

13th Conference of the European Network for Buddhist-Christian Studies (ENBCS) in partnership with the World Council of Churches

Buddhist-Christian Encounter: A Visionary Approach

A Conference Inspired by Lynn A. De Silva (1919-1982) on the centenary of his birth

To be held at the Arch Abbey of St Ottilien, near Munich, Germany: 27 June – 1 July 2019

Letter from the President

The theme of the 13th ENBCS conference concerns our vision for Buddhist-Christian encounter. The topics that will be addressed by invited speakers are inspired by the work of Revd. Dr Lynn A. de Siva, Sri Lankan Methodist minister, Pāli scholar, artist, philosopher, theologian, and pioneer of Buddhist-Christian dialogue, at the centenary of his birth: May Dialogue change our Self-Understanding and View of the Religious Other? May Dialogue Change our Understanding of the Human Being? May Dialogue Change our Understanding of Death and Life after Death? May Dialogue Change our Understanding of Ultimate Reality? May Dialogue Change Our Understanding of the Buddha and the Christ? May Art Inspire Dialogue – May Dialogue Inspire Art? May popular religion alter the Course of Dialogue? De Silva was also a pioneering advocate of inter-faith dialogue at the World Council of Churches (WCC) and so the conference is organised in partnership with the WCC.

As you will see from the complete programme, we have an excellent line-up of speakers and respondents, including Wesley Ariarajah, Perry Schmidt-Leukel, James Fredericks, Amos Yong, Andreas Nehring, Gudrun Löwner, Anniewieke Vroom, Rasika Pieris, Peniel Rajkumar and Jude Lal Fernando. They will combine an examination of De Silva's work with a visionary approach that will look to the future of Buddhist-Christian encounter, and its recent achievements.

In addition, a Call for Papers has been issued for parallel sessions on the Saturday and Sunday evenings (see Call for Papers). These are designed for postgraduate research students and recognised researchers. Papers for these sessions need not be on the theme of the conference but should relate to Buddhist-Christian Studies.

ENBCS conferences are an opportunity not only to engage with important issues in Buddhist-Christian encounter but also to meet others. Conversation is important – during coffee breaks and meals, and in the evenings after formal sessions. So also is the culture of the place where we meet. The Benedictine Arch Abbey of St Ottilien is a wonderful location, situated in the heart of the beautiful Bavarian countryside. Members of the Arch Abbey have been involved in inter-monastic dialogue for many decades and their retreat house will give us a warm welcome. For those who can stay on the Monday morning, there will be a guided tour of the extensive complex at St Ottilien. And for those who value silence, meditation sessions are offered each morning before breakfast.

All who are committed to building understanding between Buddhists and Christians are welcome to attend ENBCS conferences. The focus is academic and the programme is intense but we do not limit attendance to academics. Many from outside academia have attended past

conferences. We hope to offer some bursaries for research students to help with the cost of the conference.

Whether you are new to ENBCS or have long been involved with the Network, I hope you will consider coming to St Otilien. I can assure you it will be a thought-provoking, enriching and enjoyable conference.

Dr Elizabeth Harris, President of the ENBCS, Honorary Senior Research Fellow, the Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public Understanding of Religion, University of Birmingham
August 2018.