

“Glory to God and peace on earth” A Call to Peace and Reconciliation

The gift of the resurrected Jesus to the apostles was peace. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you” (Jn.14:27). Encouraged by this message and strengthened by this promise, we, the representatives from partner churches, partner institutions and partnership committees in the Protestant Church of Hesse and Nassau (EKHN), have gathered together for the third International Partnership Consultation at the end of the “Decade to Overcome Violence” at Arnoldshain, Germany, 9th - 11th November 2010.

We are delighted for this opportunity to come together under the auspices of EKHN, and in the presence of the Deputy Church President of the same church, Rev. Cordelia Kopsch, together with representatives of the Church Board, Church Administration and the Centre for Ecumenical Work of EKHN. After thorough deliberations and careful consideration we have arrived at the following observations and recommendations.

1. The suggestions and recommendations of the second partnership consultation (February 2009) were taken up and discussed. Some concrete steps were taken to implement the recommendations. As suggested by the second consultation efforts are being made to integrate peace building programmes into the regular exchange programmes. The present consultation takes place in this context.
2. The main focus of the 3rd International Partnership Consultation was the mutual exchange and sharing of our experiences and insights collected during the “Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010” initiated by the World Council of Churches. We discovered that the issue of Peace and Justice is deeply related to the centre of Christian belief. We pray: “Lord make us instruments of your peace” so that we are enabled to overcome the culture of violence and to live and work towards a culture of just peace. We realize the need to move towards transformative justice. With deep regret we realize that the Decade was also a time of violence and wars. The world in which we live is assailed by economic injustice and enslavement, nuclear warfare, increasing trade of weapons, structural violence, exploitation of the poor, etc. Although we may not be able to overcome violence in its totality, yet we believe and affirm that just peace and reconciliation as the signs of the kingdom of God are possible.
3. In the presentations and the discussions we were made aware of the different forms of violence all over the world and of the psychological and physical burdens that accompany them. In some parts of the world Christians also have become victims of violence, but we are also painfully conscious of the fact that the Church and its institutions themselves are perpetrators of different forms of violence.
4. In ecumenical solidarity our churches and partners are engaged as advocates of human rights and are involved in different activities and projects to overcome violence and new forms of slavery, especially human trafficking, forced prostitution, domestic violence and violation of human rights and violence also among youth. We are aware of the great risks that our brothers and sisters take up especially in minority contexts, making a vital contribution to reconciliation and thus becoming committed witnesses to the central mission of the Church to be peacemakers.
5. We firmly believe that peace is a gift of God and that we are called to enhance this peace. We came to realize that there are concrete ways of overcoming violence. We were encouraged by the various models pursued during the Decade in different parts of the world and have experienced the strengthening of our partnership in this regard as a learning community. We became consciously aware of some models of overcoming violence such as countering human trafficking and forced prostitution in Czech Republic and Germany, domestic violence and violation of human rights in South Africa, India and Germany; building up cultural identity from the impacts of history of oppression and violence and to work for equity and peace through education and reconciliation in the USA. We further realized the importance of becoming agents of peace education as in Ghana and in Germany; as facilitators of interreligious harmony and conflict transformation effected by the Henry Martyn Institute in Hyderabad, India.

6. Through our South African partners we were informed about the concept of *Ubuntu (umntu ngumntu ngabantu)* which when translated means that we are interdependent, which is a human imperative. In order to realise our peace endeavours we should share our spiritual and cultural gifts, and express these through singing, praying, and dancing.
7. It gives us great joy to see that there are committed engagements of Churches and institutions with people of other religions and agents in the civil society to face the challenges, to work for peace, justice and integrity of creation.
8. We intend to bring up our insights on these themes in the international peace convocation in May 2011 in Jamaica. We call upon our Churches and partner institutions to continue working on the themes of the Decade. We commit ourselves to the strengthening of the culture of peace and reconciliation. The insights gained and good examples received from the Decade should inspire for further engagement in the future. Our Churches, congregations and institutions should become supportive of the needed protest against violence and offer an open space of learning to overcome violence.
9. We earnestly encourage the Churches to take up the instances of violence in the respective regions and the churches, to break the culture of silence, to reflect upon the situation, to raise our voices courageously against such situations and to initiate concrete steps to overcome violence, especially by offering space and assistance to the people affected. Causes of violence must be uprooted through the process of reconciliation in order to bring about healing so that victims of violence may liberate themselves from the causes of their suffering. This will enable them to live a life in peace and justice with one another.
10. Encouraged by our sharing and fellowship we commit ourselves to the implementation of the recommendations and ideals that we have set for ourselves in our congregations and in the society at large. A reporting of the achievements and challenges is expected.
11. Having become aware of the rampant violence against women in all our societies, we commit ourselves to focus on this burning issue in a concerted effort.
12. During these days of consultation we experienced again the great value of this multilateral meeting of partners. Therefore we encourage our Churches to provide the possibility for such consultations.
13. We call upon our churches and congregations to pray and celebrate ecumenical services for peace on the occasion of the peace convocation in Jamaica, especially on 22nd May 2011.
14. The biblical vision of just peace and a new creation is a source of hope for change. This encourages us to continue to work for peace and indeed we are convinced that peace is possible and feasible. We invite all people of good will, to follow the call: "Seek peace, and pursue it" (Psalm 34, 14).

- **Church of North India (CNI):**
Amritsar Diocese – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Gießen and Wetterau;
- **Partnership Committee Krishna-Godavari** of the Deaneries of Grünberg, Hungen and Kirchberg;
- **Henry Martyn Institute, Hyderabad – India;**
- **Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) - Diakonia**
Ceskokobratrská Církev Evangelická;
- **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT):**
Karagwe Diocese – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Biedenkopf, Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Gladenbach and Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Nassau;
North-western Diocese / Evangelical Academy Ruhija – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Herborn;
- **Partnership Committee GMIM** of the Church District Rheinhessen;
- **Partnership committee GKPS** the Deanery of Bad Marienberg;

- **MEET – More Ecumenical Empowerment Together;**
- **Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA):**
MCSA – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Vorderer Odenwald;
- **Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG):**
Asante Presbytery – Partnership Committee of the Deanery of Runkel;
Northern Presbytery – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of the city of Frankfurt;
- **United Church of Christ USA (UCC):**
New York Conference – Partnership Committee of the Deaneries of Frankfurt-Höchst and Wiesbaden;
- **Women´s Rights are Human Rights:.** Counselling and Information Centre for Migrant women and their Families, Frankfurt/M., Germany;
- **Center for Ecumenical Work, Frankfurt/M.**

Arnoldshain, 11th of November 2010