

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

### **Dear Members and Friends of Our Parish Christuskirchengemeinde,**

A second year of Covid 19 and, nevertheless, a year full of changes, developments, and decisions in our Christuskirchengemeinde congregation. And certainly, a year, in which many of us have experienced and appreciated community life anew. Due to Covid 19 many things have no longer been matters of course.

Since the first Advent weekend through its first half, the past year was very much subject to the limitations of the pandemics, indeed. From November 2020 to May 2021 all services were celebrated digitally, but they were celebrated! On Christmas the open-air services planned to take place at the Bad Vilbel fairground finally had to be cancelled due to the second Corona wave. But we had made the preparations for digital celebrations, that did take place. And during Holy Week and Easter we remembered Jesus' death and resurrection digitally for the second time. Until the start of the summer holidays in mid-July the digital streams had still been going on, when we were also having our first services at Christuskirche together at last. Our digital team made our services possible for three quarters of a year without any interruption. We are very grateful for your great commitment. And we are also grateful, that the services were extremely well accepted by so many people – as well live as later on. We were also happy about the positive feedback we received. For this reason, we intend to celebrate hybrid services, i.e., with people coming to our church Christuskirche as well as by live broadcast on our youtube channel. There you will also find all our digital services celebrated thus far. (Photo 0)

Particularly in summer we all could see, how important it is to many people of our congregation and our city to come together personally. Our lives are above all characterized by personal meetings, as useful as the digital facilities may be. Bible study groups started to meet again, above all using the chances of coming together in gardens in the evening. Since the end of May, father-child weekends were the first to take place open-air, later on the mother-child weekends were realized, too, and then a very special summer camp for children and teens at Leomuehle on the island of the river Schwalm. (Photo 1)

During our services, too, we felt how grateful people were for the chance to meet again, for new forms of the Holy Communion, and, above all, for singing, even with masks. In general, all members of the Parish Council, the employees, and the executive teams have been adjusting and realizing the new preventive measures with a lot of time and effort. Trips were taking place with regular tests for people tested, vaccinated, or recovered from Covid 19. The same applied to the summer programme for children in Bad Vilbel and the Children's Bible Week, that was subject to Corona conditions for the second time, nevertheless, it was taking place. In the Easter holidays we organized a "confirmation seminar @ home", daily meeting confirmation candidates from three parishes in our large parish centre and enjoying a very special week in fixed groups. In autumn we had a cultural trip again to visit cathedrals and castles in France (Photo 2). Hopefully, the weekend of "things that do you good" will take place on the first weekend of the advent season, and the three fully-booked family ski camps in January 2022, too.

## Anniversary and Changes in Our Staff

Our congregation is blessed by an extremely high continuity of staff. Many of them have been working here for a very long time, so guaranteeing continuity and long-term relations. In January 2021 Klaus Neumeier celebrated his 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a minister of our congregation – such a long and blessed period of time...

At the same time, however, there were some changes in 2021:

- Julian Lezuo has a half-time post as a minister of our congregation since June 1. He came from Kronberg to Bad Vilbel directly after his training (curacy), and was being ordained solemnly by Provost Matthias Schmidt in July, so being assigned with the tasks of a minister. He is living with his family at the vicarage Am Alten Wehr, Bad Vilbel, and has taken up work successfully. (Photo 3)
- Since the beginning of this year Eva Raboldt has a half-time post as the manager of the new “B 3 Family Centre”. She has been active in our congregation as a voluntary team member and singer of the Gospeltrain choir for a long time, and now she is working in our team. Her start of this job has not been easy due to Covid 19, building delays at the Quellenpark (Park of Wells), and, unfortunately, due to unexpected coordination difficulties with the Municipal Authorities of Bad Vilbel. Nevertheless, Eva Raboldt started her conceptional work with great vigour, and by now we hope that everything is really on a very good course.
- Julia Krombacher took up the second post of the Bad Vilbel parish pedagogue in May, starting her practical work very well with the “Summer fun” for children and the children’s bible week. So we regret it even more, that she will leave Bad Vilbel again as early as the end of January 2022, as the challenges of family life and her job cannot be combined in the long run.
- Martina Radgen is continuing her work in our congregation, but with the filling of the second post of a parish pedagogue, her scope of work changed a lot, as both pedagogues are now in charge of the whole of Bad Vilbel. While the second post (that now has to be filled again) is in charge of children and family work, Martina Radgen took over the area of confirmation candidates and youth work as well as the youth team. This restructuring of work implied that she had to hand over some tasks of our Christuskirche congregation.
- Klaus Neumeier, too, handed over some fields of activity, as he took up a new huge work scope, above all the new kindergarten “Kita Dreiklang” (see below). After 30 years he was leaving the youth work and was bid farewell as the head of the interparish youth team by the volunteers, who were thanking him very much – some former members, even from far-away places like Kiel in the north of Germany, were participating.
- After having graduated from her theological studies, Lydia Katzenberger will be in our team as a curate for two years in order to prepare herself for being a minister, and in doing so she will be assisted by Ulrike Mey. She will celebrate

services and participate on many other occasions in our parish in 2022. (Photo 4)

## Parish Council Elections and Outlook on the Six Years to Come

Every six years the Parish Council of all Protestant congregations is elected anew. In spite of the pandemics, the election could take place on June 13, 2021.

Nevertheless, some things were different: For the first time, all 18 candidates could be elected by "list election", so the nomination proposal of the hitherto parish council could be confirmed. It was not necessary to select two or three persons from the list, as was the case in the previous elections. Some people were a bit confused about this new procedure without a real choice, but most of them were very grateful, that these people were prepared to take up the extensive and responsible work of a parish council member, and they gave them their acknowledgement. By the way, more than 50 percent of the congregations of the EKHN (Protestant Church of Hesse Nassau) voted for this procedure of "list election". Obviously, it is the more suitable type in our times.

In fact, there are only four new members in the new parish council (Robin Krauss, Helge Lemmer, Elke Rühl-Mittag, and Helga Schaefer-Geywitz). After 22 years of membership Claudia Leyendecker left the council, and Irene Hartmann after 18 years of being a member. In October the new Parish Council took up office, and as Werner Kristeller wanted to hand over his post of the chairman after 12 years, Christoph Diemerling was elected to be the new Chairman of our Parish Council. We are very grateful to Werner Kristeller for his prudent, considerate, and very responsible leadership during the last few years. We are very happy, that Christoph Diemerling was prepared to take over, and we are sure that our work will go on smoothly (Photo 5). In early November the new Parish Council went on its first conclave weekend taking a look at the six years to come.

The time ahead will be characterised by changes in the Church of the Land of Hesse EKHN: Having the motto "EKHN 2030" the restructuring on the level of the parishes will take place. New neighbourhood rooms are to be created, where the staff and the volunteers shall cooperate, buildings and administration are to be organised together, and, above all, proclamation in all its facets is to be accounted for together. In the field of parish pedagogics (children, youth, and family work) this has been the case already, and in other areas we have been cooperating with other parishes in the city convent and the "Council of Protestant Parishes" for a long time. Nevertheless, the next few years will confront us with many challenges, that can only be tackled by the trustful cooperation of several parishes and their staff and voluntary teams.

At first, however, we were discussing the changes in our staff and in the Parish Council as well as in the scopes of work of our parish, adjusting the well-established structure of work of the Parish Council to the different committees and teams. As always, the weekend together at Bingen on the river Rhine, in addition to all the work done, was a time of real cheerfulness and good companionship. (Photo 6)

## Kindergarten "Kita Dreiklang" and the „B3 Family Centre"

Actually, the new Protestant kindergarten at the Quellenpark (Park of Wells) should have started in February this year. A few months before, however, the opening was

postponed until May 1. But then it really started and on the very first day five groups were being opened: with two toddler groups 24 children below the age of three years, and three kindergarten groups with children between three and six years old. We are very grateful that we were able to employ so many persons at the start of the kindergarten already, which is not self-evident, – given the great shortage of skilled kindergarten teachers. In summer, during a service by Anna Debé and Klaus Neumeier, God's blessing could be given to most of the team members (Photo 7). But at present, we are still waiting to receive further applications – also for our kindergarten “Arche Noah” – in order to be able to fill the vacancies of skilled kindergarten teachers. Should anybody know people with suitable skills, please, tell them about the vacancies.

Nevertheless, starting to work was not easy. It is really a great challenge to design, order, and arrange everything for such a big kindergarten, from pencils to children's chairs up to computers in the manager's office. In addition to this, teams had to be formed, a good atmosphere with children and parents had to be created, the still existing pandemics to be managed, first individual problems included, to get familiarised with software, billing, contracts, etc. Quite a challenging time for management, teams, and our Christuskirche as the supporting organisation. On this occasion, we found out that the mutual expectations of the head of the kindergarten (Christiane Feucht) and the supporting organisation, contrary to our hopes, did not match after all. After a separation by mutual agreement in autumn the deputy head of the kindergarten, Ana Pino, assumed the post of the head, whereas the post of the deputy was advertised again.

The building constructed by the Municipal Utilities by order of the City of Bad Vilbel is large and modern. Nevertheless, several small and also some big deficiencies in the construction had to be solved, even after the work had started. In particular the completion of the outdoor facilities lasted much longer than was planned – very much to the regret of the 80 children in the kindergarten, as there were not yet any alternatives in the Quellenpark development area in summer. In the field of musical education, the work started in connection with the kindergarten team and the music school, as well as in the field of religious education with Klaus Neumeier, who, together with Anna Debé and Judith Dietrich as members of the Parish Council, was intensively involved in this first year of development work of the Kita Dreiklang and still is.

In the same building there is also another kindergarten under municipal patronage and the “Family Centre Quellenpark”, where the municipal “Family Centre Quellenstadt” and our “B3 Family Centre” have been working since summer. As was told before, Eva Raboldt started her management work, having been able to begin several programmes with a lot of commitment and drive already. This half-time post is being funded by the Association to Support Christuskirchengemeinde. Some more hours are to be financed by the City of Bad Vilbel, so that people from the large development area Quellenpark may be supported by this centre. The “3B” of our family centre stand for: Begegnung – meeting, Beratung – advice, and Bildung – education, for all kinds of families! Nuclear families, adopted families, singles and pairs, children and elderly people. The work in the family centre is very diverse at present. The term “family centre” is only partly correct, as in general we support people of several generations in all kinds of situations of life. Many of the activities will take place at our new rooms at Johannes-Gutenberg- Strasse 13, and others at

our kindergarten Arche Noah, Bergstrasse, and our Parish Centre, Grüner Weg – or even at other places of Bad Vilbel, because cooperation is an essential motto of this work. (Photo 8)

### Our Services and Programmes

As was described before, we are very glad to be able to celebrate services together with people in our churches, hoping very much, that it will stay this way. In addition to our christening, marriage and confirmation services, all other special services had been postponed, as, for example, the ceremonial nomination of three new lay preachers: Werner Betz, Gabriele Castenholz, and Christoph Diemerling had completed a two-year course to design sermons, to celebrate services, christenings, and the Holy Communion. During a solemn service they were nominated and are now celebrating services in our parish and elsewhere, in addition to our ministers and other lay preachers. In doing so, they are not substituting our ministers in the first place, but they are placing emphasis on other things when proclaiming, being persons with very different careers. Their service represents the epitome of the Protestant understanding of church and service. (Photo 9)

Early in March 2020 the last alternative service “Kirche anders” took place – at a very special place at the Hassia water-filling plant. And then everything else, together with the “Kirche anders” winter season, and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, that was to be the grand finale in March 2021, had to be cancelled. The pandemics prevented everything, and so “Kirche anders” ended with a small celebration for the leading team and the former and present volunteers. Appropriately, we were celebrating on Reformation Day, October 31, 2021. (Photo 10). Why does this successful service end after 25 years, although for many people our Christuskirche congregation practically was the “Kirche anders” congregation? It’s as simple as that: “Kirche anders” has been characterising our congregation so much, influencing our services so positively, that we don’t need “Kirche anders” in its present form any longer, but new kinds instead. For example “Bembel.Bible.Beat” (Photo 11), which started on the square in the middle of the new Quellenpark quarter with the Band UCB, with plum and onion cakes, apple juice and apple wine, and with a conversation with Katrin Faludi about doubts and faith. And many families with children were participating, filling the programmes for adults and children with life. In 2022 we have planned four dates at special places on special Sundays.

A very special occasion, too, was the second live broadcast of our Christuskirche Sunday service by the German television station ZDF. Anja Seybold and Klaus Neumeier presented this service together with the band BON directed by Thorsten Mebus and Daniel Scharfenberger. And as our topic of the service was the role of fathers, several participants of our father-child weekends were present, too. (Photo 12) Again we met with very positive response. Although time and effort for such a service broadcast on television is very extensive, all people involved had a lot of fun, as had also been the case early in 2018.

### And Lots of Other Things...

Of course, many more things would be worth mentioning – as always. A lot of precious work is being done in the background. This applies to administration, maintenance of buildings, and funding, as well as public relations, or the pastoral

work of visits done by pastors or volunteers. On this occasion we thank you all for your extraordinary commitment in very special times and under sometimes very difficult conditions.

At the same time we are looking ahead full of hope and faith in God, especially looking forward to the new musical show about the Christian martyr and fighter for equal rights of all people, Martin Luther King (Photo 13 and signature 14). There will be many very different activities about this topic. Please, already mark down July 17, 2022 in your calendar, when we want to have a great parish party, hopefully without any limitations due to pandemics, that has taught us, that our lives are not in our own hands, but that a small, invisible virus can change everything. How lucky we are, that even in our disturbed times we can trust in Jesus. And so let us greet you all by the text for the year 2022: "Jesus said: Whoever comes to me, I will never drive away." (John 6:37)

On behalf of the Parish Council

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