



June 2011

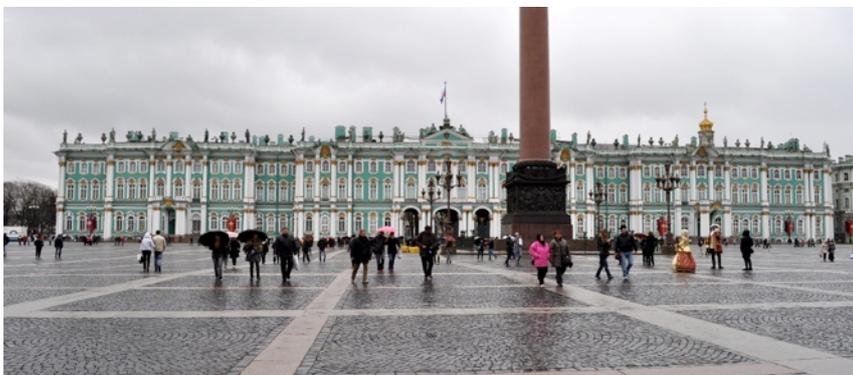
EFECW Newsletter

- REPORTS -

EFECW Seminar “Creation and Ecology” 4-8 May 2011, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation

by Carla Maurer (Pictures: Nata Hovorkova and Carla Maurer)

On the kind invitation of the Russian Forum, the EFECW seminar 2011 took place in St. Petersburg. At the General Assembly in 2010 in Loccum, Germany, the Forum decided to



establish a working group on ecology. Consequently “Creation and Ecology” was chosen as theme for the EFECW seminar 2011. Twenty-five women participated, representing nine countries. The Biblical stories of the creation of the world, their interpretation throughout church history and their consequences for the relationships between God and

creation, humankind and creation and men and women were discussed from different denominational perspectives and disciplines. The participants also exchanged information about projects in their countries.

In their message, the participants of the St.Petersburg seminar commit themselves to seven points on how to move towards a more sustainable and just lifestyle, and invite others to join them in their commitment. Also, the St. Petersburg group expressed the wish to cooperate more closely with other organisations such as the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN). The Co-Presidents will explore possible ways of cooperation for the next ECEN General Assembly in 2012.

The whole message can be read on the EFECW webpage: <http://www.efecw.net/>

Some of the presentations will be available on the webpage.

Before the seminar, the Financial Committee (FC) and the Coordinating Committee (CC) met. On the agenda were, among other things: adoption of the financial report and the budget, planning upcoming meetings and events, reporting and consulting on ongoing projects (such as Young Women's Strategy, Jubilee book, Ecumenical Celebration Group, contacts to members and partner organisations).



International Ecumenical Peace Convocation: "Glory to God and Peace on Earth" **17 - 25 May 2011, Kingston, Jamaica**

by Fiona Buchanan

The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) was a "harvest festival" which aimed to celebrate the achievements of the Decade to Overcome Violence, a World Council of Churches initiative which began in 2001. With almost 1000 participants representing many denominations and countries from all corners of the world, the IEPC provided an opportunity to share ideas for building 'just peace', and at the same time enabled the development of networks which will strengthen this work in the decades to come. It also called upon individuals and churches to renew their commitment to nonviolence, peace and justice.

The IEPC was structured around four key themes - Peace in the Community, Peace with the Earth, Peace in the Marketplace, Peace among the Peoples – and the plenary sessions and 'reasonings' (or 'workshops') provided the means by which delegates could consider these themes within their local context. We heard from Martin Luther King Junior III, who underlined that his father's fight against poverty, racism and militarism was by no means over, and how nurturing mutuality and interdependence among our young people is key to continuing this work. Dr Muna Mushawar, a Palestinian, talked about the violence of patriarchy and sexism, and the issues facing women of all ages in Palestine. The statistics are shocking - 62% of married women experience psychological abuse, whilst 23 % experience physical abuse - yet the government continues to use the excuse of more pressing political issues to prevent them from addressing issues of gender. We were left with the question - how can the churches stop the misinterpretation of scripture that leads to this violence occurring?

With fringe events including a Peace Concert in Emancipation Park, a screening of a play on human trafficking and how churches can contribute to its elimination, a 'Caribbean Day' festival of steel bands, dancing, and Caribbean food, there certainly was no shortage of cultural activities to root us in the country and culture of the Convocation, Jamaica. As we

recommitted ourselves to working for just peace in whichever context we may find ourselves, delegates left the Convocation with the challenge of putting a stop to the violence which the churches are too often guilty of – the violence of silence.

Read the final message of the IEPC Conference in Jamaica:

<http://www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/wcc-resources/documents/presentations-speeches-messages/iepc-message.html>

Plenary meeting of the Church and Society Commission 25-28 May 2011, Brussels, Belgium

by Carla Maurer

The EFECW is an associated member of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and its Church and Society Commission (CSC). At the meetings of the CSC, the EFECW is regularly invited as an observer. This year's plenary meeting was held in Brussels, bringing together CEC member churches and associated organisations. The main themes of the plenary were:

1) Dialogue with the European institutions

In Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty of the European Union, the EU commits itself to an "open, transparent and regular dialogue" with the "confessional and non-confessional organisations" (including the churches). CEC is the official dialogue partner for its member churches (Orthodox, Protestant, Baptist, Anglican, Old-catholic and others). Twice a year, CSC together with members of the European Commission, plans dialogue seminars on changing topics (recently: ecology, religious freedom, combating poverty). Once a year, the head of the European Commission (José Manuel Barroso) invites CEC to a church leadership meeting. The participants of these meetings are almost exclusively men, whereas women play a more active role in the dialogue seminars. EFECW proposed to CEC to create an advisory board for the church leadership meetings, to give more women and young persons the opportunity to participate.

2) Financial and debt crisis in Europe

There was a deepened debate about the financial situation in the members churches and the role the churches play in these difficult times. Many churches feel the increased responsibility in diaconical work and spontaneously set up ad hoc projects to help people who are affected by the crisis. Different projects and experiences have been shared. Mr. Vesa Virhälä, an adviser from the cabinet of Olli Rehn (European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs), presented an analysis of the events that led to the debt crisis and explained how the EU intends to absorb the consequences of it. Unsurprisingly there was no change of paradigm in his view on the economy as such. To stimulate the economic growth, to save countries like Greece, Portugal or Ireland from bankruptcy and

to stay competitive on the global scale remain the top priorities of the EU. Alternative economic models are not on the radar screens of the decision makers.

Next CSC Plenary Assembly: 9-12 May 2012

- INFORMATION -

Jacqueline Stuyt Legacy

by Gisela Hoeve

In 2009 we received a legacy of over € 220.000 from former CC-member Jacqueline Stuyt. The legacy is earmarked for special projects of National Forums in Europe for the duration of 10 years.

Applications awarded for 2011:

Croatia: Capacity Building in a project to open a care center for elderly people.

European Project for Interreligious Learning (EPIL): module III of an educational project for Christian and Muslim Women.

Romania: Capacity training of young women in Romania from different cultural and denominational backgrounds.

Cyprus: Training of young women to work with children and teenagers in church.

Greece: Capacity building for migrant women in Greece.

Germany: Workshop at the Kirchentag in Dresden.

Congratulations and good luck!

Upcoming events

ICETH Annual Conference 2011, Bad Boll (Germany), 8-10 July 2011
"Xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe: How Christian, Muslim and Jewish Women Take Responsibility for Change" (www.iketh.eu)

World YWCA Women's Summit and Council, Zurich (Switzerland), 10-16 July 2011
"Women Creating a Safe World" (<http://www.worldywcacouncil.org/>)

European Project for Interreligious Learning (EPIL), Vienna (Austria), 18-25 September 2011

“Historic Memories and Present-Days Realities - Difficult Interactions” (www.epil.ch)

Meeting of the National Coordinators in Druskininkai (Lithuania), 21-25 September 2011

“Trafficking in women” and “Shared responsibility between the generations”

Thank you for reading our newsletter! The EFECW newsletter will be issued regularly in May/June and in September. We are happy to receive your comments, suggestions, reports and announcements and to include them if possible!

Please contact: efecw-admin@inbox.net



The Coordinating and Financial Committee