

## Church and Peace AGM Saturday 20th June 2020

The Church and Peace AGM was held by zoom this year due to Covid 19. This is an organisation of communities, training centres, peace organisations and peace service agencies as well as individuals committed to peace, which acts as a catalyst for common initiatives and projects. It was set up in the aftermath of WW2, following the establishment of the Worldwide Council of Churches in order to develop a European peace church community and engage established churches in theological discussions on peace issues. British Quakers and members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation joined with Mennonites and the Church of the Brethren to form what came to be known as Church and Peace.

The forced cancellation of the annual C&P conference in the Netherlands coast this year on account of corona virus did not dampen the optimism of the AGM. Although the international office in Diemelstadt Germany has had to be closed, the three staff have adapted well to working from home and have been communicating on FaceBook, Twitter and Instagram as well as through press releases.

The network is working with the Conference of European Churches, contributing to its thematic reference groups. Kees Nieuwerth , a C&P board member and a Dutch Quaker, serves as moderator of the “Economic and Ecological Justice and a Sustainable Future” thematic reference group. The current chair of C&P, Antje Heider-Rotwilm participated in various ways including giving a speech at the recent conference which took place to mark 60 years of the CEC.

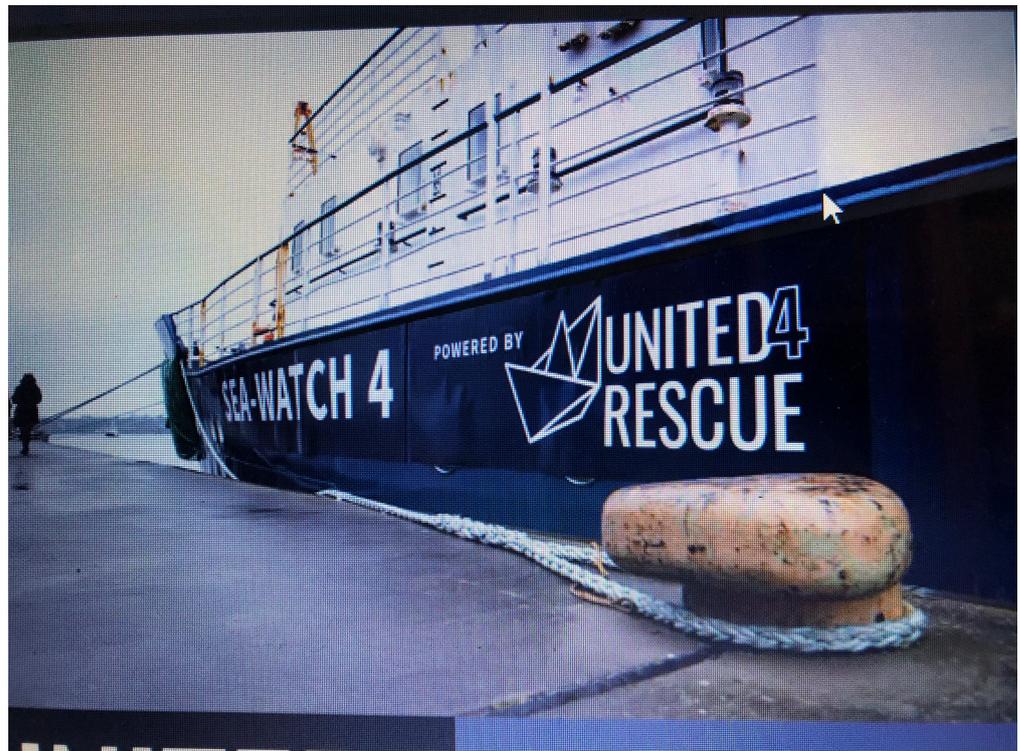
As part of a group of over 480 organisations Church and Peace has become a partner of United 4Rescue which has got together to supply a boat to rescue migrants in the Mediterranean. The vessel is currently being fitted out and hopefully will begin service in July this year.

Suggestions from those at the meeting for future initiatives were : commemorating Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and continuing to lobby MEPs. Next year's conference is planned for the 3rd to the 6th of June 2021 in Novi Sad, Serbia and will address issues in south-east Europe.

After a moving introduction we were put into small groups for ten minutes to talk about how things

had been going for us and issues of interest. I found myself with Christoph from Germany and Peter from Spain and our English translator Elaine Griffiths, talking about Black Lives Matter and statues.

A highlight of the event for me were the applications for membership. The Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network application was spoken to by David Forbes, who is a founder member. Ian Ring from Bromsgrove, who is retiring as coordinator of the Community of Reconciliation applied for



individual membership, having served on the Church and Peace board for several years as part of his job. Micah Germany was new to me. This group is part of an international network based around the passage in the Bible - Micah 6:8 "What does the law require of you? To act justly and love mercy and to walk humbly with your God". The work of the network is based around seeking to 'develop a continual improvement cycle of learning through sharing of resources and provision of a library of material that will help members in their growth of understanding and development.'

Also accepted into membership were Kristin Flory from Berlin, who had grown up within the Church of the Brethren and volunteered for Church and Peace. She became the coordinator of the Brethren Service Office in Geneva in 1987 and regularly attended C&P conferences, using her contacts to help place volunteers in peace and environmental organisations around the world. She became an active Quaker in Geneva and is now part of Berlin Quaker meeting.

Jewel and Andrew Bolton from Leicester, who are members of the Community of Christ were welcomed as associate members. Andrew has taught about peace theology. Jewel has a masters in Human Relations and has taught in the Leicester remand prison and volunteered in the Peace Pavillion, teaching children peace skills.

Barbara Forbes of Bull St meeting represents Britain and Ireland on the C&P board. She had submitted a substantial report this year, focussing on the problems of doing peace under the current government and with the approach of Brexit. A suggestion from a response to a recent survey that Barbara had done was that online meetings could be held on specific topics, with break out rooms and plenaries. This would raise the profile of C&P and highlight important issues. Barbara spoke about a black theologian at Birmingham Cathedral who might lead a session on Black Lives Matter

Church and Peace demonstrating at the Excel Centre arms fair last year



Towards the end of the AGM a selection of members contributed news. Neal Blough was retiring from running the Paris Mennonite Centre on October the 1st; Maria Biedrawa had participated in a 4 language conference; Naomi Enns spoke movingly about how she and her husband Doug are being made redundant from their posts as Mennonite Central Committee representatives for Western Europe. MCC has been undergoing restructuring and Western Europe will now come under the charge of the Europe and Middle East Directorate based in Jordan. They will be returning to Canada to find a new home and new jobs and bade everyone a fond farewell.

Antje Heider - Rottwilm, the current chair, concluded the gathering with an inspiring bible quotation from the second letter to Timothy chapter 1 verse 7 'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of strength and love and thoughtfulness.' I felt that I had come among friends of like mind and enjoyed the pervading spirit of humility, understanding and acceptance, so active in those who have long worked for Reconciliation and Peace. A day of intense concentration in front of our computers had given us all a transformative experience.

The current board of Church and Peace

