



ccme

Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

## Europe protecting people more than borders – CCME – beyond borders since 1964 –



## Documentation

**EVANGELISCHE AKADEMIE FRANKFURT**

**02. – 04. December 2025**

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## 02<sup>nd</sup> December

### Opening and Welcome by CCME & Evangelische Akademie

- Ms Fiona Kendall, CCME Moderator

### Welcome, Opening, Prayer

*by Ms Fiona Kendall, CCME Moderator*

#### Welcome and thanks

Good morning, everyone. For those who don't know me, my name is Fiona Kendall, a mission partner seconded to work within the refugee and migrant team of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy. Now in my second term as a member of CCME's ExCom, I currently discharge the role of moderator. It is therefore my first happy task this morning, on behalf of CCME, to welcome all of you to our sixtieth anniversary celebrations. We are deeply honoured that so many have you chosen to join us, aware that, for some, the journey has been neither short nor straightforward. We have representatives here from four continents, at least at least 12 countries, at least 12 denominations and at least seven councils or associations, some with very long-standing connections to CCME.

We are very glad that both CEC and WCC are represented given our historic connection and, given our common desire to strengthen links with our sisters and brothers in Africa, particular thanks must go to Rev Dr Fidon Mwombeki, General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches, for making the journey. We look forward to meeting with you on African soil in the spring.

Amongst us we have theologians, academics, clergy and migration practitioners working within diaconal organisations and faith-based networks. It is clear that this is a group rich in faith and experience, capable of bringing diverse perspectives to the table. How fortunate we – as CCME - are to have you all in our midst – and what an opportunity for all of us not only to celebrate together but to strengthen bonds with one another, to learn more of the work in which we are all engaged and to forge a common path. The programme developed by CCME's staff team should provide ample opportunity for formal and informal dialogue. We know that your time is precious so, having made the commitment to be here, please maximise this forum to the full.

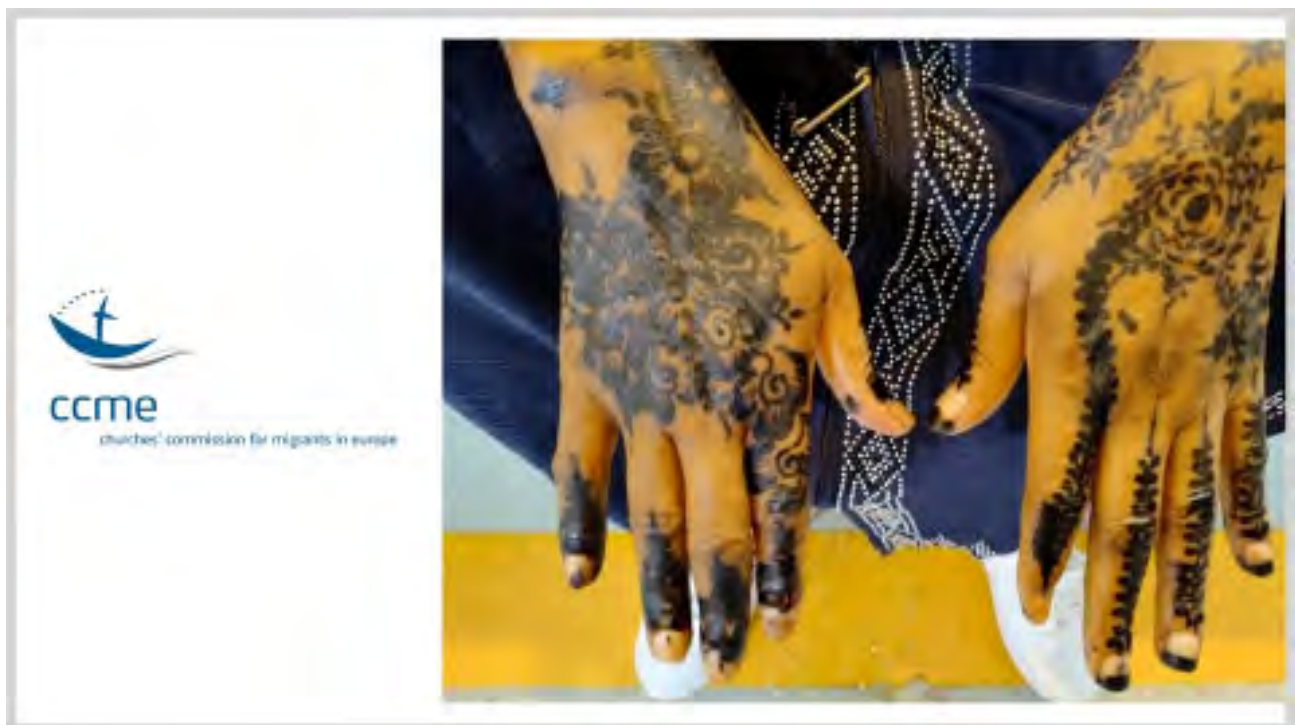
My second happy task of the morning is, on behalf of all of you, to thank those who have worked to bring this event to fruition. Behind the scenes, CCME's Brussels-based staff, seconded staff, interns and volunteers have worked tirelessly to meet practical challenges and create a programme which would do honour to CCME's long history and future work. Most of us are familiar with the logistical curve-balls which conference-organization poses and we can therefore assume that this one, too, will have had its moments. It is to the CCME team's credit that this event is now underway. Thank you to you all.

None of this would have been possible without the financial support of four particular donors: Evangelische Kirche in Rheinland, Otto per Mille (Chiesa Valdese), Evangelische Landeskirche in Württemberg, Evangelische Kirche in Hesse-Nassau. Thank you to all of you too.

Finally, let me thank our hosts, the Evangelische Akademie Frankfurt. Frankfurt is not a million miles from the very spot where CCME was founded but has the advantage of being much easier to reach. In today's busy world, that counts for much and we were therefore delighted that we could avail of these fine facilities. We greatly appreciate the support provided by staff at the Akademie and I am sure you will all agree that the venue is ideal for the occasion. Let's give all of these people a round of applause.

### Opening

These important formalities having been dealt with, let me draw your attention to the hands in image being projected. These hands, like our gathering, signal celebration and hope. They are the hands of a Somalian woman who, at the beginning of October, reached Italy safely and legally on a charter flight, armed with a humanitarian visa, in the knowledge that a community here is ready to shelter, welcome and support her as she learns to make her way in Italian society.



With her permission, I took this photograph in Rome's Fiumicino airport where, along with nearly 100 others, she patiently waited through the night for immigration procedures to conclude and for a new life to begin. I cannot guess at how she felt. I can, however, report my own deeply felt emotions at seeing this particular project finally come to fruition. Back in 2020, another colleague from the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy and I undertook the task of building a consortium – ultimately fourteen partners from seven different countries – so that we might, together, apply for EU funding to pilot a network of legal pathways – including the existing Italian humanitarian corridors – to bring people in need of international protection to Europe. Since receiving that funding, the COMET<sup>1</sup> network has been quietly working together to develop common tools, standards, methods and practices and, most importantly, facilitating the arrival of people – families, individuals, students, unaccompanied minors and members of the LGBTQI+ community – all in

<sup>1</sup> [cometnetwork.eu](http://cometnetwork.eu)

pressing need of international protection. This latest group to arrive at Fiumicino was the last of the COMET arrivals, much-delayed due to political unrest in the African region from which they travelled.

CCME is one of the partners in the COMET consortium. It has a discrete role in advocacy connected with the project: through webinars, fact sheets and, in due course, a final report, CCME is helping to convey the learning from the project, helping to build the evidence base required for policymakers to be convinced of the merits of establishing and expanding safe and legal pathways for those in need of international protection across Europe.

The need for such pathways is all the greater if the primary focus of EU governments remains to “stop the boats”. Although there is doubtless an ideological imperative for those on the right to do this, the premise is typically expressed as a desire to dismantle people-smuggling operations. That does not, however, address the need of those using the boats to seek international protection. If governments are *at all* serious about assisting the people at the centre of this misery, logically, a sufficiency of safe pathways must be established for those who have a well-founded asylum claim. A sufficiency of safe pathways is, however, not yet in the migration lexicon of most politicians.

CCME has entered its sixtieth year. Those who established it in 1964 may not have imagined that it would still exist today but the sharp reality is that it is, arguably, needed more than ever. The denominations and organisations which make up CCME have a vital role to play in modelling, in different ways, what it is to place people rather than borders at the heart of migration policy. It is within CCME’s gift to lift that example to policymakers and to challenge institutions to adopt the same ethic. It is also within CCME’s gift to empower its members to act, through the dissemination of information, through its network events and by connecting members to one another. In this way, its members and the organization itself are strengthened. In this way, the potential for CCME and its members to influence national and European policy effectively is all the greater.

Our programme over the next three days gives us ample opportunity to reflect on the path that CCME has taken in the past sixty years, to debate the most pressing concerns of our time and, crucially, to consider how we might envision and frame CCME’s future work: our focus on “protecting people more than borders”. It is now one year since I took on the mantle of moderator and, in that time, it is fair to say that much time has already been devoted to re-visiting our focus, strategy and areas of priority. This has been a painful but necessary exercise, for the invaluable financial contributions of CCME’s members must be husbanded wisely and effectively. Today, CCME’s historic availability to work on a wide number of themes is not financially realistic, requiring tough choices to be made in setting priorities, an exercise which I am aware many organisations represented here have themselves had to undertake. Narrowing priorities has, however, helped us to frame our future vision and the measure against which work can be undertaken. “People more than borders” seems to us to sum this up effectively, and this will be the thread which runs through all of our discussions.

### **Prayer**

That “people more than borders” should be at the heart of our work seems coherent with our common driver: faith. As I mentioned before, we represent a variety of denominational perspectives but modelling God’s love through love for our neighbour is common to us all. As the Iona Community, to which I belong, puts it:

“The sweep of scripture suggests that God’s dream for us is to move from external laws, needed initially to set the tone and scope of our lives to create social order, toward a response *motivated by love*: so commandments written on tablets of stone give way to God’s ways written on our hearts. *Hearts of stone become hearts of flesh*. Jesus condensed God’s ways to an invitation to love God, our neighbours and ourselves.”

Turning hearts of stone to hearts of flesh is no easy task. Challenging policy-makers and practitioners to focus on people more than borders may be perceived as hugely disruptive. But disruption, if we care to look back for enough, is within our Christian DNA. So let us not be afraid to take up the mantle.

Will you pray with me?

*Loving God*

*You bring us together in this place for a time of reflection, fellowship and celebration. May we use this time wisely. May we be inspired. May our sense of call be renewed.*

*Disrupter God*

*You challenge us to challenge others; to model an example which may run counter to the direction of policy and practice in the contexts in which we work. Give us courage to speak into places where our message may not be welcome. Give us wisdom to know how best to convey our message. Give us strength to hold our course.*

*Everlasting God*

*You are with us however hard life seems, however bitter the struggle. Remind us, gently, that we are not alone. May those whose struggle is beyond imagination know your presence. May those whose lives have been framed by horror and hostility know welcome and warmth. And may all of us help to bring about your kingdom here on earth.*

*Amen*

And so, as I conclude let me return to the hands in the picture. As I waited through the night with the woman whose hands you see, I asked her what had prompted her to have her hands painted in this way – was it her birthday? “No,” she responded, “but I am about to begin *a new life!* This, of course, is something to celebrate.”

As we move ahead, please keep these hands of celebration and hope in your minds, not only as a symbol of our own celebration but, rather, as a reminder of the people who are at the centre of our work and the value of all that we do – as individual organisations and as CCME – to bring about real change in people’s lives.

- **Dr Annegreth Schilling**, Head of Theological studies at the Evangelische Akademie Frankfurt

## Word of Greeting – December 2, 2024

*by Dr Annegreth Schilling*

Welcome to the Protestant Academy in Frankfurt.

And Happy Birthday to 60 years of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe!

It is wonderful to see so many engaged people in this place. I hope you have had save travels to Frankfurt and found your way through the Christmas market. Together with my colleague Dr. Helge Bezold I am director of theological studies in the Protestant Academy Frankfurt

We are situated in the middle of the city center. Next to this building is the city hall, and the Römerberg, the square just in front of the Academy, is not only filled during Advent & Christmas season. It is also the place where many demonstrations are taking place. In January of this year we had many demonstrations against the far right wing parties and politics in our country.

On your left handside you also see the Alte Nikolaikirche, founded during the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Now let me share a short story with you: It was 38 years ago, in 1986. Since I was only 4 years old at that time and have not been raised in Frankfurt, I rely on the story telling of others.

However, in 1986, the Christian base community Frankfurt unrolled a banner straight from the tower of the Alte Nikolaikirche: *"Jesus was an asylum seeker. Would we give him asylum?"* This led to a number of discussion rounds within the church, in newspapers and in the public sphere.

A few decades later, in 2010, the US American artist Jenny Holzer released an installation on the frontage of the Alte Nikolaikirche. It then showed slogan: *"Love demands nothing from the other. Love demands everything for the other."*





For 60 years, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe has worked for human dignity of refugees and migrants in Europe. Be it through roll-ups, discussion rounds or political networking.

Driven by the gospel, driven by love CCME has worked for the rights and the needs of migrants in Europe. May this work continue and flourish – and may this gathering in Frankfurt also be a starting point for new insights and initiatives! It is needed more than ever.

## Introduction to the programme

- **Dr Torsten Moritz**, CCME General Secretary

## Welcome by EKHN (Protestant Church of Hesse Nassau)

- **Rev Dr Volker Jung**, Church President Protestant Church of Hesse-Nassau

## Europe protecting people more than borders – CCME - beyond borders since 1964 Welcome by EKHN

*by Rev Dr Volker Jung, Church President Protestant Church of Hesse-Nassau*

Ladies and gentlemen,

dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

estimated friends,

Sixty Years of age is an incredibly long time of being! It is an age, in which people are full of experience and even start to be wise. A time, when we look back on many challenges and achievements. And it is an age, in which we still are strong and powerful to make things move. On the whole: best conditions for new challenges. Congratulations! It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome you all on this 60th anniversary of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe CCME.

“Beyond Borders since 1964” has been the motto since 2014. Indeed, since we met in Frankfurt am Main in 2014, many people crossed borders to seek safety from war, persecution and violence. Yet, we know that refugees are only the smaller part of people on the move in the world.

The founding conference of the World Council of Churches on migrant workers took place in 1964 at the Evangelical Academy Arnoldshain. This led to the founding of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe. As president of the Protestant Church of Hessen and Nassau I am happy, that our Church could contribute to the development of the work of churches in Europe with and for migrants and refugees. And I am grateful that you celebrate the jubilee again in our Church's premises.

On this occasion let me pay tribute to the person initiating this process at the WCC: Baldwin Sjollema, who planned this encounter at Arnoldshain. By this he showed vision and foresight of the churches' contribution in addressing the „problems of international migration“. Few years later, he

became the director of the Ecumenical Programme to Combat Racism. He stayed active in Geneva and maintained contacts with CCME until this year. In September of this year he died at the age of 97. Let us keep the memory of this outstanding and dedicated ecumenist in our minds.

Throughout six decades, CCME focused on the commitment of churches and church organizations to people who have left their homes for various reasons. From the beginning on it was one of the strengths in the mandate of CCME, that no distinction was made between people who are forced to leave their homes and those who leave for other reasons like work, studies, family. It was and is a principle of the work of CCME that human dignity is universal and thus applies to all - regardless of their residence status.

Our churches in Europe and CCME have experienced many changes over the past six decades. Achievements could be harnessed concerning migrant workers' rights, refugees' rights, integration programmes, participation in societies, programmes and measures against racism and discrimination. Yet, over the past 10 years in many countries in Europe a hostile environment has developed. With much sorrow we see, how this hostility has even influenced the political aims of some political parties and governments. Such policies blame migrants for almost everything going wrong in societies: shortage of affordable housing, insufficient access to health care, problems in the efficiency of security and more. Political strategies of this kind aim at limiting access to social support particularly for people seeking protection. In Germany too, current policies focus on deportation and limiting the entry of asylum applicants. Yet, our country like many others in Europe is in desperate need of workers. Populist contempt and disrespect spread by social media lead to polarised debates in society. Regrettably, this also leads to widespread hatred and increasing fears in society. Let me point out, that I keep reminding in all official meetings with politicians, that especially we as Germans have a great responsibility in welcoming migrants, in protecting the individual right to asylum and in keeping up the possibility of Church-Asylum for persons in precarious situations. Furthermore, the synod of our church, which ended just last Saturday, together with the governing board of our church adopted a resolution which calls for "Shaping Migration in a Humane and Just Manner".

It belongs to the special merits of CCME to stay at the side of people with migration history or those who belong to minorities. As a voice of the churches in Europe, CCME speaks up to the political sphere in Europe. They keep pointing out, that the churches encounter no one less than Jesus Christ in the foreigners and in the human beings seen as strangers (Matth 25:35). By taking side for migrants the Commission lightens the mission of the Gospel and contributes to spread it. This approach also includes a critical but constructive cooperation in Brussels. CCME takes an active part in Europe. This includes much more than caring for an "area of freedom, security and justice" which should become a reality for all people living in the EU. Especially since this proclaimed "reality" has come under pressure by many retrograde movements in Europe.

Last but not least, CCME always reminds all church representatives and dignitaries, that despite all internal debates in our churches on its transformation and future, we should keep our eyes open for God's will and acting. This points to stand up courageously for a just and inclusive community in which all people have the opportunity to participate.

It is my privilege to greet you also on behalf of the Evangelical Church in Germany. Petra Bosse-Huber, EKD bishop for ecumenical relations, writes in her message: "As churches, we stand up for the fact that every person has a God-given dignity. In these times we urgently need to remind people

that refugees have rights, simply because they are human beings. And these rights apply everywhere, even if some people do not want to accept this.

It's for this reason CCME's work is needed. And CCME needs the support of the churches. Together we can bear witness to humanity and the protection of the weak that we are called upon to provide."<sup>2</sup>

Globally we live in times of multiple and complex crises and transformations. The war waged by Russia against Ukraine, military escalations in the Middle East, the violent conflict and desperate situation in Sudan and the multiple consequences people have to bear because of climate-crisis – just to name some of the most obvious ones - they all call for a distinct appeal in favour of harmed people. We must not turn a blind eye to the situation at the external EU borders. Therefore, the CCME motto "Beyond Borders" remains of central significance. The title of this conference, "Protect People More than Borders", is a call at a critical moment in time. Indeed, the mission of CCME in the past and in the future aims at reaching beyond borders, in line with the ecumenical vision searching for unity in diversity. May the spirit of God, which always transgresses all borders keep inspiring all your reflections and actions. I wish CCME all the best for its work, lots of courage and of course God's abundant blessings!

Thank you for your attention.

## **Human dignity and human rights: central motives for Churches' work on asylum and migration**

- Moderation: **Dr Torsten Moritz**, CCME General Secretary
- Keynote: **Bishop Prof em. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm**, Moderator WCC Central Committee

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<sup>2</sup> Der Brief liegt in deutscher Fassung vor und kann nach Aussage von Doris Peschke mit übergeben werden.

## Human dignity and human rights: central motives for Churches' work on asylum and migration<sup>3</sup>

by Bishop Prof em. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Moderator WCC Central Committee

YouTube: Keynote: <https://www.youtube.com/live/rg91ovRZMvo?feature=shared>

### 1. You don't let anyone drown. Period!

It is with joy and gratitude that I bring the greetings of the WCC to the 60. anniversary of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME). WCC played a central role when CCME was founded. But also today, we feel deeply connected with you in our common Christian witness for the dignity of every human being and particularly those who are most vulnerable because they have left their homeland for an uncertain future due to war, violence or lack of living perspectives. The existence of CCME has hardly ever been as important as now as increased advocacy for refugees has become a sad necessity.

In our common preface to the ecumenical memorandum in migration „Migration menschenwürdig gestalten“ (“Shaping migration in a humane matter”<sup>4</sup>) from 2021 the Chairman of the German Catholic bishops' conference Georg Bätzing, the Chairman of the National Council of Churches in Germany (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Deutschland) Archpriest Radu Constantin Miron and myself as the Chairman of the Council of the Protestant Churches in Germany (EKD) have given a sobering account of the present situation in Europe, which I want to repeat here :

"Imbalances between the countries of the global North and the global South have continued to increase over the last two decades despite some countervailing movements. The biggest part of all refugees live in developing countries. Only a comparatively small proportion reaches Europe. Nevertheless, the member states of the European Union are fiercely debating the admission of refugees. Time and again, massive human rights violations occur at Europe's borders and people seeking protection drown in the Mediterranean. Despite all the achievements of European unification, it is a sobering realisation: A common policy that breathes the spirit of humanity and solidarity is currently not in sight in Europe."

This analysis is unfortunately still true, even more so than three years ago. That is why the churches have tried to unite in Europe and beyond to remind us all of basic values that have been at the cradle of Europe as a peace project. There is maybe no other sentence that stands so much for this involvement of the churches here as a sentence that was said in the sermon of the closing service of the Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag in Dortmund in June 2019: “You don't let anyone drown. Period!” This sentence, spoken by German pastor Dr. Sandra Bils, made history. It led to concrete action by the churches in a way that we had never experienced before.

Briefly before, on 3 June 2019, after a visit of the crew of the search and rescue vessel Seawatch 3 in Sicily, blocked by the Italian authorities and together with the then Mayor of Palermo Leoluca Orlando, we published the Palermo Appeal, which was subsequently supported by many people, including many prominent people. In it, we called for an end to the criminalisation of civil search

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<sup>3</sup> For many of my thoughts in this paper see also. More elaborately, my book on “Mitgefühl. Ein Plädoyer, München 2016.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ekd.de/ekd\\_en/ds\\_doc/migration\\_gt\\_27\\_ekd\\_dbk\\_EN\\_2022.pdf](https://www.ekd.de/ekd_en/ds_doc/migration_gt_27_ekd_dbk_EN_2022.pdf)

and rescue missions in the Mediterranean, the resumption of such missions as a task of the European states and a distribution mechanism for rescued boat refugees.

Following a resolution by a big crowd during the Kirchentag and based on the support of the EKD Council as the governing body of the German protestant churches, we presented the "United4Rescue" alliance to the public in Hamburg at the beginning of December, to which meanwhile about 950 institutions and organisations belong.

The appeal for donations was so well received that the money needed to buy the former research vessel "Poseidon" was raised within two months. Following the ship's christening under the name "Seawatch 4 powered by United4Rescue" and the delayed refit due to the pandemic, the ship was finally able to leave for the Mediterranean in August 2020. The ship rescued 353 people on its very first mission. Meanwhile our alliance supports 4 search and rescue vessels, which have saved around Thousands of people from drowning and continue to do so.

More than 20,000 people have drowned while fleeing across the Mediterranean. The number of unreported cases is probably much higher. Despite this, Europe is allowing ships that are supposed to save people from drowning to be blocked or obstructed, while at the same time European states are refusing to resume sea rescue operations in the Mediterranean themselves. This is a moral scandal.

From the point of view of basic Christian principles, it is not decisive why people are in mortal danger. It is only that their lives are in danger. And then you simply have to save them. All political discussions about managing migration and dealing with asylum seekers can and must be held. But not instead of saving human lives. Saving human lives always takes priority. This is why the European states in particular, which explicitly refer to Christianity, have a duty to take the basic ethical orientations associated with it seriously and to develop a refugee policy together with all European states that is not characterised by isolation but by humanity.

If we take a closer look at the biblical tradition as the basis of our Christian faith, it becomes clear, why the present European policies toward refugees, for which I have only given the most drastic example of deliberately letting people die at the borders of Europe, is in strong tension to the moral basis of the Christian heritage, which so many politicians keep claiming as the basis of the European peace project.

## **2. The basic orientation of biblical ethics**

### ***God's image and likeness***

Theological discourse about migration and asylum is first of all based on the impulse from the biblical story of creation that every human being is created in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and therefore is of infinite value, and that this infinite value cannot be taken away from us by anyone. The first article of the German constitution ("Grundgesetz") stands for it: "Human dignity shall be inviolable."

We are so used to the idea of humanity's being created in God's image and likeness as being a basic element of our cultural thought that we sometimes forget how unexpected but also how precious that claim is. In Psalm 8 we read: "Yet you have made them (human beings) a little lower than God". This strong attribution of kingly characterizations to every human being found within the Jewish

tradition<sup>5</sup> leads to the idea in Christianity that God has come into the world as a human being, Jesus Christ. We cannot more strongly base the humanitarian legacy to which we are indebted than on the conviction that we encounter God in a human being, more explicitly: in one who was crucified, in one who was a victim of political and religious persecution, whose execution was slow and painful.<sup>6</sup>

Based on this, there is no relationship with God without a relationship to my neighbor. The question is not **whether** a church, informed by this tradition, takes part in public discussions about dealing with human need, but rather **how** it responds to it. What then can we learn from the Bible as the decisive source of Judeo-Christian tradition about how to deal with refugees and asylum?

***“For you were also strangers...”***

The fundamental characteristic of a biblically based Christian ethics is – and this is remarkable considering our topic – that it is an ethic stemming from a migration movement. Within exegesis, the so-called “Creed of Israel” is regarded as Israel’s initial confession of faith, which for that reason can also be seen as something like the starting point of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Dtn 26: 5-9 states:

“A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as [a stranger] an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a great display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

We Christians, together with Jews, believe that God is one who led his people out of oppression and slavery in Egypt into freedom. In light of the insoluble connection between the relationship to God and the relationship to our neighbor, it becomes clear as to why the commandment to protect the stranger has nothing to do with moralizing. The commandment to protect the stranger has its validity by being firmly rooted in the history of God’s liberating action for God’s people.

The book Leviticus states: “When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the [stranger] alien. The [stranger] alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” (Lev 19:33ff; also Dtn 10:19ff; Ex 22:20).

This statement can be seen as *the* classical expression of the rootedness of love in the relationship between God and humanity. For it doesn’t just say: love the stranger! Instead the commandment is a twofold plea. *Firstly*, there is an appeal to reason based on experience: “You know what it is like to be a stranger and shunned. Treat the stranger the way you would like to be treated if you were in the same situation.” The *second way* the commandment is endorsed is by referring to God himself: at the end God says “I am the Lord your God. Whatever concerns the stranger, concerns

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<sup>5</sup> This is clearly shown by Ute Neumann-Gorsolke, „Mit Ehre und Hoheit hast du ihn gekrönt“ (Ps 8,6b). *Alttestamentliche Aspekte zum Thema Menschenwürde*, in: *Menschenwürde (Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie 15)*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2001, 39-65.

<sup>6</sup> For Paul’s account of this basic anthropological assumption see Marlies Gielen, *Grundzüge der paulinischen Anthropologie im Licht des eschatologischen Heilsgeschehens in Jesus Christus*, in: *Menschenwürde (Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie 15)*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2001, 117-147.

me, just as your concerns are my concerns. I am your God, I care for the stranger. So shall you care for the stranger!”

The basis for this openness to the stranger is an *ethic of empathy*. This can be seen best in a passage in Exodus:

“You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of an stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Ex 23:9)

By understanding and empathizing with the vulnerable situation strangers are in, it becomes plausible to treat them with honor and respect.

With the constitutive character of empathy, we encounter a special characteristic of Judeo-Christian ethics that is most visible when looking at how one should treat strangers but is valid for the entire ethical system. It really comes into focus when we look at the New Testament and a specific aspect of the commandment to love, namely its close connection to the so-called “golden rule”.<sup>7</sup>

### ***The Double Commandment of Love and the Golden Rule***

When Jesus is asked which commandment is the greatest, he responds: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Mt 22:35-40).

Here we see that Matthew emphasizes the special importance of this twofold commandment to love by calling it “the law and the prophets”, (Mt 22:40), a phrase that underlines the fundamental character of this commandment. There is only *one* other New Testament tradition that is honored with the title of being “the law and the prophets” and thus containing the entire content of the ethics of Jesus: the “Golden Rule”. “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets” (Mt 7:12).

The Golden Rule is a key phrase for understanding moral life as the ability and necessity to empathize with others. The commandment to care for the stranger grounds such empathy in the experience of the people of God being led themselves out of oppression in Egypt into the promised land.

Empathy based on their own experience was characteristic for the reaction to the arriving refugees in 2015 by many elderly Germans who had also been displaced persons in their early lives. The relatively strong readiness on the part of the older generation in Germany to take in these refugees has to do with the memories of their own experience of forced displacement out of the former German areas in Eastern Europe in 1945. Thus, current experience underscores the sustainability of a biblical ethics of empathy as the basic approach for dealing with refugees and migrants today.

We have seen that caring for the stranger in the Bible can never be separated from the relationship with God. Its most pointed formulation can be found in the parable of the day of judgment, in which dealing with the stranger is the touchstone for dealing with Christ: “I was a stranger,” Christ says “and you welcomed me...” (Mt 25:35). Thus, taking in the stranger, who is especially vulnerable, is prominently regarded as one of the works of mercy, which we do to Christ himself.

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<sup>7</sup> For an elaborated treatment on this see Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, *Gemeinschaft aus kommunikativer Freiheit. Sozialer Zusammenhalt in der modernen Gesellschaft. Ein theologischer Beitrag*, Gütersloh 1999, 269-278.

It is also remarkable that the Christmas story is a story about fleeing and asylum. According to Matthew (Mt 2:13-15) the parents of the newly born Jesus, on the run from King Herod, are not turned away at the Egyptian border but are allowed to stay. The savior of the world shares the same destiny as the lowest of the low. He was a refugee. This story plays an important role in the Coptic-Orthodox church of Egypt and there are many legends which surround it. The Coptic Christians – above all Pope Tawadros II - continuously reminds us that Egypt is also Holy Land. Numerous places are venerated as places where the mother of Jesus rested with her divine child. This tradition found its place in the art world, namely in icons. Thus, these visible signs show us how, to this day, this refugee baby has become an integral part of Christian history and a sign of divine blessing.

The way in which the commandment to love can be the basis for an ethics of empathy when encountering migrants and refugees is also determined by the question of how universally the commandment of love should be understood. There are, however, ethical approaches, which follow the popular opinion that we should first take care of those in need in our country. These show a deep skepticism for the universality of the commandment to love.

### 3. Those near and those far – the extent of the commandment of love

The American theologian Stephen Post argues for a concept of “loving thy neighbor” that puts special relations in focus. Special relations are those relationships with family and friends, those people who are close, that share an especially intense kind of love. This orientation towards “special relations” is combined with a strong criticism of concepts of love, such as the classical work written by the American ethicist Gene Outka on agape<sup>8</sup>, which are oriented toward the universalism of the enlightenment and find powerful expression in the human rights tradition.

If it is true – says Stephen Post – that the natural order of life has theological and moral dignity, if God regulates the world through “special relations” between individuals, then these cannot be judged morally the same way that impersonally distant relationships are, which are simply based on “equal regard”.<sup>9</sup> Of course we have duties towards strangers, says Post, and *exclusive* concentration on family and friends is problematic. That does not mean, however, that there is no moral priority to this concentration.<sup>10</sup>

This position’s charm lies in its proximity to intuitively logical daily experience. Naturally, we feel a more direct moral responsibility towards those children who are entrusted to us than to those children in need in other parts of the world. Paying less attention to our own children than to those children in the world who are less fortunate would rightly evoke moral criticism.

Still it is no accident that in the New Testament the commandment to love is explained with stories in which the act of love goes beyond special relations. This is the case both for the rich young man and the command to give his money to the poor (Mt 19:16-26) as well as for the Good Samaritan who, as a foreigner, rescues the injured Jew (Lk 10:25-37).<sup>11</sup>

The intuitive plausibility of being responsible for those individuals in our social proximity on one hand and the universalism of the commandment to love on the other hand are not in conflict with

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<sup>8</sup> Gene Outka, *Agape. An Ethical Analysis*, New Haven/London, 1972

<sup>9</sup> Stephen G. Post, *A Theory of Agape. On the Meaning of Christian Love*, Lewisburg/London/Toronto 1990, 31.

<sup>10</sup> Post (1990), 34ff.

<sup>11</sup> See Gerd Theißen, *Die Bibel diakonisch lesen: Die Legitimationskrise des Helfens und der barmherzige Samariter* in: G. Schäfer, /Th. Strohm (Hgg.): *Diakonie - biblische Grundlagen und Orientierungen. Ein Arbeitsbuch*, Heidelberg, 2. Auflage, Heidelberg 1994, 376-401.



each other if we understand universalism as “concrete universalism” and weave it into an ethics of empathy.

Concrete and close personal relationships in our social proximity and the universal concern for human well-being – so the core of this idea – depend on each other. Taking action for those “far away”, for people with whom we have neither a personal connection nor share a common religious or ideological orientation, becomes an abstract surrogate for love if it is not continually fed from the experience of giving and receiving love in our own personal realm. Being moved to give love to those far away is nurtured by our direct social relationships, which teach us and show us concretely and visibly what people suffer from and what they hope for.

From the perspective of a concrete universalism, a life of gratitude in the density and intimacy of “special relations” is not in competition with a life focused on universal love but rather supports it. The ability to love those who are far away from us touches once again upon empathy. A father who loves his children and cares for them, who practices love in “special relations”, cannot but open his love universally. Because he experiences the density of human relationship in his direct social proximity, he will be able to love those strangers who live far away from him more than simply abstractly. He will be able to put himself in the shoes of the father who is seeking asylum, who cannot offer his children the safe space he would want to give them but instead lives every day in the fear of being deported. Giving and receiving love in “special relations” enables to give love beyond those “special relations”.

A position that sees Christian love only in relationships of close proximity underestimates the universal potential of loving empathy. Through empathy, which is the goal aimed at by the commandment to love, the neighbor who is distant becomes the one who is close.

If we now have a firm ethical ground on an empathy based approach towards refugees, what does it mean for politics? It seems clear that stating the importance of empathy is not enough for political decisions, which sometimes are characterized by dilemma situations and demand hard decisions.

In ethics this question has frequently been debated with a pair of terms originally coming from Max Weber’s famous lecture “Politics as Vocation”: ‘ethics of conviction’ (*Gesinnungsethik*) and ‘ethics of responsibility’ (*Verantwortungsethik*). In the debate on refugees, some politicians have used this pair as a weapon against the churches position, suggesting that they were taking a position of blue eyed *Gesinnungsethik* while politicians had to act responsibly.

#### **4. An ‘ethics of conviction’ based on responsibility**

We clearly have to reject this interpretation. The churches call out for political decisions which go beyond moral correctness and which attempt really to change the situation. Of course, a social ethics, which comes with a maybe inspiring prophetic attitude but only functions in theory, is a poor one because it is without effect. A division of duties, which allows the churches to voice humanitarian ideals and leaves policy makers alone in trying to find morally justifiable political solutions would not be the right way.<sup>12</sup>

Dividing the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility between church and politics does not do justice to the complexity of the motives on both sides. In addition, it would be a distortion of

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<sup>12</sup> See H. Bedford-Strohm, Prophetic witness and public discourse in European societies – a German Perspective, in: H. Bedford-Strohm/E. de Villiers (eds.), *Prophetic Witness: An Appropriate Mode of Public Discourse?*, Zürich 2011, 123-137.

the intentions with which this pair of terms was originally introduced. For it is actually the connection in the distinction between conviction and responsibility, which Max Weber was specifically demonstrating when he introduced this pair of terms in his lecture “Politics as a Vocation” (*Politik als Beruf*) around one hundred years ago.<sup>13</sup>

For Weber, people who act based on an ethics of conviction do not take into account the results of their conduct or are not ready to take responsibility for the results. People who act based on an ethics of responsibility, on the other hand, consider the possible results and then decide upon their actions accordingly. However, what Weber finds crucial is for all responsible actions to be lead and informed by conviction. It is, Weber says, “immensely moving when a mature man – no matter whether old or young in years – is aware of a responsibility for the consequences of his conduct and really feels such responsibility with heart and soul. He then acts by following an ethic of responsibility and somewhere he reaches the point where he says: ‘Here I stand; I can do no other.’ That is something genuinely human and moving. And every one of us who is not spiritually dead must realize the possibility of finding himself at some time in that position. In so far as this is true, an ethic of conviction and an ethic of responsibility are not absolute contrasts but rather supplements, which only in unison constitute a genuine man--a man who can have the ‘calling for politics.’”<sup>14</sup>

We have to stop pitting humanitarianism and realism against each other. It does not aid the public discussion to have one political position claim to have an approach of “realism” while suspecting all other diverging opinions as being naive. Truly being realistic, from a Christian point of view, cannot be understood without viewing Christ as being the reality that grounds our reality. Dietrich Bonhoeffer illustrates this position impressively in his ethics by emphasizing God’s reconciliation of the whole world in Christ.<sup>15</sup> Realism can therefore not ignore what Bonhoeffer calls the “view from below”. With respect to refugees, this means that realism always has to be able to give a satisfying answer to the question, what the realistic option means for the weakest individuals in the situation.

Once again in the words of Max Weber: each ethics of responsibility is based on a certain conviction. For that reason, ethics of conviction and ethics of responsibility can never simply be placed opposite of each other but have to be placed in relation to each other.

## 5. Public Witness of the Churches

After the new European Pact on migration and asylum adopted in May 2024, the churches have publicly criticized its possibly detrimental impact on refugees seeking a life in dignity.

The introduction of mandatory border procedures harbours the risk of producing unsustainable conditions, which we had experienced earlier in camps like Moria once again. Those who do not benefit from a regular asylum procedure will remain in detention-like camps until their status can be clarified and they can be returned to a country willing to accept them. Experience shows that there is often no country willing to accept them. It is therefore to be feared that conditions will once again arise, in which men, women and children are now being detained in inhumane conditions in the EU after terrible experiences as refugees. This flies in the face of European values. It is to be

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<sup>13</sup> Max Weber, *Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society*. Translated and Edited by Tony Waters and Dagmar Waters, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, . 2015.

<sup>14</sup> English translation: <http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Politics-as-a-Vocation.pdf>, P. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics (DBW 6)*, ed. C. Green (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), p. 55

feared that Europe, which for many people embodies the dream of freedom, will become a nightmare.

Dealing with migration in accordance with our principles looks different. Legal access routes must be strengthened and the options for switching between immigration and asylum law must be expanded. We are currently seeing old people's homes having to close and restaurants only being open a few days a week because there is simply no labour to be found. It is therefore clear that we need immigration - if only for our own sake. Taking in refugees does not have to be a problem if people are allowed to move to places where they have family ties, where they can find accommodation, and if they are given quick access to the labour market.

In many places, however, there is a shortage of housing, nursery and school places. That's why we need a joint social effort to overcome these challenges and create the necessary social infrastructure. If people who come here are allowed to work, then they can contribute to this great endeavour themselves instead of being a burden on others. They don't want to be a burden on anyone. They want to contribute. You just have to let them.

This is the fundamental direction, in which the public statements of the EKD and beyond have taken a stand in the public debate. I am just giving two examples:

In 2017 the EKD has published a paper on the refugee question which promotes ten convictions. You will recognize many of the insights, which I have tried to explain:

1. God's love is for the whole world and does not stop at national borders.
2. God created all people in his image and has thereby given each and everyone inviolable dignity.
3. Love one's neighbor is an obligation. It must show in readily receiving refugees.
4. The desire for security must be carefully balanced against the rights to freedom and tolerance, which are the very foundations of an open society.
5. Faith in God means that justice and peace are the guiding principles for our responsibility towards the world. Christians are opening their eyes to the injustices and their role in combating such inequalities.
6. Ending off victims of violence and terror at our borders, or allowing them to drown, flies in the face of the European Peace project and damages the soul of Europe.
7. Religious freedom is for everyone. Tolerance ends where religion and religious freedom are abused in order to insult people and their dignity. We stand at the side of all the oppressed and persecuted Christians across the globe.
8. Families must be protected. Whoever is granted asylum in Germany has the right to family reunification with their spouse or life partner and younger children.
9. Social cohesion requires the courage to remain well-meaning, rather than succumbing to feelings of fear and defeat towards those who have found refuge in Germany.
10. Democracy thrives upon debate. Currently however, racism and xenophobia are highly polarising the political and social debate. A civil exchange of opinions can break up hardened frontlines in an argument – and thus strengthen social cohesion for the benefit of all.

The ecumenical memorandum in migration „Migration menschenwürdig gestalten“ from 2021 gives concrete orientation for church and society. It underlines the necessity of Pastoral support for migrants, including if they set out on the path to baptism. It appeals to society to understand migration as normality, to enable integration, to counter racism, to protect religious freedom. It promotes interreligious dialogue. It demands of the state to protect families, to support those in particular need of protection, to combat exploitation and human trafficking, to help people without residence papers to gain their rights, to provide responsible support for returns, to avert humanitarian hardship and it encourages the churches to advocate a European refugee policy based on human rights, to saving human lives through search and rescue missions and to assume international responsibility.

### **Conclusion**

I will end with a theological thought. "For you also were strangers..." - The reminder that we ourselves are also dependent on receiving help in times of need is particularly important when we are preoccupied with ourselves. Biblical ethics is characterised by the grateful reminder of the blessing that we have experienced through God's actions, both personally and as a country that was at rock bottom and is now - despite all the high, excessive inequality in distribution - one of the most blessed countries on earth with prosperity. This memory alone would be an occasion to share this blessing with others. And then to experience that it becomes greater when it is shared.

Solidarity with the most vulnerable is perhaps the most important attitude for getting through challenging times. This solidarity naturally applies to our neighbours in a geographical sense. But in the light of biblical tradition, it also applies to those who are geographically distant, but who are just as much our neighbours in the biblical sense.

Every human being is created in the image of God. This statement from Genesis is one of the fundamental statements of the Jewish-Christian tradition. It does not say: every German, every European, or every white person, every man, every adult. It says: every human being. And that is why the horizon of our responsibility does not end at the German or European borders. In the light of the biblical option for the poor, we say: The prosperity of a society is measured by the fate of its weakest members. This applies to our own country. It applies to Europe. And it applies to the world as a whole.

To recognise this, to carry it in our hearts and to act accordingly - that means leading a good life. This is what CCME stands for. And this is what unites us as WCC and CCME. I am looking forward to many more common activities to witness God's love to every human being and publicly advocate policies, which express it.

## **Calling & committing the churches to work for and with migrants, refugees and minority ethnic persons: experiences of 60 years**

**Panel with:**

- Moderation: **Ana Puljiz**, CCME executive secretary
- **Ms Doris Peschke**, CCME GS 1999-2018
- **Mr Frans Bouwen**, WCC/CEC programmes executive on refugees 1982-1993
- **Ms Joy Eva Bohol**, seconded CCME staff/UMCOR

YouTube: Panel: <https://www.youtube.com/live/Ert13zE0S50?feature=shared>

## **Panel: Calling & committing the churches to work for and with migrants, refugees and minority ethnic persons: experiences of 60 years**

*moderation by Ana Puljiz, CCME executive secretary*

### 60 Years of CCME

As we delve into this topic, we will reflect on the significant roles that faith communities have played in advocating for and supporting the most vulnerable populations among us over the past six decades. Our esteemed panellists bring a wealth of experience and insight to this discussion.

- We have Ms. **Doris Peschke**, who served as General Secretary of CCME from 1999 to 2018, and has been instrumental in shaping policies for migrants and refugees.
- Mr. **Frans Bouwen**, who directed programmes on refugees within the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches from 1982 to 1993, will share his extensive knowledge on this matter.
- Finally, we welcome Ms. **Joy Eva Bohol**, who has been seconded to the CCME as a staff member of UMCOR, contributing her practical insights and experiences.

Together, they will help us navigate the past, present, and future of the church's commitment to those in need.

### **Panel Structure:**

1. **Introduction (3 minutes):** Welcome the audience and introduce the topic + briefly introduce each panellist.
2. **Opening Statements (10-12 minutes):** Each panellist to share a brief opening statement about themselves, their experiences and insights related to the topic.
3. **Moderated Discussion (30-35 minutes):** Start with individual questions tailored to the panellist's background and proceed with discussion questions for all panellists.
4. **Q&A (15-20 minutes)**
5. **Closing Remarks (5 minutes):** Each panellist to offer final thoughts.

### **Proposed Questions:**

#### **Ms Doris Peschke:**

- During your tenure as CCME General Secretary, what strategies did you find most effective in encouraging new churches to join and commit to CCME's mission? How did you ensure sustained commitment from member churches over time?

- During your tenure at CCME, what were some of the most significant challenges you encountered while advocating for migrants and refugees and how do you see these challenges evolving in the current global context?

**Mr Frans Bouwen:**

- Reflecting on your experience with WCC/CEC programs, what were some key strategies that proved effective in supporting refugees, migrants and minority ethnic persons? How might these strategies be adapted to address today's humanitarian crises and what lessons from that era remain relevant today?
- How did you ensure that the voices and needs of migrants, refugees, and minority ethnic persons were included in church initiatives and collaborations?

**Ms Joy Eva Bohol:**

- In your roles with CCME/UMCOR, how are inter-organisation collaborations contributing to supporting migrant, refugee and minority communities and what innovative approaches or programs did you observe?
- How do you see churches effectively collaborating with governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as other partners to enhance their impact on migrant and refugee communities?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How have the roles of churches in supporting migrants and refugees changed over the past decades, and how can they continue to evolve to address shifting needs?
2. What are some examples from your work that highlight the positive impact of churches engaging with migrants, refugees and ethnic minority persons?
3. In what ways can churches address and overcome resistance or indifference within their own communities regarding support for migrants, refugees, and minority ethnic persons?
4. Could you discuss any significant cultural or policy shifts that have influenced church-related migration work over the past decades?
5. How can younger generations within church communities be encouraged and equipped to take active roles in supporting migrants, refugees and minority ethnic persons?
6. Looking ahead, what emerging trends or challenges do you foresee in the intersection of migration and church work, and how should these be addressed?

**Personal statement**

*by Joy Eva Bohol, seconded CCME staff/UMCOR*

**You are working with UMCOR and CCME – you learnt much about migrants coming to Europe – is there an image or an example to summarize your impressions?**

From a distance, observing the fence along Poland's borders with Belarus and Ukraine stirred conflicting emotions within me. Stretching 418 and 535 kilometers, respectively, it stands as more than a physical barrier; it symbolizes the deep disparities in how people are treated based on race, ethnicity, skin color, gender, religion to name a few...

During my visit to a Polish border town near Belarus, asylum lawyers and activists recounted the harrowing experiences of migrants and asylum seekers, many from the Middle East and Africa, who faced violent pushbacks and limited legal support while seeking refuge within the European Union.

At the Polish-Ukrainian border, doors open for fleeing Ukrainians, offering immediate protection, a stark contrast to the hostility faced by migrants at the Polish-Belarusian border. Despite tighter regulations, every Ukrainian entering the European Union has stayed safe, highlighting the disparity compared to the thousands who lost their lives attempting entry.

The recent adoption of the European Union's Asylum and Migration Pact has sparked widespread concern, particularly regarding potential human rights violations. The watered down "safe third country" concept and externalization, which several European Union member states are exploring, could lead to prolonged detention, unfair asylum procedures, and deportations.

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe has voiced deep concerns about tightening migration policies, reduced resettlement quotas, and rising hate speech, racism, and right-wing extremism across Europe. The shrinking space for migrants and refugees and the increasingly hostile environment are disturbing trends that underscore the challenges in addressing migration and human rights in the region.

As the conflict in Ukraine continues, the European Union Council's extension of the temporary protection directive for displaced Ukrainians until 2026 is necessary but also highlights the need for a long-term strategy that includes ALL migrants and refugees.

Reflecting on my experiences, I recognize the crucial role of organizations like UMCOR and CCME in addressing the diverse needs of migrants. My site visits with UMCOR partners across Europe showed how the church's work encompasses a broad spectrum of actions for people on the move, from humanitarian aid to legal assistance and policy advocacy, driven by the priorities of the migrants themselves.

In my role and as a migrant, I have witnessed God's spirit in these efforts. I have seen the church as a beacon of hope and compassion. May we never tire of seeking justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God.

## **Panel Questions:**

### **1. How are inter-organization collaborations contributing to supporting migrant, refugee, and minority communities, and what innovative approaches or programs have you observed?**

Inter-organizational collaborations, particularly those involving CCME and UMCOR, are crucial in responding to the multifaceted needs of migrants, refugees, and minority communities. They address gaps in services, amplify advocacy, and foster innovation. Specific examples include:

#### **1. Legal Aid and Advocacy:**

- Collaborations such as those between UMCOR, CCME, and ELIL in Greece and Poland provide essential legal assistance to asylum seekers, many of whom face systemic barriers to fair processes. ELIL employs local and refugee interpreters to ensure effective communication during asylum applications and hearings, a critical need in Greece where pushbacks and government hostility are prevalent (60 year- observations a...) (Highlights from Greece ...).

#### **2. Holistic Integration Programs:**

- Habitat for Humanity Poland's Social Rental Program addresses housing needs for both refugees and vulnerable locals. By creating sustainable, government-supported housing models, it ensures long-term benefits for Ukrainian refugees and others. This collaboration between NGOs and government entities is a model of resource-sharing and innovation (Poland\_country and part...).

### **3. Youth-Centric Empowerment:**

- Faros, a CCME partner in Greece, focuses on unaccompanied minors, providing vocational skills training, language classes, and transitional housing. This approach equips young refugees with the tools to integrate and thrive independently (Highlights from Greece ...).

### **4. Community-Based Approaches:**

- In Moldova, UMCOR partners with Diaconia and other local NGOs to provide essential services such as healthcare, education, and food security for both Moldovan and Ukrainian communities. This dual approach reduces tensions and fosters social cohesion (Moldova report\_11.10.20...).

## **2. How do you see churches effectively collaborating with governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as other partners, to enhance their impact on migrant and refugee communities?**

- Churches play a vital role as connectors, advocates, and service providers. Through collaborative efforts with governmental and non-governmental partners, they enhance their capacity to support migrant and refugee communities effectively:

### **1. Advocacy and Representation:**

- CCME acts as a collective voice for European churches, influencing migration policies through coordinated efforts with the European Parliament, the European Commission, and international NGOs like Caritas and Jesuit Refugee Service (60 year- observations a...).

### **2. Grassroots Networks:**

- Churches often serve as community hubs, offering immediate support while connecting refugees with services. For example, Synypraxis in Greece, the refugee ministry arm of the Greek Orthodox Church, focuses on unaccompanied minors and collaborates with legal aid and psychosocial support providers (Highlights from Greece ...).

### **3. Resource Mobilization:**

- Faith-based organizations like Diaconia in Moldova leverage international funding to address local needs, demonstrating how churches can act as intermediaries between global donors and local beneficiaries (Moldova report\_11.10.20...).

### **4. Addressing Gaps:**

- In regions where governmental support is limited, such as the Polish-Belarusian border, churches and their partners step in to provide legal aid, housing, and advocacy for vulnerable migrants (Poland\_country and part...).



## Discussion Questions:

### 1. How have the roles of churches in supporting migrants and refugees changed over the past decades, and how can they continue to evolve to address shifting needs?

Over the decades, churches have transitioned from offering direct relief to advocating for systemic change. This evolution reflects broader shifts in migration trends and the increasing complexity of migrant needs:

#### 1. Historical Role:

- In the 1960s-1970s, churches primarily focused on addressing labor migration needs. By the 1980s-1990s, as migration patterns became more permanent, churches emphasized integration and multiculturalism (60 year- observations a...).

#### 2. Current Trends:

- Today, churches are actively involved in policy advocacy, anti-racism initiatives, and supporting vulnerable groups such as women, children, and unaccompanied minors. CCME's recent focus on empowering migrant communities reflects this shift (60 year- observations a...) (Highlights from Greece ...).

#### 3. Future Directions:

- Churches must embrace roles as facilitators of dialogue and inclusion, ensuring migrants have a voice in shaping programs and policies. Fostering partnerships with migrant-led organizations will help address emerging challenges such as climate-induced migration (60 year- observations a...).

### 2. What are some examples from your work that highlight the positive impact of churches engaging with migrants, refugees, and minority ethnic persons?

- **Moldova:** Diaconia's initiatives serve both Moldovans and Ukrainian refugees, addressing shared needs while reducing inter-group tensions. Their food distribution programs and social activities foster trust and cohesion (Moldova report\_11.10.20...).
- **Greece:** Faros provides a safe space for unaccompanied minors, helping them rebuild their lives through education, skills training, and transitional housing (Highlights from Greece ...).
- **Poland:** Habitat for Humanity's collaboration with UMCOR has enabled long-term housing solutions for refugees, addressing critical gaps in accommodation and advocacy (Poland\_country and part...).

### 3. In what ways can churches address and overcome resistance or indifference within their own communities regarding support for migrants, refugees, and minority ethnic persons?

#### 1. Education and Awareness:

- Churches can organize workshops and discussions to dispel myths about migrants, emphasizing biblical principles like "welcoming the stranger" (Matthew 25:35) (60 year- observations a...).

## **2. Showcasing Success Stories:**

- Highlighting positive examples of integration and community-building, such as youth empowerment programs in Faros, can inspire congregational support (Highlights from Greece ...).

## **3. Engaging Local Leadership:**

- Local clergy and lay leaders can act as advocates, using their influence to foster understanding and empathy within their communities (60 year- observations a...).

## **4. Could you discuss any significant cultural or policy shifts that have influenced church-related migration work over the past decades?**

### **1. Policy Shifts:**

- The 2024 EU Migration Pact reflects an increasing focus on border security, which challenges the church's mission to advocate for humane policies (60 year- observations a...).
- The unequal treatment of Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian refugees highlights systemic biases that churches are working to address through advocacy (Highlights from Greece ...).

### **2. Cultural Dynamics:**

- Growing nationalism and anti-immigration sentiment have spurred churches to strengthen anti-racism initiatives and promote social cohesion (60 year- observations a...) (Highlights from Greece ...).

## **5. How can younger generations within church communities be encouraged and equipped to take active roles in supporting migrants, refugees, and minority ethnic persons?**

### **1. Education and Training:**

- Programs like Faros' youth vocational training can be expanded to church communities, equipping young people with the skills to engage meaningfully in migration work (Highlights from Greece ...).

### **2. Digital Campaigns:**

- Leveraging social media to share migrant stories and promote advocacy opportunities can engage tech-savvy younger generations.

### **3. Involvement in Decision-Making:**

- Creating youth-led committees within church organizations ensures that younger voices are heard and valued (60 year- observations a...).

## **6. Looking ahead, what emerging trends or challenges do you foresee in the intersection of migration and church work, and how should these be addressed?**

### **1. Climate-Induced Migration:**

- Churches must prepare to address displacement caused by climate change by advocating for international protections and developing targeted support programs (60 year- observations a...).

**2. Declining Funding:**

- As donor interest shifts, churches need to diversify funding sources and strengthen partnerships to sustain long-term initiatives (Highlights from Greece ...).

**3. Rising Xenophobia:**

- Continued anti-racism campaigns and interfaith collaborations will be essential in combating exclusionary narratives and policies (60 year- observations a...) (Highlights from Greece ...).

**4. Policy Complexity:**

- As migration policies become more restrictive, churches must equip themselves with legal expertise to support advocacy and aid efforts (60 year- observations a...) (Highlights from Greece ...).

# 03<sup>rd</sup> December

## Morning Prayer

- Ms Ineke Bakker, Council of Churches in the Netherlands

## Europe protecting people more than borders – MORNING PRAYER

*by Rev. Ineke Bakker*

### Greeting and praise

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

### ***And also with you***

Let us praise God, who created the world as a beautiful place for all living beings, to enjoy diversity and to live together in harmony and peace.

### ***We praise you God***

Let us praise God, who is present in the lives of refugees and migrants, and who incessantly calls for justice and solidarity.

### ***We praise you God***

Let us praise God, who defends the position of the poor and vulnerable, and challenges the rich and mighty.

***We praise you God and thank you for all our blessings. Amen.***

### Reading: Psalm 24: 1-6 (Migration Bible)

The world and all that is in it belong to the LORD;  
the earth and all who live on it are his.

He built it on the deep waters beneath the earth and laid its foundations in the ocean depths.

Who has the right to go up the LORD's hill?

Who may enter his holy Temple?

Those who are pure in act and in thought,  
who do not worship idols or make false promises.

The LORD will bless them and save them;

God will declare them innocent.

Such are the people who come to God,  
who come into the presence of the God of Jacob.

## Reflection

Dear brothers and sisters, dear siblings in Christ,

Our Europe, our countries are obsessed with borders and border control. More than 2000 km. was the length of walls, fences and other obstacles to “protect us against illegal immigration” in 2022. Now it will be many more kilometres. The measures of control are becoming increasingly smarter. The official reasons for the construction of the walls and for the security measures are to prevent irregular migration and combat terrorism. However, the price for ‘our safety and protection’ is paid by thousands of migrants, men, women and children, who died or disappeared in their efforts to cross the borders and to try to reach safety in Europe. In 2024 alone, their number – now in the beginning of December – is already almost 3000 people. As we speak, people are drowning, people are dying in despair.

The conclusion is simple: *Europe is protecting borders far more than protecting people.*

In sharp contrast to this situation, to this limited and closed vision of the world as a place divided in gated spaces where some people may be allowed to live in and to enter and others not, this morning we hear the words of the poet of Psalm 24: *The world and all that is in it belong to the LORD; the earth and all who live on it are his.*

Here, a completely different perspective emerges. The whole wide world and all living beings who live on it belong to God. We see a universal vision of unity in diversity. All people, all animals, all trees and plants, all microbes and bacteria, all living beings are created by God and belong to God and, therefore, may live together.

In the following two verses the psalmist explains that it was God, who built the world on the deep waters beneath the earth and laid its foundations in the ocean depths. God is the Creator and Protector of the universe.

Some commentaries assume that this psalm is a pilgrim song and was sung while the pilgrims were entering Jerusalem and the holy temple. One group of singers might be asking: Who has the right to go up the LORD’s hill? Who may enter his holy Temple? And a second group of singers might be answering then: Those who are pure in act and thought, who do not worship idols or make false promises.

And the conclusion is then: the LORD will bless them and save them; God will declare them innocent. Such are the people who come to God, who come into the presence of the God of Jacob.

Here a strong moral component comes into the psalm: the righteous and just people are the ones who may live in the presence of God. This message is clear: the just and righteous may live with God.

When we, then, return to our times, this psalm may encourage us to think great, to embrace the vision of a world without borders; the psalm may stimulate us to become juster and more righteous people, who know what is good: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God (Micah 6,8).

So that, finally, *Europe will be protecting people more than borders.*

**Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer** - in everyone's native language (stand)

**Song** (stand)

1. In Christ there is no east or west in him no south or north, but one great fellowship of love throughout the worldwide earth.
2. In Christ shall true hearts everywhere their high communion find; his service is the golden cord close binding humankind.
3. Join hands, disciples of the faith, whate'er your race may be. All children of the living God are surely kin to me.
4. In Christ now meet both east and west; in him meets south and north. All Christly souls are one in him throughout the whole wide earth.

**Benediction**

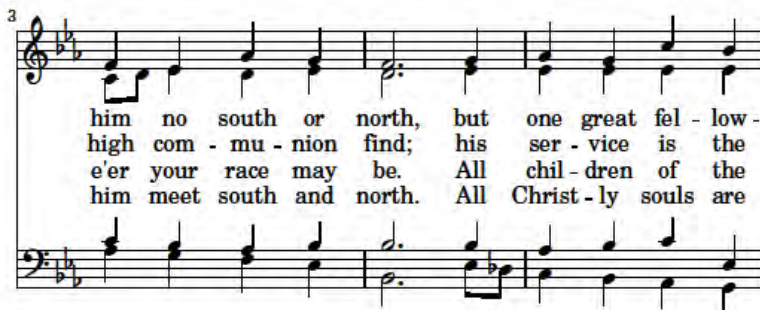
The presence of the living God may be with us,  
**as a protecting roof above our heads,**  
 as a strong support in our backs,  
**as a clear light on our paths,**  
 and as stable ground under our feet.  
**Today and all days of our life.**

**Amen**

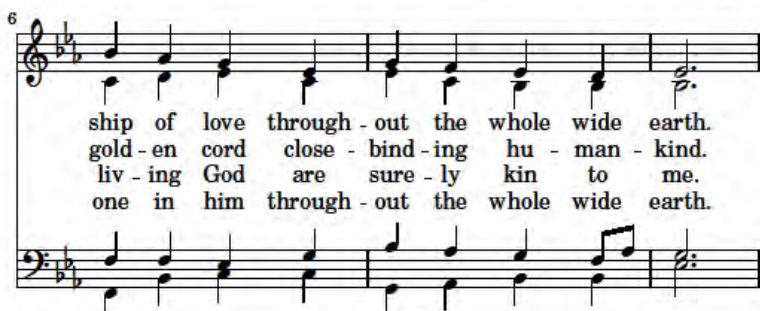
318 In Christ There Is No East or West



1 In Christ there is no east or west, in  
 2 In Christ shall true hearts ev - ery - where their  
 3 Join hands, dis - ci - ples of the faith, what -  
 4 In Christ now meet both east and west; in



3 him no south or north, but one great fel - low -  
 high com - mu - nion find; his ser - vice is the  
 e'er your race may be. All chil - dren of the  
 him meet south and north. All Christ - ly souls are



6 ship of love through - out the whole wide earth.  
 gold - en cord close - bind - ing hu - man - kind.  
 liv - ing God are sure - ly kin to me.  
 one in him through - out the whole wide earth.

## Introduction: 60 years of CCME history booklet

- Moderation: **Dr Torsten Moritz**, CCME General Secretary
- **Ms Joy Eva Bohol**, UMCOR/CCME seconded staff

## Book Launch Speech: "CCME at 60: A Europe Protecting People More than Borders"

*by Ms Joy Eva Bohol, UMCOR/CCME seconded staff*

Good morning,

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed colleagues, and friends, it is with profound gratitude and excitement that I welcome you all to the launch of "**CCME at 60: A Europe Protecting People More than Borders.**" This is more than just a book—it is a tribute to six decades of faithful service, unwavering advocacy, and a commitment to justice for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers across Europe.

### Acknowledgment of Past Contributions

In preparing this booklet, I was privileged to build on the strong foundations laid by many who have contributed to CCME's history over the years. The **40th-anniversary booklet**, compiled by **Robert Mathes**, was an invaluable resource that provided a historical lens for this 60th-anniversary publication. I would also like to acknowledge Goos Minderman, for writing the Biblical-Theological Reflection.

### Personal Journey and Connection to CCME

In August 2023, I had the privilege of joining the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) as a part-time seconded staff member from the United Methodist Church - General Board of Global Ministries (UMC-GBGM). Alongside this, I serve as the Regional Migration Specialist for Europe with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

My journey, from the Philippines to Colombia and beyond, working across four continents, has shaped my understanding of migration, not only as a professional endeavour but as a deeply personal experience. These experiences of resilience and adaptation inspired me to approach this project with both humility and determination.

### The Significance of CCME's 60-Year Legacy

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe has been a steadfast voice in the ecumenical community since its establishment in 1964. This book reflects CCME's rich history:

- A journey that began amidst labor shortages in post-war Europe,
- Progressed through trends of migration and the multicultural integration of the 1980s,
- And continues today, addressing pressing challenges like externalization, stronger restrictions of borders, xenophobia, the rise of populism, among others.

At the heart of CCME's mission lies a biblical mandate, drawing inspiration from passages such as Matthew 25:35, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me," and John 10:10, promising "abundant life for all."

## Observations from the Book

In my research, I delved into CCME's archives, uncovering a treasure trove of theological materials, advocacy documents, and testimonies. Through these, several themes emerged that encapsulate CCME's journey:

1. **Labor Rights:** Supporting labor migrants, ensuring equitable treatment, and advocating for fair policies.
2. **Refugee Support:** Standing with those fleeing war and persecution, pushing for policies rooted in international law and compassion.
3. **Combating Racism:** Persistently opposing all forms of discrimination and promoting social cohesion.
4. **Vulnerable Populations:** Addressing the unique needs of women and children, combating human trafficking, and offering pathways for empowerment.
5. **Integration:** Fostering spaces for cultural and spiritual belonging, particularly for migrant churches.

## Relevance in Today's Context

The challenges faced by migrants today—anti-immigration rhetoric, restrictive policies, and increasing climate-induced displacement—underscore the continuing importance of CCME's work. As the book reflects, CCME has consistently worked “for” migrants. The time has come to fully embrace working “with” them, empowering communities to lead their own narratives and solutions.

## Recommendations for the Future

As CCME enters its seventh decade, this book outlines several recommendations:

- **Strengthening Anti-Racism Initiatives:** Collaborating with institutions to enforce anti-discrimination laws while encouraging churches to embody inclusivity.
- **Human Rights-Based Policies:** Prioritizing dignity and humane treatment over border control measures.
- **Empowering Migrant Voices:** Supporting migrant-led organizations, ensuring representation in decision-making spaces, and fostering self-organization.
- **Addressing Climate Migration:** Advocating for recognition and protection of climate-displaced individuals.
- **Deepening Partnerships:** Expanding collaborations with global church networks, especially in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

## Stories from CCME's Founders

During my journey, I had the immense privilege of interviewing key figures in CCME's history, including Jan Niessen, Arrien Kruyt, Doris Petschke, and Boudewijn Sjollema. Sjollema at the age of 96, he recounted the courage and dedication required to lay the foundation of an organization that would become a beacon for justice in migration. His words remind us of the perseverance and vision necessary to sustain this work. Let us watch this video interview I had with him last March 2024.



## **Conclusion: A Call to Action**

As we celebrate CCME's 60 years of faith-driven advocacy, let us also look to the future with hope and determination. This book is not just a retrospective; it is an invitation—to reflect on the past, act in the present, and shape a future where justice and dignity prevail for all migrants.

I encourage each of you to read "**CCME at 60**" and to join us in advancing its mission of protecting people over borders, fostering solidarity, and ensuring abundant life for all. Together, we can honour CCME's legacy by continuing the work of welcoming the stranger and building inclusive communities.

## **Words of greetings**

- **Rev. Dr. Fidon Rwezahula Mwombeki**, All Africa Conference of Churches, General Secretary

## **FRATERNAL GREETINGS TO THE 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE CCME**

*by Rev. Dr. Fidon Rwezahula Mwombeki, All Africa Conference of Churches, General Secretary*

Honorable Moderator of the CCME

Honorable and dear friend Torsten Moritz, General Secretary of the CCME,

Honorable leaders and members of CCME,

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, ladies and gentlemen

I bring you very warm greetings from the All Africa Conference of Churches, and on behalf of its 214 members across 43 African countries. I am delighted to be here because of the growing, cordial partnership between AACC and CCME. We remember very well the great words of encouragement from CCME at our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AACC in Abuja, Nigeria, one year ago. It is obvious for me that I should very happily have received the invitation to join your anniversary as well. I am happy to join you and hear about the work and the resilience of CCME.

CCME and AACC have been developing partnership in the last few years. We are aware of the challenge of migration in the world. We are also aware that Europe has been for a long time a destination continent for many African migrants, who followed their links to the countries which had colonized them without invitation. The days of colonization were the days of uninvited, unwelcome migrants from Europe to Africa. Now there are not so many in that direction. But the tide has turned, that Africans are coming to Europe, also mostly uninvited and unwelcome. Churches are a part of this, as they continued to build and maintain partnership with the churches started by European missions.

CCME has been an instrument of the churches at the forefront of championing the rights of migrants in Europe. We appreciate the overall approach which strives to make sure that people are people. All are created in the image of God. Their dignity is sacred. Their rights as human beings, including to live in dignity are God given and must be protected. They deserve to be protected more than countries protect their borders.

As the political atmosphere around the world is changing, turning against migration, to see it as the evil which causes all problems in our different countries, the calling for CCME, for AACC and their members, not to let that toxic rhetoric take root and overturn decades of development. We must ensure that toxic rhetoric becomes once again not acceptable. We follow closely the issues in USA, where Trump is demonizing migrants as causes of every social and political problem, which is being followed by far-right parties in Europe as well. We witness focus on building walls, protecting borders, more than people and relationships. While more and more borders are open for goods, are more and more closed for people. Is this a short-term fad or a growing trend? Will we relent in our efforts to fight for justice for migrants?

AACC is working on the campaign for African patriotism, under the motto: AFRICA. MY HOME. MY FUTURE. We indeed know the different undignified ways migrants of African descent face across the world. We want to encourage young people to remain and prosper in Africa. But we are faced with the reality, that indeed millions of young people have no hope to succeed in their countries, therefore any opportunity found anywhere is something one cannot dissuade people from taking. We also know that the opportunities are there in many countries who have low, aging population. And the meagre income and undignified work in some countries seem to many to be a better alternative than no chance at all. We are therefore witnessing an increasing readiness to attempt to migrate in all directions.

AACC needs to learn from CCME which has not given up in different political climate situations as politics pendulum swings all the time. We in Africa would like to awaken the churches, not to look at the issues of migrants only those going to Europe. We have a lot of migrants, and actually the most African migrants are within Africa. Are African churches concerned and care about migrants welfare who come to their countries? Many African countries demonize migrants from their neighboring countries as well, and making them political scapegoats for economic, political and social problems. The churches should focus on these too. And more urgent, as we see borders being opened to the middle and far East, as well as in some European countries, with the so-called Bilateral Labor Agreements, we must work together to examine them, and work for enforcement of these agreements as far as they are just. On this one, we thank CCME for its readiness to work with us on these. It is no longer about “irregular migration”, but includes modern slavery types of agreements. We must remember slavery was legal, with numerous laws being enforced. But it was nevertheless brutal and unjust. We should not be fooled by the signed agreements as if they are just and fair, or are enforced in a just manner.

That is why I am very much impressed by the theme of this event: Protecting People more than borders. We should fight for that.

As we are already planning further cooperation activities in the coming year and years, I wish CCME a very happy anniversary.

- **Rev. Frank Dieter Fischbach**, Conference of European Churches, General Secretary

**CEC Greeting CCME jubilee**

*by Rev. Frank Dieter Fischbach, Conference of European Churches, General Secretary*

Dear Moderator Fiona Kendall,

Dear Members of the Executive Committee,

Dear General Secretary Dr Torsten Moritz,

Dear Members of the CCME staff,

Dear participants,

Thank you for your invitation and the opportunity to greet you, to greet CCME, to congratulate for 60 years advocacy for migrants in Europe!

I know and I can imagine that some of you may find these congratulations from the Conference of European Churches a little strange. After all, from next year we - CEC and CCME - will be separate organisations, which has not been the case for many decades, and for some it looks more like a separation. And a separation always raises the question: why?

I am quite happy that I cannot say much about this, as I have not been involved in CEC or in the events and decisions surrounding Rue Joseph II 174 for the last five years. Nevertheless, I am aware that the reading of the decisions taken will be very different. I am therefore really pleased and grateful that you have invited me to this anniversary and to this greeting.

Because this is also true: during my first visits and encounters with CEC member churches, there is almost never a lack of references and requests to keep the topic of migration high on the agenda, and this is always linked to the reference to CCME.

I will follow this advice for the CEC out of conviction - out of conviction with regard to the importance of the topic of migration for our churches and for European societies, and out of conviction for the great work that CCME has been doing here for 60 years!

I am therefore very pleased that Torsten and I have already sat down together to talk about content and a meaningful relationship, so that our house community in Rue Joseph II does not become something purely formal.

I would like to take the liberty of congratulating CCME on at least two things: I warmly congratulate you on your work, which is highly recognised in Brussels and beyond. I have already mentioned the recognition by the churches. But this also applies, as I have observed over the years, to the European institutions - Commission, Parliament, Council. I have been and continue to be impressed by the way in which CCME is linked to the institutions and how it can make its voice heard in the right places in a very concrete and targeted manner and can contribute politically in a strategic manner.

This is certainly also due to the good network with other migration organisations in Brussels, but you also have to have that first.

But it also has to do with the reputation CCME has built up over 60 years. I still remember well how I once came to Rue Joseph II, the large conference room was set up, and I learnt from Torsten that migration associations were about to meet with Council officials in the run-up to a Council on migration. Great congratulations!

I am of course aware that, in view of the development of European migration policy, one can ask how successful it is.

But this is not an originally Christian question, if one is of the opinion that the commitment to a humane migration policy that protects people is a Christian task.

Secondly I would like to congratulate all the people who have worked and continue to work for CCME: Ever since I got to know CCME, and that goes back to 1992 to 1994, I have admired the people who work for CCME - I am very happy to mention Doris Peschke and Torsten Moritz by name, the other employees as well as all the volunteers.

I honestly confess that I don't know if I could work and live every day on the subject of migration with all the disasters, with all the misery, with all the powerlessness in the face of the experiences of refugees.

I admire you all in this! And I hope that God will continue to give you the strength to get involved in this way, and that new people will keep coming forward to support you.

Normally, on a birthday like this, people say 'here's to the next healthy and happy 60 years': but actually, you'd rather hope that things change so much that advocacy work for migrants is no longer necessary.

But that's probably not realistic. And in this respect, CEC wishes CCME God's blessing for the continued advocacy work, for continued perseverance, persistence and courage to keep at it, and always enough people and churches to join in, support and help.

Thank you again for the invitation and Gods' blessing for CCME!

- **Ms Linda Becht**, Asylpfarramt Stuttgart

## **Grußwort 60.-jähriges Jubiläum CCME**

*by Ms Linda Becht, Asylpfarramt Stuttgart on behalf of Dr Christine Keim, Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Württemberg, Referat Mission, Ökumene und Entwicklung*

Dear General Secretary Dr Moritz, dear members and staff of CCME,

On behalf of the 60th anniversary of the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europa (CCME), the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Württemberg sends warmest greetings.

We congratulate the World Council of Churches for founding this Commission in the year 1960 – and we, of course, thank all members and staff members who shaped this important work for the last 60 years.

The work of the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europa is as important as 60 years ago, if not more. The challenges in Europe are growing through the rising right-wing extremism and other obstacles. More people around the world are currently migrating than before. War conflicts and climaterelated causes are leading to an increasing number of people fleeing their homes. The United Nations Refugee Agency currently speaks of over 122 million people (June 2024).

At the same time, there is a growing debate in Germany as well as within the European Union about migration, which causes fear and provokes a defensive attitude towards refugees. These debates are often accompanied by group-focused misanthropy.

This has an impact on the integration of refugees and migrants in Germany and in Europe. But it has also an impact on the willingness to take international measures to support refugees and provide them with financial support.

The Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) also drew attention to this dramatic situation at its annual Synod last November 2024, this year with a special focus on “Refugees and Migration”.

The Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Württemberg appreciates the work of Churches Commission for Migrants in Europa (CCME) for raising its voice in the public sphere and for enabling churches to raise their voices as well. We thank all those engaged in the Commission for their untiring work to promote human dignity of all people and for inserting their voices into the current political debates.

We greet you with the biblical vision of the prophet Amos:

**“Let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” (Amos 5,24)**

We wish you the ongoing motivation for your work in the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europa (CCME) and God’s blessings.

**Current and future concerns on asylum & migration in Europe  
Issues articulated by conference participants, case studies on:**

**Panel:**

- Moderation **Prof Goos Minderman**, CCME Vice Moderator

# Current and future concerns on migration and asylum

## Three different issues

- Reception of asylum
- Externalisation of the asylum process
- Labor migration now and in the future



## Reception

- Larissa Franz, Caritas Finland
- David zaugg, Ev. Reformierte Kirche Schweiz



- **Reception of migrants and refugees: Finland** (Ms Larissa Franz, Caritas Finland)



## Introduction

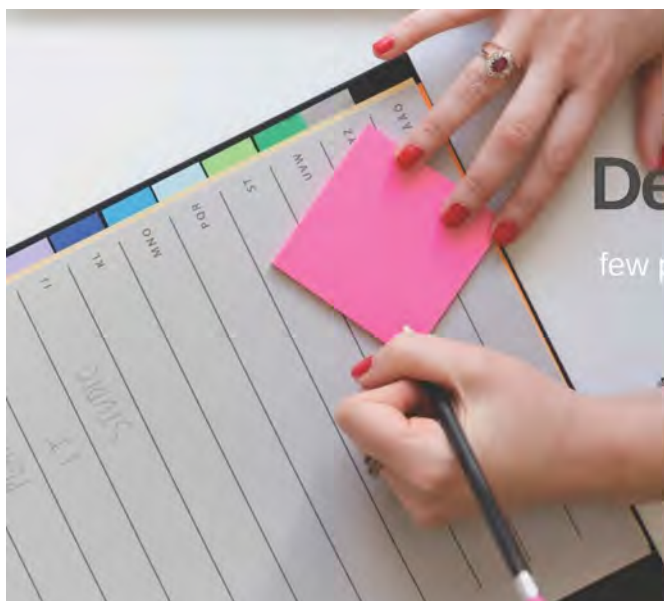
Larissa Franz-Koivisto  
 Magister political/social science, Social worker (licence)  
 Project Manager/expert in THL (Health and wellbeing Institut)  
 on my Desk implementing the new Integration law to regions  
 Secretary general Caritas Finland / CCME representative Finnish  
 ecumenical Council

Special field: Migration and integration

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73 adults centers (5 of them transit centers), 22  
 minor center and 2 closed units  
 Applications 60 245 (10 147  
 temporary, EU 6 025, international  
 protection 1 791 ) year 09/2024  
 More Asylumseekers in other  
 countries Europe  
 Location, Borders has been  
 closed, (nordic)



## Decision making

"Push back law" in Finland

- The closure of the eastern border in accordance with current practices seriously jeopardizes the right to seek asylum.
- 1 300 km (eastern border )
- The new border security law is contrary to international law, EU law and the Constitution.



## My concerns

### Every day life

Not only in Finland

#### Fears

- Anti-immigration talk
- Political atmosphere (radical right)
- Racism
- Labour discrimination
- Poverty
- Migration – without documents
- Closed units outside EU

#### Hopes

- Joint policy in EU level (Asylum system? Visas?)
- Right to seek asylum, right to seek status
- Labour force
- Anti-poverty strategy
- Social Rights
- Churches together, religious community together





- **Reception of migrants and refugees: Switzerland** (Mr David Zaugg, Senior Public Affairs and Migration Officer, Protestant Church in Switzerland)



Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz  
Église évangélique réformée de Suisse

## The reception of asylumseekers in Europe

Current and future concerns – a swiss perspective



Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz  
Église évangélique réformée de Suisse

**„The reception of migrants and refugees is critical in Europe, requiring a balance between humanitarian obligations and social integration efforts.“**

- **What are we balancing?**
- **Who decides what to balance?**



Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz  
Église évangélique réformée de Suisse

Year	Immigration (net)	Emigration	Asylum applications (UA)	Population in millions
2002	127'340 (48'921)	78'419	26'987	7.3
2022	190'883 (81'345)	109'538	24'511 (75'000)	8.8
2023	263'000 (139'000)	124'000	30'223 (23'012)	8.9

- Generally high immigration and emigration dynamics is typical for Switzerland, especially during the last 22 years.
- Switzerland ranks 9th in Europe in terms of the number of asylum applications in relation to the population.
- The proportion of immigration via the asylum procedure is relatively small. It averages 15 per cent over the last 10 years.

- **In 2002, the population of Switzerland was 7.3 million. That year, Switzerland adopted the EU's free movement of persons. Since then, net immigration amounts to 1,536 million people.**
- **By the end of 2023, almost 9 million people lived in Switzerland. 27 per cent of the permanent resident population in Switzerland were foreigners.**
  - EU/EFTA nationals: 1,5 million
  - Third countries: 772,000
  - Italians are still the largest foreign population group in Switzerland with 342,454 people, followed by German (326,033 people), Portuguese (260,462 people) and French (165,684 people) nationals.
  - In 2023, 263'000 people have immigrated (3%), whereas 124'000 have left the country.
- **The main immigration and emigration groups: Germany, Italy, France, Portugal, Spain, UK**
- **Switzerland ranks 9th in Europe in terms of the number of asylum applications in relation to the population.**



## The bright side of the current situation

- Switzerland's overall integration capacity (and willingness) is good:
  - A close and responsive link between vocational education and training and the needs of the labour market.
  - Low unemployment rate of 2,4% (August 2024)
  - Generally high quality of primary schools, vocational schools and universities.
  - (Increasingly) coherent integration policy at all levels of government.
  - Cantonal distribution formula: all cantons must take responsibility for the accommodation and integration of refugees.
- **Dual vocational education and training system**
- **Promoting integration is seen politically as a task for society as a whole.**
- **The focus is on integration into regular structures plays an important role: public schools, vocational education, healthcare. Numerous civil society support programmes and close cooperation between the state and employers' and employees' associations also help with this.**



## The challenging side of the current situation

- Dried up housing market, (heavy) loaded regular structures and Increasing scepticism regarding the overall benefits of high immigration rates.
- Regarding the integration of refugees:
  - Labour market integration is not as good as it could be.
  - The return orientation of “provisional admission” and “status S” has (assumably) a negative impact on prospects on the labour market.
  - Lack of language skills is one of the biggest obstacles. Models that combine language learning and labour market integration would be helpful.
  - (planned) Saving measures by the federal government and the parliament.
- **It is not unlikely that the negotiations with the EU on a new bilateral agreement will fail over the issue of the free movement of persons.**
- **The cantons suspended the resettlement-programm**
- **Only about 25% of the Ukrainian refugees work**
- **2019 Switzerland introduced an accelerated asylum procedure and at the same time increased the legal protection. The idea was that fast decisions promote both the willingness to return or – if positive – to integrate. However, it has become evident that the system is not as efficient as hoped with a high number of asylum applications.**
- **The willingness of politicians or the government to provide more resources for the asylum system has declined. On the contrary, parliament is considering cost-cutting measures. These may well have a negative impact on integration.**



## What are we looking at in the future?

Depends on the scenario...

- Migration and it's „side effects“ are already controversial. In the area of refugee migration, cultural and religious aspects may play an even greater role in the political and social debate.
- Political and legal shift towards a more restrictiv reception and increasing conflict with international law.
- Perhaps lower numbers of asylumseekers (maybe more because of an european rather than a swiss policy)

**The more society and politicians become convinced that obligations under international law or certain interpretative norms conflict with the fulfilment of central state tasks, the more willing they are to accept violations of the law or to propose changes to these legal texts.**



Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz  
Eglise évangélique réformée de Suisse

## As for PCS

- Church's commitment to refugees is much recognized and appreciated both socially and politically.
- But: It is becoming more difficult to find pastors, pastoral workers, deacons and volunteers.
- Advocacy for the reception and protection of asylum seekers in Switzerland: We try to establish and/or maintain good and trusting relationships with politicians from all political parties.



Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche Schweiz  
Eglise évangélique réformée de Suisse

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# Externalisation

- Bilateral & multilateral agreements
  - EU-Turkey
  - EU-Libya
  - EU-North Africa
- Offshore processing centers
  - Rwanda: UK and Denmark
  - Italy - Albania
  - Hotspots in North Africa (since Blair initiative)
- Disembarkation arrangements for the rescued migrants at the mediterranean
- Return agreements
  - Netherlands and Uganda?
- Others?



# Asylum and externalisation

- Simeon Mitchell
- Karel Jungheim



- **Return and externalisation: United Kingdom** (Mr Simeon Mitchel, Methodist Church of Great Britain)

## Learning from the UK's Rwanda asylum plan

CCME Conference, 3 December 2024

TOPIC 2: Return and externalization of denied asylum seekers: what's going on and where will it go? Externalization policies, which aim to shift border control and migration management to third countries, often raise concerns about human rights and accountability. What are the trends and what is our position about this topic?



**JP** JOINT PUBLIC ISSUES TEAM  
**IT** CHURCHES WORKING FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

[www.jpit.uk](http://www.jpit.uk)

## Learning from the UK's Rwanda asylum plan

**Simeon Mitchell**  
Team Leader, Joint Public Issues Team  
of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches (UK)

**BAPTISTS TOGETHER**    **The Methodist Church**    **The United Reformed Church**

### Introduce self and JPIT

Offer a case study from the UK of the so-called Rwanda plan pursued by the previous UK government over the last 2½ years, and of how the churches and wider civil society responded and opposed it. I hope it may offer parallels for your contexts and learnings which are helpful.



## The UK's Rwanda asylum plan

- Context and background
- Key proposals

**BREAKING POINT**

**NEW PLAN FOR IMMIGRATION**

**STOP THE BOATS**

**In the UK illegally?**  
**GO HOME OR FACE ARREST!**  
**Text HOME to 78070**

**106**  
**ARREST LAST WEEK**

**MANUEL**

### Context and background

A Conservative (centre-right wing) government facing a perceived failure to fulfil its promise to 'take back control' of UK borders and levels of immigration after Brexit, most visibly seen in the numbers

of people crossing the English channel to seek sanctuary in the UK – and political threats from its right in particular.

In April 2021 it announced a ‘New Plan for Immigration’ which included plans to limit the potential refugee status of anyone claiming asylum after arriving in the UK by so-called ‘irregular’ routes – particularly targeting those crossing the English Channel from France – and to rapidly remove people seeking asylum to a safe – but at that point unnamed – third country.

Over the subsequent months there were various rumours about which country this might be, from Ascension Island in the South Atlantic, Albania and Ghana, as well as even Gibraltar.

But then in April 2022, the government announced that it had agreed a Migration and Economic Development Partnership with the government of Rwanda.

### **Key proposals**

It would enable the UK to send people seeking asylum to Rwanda, where the Rwandan government would decide their asylum claims. This would not be, as was often misunderstood, offshore processing on behalf of the UK – but a permanent relocation. If their claims were successful they would be granted asylum in Rwanda, and even if not they would be offered the opportunity to settle there. The focus would be on people who had arrived by what were deemed to have been dangerous or illegal routes who had travelled through safe countries before getting to the UK.

In return, an initial payment of £140 million was made to Rwanda, with more to follow as the plan was implemented.

Nobody expected the numbers of people involved to be very high, with the Rwandan government suggesting it would take 1,000 asylum seekers in an initial five-year trial period. However the policy’s intended impact was much wider, as it was intended to provoke a deterrent effect and reduce the numbers seeking to travel to the UK. There was great scepticism about this, such that the civil service required special instructions from government ministers to go ahead with the plan, even when there was insufficient evidence that it would provide value for public expenditure.

That was just one of many hurdles that got in the way of the implementation of the policy over the two years that followed.





## Timeline

The first flight to Rwanda was due to depart in that \*June but was stopped at the last minute due to a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights regarding the case of one of the seven people on board.

The lawfulness of the overall policy was then challenged in the UK's High Court by some who had been selected for relocation. \*The High Court ruled in December 2022 that the policy was lawful. That case was subject to an appeal, but in the meantime preparations for implementation got underway, with accommodation being built for new arrivals in Rwanda, and people were arrested and detained ready for deportation.

In \* November 2023 – a year ago – the UK's Supreme Court ruled that the policy was unlawful on the grounds that Rwanda could not be deemed a safe country to send people to, for three reasons:

- (1) the country's poor human rights record;
- (2) the presence of serious and systematic defects in its asylum processing; and
- (3) that under a similar agreement with Israel, Rwanda removed asylum seekers to countries of origin, thus violating the principle of non-refoulement.

In response to this, the government introduced \* new legislation into parliament which sought to say in law that Rwanda was safe – regardless of the findings of the courts or the facts on the ground – and also a new treaty with Rwanda which committed that no relocated person will be sent to any country except the UK, thereby (in theory) removing the risk of refoulement.

So all was set to go, but then the government called a general election which was won by the opposition Labour party, who in one of their first acts in government fulfilled the commitment they had made to cancel the scheme, mainly on pragmatic grounds.

It is now estimated that the scheme had cost over £700 million<sup>16</sup>. No one was ever sent by the UK to Rwanda other than four people under a voluntary resettlement scheme. The numbers attempting Channel crossings do not suggest it had any deterrent effect.



From the outset, our Churches through their leaders were vocal in our opposition to the plan, both separately and together, principally arguing that moral responsibility for refugees cannot be outsourced.

Just after the policy was announced, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, used his high-profile Easter sermon to condemn the plan, generating newspaper headlines...



<sup>16</sup> [Rwanda asylum scheme spent £50m on flights that never took off, data reveals | Home Office | The Guardian](#)

...which then generated a predictable reaction the next day, and sparked a debate on whether faith leaders should involve themselves in politics.



Of course, it was not only Churches that opposed the plan. There were challenges in the courts, protests, and activists tried to prevent flights from leaving.

But it was striking that the Churches provided some of the leading voices providing the loudest public criticism of the plan on moral grounds. Opposition politicians were timid about making that case, instead criticising the likely ineffectiveness or unworkability of the proposals.

## Learnings and reflections

Before we move on from this short but shameful episode, let's consider what we might learn from it.

1. **Externalisation is widely misunderstood – many people thought this scheme it meant offshore processing of asylum claims by Rwanda, and were shocked to discover it meant permanent relocation for the people involved.**
2. **Be careful about the arguments you make about such proposals:**
  - a. Don't reinforce stereotypes about African countries by implying that being sent to Rwanda is the worst thing that could happen to someone. It's about the principle of externalisation not the specific destination.
  - b. Don't base your case on ineffectiveness as a deterrent – that may be disproved.
  - c. Don't just focus on our obligations to meeting international legal responsibilities, human rights law, or the ECHR – that's a fight the right want to have

- d. But instead focus on the principles that underlie these frameworks – the moral arguments – which in the end seemed most powerful and persuasive. Faith groups were a leading voice willing to make them.
3. **The Rwanda scheme became totemic, but was actually a sideshow to the wider anti-immigration agenda. Much greater harm was done by the criminalization of those arriving by irregular routes, and the government’s lack of commitment to creating new safe and legal routes. There was opposition to that too, but it was less vocal and generated fewer headlines. And that’s what remains UK policy today, even with a change of government. Did we allow the Rwanda plan to distract us?**

- **Return and externalisation: Netherlands** (Mr Karel Jungheim, Kerk in Actie)



## Asylum and externalisation – current government policy in the Netherlands and response from society and churches

Presentation at 60 yrs CCME

Karel Jungheim

Refugee specialist at the Protestant Church in the Netherlands



### Current Dutch government policy

Since July 2024 a right-wing four-parties coalition government

Coalition Agreement: 'the toughest asylum policy ever'

Letter sent to European Commission to opt-out of the EU on asylum

Maximize 'buy off' of asylum seekers (Pact)

Maximum focus on reception in the region and on migration deals to that end

Modernization of the UN Refugee Convention

Border controls

Reducing residency permits for refugees from five to three years

Ending local authority quotas for housing refugees

## kerk in actie

### Facts on the ground

- ☐ Reception conditions worsened
  - E.g. access to health care for pregnant asylum seekers
  - Communication on termination of the 'Spreidingswet' (municipal quota for housing asylum seekers) creates unrest
- ☐ Tougher policies on undocumented people
  - National facility 'LVV' (pre removal centres): No money, no mandate as per January 1<sup>st</sup> 2025
  - "They can go to the removal centre" (Detention Centre Rotterdam)
- ☐ 'Innovation' return hub Uganda
  - Minister of 'Development Aid' in Uganda: Dutch plan to accommodate rejected asylum seekers in Uganda

## kerk in actie

### National meeting on the pact (1)

The Dutch Refugee Council and the Meijers Committee (independent experts) organised the conference 'Unweiling the Pact on Asylum and Migration: implementation at national and European level' on 26 September 2024. Participants were representatives of:

- ☐ European Commission
- ☐ Ministries of Justice and Security and Foreign Affairs
- ☐ IND (Immigration service)
- ☐ COA (Asylum Seekers Reception Organisation)
- ☐ Advisory councils
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Fellow NGOs
- ☐ UNHCR
- ☐ Scientific bureaus of political parties
- ☐ National Ombudsman
- ☐ Netherlands Institute for Human Rights

## kerk in actie

### National meeting on the pact (2)

Important points for implementation:

- ☐ Look at alternatives to detention, especially children
- ☐ Solidarity mechanism: Do not 'buy off' solidarity
- ☐ 'new Dublin': Prevent people who travel on from (border) countries from ending up in sober shelters for a long time, or on the streets
- ☐ Organise shelter in a humane way
- ☐ Monitor border screening procedure at Schiphol Airport

## kerk in actie

### Position of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands

- ≡ **Public reaction** to the decision to stop financing facilities for undocumented: "Moral limit was exceeded" (Gen. Sec. Dr. René de Reuver)
  - ≡ **Dialogue with government representatives:** e.g. De Thuisgevers has many relations with government officials to constructively deal with the housing crisis
  - ≡ Kerk in Actie is preparing **lobby agenda**, most likely topics
    - Undocumented
    - Housing for refugee status holders, to improve reception conditions
  - ≡ **Partnership** with National Council of Churches, and NGOs, among others
- > Question: Given limited capacities and adverse political climate, how to effectively advocate for changes?

## Labour migration

- We look here at migration from outside EU to inside, but there is still a serious issue with labor migration within EU.
- In principle now five mainstream:
  - Bleu card
  - Seasonal workers
  - Intracorporate
  - Highlevel talents
- Other 'legal pathways' as an alternative: resettlement and relocation.

- **Labour migration: Italy** (Ms Fiona Kendall, CCME Moderator)





# THE COST OF AN ORANGE

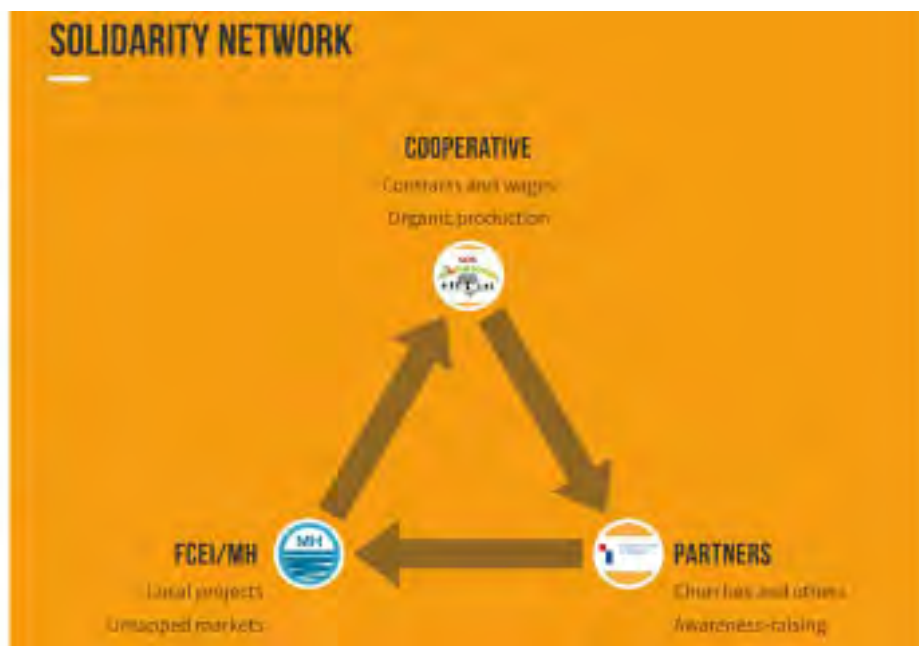
[katja.breyer@ekvw.de](mailto:katja.breyer@ekvw.de)    [www.faire-orangen.de](http://www.faire-orangen.de); [www.thepickers.de](http://www.thepickers.de)  
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**LABOUR EXPLOITATION**  
AGRICULTURE

 25% ITALIAN ECONOMY	 10% ORGANISED CRIME EARNINGS	 48% UNDECLARED WORKERS
 450,000 EXPLOITED WORKERS	 €20-40 FOR 9-15 HOURS PER DAY	 20% - 30% LESS PAY FOR WOMEN
 NO DOCUMENTS, CONTRACTS OR SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS	 NO TRANSPORT	 NO HOUSE









## THE ORANGE CAMPAIGN IN GERMANY

Every season around 100 tons of ethical oranges are sold

Regional Action Teams

Fairtrade societies and shops; world houses; parishes, schools, kindergartens



## 2023 - DECRETO FLUSSI AND WORK PERMITS UNDER DPCM 27/09/23

When immigration serves the economy...



- Triennial work permit quota ("flussi") based on labour market needs (452,000/2023-25)
- Triennial refugee work permit quota (750/23-25)
- Uncapped "extra-quota" work permits for those who have completed accredited vocational and linguistic training in countries of departure
- Uncapped "extra-quota" work permits for those, including seasonal workers, coming from countries with which Italy has signed agreements regarding repatriation

## RISKS AND CONSEQUENCES





# Thank you.



## Refugees & Migrants and European churches: from objects to subjects ? Analysis and witness: church leaders/activists with migration background

- Moderation: **Ms Sarah Eulitz**, European Regional committee of the World Students' Christian Federation

### Introduction

- **Panel** about: Are churches in Europe working *for* migrants only or can we talk about ownership by migrants?
- Are we able to answer this question?
- Two panelists with great experience, providing us with a glimpse on how those questions may be answered

### Bishop Paulina Hławiczka-Trotman

- Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain
- Chairperson of the national ecumenical body 'Churches together in England'
- In both institutions she served as the Racial Justice Officer

- Her roots are in Poland:
  - Education in theology and professional singing
  - First worked as an opera singer
  - Followed her call to ministry
  - First worked as unordained theologian & bishops' assistant for the Army Chaplaincy and the Polish Ecumenical Council
  - Finally got ordained as a Lutheran pastor in England 2014

### **Pastor Prince Ossai Okeke**

- Ecumenical representative of the Evangelical Church of Northern Germany
- Works as a consultant for international congregations in the area of the northern church and brings them together in an International Churches Convent
- Pastor of an Pentecostal Church
- chairman of the African Christian Council Hamburg (an umbrella organization of over 60 African-influenced and led churches in Hamburg)
- He makes sure the intercultural and ecumenical perspectives are heard

### **Reflection**

Are churches in Europe working *for* migrants only or can we talk about ownership by migrants?

Pastor Prince starts to share her reflection based on her individual experience.

- She speaks about the Brexit and racial justice work in Britain and how migrants and refugees are affected

Bishop Paulina continues with another reflection on this topic.

### **Discussion**

Paulina:

- trouble being a woman in Poland and trouble being Polish in England
- Working for a church for migrants forces you reflect on your own stereotypes
- Brexit as gun against migrants

Prince:

- Born in Nigeria
- Miracle project 2010: giving voices to migrants
- African christian council: pentecostal. Originally brought to live by Nordkirche
- Being church together can be challenging

### **Questions for the discussion:**

Both sharing very different stories of their sometimes challenging paths to become a pastor...

- How to find a balance between working as a migrant and working for migrants?
- What identity influences your work the most? Being a woman, a migrant or a professional singer?
- How does being a migrant yourself influence your Christianity?

- What influence does the current political situation with its rise of right-wing movements has on your work as a pastor?
  - How do churches make sure that migrant perspectives are not only heard but also brought into action?
  - What do you wish the Church of the future to look like when it comes to working with migrants?
- **Pastor Prince Ossai Okeke** Nordkirche interkulturell

## **Refugees & Migrants and European Churches: From Objects to Subjects?**

*Evangelische Akademie Frankfurt, 2-4.12.2024*

*by Pastor Prince Ossai Okeke*

The topic demands a critical reflection on the role of churches in Europe in addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by “the migrant” Churches. And the question, do the historical churches primarily offer aid, shelter, Church Asylum and advocacy or are they intentionally working **with** the “migrant churches”, in my document I will rather refer the “migrant Churches” to the International Churches.

My experiences are within the Northern Germany where I have lived and worked as a Pastor of an International Church and a Chairman of the umbrella organization for the African Churches in Hamburg, and since 2015 the coordinator of the International Churches platform with the North church (Nordkirche). Over the years the paternalistic dynamics of treating refugees and migrants by many institutions as passive beneficiaries of charity and help have slowly shifted to embracing them and valuing their contributions to spirituality and the social life of many within the region. My observation over the last 30 years that I have lived in Hamburg Germany reveals that the Evangelical Lutheran church in Northern Germany (Nordkirche) has navigated the shift and has transited from merely offering support to the International Churches to building inclusive platform and Networks which seeks to foster partnerships that affirm the dignity and co-leadership of migrants in shaping the church’s mission and identity in an increasingly diverse manner.

In the 80s – The Evangelical Church the Nordelbische Kirche Norddeutschland in their effort viewed the African Christians in Hamburg as “objects” that needed help and aids. In their effort to help, they provided one local Church service with an imported Pastor from Tanzania for all the migrant African Christians in Hamburg and the suburbs. Among many one of his assignments was to give pastoral care to all the Africans in Hamburg and seek to keep contact with the increasing newly formed churches from Pastors from Africa, who saw Germany as a mission field. Now, this good intention from the Evangelical church of one church called the African Christian Church- for all African Christians became an illusion because they forget that Africa is a continent with diverse languages, traditions and diverse Christian forms. Therefore, though the church was meant to be a help, a place of gathering for all the migrant Christians. The reality was that the Church could not hold nor embrace the divers’ forms of Christians that came together so they scattered and began to form new Churches.

The imported Pastor from Tanzania did well in organizing the scattered churches into what we today know as the African Christian Council Hamburg e.V



The African Christian Council Hamburg (ACCH) which was an idea from the Evangelical Lutheran Church to bring together the rising number of African established churches in Hamburg into a Network of Churches with the mandate to function as a reference agency for the Evangelical Lutheran Church on which African Church could be allowed to use their church building for their Sunday service. Secondly, the ACCH should be an advocacy agent for the African Churches in Hamburg. Since the year 2001, “the African Christian Council Hamburg”<sup>17</sup> (an umbrella organization for 60 African led Churches) has engaged in many partnership endeavors with the Nordkirche and the Missions Akademie Hamburg in developing training for the African Pastors, like the African Theological Training in Germany (ATTiG) and seminars, Pastoral Care and leadership topics for the “migrant churches” to foster support and acceptance into the German system.

In 2012- The EKD had an ad-hoc committee that met for months to deliberate on how to archive a more dignified ecumenism on eye level between Churches in Germany. I served as a member of this Ad-hoc committee that later drafted the ecumenical booklet called “Gemeinsam Evangelisch”<sup>18</sup> that was meant to help churches in their ecumenical relationship and journey with the International Churches.



<sup>17</sup> <https://www.africanchristiancouncil.de/>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.ekd.de/ekd\\_de/ds/doc/ekd\\_texte\\_119.pdf](https://www.ekd.de/ekd_de/ds/doc/ekd_texte_119.pdf)

In 2015 – 2021- The Nordkirche commissioned me to head a project platform called The Communication Platform of the Nordkirche with the International Churches. The goal was to find out where the migrant Churches were and to indicate the interest of the Nordkirche to those from the International Churches who were interested in ecumenism, networking and ready to coexist as Churches together on the scriptural foundation of John 17.21<sup>19</sup>.



In 2022- The Nordkirche employed me as a regular worker to oversee the relationship between the Nordkirche and “the International Churches in the area of the Northern Germany”<sup>20</sup>. And on 26th of June 2022, the International Churches Convent was inaugurated with 46 International Churches and the presiding Bishop of the Nordkirche Bishop Kristina Kühnbaum- Schmidt for the Nordkirche signed the Networking document to fully participate as partners, to exchange resources, endeavor to sharing of faith, unity in prayers and service to one another and God.

And since then, the relationship between the international churches and Nordkirche has undergone a profound transformation, the traditional dynamics has been challenged and new opportunities for engagement were developed.

This shift from been perceived as “objects” of compassion to becoming active “subjects” in theological, social, and cultural dialogue could be seen practically in our seminars and conferences, where they speakers are not only from the Nordkirche but also from the International Churches.

<sup>19</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.nordkirche-interkulturell.de/internationale-gemeinden/kirchen-konvent>





“In Germany, there are around 2,000 to 3,000 Protestant international congregations, 460 Catholic mother-tongue congregations and around 450 Orthodox or Oriental Orthodox congregations that have come about because of migration. The number of Protestant congregations can only be roughly estimated. Every week, new congregations are formed, split up or renamed, and some dissolve.”<sup>21</sup>

The process of intercultural opening within the Nordkirche region, had already taken place in many states in Germany like in Nordrhein-Westfalen, in Bayern, Frankfurt, Berlin and other regions in Germany. In all these regions there are existing ecumenical international Churches Convents to foster the transformation that the international Churches are no long objects but subjects. All the International Church Convents have its place in the Intercultural Pastors Conference (IPK) with the mandate of promoting a rethinking within the historical churches in Germany of the role and identity of the international churches. Secondly, fostering inclusivity, mutual enrichment, and justice.

We are not where we want to be, yet it is important to note that we are not where we used to be.

## "Migrants" Churches and European Churches: From Objects to Subjects?"



60 years CCME

Frankfurt 3.12.24

Pastor Prince Ossai Okeke, Speaker for the International Churches and the Nordkirche

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.internationale-gemeinden.de/was-verstehen-wir-unter-einer-internationalen-gemeinde/>

## My encounter with CCME



### Models of Integration through Religion, Activation, Cultural Learning and Exchange

German Workshop – Kassel, 3-5. February 2010

- The European MIRACLE wants to understand if and how churches are a welcoming harbour for migrants and how the relations in the Ecumenical Dialogue between the historical churches and the migrants-led churches can be developed improved.

## What Happened Since 2010?

**Case Study: Nordkirche and some of the „migrant“ Churches.**

## AFRICAN CHRISTIAN COUNCIL HAMBURG SINCE 2012



- **Organisation of 64 African led churches in Hamburg .**
- **They are Pentecostal and**
- **Majority from West Africa**
- **Ecumenism?**
- **What are the Challenges ?**

[www.africanchristiancouncil.de](http://www.africanchristiancouncil.de)

# TRAINING SCHOOL



**ATTiG, African Theological Training in Germany.**  
2001 - 2020



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Bachelor degree. - 2012 - 2025



2024 - offers work oriented courses

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African Christian Council Hamburg & ICCN invites you to a

**ZOOM PRAYER NIGHT** TIME 8PM - 9.30PM  
**23.09.2024**

- Prayers
- Seminars
- And Joint services ?



REVD. BISHOP JOSEPH OMATIE DORDH  
DELTA STATE NIGERIA

Colossians 4:2- Continue steadfastly in Prayer being watchful in it with Thanksgiving



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Junge Straße 5, 20535 Hamburg



### Intercultural Pentecost Service

You are welcome to our Pentecost Service on **Sunday, 19th May 2024 at 11 am** in the **Erlöserkirche Borgfelde**  
Afrikanisches Zentrum  
Jungestraße 7a, 20535 Hamburg

After the service there will be a **Pentecost feast**. Food will be provided. We invite you to enjoy an international buffet and have the time to socialize. You are welcome!

[www.africanchristiancouncil.de](http://www.africanchristiancouncil.de)

**SINCE 2015-2020**

**COMMUNICATION PLATFORM BETWEEN THE NORDKIRCHE AND INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES.**



**ACK** Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Hamburg

**Ökumenewerk der Nordkirche**  
Miteinander für globale Gerechtigkeit

**SINCE JUNE 2022**

**THE ICCN STARTED**




**International Churches Convent**  
in the area of the Nordkirche

Arbeitsstelle Ökumene-Menschenrechte-Flucht-Friedensbildung  
Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Norddeutschland

**Welcome to International Churches Convent**  
„Communication Platform between the Nordkirche and the international Churches“

**Many Languages - One faith**

- Communication
- Unity
- Equality
- Dialog
- Sharing of Faith and Resources

This is my commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you (John 15:12)

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[www.gesh-nordkirche.de](http://www.gesh-nordkirche.de)



## ICCN-WHO WE ARE...



**Many Languages - One Faith**



**In June 2022, 45 international Churches registered as members of the newly founded International Churches Convent.**



**We are a Christian network working together and seeking ways to serve God, one another and our society.**



### Celebrating our differences



**HOW AND WHAT IS THE  
RELATIONSHIP TO THE NORDKIRCHE  
LIKE?**



TABLE  
DIALOG

**INVITATION**

**INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES CONVENT**

**TOPIC- MY CULTURE AND MY FAITH**

**Sat. 22. June, 2024 | 11am- 2pm**  
Venue - Junge Straße 7, 20535 Hamburg



**PASTOR FELIX BOATENG**  
SPEAKER

*How has my Culture influenced my faith and work?*



**PASTOR CLAUD HOPPE**  
SPEAKER

**ABOUT US**

We are a Network of International Christian Churches and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Northern Germany. We invite all Pastors and Churches that seeks networking with the Convent.





In Cooperation with the MISSIONSAKADEMIE

☎ 017647342821 ✉ p.okeke@nordkirche-weltbewegt.de

**INVITATION / EINLADUNG**

**INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES CONVENT**

**TOPIC- GOOD PREACHING**

**Sat. 28. Sept, 2024 | 11am- 2pm**  
Venue - Junge Straße 7, 20535 Hamburg



**PASTOR SIAQUIYAH DAVIS**  
SPEAKER

*Preaching! Why I preach and the Challenges?*



**PASTORIN KIRSTEN WOLANDT**  
SPEAKER

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# WHAT TOPICS ENGAGE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ICCN AND THE NORDKIRCHE?

ROOMS, RACISM, DISCRIMINATION, GENDER, 2nd GENERATION AND MONEY





## INTERNATIONAL CHURCHES CONVENT IN GERMANY

- 1- Internationaler Konvent christlicher Gemeinden in Baden
- 2 Internationaler Konvent christlicher Gemeinden Berlin und Brandenburg e.V.
- 3 Internationale Konferenz Christlicher Gemeinden im Bereich der Evangelisch-lutherischen Landeskirche Hannovers
- 4 InterKulturell Evangelisch in München (IKEM)
- 5 Internationaler Kirchenkonvent (Rheinland Westfalen)
- 6 Internationale Konvent christlicher Gemeinden Rhein-Main e.V.
- 7 Internationaler Konvent christlicher Gemeinden in Württemberg
8. International Churches Convent in the area of the Nordkirche

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### FOR MORE

[www.africanchristiancouncil.de](http://www.africanchristiancouncil.de)

<https://www.fh-hermannsburg.de/>

<https://tagungshaushamburg.com/#haus-3>  
Missionsakademie Hamburg

<https://himmelsfels.de/>

<https://www.bfp-ausbildung.de/>  
Bund Freikirchlicher Pfingstgemeinden  
Association of Pentecostal Churches in Germany

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## THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

REFERENT FÜR INTERNATIONALE  
GEMEINDEN

PASTOR PRINCE OSSAI OKEKE

OFFICE -

SHANGHAI ALLEE 12-14, 20457 HAMBURG

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International  
Churches Convent  
in the area of the Nordkirche



- **Bishop Paulina Hławiczka-Trotman**, Lutheran Church in Great Britain

## **Refugees & Migrants and European churches: from objects to subjects ?**

### **Analysis and witness: church leaders/activists with migration background**

*by Bishop Paulina Hławiczka-Trotman, Lutheran Church in Great Britain*

#### ***"You are all one in Christ Jesus" /Galatians 3:28d/***

In July 2020 The Lutheran Church in Great Britain stood with the global Black Lives Matter movement following the cruel death of African American George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police.

We decided to take part in learning about the systemic racism and aimed to join leaders and communities to end the enduring oppression of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people (People of Global Majority Heritage) in the UK and across the world.

We were ashamed that prior to this act we had never worked on this issue, especially given our own character, the Lutherans in the UK comprise of 30% black & brown people, 30% Asian and 40% white people of different nationalities.

We believe that every human being is God's creation to be loved, cherished, respected and in case of an emergency to be treated with care. We recognise that racism is a sin against the Creator and the Creation.

We are privileged to be an international Church built of 20 nationalities and different ethnicities. We worship in several languages and include different kinds of liturgies from around the world. We recognize our own failure as individuals and churches to speak out against racial injustice and to act justly, after learning of or witnessing inhuman and degrading treatment of the People of Colour.

Though Jesus loves everyone, even to the point of dying for our sins, he went out of his way intentionally to help specific groups of people at particular times – persons alienated, mistreated and those experiencing injustice. We should do no less.

So we are taking steps to affirm our commitment to a policy of anti-racism, and to use this opportunity consciously to examine our practices to see where we can do better. Our effort includes providing education on historical and contemporary racism within our churches, chaplaincies, partners and communities and joining other churches, bodies and associations in this work. We encourage our members and friends to apply the same principles to their circles, and to seek out education on these issues where possible. The Lutheran Church in Great Britain formed a working group in 2020 to lead, teach, and provide the resources. It is called the Racial Justice Core Group, an initiative supported by then Presiding Bishop Rt Rev Tor Berger Jørgensen (Norway), led by co-chairs: Rev Paulina Hławiczka - Trotman (Poland) & Mrs Sesulelo Kehle (Zimbabwe).

We seek to promote racial justice through new and positive reforms that empowers all affected people including white counterparts with our fragility and fatigue. We are determined to continue enabling reconciliation as the most Christ-like of actions.

We know that the time has come for white people in our communities to stop talking, explaining and searching for excuses, but to open our ears, hearts and minds to listen and learn, and to admit our own racist acts and comments. To accept new knowledge and criticism is often hard, but no one

promised this task would be easy. Until we recognize there is only one race, the Human Race, we will strive to learn, work and teach on racial justice and reconciliation, which is only possible through God's grace and love offered to All.

*Rt Reverend Paulina Hławiczka-Trotman, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain, Trustee of the Council of the Lutheran Churches in Great Britain, Churches Together in England President. Married to Reverend Arlington W. Trotman, Supernumerary Methodist Minister, former Secretary of the Churches' Commission for Racial Justice at Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and a former Moderator of the CCME.*

## Exposure visit to Evangelisches Zentrum für Beratung Am Weißen Stein (churches' work with/for refugees, migrants in Frankfurt)

- **Ms Leonie Albert**, Leitung Sozial- und Migrationsberatung



Protestant center  
for counselling and  
therapy at  
Weißer Stein

Eschersheimer Landstraße 567  
60431 Frankfurt

### Course of the evening

- **4:30 pm:** Getting started and overview of the services offered by our advice center
  - Counselling and therapy for refugees
  - Social and migration counselling
  - Mentoring-Programm SOCIUS
- **5:15 pm to 5:45 pm:** Tour of the 2nd floor
- **6:00 pm to 7:00 pm:** Joint round for discussion and questions
- **7:00 pm:** End



## Locations

**Evangelisches Zentrum für Beratung und Therapie Am Weißen Stein**  
 Eschersheimer Landstraße 567  
 Telefon: 069 / 5302-159  
 Email: [migrationsberatung@frankfurt-evangelisch.de](mailto:migrationsberatung@frankfurt-evangelisch.de)

**Evangelisches Zentrum für Beratung in Höchst**  
 Leverkusener Str. 7  
 Telefon: 069 / 7593672-40  
 Email: [migrationsberatung.hoechst@frankfurt-evangelisch.de](mailto:migrationsberatung.hoechst@frankfurt-evangelisch.de)

**Evangelisches Zentrum für Beratung in Offenbach**  
 Arthur-Zitscher-Str.13  
 Telefon: 069 / 82 97 70 99  
 Email: [migrationsberatung@offenbach-evangelisch.de](mailto:migrationsberatung@offenbach-evangelisch.de)

## Protestant center for counselling and therapy at Weißer Stein

Eschersheimer Landstraße 567  
 60431 Frankfurt

The largest psychosocial counselling center in Hessen:

- Couples and life counselling
- Family, parenting and youth counselling
- Addiction counselling
- Mentoring-Programm SOCIUS
- Counselling and therapy for refugees
- Social and migration counselling

Additionally:

- Protestant family education
- Protestant Youth Organization
- Outpatient youth services

## Counselling and therapy for refugees



Isabel Hausmann  
Psychotherapist



David Kilian  
Psychotherapist



Barbara Lueken  
Asylum counsellor



Mohammad Alsaadi  
Asylum counsellor



Miriam Schwarz  
Social worker



Annika Wember-  
Matthes  
Psychotherapist



Thuong Bui  
Team assistant

Kathrin Macha  
Psychotherapist

Carolin Abraham  
Psychotherapist

## Counselling and therapy for refugees

Our specialised counselling team supports refugees with following services:

- Counselling about questions regarding the **asylum procedures** and preparation for the interview in the asylum process (asylum law counselling, dealing with official decisions, cooperation with lawyers)
- intermediation and counselling regarding **church asylum** (accompaniment of clients and cooperation with church parishes)
- **psychosocial counselling and psychotherapeutic treatment** (up to 30 sessions)
- writing psychological reports

## Counselling and therapy for refugees

**Target group for therapy** are refugees

- within the first 36 months of their stay (without health insurance card)
- who need translation (into rare/uncommon languages) for counselling and who can't find a therapy place with a practising therapist

## Counselling and therapy for refugees

### Locations

**Ev. Zentrum Am Weißen Stein** psychosocial counselling, psychotherapy, asylum procedure counselling

**Hessische Erstaufnahmeeinrichtung Büdingen** psychosocial counselling, asylum procedure counselling

**Airport Frankfurt transit area** psychological counselling and evaluation statements

## Social and migration counselling



Leonie Albert  
Team lead



Malale Schokory  
Social and migration counselling  
Return counselling



Selamawit Tewelde  
Social and migration counselling



Ewa Maksym-Akdogan  
Team assistant/administration



Hafize Tran  
Social and migration counselling



Kahraman Topuz  
Migration counselling for adult immigrants  
Social and migration counselling

## Social and migration counselling

### Access for clients

Coordination of new registrations via the secretariat (by email, by phone or in person on site):

- Tuesday + Wednesday: 9 am – 2 pm
- Thursday: 12 – 5 pm
- Friday: 9 am – 1 pm

Phone: 069 53 02-159

E-Mail: [migrationsberatung@frankfurt-evangelisch.de](mailto:migrationsberatung@frankfurt-evangelisch.de)

- Forwarding to us through:  
Social services and facilities of other welfare organizations, youth migration services, public authorities and offices, consulate offices, word-of-mouth advertising, Community, etc.
- Native speaker consultation (Pashto, Kurdish Zaza, Turkish, Amharic, Tigrinya, English) or with interpreters.

## Social and migration counselling

### Our advisory services

1. Social and migration counselling
2. Migration counselling for adult immigrants (MBE)
3. Voluntary return counselling

## Social and migration counselling

### 1. Social and migration counselling

- Financing/Funding: Municipal funds
  - Target group: Migrants and refugees living in the northern districts of Frankfurt
  - Contents:
    - Issues relating to securing residence permits
    - Livelihood security
    - Language support / integration courses
    - Labor market integration / recognition of foreign qualifications
    - Consumer issues
    - Health issues
    - Advice on family reunification- applying for grants and subsidies
    - Psychosocial counselling, crisis intervention
- Close cooperation and correspondence with authorities, lawyers, integration course providers, internal specialist services and other institutions

Social and migration counselling

## 2. Migration counselling for adult immigrants (MBE)

- Financing/Funding: Federal funds
- Target group:
  - Adult immigrants over 27 years (under 27 years at Youth migration service)
  - Late repatriates, their spouses and children
  - Permanent resident adult immigrants and their family members
  - Refugees after receiving recognition
  - Asylum seekers with good prospects of staying
  - EU citizens
  - German citizens
- Main characteristics:
  - Content: similar to Social and migration counselling
  - Time-limited: up to 3 years (after entry)

Social and migration counselling

## 3. Voluntary return counselling

- Financing/Funding: Municipal funds
- Target group: People with a wish to return to their country of origin (for various reasons)
- Contents:
  - Discussing perspectives for leaving or staying in Germany (residence situation, job situation, social network, health situation etc.)
  - Information on obligations to leave the country and conditions of departure
  - Assistance in obtaining passport and passport replacement documents
  - Application to BAMF for return aid
  - Application to the social welfare office for reimbursement of travel expenses and passport procurement costs
  - Close cooperation with BAMF, IOM, embassies/consulates and the Frankfurt Immigration Office
  - ➔ Counterpart to state return counselling

Mentoring-Programm SOCIUS



socius

Mentoring-Programm  
SOCIUS

**1. Why does SOCIUS exist?**

- Foundation of SOCIUS (2012):
  - Support for migrants and refugees
  - Challenges: language barriers & administrative procedures
- Target Groups:
  - New arrivals: help with kindergarten, housing, apprenticeships
  - Long-term residents: isolation, lack of social networks
- Key Issues:
  - Limited contact with locals → little language practice
  - Difficulty navigating city services and offers
- SOCIUS Solution:
  - Individual support through mentors.
  - Assistance with integration, language, and building social connections



Mentoring-Programm  
SOCIUS

**2. Background information**

- Current Statistics:
  - 81 volunteers (mentors)
    - 31 currently on a break
    - 50 active mentors paired in tandems
  - 50 mentees
- Tandem Model:
  - Mentor = provides support
  - Mentee = receives support
- Achievements Since 2012:
  - Over 300 tandems formed
  - Nearly 200 volunteers trained



Mentoring-Programm  
SOCIUS



Silja Dickemann  
Team lead



Sina Tamar Arndt  
Educational employee



Petra Buschkämper  
Team assistant/administration

Mentoring-Programm  
SOCIUS

3. Mentors

- **Mentor Training Program:**
  - Over 60 teaching units over a year
  - Evening, day, and weekend seminars in Frankfurt/Rhein-Main
  - Topics covered:
    - Language learning support
    - Culturally sensitive communication, Anti-racism
    - Legal, social, and psychological aspects of migration
    - Mentoring dynamics: boundaries, trauma, supervision methods
- **Commitment:**
  - Mentors volunteer for one year post-training
  - Engage in reflection through supervision and peer counselling
- **Mentor Values & Motivation:**
  - Driven by individual responsibility
  - Goal: support an inclusive, tolerant, and supportive society
  - Advocate for mentees' rights and personal growth
  - Respect and equality in mentor-mentee relationships

Mentoring-Programm  
SOCIUS

4. Mentees

- **Requirements** (exceptions possible):
  - Migrants and refugees living in Frankfurt & Offenbach
  - Basic German language skills
  - Willingness to meet mentors weekly
- **Access Points:**
  - Counselling centers in Höchst, Weisser Stein and Offenbach
- **Current Mentee Statistics:**
  - 45 mentees from 10 countries
  - Majority from Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia
- **Key Considerations:**
  - Participation based on individual support needs
  - Mentees understand mentors are volunteers



Mentoring-Programm  
SOCIUS





Mentoring-Programm  
SOCIUS



Thank you for your  
attention!

## 04<sup>th</sup> December

### Morning Prayer

- John East, United Reformed Church – DARE [www.daredarwen.org.uk](http://www.daredarwen.org.uk)

### "The Strangers' Case" Speech from Sir Thomas More

<https://myshakespeare.com/hamlet/the-strangers-case-speech-sir-thomas-more>

*On May 1, 1517 — now referred to as Evil May Day — riots broke out in London as a response to an influx of immigrant workers. Eighty years later, a play was written that includes some of these events. The play, called Sir Thomas More, wasn't published or performed at the time, quite possibly because it was censored. This speech from the play is delivered to the rampaging crowd by Thomas More, who was sheriff of London at the time. Thomas More asks the rioters to imagine themselves in the shoes of the immigrants they're attacking. The manuscript shown in the video is an original version of the speech and was very likely written by William Shakespeare.*

Grant them **removed** [deported], and grant that this your **noise** [rioting]  
Hath **chid** [scolded] down all the majesty of England;  
Imagine that you see the **wretched strangers** [miserable immigrants],  
Their babies **at** [on] their backs and their poor luggage,  
Plodding to the ports and coasts for transportation,  
And that you sit as kings in your desires,  
**Authority** [rulers] quite silent by your **brawl** [riot],  
And you **in ruff** [proudly] of your opinions clothed;  
What had you **got** [achieved]? I'll tell you: you had taught  
How **insolence** [arrogant rudeness] and **strong hand** [violence] should prevail,  
How order should be **quelled** [stopped]; and by this pattern  
Not one of you should live an agèd man,  
For other **ruffians** [violent criminals], as their **fancies** [desires] **wrought** [control them],  
With **self same** [the exact same] hand, self reasons, and self **right** [righteousness],  
Would **shark** [prey] on you, and men like **ravenous** [greedy] fishes  
Would feed on one another.  
[...]

Say now the king,  
As he is **clement** [merciful] if th'offender **mourn** [express remorse],  
Should **so much come too short of** [do less than] your great **trespass** [offense]  
As but to banish you, **whither** [where] would you go?  
What country, by the nature of your **error**,  
Should give you **harbour** [safety]? Go you to France or **Flanders** [Belgium],  
To any German province, to Spain or Portugal,  
Nay, anywhere that not **adheres** [belongs] to England,  
Why, you **must needs** [must] be **strangers** [immigrants]: would you be pleased  
To find a nation of such **barbarous** [savagely cruel] temper,

That, breaking out in hideous violence,  
Would not **afford** [give] you an **abode** [home] on earth,  
**Whet** [sharpen] their **detested** [hateful] knives against your throats,  
**Spurn you** [kick you out] like dogs, and like as if that God  
**Owed** [caused] not nor **made** [created] not you, nor that the elements  
Were not all appropriate to your comforts,  
But **chartered** [rightfully given] unto **them** [the native citizens], what would you think  
To be thus **used** [used]? This is the **strangers' case** [immigrants' situation];  
And this your **mountainish** [enormous] inhumanity.

## Prayer

God of the exiles,

You cared for the Israelites through their captivity in Egypt and later in Assyria.

Care for and protect every person whose home is no longer safe, Who has been forced to flee, who is living in a crowded camp, Not knowing whether they will be taken in elsewhere.

Bring them to safety so that they can live in joy and peace, without fear.

God of the exiles, Hear our prayer.

God of all nations,

You are the Prince of Peace,

And you promise that one day nation will not lift up sword against nation (Isa. 2:4).

Mediate the conflicts between governments and people groups that make whole countries unsafe for their citizens.

Overcome evil with good, and bring an end to terrorism around the world So that people everywhere can know the goodness of your reign.

God of all nations, Hear our prayer.

God of our hearts,

In Jesus Christ, you have broken down the dividing wall of hostility between humanity and you.

We were once far off, but you have sought us out and brought us near, even while we were sinners and strangers to your grace (Eph. 2:13–14).

By the power of your Spirit, transform us with your trust, love, and generosity.

Help us to extend your grace to others, regarding them as we would regard Jesus himself, So that we can be faithful ambassadors to you and your gospel of reconciliation, And so that your kingdom would break in even now.

God of our hearts, Hear our prayer

AMEN

## Europe “protecting people more than borders” – Challenging current “realism” discourse & myths

- Dr Torsten Moritz, CCME General Secretary

### Europe “protecting people more than borders”

### Challenging the current “realism” discourse & lasting myths

*by Dr Torsten Moritz, CCME General Secretary*

From news but also reports of the last days, it is clear that the current asylum & migration system is not very humane and indeed causing suffering, brutality and death while at the same time making smugglers and the so-called security industry rich.

When we criticise this and make suggestions how things could work differently. We often hear that we are unrealistic....the interesting phenomenon however is: the current system is based on a number of assumptions, which are not supported by facts. Rather on the contrary. I'd actually say large parts of European Asylum and migration policies are based on myths and misleading discourses. Even more, a lot of the policies which have now been carried out for 2 decades have never been examined – if they fulfil their own success criteria for example reducing the number of arrivals of asylum seekers in Europe.

Some of them have been summarised by Hein de Haas in his enlightening book “how migration really works” which destroys some of the myths in public debates – and I must admit also some of the messages of the humanitarian community.

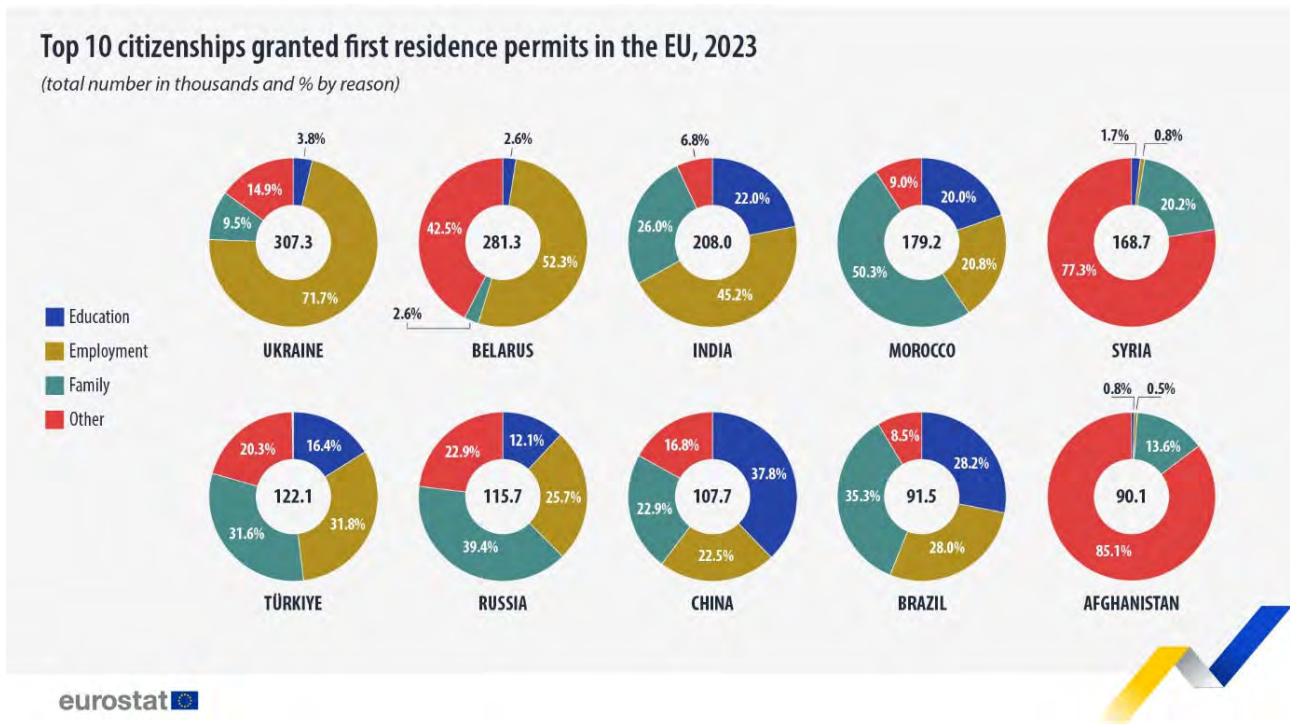
- **MYTH: WE NEED TO REDUCE ASYLUM TO REDUCE MIGRATION**

HOW MANY FIRST RESIDENCE PERMIT DID EU ISSUE IN 2023? → 3,7 million

HOW MUCH OF THAT WERE REFUGEES OR OTHERS UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION? → less than a quarter

WHAT WAS THE MAIN REASON FOR GRANTING THEM? → Employment with 33,8. The fastest growing reason – is education

Biggest groups Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Indians – for all 3 employment is the main reason UA (71) BY (53) IN (46)



### Myths of mass irregular entry - How many of the asylum seekers entered irregularly?

Asylum applications 2023: 1.140 000 – EUAA

Irregular border crossing entry – 380.000 FRONTEX

➔ **2/3 of asylum applicant enter regularly**

SO IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO LOOK BEYOND ASYLUM AND BEYOND IREGULAR ENTRY.

WE CAN CERTAINLY ARGUE THAT THOSE SEEKING ASYLUM AND IN IRREGULAR SITUATIONS ARE LIKELY TO BE MOST VULNERABLE AND NEED SPECIFIC ATTENTION, BUT IF WE LOOK AT SOCIAL INTEGRATION; THE JOB GOES FAR BEYOND RECOGNISED REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS.

It is also a reminder that our own analysis needs to be modified: it's no longer that there is NO possibility to come Europe legally BUT there are a wide range of different mini programmes with very specific target groups. This is neither something which the average person wanting to come to Europe understand nor is it something which the authorities in European countries understand. It is high time for some transparency.

- **Myth: asylum applicants are not getting refugee status....**

EUAA for 2022 speaks of an initial recognition of 39 % at first instance, but adds that with national humanitarian status taken into account the quota is more 50% . This doesn't take into considerations the recognition at a later instance, usually as result of a court decision....having precise figures for the appropriate year here is difficult but it is realistic to think that at the end, between 60 and 65 % of asylum applicants get a protection status

- **Myth: “pull factors” work and social benefits are responsible for migration**

Common myth is that elements like social security transfers or other reception benefits such as an early opportunity to take up work attract people to migrate to Europe. Several studies have found no such correlation<sup>22</sup>. In a study on refugees choice of destinations, “Valentina Di lasio and Jackline Wahba from Southampton University conclude “Policies in destinations are modestly associated to asylum flows.” NB: existing networks play a strong role., some argue that processing time and recognition rates do, too...

- **Myth (or rather illusion): its better to help in the region we are welcoming the whole world**

Most of the world s refugees are as a matter of fact in the region or internally displaced, with UNHCR estimating 69% are in neighbouring countries, often low to middle income countries<sup>23</sup>. Countries like Uganda, South Sudan . Iran, Pakistan Turkey or Lebanon shouldering a lot of responsibility. Despite the verbal commitment to help in the region, little is done to help

A sad example of the hypocrisy surrounding the issue of “protection in the region” is the displacement from Sudan – currently the largest refugee movement in the world. On April 16, 2024, an international donor conference was supposed to collect 4.1 billion US dollars (approx. 3.7 billion euros) for the protection of displaced people in Sudan and neighbouring countries. But only 2 billion came together<sup>24</sup>. The disappointment over this fatal development is all the greater when you consider that in March the EU signed an agreement for support totalling 7.4 billion euros with Egypt alone – from what is known with one of the main goals being limiting migration<sup>25</sup>

If protection in the region is to work it needs proper resources and needs real viable options for enough people to stay and live in the region - for those fleeing or migrating. The current hope that substandard makeshift arrangements without any personal development prospects will keep people in the region in the long run will backfire.

- **Myth: Immigration restrictions reduce migration**

In Europe we have what one might call communicating tubes or de Haas calls « waterbed effect” – if there are less persons on one migration route there are more on another one. In Europe the Easter and the Central mediterranean together with Spain/Morocco and the canary islands are such a context most recently also Eastern borders. There may be a temporary reduction on one route, even over all, but usually after a year ow two overall levels are the same, even though routes might have changed, and after some more years some migration returns to the old route. . This could for example be seen with the so called Balkan route after the EU Turkey deal....an initial drop in persons crossing, a shift of similar populations to for example the central mediterranean route

Arrivals are inevitable as long as route causes exist

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<sup>22</sup> E.g. quantitative: The Determinants of Refugees’ Destinations: Where do refugees locate within the EU? Valentina Di lasio and Jackline Wahba, 2024

Qualitative: Deciding Where to go: Policies, People and Perceptions Shaping Destination Preferences Heaven Crawley, Jessica Hagen-Zanker 2018

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/refugee-hosting-metrics.html#:~:text=69%20per%20cent%20of%20refugees,near%20their%20country%20of%20origin.>

<sup>24</sup> (<https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/reaction-paris-pledging-conference-sudan-and-its-neighbors>).

<sup>25</sup> . (<https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-leaders-egypt-e7-4b-economic-aid-migration-deal-italy-greece-belgium-austria-cyprus/>)

- **Myth: Poverty is the main cause of South-North migration**

The poorest of the poor don't migrate, they die or at best move to a nearby place. It is rather an investment from persons, families with some means to migrate or to put resources together to have a family member migrate. As mentioned before that calls into question if sanctions on development cooperation are a useful tool. It also explains why the idea that migrants who have not achieved legal status or substantial wealth as a result of their migration might simply go back.

- **Using development aid can motivate cooperation of 3rd countries**

In many debates on cooperation with 3<sup>rd</sup> countries, EU and European countries often contemplate a stick and carrot strategy on development cooperation with countries from which Europe expects migration cooperation. Recent examples like Tunisia or Niger however show that these countries often interpret the agreement differently or experience instability due to the cooperation.

The threat to cut development aid overlooks that most of the countries with which Europe engages in development cooperation are not those of strongest interest for Europe. In the few cases, where recipients of development aid are interesting migration partners, the remittances of those having migrated are as important or more important than official development cooperation.

- **Myth: Global migration is not at an all-time high. Refugee number**

De Haas shows that absolute numbers of migrants indeed has increased....but that this is in line with the increase of the world population.....the percentage of migrants among the world population is so far relatively stable since the 1960ies around between 2, 5 and 3, 5 % of the world population. He however notes that migration patterns have become more complex and diversified – but also explains that the narrative of the monolithic no diverse old societies is – a myth....

Similarly, the number UNHCR reports as forcibly displaced 117.3 million people worldwide, up from around 40 million 15 years ago. There is indeed an increase among internationally displaced, as some conflicts and the displacement have become more “protracted” but the biggest increase is among those internally displaced, those not leaving their country. This is partly a real increase but also due to UNHCR taking statistics more seriously in recent years – it was only from the late 90ies onwards that UNHCR officially started to work on and count internally displaced.

→ **We need to take closer factual look and also challenge myths if we want migration to be humane and a success for those migrating and those hosting them**

## An EU asylum system based on solidarity

- Dr. Ruben Wissing , University Of Gent

research group migration law University Gent (author “bescherming voor bescherming (protection for protection)” on ([https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/rubenwissing\\_bescherming-voor-bescherming\\_0.pdf](https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/rubenwissing_bescherming-voor-bescherming_0.pdf), in NL)



*‘BESCHERMING VOOR BESCHERMING’*

# “PROTECTING TOGETHER”

*Initiating asylum policies based on **solidarity**,  
from within a European and international framework*

## ASYLUM POLICY = ‘COLLECTIVE ACTION PROBLEM’

- **PUBLIC GOOD:** if supplied by one state, impossible to exclude benefits to other states
- **FREE-RIDER BEHAVIOUR:** uncooperative action
- **COLLECTIVE ACTION PROBLEM:**
  - Uncoordinated action of players
  - **Common interest** is not served
  - **Require “coercion** or some other special device to make individuals [states] act in their common interest” (Olson, 1965)



# 1. External policy: migration deals

## “protection for protection”

### First objective of cooperation

= global & durable strengthening of international protection regime

- concrete solidarity
- with first countries of asylum, ‘transit countries’, the ‘regio’, ...
- based on equal partnership and effective needs

- For refugees: improved **quality and access** to international protection globally
- For certain states: decreased **pressure**, by improved responsibility-sharing
- For other states: decreased **secondary movement** in the long run

### ‘BESCHERMING VOOR BESCHERMING’

Aanzet voor een solidair Belgisch asielbeleid binnen een Europees en internationaal kader



A ROUTE-BASED APPROACH

Strengthening protection and solutions in the context of mixed movements of refugees and migrants

dr. Ruben Wissing (Onderzoeksgroep Migratierecht UGent)

In opdracht van Vluchtelingenwerk, 11.11.11 en Caritas



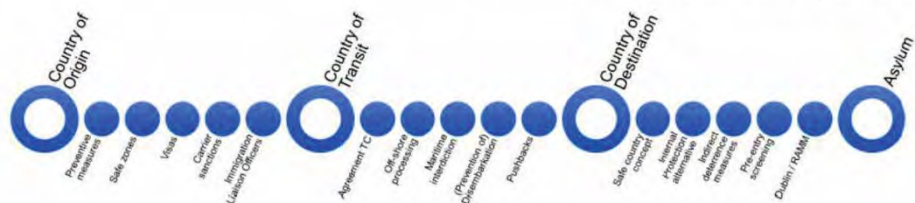
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Oktober 2023

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

A renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025)



## Principle 1: Non-refoulement (of migrants)

1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees	1984 Convention against Torture	1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<p><b>Article 33</b>  <i>Prohibition of expulsion or return ("refoulement")</i>            1. No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") <b>a refugee</b> in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his <b>life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.</b></p>	<p><b>Article 3</b>            1. No State Party shall expel, return ("refouler") or extradite <b>a person</b> to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in <b>danger of being subjected to torture.</b></p>	<p><b>Article 7</b>  <b>No one</b> shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, <b>inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.</b> In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.</p>

### ➤ Externalisation border & asylum policy

## Principle 2: Solidarity (between state)

- Preamble Refugee Convention 1951:  
*"Considering that the grant of asylum may place **unduly heavy burdens on certain countries**, and that a satisfactory solution of a problem of which the United Nations has recognized the international scope and nature cannot therefore be achieved without **international cooperation**,"*
- OAU African Refugee Convention 1969 (Art. II(4)):  
*"Where a Member State finds difficulty in continuing to grant asylum to refugees, such Member State may appeal directly to other Member States and through the OAU, and such other Member States shall in the spirit of **African solidarity and international cooperation** take appropriate measures to **lighten the burden of the Member State** granting asylum."*
- Global Compact on Refugees 2018 (§5):  
*"emanates from fundamental principles of humanity and **international solidarity**, and seeks to operationalize the principles of **burden- and responsibility-sharing** to better protect and assist refugees and support host countries and communities"*
- Communication on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum 2020 (EU Commission):  
*"The New Pact recognises that **no Member State should shoulder a disproportionate responsibility** and that all Member States should contribute to **solidarity on a constant basis.**"  
*"A comprehensive approach is therefore needed which acknowledges **collective responsibilities**, addresses the most fundamental concerns expressed in the negotiations since 2016 – in particular in relation to **solidarity** – and tackles the implementation gap."**

## 'migration deals'

- **Resettlement** commitments
  - **Safe and legal** pathways to international protection
  - **Binding quotas** (0,05% pop./yr)
  - **Humanitarian**: substandard living conditions (refugee camps)
  - Priority: UNHCR 'urgent resettlement needs' (2 million)
- In exchange for **improved protection systems** in partner countries
  - Protection of **refugees**: reception conditions – procedure – residence status – socio-economic integration
  - Protection of **local communities**: socio-economic – HR standards

## 2. Internal policy: solidarity in the EU distribution & uniform status

- **Registration** at entry > **uniform status 'EU applicant IP'**
  - Procedural standards CEAS – EU oversight
- **Responsible MS? reception & procedure (only)**
  - Sharing on basis of **objective criteria**: population, GDP, ... (historical migration, integration succes, global efforts, ...) – incl. own preferences
  - **Structural** – no crisis mechanism
  - Financial **compensation** for integration, training .... (fiscal transfers)
- **Uniformisation protection policy?**
  - **Appeal** procedure – decentralised
- **Uniform EU protection status: free movement**
  - **Mutual recognition 'EU refugee/SP status'** (cf. Art. 78(2) VWEU)
  - Direct access to EU freedoms: employment in other MS ... (fiscal transfer)

## 3. Return: mutual commitments structural & long term perspectives

- **Countries of origin, transit, region ...**: genuine commitment to **root causes**
  - International development: **long-term results** (conflict, climate, socio-econ, liberties, ...) – rather than migration effects
  - Support **local reception communities**: individual & collective rights
- **Refused applicants IP & voluntary returnees: engagements**
  - **Circular migration** (visa)
  - Humanitarian status: socio-economic deprivation = refoulement

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Centre for the Social Study of Migration and Refugees (CESSMIR)  
Human Rights Centre (HRC)



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## Committing churches to work and sustain alternatives to the current system on asylum and migration in Europe

- Ms Fiona Kendall, CCME Moderator

### Committing churches to work for and sustain alternatives to the current system on asylum and migration in Europe

[A short outlook on the idea of “protecting people more than borders” in general and a rallying call to members and partners] [See Ana’s Discussion Paper]

by Ms Fiona Kendall, CCME Moderator

“We all know that migration has become a “mega-trend” for our time and that, in this space, we need to be *game-changers*.”

These words, spoken at a conference I recently attended in Rome, have stayed with me throughout our time here together.

The speaker went on: “The *concept* of migration has become hostage to a toxic narrative, weaponized by political and other actors for their own ends. Refugees, that most vulnerable group of people on the move, are victims of that narrative, their existing vulnerability exacerbated by heavily-stoked public hostility.

All of us see the storm clouds on the horizon, not only across the pond but right here on our doorstep and within our own continent. If we are to have any hope of weathering that storm, we *must* chip away at hostility, disrupt the toxic narrative and, ultimately, shift perspectives.”

As we have heard time and again over the last two days, society needs to be challenged to think differently about people on the move.

I believe that churches are particularly well-placed to do that. We still have the privilege – and responsibility – of an *audience* inclined to look to its leaders for guidance or affirmation as to how it should behave in or respond to a given situation. It is clear to me that we should not squander that privilege but, instead, use it.

*This* audience does not, I know, need to be convinced of a theology of hospitality, nor of how that should be applied in a local, national and European context. But how do we, as the denominations and associations which make up CCME, articulate our conviction and stimulate that shift?

### **Collaboration**

Some may be uncomfortable with what they may see as preaching politics from the pulpit. Some may feel ill-equipped to undertake practical initiatives which run counter to the prevailing toxic narrative. Others may feel entirely unable to undertake the work of lobbying for change, be that in a local, national or European context. **In truth, all of us, individuals, churches and associations alike, are challenged to discern how we can contribute to this work and how we can do this most effectively.**

Ten years ago the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy dared to respond to what it saw as the dire need to prioritise people over borders. Thousands of people were making their way across the Mediterranean Sea in search of a better life in Europe and landing on the island of Lampedusa, a historic crossing point which has welcomed people of all creeds for centuries. The islanders, long used to welcoming strangers, were at breaking point. The team of two people sent to the island by the Federation had a specific mandate: to welcome those arriving and to support the community on the island. Ten years later, long after the open-hearted climate of welcome present in Italian political circles in 2014 had expired, the Federation continues to have a base on Lampedusa, continues to welcome the exhausted and traumatized people who arrive there, and continues to support the beleaguered local community. But the team now known as Mediterranean Hope has expanded beyond recognition; its work on the front line of this and other borders is underpinned by advocacy, innovation and awareness-raising. A small pilot programme launched in 2016 has now spawned a network of humanitarian corridors across the Mediterranean which has brought over 7,000 people to safety. A project which began in 2019 as the simple distribution of bicycle lights to seasonal workers injured on unlit roads in Calabria has, as you heard yesterday, transformed into the establishment of a social hostel for sixty workers, and a potential blueprint for other regions of Italy. Whatever the initiative, always, at the heart of Mediterranean Hope's work, are people.

Not every Protestant in Italy is part of the Mediterranean Hope team. However, the Federation's member denominations can rightly feel proud of the part they play in supporting the work of Mediterranean Hope and the role they have in influencing its priorities. They can equally feel confident that, in Mediterranean Hope, they have available to them a resource: a body of experience, knowledge and creativity open to advocating for and implementing initiatives which can contribute significantly to changing policy and, indeed, the lives of individuals.

Why do I speak of Mediterranean Hope again today? In part, for sure, because it is my privilege to have worked alongside that team for the last seven years and because I am a passionate supporter of its work. In part, because working within Mediterranean Hope has allowed me to witness so many

inspiring examples of how a radical theology of hospitality *can* be embodied in the work of the church at a practical and political level if the will to do it – and the funding – are there.

However, I speak of it *mainly* because it is an example of faith-based collective – seven mainline denominations - working in collaboration. Mediterranean Hope could not exist without the support of the denominations which make up FCEI (nor, indeed, of churches beyond Italy). **But it is equally a vehicle for supporting churches to undertake work which they could not necessarily do themselves.** There is a symbiosis in this relationship. And this, I think reminds me of CCME, another body undertaking what is, at times, exceptional work, **on behalf of its members**, [many of whom are doing exceptional work in their own right], all of whom are ultimately committed to serving that group of people we know only as “people on the move”.

Various speakers have talked of a vision of “protecting people more than borders”. In today’s context, that vision is arguably more vital – and yet more out of reach – than at any time previously. In a European context, the lurch to the right and the increasing reluctance of society to acknowledge the primacy of human rights over national interest coupled with unchecked disinformation and the use of hostile language all render realization of the vision outrageously ambitious. **For that reason, leveraging our network, our knowledge and our collective effort matters all the more. CCME is a vehicle through which that vision can be articulated and strengthened but only if the collective will to do it – and, of course, the funding – are there.**

### A Clear Message

Whilst it is within CCME’s gift to exercise an advocacy function for *all* its members, there is no question that *each* member denomination and association also has capacity *of its own* to contribute to the shared objective of shifting the European focus to people rather than borders. At the Ninth European Migration Forum, which I attended in Brussels at the end of last week, I found myself in conversation with someone from a migrant background working with an NGO in Sweden. We were talking about the challenges posed by EU politics on migration. Unprompted, he said to me, “It’s not rocket science. It’s about finding the right starting point. In the case of migration, the starting point has to be that we are dealing with humans. There, no matter the political or geographical context, we find commonalities.”

As Christians, how we treat our fellow-human being (whom we, as Christians, prefer to call our “neighbour”) is at the heart of how we witness our faith. As other speakers have confirmed this week, it evidences our capacity to love, as God loves us. We are practiced in framing our approach to life in those terms and, indeed, in encouraging others to do so. I would suggest that it is not, then, a radical step for us to apply that same logic to the sphere of migration. Some may prefer that technical lobbying to be left to CCME or others with the professional or vocational capacity to do that work; others may be entirely at ease with that. It does not matter. What does matter is that whatever our particular strengths, as churches and church organisations, it is open to *all* of us to teach and act in a way which affirms the value of our neighbour even – or perhaps especially – in a migration context.

This year, amongst other initiatives to mark its ten-year anniversary, Mediterranean Hope has developed its own “vocabulary”. Aware of the ways in which language is used and abused to feed a toxic narrative, the team has been reclaiming some of the terminology “stolen” by those who would polarize the public further. Every few weeks, a new word has been posted on our social media sites and, for those who prefer to communicate the old-fashioned way, the word has been replicated on

a postcard. The posts and postcards communicate *our* definition of the word in question. The cards can be used as discussion prompts, challenging those who read them to think differently or discuss the ways in which the word has become weaponized.

“E di Emergenza” – E is for Emergency: “The only *real* emergency concerns those who continue to die at sea or along other borders; the trauma, violence and injustices which many are forced to endure. For us, *this* is an urgent problem.”

“R di Rifugiati” – R is for Refugees: “‘I am not a refugee; I am not *only* a refugee’. They often say it, those who seek asylum in Italy. Migration is a path, not a characteristic. The state of being a “refugee” exists but it is not an exhaustive label for the lives of people. No person is a single story.”

Whilst we may not be in the habit of posting something of that nature online, or whipping out a colourful card during a conversation, there is no question that we *can* provoke others to think differently, whether that be by offering a different narrative or directly engaging those we encounter in initiatives which manifest love for our neighbour, the stranger. Do not be lulled into thinking that it does not matter. For **it is only when the public at large has greater faith in humanity than it does in security that the focus will flip**. Only then, will a public tired of having fear and hostility stoked for political gain, choose leaders and policymakers prepared to support a different approach.

From our speakers and in the conversations we have had together over the last two days, there has been much to provoke, stimulate and inspire us. Reflections from the past and on the future have encouraged and challenged us. I have, however, been inspired by the *energy* amongst us as much as by the content of our discussions. There is amongst us a warranted sense of urgency and, I believe, a determination to move forward together. So let us do that.

To conclude, let me share with you one final letter from the Mediterranean Hope vocabulary.

“I di Italia” – I is for Italy: “We want a country which welcomes and which does not push back; which safeguards, which is an example for all other EU member states, as with its humanitarian corridors; which respects the rights of others and promotes best practice in reception and inclusion”.

This is a vision which we can apply in all of the countries we represent and a vision which we believe all of our members share. It is that vision which is about protecting people more than borders. And so, let us continue to inspire one another and to stand in solidarity with one another as we undertake this work over together over the coming years. It is, after all, down to us to be the game-changers.

## Next steps/follow up group

- Facilitated by **Ms Alice Jahier**, CCME and **Prof Goos Minderman**, CCME Vice Moderator

## DISCUSSION – open floor

## Service of thanksgiving and commitment

- Sermon: **Rev Dr Arlington Trotman**, Methodist Supernumerary Minister

### Sermon

#### *Seeking Life, Destined for Death*

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe  
60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference, Frankfurt, Germany

*by Rev Dr Arlington Trotman, Methodist Supernumerary Minister*

#### INTRODUCTION

Distinguished guests, Moderator Fiona Kendall, General Secretary Torsten Moritz, Staff and Executive Committee of CCME, siblings in Christ, I am deeply honoured as former moderator of CCME to address you on this special occasion. Thank you, Fiona, Torsten for your kind invitation marking CCME's 60<sup>th</sup> year of advocacy, a moment of celebration, challenge, and renewed commitment.

#### *Motive and formation*

I would briefly like to state some aspects of my context by sharing two incidents which have helped to determine my vocation. On arrival in London from the beautiful island of church-going Barbados, I had answered the call of the UK Government, parent-funded, to work in Britain's post-war reconstruction. Immediately I visited the nearest Church. The priest of this mainstream Christian Church in the London suburb of South Croydon approached me in the nave, following his sermon, in soft but unmistakably official tones: "Who invited you?" "I wanted to worship with you today, my first Sunday in England," I said. The stony-faced cleric immediately led me to the street and gestured to an unnamed place, where he suggested I should worship next time, as then informed me not to return! I soon discovered that this form of exclusion was a common experience for most Black and Brown believers seeking a place of worship.

Several years later, at the seaport of Dover, June 2000, 58 Chinese young people were found lifeless in the back of a container lorry.<sup>26</sup> As lead of the Churches' Racial Justice Commission (CTBI), my single most compelling thought about an appropriate response, was to prepare and include an artistic image of each of the deceased by which to represent their dignity and humanity, in memoriam, at a London Church. These experiences, among others, I recall on this occasion of celebration begun and marked my life-long witness together with CCME of humility justice and unity.

#### CELEBRATION

As moderator I was privileged to witness a portion of CCME's incredible journey. Much has been accomplished! But the mission remains urgent! In fact, all too frequently unnecessary death ensues. We recognise CCME's activism and representation, evidenced as a visible expression of Jesus' end-of-the-ages injunction, "I tell you the truth whatever you did for one of the least of those brethren

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<sup>26</sup> Bodies of 58 Chinese migrants found in lorry at Dover in 2000



of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40). Celebration embraces triumphs and disappointments overcome, testament to the enduring need for humility truth and justice. But first the scripture on which I base my thoughts, a favourite Matthean text indicating Jesus’ eschatological (end of times) vision.

### *The Word*

St. Matthew, chapter 25 verses 31-46 (New International Version)

A cursory exposition of Matthew 25:31-46 reveals Jesus’ instruction to his disciples that they will be hated, unpopular, and tortured for following his teaching; but that “the blessed ones are those that do not retaliate with violence, rather they bear witness to a new empire by serving others”.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, faith and works in love is the ultimate source of blessing in Christian life. Protestant theologian and ethicist, Stanley Hauerwas, remarks that “the difference between followers of Jesus and those who do not know Jesus is that those who have seen Jesus no longer have any excuse to avoid ‘the least of these.’”<sup>28</sup>

### *People movement*

In celebration of your persistence and witness we acknowledge you could not have had a more challenging task, on behalf of “the least of these”! For where modern people-movement is politicized as “flooding” and undesirably altering European culture and landscape - to which, most often, people of Global Majority Heritage (GMH) are forced to flee, seeking life and meaning - you have risen to the challenge, drawing on the well of living water in Jesus’ redemptive sacrifice. Congratulation is meritorious, but your work programme has intensified: “they seek life, they’re destined to die!” Mission continues!

You shone a light on the darkness – the results of impoverishment and violence: racism, exploitation and unfair and degrading treatment of Black and Brown migrant compatriots. You endeavoured to enable members to denounce injustice, discrimination and exclusion based on an African and Asian hue. Your activities also sought the promotion of fairness in policy development with respect to anti-trafficking in human beings and pro-Roma initiatives. We mark your prophetic witness stretching back to the WCC’s inaugural committee defending the rights of migrant workers in Western Europe, whom you successfully succeeded determined to celebrate unity of the human family.

### *Advocate “With”*

In Johannine theology (John 17) Jesus’ prayer to the Father to ensure the unity of his disciples is instructive for us all. The recognition of the bonds of unity (Galatians 3: 28) of believers in Pauline theology, regardless of ethnic identity, we are equal humanity in Christ. You are called now to advocate “with” rather than “for”<sup>29</sup> as a positive more inclusive signal of shared love and equality with the people called migrants.<sup>30</sup> Despite organisational and personnel changes, you remain a

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<sup>27</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, Matthew, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, Brazos Press, (Grand Rapids: 2006), p. 211.

<sup>28</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, Brazos Press, (Grand Rapids: 2006), p. 211. See [Commentary on Matthew 25:31-46 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)

<sup>29</sup> Recommended by participants while *Marking CCME’s 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*, Evangelische Akademie, Frankfurt, Germany, 2-4 December 2024.

<sup>30</sup> Some terms in popular usage inappropriately or offensively refer to people of GMH and require correction or development, e.g. “asylum seekers” has attracted negative connotations as a category of persons, is misleading and offensive because of its right-wing populist association with hate and xenophobia.

critical voice for the voiceless, challenging the swirling tide of blight, statelessness, and death at British and European borders.

### *All borders*

As another 60 years begin, you continue to embrace the challenge borders hold; the borders of heart, minds, history, language, culture, and colour, are matched only by the victims' and survivors' breathless clutching at the floating embers of life, the inevitability of death! We thank God for small mercies! But rising to the challenge ahead, you will be cognisant of a more diverse agenda, the challenge for transformation.

## **CHALLENGE**

### *Agapé*

Throughout scripture, we are compelled to bear witness with, to, and for one another (Galatians 5:12-15; James 5:16). You will find throughout the Hebrew scriptures (Genesis chapters 1-11), and New Testament texts - the Creation narratives, the Prophecies, Gospels, and letters of St Paul's, e.g., to the Corinthians, the Apocalypse - one inescapable theme echoing as the incomparable source of God's extraordinary work in human affairs: Agapé! Unconditional divine love! In the Greek text, Agapé compels absorption, divine sustenance which requires no favour. Regardless of the challenge Agapé will sustain you (1 Corinthians 13)!

### *Asylum Voices*

The language of Agapé offers to re-assert creation's unity as *the* human race, unity with marginalised and minoritised Black and Brown peoples, often demonised and excluded by language such as "asylum seekers" which regrettably persists in popular usage. Having promoted it in my book *Asylum Voices*, (2003)<sup>31</sup>, many, including the British Refugee Council has adopted the term, "people seeking asylum", when referring to human beings seeking refuge and migrant protection. The majority of 186 detention interviewees in our research told us they left their homes "because of fear!"

### *Transgression – interconnections of "racism"*

Prof. Miroslav Wolf, Croatian Protestant theologian, helps our understanding in his classification of the transgression of racism in three forms of ignorance and exclusion: *elimination* through killing or assimilation; *domination* by assigning others the status of inferior beings; and *abandonment* by keeping others at a safe distance so that their "dehumanised bodies can make no immoderate claims."<sup>32</sup> Regrettably, these lived experiences are regarded a contradiction of person. Conviction girded by responsibility, wisely asserted by Bishop Strome, could be prophetic responses across the work programme.<sup>33</sup> Diverse features of identity flows from here to lived experiences.

### *Persons more than borders*

As you seek to address "persons more than borders" the injunction to love (Mark 12:30-31) demands recognition that you are standing not alone, to which this audience bear witness. Rather, all are aware of the increased intensity with which the public agenda driven the demands in life and work,

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<sup>31</sup> Arlington Trotman, Andrew Bradstock, *Asylum Voices*, Experiences of people seeking asylum in the United Kingdom, Church House Publishing (London: 2003).

<sup>32</sup> Miroslav Wolf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, Abingdon Press, (Nashville: 1996), pp. 63-4.

<sup>33</sup> Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strome, Sermon CCME 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Frankfurt, Germany, December 4, 2024.

utilising Jesus' assurance that, in consort with the data, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6), and "no longer should there be any excuse to avoid 'the least of these.'"<sup>34</sup>

In essence, Matthew's dramatic version of love in actuality is apt not only for his appeal to his Jewish audience, but for us all. He said: "Then Jesus made a circuit of all the towns and villages. He taught in their meeting places, reported kingdom news, and healed their diseased bodies, their bruised and hurt lives. When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd." "What a huge harvest!" It is apt also for CCME and all partners, a description of the need in terms of reaping the harvest through sacrificial love. As Bishop Bedford-Strome<sup>35</sup> in his speech to the gathering remarked about his commitment: "Witnessing the deaths at sea, I became convinced and took responsibility: 'we bought a boat!'" And he asserts that responsibility demands conviction and sustaining commitment.

## COMMITMENT

### *Actors and acting*

I became aware recently of a Sonnet by Malcolm Guite,<sup>36</sup> based on a dramatic alternative exposition of Matthew 25: 31-46. Though Christ is enthroned in glory, the King who judges at the end of the ages is also the hidden King, hidden beneath the flesh of the poor, war-ravaged on earth, and dreadfully destructive violence so evident today.

### *Mathew 25: 31-46*

Our King is calling from the hungry furrows  
Whilst we are cruising through the aisles of plenty,  
Our hoardings screen us from the man of sorrows,  
Our soundtracks drown his murmur: 'I am thirsty'.  
He stands in line to sign in as a stranger  
And seek a welcome from the world he made,  
We see him only as a threat, a danger,  
He asks for clothes, we strip-search him instead.  
And if he should fall sick then we take care  
That he does not infect our private health,  
We lock him in the prisons of our fear  
Lest he unlock the prison of our wealth.  
But still on Sunday we shall stand and sing  
The praises of our hidden Lord and King.

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<sup>34</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, Brazos Press, (Grand Rapids: 2006), p. 211.

<sup>35</sup> Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strome, Sermon, CCME 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Frankfurt, Germany, December 4, 2024.

<sup>36</sup> In marking the Feast of Christ the KING, Malcolm Guite, English poet, singer-songwriter, Anglican priest, and academic. Born in Nigeria to British expatriate parents, Guite scholar of Cambridge and Durham.

Guite's radical account, if nothing else, reminds us to keep our feet steady, firm, opening hearts and minds, not to walk contrarily on the other side, in fear of deadening fatigue and impending failure. As CCME and partners formal and informal gear up for the future, let us incarnate the Incarnate King of Kings, both to victim and/or survivor, and institution or perpetrator. Mission here is not a leisurely sail on the canal, a walk in the park!

**The people called migrants, refugees, immigrants of GMH are capable of or trainable to confront the rising challenge with humility and rigour, working preventing death, sharing justice with justice, love with love, metaphorically “buy the boat.”** For as the unknown poet<sup>37</sup> writes [two authors have been technically associated]:

Fleecy locks and black complexion  
Cannot forfeit nature's claim  
Skin may differ but affection  
Dwells in Black and White the same.

Were I so tall as to reach the pole,  
Or to grasp of the ocean at a span;  
I must be measured by my soul,  
The mind is the standard of the man.

### *Persistence in love, the denial of death*

Commitment presupposes personnel, knowledge, truth, humility (Micah 6:8) and work. The Church, the people of God, is essentially defined by the peoples' relatedness to God: the family of believers, people 'called out,' the ekklesia or assembly (John 15:4-6). Intellectual capacity is vital, but humility is unbeatable. Inspiring awareness and providing education with church and society in Europe, to love and receive love, is the call to discipleship in creation and culture, Black and Brown people without exception.<sup>38</sup> Yet, CCME could not have reached this juncture without love while urging churches unifying sources of healing love. Why? He who seeks life, is destined to die, especially where the persistence of unconditional love is lacking!

## **CONCLUSION**

CCME might find the following recommendations useful: urge European cities, churches, local governments to become Cities of Sanctuary;<sup>39</sup> develop Churches of Sanctuary as networks of welcome, support, and healing; introduce a clear and transparent plan for how any backlog of asylum claims will be processed and prioritised; move away from the current system of private

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<sup>37</sup> Dr Martin Luther King Junior. The poem was quoted in a speech that Dr. King called “the most decisive speech” of his life. He delivered it without manuscript or notes on the night of Dec 5th, 1955, a few days after Rosa Parks had been arrested and convicted for violating Montgomery's segregation laws.

<sup>38</sup> Arlington Trotman, paper, ‘We are not Immigrants in the Church – We are at Home!’ Social and theological reflection (KIA Intercultura, Norge: 2008).

<sup>39</sup> A network of community groups to councils, schools to libraries, organisations to institutions, politicians to ordinary people, these vibrant networks across the UK provide welcome, support, and opportunity to people seeking sanctuary, to rebuild their lives and well-being. see [City of Sanctuary - City of Sanctuary UK](#)

See ‘A Hundred Thousand Welcomes’ now available as an E-book – launched on World Book Day 2021.

accommodation contracts and instead empower local governments to provide value for money adequate housing; push on the need to expand safe routes. Treat people who are migrants humanely and with respect and dignity.

- Prayer: **Apostle Adejare Oyewole**, Unification of Cherubim and Seraphim Churches, Europe Chapter

## **CCME 60 YEARS SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING AND COMMITMENT**

### **OPENING PRAYER**

*by Apostle Adejare Oyewole, Unification of Cherubim and Seraphim Churches, Europe Chapter*

Almighty God to whom all honour, praise and thanks belongs to. We gather this morning to give honour, thanks and praises to you for all that you have done in the 60 years since the founding of this organisation – CCME.

We thank you for the wisdom and vision bestowed on the founding fathers and mothers of this organisation, to set the organisation up to advocate, support and speak up for those who find themselves struggling to relocate to other places for whatever reason.

You teach us to love our neighbours as ourselves, if we don't love our neighbours, we don't love you, our maker. There are many who would say they are Christians, but they only live like Christians ONLY on Sabbath day, come Monday, they will not have mercy or love others.

In **Matthew 25:34 – 40**, the Bible tells us: *“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom<sup>x</sup> prepared for you since the creation of the world.<sup>y</sup> 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,<sup>z</sup> 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me,<sup>a</sup> I was sick and you looked after me,<sup>b</sup> I was in prison and you came to visit me.’<sup>c</sup>*

*37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’*

*40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’<sup>d</sup>*

Help us Lord to be an everlasting light, to have sense of selflessness. We ask for the spirit of renewal which we equip us for the task ahead as we bring our thanks unto you Lord.

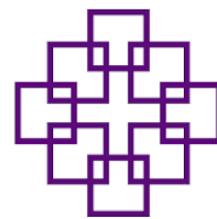
Help us as we join our hands together to make our mission more credible, so that we can continue to have positive impact on the group of people that we represent.

Thank you, Lord, for this thanksgiving occasion. We thank you for the executive committee members, for the general secretary and his team of staff members, the staff before them because on the back of giants, we stand taller. Help CCME to further its work to be able to effect positive change in diverse and frequently dangerous conditions not least the degradation of small boats.

These and other requests we ask in the Most Powerful name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who taught to pray – Our Father, who art in Heaven.....**AMEN**

- assembled by: **Rev. Thomas W. Stephan**, Protestant Church of Hesse & Nassau

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