialogue and Conflict Transformation in Klaipėda and is strongly committed to working to promote justice, peace, and human rights. She seeks to understand why people behave as they do, especially in conflict situations, whenever crimes are committed, and within the criminal justice system. Ieva feels that she is called to build bridges where there are divisions between individuals, between social groups, or within the justice system, by facilitating discussions which lead to healing and change. She always strives to create spaces in which people can find dignity, hope, and reconciliation.



## **Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CCND)**

*United Kingdom*

CCND organises monthly prayers for (nuclear) disarmament, and campaigns for implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which came into force in 2021. Partly because of Brexit, CCND is keen to develop closer links with the peace movement in continental Europe and therefore joined Church & Peace as a corporate member in 2024.



## *Introducing the new Board*

During the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 24 October 2024 the members of Church & Peace elected a new Board and said goodbye to the members of the Board who were standing down: Kees Nieuwerth (Netherlands, Quaker), Ruben Secen (Croatia, Youth for Christ), and Tony Weekes (United Kingdom). Kees, who has played a leading role in Church & Peace as a member of the Board since 2015, was thanked especially for his service.

The new Board is largely made up of an experienced team which includes Antje Heider-Rottwilm (Germany, protestant), Elisabeth Freise (Germa-

ny, Catholic), Maria Biedrawa (France, Catholic), Étienne Chomé (Belgium, Catholic), and Salomé Richir-Haldemann (France/Switzerland, Mennonite). They are joined by three new members: Anja Vollendorf (Germany, protestant), Mike Zipser (Germany, Quaker) and Martin Tiller (United Kingdom, Baptist). Elisabeth Freise and Antje Heider-Rottwilm had already declared that they were willing to continue to serve as treasurer and chairperson. A new chairperson and a new treasurer will be elected at the next in-person AGM which will be held during the European Conference in Herrnhut, 24-26 October 2025.



**Diary**

**19 September 2025, 5 PM – 9 PM CEST**  
**Annual General Meeting**  
 online

**24-26 October 2025**  
**European Conference**  
**“Do not let your heart become  
 hardened in these hard times...  
 Resist, Reconcile, Transform” ... and  
 I will remove from your body the heart  
 of stone and give you a heart of flesh.**  
 (Ezekiel 36:26)

Herrnhut, Germany

**5-7 December 2025**  
**Board meeting**  
 Kehl, Germany

**Every Friday, 20:30 hrs. CEST**  
**Friday Prayers for Peace**  
 online

**Resources**

In view of current developments,  
 Church and Peace calls for clear  
 orientation to justice and peace  
 (Wethen, 6 March 2025)

European Conference and Board  
 Elections of Church and Peace 2024  
 (Wethen, 4 November 2024)

Nonviolent Resistance – Rethinking  
 Security (Wethen, 4 November 2024)

Guaranteeing Protection and Asylum  
 for Conscientious Objectors, Deserters  
 and War Resisters!  
 (Wethen, 4 November 2024)

New European Commission prioritises  
 competition and security instead of  
 reconciliation and peace!  
 (Wethen, 30 October 2024)

Open Letter: You can never solve  
 problems with the same mindset that  
 created them.” (13 June 2024)

Press releases and open letters:  
[www.church-and-peace.org/documents](http://www.church-and-peace.org/documents)

# Climate and Military

## Resisting the Powers and Principalities – On the German Autumn Conference 2024

Some 60 participants discussed the role of the military in times of climate change and ways to address issues of disarmament and climate crisis during the Church and Peace German-speaking regional conference 2024 ‘Climate and Military – Resisting the Powers and Principalities.’

The gathering, also the autumn conference of the German Mennonite Peace Committee along with the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Quakers, took place at Thomashof, Germany, from 29 November to 1 December.

In his opening presentation on Walter Wink's concept of resisting the powers and principalities, Gregor Rehm encouraged the participants to see the world not only as a system of human institutions but also as a spiritual structure. He triggered much discussion with a central question of how the inner spirit of institutions could be altered to bring about external changes.

In her look at the role of the military in the climate crisis, Jacqueline

Andres showed how military build-up and wars accelerate climate change and cause long-term environmental damage. In follow-up discussion participants debated questions of greenwashing and the necessity of military intervention as well as the complex interactions between war and the environment.

Workshops on a range of topics such as ‘Military and Climate Crisis’, ‘The armour of a Christian’ and ‘Transforming Powers in the Way of Christ’ facilitated the exchange of ideas about practical nonviolent action people can take for peace.

The 2024 Autumn Conference was an inspiring and challenging weekend that addressed the most pressing questions about the climate crisis as well as the role of the military and society. Participants went home with many new insights and ideas that they can implement in their daily lives and commitment to peace and justice.

**Johanna Landes  
 and Juliane Prüfert**

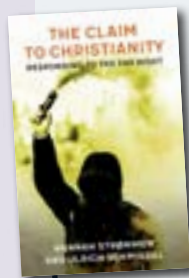


Photo: Juliane Prüfert

United Kingdom

**The Far Right and Christianity**

Hannah Strømme and Ulrich Schmiedel have written a book entitled "The Church, the Far Right, and the Claim to Christianity". As regards to the content of the book, the two authors say: "Theologians may not like (this kind of) political reading of the Bible. Indeed, biblical scholars could say that it is implausible from a historical point of view, and that the hermeneutics is all wrong or even intentionally falsified. But the Bible is still read in this way. The theologians in far-right circles have not simply appeared out of the blue."



Netherlands

**Veiligheid opnieuw doordenken**

The launch of the Dutch „Rethinking Security” campaign on 18 September 2024 began with the presentation of the Dutch translation of the abridged version of the German scenario, "Sicherheit neu Denken". Representatives of numerous organisations and networks from throughout the Netherlands drew up a plan for the campaign which was then adopted nationally. Kees Nieuwerth, who was a member of the Board of Church & Peace for many years, has translated and adapted the scenario for the Dutch context.



Poland

**Annual meeting of Quakers in Europa and the Middle East**

More than 60 Quakers will meet in Warsaw and online for the annual meeting of the Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) of the Friends World Committee for Consultation, 8-11 Mai 2025. The theme of the gathering will be: "How do we live together as a community of Friends in Europe and the Middle East?"



France

**Rethinking Security in Paris**

In March, a group met in Paris to create a French branch of "Rethinking Security". Karina Knight-Spencer from "Stop Fuelling War", a corporate member of Church & Peace, was one of the people who organised the meeting.



Italy

**"No More War – Letters from Russian and Ukrainian Conscientious Objectors and Deserters"**

The ad hoc subgroup for conscientious objectors of the Peace & Service Network of the Europe and Middle East Section (EMES) of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) has collected stories from conscientious objectors and deserters from Georgia, Armenia, Russia and Ukraine. The Mailand-Monza local group of Un Ponte Per (UPP, "A Bridge for"), an Italian NGO, has edited the collection, translated it into Italian, added stories that they have collected through their own channels, and published the entire collection on 15 March in the form of a brochure entitled "No More War - Letters from Russian and Ukrainian Conscientious Objectors and Deserters".





# the Network



**Lithuania**

***Updated Charta Oecumenica***

The Charta Oecumenica (COe) has been updated. Church bodies throughout Europe, including Church & Peace, were involved in the process. The new version of the Charta Oecumenica will be presented in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 26-27 April. The goal of the Charta Oecumenica, when it was published in 2001, was to maintain and develop community among the churches. The Charta Oecumenica is a joint document of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE).



**Germany**

***"Why Civil Resistance Works"***

A German translation of the book "Why Civil Resistance Works", by Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, is now available. The book dispels the myth that violence occurs as a result of structural and contextual factors and must sometimes be employed to reach certain political goals. Stefan Maass, who works for the regional protestant church in Baden, was largely responsible for getting the book translated.



**Serbia**

***"We come in Peace"***

The Center for Nonviolent Action in Belgrade has recently published a book about the potential role of veterans in peace work and the challenges that they face: "We come in Peace" - War Veterans in Peacebuilding". The book appears in English on the website of the Center for Nonviolent Action ([nenasilje.org](http://nenasilje.org)) and can be downloaded free of charge.



**Kosovo**

***40 years must be celebrated!***

On 13-15 June, the Fellowship of the Lord's People will celebrate 40 years of existence as the first Albanian-speaking church to be established in Kosovo after the end of World War II. The church was founded in Prishtina in 1985. Artur Krasniqi has been serving as the pastor of the congregation for more than 20 years. The Fellowship of the Lord's People has been a corporate member of Church & Peace since 2014.



*The Last Word*

# Devouring People is the Character of War

*2 Samuel 2:26: "Must the sword devour forever? Don't you realise that this will end in bitterness?"*

In 2 Samuel 2:26 we hear Abner, the commander of Saul's army, calling on his opponent, Joab, to end the fighting. We do not know whether Abner knew that the two reasons that he gave for ending the fighting would be accepted by Joab.

on how it is possible to stop the violence in the middle of a war. In the middle of a war, it is possible to awaken people to the realisation that it will inevitably be bitter in the end. An appeal to stop the violence makes sense, even when it doesn't mean a final end to the war.

working for peace. Our response to war is not simply peace, but to work for peace. In the middle of a war, we begin working for peace by resisting the spread of enmity. The seeds of enmity are sown before the war. And then enmity flourishes during the war. The innocent victims "justify" a new round of killing and even deeper enmity.

Peace logic doesn't involve demonising the aggressor. It involves recognising that violence takes on a life of its own during wartime. The dynamics of violence are ignored by military logic. So the victims gradually become like the perpetrators. In wartime people become bestial "man-eaters" when they are not warned about what will happen to them. Good people turn into nasty petty thieves in wartime. Murder, rape, and looting are commonplace during wartime.

In the middle of a war, it is difficult to convey the message that those who are enemies in wartime can one day become friends in a time of peace. This message is either annoying or unimaginable, because the fear is too great, and people have been too deeply hurt. But when the woundedness means that we cannot speak of peace, we can witness to peace through silence.

All these things are an integral part of warfare. They are not an aberration from otherwise "clean" war-fighting. What we are seeing today in Gaza, Lebanon, Ukraine is not an overstepping of the boundaries of legitimate self-defence. This is what legitimate self-defence looks like.

My answer to the question, "What can we do to oppose war in the middle of a war?" is: We should respond to the reality of warfare by

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Photo: Jakob Fehr

*During the conference in Brussels Ana Raffai combines her exegesis of the verse in 2 Samuel with an analysis of the reality of war.*

The two reasons are: 1. It is in the nature of war that it devours people. When a war devours people, this is not an aberration. It is a defining feature of war that it devours people. 2. Abner warns against the fruits of war: War is always bitter in the end.

The text in the second book of Samuel concludes with a report