



It was a privilege to be a delegate to Evangelical Church of Westphalia (EkvW) Conference and Kirchentag on behalf of the Indiana Kentucky Conference of the UCC.

There were 40 official representatives of the executive boards of international partner churches at the conference center “Haus Villigst” near Dortmund.

When I arrived in Dortmund, I quickly hopped a bus traveling to Wuppertal, to the conference center of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM). There was an international consultation sponsored by the World Council of Churches (WCC), UEM, Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW). The conference included invited international experts exploring the issue “Together towards Eco-Theologies, Ethics of Sustainability and Eco-Friendly Churches.” Discussion included the role of the churches around the world in leading climate spirituality and the advocacy of environmental justice in our local churches and the need for each of us, particularly in the United States, to do our part in maintaining God's creation. We in the United States lag woefully behind in eco justice compared to other countries around the world. Katja Breyer, minister in the Evangelical Church of Westphalia writes, “We

will not become the image of God until we fulfill our responsibility to ‘cultivate and preserve’ the earth.” She defines cultivate and preserve as acting creatively while, at the same, time setting limitations.” Meaning we all must reflect on who we are, what we do, and the consequences of what we do regarding nature and the earth that God has entrusted to us.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, I attended a conference held by the Evangelical Church of Westphalia titled “I was a stranger and you welcomed me: Church and Migration.” The conference dealt with the role of the church with immigration in our respective churches. Each delegate was invited to speak of immigration issues within our own countries, and the plight of refugees and/or immigrants around the world. Much attention was given to the treatment of refugees from South American countries by the United States and the cruel stance of the Trump administration with the border wall, internment camps, and cruel separation of families and children.

It was eye opening to see the contempt and confusion that the Europeans and Africans have regarding the President of the United States, who they compare to Adolf Hitler and their perceived apathy in the citizens of the United States allowing him to do the deplorable things he does, our passiveness toward world peace, migration and, yes, ecology. Perhaps this is because the Europeans and Africans recognize the effects of each in their respective countries and believe that they are intimately responsible for doing something individually and collectively to make a difference.

The later half of the trip was my participation in the German Kirchentag, a bi-annual ecumenical celebration that included 2,400 workshops and events for

over 100,000 people and ended with an ecumenical worship service at the Dortmund Soccer Stadium with about 80,000 participants. What an amazing time of worship, service and fellowship! The UCC was well represented in Friday Worship Service at Felerabendmahl mit der United Church of Christ. The message was preached by Dr. Ben Sanders, III, Assistant Professor of Theology and Ethics, Eden Theological Seminary, a young preacher “committed to transformative, justice-centered theological education and this commitment is at the center of my academic research, pedagogy, and ministry.” Dr. Sanders also conducted workshops on Black Lives Matter and the chronology of racism in America.

I am blessed to have been afforded the opportunity to join in both wonderful eye opening spirit filled conferences. So often, our view of the world is skewed and limited to our own privilege. To hear the voices of other church leaders around the world is a reminder that we, the church are called into action not only in our local churches, but around the world; for we are all connected through our faith in God, and our love and compassion for all of God’s creations.

Submitted by

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