

2016 Michael Sattler Peace Prize Awarded to the Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria and Christian-Muslim Peace Initiative in Nigeria

BAMMENTAL, 17 March, 2016: The 2016 Michael Sattler Peace Prize has been awarded to the Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN) and their "Christian and Muslim Peace Initiative" (CAMPI), founded in 2010 with Muslim partners. The prize will be presented on Friday, May 20, 2016 in Rottenburg am Neckar. Ephraim Kadala (55), Pastor and Peace Co-ordinator for the EYN, and Hussaini Shuaibu (51), Lecturer, Mediator and Muslim partner of CAMPI, have been invited to Germany to receive the prize on behalf of the EYN and CAMPI.

The Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa is based primarily in Northeastern Nigeria. As the largest Christian church in the region, it has suffered for years from attacks by the islamic terror organization, Boko Haram. Of the 276 Chibok schoolgirls abducted in April 2014, the majority (178) are members of the Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa. Approximately 2,000 of their church buildings have been destroyed, and more than 10,000 church members, including six pastors, have been killed. Thousands have been forced to flee their homes. Schools and seminaries have been destroyed or forced to close.

In spite of this aggression the EYN has held fast to the peace witness of the Gospel and has renounced calls for retaliation. The Church teaches its members, and especially its youth, in the Biblical way of peace and reconciliation, and has established contact with Muslims and mosques open to dialogue. In their peace and justice initiatives the church works to counter the economic and political sources of violence. Not only do they renounce violent confrontations – there are many examples of individuals putting love for enemies into practice – but they are actively contributing to the growth of peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians. A major focus of their work is instruction and training in conflict transformation.

In English, Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa means literally "Church of the Children of One Mother." American missionaries of the Church of the Brethren (CoB) established the EYN in 1923. Although the EYN has been independent since 1972, it continues to be supported by the CoB. Today, the Church has approximately one million members in over 2,000 congregations. The Church has been a member of the World Council of Churches since 1985. The EYN is committed to the world-wide tradition of the historic peace churches. Its mother church emerged in the 18th century from the radical German pietist movement (Schwarzenauer Täufer), which later emigrated en masse to North America.

The Michael Sattler Peace Prize was first awarded in 2006 to mark the 50th anniversary of the German Mennonite Peace Committee (Deutsches Mennonitisches Friedenskomitee, or DMFK). Now in its 60th year, the DMFK will award the prize for the fifth time. Wolfgang Krauss, member of the ecumenical Prize Committee, says that the exemplary commitment of the EYN to loving its enemies makes it an especially deserving recipient of the peace prize. It was for this same reason that the early Anabaptist Michael Sattler (1490-1527) was executed on May 21, 1527. Sattler advocated that the contemporary "Turkish threat" be countered not with violence, but with prayer and love: "Christians are completely at peace (gelassen) and trust in the protection of their Father in Heaven, and not in any worldly weapons".

www.michael-sattler-friedenspreis.de

Historic Peace Churches: Since their beginnings in the Reformation, these churches have emphasized the peace witness of the Gospel and the early Church. They encourage their members to follow the way of Jesus in conscientious objection to military service, peace service and active nonviolence. The term “historic peace church” emerged at a conference in Newton, Kansas in 1935. It includes the Mennonites, who trace their origins to the 16th century Anabaptist movement and the ‘left wing’ of the Reformation; The Society of Friends (Quakers), who emerged from the 17th century English Dissenters; and the Church of the Brethren, originating in radical German Pietism in the 18th century.

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