

Dear Members and Friends of our Parish Christuskirchengemeinde,

“But as for me, it is good to be near God”. This verse 28 from psalm 73 is the verse from the Bible chosen for 2014. Looking back on the last twelve months since the last beginning of the advent season, we are thankful for many events in our parish, when we really had this experience. We wish and hope that this also applies to your life.

As usual this annual report is to remind us of this year's outstanding events and to attract our attention to them again. So some events are becoming important and show the central themes in our parish. Therefore we will be happy if you read this report from Christuskirchengemeinde – and any feedback would also be appreciated.

In accordance with the motto of our parish we have been “in the centre” again in many ways in 2014. We are very happy about that. Many people have attributed their gifts and talents, their time and their money to our congregation, so making it possible for us to “be in the centre”. And it is good that we can be so colourful in many ways, as the jigsaw pieces are indicating. God will certainly have his reasons to have created people so different. In our everyday life this means richness and challenge at the same time. We are going to discuss some of the above mentioned issues in the course of this annual report.

Services “in the centre”

But at first there are several services and celebrations “in the centre”. Above all let us mention the parish party we were able to have at the newly designed square in front of the Kurhaus assembly hall. It was the first party at this place and we are glad about that very successful premiere. The stage was opening the party to the lawns of the park better than before, and so in direction of the programmes for families and children. The well-proven cooperation with the Municipal Authority for Culture with its “Jazz under the Plane Trees” is as much an event “in the centre” as the different programmes made by the “Family centre around our Christuskirche church” on the lawn. Of course, the magnificent weather attributed considerably to that really wonderful party.

A little later there was another premiere: for the first time all Bad Vilbel congregations celebrated the Pentecost service together – on a new square in the city centre, the Niddaplatz. This was a great start, too, as all the participants agreed to do this again. When all Christian churches are celebrating services together in the centre of our town, this is a good and important sign showing the public Christian life in our times.

Let us also mention the other services outside our churches and “in the centre” of our town – in the meantime they have all become a good tradition in our parish: The “Advent Season in the Castle” nearly one year ago, Baptism in the River Nidda in summer, Service at the Bumper Cars at the Bad Vilbel Fair and finally the Thanksgiving service in the orchards together with the Bad Vilbel City Band.

Musical Highlights

These and other services are closely connected with a variety of music in our parish. Five choirs of our parish attribute to the services, four worship bands, two joint youth bands together with the Protestant congregation of Dortelweil, and, of course, five organists of our team. However, we had to bid farewell with grief to Karl-Heinz Broske, who died last year. For many years he had been shaping musical work in our parish decisively – at first as an employed organist and then as a volunteer in our team of organists up to his death.

Week after week we are enjoying very much the sound of our renovated and successfully extended Walcker organ during our services. We had special organ recitals, the musical request programme in February with a selection of 50 works, and the concerto for organ and percussion in October. Additionally, Simon Harden performed several other recitals and the first Bad Vilbel organ CD recording was published in November.

Furthermore the positive development of our church choir for classical music “Evangelische Kantorei Bad Vilbel” should be pointed out. Although the choir was founded only three years ago, it now comprises quite a number of singers. In addition to several services the choir sang two concertos in 2014, both times together with the choir of the Music School Bad Vilbel Karben, Vil-belCanto. At first the Creation by Joseph Haydn under the direction of Benedikt Bach was performed at the Heiliggeist Church, Bad Vilbel Heilsberg, and then, under the direction of Simon Harden, the Requiem by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart at the end of the ecclesiastical year. Three years ago we did not dare to expect that such important works of Christian choir literature could be performed within such short notice. So we are very happy about it.

Let us also mention many other concerts by our ensembles: The variety of music as well as the quality keep impressing us constantly, starting with the kindergarten choir up to the adults. Our own music groups are being supported by guest choirs or bands. The City Band and Vil-belCanto have already been mentioned. The Ladies' chamber choir Cantilena and the Purcell Brass Ensemble have been rehearsing in our premises every week and practically belong to our congregation. The Brass Band of Bad Vilbel Massenheim has repeatedly accompanied a service at Christuskirche. Solo singers and instrumentalists have enriched organ vespers and services. The brass band of the Trinitatis Parish Frankfurt played again at the Advent Season in the Castle, and as well the Music School Bad Vilbel – Karben as the grammar school Georg Büchner Gymnasium held their Christmas concerts at our Christuskirche church. “Praise Lord by singing” an old hymn says. And indeed, that's the most prominent task of music in church and we are very grateful that all this belongs to our life. We owe this to about 250 members and, of course, to our employed leaders of choirs and bands, who all meet regularly to rehearse and play music.

Anniversary of the Association to Support Christuskirchengemeinde

In this context there was a very special concert in March 2014:

Early in 2004 the “Aktion Baum / Tree Project” had been founded. Our Association to Support Christuskirchengemeinde had been looking for regular donators to further our congregation by more employed personnel. On the occasion of this tenth anniversary our choirs and bands performed a very special concert, and we thank all those who made the formation and direction of these music groups possible. As a matter of fact our musical leaders Thorsten Mebus, Tanja Tahmassebi-Hack and Simon Harden are paid by our support association – only Simon Harden’s post has been funded substantially by the Protestant Deanery of Wetterau since autumn 2013. Additional costs are arising for concerts and technical equipment.

But it is not only the music that is regularly being financed by the support association and the Foundation “Lebendige Christuskirchengemeinde” (Lively Congregation). Part of Martina Radgen’s post as the Parish Pedagogue and several projects are also being funded in this way. The Association to Support Christuskirchengemeinde attributed to the comprehensive renovation and extension of our organ in 2013, public relations, and, to a smaller extent, the acquisition of new chairs for our Christuskirche Church in the last few weeks.

In short: About 100 donators of the Association to Support Christuskirchengemeinde make great projects possible by means of their monthly donations between € 10 and € 200, and we are very grateful to them. But at the same time we urgently need new donators, in order to be able to continue with all this reliably in the future. We would be very obliged if you could become new regular donators, too. On occasion of this anniversary, the flyers of the Support Association are attached to this annual report, giving you many details in this context.

Partnerships Worldwide

In January we had our 50th Partnership Celebration. It emerged from the former mission celebration and traditionally takes place on the last Sunday in January. For half a century it opens up views over and above of our own congregation and society in Germany. The Partnership and Ecumenism Committee is discussing and developing continuously this area of operations. This is extremely valuable for our own Christian life and at the same time an important material and non-material help for people in other parts of the world.

In 2014 voluntary work in three projects connected with us could further be developed considerably. For the third time two volunteers from Germany worked at the children’s home at Kamuthi, Marit Debé being the first young lady from our parish. By means of our financial and conceptual support, there are now for the first time two volunteers from Germany at the Ndlovu project of Dr. Hugo Tempelmann in South Africa. Martina and Gerhard Radgen visited the family assistance project of the Protestant youth organisation of the Land of Hesse, Procedi, in Guatemala, and in spring 2015 Annika Küss is going to work there as a volunteer for half a year. Thanks to the internet we

hear a lot from the projects and can make the support of the great and important work possible on site.

Particularly India was in the focus of our congregation last year. On the one hand the two children's homes at Kamuthi and Tranquebar need continuous financial support. And on the other hand, in September there was a disastrous flooding after incredible rainfall in the North of India in the area of the Diocese of Amritsar– even our media reported on it many times. The consequences for the congregations and projects of our friends are hardly foreseeable. In mid November Bishop Samantaroy visited our congregation and reported personally and directly about the consequences of this catastrophe. This partnership is being sustained by the Provost District of Oberhessen and the Wetterau Deanery, and in our parish one of our home circles, the members of which visited Amritsar in autumn 2013, has close relations to the diocese.

Since summer 2014 we have been experiencing worldwide partnership in our parish: for the first time a young man from another country, Joakin Onwugamba, has been working as a volunteer at our parish for one year. Joakin comes from Nigeria, he is 18 years old, and we are very happy that he will stay with us until summer 2015. He is living with a family, he is regularly working in our day nursery "Arche Noah" and he supports the children and youth work of our parish.

Other Things Worth Mentioning from 2014:

- Ingo Schuetz has been working as a half-time minister in our parish since 2012. This year he was elected to stay on this post he up to then only administered. We are glad that he can now continue to work in our parish without any time limitation.
- Some members of our congregation, together with other committed people from Bad Vilbel, took up a special cause organizing the friendly reception and support of refugees accommodated in our town. In this context a joint open air breakfast took place behind our parish centre.
- In autumn another CK cultural trip was taking place, this time to Israel. The full programme of visits led us to many biblical places and showed us a country with its fascinating and also distressing aspects, as we became aware of the tensions between cultures and religions and the threat to peace and justice as well. In addition to this, there were many other camps and trips. The parish weekend with the motto "Things that do you good" at the start of the advent season is taking place every year now. This year's weekend trip with 130 participants is again fully booked.
- After more than 50 years the wooden chairs in Christuskirche have become past use, many chairs had to be disposed of every year. Financially the purchase of a sufficient number of new chairs posed quite a challenge. Now we invite you all to test the new chairs during our next services.

- Since the start of this year persons celebrating their big birthdays from the age of 10 years onwards receive special birthday cards. In a joint campaign of all Protestant congregations of Bad Vilbel we designed our own greeting cards. We received several pleased and astonished answers. It is especially nice that this project was done by joint action. Our Bad Vilbel congregations are coming closer together, and that's a good sign.
- And finally: One year after the inauguration of the renovated Walcker organ at Christuskirche the fundraising team "Keen on Sounds" completed its work with a second and final appeal for donations. More than 100,000 € were collected for the organ renovation on occasion of events, concerts and services. This is a fantastic result. Many thanks to that committed team.

Topic of the Year 2014 - 2015: The Holy Bible

The topic of the year is to attract attention to something special. If a congregation chooses "The Holy Bible" to become the topic of the year, there must be something more about it, as the Holy Bible is present at any service or religious pedagogies, anyhow. Its extraordinary character must show in some other way. And it does, indeed. In our parish magazine ZACK well-known persons from Bad Vilbel presented their favourite texts from the Bible. In two four-week seminars of about 50 to 60 adults each, the participants got to know the history and theology of the Old and New Testaments. In the "Bible experience space" individual visitors, groups and school classes could discover the bible anew: texts, pictures, a foot track and many objects around the bible and its stories.

In the year to come this topic is to be continued. "The history" is a project telling the whole story of the bible in 30 sections. We intend to start during Lent by treating the two books of Moses in many different ways. The detailed programme will be listed by the first 2015 ZACK magazine. The evenings with the motto "things that do you good" will also deal with this topic.

Outlook to 2015

We are glad to celebrate another series of anniversaries in the year to come: Martina Radgen will celebrate her 25th anniversary as our parish pedagogue and Thorsten Mebus his 10th anniversary – and with him the Gospeltrain and our youth choir. In autumn our new day nursery "Arche Noah – Noah's Ark" at Bergstrasse will become 20 years old. On September 26 this will be celebrated. And on the same night the Bad Vilbel "Night of Churches" will take place for the second time. One week before there will be the 20th anniversary celebration of our father-child weekends, a real story of success in our congregation.

As early as this advent season our church will receive another work of art: private donators made it possible that Stephan Gruber is manufacturing a new

nativity set for our church. His large wooden statues are well known in Bad Vilbel from the water castle. We are really looking forward to our new nativity set.

We should not forget that thanks to a special donation we have already acquired another work of art made of glass by Beate Polderman, called "Together". In our opinion it expresses much of our congregation: many colourful pieces in spite of their edges result in one overall picture with Jesus Christ heading it...

And then, on April 26 2015, a new Parish Council is being elected, as will also be the case in all other parishes of the Protestant Church of Hesse Nassau. It is a good sign of Protestant church culture that committed volunteers are elected to the direction of a parish. We are very grateful that so many apt people have been prepared to take up such a task for many years. Therefore it is with great confidence that we are looking forward to the period of the new Parish Council starting in autumn 2015. By taking part in this election, you show your interest in and support of the work and development of our and your Christuskirchengemeinde.

On behalf of the Parish Council at the start of the advent season 2014

Werner Kristeller, Chairman of the Parish Council
Dr. Klaus Neumeier, Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council and Minister

TEXT OF THE YEAR 2015

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God

Romans 15:7

The motto of our parish:

"Supported by the love of God we want to work together to fill our faith with many ways of life and to live in an active congregation. In the name of and accompanied by Jesus Christ we are open to everyone, inviting everybody to accompany us on our way of faith, sharing the diversity of our experiences with God and our individual abilities."

Evangelische Christuskirchengemeinde

Photos:

- 03: Parish Party in front of the Kurhaus Assembly Hall
Ecumenical Pentecost service in the city centre
- 05: Choir rehearsal for the Requiem by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- 06: Gala concert of all choirs on occasion of the Anniversary of the Association to Support Christuskirchengemeinde
- 07: Werner Betz is reporting about his home circle's trip to India at the Partnership Celebration Service
- 08: Marit Debé in Kamuthi (India)
- 09: Bishop Samantaroy and interpreter Reinhard Walter during the sermon at Christuskirche
- 10: Breakfast with refugees in the courtyard behind Christuskirche
- 11: Trip to Israel: At the Western Wall in Jerusalem
- 12: Bible experience space
- 13: Manufacturing a new nativity set: Stephan Gruber at work