



## **Cevaa Executive Council** **Kibuye, Rwanda – April 17-23, 2023** **Final Communiqué**

### **Finally in Rwanda!**

Postponed several times because of the health crisis, the Cevaa Executive Council met from April 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 at the Bethany Center, in Kibuye, Rwanda. To get there from the Kigali airport, the Council members crossed a part of the country, realizing why it is called “the land of a thousand hills.” By the Lake Kivu, the Council took a number of important decisions for the life of the Community, but also had the opportunity to share opinions, sometimes contradictory, in a spirit of listening. The Council’s ability to speak frankly and in accordance with the decisions taken, was appreciated in the evaluation of its session. Learning how to listen to oneself and respect one’s neighbour opinion is a work to be repeated always, as well as among the people. The visit of a memorial of the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda struck the participants with a chilling reality: when the “other” becomes an enemy to be defeated. Moreover, the Rwandan Churches asked for forgiveness because their silence contributed to the killing. All the Churches of the Cevaa have their share of responsibility for the unity of the human race and the people of the countries in which they work.

Rwanda sings the love of God. Every morning, one of the different choirs of the local parish opened the Council’s meditation and prayer. The Presbyterian Church in Rwanda was represented through its Vice-President, Rev. Julie Kandema, and of course through its President, Rev. Dr Pascal Bataringaya, who is a member of the Council.

The Director of DM, Rev. Nicolas Monnier, invited to the Council, shared his many projects, but also the challenges facing his Department. Some projects are carried out in conjunction with the Cevaa, for example training in intercultural theology.

### **The Cevaa Secretariat in Montpellier: a beehive**

The Council, accompanied by the Secretariat, took note of the reports of the General Secretary, Rev. Claudia Schulz, on the Community as a whole. The General Secretary and the Executive Secretaries conducted several missions to the member Churches. The General Secretary emphasized her joy at seeing that some Churches are close to Cevaa and engaged in the activities of the Community, even if, for some other Churches, the Cevaa seems far away. A real effort of contact and visit will be necessary, so that all the Churches are involved in this rich and exciting community life.

“All true life is an encounter. Meeting transforms us”: that was the title of her report, which well represents the whole Cevaa spirit.

The General Secretary stressed that the offices of the Cevaa in Montpellier are a real hive: many people come to meet the Cevaa through its Secretariat, call, ask for an opinion...

The Council decided to authorise the Secretariat’s project to host interns in order to make the Cevaa better known to the younger generations, by opening the Montpellier offices to students in theology or to (junior or probationer) pastors from the various member Churches, for periods ranging from 15 days to 4 months.

After the resignation of the Executive Secretary of the Projects Pole, Mrs. Anne-Sophie Macor, the Council appointed a selection team, responsible for reviewing applications for the position of Executive Secretary of the Projects and Funding Search Pole. To continue to best ensure the mission of this Pole, the work was shared among all other members of the Secretariat.

### **Study with the support of the Cevaa**

The Executive Secretary in charge of the Animations and Youth Pole, Rev. Omer Dagan, met and encouraged all the beneficiaries of a Cevaa scholarship. The Council decided to award ten new scholarships, six of which were in the theological field, three in management and finance, and one in the medical field. A working group has been appointed to study the award process and the future of this service.

### **Inhabit creation differently**

This will be the theme of the next General Assembly of the Cevaa, to be held in Jacqueville, Ivory Coast, in October 2023. At the PUCA in Cameroon, a colloquium brought together professors and their students around this ecological issue, and gave content that will be shared in the Community. The Executive Secretary in charge of theological animation presented a first work aiming to embody this theme in the faith and experience of the Churches. The importance of a personal transformation towards more connections, and changing habits within the Churches, is undisputed. The Council discovered with interest the Rwandan government's efforts in this area, with for example the ban on plastic bags.

The Council adopted the main theme and will propose to the General Assembly to make it the theme of its next Shared Action, meaning, in order to make this concern more alive in all the Churches, over several years and in different ways, according to the contexts and the needs.

### **Living in another's home: the exchange of persons in reflection**

For several years, the Council has been reflecting on the usefulness and significance of short-term visits or exchanges, commitments over several years, bilateral or multilateral meetings over a longer or shorter period. The Council will propose to the General Assembly to give guidelines and take decisions on this subject. Financial restraint requires a clear vision.

### **Young people are already the Church of today**

The Council adopted four stimulating and engaging projects for and with young people, in Uruguay, Togo, Ivory Coast and France. An international youth seminar will be organized in Benin. The Executive Secretary for the Animations and Youth Pole shared beautiful stories of meetings of young people that took place in the past year, especially in Switzerland, but also by videoconference.

### **Shoulder the worries with each other**

The Council noted that some Churches in the Community are not doing well. The threat of division, caused by human pride or by appetite for profit, appears in one Church or another. "To love Jesus", as the morning meditations have recalled, also implies "to follow Jesus", that is, to practice a responsible ethic in the management of the Churches and in the translation of the Gospel message into humble and just actions, as well as into the truth. The Cevaa places itself at the disposal of the Churches in trouble.

### **Communicating the Cevaa**

Together with the Communications leader, the Council raised the question of adequate communication for the Community. A lot of work remains to be done, but a transformation is underway.

The Council was asked to determine a true communication strategy and to define what it wants to communicate and to whom. A first online Newsletter was sent and received successfully during the Christmas period. The Council wishes to continue this communication.

Many articles are published via the Cevaa website and its Facebook page. How can the Churches of the Community contribute to the communication around the projects and achievements of the Cevaa?

Finally, to promote awareness of gender equity, the Council adopted rules to improve communication using inclusive language.

### **Funding the Cevaa**

The contribution of the major contributing Churches is continually diminishing, and some Churches are not fulfilling their contributions. The Council implemented an in-depth study on the future financing of its activities. Major changes are expected in the future. Although budgets and accounts are always balanced, the Cevaa draws on resources that are running out. Cevaa plans to open up to the search for funds, notably through the newly renamed Projects and Funding Search Pole. Nevertheless, the member Churches of the Community must assume their responsibilities for a living Cevaa. The General Assembly to be held in October will hold a substantive discussion on this topic.

### **Before leaving**

The Council concluded with a worship service in the local parish of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda. The members of the Council flew back to their respective countries and Churches to testify about this beautiful Community and to share its challenges, remaining infinitely grateful for the love felt from the local Church during they stay, and the thoughtfulness and generosity with which they were welcomed.