

The Peace Center – Martin Niemöller House

The Peace Center – Martin Niemöller House at Pacelliallee 61 was officially opened on 16 January 1982. The pastor of the Evangelical Church in Dahlem, Pastor Möckel, had moved out of the former parsonage in 1979 and in the meantime, the house was being used to house Argentinian refugees. However, there remained the pressing question as to the future use and financing of the house, which was protected under memorial status. A core group and the Dahlem Community's Church Council considered a variety of possible uses. They wanted the house to become a facility which would reach beyond the borders of the church community, yet also one in which numerous members of the Dahlem Community would participate.

With this goal, the decision was made (still during the Cold War!) in favor of creating a "Peace Center," in which groups and organizations involved in peace work could meet and work together to organize events and projects and which also could be linked to the life of the church community in a variety of ways.

Members of the Association of the Peace Center included: Aktion Sühnezeichen/Friedensdienste e.V. (Action Reconciliation Service for Peace), Aktionsgemeinschaft Solidarische Welt (Action for World Solidarity), Weltfriedensdienst (Service for World Peace), Frauen für den Frieden (Women for Peace), Versöhnungsbund (International Fellowship of Reconciliation), Service Civil International, Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft/vereinigte Kriegsdienstgegner (German Society for Peace), Amnesty International, and of course the Evangelical Church Community of Dahlem as well as the church district of Zehlendorf, among many others. Dedicated members of the Dahlem community and others who were interested in these activities formed a Circle of Friends and Supporters. Members of this support circle and representatives of the member groups of the house meet every month, along with the community that lives in the house, in order to plan activities related to the goal of the house as well as to coordinate necessary repairs and renovations.

At first, four former Aktion Sühnezeichen/Friedensdienste volunteers lived in the house as a community. Today, the community living there is composed of four dedicated women who volunteer their time to care for the everyday coordination of house activities and who strive to create an atmosphere in the house, which differentiates it from a typical conference center. Part of the character of the house is that no full-time "Peace Workers" are employed.

The house bears the name "Martin Niemöller" not only because he worked here as a pastor of the Dahlem Community, but also because, after his liberation in 1945, he committed himself to working for peace,



especially in taking a stand against those who endangered peace through excessive rearmament. Niemöller gladly allowed his name to be given to this house, with the stipulation that under no circumstances, should the house become a museum, rather it should be filled with life. There were several meetings with him, mediated by his daughter Hertha von Klewitz, who was an active participant in the work of the house until her death.

An exhibit about the history of the Evangelical Church Community of Dahlem during National Socialism was opened in 1982 at the same time as the house was established as a peace center – one year later a catalog containing this information was completed. It is still available for viewing today. Members of the support circle looked into the development of the question: Could what the Confessing Church had experienced and learned through its resistance against the appropriation of the church by the National Socialist state be helpful for the current work in the peace movement? Further projects followed: first-hand accounts from witnesses; arranging events concerning peace, justice, and environmental preservation; questioning representatives from the Bundestag about their attitudes towards the NATO Double-Track Decision (concerning limitation/deployment of missiles). International workcamps became an important part of the activities; during the last decade, people, especially from European countries and the United States, live and work together, while also getting to know Berlin and confronting social and political world problems.

In the 25 years since the establishment of the Peace Center, many people have discovered here a lively place, actively involved in social-political work. The house survives through donations and, to a great degree, the commitment of volunteers. The groups appreciate the open atmosphere, the uncomplicated system of taking care of themselves, and especially the large yard. To this day, the following groups, among others, work in the Martin Niemöller House:

1. Aktion Sühnezeichen/Friedensdienste e.V. (Action Reconciliation Service for Peace)
Founded in 1957 by Pastor Lothar Kreissig, in order to perform reconciliation work in countries which suffered from German aggression during the Nazi regime. For the past 50 years, young people have committed themselves to a year of volunteer work in social and political projects. Preparation and conclusion seminars for the participants take place in the Martin Niemöller House.

2. Versöhnungsbund (International Fellowship of Reconciliation)

The Versöhnungsbund organizes exchanges, such as work camps, for young people in the United States, Tanzania, and, since 1989, between East and West. Frequently project partners are the guests of the Martin Niemöller House. Participants in all the workcamps are trained in creative methods for handling violent conflicts.

3. Dritte-Welt-Laden (Ein Welt Laden)

The Dritte-Welt-Laden is represented by an office, the inventory, and a small store (in Niemöllers old garage). This group is concerned with fair trade and supporting small producers as well as direct marketing.

Additionally, a wide spectrum of different groups come for seminars, one-time events, and a variety of uses by the Dahlem church community. In 25 years, there have been many changes, through which the house could remain lively and embrace its mission. The opening of the newly created Erinnerungsort (Place of Remembrance) about the life of Martin Niemöller was celebrated on 1 July 2007, as a way to enrich the historical aspects of the house and to give the life and effect of Martin Niemöller its due space. It is for us an important model. In Niemöller's former office, the work and life of Niemöller will be brought to many people through atmosphere of the room, a short film, and a digital exhibit.

Address

Pacelliallee 61
14195 Berlin
eMail: niemoellerhaus2006@yahoo.de
www.niemoeller-haus-berlin.de

Office Hours

MWF 6-8 p.m.

Telephone: 030-841 099 51

Fax: 030-841 099 52

Cell: 0170-27 34 557

Bankverbindungen:

Postbank Berlin
BLZ 10010010
Account #: 67132-105

Bank for Sozialwirtschaft

BLZ10020500
Account #: 3013300

Getting here:

U-Bahn Dahlem-Dorf (U3)
Bus: 183, X83, X11, 110,
N10 (night bus from Zoo)

Other Offices in the house:

Dritte Welt Laden Berlin,
International Versöhnungsbund,
SJ-Die Falken-LV Berlin,
Dt.-poln. Bildungswerk