

Dear Members and Friends of Christuskirchengemeinde,

“Being on our way” – that goes for our personal lives from birth to death, that also goes for a community like a parish. “On our way” we face special incidents and periods that make us stop and gather strength. This is also reflected in each calendar year, in our individual lives and at our parish Christuskirchengemeinde.

“What is impossible with men is possible with God” (Luke 18:27) has been the text of the year 2009. Have we experienced divine miracles among us? – What exactly is a miracle, where does it begin and how do I define it? It is one of the great privileges of faith in God, that we do not have to live and think in the very limited earthly dimensions alone. In the large space of God’s reality many things are possible, that seem to be impossible when considered from an earthly (or even scientific or intellectual) point of view. And so it is up to each of us to interpret our own lives with the faith in God and to discover or at least presume HIS actions – and in our point of view this is always a miracle. Looking back at the past few months, we discover many of such miracles, indeed... And in this sense we do not doubt that we could experience a year blessed by God in our parish.

A new Parish Council

On June 21 we elected a new Parish Council. The members of the old Council were discharged from their leadership responsibility with all due ceremony and many thanks during the service on November 1. The new members were introduced with prayers and blessings. Many long-term members of the old Council had announced their resignation quite some time ago. The time is really opportune: For many years we had a comparatively stable membership of the Parish Council and the parish is now moving on the right track. “As things are, we can, after so many years, safely hand over control to others, particularly younger people” said Hartmuth Schröder, who resigned after 30 years, being the most senior member of the Parish Council thus far. The same goes for Ingrid Faludi, who was the chairwoman of the Parish Council from 1995 to 2005 as the first elected member who was not a minister. So she influenced the work of the Council essentially. In addition to these two members, Dr. Werner Betz, Dr. Hans Ulrich Callies, Nicole Duplois, Michael Grandjean and Uschi Szczes had announced their resignation from the Parish Council quite some time ago. They all, however, will not only remain members of our parish, but they will also continue their voluntary work. We are deeply indebted to them for their cooperation in the Council for such a long time, and also to Frank Sarkar, who had been the chairman of the Parish Council for four years, but has now given up the chairmanship for job-related reasons. We are grateful to him, that he will, nevertheless, remain a member of the Parish Council.

Who is able to lead such a large and active parish in the years to come – from a spiritual and organisational point of view? We are once again grateful that 15 people from our large number of volunteers stood as candidates. Twelve of

them were elected and took up their office on November 1 (in alphabetical order): Ralf Appel, Anna Debé, Irene Hartmann, Michael Kindsvater, Steffen Kreiling, Werner Kristeller, Claudia Leiendecker, Ursel Metz, Judith Reitz, Frank Sarkar, Anja Seybold, and Tobias Utter. In December 2009 the new chairman will be elected out of these people.

And then our new Parish Council will start the next six years with commitment and faith in God, “building up our parish”. The election day itself had already been an encouraging celebration with a great service and the christening of seven confirmation candidates in the river Nidda, a lot of music, storytelling, and a comparatively heavy polling. During one weekend in late September the old and the new Parish Council worked intensively together at a closed meeting. How about the parish? What are we aiming at? What are the steps we want to take? – The happy and calm companionship until late at night was as encouraging as the cooperation itself. Briefly: We are looking forward to the next few years!

The ministers, too, are always part of the Parish Council. While Martina Radgen, the parish’s pedagogue, and Thorsten Mebus participate in the meetings of the Parish Council as guests with the right to speak and make proposals, the ministers are full members. In addition to Jens Martin Sautter and Klaus Neumeier, this was Michael Solle, who was a member until April 2009 and is now a minister at Biedenkopf. He had been a good substitute for Ulrike Mey, who was on maternity leave. We are very grateful to him for his helpful, calm and committed cooperation. At the same time we are happy that Ulrike Mey has again been putting her time and energy into our parish since April.

Nothing works without volunteers

What goes for our Parish Council, is also true for the whole parish: “Nothing works without volunteers”. About 250 volunteers are working permanently on a binding basis in approximately 70 teams – and in addition there are many sporadic helpers on the occasion of celebrations and special projects. We have structured our parish purposefully in a way, that many volunteers may participate by giving us their talents, time and often money. Therefore many incredible things far beyond the basics of a parish have become possible. But above all, a special kind of togetherness has developed. In our opinion, this is the only way to make a community work in a happy atmosphere.

Each year at about the time when this annual report is coming out, a large meeting of our volunteers takes place. Longstanding volunteers are being honoured, highlights of the past year are being remembered, an incredibly rich buffet dinner put together by everybody is inviting us and a guest is being invited to say thank you for the work and commitment. Late in 2008 Nicolai Friedrich, a magician, enchanted us in a way that our enthusiasm and amazement remained for quite some time... Another meeting of all members of our teams focused on faith, the development of the parish and on cooperation.

But we do not only want to honour the present volunteers for their work in the parish. For several years, there are also regular meetings of former volunteers. Esteem should not end, when people stop to do voluntary work, mostly for reasons of age. We appreciate that a team around Ingrid Faludi, Uschi Szczes, Adolf Schmitt and Thorsten Mebus is taking care of this aspect.

10 years Family Ski Camps and Confirmation Seminars

It is not unusual that the annual report mentions the tenth anniversary of different activities of our parish. This year, too, we celebrated two jubilees. In January the tenth family ski camp took place. It all started at Saas Grund, Switzerland, in 1999 – other stations were Luc, Engelberg and Laax. Six persons, parents and children, or rather young people by now, participated in each of them: Ina and Werner Kristeller and Pia, Hannah, Martina and Klaus Neumeier. But matters didn't stop there. Soon another group joined the first one at Saas Grund, and for a few years there have been three groups at the same time. And these ski camps, too, are mainly organized by voluntary teams. We could even offer many more camps, if we opened the circle of participants to persons outside Bad Vilbel. But our directing teams decided that the camps, the community and companionship should be strengthened here in our parish.

And in April we were together with a large group of confirmation candidates at the "Haus Heliand" at Oberursel-Oberstedten for the tenth time. At this house of the Protestant Youth of Hesse, which is ideal for our purposes, we held our first confirmation seminar in 1999, and this year spent nine days together during the Easter holidays. No, it's not only a simple holiday camp for young people, it really is a seminar and as such replaces the traditional weekly confirmation lesson. This seminar, too, requires an extremely high commitment of the voluntary and professional leaders. Why are we doing such things? Because we are convinced that confession and the faith in God cannot be learned by heart like a hymn, but that it requires a good atmosphere, surroundings, and time for practising and for letting it happen. Feedback from a lot of participants of present and former confirmation seminars has shown that we have chosen a really good course.

Work with Confirmation Candidates and Other Projects of Christuskirchengemeinde Recognized and Distinguished all over Germany

Not only the long confirmation seminar at Easter, but the confirmation work as a whole, comprising the weekly JAC confirmation service, the close cooperation with the youth and family work, christening in the River Nidda, Chill-Church, youth teams etc. – the whole confirmation work of our parish was presented by stands and workshops at a "Congress of the Future" of the Protestant Church in Kassel and at a "Fair of Ideas" by the Church of the Land of Hesse in Wiesbaden initiated in cooperation with Klaus Neumeier. At the fair in Wiesbaden four other ideas of our parish were presented in the framework of "best-practice" projects: the father-child weekends, the youth film group "soap", "Things that do you good", and the "Christians in the shop

window”, who were awarded the 2nd prize in an innovation competition. In general, the intensive participation of our parish, particularly of the young people, in the Wiesbaden Church Congress is very encouraging. And it was also a good day for the Church of our Land Hesse, because many good ideas were spread into the parishes.

In autumn we received still another award: Frank Sarkar and Michael Kindsvater were handed over the 2nd prize for our Parish Magazine ZACK by the Hesse Church Leader Volker Jung.

For our youth film group “soap” 2009 was an important year, too: they shot and cut their first longer high-standard film. “Vorglühen” (preheat) is about teenagers looking for their meaning of life, including flight and alcohol, leaders and seducers, great pictures and very real dialogues. The film was supported by the BVB Kulturstiftung (a bank’s foundation for culture) and it has already been shown on different occasions.

Of course, we are happy to meet with so much response and appreciation. Nevertheless, we know that there are at the same time many things to do in other areas of our parish work ...

A variety of lively music in our parish

GOD - The Musical Show! It was the highlight of all musical activities this year. Six performances in our Parish Centre in November. A semi-professional show as regards band and singers, drama and scenery, costumes and technical equipment - a really impressive project directed by Thorsten Mebus with lots of commitment of the people involved on the stage and backstage. But also our regular choirs and ensembles performed impressive concerts: The choir for small children filled the hall twice, performing the thanksgiving celebration of the knight “Ritter Rost”. There were two performances of the Easter musical show by the “Happy Singers”, and the concert given by the youth choir in the old church Auferstehungskirche. The Gospeltrain filled the church and the assembly hall with people and, above all, rousing songs. The “anders Band” invited us to rock music in our parish hall and a hall at Dortelweil and gave an impressive unplugged concert at our old church. But in addition to the concerts, the regular musical accompaniment of our services is worth mentioning, as it comprises quite a variety of music: there are the organ players, the flute circle and the project choir, our guest ensembles “Cantilena” and “Purcell Brass”, our two new youth bands and our four service bands. They all help to enrich our new Sunday service “meeting point” in such a sensitive and inspiring way, many of us could not have imagined when we introduced this new kind of Sunday service.

The “Meeting Point” Sunday Service and the Saturday Evening Service Have Become Established

As regards the services, the year 2008 was characterized by the preparation of the new Sunday morning service. At the start of the present ecclesiastical

year we introduced the “meeting point” Sunday service to be the regular Sunday Service. Even if everything is to be reviewed thoroughly, now that one year has passed, - the numbers of participants and the responses received speak for themselves. Organ and band do go well together! Young and old people do suit one another! One service for all is possible! - It is true that such a combination always involves certain concessions and compromises. But the will to go together in spite of it all, that is the encouraging and essential point. We are glad that we started this way two years ago and introduced this new “meeting point” Sunday service at the beginning of the ecclesiastical year 2008.

Changes did not only apply to the Sunday morning service, but also to the Saturday service in the old church Auferstehungskirche. The service on Saturday evening formerly celebrated with a shorter liturgy has been strengthened and is now a complete service celebrated all the year, i.e. without any winter break. The musical accompaniment is practically exclusively done by the organ and the rather traditional character of the service and the old Bad Vilbel church match perfectly. So it is no surprise that, since last year, the evening service has been attracting more people than before. We are very happy about that.

Christuskirchengemeinde on its Way - Not Only with Major Projects

As always, the past ecclesiastical year has brought many small but fine items and developments that are worth mentioning. Some of them are:

- We have held seminars for adults for many years. The **Theological Conversations** have been introduced lately, now giving a framework for seminars and open evening meetings in the parish centre. In addition to them, there are house circles with steady members from the adolescent age onwards on various weekdays.
- We had an impressive exhibition of paintings by Lars Hoellerer in our church and parish centre. They were painted with the mouth by a paraplegic artist.
- Together with the Lions Club Bad Vilbel Wasserburg and other Bad Vilbel institutions we called the **“Notinsel”** (“emergency islands” for children) into being. Most of the “emergency islands” are shops that give shelter to children in emergency. To help children and families, we are additionally just building connections around Christuskirche integrating the day nursery, the after-school care centre, the family education institution, the parish and the “emergency islands”.
- “Things that do you good” – that was the motto of six evenings in autumn 2008. Among other things the “Theological Conversations” have originated from that project. But also a weekend taking place at the end of the ecclesiastical year in November has the motto “Things

that do you good". More than 100 people will celebrate together the start of the advent season in the Rhoen mountains.

- Six father-child weekends counted again over 200 participants – with children from the kindergarten age to teenagers. And during the summer holidays there were again holiday camps for several age groups and at the end of the holidays the one-week trip by the youth team to Kiel.
- Following the "things that do you good" in autumn 2008 several new house circles have been formed this year, also for confirmed young people. In summer a breakfast for the participants of all house circles took place and a house circle team was formed for the coordination and direction.
- "Reflecting our own life" – this was the invitation of a special route on the occasion of the **cemetery day** in September. Once again, the old church Auferstehungskirche in the middle of the graves of our graveyard turned out to be a place of particularly intensive life.
- Of course we had another building site in 2009. Among many other measures of maintenance there was one major project: The grounds around Christuskirche have been renovated thoroughly. As usual, we were again able to "kill several birds with one stone" and there will at last be peace and quiet concerning building sites for some years.

The ecclesiastical year to come deals with a special kind of peace and quiet. Together with various other Christian groups we want to make a "**Year of Silence**" out of it. Even if we will certainly not be always silent and quiet, we want to give silence a chance in our hectic and loud world. Let us emphasize some activities already existing in this respect, for instance the Tuesday night prayers with Taizé songs (always at 7 p.m. at the Christuskirche, except for school holidays). One of our ZACK magazines will deal with that topic, the prayer garden during Lent will be about it, as well as another series of "things that do you good" in autumn. The youth team offers a week of prayers in January and a trip to Taizé in France. All members of the parish are invited to join us in a "weekend of silence" in May. At our parish party on May 9, 2010, however, it will be as loud as always, and at our alternative services of Kirche anders or our various concerts, too. And still we want learn again to hear the silence – and we can't wait to find out, how we are going to experience it.

We greet all the teams, members and friends of our parish with the text of the next year, the words Jesus said, that will accompany us in the year to come: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God and trust also in me" (John 14:1).

On behalf of the Parish Council in November 2009
 Frank Sarkar, Chairman of the Parish Council until October 2009
 Dr. Klaus Neumeier, Minister and Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council