

Editorial

Rachael Weber

'I don't know,' he replied. 'Am I my brother's keeper?' The LORD said, 'What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground'. Genesis 4; 9b-10

Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square; on top of the wall she cries out, at the city gate she makes her speech... Proverbs 1; 20-21

As the breakout of World War I seemed eminent, WSCF distributed decorative pins to its students throughout the continent. If they ever met, on either side of the war zone, and saw an 'enemy' wearing the same pin, they would recognise that they were a part of the same student Christian movement.

What a stark symbol of the futility of war and violence. Such a sharp reminder that I too am like the other, that we are part of one humanity. I have not heard personal stories of conversations or meetings resulting from the pins, but the symbol itself is enough to remind us of our common humanity, to help us break out of the senseless cycle of violence.

But cycles of violence are often much more hidden than those present internationally in times of war. This publication follows the three year Lingua Franca campaign, *Stop Being Silent! Identifying, Overcoming, and Preventing Domestic Violence*. As statistics reveal – and there are many statistics in the coming pages – domestic violence permeates our society, churches, friendships, and families.

What does it take to identify and break cycles of domestic violence? The Lingua Franca seminars gathered students and activists from throughout Europe to examine and study this question. The first section of this Mozaik provides an overview of the *Stop Being Silent!* programme and related themes. In the second section, in articles from Slovakia to Azerbaijan, you can read about present realities of domestic violence in Europe today.

As a student-led ecumenical network, we must search inside our own churches and structures to root out the violence hidden within as we seek to follow biblical callings to free the oppressed. Are our homes and churches oases of healing and renewal that challenge injustice in society or do structures in our churches keep victims locked in oppression? An exploration of domestic violence and the Church by young theologians and activists makes up the third section of this publication. Let us raise our voices to create loving, safe places of sanctuary in our congregations.

I was given one of these WWI pins from WSCF in 2009. This pin, an average needle with a cross of about 4mm at its head, was much smaller than I expected. Much attention is required to locate it in the pocket where I keep it at the back of my journal, much more to notice it hidden on a uniform. But this is also a reminder that we sometimes are required to look closely to see the flaws in our traditions, mentalities, and ruling structures, to notice the humanity of the other, whom might easily be passed by as we go about our rushed daily

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schedules. How essential this is to being human, to following the biblical call to love our neighbour, to being my sister and brother's keeper.

Yet the violence and devastation around us is so overwhelming. How can we respond to domestic violence and the violent tendencies that permeate our societies? How can we raise our voices in public discourse? In addition to being attentive to the needs of the neighbour, articles in the third section give creative examples of a variety of initiatives responding to violence against women throughout the world.

In the *Stop Being Silent!* seminar in Serbia, at the end of one particularly challenging session examining war crimes against women by all sides in WWII, I was reminded of my pin. As I had brought my journal with me, I had also carried the pin. The pin was passed carefully from hand to hand throughout the room, between students from Czech Republic to Ukraine, Sweden to Romania, reminding us all of those hurting, those who are just like us. This symbolic pin challenged us to remember even those most difficult to relate to, those caught in generational cycles of abuse, who after being victims become abusers.

As explored at the seminars, even the connotations of the words victim, abuser, and observer often affect the way we view those involved in domestic violence. May we look beyond the surface of labels. May we not be silent witnesses. May we be pricked to action only by the sight and story of a gentle needle, by a reminder of the humanity which we share, to call aloud with wisdom in the streets.

A special thanks to the many who helped with the *Stop Being Silent!* campaign, namely to Jaanus Teose for all three seminars, and Lenka Matuskova in Slovakia, Gabor Nemet in Serbia, and Marta Gustavsson and Natallia Vasilevich in Belarus. We are thankful for the contributions of the participants who opened themselves to learning and dialogue in each seminar. Also, I thank Jill Piebiak for editing this issue with me.

That we all may be one in hope and deed,

