

Hope-Makers – From Hostility to Hospitality

The statement from the Diocese's 3rd International and Ecumenical Conference on Racial Justice held 4-7 December 2025 in Berlin, and titled Embracing Diversity, Re-examining Democracy, Challenging Hostility, builds upon the significant momentum generated by our earlier gatherings on Racial Justice—held in Freiburg (8–12 November 2023) and Bad Boll, Germany (4–7 December 2024). The continuing impact of these events is evident in the evolving life and witness of the Diocese in Europe and the Church of England, and resonates widely among ecumenical partners and allied communities of faith.

The Conference Statement is now available [here](#) sharing its vision of "communities shaped by the hospitality of Christ" which challenge prevailing fragmentation and hostility. The conference, which was both international and ecumenical, committed to uphold 'from lament to action' in seeking to create "the breadth of God's spacious dwelling" respecting the dignity, identity and belonging of every human being. It concluded with a joint service in the heart of Berlin at the rebuilt Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. This historic church stands with all its scars as a hallmark for what we celebrate in our Christian faith, namely that God did not abandon his creation to destruction and chaos, but came to restore, to rebuild, to heal our human relationships with the Creator and our human relationships with one another. That is what in essence we celebrate at Christmas. It is at this service that we renewed our commitments to be peacemakers and to resist all kinds of discrimination and injustice.

Friends, it seems appropriate to share a short reflection on the nature of the Church by Rowan Williams, erstwhile Archbishop of Canterbury. I quote this from one of his lectures: *The Church is first of all a kind of space, cleared by God through Jesus in which people may become what God made them to be (God's sons and daughters), and that what we have to do about the Church is not first to organise it as a society but to inhabit it as a climate or a landscape. It is a place where we can see properly – God, God's creation, ourselves. It is a place or dimension in the universe that is in some way growing towards being the universe itself in restored relation to God. It is a place we are invited to enter, the place occupied by Christ, who is himself the climate and atmosphere of a renewed universe.*

Keeping this in mind, this Conference became a concerted and joyous exercise in occupying our landscape as the space in which we gave challenging recognition to our belief that all human beings of whatever hue, ethnicity, gender or creed are created in the image of God and should live to the glory of God.

The great opportunity that it offers is that we can give flesh and blood, to truly being the body of Christ where no one is considered an alien or stranger, but each person is equally a member of God's household with dignity and space assigned to them.

Our Conference Theme therefore drew once again on the powerful image of the Kaleidoscope— God's Kaleidoscope, and a symbol of how diverse and shifting elements, can form new harmonious patterns. It calls for an inclusive dialogue that transcends barriers and fosters solidarity, particularly with those often marginalized or displaced—migrants, refugees, and others facing rising hostility.

We are grateful for the persistent resounding call from all our partners, stakeholders and grassroots movements to sustain this transformative journey—until all recognize their place within *God's Kaleidoscope*. As affirmed in our Bad Boll Conference, our shared commitment remains clear: *either all of us, or none of us*.

Friends, this Conference was certainly the need of the hour, due to the current global and European landscape that is marked by conflict, fear, misinformation, and a growing disregard for human dignity and life itself. Societies are increasingly defined by polarization and a kind of populism that has the

seeds of fascism. All this fosters a culture of “othering” that fractures communities and fuels mistrust. There is a rhetoric that is deepening divisions, eroding the capacity for honest dialogue, compromise, and any collaborative policymaking.

The Conference noted that as democratic values weaken, so too do the prophetic voices and moral authority of long-standing institutions. Independent bodies such as the judiciary, the press, and electoral commissions face mounting pressure, undermining the checks and balances essential for a just society.

Today we are confronted with new forms of hostility that are manifested through hate speech, racial intolerance, suppression of dissent, cultural and religious discrimination, gender-based injustice, and widespread apathy toward climate justice.

Social media has become a powerful yet deeply challenging arena in the struggle against racism, discrimination, and threats to democracy. While it offers opportunities for meaningful communication and global connection, it also serves as a breeding ground for hate speech, targeted misinformation, and group-based hostility.

The Conference affirmed that the Church bears both a calling and a responsibility—to speak out boldly and to confront these realities, also within its own structures. When such tendencies go unchallenged and are used to enable some to act with impunity, they marginalize the vulnerable, imperil the shared future of humanity, and have little regard for life.

The Conference challenged all faith communities to move beyond appeals for mercy and to actively shape a new trajectory of justice, peace, and love. This prophetic mandate must be embraced in its fullness and pursued with conviction and urgency. Stakeholders, also young leaders within churches and faith-based organizations, must unite to discern, plan, and act together for transformative change.

Into this context our Conference marked a much-needed shift: it became a movement from renewal to witness; from the formation of just communities to the shaping of just societies.

The Conference has released three Newsletters already and the final one is still under preparation as this is being written. All the Newsletters will provide insight into many of the contributions. There is furthermore a Conference Book with interesting details, including a number of liturgies that participants will continue to find useful, and could share more widely. A reading of the agenda of the Conference, will provide all with details of the number of Internationally recognized resource persons we have had. There will also be a full report of the conference, as was the case with the previous two.

Through significant Bible Studies by renowned theologians, several Keynote addresses, Panel discussions, also with people engaged in church and politics, and through the insight of the younger people at the conference, and discussion groups, the Conference established an eschatological Hope, that draws our attention to a God who chooses to dwell in the World. In John 14, we read: *We will come to them and make our home with them.* God does not withdraw from history; God dwells within it, as our Conference Statement notes.

It now remains for me to thank on behalf of all our working groups, all our resource persons from near and far, all our partners, the Racial Justice Unit of the Church of England, the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), the World Council of Churches, the Evangelische Landeskirche in Baden, the Evangelische Landeskirche in Württemberg, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the United Society – Partners in Global Mission (USPG), and the St Albans Anglican Church Copenhagen, for their continuing support. I am also grateful for the solidarity we have received from chaplaincies and churches that have sent participants to the Conference. Without such support, such a conference would have remained a dream. We have dreamed together and that has made this annual gathering become an exciting reality.

Finally, I pray for God’s blessings on all that we do. May all of us remain attuned to our calling and the stirrings of the Holy Spirit, and to uphold all that nurtures coexistence, celebrates the richness of

diversity, and recognizes the gifts and the potential each one of us bring. That is the background for our conference CALL into the public square to be *Hope-Makers* in an uncertain, fragile, changing and challenging context, *and to be instruments in transforming Hostility to Hospitality*.

The Venerable Dr Leslie Nathaniel

Conference Chair and Archdeacon of Germany and Northern Europe and the Eastern Archdeaconry