

'Hope-Makers: From Hostility to Hospitality'

Embracing Diversity – Re-examining Democracy – Challenging Hostility

**International and Ecumenical Conference
held at Berlin, Germany, 4th – 7th December 2025**

Conference Statement

- **We dream** of a world in which the breadth of God's spacious dwelling becomes evident among us – a house with many rooms, where every human being, in all their dignity, identity, and belonging, finds a home. In a time marked by rising fear, fragmentation, and hostility, we dream of communities shaped by the hospitality of Christ, who creates common space where others exclude, reconciles where others foster a sense of offence and humiliation, and gathers together where others cause division. We dream of safe spaces where everyone may open up freely and is listened to attentively and respectfully.
- **We acknowledge** that this third Conference convened with heavier hearts than before. Participants brought stories of democratic backsliding; polarised societies; a populism that has seeds of fascism; racialised violence and a resurgence of unashamed, open racism; ecological devastation; weakening trust in institutions; digital manipulation; and rising hostility and fear. Our young participants – the inheritors of all that today's decisions will shape – expressed frustration, urgency, and determination. They called for wider participation, formation for leadership, and the courage to act before opportunities close. These tears and fears do not overwhelm us. They sharpen our vision. They deepen our resolve.
- **We commit** to walk together in our diversities – not despite them, but because of them. Unity is not uniformity. We commit to strengthen one another in courage, to resist hostility with prophetic clarity, to speak truth in public, to defend the dignity of all people, and to confidently bring hope into this world. We commit to uphold 'from lament to action' and not reverse the course, and move from insight to transformation, reflection to public witness, being wounded to becoming wounded healers and a community of healing.

A Pilgrimage Continued: From Freiburg to Bad Boll to Berlin

From 4th – 7th December 2025, Christians from the Church of England, in particular the Diocese in Europe and the Racial Justice Unit, from the wider Anglican Communion, partner churches and organisations, in particular EKD, WCC and USPG, and personalities from other faiths, gathered in Berlin, Germany, to hold a conference on racial justice.

But our journey did not begin here: In **Freiburg (2023)**, gathered from many contexts, we confronted racism as sin and heresy, recognising that every person bears the image of God. We affirmed that diversity is a divine gift. In **Bad Boll (2024)**, we realised that internal transformation requires spaces of encounter, truth-telling, healing, repentance, and structural change – both interpersonal and institutional.

In response to major and dangerous global shifts, in 2025 our discourse addressed the needs of the hour and turned outward. We see more clearly that the crises confronting the world – political, ecological, social, and spiritual – cannot be addressed without public witness and advanced interrelatedness with interfaith and civil society partners. Our calling is not to retreat into private spirituality or ecclesial introspection but to enter society's contested spaces with courage, humility, and hope. Thus, this third conference marks a much needed new stage: the movement from renewal to witness; from the formation of just communities to the shaping of just societies. We see ourselves as part of a broadening and intensifying process as we continue our pilgrimage towards a world more just and inclusive.

With this in mind, the Conference adopted the following Statement:

I. Theological Foundations: Human Dignity, Divine Dwelling, and the Spirit's Complex Unity

1. Human dignity as foundational for Christian engagement

At the heart of Christian anthropology stands the conviction that every human being is created in the image of God. This affirmation is not merely spiritual; it is social, ethical, and political. Wherever the image of God is denied – through racism, discrimination on ground of gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, age, other forms of degrading people for who they are, through exploitation, authoritarianism, ecological devastation, or indifference – human dignity is violated. When commitment to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion is withdrawn, the DEI is being taken out of the *imago dei*.

We therefore affirm that each person is endowed with worth that no state, market, or majority may override. This is the foundation for any society that seeks justice and peace. It is also a core criterion by which Christians evaluate public structures, political systems, and social practices.

2. Incarnation: A God who chooses to dwell in the world

In John 14, Jesus reverses the logic of eschatological hope: He draws our attention away from a possible future home in heaven, and towards God's presence in this world: 'We will come to them and make our home with them.' God does not withdraw from history; God dwells within it. God's presence welcomes rather than excludes; it embraces rather than dominates. The spaciousness of the Father's house – with 'many rooms' – becomes the pattern for Christian life and a vision for public life: societies in which all may live in dignity, flourish in safety, and participate without fear.

Jesus does not remain aloof of the world's struggle. He enters right into its political hostilities, religious conflicts, social fragmentations, and human sufferings. He does not fear 'contamination' by imperfect systems but brings healing into their midst. Likewise, to follow Christ is to enter the world with humility and courage – not to escape it. Christian witness requires presence: engaging flawed political structures without being captured by them; accepting compromise without surrendering integrity; trusting in God's forgiveness when we fail, and in God's grace when we are tired.

Churches encourage and support an understanding, that Christian calling and vocation is not only into the ministry, but also into positions of responsibility in politics and the economy. Christians must not shy away from involvement, but trust that their integrity is resilient and that they can change things for the better by engaging (within) secular life. Christians cannot remain spectators. Discipleship is a public duty and office.

3. Qualified diversity and the Spirit's complex unity

The Spirit creates unity not by erasing difference, but by honouring it. In Joel's vision and the Pentecost story, young and old, women and men, powerful and powerless, speakers of many languages all receive the Spirit's gifts. This 'qualified diversity' – unity, not uniformity – contrasts with both homogenising majoritarianism and arbitrary relativism. Where the Spirit is present, unjust differences are confronted; creative differences are celebrated. Diversity becomes a source of resilience, not division.

4. The Paraclete: Spirit of truth in an age of distortion

In our digital age, algorithms amplify outrage, platforms reward falsehood, and discourse becomes fragmented. The Church, born of the Spirit of Truth, is called to discernment: unmask manipulation and digital deformation, resist propaganda, uphold truthfulness as a spiritual discipline, lead people out of their bubbles and echo chambers and into true encounter and discourse.

II. Reading the Signs of the Time: A World in Crisis, a Call to Bold Witness

1. Democracy under pressure

Across the globe, populist movements gain influence by exploiting fear and resentment, replacing reasonable discourse with 'alternative facts'. Election outcomes reflect deep polarisation and a disturbing willingness to normalise hostility toward minorities and institutions. Imperialistic systems are willing to wage war to preserve hegemony far beyond their borders. Religious nationalisms, including Christian nationalism, threaten to upturn centuries of peaceful co-existence. Centralised political power goes hand in hand with total social control. An unholy alliance of economic and political power, accompanied by the concentration of wealth and influence in the hands of a few, threaten participation and self-determination. These examples reveal a global pattern: democracy is fragile, and its integrity and flourishing cannot be taken for granted.

2. Democracy must be both defended and re-examined

We believe in the potential of democracy to give a vote and voice to everyone, thus enabling, upholding and defending human dignity and global justice. We are ready to defend democracy not because it is perfect, but because it is the political order most consistent with the claim to power by the community, not just a select elite. But we are dismayed at historic and continuing instances in which democracy has been and is being used to dehumanise, discriminate, and exclude some people of God from a path that leads to abundant life (John 10:10). We challenge an understanding of democracy that puts the interest of the majority over the rights of minorities.

Democracy must put human dignity at the centre. As a political system it can only succeed when it is bound by human rights, the rule of law, a balance of power and a pluralistic and just society. Its legitimacy lies in its ability to protect these principles as well as values like social and ecological justice, or the equality of all people. When democracy fails to uphold these, it risks becoming an empty shell – vulnerable to be captured by those who seek power rather than justice.

History warns that democracy can be destroyed through democratic procedures. In Berlin, we remember the Weimar Republic's collapse, and the Nazis' calculated manipulation of democratic institutions, which reveal the catastrophic consequences when truth and dignity are abandoned.

3. Democracy requires moral foundations beyond itself

Liberal democracy cannot sustain itself solely through legal mechanisms or procedural norms, and cannot itself produce the values it is built upon, such as solidarity, humility, mutual respect, compassion, truthfulness, courage, responsibility. These arise from pre-legal and extra-constitutional sources – faith and spirituality, religious traditions, cultural memory, philosophical wisdom, civic

virtues, and intergenerational commitment. A democracy without ethical and moral reserves becomes vulnerable to manipulation, tribalism, and authoritarian temptation. A democracy nourished by these deeper sources becomes resilient.

4. Digital hostility and algorithmic extremism

Unregulated digital platforms amplify outrage, reward falsehood, and undermine public discourse. Their algorithms promote extremism, fragment communities, and endanger democratic culture. The Church must advocate for digital responsibility while forming communities capable of discernment and truth-telling. We must ask ourselves why populists are so much more effective in using so called social media to spread their messages than we are. We must counter the digital space's domination by destructive forces.

5. Intersectional justice: a single fabric

Justice is indivisible. There can, for example, be no racial justice without social justice; no social justice without ecological justice; no ecological justice without intergenerational justice; no gender justice without economic justice. The same applies to all other forms of injustice, humiliation or discrimination. When one thread is torn, the whole fabric frays.

6. Young people: prophets and leaders

Youth participants in this conference voiced urgency and moral clarity. They asked to help shape decisions that determine the world they will inherit. They called for more genuine influence and better preparation for leadership within our communities. We commit to walking with them, empowering them, and sharing power responsibly. We will pass on this message into our chaplaincies, parishes and church structures.

III. A Message of Hope and Determination: Becoming Hope-Makers

We do not deny the depth of the world's crisis, nor the weight of grief, anger, and frustration expressed in our gathering. But we refuse despair. Our hope is a gift of God. It does not make us escape but engage. It is not naïve optimism, but trust in God's faithfulness and presence in this world.

We believe

- that the spacious dwelling of God cannot be overcome by human narrow-mindedness;
- that the image of God in every person is more enduring than any ideology attaching different value to different people;
- that the theology of incarnation also leads us to better understand that the embodiment of suffering, in our fellow humans, hurts the integrity of God;

- that, by the same token, we also need to experience the embodiment of our engagement in order to better relate to each other;
- that Christ's love is stronger than hatred induced by fear and hybris;
- that the Spirit's truth unmasks every lie;
- that diversity, honoured and protected, strengthens the human family;
- that young and old will renew the face of the earth when working together;
- that justice, though delayed, will roll down like waters;
- that God's Kingdom, though it may be resisted, cannot be stopped.

We speak out and take our cause forward confidently, carrying the fire, not the ashes of our faith in God's love, hospitality and healing powers.

IV. Commitments and Next Steps: Causing Ripple Effects

Our movement must show effects in church and society. We commit to:

1. **Reclaiming the Gospel from political distortion:** We will oppose all attempts to misuse Christianity for nationalist, racist, or exclusionary agendas. We affirm that the Church is the one and indivisible body of Christ, made up of all its members, and we commit that our communities must reflect this unity in their bodies, life and worship.
2. **Creating spaces for listening as healing:** In our congregations, people of all identities – especially those unlike ourselves – can speak their deepest fears, truths, and lived experiences without being judged. We create spaces for the spoken and the unspoken, expressive silences, listening with patience, vulnerability, and without interruption.
3. **Moving from transactional to dispositional hospitality:** We make hospitality the DNA of our communities by letting the stranger question and shape our identity, by allowing our boundaries to be reconfigured by encounters, by becoming willing to be disrupted by God through unexpected persons. That way, our hospitality becomes a habitual openness, a readiness to meet the other without fear, superiority, or defensiveness.
4. **Shaping liturgies that embody God's diverse household:** We will create forms of worship and preaching that reflect our growing diversity – of many languages, cultures, traditions, and skin colours and bodies – forming us into a communion capable of bearing witness to God's spacious love.
5. **Educating our youth in a spirit of diversity:** We will produce material for Sunday schools and religious education that enables even our youngest to understand themselves as part of a diverse and yet strong community.
6. **Strengthening the Church as a global player for promoting justice:** We recognise the Churches' unique capacity to act across borders in defence of justice and human dignity when they act together in an ecumenical spirit, and pledge to make use of this strength. We humbly offer our cooperation to other communities of faith and invite them to working jointly on this universal cause.

7. **Empowering young leaders:** We will share responsibility, prepare youth for civic and ecclesial leadership, and honour their insights.
8. **Engaging politically with integrity:** We will enter the public sphere confidently and even boldly, compromise wisely, and act in fidelity to Christ's commandments. We show our appreciation to all Christians who engage in politics and not disdain them for getting their hands dirty and their consciences burdened by compromise.
9. **Affirming the interdependence of all forms of justice:** We commit to racial, social, ecological, economic, and intergenerational justice for all. We will accompany all who are excluded or oppressed – not as benefactors but as siblings. We will empower them to take responsibility for their own lives, not degrading them to being recipients of our charity.
10. **Defending democracy by strengthening its moral foundations:** We affirm a democracy grounded in human dignity, human rights, the rule of law, and social justice. We will advocate reforms that protect democracy against those who exploit it for their self-interest.
11. **Advocating for digital justice:** We call for regulation of algorithmic systems that undermine truth, and commit to educating our communities in digital literacy and discernment.
12. **Sustaining our endeavour:** We will continue to meet, learn, question, repent, act, hope, and raise our prophetic voice within the church. We will follow up and report on progress on our commitments from previous conferences. There is no turning back from our common way. We understand our limited contributions as serving the wider movement, reminding our churches of its importance and impact. We will campaign for more attention, reinstatement of funding, and stronger support. In particular, we ask our Bishops and church leaders to circulate this Conference Statement to all bodies within their areas of responsibility and engagement, so that there may be greater awareness throughout our communities.

V. Conclusion: Carrying the Fire, Renewing the World

As we leave, we carry with us a living flame – the flame of God's love and truth that kindles our hearts and fuels our strength. We go forth with deeper understanding, renewed courage, and strengthened solidarity. We walk our way together – young and old, different genders, from many nations, cultures and denominations – emboldened and united not by sameness but by shared dignity.

We resolve, with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, that even if the Judgment Day dawns tomorrow, today we will untiringly work for justice and peace, reconciliation and inclusion, partaking in God's transformation of this world into His dwelling, a house with many rooms.

So we proclaim once again: It is either All of Us, or None of Us.