



MOZAIK

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**MOZAIK**

**PEACEBUILDING AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP**

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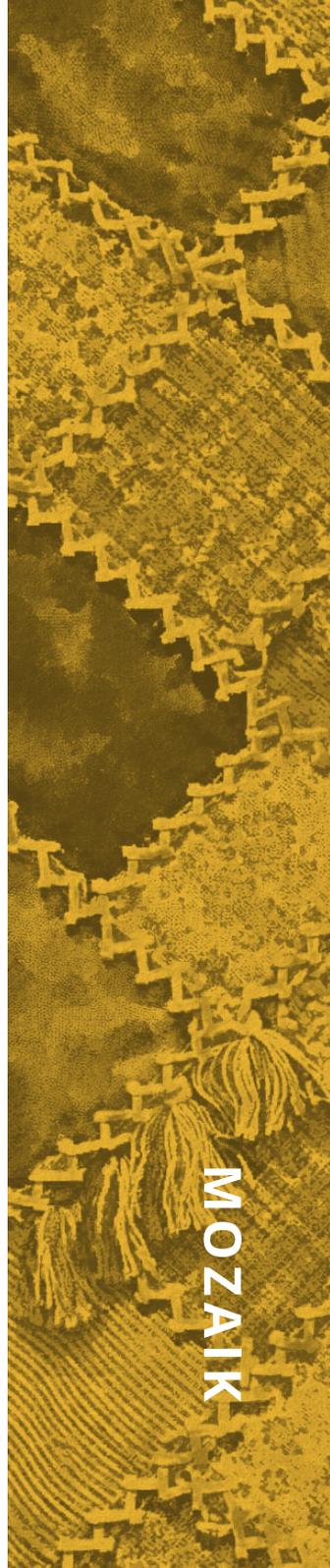
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MOZAIK

## Mozaik Editorial



Dear readers,

As we open this 43rd issue of Mozaik, I feel both humbled and deeply moved. This year, the World Student Christian Federation celebrates 130 years of life, witness, and youth leadership. For one hundred and thirty years, young people have dared to believe that justice is possible, that peace is worth fighting for, and that faith can be a source of

courage rather than fear. It is a legacy built piece by piece, story by story, vision by vision, and now, entrusted to us.

This edition, dedicated to *Peacebuilding and Youth Leadership*, arrives at a moment when peace feels fragile in so many parts of the world, but it comes alive in these pages through the voices of young people who write with vulnerability, conviction, and

hope. As you read these pages, you will realize that peacebuilding is not a theory for our generation. It is a lived experience, often born out of pain, courage, or longing.

Hannah, one of the contributors, reminds us in a phrase that real peace starts within, that healing begins in the quiet places of the mind and heart. The poem *'The Hope That Still Remains'* speaks of love as the transformative force that can reshape the world, insisting that hope still remains even in times when despair seems louder. There is a lamentation from Palestine crying out, *"Let your justice fall like rain,"* echoing the prophetic tradition of Amos 5:24, where justice is not merely desired but demanded. And then there are reflections like those shared by participants of the scoping mission in Inari, where the wounds of the Sámi people reveal how deeply cultural erasure can scar a community, and how reconciliation requires truth, humility, and the courage to listen.

Each contribution paints a different facet of the same longing: a world where dignity is restored, where memory is honored, where peace is built not only with policies but with people.

As part of this issue, you can read

from our regional secretaries in the Middle East, Europe and the national organiser of WSCF United States about their reflections, in which they describe how young people are navigating wars, occupation, displacement, authoritarianism, racism, economic instability, and how institutions often fail to protect them. Different contexts, different histories, yet the emotional landscape is painfully familiar: exhaustion, frustration, fear, but also resilience, creativity, an unshakeable hunger for justice, and a stubborn, almost sacred hope.

What unites all these experiences is not just the scale of the challenges, but the unbreakable commitment young people show toward building something better. Their leadership does not wait for permission. Their activism does not wait for perfect conditions. Their faith does not wait for easy answers. In them, I see the truth of 1 Timothy 4:12: *"Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example."* And indeed, they do.

As editor-in-chief, I also want to acknowledge a reality that many young people live quietly: working for peace and justice is not always difficult only in society; sometimes it is hard within

our own faith communities. Some of you have felt unheard, undervalued, dismissed, or held back in communities that should have embraced your gifts. Some of you have struggled to be heard or taken seriously. Some have had to confront prejudice, exclusion, or rigid structures that suppress creativity instead of nurturing it. Some have encountered the same inequalities inside faith spaces that you are fighting outside of those spaces. I want you to know that this ecumenical journal sees you. This issue sees you. I see you. And God sees you too. This issue wants to honor your resilience.

Faith communities should be places of refuge, not struggle, places where gifts are welcomed, not questioned. The prophet Joel offers a promise that feels especially tender here: *“I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy... your young people shall see visions”* (Joel 2:28). God’s Spirit is poured out on the young: giving visions, giving dreams, giving the courage to imagine new ways of being church together. Other prophets remind us again and again that justice begins in our own house. *“Do not be afraid, for I am with you”* (Isaiah 41:10) is not only a comfort but also a commissioning. It sends us back into our communities with tenacity to challenge, to

question, to heal, and to rebuild.

As I reflect on all these contributions, from poems of hope to stories of healing, from lament to celebration, from personal journeys to collective efforts, I am convinced that we are witnessing a generation waking up to its calling. Not someday in the future. Now. Young people showing solidarity across borders can transform fear into fellowship, isolation into collaboration, and despair into collective hope. In our towns, our cities, our regions, our continents. Young people are not merely preparing to lead; they are already leading, building bridges across borders, across denominations, across wounds. I am convinced more than ever that peace grows through connection, programs, training, encampments, solidarity networks, and ecumenical spaces. They are showing what peace can look like when it is lived with courage and love.

My deepest hope is that this generation, our generation, continues to awaken and that we continue to claim the space that belongs to us. We are not only the future; we are the present. We are ready. And we deserve to participate, to be heard, to work, and to shape the world we will inherit.

As you read this issue, my prayer is that *Mozaik 43* strengthens your spirit and that you find inspiration in the stories, wisdom in the reflections, and courage in the witness of young people across the globe to claim your voice. May you be reminded of the call of Micah 6:8: *“To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”* And may that call guide us, not someday, but today, as we continue building peace with open hearts, bold voices, and unwavering faith.

Welcome to *Mozaik #43*. May these pages accompany you, challenge you, and inspire you.  
I am grateful you are here.

— *Laura Gomez Reyes*  
**Editor-in-Chief**



Photo taken by PH  
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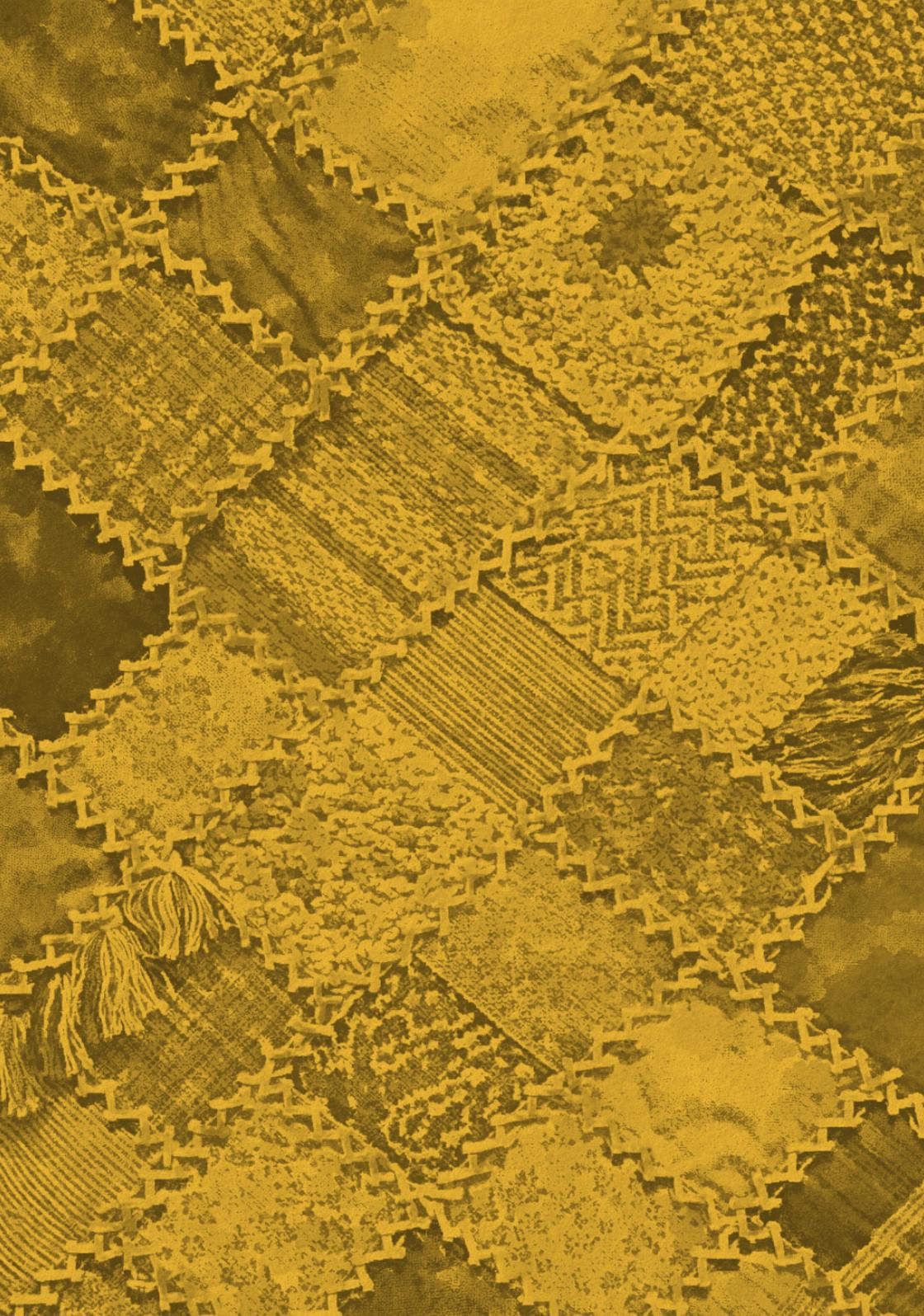
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# **I. LAMENT – Naming the Wounds**

*“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit”*

(Psalm 34:18)



## Ya Rab

- BY ANTHONY KHAIR

Ya Rab,

In the midst of these uncertain times, make your justice  
fall down like rain and nourish this dry  
land covered in scars.

God, I hope you hear the screams of the wounded loud and  
clear, as we hear them from here.

Our loved ones' cries echo louder than sermons.

Where is the Holy Spirit falling on us? Because all we see  
are missiles.

Where is your holy fire? The only thing being burned are  
tents.

I lament the homes that are turned to ash and those  
dreams that turned into rubble.

The holy soil is soaked in the blood of the innocent and the  
olive trees no longer blossom.

The land once called holy forgot how to be sacred  
when your children were driven from their homes.

Holiness left

with the breath of the thousands who screamed their last

as the bombs fell like judgment.  
They said this was a promised land, but who promised this?  
Not a God of mercy.  
Not a Christ who weeps.  
This land has forgotten how to pray because every time we say “peace,”  
it is answered with destruction.  
But still, we gather our broken voices and we sing.  
Still, we gather our shattered hearts and we pray.  
Still, we hold onto memory, and memory becomes steadfast.  
Because even the stones know our names. Rubble became our witness.  
Ya Rab,  
Teach us to grieve, without forgetting.  
Teach us to hope without letting go of truth.  
And when your justice finally comes—let it be like spring after a thousand winters.  
Let it come not in missiles, but in mercy.  
Not in fire, but in freedom.  
Let it come.  
Let it come.  
Let it come. Amen.



**Anthony Khair**

*Anthony is a Palestinian human rights activist and theologian, holding a Master's in Peace, Trauma, and Religion from VU Amsterdam. He currently works with the Bethlehem Institute for Peace and Justice in Bethlehem, Palestine. Fluent in English, Spanish, and Arabic, Anthony's work emphasizes justice for Palestinians and international solidarity.*



## Peace pledge to Palestine

- BY GIOVANA BUTTELLI

As I declare this peace pledge  
eyes and soul facing the sky,  
my feet are strongly stuck in the ground,  
grounds of stolen land,  
taken from us from south to north.

The earth spurts blood  
blood of injustice, blood of oppression,  
of silence and abandonment.

And after all, we were and still are forged over  
massacres

but we are not alone  
from north to south

we recognise ourselves as sisters

“Un pueblo sin piernas pero que camina”

We are capable of walking alone,  
but the journey is powerful when walked in  
communion  
May our steps be of justice  
reminding us daily that our strength is  
ancestral.  
So we follow together  
until the day where the liberation of the people  
is no longer utopia  
Our reality is one of reconciliation  
I will not be free until you are free  
I am because we are  
Ubuntu



**Giovana Buttelli**

*Giovana is pursuing a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature and her ongoing research is about gender justice and translation. She is a member of the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil. She is currently serving as the Support Officer of the Lutheran World Federation's Regional Secretary for Latin America, the Caribbean and North America.*

# The fields burn during harvest season. Could this be the generation that God calls “Peacemakers”?

- BY CARLOS MARIO MORENO-BATISTA

As bombs fall on Gaza, tanks advance through Ukraine, violence engulfs Sudan, and polarization divides families, churches, and entire nations; as corruption, violence, and despair seem to be winning the final battle, the Word of God resounds with a burning urgency: *“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”* Never have the fields been so ready for harvest, and at the same time, never before have they burned with such fire. The very despair that terrifies us today is the prophetic sign that the decisive hour has come. This reflection is not just another lament, but a wake-up call to the young Christian generation who, like me, have seen brothers and sisters in faith choose hatred disguised as “defense of the truth” and have wept over the division within the church itself. But they have also witnessed that another way is possible.

From school classrooms to interfaith dialogues that cross denominational boundaries, I have learned that peacebuilding is not a utopia, but daily obedience

to Jesus who, seeing the helpless and wounded crowds, felt compassion and did not turn his back on them. If He multiplied five loaves of bread in the middle of the desert and resurrected hope where there was only death, He can also use our trembling hands, our young voices, and our broken communities to extinguish fires and harvest peace. The question is no longer whether the world needs peacemakers; the question is whether we, the young people of this generation, will accept to be peacemakers.

## **Moved to compassion**

In Mark chapter 6, we find the Lord and his disciples taking a private boat to a deserted place, hoping to find some rest from the demands of ministry. As they disembarked, Mark records: *“When Jesus stepped ashore, he saw a large crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things”* (Mark 6:34).

It was a time of great difficulty. Rome ruled the known world at that time. In Israel, people were

shocked to hear the news that a treacherous King Herod, at the capricious request of a dancer and her adulterous mother Herodias, had brutally and cruelly executed John the Baptist. John's death left a leadership vacuum on earth. It was at this very moment that the great crowd began to seek Jesus. When the Lord saw the crowd coming to Him, He had compassion on them. They were like sheep without a shepherd, and that compassion compelled Him to go forward and *"teach them many things."*

### **A world without a shepherd**

We must recognize that in our time there is a significant lack of leadership called and guided by God, who are pointing the masses toward what is not true, honorable, just, pure, beautiful, and admirable (Philippians 4:8). Where are those who cry out, *"Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near!"* or *"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*? We are living in a time when it seems that the world is falling apart. In Palestine, in Ukraine, in Sudan, millions of people have lost their homes and everything they had, even their lives. If there was ever a need for true Christian leadership, it is now! Yet there has been a great absence of leaders. I cannot remember a time in my life when I have seen such despair and uncertainty as we have now.

### **Where are the peacemakers?**

And yet, in the midst of this panorama, Jesus repeats the words that resonate today with unprecedented force: *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"* (Matthew 9:37-38). The fields are ready. Global despair is the clearest evidence that the time for harvest has come. But the question burning in the hearts of young people today is, Will we be those workers? Will we be the ones who, moved by compassion like Jesus, dare to feed, heal, reconcile, and build peace in the midst of war? Building peace is not just silencing weapons; it is restoring broken relationships, healing deep wounds, rebuilding trust where only hatred remains. It is what Nehemiah did when he rebuilt walls with one hand and a sword in the other; it is what Esther did when she risked her life for her people; it is what we young Christians are called to do today. In Serbia and Kosovo, young evangelicals and Orthodox Christians gather every summer to rebuild houses destroyed in the 1999 war, and as they hammer nails, they talk about forgiveness. In my country, Colombia, we have been embroiled in internal conflict for more than half a century. In 2016, after four years

of negotiations in Havana, a historic peace agreement was signed that promised an end to the armed conflict, the surrender of weapons, and the reintegration of thousands of combatants. That same year, a referendum was held to ratify the agreement. Against all odds, the “No” vote won by a narrow margin.

And that’s when the greatest pain came for me. Many Christian churches, brothers and sisters with whom I share the same Protestant faith, actively campaigned for the “No” vote, arguing that the agreement was too “soft” on the former guerrillas. As a young Christian, that stance broke my heart and left me deeply demoralized. I felt that a part of my own spiritual family had chosen fear and revenge over the Gospel of reconciliation. But God lifted me out of my disappointment. Months later, I encountered other Protestant churches and ecumenical movements that had embraced the path of peace and supported the Agreements. That experience renewed my commitment and led me to co-found the Colombian Network of Philosophy of Religion, whose explicit purpose is to promote critical and transconfessional interreligious dialogue and to make religious diversity visible in a country where Christianity has historically

been used to exclude and polarize. With the Network, we organized the fifth edition of the Colloquium on Philosophy of Religion & Spirituality, focusing on studies of peace, conflict, and religion. In a previous edition, we focused on religious tolerance and created real spaces for discussion on ecumenism and plurality.

At the same time, as a teacher of Ethics and Religion at a public school granted to the Jesuit community of Fe y Alegría, I coordinated initiatives such as La Escuela Abraza La Verdad (The School Embraces the Truth), in partnership with the Truth Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. In our classrooms, we do not teach catechisms or dogmas from a single tradition; we teach students to value differences, to recognize others as images of God even if they pray differently or do not pray at all. For me, that classroom is already a small laboratory for peacebuilding, a space where teenagers from displaced families, Venezuelan migrants, military personnel, and victims learn to look each other in the eye without hatred. These experiences are signs that the Kingdom is already breaking through.

**There are few workers...**

Jesus did not wait for conditions to be perfect. He saw sheep

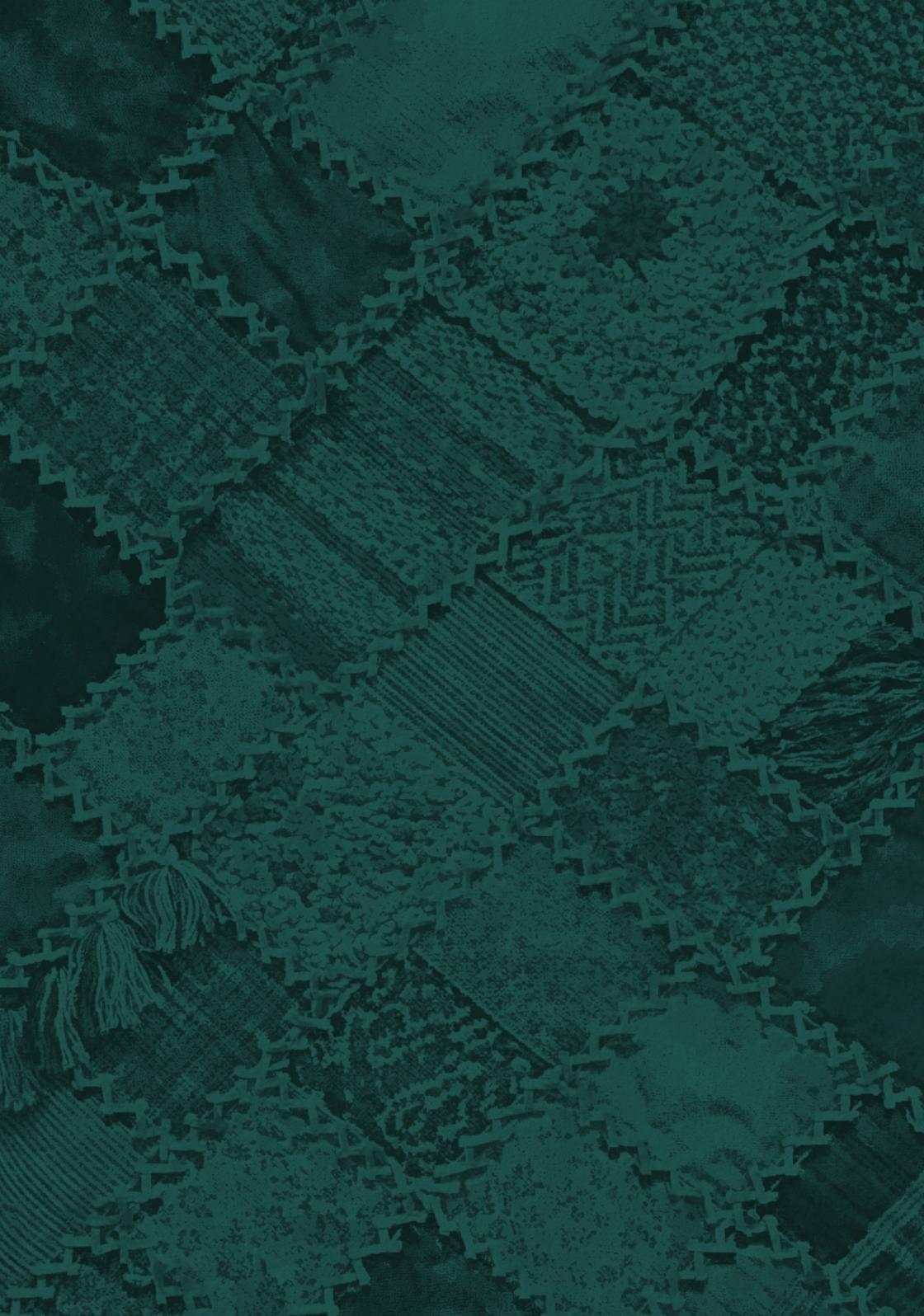
without a shepherd and was moved with compassion. He saw five loaves and two fish and multiplied them. He saw a broken world and gave himself up on the cross to reconcile all things to himself, “*making peace through the blood of his cross*” (Colossians 1:20). Today it is up to us, the young people of this generation. The fields are ready, the harvest is plentiful. The world is hungry for bread and hope. Today fire runs through the fields, but the harvest is still ready. Start where you are. This week, invite someone who thinks differently to have coffee

and listen to their story without interrupting. Or you can create a small group (WhatsApp, church, university) to read together and take concrete action for peace in your community. Use your art, your class, your social networks, your vote, your prayer to multiply reconciliation. The workers are still few, but you no longer have an excuse. The world is burning, the harvest is crying out, and God is looking for a generation that dares to be called «*peacemakers*».



**Carlos Mario Moreno-Batista**

*Carlos is a philosopher at El Bosque University. Member of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia (Bucaramanga, Santander). Professor of political science, promoting intellectual humility in students as the basis for a pluralistic society. Founding member of the Colombian Network of Philosophy of Religion. Author of several academic articles and book chapters.*



## **II. HEALING – Remembering, Reconciling, Restoring**

*“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds”*

(Psalm 147:3)



## “Visiting the Wounds” - WSCF Scoping Mission in Inari

- BY OLAF WOLTMAN

How would you react when you were banned from practicing your language, your culture, the rituals you observe? How would you try to respond? And finally, when outright oppression is no more, how would you come to terms with the former oppressing power in order to build lasting peace? From 12 to 17th August 2025 me and other 11 young people from Council of Europe countries had the opportunity to ponder that question thanks to a World Student Christian Federation Scoping Mission in Inari, Finland. Over the course of six days we learned about the history and culture of the Sami people, explored the local nature, and enjoyed our stay in one of the most unique and pristine areas in Europe.

Our group consisted of people from all across the European continent, and we all were invited thanks to WSCF, an organisation focused on youth work and Christian student perspectives. We were invited on this trip to learn more about the conflict between Finland and the Sami people, and the current effort of peacebuilding and reconciliation. Our mission focused on the role of the Finnish Lutheran Church – their partaking in the oppression of the Sami community in the past, but also their current work to right their past mistakes and help with supporting the rights of Finland’s indigenous people.

As we have learned, the relation between the Sami and the countries possessing land in

their historical area of presence – Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia – is long and complicated. As centralised authority started reaching further North from the 17th century onwards, the Sami were targeted because of their culture, their language and their animistic religion. The countries the Sami found themselves in didn't appreciate their traditional ways of living, and did much to assimilate the local population, often forcefully. Infamous among them was the system of residential schools in the 19th and 20th century. In that system, children would be taken away from their parents' home and put in a boarding school, thus both weakening ties to their families and contact with their culture, and contributing to the process of assimilation.

The Lutheran church also played a role – at the beginning of the Christianisation of Sapmi, the missionaries would forcibly convert the Sami, destroy their objects used in worship, and ban their traditional customs, sometimes not even entirely connected with their religion. Other instances of ambiguous behaviour happened in the much more recent past, when at the height of the eugenics movement whole graves were dug out to provide Sami bones

for Anthropology departments of various universities, in Finland and elsewhere.



As time went on, however, things began to change. In the 1960s, the Sami movement strengthened, calling for language and culture rights. In the 80s and 90s, Sami parliaments were created in the three Nordic countries with Sami population. The church also changed its approach: in Finland, the Diocese of Oulu, which covers the territory of Sapmi, apologised in 2012 for historical wrongdoing. In 2025, the national church body did the same. Sami language and culture is being introduced in church services in Sami areas.

It seems to me that despite the problems, which obviously exist, the reconciliation process had a positive effect here. When we drove from the airport to our accommodation, we could see multilingual road signs in Sami languages, as well as Finnish and English. There are institutions like the parliament and Siida, the Sami museum (both worth visiting!), which promote Sami language and culture. The Sami people we spoke to were passionate about their culture and spoke with admiration

about their home region. We also had the chance to attend a Sami music festival, where we could see their culture is not archaic, but thrives even in popular culture, even in music genres such as pop and hip-hop!

Our journey was really something special: we could hear from, talk to and discuss with Sami people, take part in the local culture, and enjoy the amazingly beautiful nature of one of the northernmost areas of Europe. We also could learn a lot: even if there are still problems, I believe the Sami are an example of a reconciliation process our entire continent would be well-advised to learn from and follow. To me, it shows that better things are possible, and that we really can do better.



**Olaf Woltman**

*Olaf Woltman. Third-year medicine student and member of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Poland. Interested in medical sciences, travelling, learning new languages and history, with a particular focus on the history of Northern and Central Europe.*



## Intercultural journey through the city of resistance

- BY TAIA TSIKLARI

Sarajevo, end of October, a sunny meeting room full of bright minds and souls from so many different countries and cultures. I am still not sure how to manage speaking with everyone in the next 6 days, exchanging thoughts, emotions, ideas and just having fun all together.

And yet, here I am, bringing my perspective from South Caucasus to the city which definitely saw a lot, a lot more than I could imagine but have not seen us before.

‘Frame the Future’ came to me

as a nice chance to dive into my beloved Balkan’s experience once again, however visiting Sarajevo with WSCF, which connects people from so many different cultures and confessions, was something quite new and intriguing for me. As a result, I was full of expectations when I stepped on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s land. The anticipation was already met on the way to that unforgettable city as I met my peer for the training at the airport and we even shared our last flight to Sarajevo (Yes, yes, sometimes short physical distance is not

enough for direct flights). And just like that, our training started with a tasty gathering over a joint dinner, where I found old friends, as well as made new and inspiring connections, making me realize that you will always have someone's back and other way round, especially when you are surrounded by believers from so many beautiful cultures.

The training week was full of questions, group works, prayers, learnings, techniques and practices from previous events, experiences, laughter, games and most awaited – Baklavas and Kadaifs. And just like these sweets, most of the talks, walks, group works or exchanges during the coffee breaks, filled me with endorphins. There were moments of feeling not the brightest emotions, especially when we were working on local context and history and connecting it to our communities' challenges derived from the recent historical events, be it conflicts, wars or civil disputes. Just right at those moments, spotting small acts of kindness and care from the participants and trainers for comforting others and themselves, reminded me that any kind of educational gathering – training, conference, seminar or etc. is not just for learning something new or hearing



experts' perspectives, but to see and hear our peers, spot each other and have trust and hope in our work and efforts, especially for the local youth communities who are taking our lead and often ask for advices.

Now it's the end of November and Autumn is slowly going to an end, yet it's still sunny and warm in Tbilisi, reminding me our strolls across Sarajevo and talking with friends, who became very dear in just one week or having coffee at the Baščaršija with locals, whose words I would always recall: telling us that different ethnic and religious groups living together peacefully is nothing to be fascinated about in the year of 2025, and as Georgian, I think I can easily relate to this.



However, on the other hand I am remembering so many challenging stories from our everyday realities and still deciding to stay fascinated with what I saw in Sarajevo, in the city of resistance.

Thank you WSCF Europe, Thanks to each and every member of the group, and Hvala Sarajevo, You brought peace to my heart and definitely have a piece of my heart.



**Taia Tsiklauri**

*Taia Tsiklauri, based in Georgia, works in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in South Caucasus and is part of various intercultural dialogue/trust rebuilding platforms. Taia holds an MA in Applied Foreign Languages and International Negotiations.*

# Jesus Christ the ultimate Peacemaker: A meditation on the Christology of Peace.

- BY EMAD ATEF

Jesus Christ the ultimate Peacemaker: A meditation on the Christology of Peace.

## Abstract:

We live in an era of warfare, social and political conflicts, and digital partisanship. We are overwhelmed with polarizing debates, rough disagreements, and widespread hate speeches on every topic whether it is peripheral or critical, in every context whether real or virtual life! One can assume that any peacebuilding endeavor will end up eventually with the same Sisyphean failure.<sup>1</sup>

So, one may ask, what shall Christians do in this difficult context? Shall Christians surrender to the seemingly failure of most of the peacebuilding initiatives in our inner individual self or within our global contexts?! In this modest meditation, I present various Christological motifs that help us as Christians to fully understand

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<sup>1</sup> The myth of Sisyphus is about a king who was punished by Hades by rolling up a huge boulder up to the top of a hill, and the boulder will eventually and consistently fall back, and thus Sisyphus is endlessly doing this pointless, and endless job without any trust of success.

a Christology of Peace. In other words, to build an understanding of peacebuilding that is established on the character and the work of the one and only true emperor of peace Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

## Jesus Christ is the ultimate benefactor:

In the book of Acts, the deeds that were made by Jesus, or done in his name are described as benefaction activities in two places. (Jantsch, 2022, p. 277)

The first place, when Peter and John were asked to explain under

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<sup>2</sup> I entitle Jesus as "one and only true emperor of the cosmos", and I hope not to be portrayed as trying to impose an imperial/ superior reading of Christian theology. A lot of New Testament scholars suggest -rightly- that when the New Testament is saying "Jesus is lord" this was a criticism of the Roman imperial ideology. In other words, "Caesar is not!". I use it in the same sense across this meditation. So, I use "Jesus is Lord" to criticize any other emperor(s), whether it is a real person promoting dangerous ideas in our personal or public sphere, or any dangerous ideology that goes against Jesus' family (i.e. the whole cosmos).

what “name” or “power” do they use to perform these healing miracles. Peter inaugurated his response mentioning that the healing acts is an “**act of kindness εὐεργεσίᾳ**”, he states “if we are being called to account today for an act of **kindness εὐεργεσίᾳ** shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed” (Acts 4:9 NIV), he then added “It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed” (Acts 4:10 NIV). He added later that “**Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.**” (Acts 4:12 NIV). So, the healing act of the lame man, is described by Peter as an act of kindness/ benevolence, which is done in the name of Jesus Christ, this historical figure from Nazareth, who was crucified, died and raised from the dead. Later he added the **universal salvation through the name of Jesus**. In other words, Christology is intertwined with Soteriology either through the actualized and current “act of kindness” of the healing which represents the “inaugurated kingdom of God”, or the upcoming hope of the universal salvation and the hope of the “fulfillment of the kingdom of God”.

The second is in Peter’s speech in Cornelius’ house, he said that “God

anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around **doing good εὐεργετῶν and healing all who were under the power of the devil**, because God was with him” (Acts 10:38 NIV). Jesus’ deeds include healing and exorcism with the power of the Holy Spirit; these deeds are acts of **kindness/ benevolence**, as God the Father was with him. Peter also expressed two essential facts; the first is the Lordship of Jesus, as he “**is Lord of all**” (Acts 10:36 NIV), and the second is the function as the Judge, the one “whom God appointed as **judge of the living and the dead**” (Acts 10:42 NIV).

Thus, it is clear that Jesus is described as the ultimate savior, Lord, and Judge of the whole creation. However, his Lordship and role as savior is not based on tyranny, but on his humbleness which is manifested in his own death on the cross, and envisioned through the act of kindness through the healing in his name/ his own healing which is done with the Power of the Holy Spirit and with God the Father too (which also imply the one and the same act of benevolence is the same work of the Trinity). In short, Luke portrays Jesus as the “benefactor par excellence”.(Jantsch, 2022, p. 281)

So, as a summary, as Christians, we are invited to share Jesus’ glory. But first, we must share his path. The

path we must go through is through our daily kind/ benevolent acts, and to present our lives to the point of death. In other words, to build peace within humanity through our acts. From this perspective, peacebuilding is not merely an intellectual discourse, or ethical idealism. It is transformative action through kindness and sacrifice imitating Jesus Christ.

### Jesus Christ is peace:

In the letter to Ephesians, the author starts (Eph 2:1-10) describing the vertical relationship of humanity with God, then later in (Eph 2:11-22), the author describes the horizontal relationship between the Jews and Gentiles, he writes;<sup>3</sup>

*“Remember that at that time you were **separate from Christ**, excluded from citizenship in Israel and **foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he***

3 According to Gorman, the letter to the Ephesians is considered as one of the disputed Pauline letters, however Paul disciples who wrote the letter believed that the language of peace applied to Christ represents the apostle properly Michael J. Gorman, ‘The Lord of Peace: Christ Our Peace in Pauline Theology’, *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters*, 3.2 (2013), pp. 219–53 (p. 3n220).

*himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ..., His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near” (Eph 2:12-18 NIV).*

Gorman comments on (Eph 2:14) writing that the theme of Christ is our peace is “central and critical part of Paul’s understanding of Jesus as Messiah and Lord”.(Gorman, 2013, p. 220) He illustrates that Christ’s death is the peacebuilding death that brings humanity to a friendship with God, rather than the previous enmity, and it also brings the different and estranged people in “one” and “new” humanity, and “one” body, thus fixing the horizontal and vertical relationships of humanity. Thus, this peace/ reconciliation is a current reality of the messianic gift of Jesus. On the other hand, this peace/ reconciliation needs to be actualized in the day-to-day practices, reflecting the lordship of Christ in our current and practical ecclesial life.(Gorman, 2013, pp. 237–238) This motif of peace / reconciliation was received and re-interpreted differently in Christian tradition according to the context and the

challenge the Church was facing (either to face heresies, or to answer the relations between the gentiles and Jews, or to construct a theology of reconciliation, ... etc.).(Caynor, n.d., pp. 71–73)

Caynor proposed another way of interpretation, which is based on contemporary research on violence and shame. She noted that according to several researches, violence should be understood on the basis of “competition for respect and recognition” not lack of resources. (Caynor, n.d., p. 73) In other word, any threat to either “belonging” or “glory” will cause people to feel “shame” and accordingly to do whatever it takes (even through violence) to protect or to regain their sense of “belonging”/“glory”. (Caynor, n.d., p. 73,89) So, she proposed that the hostility (in Eph 2:11-22) is “connected with glory”. (Caynor, n.d., p. 74)

In doing so, she started with the kingship of Jesus. Instead of eagerly searching for belonging/ glory, we as Christians are called to “display his glory”.(Caynor, n.d., p. 75) In other words, the glory we are seeking is already at our hands through Jesus Christ the King, as he shared his glory with his people, thus his glory ought to be shared not exclusively preserved. So, the vicious cycle of belonging and glory, which leads to shame, and results in violence, is flipped upside down. Glory is at

hand, and should be shared as a sign of allegiance to Jesus Christ the King. As Fletcher-Louis writes “*Lord Jesus Christ enters the stream of human history with an identity that is already defined and grounded in the reality –the being, the glory– of the one God. And he offers, to those he came to serve and save, a participation in that transcendent glory from which he himself came*”. (Fletcher-Louis, 2023, p. 599)

So, as a summary, Christ is described as peace, this peace is done through his messianic gift of reconciliation, and should be manifested in our daily life as a sign of allegiance. On the other hand, as Caynor noted, the shame resulted from the absence or imbalance of belonging and glory, which resulted in more violence, this vicious cycle was subverted through the peace of Christ. Jesus Christ overthrown the source of violence, by sharing the glory and including us in one family and body. Thus, Jesus did not merely eradicate the conflict, he did established peace within us and within our sphere of influence by sharing his glory with us.(Caynor, n.d., p. 83)

### **Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Lord:**

One of the pillars of the Christianity is the doctrine of the incarnation of the Word of God. I will try to summarize the pillars of the

doctrine of Incarnation in order to construct how this doctrine can enlighten our path for a Christology of peace.

The first pillar is the unity of the two natures in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is truly God, and truly man, one with God the Father concerning his divine nature, and one with us concerning the human nature. His divinity and humanity are in complete union. From the moment of incarnation of the Word of God, neither nature changed into the other, nor confused with the other, nor mixed/ merged with the other producing a third person, nor divided/ separated from the other as if they were two persons. There is a complete and concrete unity of one person Jesus Christ the incarnate Lord (hypostatic union). (Tsonievsky, n.d., pp. 172, 177) In the words of Williams; “In regard to the divinity and humanity existing in Christ, it cannot be that more there is of one, the less there is of the other. But it is true that the single principle or supposit can be spoken ‘abstractly’ as the unchanging act of God the Word, and historically as the act of Jesus of Nazareth in the totality of which the Word is uniquely active in the world”. (Williams, 2018, p. 37)

The second pillar is an elaboration on the previous one. While the two natures are in ultimate and unique union. The union of the two natures

is “asymmetrical”.(Hart, 2025, p. 34) In other words, we do not believe that Jesus was divinized, but that God the Word was incarnate in the person of Jesus. So, the incarnation initiative starts from God. This means that the humanity of Jesus “receiving all, and returning all to its source by that very receiving”. (Hart, 2025, p. 34) Thus, through the incarnation, humanity is invited to participate in the gift of “receiving” like Jesus in his humanity. We receive the “glory” and “adoption” as a gift from our forerunner Jesus Christ. As he is both, one with God the Father in divinity, and one with us in his humanity. We are invited to participate in grace in the glory and the sonship to God the Father. Thus, we receive peace within ourselves and within our whole humanity who is now one body through him.

The last pillar is both Christological and Soteriological. As Christology is the basis for the soteriology of the Church. Gregory of Nazianzus declares that, what the Logos did not assume is not healed. (Tsonievsky, n.d., p. 171) In other words, the Word of God assumes a complete humanity in order to redeem humanity, nothing in humanity is not assumed by the Son of God (except sin which is not by far a component of humanity). Accordingly, reconciliation and peace are properly achieved. Through the incarnation, God

united himself with the whole humanity, accordingly humanity is adopted in one family and one body. Thus, peace is a Christological gift that rests on the person of Jesus Christ. In the words of Caynor; *“Unless God associates himself with every dimension of existence it is not possible for him to restore his glory in the cosmos and truly conquer sin and death”*(Caynor, n.d., p. 67).

Thus, with the incarnation of the Son of God, we are adopted as sons & daughters of God the Father, this happens through the union of humanity and divinity in the person of Jesus Christ. In the incarnation of the Son, who is truly God, he assumed our humanity in order to heal it, thus peace and reconciliation are not merely theoretical ideals, but they are concrete realities gifted to ourselves and to the whole of humanity. Accordingly, adoption is an act of grace based on Christology. So, Jesus called the peace-makers as *“sons of God”* (Matthew 5:9 NIV). Christians are supposed to manifest the grace of adoption when they are peace-makers.(Torrance, 2025, p. 478)

### **Christology of Peace as the base for Christian peacebuilding:**

In this meditation I tried to present different and various motifs of Christology to establish a proper Christology of peace.

The first motif is **Jesus as the benefactor**. While Jesus is the ultimate Lord and Judge, he is always acting toward humanity in a benevolent manner (either his own deeds or in his name). Thus, Christians are invited to imitate him in the world by being kind/ benevolent to the point of sacrifice our own lives for others.

Then I presented the motif of Jesus as peace, where Jesus subverts the vicious cycle of belonging/ glory, shame, and violence. Jesus being the true glory, shares this glory with us. Thus, the vicious cycle of violence and conflict is broken, and as Christian who are in allegiance to Jesus, we ought to share his glory, thus breaking violence and conflict and establishing peace through Jesus Christ the ultimate peacemaker.

Finally, I presented the **Jesus is the Incarnate Lord** aspect, where the doctrine of incarnation serves as the cornerstone for the ultimate peacebuilding within ourselves, within humanity, and within the whole cosmos. The union of the humanity and divinity in the person of Jesus Christ is the ultimate and final word of God to establish peace in an unprecedented manner. In the words of the theologian Nicholas Cabasilas; *“Knowing that peace is so precious a thing that God himself came down to earth for the purpose of purchasing*

*it for humanity”.*(Torrance, 2025, p. 478)

As a conclusion, to have a proper Christology is not merely having an orthodox religious dogma or set of propositions. To think proper Christology is to think properly about humanity particularly, and about the cosmos in general. Christology has a massive impact on our theology (who is God?), morality (what is considered a moral act?), ethics (what is ethically right?), social (who is my neighbor?) and political (how shall we act in public sphere?).(Caynor, n.d., p. 70) So, I hope that this meditation successfully highlighted some important Christological motifs that will enlighten us as Christians, and church in our modern challenging context to be promote peace, not merely as a modern cultural zeitgeist or ethos, but based on proper Christological understanding.



**Emad Atef**

*Emad Atef. Author of “The Pauline Christology of 1 Corinthians 8: 6”, and Co-Authored “Trinitarian Perspectives in the Apostolic Fathers: An Investigation”. Emad holds an MBA from Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport. MTh in Orthodox Theology from Agora University, and A Master of Arts in the early African Christian Studies from Alexandria School of Theology.*

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### **III. HOPE – Refusing Despair**

*“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

(Romans 15:13)

## The hope that still remains

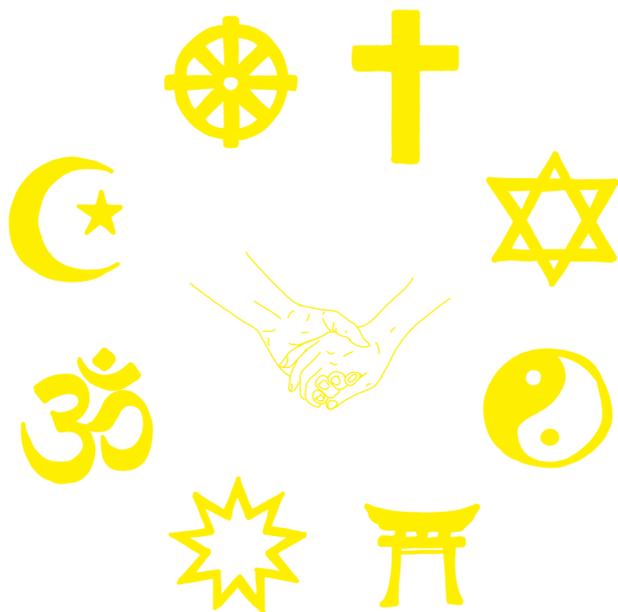
We need more than just hands,  
We need more LOVE to give,  
To transform this world anew,  
Where every soul can be free.

With spirits lifted high,  
Together, we stand strong,  
Let's lead with heart this future  
To create a nicer world

With faith as our guide,  
In harmony and courage,  
Holding our hands,  
We'll let love abide.

Embrace our shared differences,  
In unity, we find our strength,  
Peace is not a distant dream,  
It's a world we'll manifest.  
With open hearts and minds,  
We'll forge a brighter day,  
The youth would be an example,  
To lead the peaceful way.

*Anonymous Author*





## Kapayapaan

- BY ELOISA JAMES A. SONIO

Kapayapaan, Peace  
Beauty queens advocate world peace  
Churches are praying for it  
But peace is not freely given  
We have to fight for it

Peace is when children's stomach dies not grumbles  
Peace is when families are not robbed of their loved ones  
Peace is when the environment is not abused and exploited  
Peace is when women walk the streets safely at night

Peace is when nations are free and have their own sovereignty  
Peace is achieved when there are no genocide  
Peace is diversity when no one culture is considered supreme  
Peace is present when people can live without fear

Peace is not the presence of the military  
who are roaming around the streets with their guns freely  
Peace is not present when people have no freedom  
Peace is where the people achieved their rights and have dignity

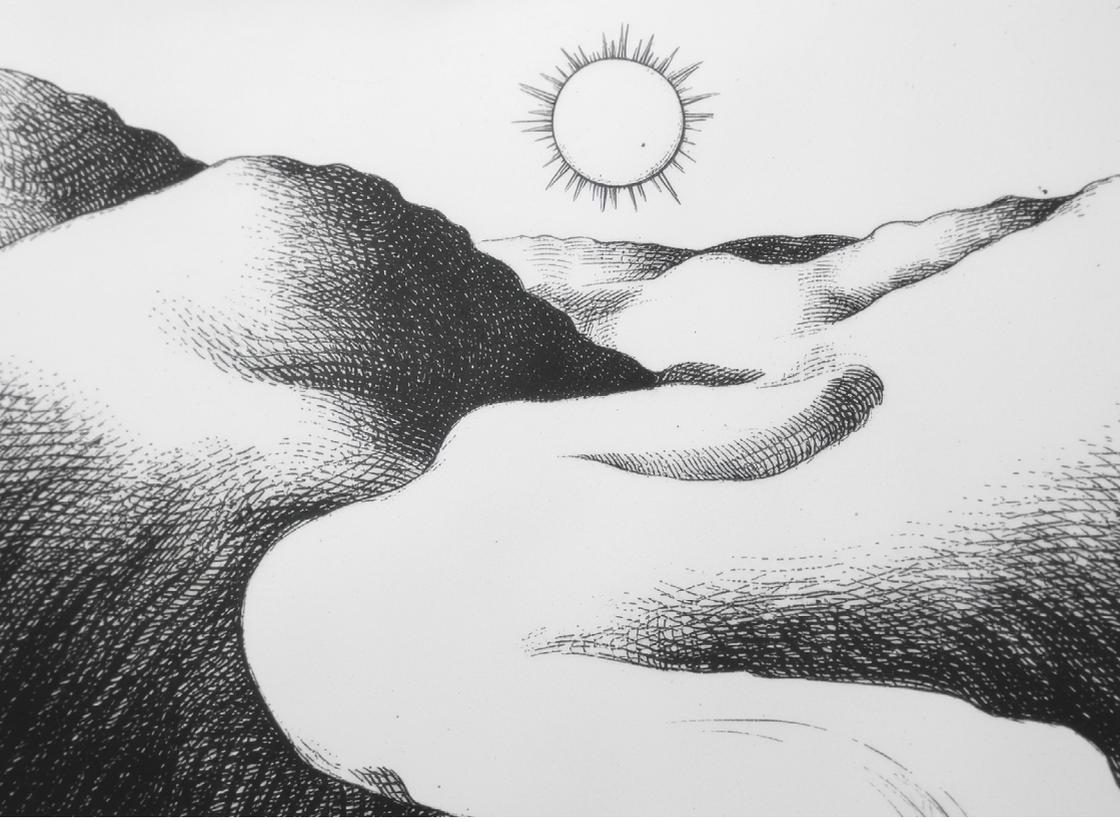
Peace is when children can dream and have hope  
Peace is when there is justice  
Where Jesus commands of love abounds  
Where abundant life is experienced full

Kapayapaan, Peace  
We all want and yearn for it.  
Peace comes with a price of constant struggle to achieve it  
The question is, are we willing to pay the price?



**Eloisa James A. Sonio**

*Rev. Eloisa James A. Sonio, Magna Cum Laude graduate of English Education and Licensed Professional Teacher, now pursues her Master of Divinity at Union Theological Seminary. She leads as Student Government President, uplifts women and justice, and serves Rosario UMC as Administrative Pastor and Provisional Elder, weaving faith, service, and compassion.*



## Tanglaw (Light)

- BY ELMO GIDEON A. MANAPAT JR.

Sisikat din ang araw  
At magpupugay  
Sa Diyos na liwanag  
Ng ating buhay

Tayo'y Kanyang huhubugin  
Mula sa karimlan  
Tao ay hahanguin  
Tungo sa kaligtasan

Buhay na may kaganapan  
S'yang sa ati'y hangad  
Mula sa pagkakasala'y  
Kamtin ang kalayaan

The sun will also rise,  
And bow in honor  
To the God who is the light  
Of our lives.

He will shape us  
Out of the darkness;  
He will lift humanity  
Toward salvation.

A life that is complete  
This is His desire for us;  
From the bondage of sin,  
May we gain freedom.

Tanglaw na Patnubay  
Diwang Kabanalan  
Kami ay Iyong samahan  
Sa landas ng paglalakbay

Guiding Light,  
Spirit of Holiness,  
Be with us  
On this journey's path.

May layon'g makatarugan  
Lapat sa katotohanan  
Tungo sa sangsinukubang  
Lukob ng kapayapaan

With a purpose that is just,  
Aligned with truth,  
Toward a universe  
Covered in peace.

Tungo sa sangsinukubang  
Lukob ng kalayaan  
Tungo sa sangsinukubang  
Lukob ng kaganapan

Toward a universe  
Covered in freedom;  
Toward a universe  
Covered in fullness.



**Elmo Gideon A. Manapat Jr.**

*Elmo Gideon A. Manapat Jr., 36, is a Conference Licentiate serving at UCCP Marcela Church of Christ Disciples under the Manila North Conference, MLJA. A composer and guitarist for Musikero ni Cristo, he is completing his Bachelor of Theology at Union Theological Seminary and lives in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan.*



## **IV. COMMUNITY – Becoming Together**

*“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”*

(Matthew 18:20)

# Finding My Place Again: Youth Ecumenism, Diaspora Identity, and Peacebuilding in Sarajevo

- BY GAREN ARABKIRLIAN

When I moved from Beirut to Munich in 2023, I suddenly found myself far from the Armenian Church University Students Association (ACUSA), the student movement through which I had volunteered throughout my university years. ACUSA is closely connected to the Armenian Apostolic Church and shaped by the historical legacy of the Holy See of Cilicia, also known as the Great House of Cilicia.

Although I grew up in Lebanon, the question of identity has always been central in my life. Armenians have lived in diaspora for centuries, forming communities across the Middle East, Europe, and beyond. Through my own personal interest and research, I learned that the medieval Cilician Armenians, who lived along major trade routes in southern Anatolia, were constantly interacting with neighboring states, empires, and Christian traditions. For them, diplomacy and collaboration were everyday realities.

That part of our history shaped

how I understood what it means to be Armenian today: adaptable, open to dialogue, and capable of maintaining identity while building relationships across cultural and religious boundaries. This heritage made ecumenism feel less like a new idea and more like a continuation of something embedded in our past. ACUSA naturally embodied this spirit, and so engaging in broader Christian student cooperation became a meaningful part of my student life.

Moving to Europe did not change that. It simply meant I needed to find a new space to continue as a student volunteer. Since ACUSA is a long-standing member movement of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), reconnecting through WSCF Europe felt like the most natural step.

## Arriving in Sarajevo

In October 2025, I joined the WSCF Europe workshop “Frame the Future – Youth Perspectives and Peacebuilding” in Sarajevo.



The choice of location was deeply symbolic. Sarajevo is a city marked by war, ethnic division, and the trauma of the 1990s conflict that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia. The genocide in Srebrenica in July 1995—where more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were killed—is one of the darkest chapters of European history, and its memory still shapes the region today.

During the five-day training, we explored peacebuilding through workshops, historical tours, non-violent communication exercises, and dialogue sessions led by local educators, and WSCF facilitators and trainers. We learned about the links between justice, reconciliation, and memory. We listened to stories from survivors and walked through streets where war scars still remain visible.

### **Dialogue Across Painful Histories**

One of the most significant moments for me was a structured reconciliation conversation with an Azerbaijani participant during a non-violent communication exercise. Speaking about the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict and the ethnic cleansing of Armenians from Nagorno–Karabakh was emotionally challenging. Yet in that room, guided by trained facilitators, we experienced what genuine dialogue could look like—not agreement, but honesty, vulnerability, and recognition of human dignity.

This was peacebuilding in practice: two young people from nations in conflict, sitting across from each other, discovering that reconciliation begins long before politics catches up.

## **The ERA and a Changing WSCF Europe**

Immediately after the workshop, we transitioned into the European Regional Assembly (ERA) of WSCF Europe. Delegates gathered to review the region's by-laws, discuss the future of the movement, and elect new committee members.

One of the amendments I proposed — and which the ERA adopted — introduced a clear status for diaspora individuals within WSCF Europe. This matters because more and more students are moving across borders for study, work, or due to instability in their home regions.

The amendment ensures that students who were active in SCMs outside Europe can continue their ecumenical involvement after migrating, provided they are:

former members of a recognized SCM,  
still ecumenically active, and  
endorsed by their original movement.

This change reflects today's reality: Christian youth in Europe increasingly come from diverse

backgrounds and diasporic identities, similar to my own experience.

Another amendment created a framework for Partnership Organisations, opening the door for meaningful cooperation between WSCF Europe and institutions that operate globally — such as the Armenian Church and its student networks.

## **Stepping Into a New Role**

During the same assembly, I was elected General Networking Coordinator of the European Regional Committee (ERC). This role marks the beginning of my direct involvement in European ecumenical leadership. It is an opportunity to advocate for faith-driven responses to social and political issues—whether it is raising awareness about the displacement of the Armenian population of the former Republic of Artsakh, addressing the ongoing denial of the Armenian Genocide by the Turkish state, or reflecting on the fundamental question: Can peace exist without truth and reconciliation?

## Finding My Place Again

Sarajevo helped me reconnect with my identity and understand my place within the broader ecumenical landscape. It reminded me that Armenian history, especially through the Cilician experience, has long involved learning how to live with others while preserving who we are.

WSCF Europe offered a space where that heritage could meet new perspectives, new friendships, and new possibilities. In a world where division feels increasingly normal, the simple act of gathering as students — to listen, to challenge, to learn — becomes profoundly meaningful.

My journey with WSCF Europe is only beginning, but I already feel motivated by the responsibility and the potential ahead. I believe youth ecumenism can help reshape narratives, build trust, and create the foundations for peace that future generations can build upon.

And as I start this new chapter, I carry with me a sense of continuity: that the same spirit of resilience and dialogue that guided the Cilicians centuries ago can still guide us today — toward a world that is more just, more reconciled, and more humane.



### Garen Arabkirlian

*Garen Arabkirlian, a Lebanese-Armenian automotive engineer in Munich working on self-driving technologies. Former chairperson of the Armenian Church University Students Association and currently serves as the General Networking Coordinator on the European Regional Committee of WSCF Europe.*



## Finding Hope and Community at the WSCF Conference

- BY DANIEL BADO

Hi, my name is Daniel, and this past September I had the privilege of attending a week-long WSCF conference in Italy. Looking back, I can honestly say that it was one of the most meaningful and uplifting weeks of my life.

At a time when our world feels increasingly divided by war, conflict, and uncertainty, it was deeply refreshing to slow down and reconnect with what truly matters. Spending a week with like-minded young people from different countries and continents reminded me that faith, peace, and hope are still very much alive.

Something that struck me most was the trust and openness that everyone brought into the space. Being part of a diverse team, learning from different cultures, experiences, and perspectives, was incredibly enriching. Throughout the week, we treated one another with patience, respect, and love. It felt like a small glimpse of what a more compassionate world could look like.

The programme itself was meaningful and well-balanced: engaging group discussions, creative tasks, quiet and deep reflection, and time dedicated to God. Each activity helped us

understand how we, as ordinary young people, can take concrete steps to make our world a little better. By the end of the week, I felt renewed, inspired, and—perhaps—changed in ways I am still discovering.

I have deep admiration for the organisers who supported us throughout the conference. They were not only leaders and mentors but also friends that were always ready to help, listen, and guide us when needed.

I cannot recommend this experience enough. If you are searching for reassurance that there are people working for a kinder, more just world, the WSCF

is a wonderful place to find them. This project has strengthened my faith, broadened my perspective, and truly touched my life. I believe it could do the same for you.



**Daniel Bado**

*Daniel Bado. 24. Originally from Beregszász in Transcarpathia, Ukraine, and has been living in Hungary for the past 10 years, where he completed his schooling and university studies. Because of the war, unfortunately, he has not been able to return home to see his family for the last four years. Interested in meeting new people and constantly learning and growing in all areas of life. Currently working as event organizer, so he is often surrounded by people — and that's exactly what he enjoys. He likes connecting with others from all over, having meaningful conversations, and learning from every interaction.*

# Es Weihnachtet sehr (It's Christmas time)

- BY REBEKKA URSULA SCHWEND



In der Kirche füllen sich langsam  
wieder alte Bänke,  
sie warten auf Geschichten von dem  
Jungen aus der Tränke.  
Doch in Wirklichkeit geht's ihnen  
allen nur um die Geschenke.  
Sie warten ungeduldig auf diesen  
einen Bericht.  
um schneller dann daheim zu sitzen,  
beim Essen im Kerzenlicht,  
dort lachen, singen, jodeln sie mit  
fröhlichem Gesicht.

*Ein heiteres Beisammensein,  
niemand führt den Streit,  
denn jeder hat sein Glas Wein,  
so vergeht die Weihnachtszeit.*

In Churches, old wooden benches  
fill once more,  
Waiting for tales of that boy born in  
the poor.  
But truth be told, it's gifts they're  
longing for.  
They're waiting for the sermon,  
quick and neat,  
So they can rush back home to their  
candlelight feast.  
Where laughter echoes – songs and  
joy complete

*A cheerful get-together time,  
No one argues, all feels fine,  
Each with a glass of lovely wine –  
And thus Christmas passes by.*

Doch wie geht es der Welt da  
draußen?  
Was ist mit den Menschen in all  
der Not?  
Den Menschen, die im Freien  
hausen  
-Das Geld reicht ihnen kaum für  
Brot.  
„Das sind die Probleme von  
außen,  
darüber spricht man nicht, du  
Idiot!“

But what about the world out there?  
What about the ones in pain and  
need?  
Those who live in the freezing air,  
Whose money can't afford them  
grain?  
“Oh, those are problems from  
elsewhere,  
Don't bring them up, you fool –  
refrain!”



*Ein heiteres Beisammensein,  
niemand führt den Streit,  
denn jeder hat sein Glas Wein,  
so vergeht die Weihnachtszeit.*

*A cheerful get-together time,  
No one argues, all feels fine,  
Each with a glass of lovely wine –  
And thus Christmas passes by.*



Bei uns vermittelt in dieser Zeit jeder  
Mensch die Liebe,  
währenddessen setzt es anderswo  
durch und durch nur Hiebe.  
Wir vergnügen uns, jeder denkt an  
Spaß,  
feiern unablässig Weihnachtszeit,  
jeder hält ein Glas.  
Bringt der Glaube anderswo den  
Menschen ins Verderben.  
Das Bekenntnis zu dem Gott, lässt  
die Menschen sterben.

*Bombenfeuer, Minensplitter, tiefe offene  
Wunden,  
bekommen wir zu sehen, in Bruchteilen  
von Sekunden.  
Für die einen sind's Momente,  
für die andren sind es Stunden.*

Here, we preach of love this season  
bright,  
While elsewhere people only feel the  
fight.  
We're laughing, drinking, lost in  
cheer,  
Celebrating Christmas year by year.  
But faith – in other lands – can  
damn, not save,  
Belief in God can dig your grave

*Bomb fire, shrapnel, open wounds that  
bleed,  
We see them only in flashes – blink and  
we're freed.  
For some they're seconds,  
For others – endless hours indeed.*

Häuser brennen nieder, bis auf das  
Zement,  
Familien müssen fliehen, werden auf  
dem Weg getrennt.  
Leben in Unterdrückung, manchmal  
in Gefangenschaft.  
Glaube hält sie am Leben, Sehnsucht  
verleiht die nötige Kraft.  
Terrorherrschaft beauftragt  
Mitläufer zum Niederstechen,  
sterben sollen alle, die über Christi  
Worte sprechen.

Houses burnt to dust and stone,  
Families fleeing, torn apart, alone.  
Living in oppression, sometimes in  
cells,  
Faith keeps them alive – hope fuels  
their rebel.  
Terror sends its dogs to kill and  
strike,  
Slay all who speak of Christ alike



*Bombenfeuer, Minensplitter, tiefe  
offene Wunden,  
bekommen wir zu sehen, in  
Bruchteilen von Sekunden.  
Für die einen sind's Momente,  
für die andren sind es Stunden.*

*Bomb fire, shrapnel, open wounds that  
bleed,  
We see them only in flashes – blink  
and we're freed.  
For some they're seconds,  
For others – endless hours indeed.*

Wir fordern, dass die Täter sollen  
kommen vor Gericht,  
aber oftmals passiert nichts mehr,  
nach dem Senden des Berichts.  
Während Politiker vieles über Terror  
und Krieg sagen,  
werden anderswo inzwischen  
Zehntausende begraben.  
Schaffen es doch ein paar Verfolgte  
dann in unser Land,  
setzen ein paar Idioten  
Flüchtlingsheime nachts in Brand.

*Bombenfeuer, Minensplitter, tiefe offene  
Wunden,  
bekommen wir zu sehen, in Bruchteilen  
von Sekunden.  
Für die einen sind's Momente,  
für die andren sind es Stunden.*

Was geht in Menschen vor, die solche  
Dinge vollführen?  
können sie nicht verstehen, was für  
Ängste Verfolgte verspüren?  
Gefühle von den Anderen sind ihnen  
suspekt,  
den einzigen Gedanken, den sie  
hegen ist „sie nehmen uns die Arbeit  
weg!“  
Hoffnung, Liebe, Schutz wurde ihnen  
genommen,  
wir sollten ihnen helfen, den  
Menschen die da kommen.

We demand: “Let justice be done!”  
Yet nothing happens – the reports  
are run.  
While politicians talk of war and  
fear,  
Tens of thousands disappear.  
And those who flee, and reach our  
land,  
See fools who torch their shelters,  
hand in hand.

*Bomb fire, shrapnel, open wounds that  
bleed,  
We see them only in flashes – blink  
and we're freed.  
For some they're seconds,  
For others – endless hours indeed.*

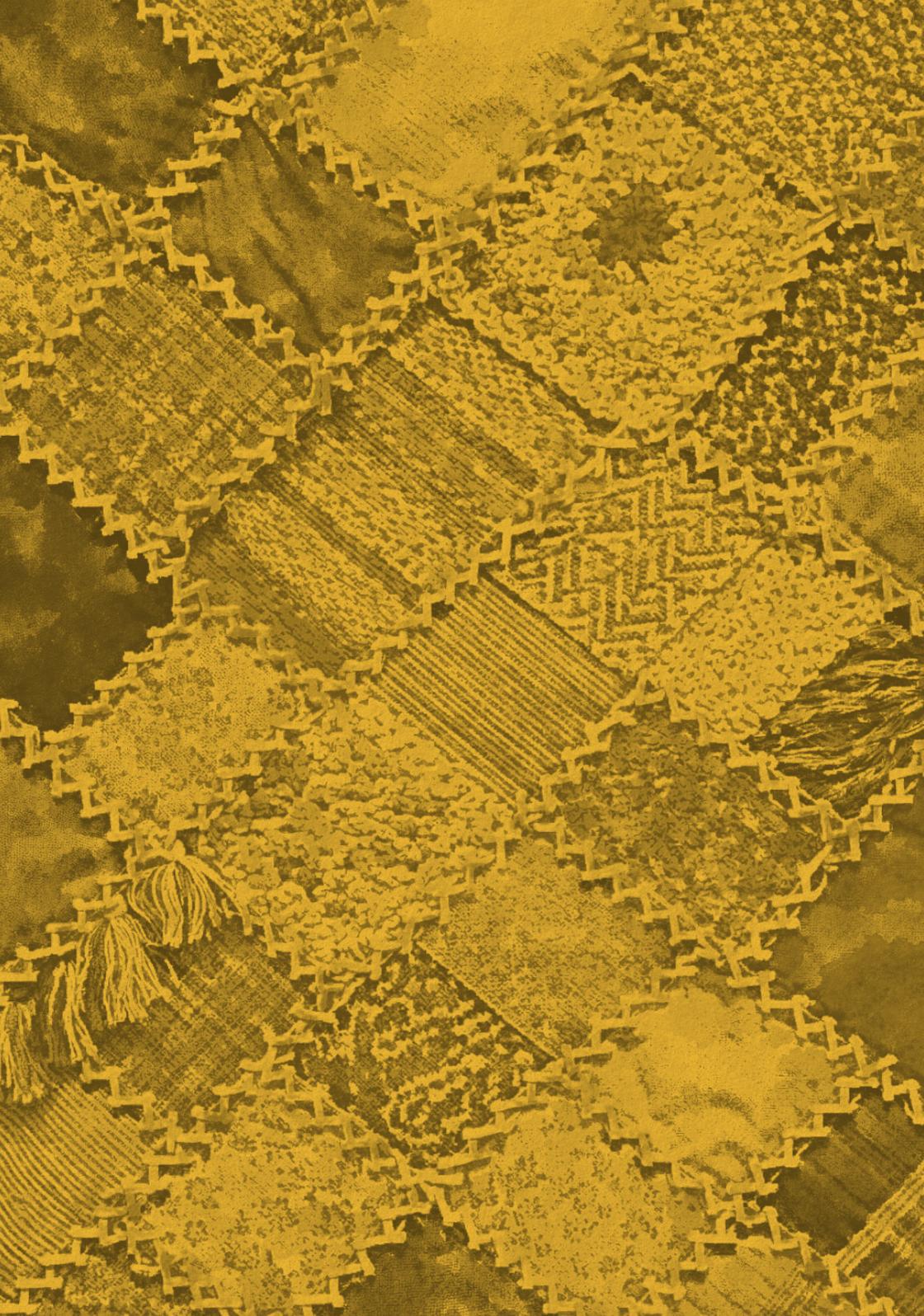
What kind of heart commits such  
deeds?  
Can't they feel the pain that bleeds?  
Do they not sense the fear, the dread,  
In those who lost all, left for dead?  
Empathy – to them, suspect.  
Their only thought? “They'll take  
our checks.”  
Hope, love, shelter – all was stolen.  
So let us help – those souls, the  
broken.



**Rebekka Ursula Schwend.**

*Rebekka Ursula Schwend. Rebekka was born in Stuttgart, Germany. She studies protestant theology at the University of Vienna, after earlier studies in Tübingen and Neuendettelsau, and pursues parallel Diaconical Studies in Ludwigsburg. She enjoys playing basketball, advocates for the inclusion of people with disabilities, and has served as WSCF-E Treasurer since October 2025.*





## **V. JUSTICE – Speaking, Resisting, Repainting**

*“But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”*

(Amos 5:24)



## My girl friends and I call each other luchadoras

- BY ALESSIA CANCEDDA

My girlfriends and I call each other luchadoras when we go to protests. Our WhatsApp group is called *Lucho pero [nunca] tengo miedo*, which means *I fight but I'm [never] scared*. Now that I reread it, it doesn't make much sense, but to us it does.

That “*never*” was added after we created the group chat, because we had to convince ourselves that even though we

were definitely scared, together we could overcome that fear — and keep going to protests, and keep fighting. So even though we always prepare beforehand, because in fact we are scared — of police brutality, of being silenced, of being recorded even though we are doing nothing wrong — we still go. And we have to be strong when we do.

We get that bravery from reminding ourselves that even if the situation is frightening, we will still show up. And I'm incredibly proud of this. And of us.

But it's exhausting. It's distressing. It happens every time I read the news and I know those headlines will lead us back to the streets, shouting and holding on to each other once again. I know it every time another woman is killed by a man, every time our communities' rights are violated, our civil rights are put in danger. I know it every time a ceasefire is broken, every time I read about another population suffering the consequences of hatred—over land, ethnicity, politics, religion.

Every day, I know my place is in the streets. I know my place is where things get done, where governments and institutions get called out, where we can do something.

I once read a quote that said something like: "I do not want to be an activist for my entire life." Because what an activist hopes for is that the battles they're fighting will, at some point, be won. What

an activist fights for is the end of the reasons why they have to keep fighting. I must admit I don't think we will ever stop being activists. And if we do, I don't think it will be because we're no longer needed. I'm not sure we, as humans, are capable of ceasing to be, in some way, cruel. We are a species that brings pain and destruction into the world, and I can't bring myself to pretend that isn't true.

But there is a concept that Jean-Jacques Derrida wrote about that made me realize that no matter what, we have to keep fighting for some kind of justice, for some kind of peace. And that maybe I will have to be an activist for my entire life. And that is the idea of justice to come. To put it simply: pure and unconditional justice is an ideal that can never be fully achieved. It feels like you can never quite touch it, never fully reach it. But you still have to envision it. You have to live as if you could one day arrive there — and the only way that can happen is by working toward it, continuously, incessantly. I tend to imagine **justice to come** as a ball of light you can see in the distance, incredibly far away, almost evanescent — but real,

and somehow tangible. That is what you're going for, that is what you're walking towards even when you feel like your legs can't take it anymore. And maybe that is just faith.

Not a passive kind of faith, the kind that makes you think standing still and hoping for change is enough, but an **active one**: the kind of faith that makes you advocate for climate justice, for human rights; the kind of faith that makes you risk everything, because nothing is more important than trying to make the world even just a little better than it is.

And this is never-ending work, truly. That is what keeps me going when I feel like the ground is collapsing under my feet, like everything I've ever believed in is being destroyed, like everything I do is useless: I remind myself that I may not see it in my lifetime, but there will be **justice to come**. And I'm not going to stop working for it to come.



**Alessia Cancedda**

*Alessia Cancedda is a 26-year-old student currently living in Rome, Italy. She's a transfeminist activist involved in different projects, passionate about theatre, writing and human rights.*

# Painting Over Hate: How Young People in Kosovo Turned Walls into Classrooms for Peace

- BY GRANIT SADIKU

The first time we walked past the wall, most of us pretended not to see it.

It was just outside a school in my city, Ferizaj, in southern Kosovo: a messy mixture of slurs against minorities, sexist insults, and nationalist symbols. Young people pass it every day on their way to class, football, or coffee. Some laughed, some took photos, most simply ignored it.

But ignoring does not make words less violent. If anything, silence gives them more power.

A few months later, the same wall looked completely different: colourful shapes, a quote chosen by a teenage girl, and a small hashtag at the bottom – #**SoshtVecKoment** (in English: “*It’s not just a comment*”). The transformation did not happen because a municipality worker suddenly decided to repaint it. It happened because a group of young people, many of them still in secondary school, decided that they wanted to live in a different kind of city.

This is the story of how our youth organisation, **Rin’ON**,

together with young people from villages and the city, turned hate speech into an opportunity for peacebuilding and youth leadership.

## From training room to city streets

In 2024 I had the chance to join the “**Frame the Future – Youth Inclusive Peacebuilding**” journey with WSCF Europe. Through Cihan Kılıç and other trainers, I was introduced to tools for conflict analysis, non-violent communication, and faith-based reflection on peace and justice. We spoke about structural violence, identity, and how faith communities can either fuel polarisation or support reconciliation.

One sentence from that process stayed with me: “*Peace is not only the absence of violence, but the presence of just relationships.*”

Back home in Kosovo, I kept thinking about our context. We live in a society still marked by the memory of war, with ethnic divisions that are sometimes

obvious, sometimes hidden. Online spaces are full of hate speech, conspiracy theories, and dehumanising language.

To be honest, I was not sure how far our work could go. Part of me wondered if small youth actions could really touch any of this – or if we were just putting “nice projects” on top of deeper wounds. I carried that doubt with me when we started to plan. The answer unexpectedly came through another of our programmes: a **Media Education Camp** with 24 young participants (rural and urban, majority and non-majority communities, aged 14–35). The camp focused on critical thinking, online safety, and the impact of media on inclusion and exclusion.

During one late-night discussion, participants began sharing examples of hate graffiti, racist insults on buses, sexist jokes in classrooms, and comment sections full of threats.

At some point, one participant said softly:

*“If hate can be written on walls, why can’t peace be written on walls too?”*

That question became the seed of our campaign: **#SoshtVecKoment**.

### **Phase 1: Cleaning the walls, reclaiming the space**

The first step was simple but radical: **remove the hate from the walls**.



Young people mapped hateful graffiti around Ferizaj – especially near schools, bus stops, and common meeting spots. They then divided into small groups to approach the municipality for permission, calculate paint and material costs, and plan logistics. As adults, our role was to support and mentor, not to lead. The campaign would only be meaningful if young people remained in the driving seat.

This was not always easy. Some officials were very supportive; others were slow to respond, and there was always the fear that permission would be refused or that the initiative would not be taken seriously. A few young people also worried about possible backlash: *“What if someone writes worse things over our murals?”* Those questions were part of the process.

On the first action day, the mood was a mix of excitement and anxiety. Covering the hate with a neutral base colour felt almost ceremonial, like erasing a wound. But the real power came when young people began designing and painting new messages: short phrases about dignity, unity, and courage; abstract images of hands, hearts, and open doors; symbols of nature and growth.

At one wall, two boys from the majority community worked next to a girl from a non-majority community who told us, *“I used to avoid this street. Now I want everyone to see what we made.”*

Passers-by stopped to ask questions. Some thanked the youth; a few were sceptical and said that “graffiti will always be there” or that “*young people are too sensitive*”. But every comment was an opportunity for dialogue. The walls became informal classrooms where we could talk about why words matter and how public space can either harm or heal.

The paint on their clothes became a badge of honour: proof that they had chosen not to be bystanders.

### **Phase 2: “It’s Not Just a Comment” – a city-square installation**

If the first phase dealt with words on walls, the second phase asked a deeper question: **What about the comments we leave online?**

For this phase, the young people designed a public installation in the central square of Ferizaj as part of **#SoshtVecKoment**. The idea was simple but very powerful: **comments are like clothes**.

We created a kind of “wardrobe” in a public space. On one side, there were black pieces of clothing hanging, each printed with real examples of hateful or humiliating comments taken from social media. They were anonymous, but every sentence came from our reality: attacks on women, ethnic slurs, body shaming, threats.

Visitors were invited to walk through the installation and read the comments as if they were choosing what to wear. Our volunteers asked them: “*Would you feel comfortable wearing this comment?*” “*How would it feel if someone put these words on you?*”

After spending time with the black clothes, people moved to the other side of the installation. There, colourful clothes were displayed, each carrying a positive or supportive message written by young people: words of encouragement, respect, solidarity, and care. Throughout the day, the volunteers symbolically “replaced” the dark clothes with the colourful ones, showing that we can transform the way we communicate. The reactions were strong. Some people stood in silence for a long time. Others took photos and started discussions right there in the square. One young man

admitted, “*I’ve written things online that look like those black shirts. I never thought of them as something someone has to ‘wear.’*”

For our volunteers, this installation was both artistic expression and peace education in action. They had to explain the metaphor, hold space for emotions, and gently challenge the idea that “it’s just a comment”. The city square became a place of reflection, where offline and online worlds met.

### **Phase 3: From awareness to education – schools, films, and workshops**

The final phase of the campaign took place in schools and youth centres.

We used a documentary about hate speech and cyberbullying as a starting point for **movie nights and workshops**. After each screening, young facilitators led discussions using methods that I had encountered through WSCF: circles of sharing, role plays, and small-group reflection.

Students explored questions such as:

When does a joke become violence?

Why is it easier to insult someone online than face to face?

What do our values or our faith

say about the way we speak to and about others?

We then worked on practical tools: how to report hateful content, how to support someone targeted, how to react as bystanders, and how to create positive counter-narratives.

One of the most powerful moments for me came when a quiet girl from a rural village, who had been bullied both offline and online, shared: *“I thought I was the only one. Hearing others speak today, I realised we all carry these stories. Maybe we can protect each other.”*

In each school we used anonymous questionnaires to gather data on students’ experiences with hate speech. The results were sobering but important: they showed that this is not an abstract problem, but a daily reality. We plan to use this data to advocate for stronger policies and more systematic peace education in local schools.

### **Faith, hope, and the courage to speak differently**

Although our campaign was not explicitly **religious, faith quietly shaped it.**

Many of our volunteers and community members come from different Muslim traditions. In our preparations I often asked them: *“What does your faith teach you*

*about the way we speak to others?”* Their answers converged on a few core ideas: that every person carries the image of God; that words can bless or curse; that peace requires both justice and mercy.

For me personally, the words *“Blessed are the peacemakers”* became a quiet guideline. They reminded me that peace is not only a feeling, but a practice: repainting a wall, choosing different words online, standing next to someone who is targeted. At the same time, I became more aware of how often I myself fail in my speech. The campaign did not make me feel like a *“successful peacebuilder”*, but like someone who is still learning to speak truthfully and kindly.

These theological intuitions translated into practical commitments:

We refused to answer hate with hate, even when we faced criticism.

We centred the voices of those most affected by violence, especially young women and non-majority youth.

We saw our work not as *“cleaning up someone else’s mess”* but as participating, in a small way, in God’s desire for reconciled communities.

In a world where religion is often used to justify exclusion or aggression, it felt important to show another possibility: **faith as a source of empathy, non-violence, and courage to transform public space.**

### **Lessons we are taking with us**

Looking back, I see this campaign not only as a series of activities, but as a **training ground for youth leadership**. Here are some of the lessons our community is carrying forward:

**Start with something concrete and visible.**

A repainted wall communicates more than a long speech. It shows that change is possible and invites curiosity.

**Give young people real responsibility, not symbolic roles.**

Young people designed the campaign, handled permissions, managed budgets, and facilitated discussions. This ownership turned them from “participants” into leaders.

**Use creativity to touch both heart and mind.**

The city-square installation worked because it spoke to emotions and imagination. People could see and feel the impact of their words.

**Work in alliances.**

Without support from schools,

the municipality, village councils etc. our work would have stayed small. Peacebuilding is always relational.

We did not always know what we were doing, and we still do not have all the answers.

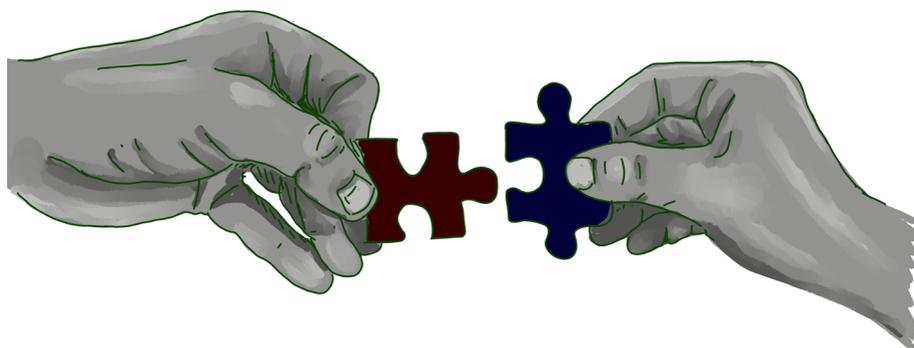
### **A different kind of wall**

Recently I walked again past the school where our first action took place. A group of younger children were standing in front of the mural, trying to read the words aloud. One of our volunteers, now a first-year university student, smiled and said, “*They will never know what used to be written here. Maybe that’s the point.*”

Of course, repainting walls and hanging colourful clothes in the city square do not solve all the deep injustices and divisions in our society. But they are beginnings: signs that young people refuse to normalise dehumanising language, and that they are ready to lead in building more just and inclusive communities.

For me, this campaign is a small chapter in a much larger story that WSCF Europe has been writing with young people across the continent: a story of **youth who do not accept the world as it is, but dare to imagine and practise a different future.**

If hate can be written on walls,  
then so can peace.  
And once you have seen young  
people painting peace into  
existence, it becomes harder  
to believe that anything is  
impossible.



**Granit Sadiku**

*Granit Sadiku is a youth worker and Executive Director of Rin'ON, a youth organisation in Ferizaj, Kosovo. He works with rural and urban youth on peacebuilding, inclusion, and civic engagement through art, media education, and village youth councils, and is actively involved in the WSCF Europe network.*

# Peacebuilding from everyday life with transformative leadership

- BY JUAN LUCAS JIMÉNEZ CÁRDENAS



Building peace from everyday life with transformative leadership highlights that we, as citizens, can raise our voices to denounce injustice and, at the same time, silence those internal voices that oppress and suppress us. Through effort and hard work, we have the power to change the realities that make us vulnerable in the eyes of the world. By facing challenges with integrity, we can overcome them to transform our lives and society.

Embracing the challenge of transforming our lives from an early age empowers us to contribute daily to a better present and future. Peace goes beyond signing national and international agreements and treaties; it is a

phenomenon built in everyday life, by being at peace with ourselves, with our fellow human beings, and with the environment. Building peace means taking on the mission to transform our surroundings and foster positive change.

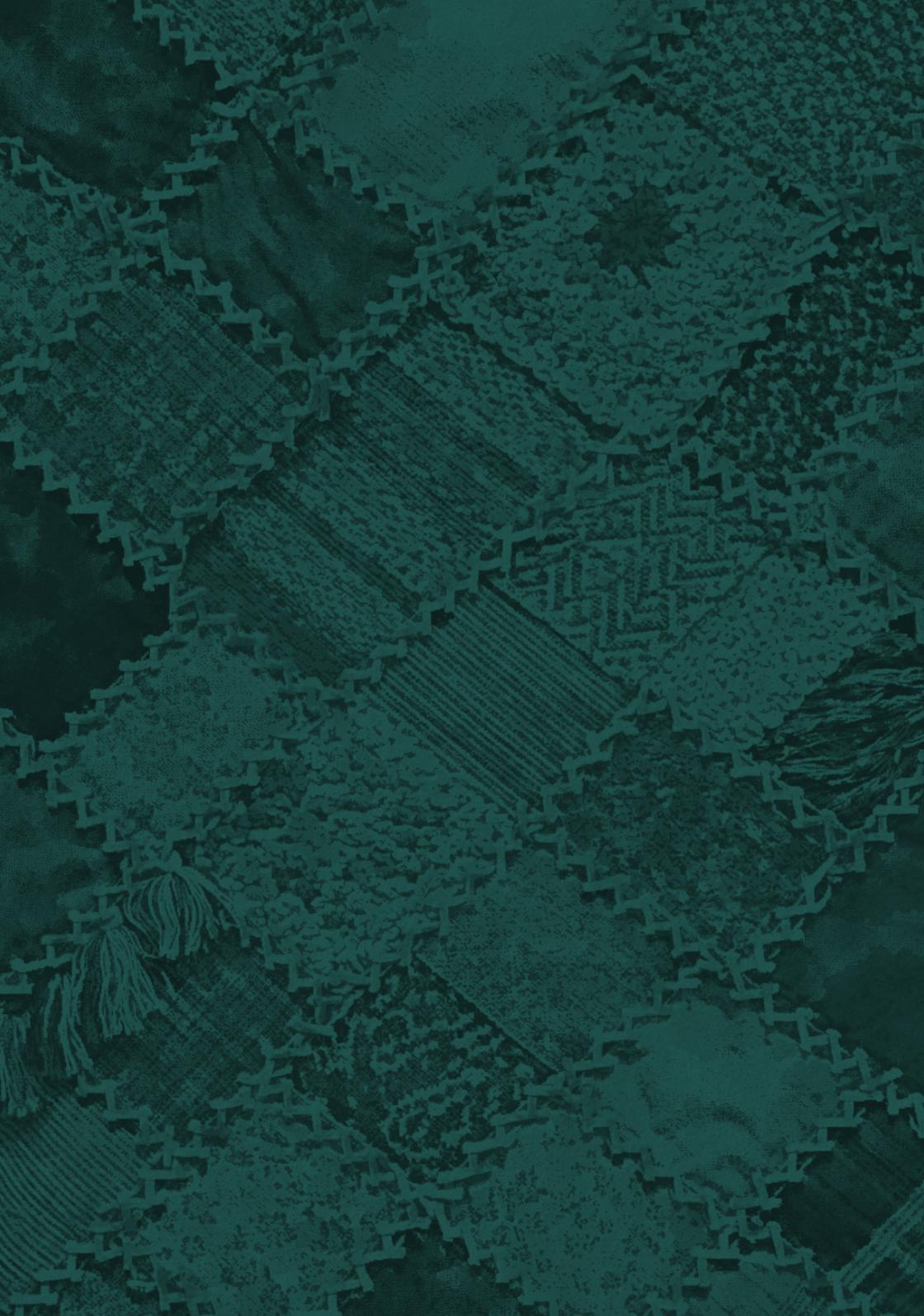
In 2016, in Colombia, the longest armed conflict that the Nation had experienced for over 50 years came to an end. What did this mean? It meant that we could face our fellow citizens in peace and begin to heal the wounds caused by the conflict. It also gave us the opportunity to envision ourselves as a society free from the individual and social damage generated by war. The forgiveness granted by citizens

to ex-combatants in the different territories affected by the armed struggle is an act and a symbol of peace. This was an opportunity to build a more just and equitable society for all beings coexisting in the Colombian republic. Working for peace is one of the most significant actions we can take to continue building a State, as through peace we can achieve all the goals we desire for a better society. Let us assume leadership to build free societies, to forge equitable development for all with love and harmony, and to empower one another to continue contributing to this society in the best possible way, overcoming the challenges we currently face.



### **Juan Lucas Jiménez Cárdenas**

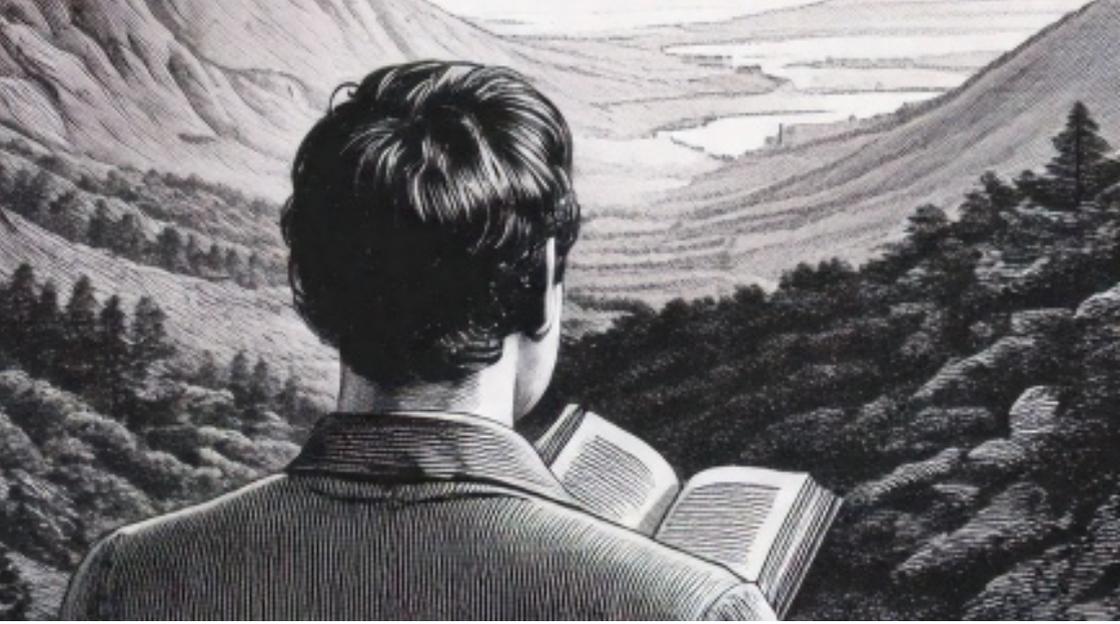
*Juan Lucas Jiménez Cárdenas. 28. Lawyer from Universidad Libre, member of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia, delegate of the Youth Committee of the First Presbyterian Church in the Youth Ministry of the North Coast Presbytery of Colombia. Volunteer at the Christian Student Movement (FUMEC) since 2015. Deputy Director of Justice and Human Rights in the Global Network of Young Politicians Colombia, Atlántico headquarters.*



## **VI. SOLIDARITY – Across Borders and Beliefs**

*“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together”*

(1 Corinthians 12:26)



## A via media Pacifism?

- BY SIMON RAMACCI

From as long as I have been a serious Christian, I have felt that the case for a faithful refusal to use lethal force has all the hallmarks of being “*catholic, primitive, and apostolic*” (Charles I, 1649, p. 86), and thus grounded in the best traditions of the Universal Church.

Training for Free Church ministry helped me cement my views: I have a very distinct memory of my favourite lecturer at Bible College telling us “*If we do Church right, we’ll have MI6 breaking through our doors*”, and while I can’t say I agreed with the hyperbole, I certainly understood the sentiment. As a Pacifist with

the zeal of a recent convert, it was only natural that the State (which had historically a difficult relationship with Dissenting churches) should be an object of suspicion, and those in its armed service regarded as compromised members of our churches.

I was satisfied with my views then, and took them as settled. However, as I found myself led to the Church of England, I decided it was a good time to re-examine all my theological convictions in light of the new traditions that I inhabited. So, as I re-assessed my views of the State, and found happiness in a more irenic Christianity, I had to come up with a matching new understanding

of my Christian Pacifism, which I'm provisionally sketching here this Remembrance-tide in three points.

(1) the State. I am now convinced that allegiance to and support for our countries is part of our Christian vocation as members of society, not as blind nationalism, but as prayerful reflection of the charges that are committed by God to our Rulers, and as engagement in light of the demands the Gospel puts on individual Christians. I can pray for the King and his Government each morning and evening without ever feeling like I might risk forgetting "whose minister he is" or to Whom my final allegiance lies.

(2) Christians who take arms. I have met many faithful Christians who believed this was their duty, and recognise the modern military is not (especially in peacetime) just about using lethal force. I think Christians are theologically mature enough that we can proclaim peace and assertive non-violence as the ideals, whilst recognising in a sinful world sometimes all we have are the least of many bad options. In such cases the Church should acknowledge the difficult reality, and be an instrument of healing and reconciliation, both between groups in conflict and for the

individuals who made choices out of "*tragic necessity*", as Orthodox Christians have often argued (Hart, 2020, p. 61). The best of the Lambeth Conference statements on War have also made this case for the Anglican world.

(3) Just War. I have come to appreciate this theory in its Christian versions as a good "*best worst case*" tool, a compromise putting firm limits to those who find themselves in the midst of war. The fact that a strong case can be made against weapons of mass destruction from a Just War perspective shows, I think, the importance of at least some qualified engagement with the theory.

And so this year, like the last couple of years, I will be remembering those who gave some or all in war, acknowledging the difficult choices they made, but I will continue to be particularly grateful for those among them who took "*with the utmost seriousness... the example of redemptive love which the cross holds before all people*" (Lambeth Conference, 2005, p. 6). And, above all, I will continue to pray for that day when "*nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more*" (Isaiah 2:4).

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**Simon Ramacci**

*The Reverend Simon Ramacci BEM. Simon is a Priest (Curate) in the Church of England, and has previously served as a Congregational Minister. He is an SCM member and previously served in the SCM General Council.*



Logged trunks of wood being swept away by the flood (Source: AntaraNews)

## Betapa Kita Tidak Bersyukur! (How Ungrateful We Are!)

*What would you feel if a leader of a majestic and beautiful country denies the destructive effects of deforestation merely for investment-related purposes?*

- BY TEOFILUS NATHANAEL

If there is one thing Indonesians will boast about their country, it would be Indonesia's majestic archipelago and its landscapes. But, in November 2025, the western part of Indonesia, specifically in Northern Sumatra, Western Sumatra, and Aceh, was hit by a massive flood with a lot of human and material casualties. The difference is, this flood seems off to some Indonesian social media users, as several clips show chunks of logged trunks being

swept away along with the flood.

This devastating situation made me reflect on a sermon I've shared before with teenagers and youths at one of GKI's local parishes in Bekasi, a suburban area near Jakarta (31/8/2025). This sermon was explicitly created to address the mass chaos that occurred in Jakarta and other major cities in Indonesia on August 28-31, 2025. This mass chaos was triggered by the death of an *ojek* (motorcycle

taxi) driver, who was struck by a police tactical vehicle. The public mass reacted as they saw this tragedy as a form of police incompetence and brutality.

There is a popular hymn in Indonesia, written by Subronto Kusumo Atmodjo in 1979, titled “*Betapa Kita Tidak Bersyukur*” (“*How Ungrateful We Are*”).

*Betapa kita tidak bersyukur (How ungrateful we are)  
bertanah air kaya dan subur; (to have a rich and fertile homeland)  
lautnya luas, gunungnya megah, (vast seas and majestic mountains)  
menghijau padang, bukit dan lembah. (green fields, hills, and valleys)*

Chorus *Itu semua berkat karunia (It's all a blessing and grace)  
Allah yang Agung, Mahakuasa; (from the Great and Almighty God)*

This hymn might seem weird at first because of the first line of the lyric. In the latest revision of the hymn book, the lyrics and title switch places, with “*Betapa Tidak Kita Bersyukur*” (“*How Could We Not be Grateful*”) creating a completely different sense and meaning. It would be questionable if a resident of this beautiful country were not grateful and

chose not to preserve and maintain its sustainability.

In Genesis 2:15, humans are mandated by the LORD to “*till [it] and keep*” the garden of Eden. In the Greek version of the Bible, “*garden*” uses the word *paradeisos* (παράδεισος), which in modern English can be translated to “*paradise*.” This verse resonates with how Indonesians and others around the world viewed Indonesia as a paradise on earth. The World Council of Churches also used this verse to define one of its Faith and Order documents, “*Cultivate and Care*,” as one of the callings of Churches throughout the world.

But, what would you feel if the number one person in this majestic and beautiful country chose not to preserve Indonesia’s natural resources sustainability merely for investment-related purposes? Prabowo Subianto, Indonesia’s current president, stated in a Development Planning Forum (*Musyawaharah Perencanaan Pembangunan – Musrenbang*) that “*we need to create more palm oil tree plantations*” and that “[*we*] don’t have to be afraid of endangering [*the forest or to do*] deforestation, as palm oil trees are also trees.” These kinds of statements aren’t only careless but also show a lack of empathy, accountability, and understanding of how humans



and their governance must pay close attention to the earth's life-sustaining systems.

Given all these facts, Indonesian youths realize that there is so much homework for the government to do to ensure social and ecological justice. Yes, we are desperate and devastated! I reflect on how Lamentations 3 depicts a condition similar to the author's devastation over Jerusalem's condition that day before Israel's

exile to Babylon. But, similar to how the author of Lamentation depicts that "*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness*" (v. 22-23) in the midst of Israel's devastation and destruction, Indonesian youths saw that there is hope. And this call to hope must be transformed into action.

On August 31, 2025, the nearest

Sunday to the tragedy of mass chaos, several young pastors and pastoral candidates decided to preach specifically about how local parish members must act to present the kingdom of God (righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; cf. Romans 14:17) in the midst of the country's condition. A pastoral candidate in my synod, Eunike Alvonciani, even decided to start a campaign inspired by the WCC's Thursdays in Black, which encourages congregants and preachers to wear black on August 31, 2025, to mourn about the social-political situation in Indonesia and raise

awareness that we are called to share love, creating hope in action.

Seminarians at Jakarta Theological Seminary also recognize the urgency of speaking up about this incident. On August 29, 2025, the student board, together with other university student boards, chose to voice their prophetic voices in front of the Jakarta Metropolitan Police Department Headquarters. The government needs to hear that even members of the clergy [candidates] are restless, facing these kinds of situations. Returning to our current situation,



nowadays, Indonesia's social media users are holding the government accountable for its pro-deforestation statements. Some efforts in Northern Sumatra to combat deforestation have also been undertaken, even by local churches (Catholic and Protestant) and other religious faiths. In addition, several fundraisers are taking place across the country to help those affected by this disaster. This kind of awareness, raised by Indonesian youth theologians and the public at large, helped strengthen the checks-and-balances process in our government, which the government is not doing a good job at the moment.

On the first Sunday of Advent (the

day that this article is written), this disaster became a reminder that we are called to be ready (cf. Matthew 36:44) and remember that there is still hope. However, this hope also needs to be accompanied by responsibility and readiness to work together to improve. How could we not be grateful that we are all always created, cultivated, and cared for by our God? May God help us, *Kyrie eleison!*



### **Teofilus Nathanael**

*Teofilus is a pastoral candidate at the Indonesian Christian Church, an Indonesian Reformed Church. He graduated from Jakarta Theological Seminary (Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Theologi Jakarta) and has a deep concern for ecumenical studies and public-related issues (such as gender and sexuality, social-political, ecology, etc.).*

# 130th WSCF Anniversary Reflections: Perspectives on Peace from WSCF Regional Secretaries (Europe, Middle East, USA, Africa)

1. **What are the main challenges to peace and reconciliation that young people face in your region today?**

## Europe

Young Europeans are navigating a world where peace and reconciliation are no longer abstract ideals, but daily challenges we live, feel, and fight for. While the EU has lived in peace for the longest period in history, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine has shaken Europe, reminding young people that peace is fragile. Even far from the frontlines, we feel the anxiety of militarization, rising defense spending, and the threat of conflict spreading. Fear of invasion makes it harder to talk about peace: weapons are roaring.

In times of no-war, we also face the rise of political polarization and radicalization, amplified by digital spaces that reward going viral, and shouting over listening, and it can feel impossible to find the “middle ground” without being accused of betraying our

communities or values. On top of that, many are skeptical of traditional institutions. Politics, legal systems, and even some international structures feel – best case scenario – unresponsive, unreachable or – worst case scenario – caught up in powerful games, leaving young people feeling like our voices simply don’t matter.

## Middle East

Young people in the Middle East are navigating a landscape shaped by ongoing wars, political instability, and generational trauma. Conflict isn’t a distant concept here—it interrupts daily life, education, livelihoods, and even the simple sense of safety. Displacement continues to fracture communities, while economic collapse in several countries fuels frustration and hopelessness. Add to that rising sectarian rhetoric, media polarization, and the feeling that institutions are failing them, and you get a generation trying to build peace while standing on shifting sand. Across all these contexts, **sectarianism** remains one of the deepest wounds.

It fuels mistrust, fragments communities, and blocks any attempt to build a shared vision of peace. For many young people, division isn't an abstract idea—it's embedded in politics, opportunities, and even the way society is structured.

### USA

Our challenges in the US are many and reflect the challenges faced by siblings around the world. Young people today contend with an increasingly authoritarian government, the corresponding rise in violence by institutions like ICE, the police, and even their own universities, and uncertainty as resources are diverted from education and healthcare. All of these pressures increase anxiety

amongst young people already experiencing the struggles of youth and a divided society.

### Africa

Young people across Africa face overlapping drivers of fragility that entrench conflict and stall reconciliation. These include protracted governance crises and politicized ethnicity; high youth unemployment amid rising costs of living; urban and rural insecurity (including GBV and criminal violence); climate shocks (droughts, floods, cyclones) disrupting livelihoods and education; forced displacement and migration; digital harms (disinformation, hate speech); and uneven access to quality education, health, and justice.



These pressures are compounded by trauma from past conflicts, distrust of institutions, and limited youth participation in decision-making, even where progressive policies exist but are weakly implemented.

**2. How do these challenges influence their outlook on justice, and which of them do you think most strongly hinders the pursuit of justice?**

**Europe**

We are going through what many call the “*polycrisis*”: economic insecurity, climate change, and social instability push young people into survival mode, leaving little energy for the slow, patient work of reconciliation. That’s why justice is a demand for immediate accountability. Yet, the biggest barrier remains systemic exclusion: when youth are left out of decision-making spaces, justice can only be pursued through protest, disruption, or social movements, rather than through collaborative, lasting change.

At the same time, the war in Ukraine and rising militarization across Europe heighten a sense of urgency, creating a tension between fear and responsibility. On one hand, there is anxiety

about safety, the future, and the threat of violence spreading closer to home. On the other, there is a drive to act, to stand for justice and solidarity with those affected, whether through supporting refugees, raising awareness, or advocating for peaceful solutions. This militarized environment also deepens social divisions, as political narratives frame security in terms of “us versus them,” challenging young people to find dialogue and understanding across ideological and cultural lines.

**Middle East**

Living through war, corruption, and displacement has made young people skeptical about justice in any meaningful form. In Lebanon, when institutions fail repeatedly, youth naturally stop believing that justice can come through formal channels. In Palestine, where basic rights are systematically denied, justice feels distant and fragile. In Syria and Sudan, the collapse of state structures and the spread of armed groups have replaced justice with survival.

Among all these challenges, **the most damaging to the pursuit of justice is the normalization of injustice**—the idea that corruption is expected, that violence is routine, and that inequality is simply how things

are. Sectarianism deepens this even further: when communities are pitted against each other, justice becomes selective, not universal. Once people lose confidence that justice is possible, it becomes much harder to rebuild peace.

## USA

I think that these challenges show young people the importance of locating efforts for justice within local communities. When government at the highest level works against justice and threatens the cohesion of our communities, strengthening relationships and understanding the effects of policies on the people around us becomes even more crucial. I see that students in our movement understand this and incorporate it into their activism and church leadership. Increasing threats to the safety of Black and brown, international, and LGBTQ+ students hinders their ability to speak out and makes students anxious about affiliation with certain political topics. Still, students display moral and strategic leadership for all people working for justice in the US.

## Africa

Economic precarity is reshaping youth conceptions of justice toward immediate survival:

fair prices, dignified work, safe communities, and accessible services often take priority over longer-term institutional reforms. Persistent exclusion from governance spaces fosters skepticism about the rule of law and accountability, especially when corruption or impunity goes unaddressed. This reinforces the sense that institutions are unresponsive, fueling frustration and disengagement from formal processes. The single strongest hindrance is the combination of unemployment and cost-of-living pressures, because it erodes trust, limits time and resources for civic engagement, and incentivizes short-term coping strategies over sustained advocacy and reconciliation work.

### 3. **How can Christian faith and ecumenical values inspire or strengthen peacebuilding efforts in your context?**

#### Europe

As Christians, we believe that peace is not something we create on our own: Jesus left us his peace, which goes beyond the absence of conflict. It is a way of life, rooted in forgiveness, compassion, human dignity, and unity.

Ecumenism, in its effort to bring



different Christian traditions together, can sometimes challenge our sense of identity. Yet it also shows us the power of focusing on what unites us rather than what divides us. By working together on the core values of our faith, we can transform anxiety, fear, and uncertainty into concrete acts of care and solidarity.

### **Middle East**

To be realistic, Christian communities in the Middle East don't always embody unity. Denominational divisions run deep, and cooperation is often shaped by political, demographic, or historical sensitivities. But precisely because unity is not the norm, ecumenical work offers something rare and valuable: a space where young people from different churches can actually meet, speak honestly, and understand each other.

In these spaces, faith becomes less about slogans and more about lived responsibility—caring for the dignity of others, refusing

hatred, and choosing dialogue over fear. When youth experience this kind of shared learning, they begin to break stereotypes and see that peace starts with changing attitudes inside our own communities before preaching it to others. Ecumenical engagement won't fix the region's political crises, but it does strengthen young leaders who can model healthier ways of living together.

### **USA**

At a time of societal division and distance created by cultures of productivity and virtual dependency, young people seek genuine connection with others and frameworks through which to make meaning of the world. Christian faith offers community and connection with people similarly inspired by the love of God to do justice in the world. Peacebuilding is strengthened when the communities working for peace and justice are loving, trusting, and forgiving of

one another. While not every movement or person working for peace may feel inspired by Christianity, young Christians can bring universal values like forgiveness, love for neighbors, and humility into their wider communities to strengthen a foundation from which to act.

### **Africa**

Christian and ecumenical traditions across Africa offer deep reservoirs of moral authority, social trust, and community infrastructure that can be mobilized for peace.

- Shared dignity and Imago Dei: Grounds nonviolence, restorative

justice, and protection of the vulnerable, reframing adversaries as neighbors worth engaging.

- Reconciliation and truth-telling: Encourages processes of confession, lament, forgiveness, and repair—practical steps for social healing and trauma recovery.
- Unity-in-diversity: Ecumenism models cooperation across denominations and cultures, countering polarization and enabling broad coalitions for justice.



**4. In what ways are students and youth movements already taking initiative toward peace, dialogue, or social justice in your region?**

**Europe**

Youth movements have increasingly taken to the streets: protesting, raising their voices, standing in solidarity with Ukraine and Palestine, and campaigning and boycotting to stop wars.

This shows that we do not view our faith as merely a personal journey or private growth, but as a responsibility and a commitment to act, intertwined with a commitment to justice. We are not retreating from the world; we are willing to transform it, alongside others, whether they share our faith, another faith, or no faith at all, while remaining rooted in love, justice, and reconciliation.

We have also been learning practical skills that can be applied and shared, such as Non-Violent Communication, to promote empathy, re-humanize the other, and “*de-weaponize*” our communities, starting with the way we speak and relate to one another.

**Middle East**

A strong example is the recent **WSCF International Training on**

**Peace, Dialogue, and Cooperation** held in Alexandria. Students from across the Middle East gathered to explore how they can advocate for peace in a region overwhelmed by conflict. The training gave them tools to understand power, trauma, sectarianism, and the need for cross-border solidarity. It also helped them see themselves as actors, not just observers, in shaping a more just future.

This work is already continuing. A second in-person activity is about to take place in Lebanon, bringing together youth from Lebanon and Syria to build on the Alexandria process. The goal is clear: empower young people to become future leaders and advocates for peace in their own communities. These initiatives show that even in difficult times, students are committed to transforming the region from within.

**USA**

In so many instances in the US, students and youth lead movements for justice and peace. They organize on their campuses and beyond, building movements that are local and connected nationally. Some of the best examples of peaceful, just community building I have witnessed over the past few years are the Palestine Solidarity Encampments. The encampments

were (and still are, in some cases) entirely student-run, interfaith, inclusive, concerned with the mental, physical, and spiritual safety of those involved, and sustained through solidarity with the surrounding community. Those who experienced life within an encampment now have a vivid example of how communities could operate through principles of just peace, including respect for its members' spiritual needs. I know that those students are taking what they learned into their communities and activism to find ways to bring that vision to life beyond their campuses.

### **Africa**

Across Africa, students and youth movements are making tangible contributions despite constraints.

- Civic education and accountability: Student fellowships and youth coalitions run forums, debates, and social media campaigns on governance, anti-corruption, and electoral integrity.
- Trauma healing and psychosocial support: Faith-based youth groups facilitate peer circles and referrals to care for survivors of violence and displacement.
- Community dialogue:

Ecumenical societies convene dialogues across ethnic, religious, and political lines to ease tensions and build understanding.

- Gender justice mobilization: Youth-led GBV awareness, bystander training, and survivor-support initiatives promote safety and cultural change.
  - Climate and ecological justice: Student associations organize tree-planting, disaster preparedness, and advocacy for just transitions and climate adaptation.
  - Service and livelihoods: Volunteering, skills workshops, and social enterprises provide pathways to income and dignity while strengthening social cohesion.
- 5. How can young people within WSCF strengthen connections and solidarity between regions to address shared global issues such as conflict, inequality, or displacement?**

## Europe

By learning about what is happening in other regions, leveraging our global network, and talking to young people from different backgrounds and experiences. For example, at the WSCF-Europe, we have started to reflect on a specific framework for diasporas from other regions, to support their ecumenical engagement abroad. And through solidarity, which is not symbolic, but shows true commitment to systemic change, shaking the system from its core.

As Europeans, this also means decolonizing our minds and approaches: stepping back, listening, and following the paths that the communities we support have already defined for themselves. By doing this, we stop perpetuating existing inequalities and power dynamics, and we unlock the true potential, creativity, and transformative energy of global youth.

## Middle East

Young people can strengthen connections simply by working together consistently, not occasionally. Cross-regional training programs, mentorship, and shared advocacy spaces help build trust across cultures and contexts. When youth learn from each other directly, they develop

a sense of common purpose instead of feeling isolated by their national struggles.

We have already taken concrete steps in that direction. WSCF Middle East sent **seven young people from different countries to Torino, Italy**, to participate in a training with students from Council of Europe countries organized by WSCF Europe. The program focused on peace and hope, and it created a meaningful bridge between regions dealing with conflict, extremism, and displacement. It's a start—one that shows how powerful solidarity becomes when young people learn together instead of working in silos.

## USA

It is so important to speak to one another about the shared challenges we face and learn from the creative solutions young people around the world are finding to build peace through those challenges. The Frame the Future trainings, which brought together young people active in movements for peace and justice in multiple WSCF regions, were a model for how WSCF can and must facilitate relationship building, information sharing, and strategic coordination amongst the global WSCF movements.

## **Africa**

- Shared learning cohorts: Create interregional cohorts on conflict transformation, ecological justice, and displacement for mutual mentorship.
- Story exchanges and peace labs: Facilitate cross-regional “peace labs” where youth present case studies, practice mediation, and co-design localized interventions, with translation support for inclusivity.
- Joint advocacy calendars: Align seasonal campaigns (e.g., International Day of Peace, 16 Days of Activism) with common themes, coordinated messaging, and pooled resources.
- Rapid response solidarity: Establish a youth solidarity desk to amplify urgent alerts, share safeguarding resources, and mobilize interregional prayers, statements, and support for affected communities.
- Digital bridges and safe tech: Use moderated online hubs to counter disinformation, share verified resources, and

train youth in digital organizing, safety, and ethical storytelling.

6. **What actions, programs, or partnerships should WSCF and its regions prioritize in the coming years to build a more peaceful and just world?**

## **Europe**

To me, the most powerful thing we can create is communities of real people who become fellow activists, spaces where we meet, share ideas, and learn practical skills that can be tested and adapted in different contexts. Facing similar challenges and united by the same goals, we can combine our creativity and existing knowledge to drive global change. Young people at WSCF have been transforming societies, resolving conflicts, and renewing Churches for over 130 years. I am certain there is still so much more in our toolbox waiting to be discovered, shared, and put into action.

## **Middle East**

WSCF should focus on long-term peacebuilding, not one-off activities. This means investing in trauma-aware training, conflict transformation, youth leadership, and cross-regional cooperation.

Partnerships with interfaith organizations, human rights networks, and community-based initiatives will strengthen local student movements and make peacebuilding sustainable. Most importantly, WSCF should keep creating opportunities for young people from different countries to work together, share experiences, and build a generation of leaders who refuse to repeat the divisions of the past.

## USA

Student-led programs that bring together young people from around the world in an accessible way to learn from one another will create opportunities for creativity and the grace of God to flow. We should prioritize all opportunities to connect across borders, using resources like Zoom as well as finding ways to meet face-to-face. Where two or three are gathered!



### **Serena Tiburtini**

*Serena is WSCF-Europe's Regional Secretary and global programme. With a background in intercultural communication, intersectionality, and migration law, Serena designs participatory projects that promote civic awareness and educational equity. Coordinator for youth, security and peacebuilding. Her work at WSCF-Europe combines strategic planning with on-the-ground training and advocacy, human rights education, youth engagement, and social justice.*



### **Melissa Bridi**

*Melissa is the Regional Executive for WSCF Middle East and Global Program Coordinator for Youth Ecumenical Leadership. A Lebanese Orthodox with a background in law, conflict management, and humanitarian action, she brings extensive experience in peacebuilding, rule of law, and youth leadership across conflict-affected contexts.*



### **Ailih Weeldreyer**

*Ailih (she/her) is the national organizer for WSCF-US and a 2024 graduate of Harvard Divinity School. She previously served on the staff of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in New York, as a Presbyterian Young Adult Volunteer in Washington, D.C., and organized with the Sunrise Movement in her hometown of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Ailih brings a passion for young adult formation, peace-building, and community organizing to the work she does with students in the U.S.*



### **Morgan Mambwe**

*Morgan is from Zambia. He comes from a background of ordained ministry with passion for youth ministry. He is a member of the All Africa Youth Network which is a wing of the All Africa Conference of Churches. Morgan holds a Masters in Theology: Old Testament and Hebrew Studies from the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Morgan was appointed as regional Secretary of the WSCF Africa Region in June 2023 and is currently serving as global program coordinator for Youth Ecumenical Leadership.*



## **VII. CALLING – What Now?**

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”*

(Matthew 5:9)

Real peace starts within- with peace of  
mind and inner healing.

Hannah



**Hannah Wehner**

*Hannah Wehner. Very passionate about peace, justice, and reconciliation. She works as a domestic abuse support worker supporting mainly women and children on their journey towards freedom, safety, and recovery.*

# Faith and youth in today's world

-BY ALEXANDRA HERNÁNDEZ PÉREZ

In today's world, we face multiple problems such as the climate change crisis, wars and conflicts, poverty, and resource scarcity, to name a few. There are also others such as violence and insecurity, environmental pollution, and mental health issues, which occur to a greater or lesser extent depending on our location and context.

Given this panorama, action to address or provide solutions is urgently needed. Thus, we often think that all these responses must be provided or resolved by the authorities or governments. However, as people who face such problems and are affected by them, and even as young people, we cannot be indifferent to these global issues.

Our actions and participation as young people begin in our closest circles, such as family, friends, neighbours, as well as in the spaces where we find ourselves on a daily basis, such as churches, schools, and workplaces, extending to our localities, states, and countries.

In this way, the promotion of peace

and dialogue about global issues can begin within our families, with friends, and even with our brothers and sisters in the faith. Talking and informing ourselves is also important in order to recognise and become aware of what is happening in the world, allowing us to not be indifferent to such situations, to be empathetic, and consequently to be able to offer solutions, as written, "*Not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others*" (Philippians 2:4 NIV).

The question here could be: but as a young person, and even more so as a young Christian, what can I do about it?

Young people also have a voice, as long as it is guided by the Word of God, in love. This is – let no one look down on your youth – as it says in the Word of God, we read, "*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity*" (1 Timothy 4:12 NIV).

For that reason, we can be the voice that promotes peace, dialogue, justice, reconciliation,

as well as solutions to global problems. The next question is: How?

We can propose and promote groups and meetings in our churches where these topics are discussed, that is, promoting more inclusive conversations and spaces, open to dialogue within our congregations and even virtual participation for those who cannot attend. In this way, not only is participation encouraged, but also the exchange of knowledge and multiple perspectives, which facilitate offering new and fresh ideas that, combined with the gifts and talents given by God, enable us to face today's problems.

An example of this is proposing actions that lead our churches—both as a place and as a body—to care for the environment and be more sustainable; holding informative seminars on mental health or violence; and even providing support for the most vulnerable groups or those with limited resources in our localities or elsewhere in our countries or in the world, as we read, *“In everything I showed you [by example] that by working hard in this way you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed [and brings greater joy]*

*to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35 AMP).

These and many other examples, which promote youth participation, can help create leaders within our churches who, with God's teachings and the values of His Kingdom, can be a blessing not only in their congregations, but also in their social circles, both where they are now and in the future.

Likewise, we can suggest times of prayer in our churches where we can have a special time to pray more frequently for the various situations occurring in our states and countries, but also internationally, such as wars or international conflicts and poverty.

Moreover, as the Scripture records: *“Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity”* (1 Timothy 2:2 NLT), we can pray for our church leaders and world leaders, and even more, for young people who, with God's help, can become leaders in various areas for the glory of God and the well-being of the world, as well as its future.

Therefore, the impact we will have as youth is not limited to the individual or the local level,

but goes beyond that. In other words, it does not remain only in our churches, but can have repercussions and even influence or collaborate with institutions or our governments, guided by God and working as God's co-workers, as written, *"For we are God's fellow workers [His servants working together]"* (1 Corinthians 3:9 AMP), to bring reconciliation, peace and care to our neighbour and all of creation.

Finally, to say that God's grace, faith in God and His Word, as well as our faith communities, can enable us as young people to do good works in today's world. Scripture affirms that: *"For we are God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"* (Ephesians 2:10 NIV).

If we choose to act in our spaces and contexts, with love to contribute to the resolution of these global problems, and even more if we go with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these actions may even create connections, inspire others, and have an impact in various areas, ultimately positively influencing the world we live in.

As young people, we can be agents of change for the present and the future. It is my prayer that we may act with God's guidance and blessing to transform the world, and above all, to extend His kingdom in today's world.



### **Alexandra Hernández Pérez**

*Alexandra Hernández Pérez. A young Mexican woman, member of the Methodist Church of Mexico and International Relations student. Her interests include faith, youth participation, and international cooperation. Her vision weaves together Christian faith, social commitment, and a constant desire to build bridges between people, churches, and nations.*



MOZAIK

## And... What now?

Dear young people,

If you have made it this far, know this: ***you were never meant to be only a reader.***

Mozaik 43 is not a collection of beautiful words meant to stay on these pages. It is an invitation. A calling. A reminder that peace is not something we wait for, it is something we practice, imperfectly and courageously, every day.

We are living in a world that often tells us to be quiet, patient, and grateful. And yet, we keep showing up for our communities, for our churches, for those pushed to the margins. Many of you do this while carrying wounds of your own, including injustices experienced within communities of faith. Still, you choose to stay, to question, to lead.

**DO NOT** let anyone tell you that your voice is too young, too radical, or too hopeful.

*You deserve to participate.*

*You deserve to be heard.*

*You deserve to help shape the present, and the future of our churches, and our world.*

WSCF exists because generations before us believed that students and young people are not only the Church of tomorrow, but **the Church of today**. As we celebrate 130 years of this movement, may

we honor that legacy not with nostalgia, but with action.

So **GO**

*fight* for peace in your neighborhoods, classrooms, communities, churches, and streets.

*build* bridges where walls still stand.

*heal* what has been broken.

and never forget: ***you do not walk alone.***

**Another world is not only possible, it is already being born through you.**

With hope and solidarity,

— *Laura Gomez Reyes*

**Editor-in-Chief**

# MOZAIK'S TEAM

**Laura Gomez Reyes** | Editor-in-Chief



*Laura Gomez Reyes. Barranquilla, Colombia. International business and Finance professional. Youth leader at Presbyterian Church of Colombia. Drawn to diverse cultures, history, languages and travels. Passionate about everything related with ecumenical and interreligious world. Enjoys serving others, volunteering, and contributing to the community.*

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*Eleonore Seiferth studied English literature and art education at the University of Paderborn, with a focus on art mediation and cultural education. Alongside her academic work, she participated in international projects such as the "Share the Care" youth event in Croatia, gaining diverse insights into collaboration and cultural exchange.*

## **Evelyn Diana Plitman** | Communication Officer



*Evelyn Evelyn has years of experience from Diakonija Latvija, where she initially led programs for children, youth, and seniors, including teaching and weekly program oversight. Her experience culminated in a role as Project Manager, overseeing international ESC volunteers and coordinating activities for youngsters in day-care centers and other international projects (including participation in the MakeChangeYourself youth program from interdiac). She currently leads WSCF-E communication strategy and social media.*

## **Marcos Dorneles** | Art Editor



*Marcos is a Brazilian videomaker and graphic designer based in Italy. He is passionate about using music and visual arts to create unity and harmony. His work is deeply inspired by his love for ecumenical communities and the richness of cultural diversity.*





**MOZAIK**