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"See, I Am Making All Things New"

2024 CEEAMS
Annual Conference
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The 2024 Central and Eastern European Association for Mission Studies (CEEAMS) Annual Conference on the theme "*See, I Am Making All Things New*": *Towards a Missiology of Hope* was held on February 16-19, 2024 in a hybrid format. Roughly half of the participants gathered in person in the usual CEEAMS conference venue at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, Croatia, while the other half represented online participants. Some fifty theologians, missiologists, clergy, reflective practitioners, and other professionals registered for the event who not only wanted to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the publication of *Theology of Hope* by Jürgen Moltmann but also put the notion of 'hope' in the foreground as a key category for theological-missiological reflection in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and beyond. Through the Christ event, God gives rise to the hope that a different world is possible. In Moltmann's words, God revolutionises and transforms the present, and in the apocalyptic language of John, God is making all

things new (Rev 21:5) — to inaugurate the world in which a just peace reigns and the whole of creation can achieve its consummation. The conference acknowledged that today, as ever, this message is in short supply. In contexts of war, conflict, political oppression, socio-economic exploitation, spiritual hunger, and ecological devastation, humankind alongside the non-human creation is crying for liberation, restoration, and healing.

Hope is not naive optimism. Rather, it is an active, though contemplative anticipation, pursued frequently in spite of what we see around us. In hope, one relies on God's involvement accompanied by walking in the trajectories of the past, present, and future witnesses of God's story, be they Christian or not. The conference participants affirmed, and explored, that it is a commitment to work toward the common good interpreted through the lens of God's reign of justice, peace, and life for all. This sharing in God's dream and vision is the contribution that Christian churches can make to the flourishing of public life.

The conference strengthened ecumenical and intercultural interaction of missionaries, practitioners, and researchers within the CEE region and beyond and contributed to the broader academic discussion among experts and practitioners from other parts of the world. In particular, this year's conference benefitted from an interreligious dimension, as one of the keynote speakers was Jewish.

In interplay with other CEEAMS-related projects and activities, the conference also contributed to the growth of CEEAMS as a sustainable platform connecting its members, promoting contextual mission study in CEE and offering space for continuous discussion and exchange of views and resources.

Finally, amidst various wars and conflicts in various parts of the world, es-

ers to engage with the notion of “hope” as relevant for developing and nurturing contextual theological-missiological praxis. Mission theology and hope as both a contemplative anticipation and active engagement go hand in hand. Yet, the link is often not explicitly thematized. The conference called for exploring this link more deeply: to share and elaborate the relationship between



pecially the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the war in Israel and Gaza, the people suffering in manifold ways were very much on the mind of both the conference organizers and participants. This became apparent both in conference presentations and discussions, formal and informal.

CEEAMS took the occasion of sixty years with Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope* as an entry to invite theologians, missiologists, and reflective practition-

deliberation and action, between beliefs and practices, around the understanding of hope and transformation and their implications for various fields of mission theology and practice. ■

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