

How do we maintain hope in times of wars, crises, climate change and right-wing populism? Together we are looking for answers to the pressing questions of our time. At stake are fundamental systemic issues and also changes in individual lifestyles. Following the online seminar last year, we invite you in 2025 to join us once a month for an hour of exchange on various topics under the heading "Hope for ...". We want to encourage each other, learn, get moving and share the message of hope within our faith - in everyday life, in our community, through actions or networking.

The events take place online from 5 pm to 6 pm (CET) – in German and English. Please feel free to arrange a conversation with interested people in your parish or church district afterwards, to discuss and work on the topics of the evening in more detail.

I look forward to meeting you, Anne Freudenberg-Klopp

1 "But test everything; hold on to what is good."

1. Thessalonians 5:21 – Hope for a just transformation

The elections in Germany will take place on February 23, 2025. Many people are concerned about the current socio-political developments here in Germany, but also worldwide. What can give us strength and encouragement now? Prof. Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm wrote on social media after the elections in the USA: "Now will come a time of heightened testing of humanity. At this time, global networking of all civil society organizations and institutions is more important than ever. And the churches, in particular, will be called upon to bear witness worldwide to the radical friendliness of God as shown in Jesus Christ." We look forward to a biblical-theological reflection on this year's biblical theme "but test everything; hold on to what is good."

Keynote speaker: Prof. Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Chair, Central Committee, World Council of Churches

Moderation: Anne Freudenberg-Klopp, Theology and Sustainability, Ecumenical Center of the North Church and Astrid Hake, coordinator of the Ecumenical Network for Climate Justice

German (with English translation)

Thursday,
13 February
5 pm to 6 pm
(CET)

2 Hope in times of crisis – How we can become and remain more psychologically resilient

The impact of the climate crisis on our mental health is now well researched. We not only know what feelings are associated with the crisis, but also how we can regain our creative power with confidence and which resilience factors can provide particular support in order to get through this crisis mentally stronger. Current research results, as well as a look into the past, are helpful here. After all, despite all the pessimism, we as humanity have already proven many times that social transformation is possible in the long term.

Keynote speaker: Katharina Klimasinski, communication psychologist in Flensburg (focus on personal development in the renewable energy sector), systemic consultant, member of Psy4Future since 2020

Moderation: Uli Eder, Infodesk for climate justice, Ecumenical Center of the North Church

German (with English translation)

Thursday,
27 March
5 pm to 6 pm
(CET)

3 Hope for peace in the neighborhood

Russia's war against Ukraine has also left those living in neighboring countries holding their breath. Countries that have experienced Soviet aggression and occupation are particularly worried about the war and feel sympathy for the people in Ukraine. They help refugees and provide humanitarian aid to people in Ukraine. They also carefully study the political situation in Russia and Europe. They prepare for the worst and hope for the best – peace in the neighborhood. Church leaders from the Baltic countries share their experiences, concerns and hopes in view of the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Keynote speaker: Mindaugas Sabutis, Bishop of the Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Urmas Viilma, Archbishop of the Estonian Ev-Luth. Church (to be confirmed), Kārlis Žoļs, Bishop electus of the Latvian Ev-Luth. Church Worldwide (requested)

Moderation: Zanda Ohff, Europe secretary, Ecumenical Center of the North Church

English (with German translation)

Thursday,
10 April
5 pm to 6 pm
(CET)

4 Hope for an economy that serves life – insights into the "Economy of Life" with suggestions for implementation in local churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC), which brings together 354 member churches worldwide, has been working on the topic of economic justice for many decades. The workshop will present the "Economy of Life" model, which criticizes the capitalist system and is primarily oriented towards an economy that serves life. Best practice examples will encourage implementation in church communities.

Keynote speaker: Max Weber, political scientist and theologian, 2023/24 Master's studies at the WCC in the field of "Economic and Ecological Justice" and Master's thesis on "Economy of Life and Degrowth - Two Sides of the Same Coin?", since July 2024 representative for the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland for the bi-ennial gathering of Protestants (Kirchentag) in Düsseldorf in 2027.

Moderation: Anne Freudenberg-Klopp, Theology and Sustainability secretary, Ecumenical Centre of the North Church

German (with English translation)

Thursday,
22 May
5 pm to 6 pm
(CET)

5 Last hope – Church asylum

For many refugees threatened with deportation, protection through church asylum (sanctuary) is the last hope for safety, a fair asylum procedure and a chance for a right to stay. At the same time, pressure from the government on church asylum is currently increasing. We want to take a critical look on the topic of church asylum and address the following questions: What is the theological basis for this practice? What options are there and how are decisions made? Is church asylum perhaps not only a source of hope for refugees, but also for the church?

Keynote speaker: Dietlind Jochims, Refugee Commissioner of the Ev. Lutheran Church of Northern Germany and Chair of the Board of the Ecumenical Federal Working Group on Asylum in the Church e.V.

Moderation: Frauke Eiben, retired provost and member of the board of the Ecumenical Centre of the North Church

German (with English translation)

Thursday,
19 June
5 pm to 6 pm
(CET)

6 Hope through education: Transforming lives and communities in rural India

We will explore how education, especially in rural and marginalized areas in India, is serving as a powerful tool for social change, offering hope for better economic opportunities, gender equality, and overall community development. And how are initiatives like digital education, government policies, and NGOs are helping to uplift underprivileged sections of society and inspire optimism for a brighter future?

Keynote speaker: Rev. Dr. Anupama Hial, ecumenical coworker at Ecumenical Center of the North Church and Mission Academy

Moderation: Reverend Jörg Ostermann-Ohno, India secretary, Ecumenical Center of the North Church

English (with German translation)

Thursday,
10 July
5 pm to 6 pm
(CET)

7 Hope means to withstand, not to give up: Lessons learnt from Argentina

Hope is a central driving force for the daily work of the Diaconal Foundation Hora de Obrar (Time to Act), because the many wars worldwide and the suffering they cause challenge us every day. The social and economic injustices call on churches and diaconal institutions to expose those responsible and to work for transformative development. The failure to contain the climate crises forces us to redouble our efforts. Despite these multiple crises, hope makes it possible to endure, to continue and to resist. Diaconia and churches can create this hope! An important organization in the transformation of the world is the ACT Alliance – it is the sum of churches and diaconal organizations worldwide. With its wide reach, it has the power to work with North-South, South-South and North-North partners. Using Argentina as an example, we want to present hope-giving examples of this work.

Keynote speaker: Nicolás Rosenthal, moderator of ACT Alliance and director of the diaconal foundation Hora de Obrar in Argentina (requested)

Moderation: Claudia Hug, Latin America secretary, Ecumenical Center of the North Church

German (with English translation)

Thursday,
28 August
5 pm to 6 pm
(CET)

8 Hope for interfaith cooperation in welfare: Why the Protestant church should advocate for more Muslim-based welfare work

There are at least five million Muslims in Germany, but only a negligible number of Muslim welfare organizations. This should change as quickly as possible – also and especially in the interest of the churches. Because only through encounters and contact can the peaceful coexistence of different beliefs take shape. Studies show that Christian welfare services enjoy a high level of trust. Accordingly, Islamic welfare should reveal a side of Islam that is not sufficiently recognized in the German debate on Islam, as it is often dominated by fear.

Keynote speaker: Ramzi Ghandour, M.A. Islamic Studies, project manager of Municipality and Muslim Life – Qualification, Exchange and Counseling

Moderation: Dr. Sönke Lorberg-Fehring, Christian-Islamic Dialogue secretary, Ecumenical Center of the North Church

German (with English translation)

Thursday,
18 September
5 pm to 6 pm
(CET)

9 Hope for peace in the Middle East

The situation in the Middle East is as volatile and confused as ever. Nevertheless, there are peace and aid organizations holding on to the hope of a peaceful coexistence. The Parents Circle Family Forum has been bringing together families from Israel and Palestine who have lost family members for over 40 years. Their aim is to listen, empathize and look to the future together.

Keynote speaker: N.N. Parents Circle (requested)

Moderation: Tobias Pfeifer, consultant for Christian-Jewish dialogue and the Middle East, Ecumenical Center of the Northern Church

English (with German translation)

Thursday,
16 October
5 pm to 6 pm
(CET)

10 Hope for a bright future. Impressions from our partners in the USA

A deep divide in society between Republican and Democrat supporters has long characterized political life in the United States. The election of Donald Trump as President of the U.S. on 5 November 2024 has once again made this very clear. In this workshop, one year after the election and a few months after the start of Donald Trump's presidency, we want to discuss the situation in the USA and in our partner churches, the Southern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Michigan Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Keynote speaker: Representatives of the partners in the United States (requested), Gerrit Marx, Head of the Ecumenical Office in the Pomeranian Church District (requested)

Moderation: Jörn Möller, North America and Ecumenical Partnerships secretary and Head of International Relations, Ecumenical Center of the North Church

German (with English translation)

Thursday,
13 November
5 pm to 6 pm
(CET)