



ccme

churches' commission for migrants in europe

beyond borders

since 1964

## Message from the 20<sup>th</sup> CCME General Assembly, Prague, Czech Republic, 21-25 June 2017

### HAVE NO FEAR – BUT HOPE!

Christ is Alive! And in Christ we have a message of hope and peace for all the world.

We see expressions of hope in those multiple prayers and actions of European citizens that have supported the common good. They are working to share Christian principles of solidarity, peace, generosity and the imperative to welcome the stranger. We have seen hope in the contribution of hundreds of thousands of people across Europe. Many people are giving their time to offer a welcome in Europe to newly arrived people who have been forced to flee their homes.

We see hope in the contribution of refugees, migrants and minority ethnic groups to European societies. European societies have a history of immigration and emigration themselves and are constantly evolving. Newcomers are helping to expand cultural horizons, and are vital to work which breaks down fears between people from different backgrounds, religions and nationalities. We celebrate that newly arrived people are playing their part in our common life. We rejoice in the opportunities that new encounters provide to help transform attitudes and opinions, which help everyone to have a deeper perspective on life.

We see hope in the future for longstanding solidarity between the Churches of Europe to work together. At our Assembly we welcomed several new organisations from the United Kingdom, Hungary and Ireland into the membership of CCME. The Churches of Europe belong together.

We are hopeful that the attitudes of European societies may be positively transformed by their experience of intercultural dialogue with refugees and migrants. For Churches this includes theological reflection. Hearing the voices and respecting the opinions of newcomers in decisions and programmes which affect them is critical, and so we commend the principle that: 'Nothing about us without us is for us'.

We commend citizens and church members to support a process of integration. We believe that: "Integration is a dynamic two-way process of mutual accommodation where all parties give and receive. In this sense integration means respect for different cultural identities. This involves a shift in the majority communities' ways of thinking."<sup>1</sup>

We encourage all those who have acted, volunteered or donated to continue with their efforts and support the growth of a movement which seeks to make societies welcoming and safe for those forced to leave their homes. We hope that their actions will be a challenge to those in positions of authority.

We urge all Governments and political actors not to be afraid of making challenging and courageous decisions in the face of xenophobia. We say to them: have no fear, do not play with fear, do not betray core European values but have hope that policies which prioritise human dignity and the common good have the support of Churches, church members and many fellow citizens.

Particular attention must be paid to:

- the opening of safe passage for those in greatest need, in order to prevent the continuing catastrophic loss of human life as people desperately try to seek sanctuary in Europe.
- the protection and expansion of swift family reunification; as Churches we affirm that family life is a fundamental human right<sup>2</sup> and is essential for the integration of a newcomer.
- the situation of persons living in Europe not granted a permit who cannot return to their country of origin. They deserve to have their fundamental rights respected and guaranteed at all times.

So we say: Have no fear! Christ is Alive! We have hope. We can move beyond borders, physical barriers and walls in our hearts and minds.

Adopted unanimously on 24 June 2017

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<sup>1</sup> Definition taken from CSC/CCME response to the Council of Europe White Paper consultation on Intercultural Dialogue, 14 June 2007

[http://www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/70\\_DOWNLOADS/95\\_ARCHIVE/2007/2007-06-14\\_CSC-CCME\\_Response\\_to\\_the\\_CoE\\_White\\_Paper\\_consultation\\_on\\_Intercultural\\_Dialogue.pdf](http://www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/70_DOWNLOADS/95_ARCHIVE/2007/2007-06-14_CSC-CCME_Response_to_the_CoE_White_Paper_consultation_on_Intercultural_Dialogue.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights