

Annual Report 2018 of Christuskirchengemeinde Bad Vilbel

Dear Members and Friends of our Parish Christuskirchengemeinde,

After the inspiring year of the Reformation Anniversary in 2017 the year 2018 was comparatively modest and less spectacular. But some future events like the Bad Vilbel Hessen Festival in 2020 and the ecumenical Church Congress in Frankfurt in 2021 are already on their way.

There were no real changes in the team of employees of our parish. But let me make two remarks:



Until the end of September **Geraldine Groenendijk** was employed as a church musician by the Wetterau Deanery. This was, however, a temporary employment only, which could not be extended. So she left our team of organists this autumn - to our deepest regret. The church choir for classical music "Evangelische Kantorei Bad Vilbel", which rehearses in our parish centre, favoured further cooperation with Geraldine Groenendijk.

Although we regret the employment problems of the deanery very much, we are even more glad, that the Association to Support Christuskirchengemeinde has been paying for directing the Kantorei choir for classical music since October.

We express our thanks to all the donors, who are making this solution possible. Further donors would be very much welcome!

Geraldine Groenendijk

In summer Klaus Neumeier had a sabbatical of several months, thus doing no normal service work in the parish during that period. Instead, he was preparing an empiric study among the pastors of the Protestant Church of Hessen and Nassau as regards the importance of the old languages (Hebrew, Greek, Latin) and knowledge in new languages in practice. The results were published all over Germany in autumn.



"In the centre – and nevertheless very different". That was the topic of four units in our parish this year. Being Christians, we are always on our way, together with our faith. We are living in relation with Jesus Christ, we are named after him – and our congregation, too. We are meeting each other, trying every day to be a lively congregation. And we must prove again and again to be reliable Christians, if we want to live a life of faith in God in this world as trustworthily as possible.

On four weekends we held sermons on this topic – we would have appreciated some more participation and interest, though. It pleased us, however, that all 13 home circles of our parish were dealing with the topics intensely, thinking

together about the question of who we are as a congregation today: amidst the world and nevertheless not only of this world, but also in the wide space of God that exceeds all earthly things ... The ZACK magazine, too, also dealt with each unit in detail and can still be seen at our homepage at www.ckbv.de, downloads – this does also apply to the sermons.

A series of summer sermons about the “water” did not only relate us closely to the text of the year, but also “Bad Vilbel, the city of the wells” - and in addition to this it prepared our thoughts for the motto of the Hessen Festival which is to take place in Bad Vilbel in 2020. Water plays manifold parts in the Holy Bible, indeed: from God’s acts of creation to the destruction by the water during the Flood, from baptizing at the beginning of Christian life to Jesus’ dialogue about living water, with which people will never get thirsty again (dialogue with a Samaritan woman at the well, John 4). The text of the year was always present: “God said: To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life” (Revelation 21:6).



This topic of water also comprised two excursions headed by Ulrike Mey: The senior director of the Hassia Mineral Water company, Mr. Günter Hinkel, was accompanying us to the Bad Vilbel springs museum and the river expert Gottfried Lehr was walking with us along the river Nidda. In addition to this, a team of our congregation designed one of the large Hassia water bottles, painting the biblical picture of the “well of the living water”. Since Pentecost it has been standing in front of our church Christuskirche. (Photo from the left: Ulrike Mey, Nadine Schwarz, Astrid Edelmann, Günter Hinkel)

Early this year in January we celebrated a very special service at Christuskirche: A whole weekend the German television station ZDF was a guest in our congregation and our Sunday morning service was broadcast live in German television.

:

“Dare to trust” was the motto of Klaus Neumeier’s sermon and also that of the little films about Robin Krauß, the firefighter, and Christine Schmidt. The Jesus House Band was playing, Anja Seybold presented the service, and Ulrike Mey did the reading. – It was a modern type of service which, nevertheless, was also well accepted by elderly TV spectators.



Rev. Klaus Neumeier and Anja Seybold



Given viewers of more than one million, the ratings were very high, and many of those who called us by telephone after the service emphasized that the service was merry and lively, and they found that the church was quite crowded by people of all generations. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped to prepare and celebrate this service: the preparatory team, persons in front of the camera, the technical team, the telephone team and other helpers in the background. We also enjoyed the cooperation with the television employees and Stephan Fritz, the TV pastor of the Protestant Church of Germany, who planned the service with our team. Of course, this event was noticed with great interest in Bad Vilbel, and so we are glad that our congregation Christuskirchengemeinde was a good representative of our city.

The Night of the Churches

Already for the third time there was a “Night of the Churches” in the whole city of Bad Vilbel, and Ingo Schütz was in charge of the overall organization. The opening service took place at our Christuskirche (photo 6: Opening service with all Christian confessions) – and afterwards there were musical or contemplative programmes, arts for our souls and food for our bodies – and many good meetings further beyond the parish limits. After several years Beate Poldermann, the glass artist, was again our guest in the old church Auferstehungskirche, presenting a great programme accompanied by harp music. At Christuskirche the band BON was playing and inspiring short films were shown - and at the end a worship concert with modern spiritual music was performed.

In addition to this, we cooperated in many ways with the other Bad Vilbel parishes, our congregation being represented by Ingo Schütz and Christian Brück. As in the previous years the service on Pentecost Monday was celebrated by all Christian congregations together at the Niddaplatz in the city centre. (Photo 7: Niddaplatz). A very good practice that has by now become a tradition. At the same time the cooperation with the other Protestant congregations is becoming more and more binding and comprehensive.



As regards the areas of church music and the pedagogic services of the parishes (work with children, adolescents, and families), joint conceptions were prepared and the work with confirmation candidates is being linked step by step. Many thanks to Thorsten Mebus and Martina Radgen, as well as many volunteers, for their conceptual work in this respect. It is our plan to cooperate in the administration and the presentation of our Protestant congregations in our city. We also discussed the new assignment of rectorates in the Bad Vilbel cooperation area. Some processes were initiated by the Wetterau Deanery, others were developed by the employees and the parish councils of our congregations. It is particularly satisfying, that seven Protestant congregations are working together: in addition to four congregations of the Regional Church of Hessen Nassau, which are the congregations of Heilsberg, Massenheim, Dortelweil and Christuskirche, also the Protestant Congregation of Gronau, which belongs to Kurhessen Waldeck, the Free Protestant Congregation of Dortelweil and the Community of the Regional Church. In February 2019 a closed conference of a team from these congregations will take place again – a good initiative by the Protestant Deanery of Wetterau.

Protestant Kindergarten “Arche Noah”

After long negotiations we, being the body responsible for the kindergarten, were able to close a new contract with the city of Bad Vilbel in 2018. It regulates, among other things, the funding of our Day Nursery “Arche Noah” (Noah’s Ark). After the long term of the previous contract this was overdue, and we are very grateful to the city of Bad Vilbel for the extremely good cooperation. This is particularly important, as the kindergarten work has developed incredibly in many respects during the last few decades:

The period of care for the children is much longer now than 20 years ago. Then most of the children were picked up at 12 o’clock, whereas now practically all children eat lunch there and are at the day nursery all day long, sometimes until 5.30 p.m.

The team has grown substantially, and we are very grateful for the good work and cooperation of our kindergarten team comprising of:

- the qualified kindergarten teachers,
- the housekeeping employees,
- the office worker,
- the trainees for a one-year internship, and particularly our very committed and highly qualified head of the day nursery, Ruth Hohmann.



Due to social requirements the pedagogic challenges have risen enormously: integration and inclusion of handicapped children, preparation for school, individual support ... Another characteristics of our day nursery is the intensive work as regards religious education: Arche Noah services and regular services for the children in church with Reverend Klaus Neumeier.

The day nursery also cooperates intensively with the congregation: the bible week for children, the choir for young children, the children’s group, father-child weekends and mother-child weekends, family ski camps, services for young children. This close cooperation is very good for both, the kindergarten and the congregation.

The kindergarten is also in close contact with the local primary schools, neighbouring day nurseries, as well as secular and church organizations of the city and the region. Unfortunately this involves almost unbearable administration work and bureaucracy. Many things which were normal in former times now require lots of forms to be filled in for applications, adjustments, or even cancellations. Where will this development lead us to?

And there are always lots of open questions, especially for funding larger building measures. In this respect Klaus Neumeier is also working actively on the level of the Church of the Land of Hessen Nassau, particularly in the field of the day nursery.

Building Committee

This year we want to emphasize the background work of the building committee. We have many buildings that are used very intensively: two churches, the parish centre, the old kindergarten building, the “Arche Noah” Day Nursery, vicarages, cemetery, grounds outside, etc.. Long protocols of the monthly meetings give proof of a lot of work in general and above all in detail.

In 2018 the focus of this work was on two building projects: the caretaker flat at the vicarage next to Christuskirche was refurbished thoroughly. That involved very much work and money. The same applies to the youth meeting rooms on the upper floor of the old kindergarten building. In the same building the premises of the day nursery for children under the age of three, “Kleine Strolche”, had already been renovated the previous year. This year in summer the youth meeting rooms were refurbished. Let us express our thanks to Ralf Appel, the president of the building committee, and his team, particularly Ursel Metz – the former president for many years, who is still accompanying with commitment all the building matters of our day nursery.

Further information worth mentioning:

The ecumenical cooperation worldwide is of great importance to us. This is nothing new. But let us give you two examples of this year:

- * In 2017 – 2018 Lena Wolpert and in 2018 – 2019 Marlene Mühlhans were the first volunteers of our congregation to cooperate in a project by Hugo Tempelmann in South Africa. Lena was able to put up a girls’ soccer team, and we are looking forward to learn more on Marlene’s experiences, when she will come back after one year.



Vijay Kumar at the thanksgiving service together with Irene Hartmann and Reinhard Walter

In autumn Reverend Vijay Kumar from our partner congregation, Christchurch Cathedral Amritsar, was our guest again. He visited many groups of our congregation, participated in services and visited members of our congregation. – In spring 2019 Ulrike Mey and Thorsten Mebus will visit Amritsar together with a youth delegation and a band.

- * And we were on our way again having organized many trips and camps. Our ZACK magazine pointed out in summer, why we are doing this: Trips and camps are a given time of special companionship: companionship with each other and with God. So it is a time for very special experiences of faith: prayers at ski camps, at the yurt of the Leomühle children's camp, services at the Anglican cathedral of Canterbury or in the desert of Jordan. Approximately 1000 participants in about 30 camps and trips (from one weekend to a two-week camp) testify: It is good to share time together and it is possible that a congregation can grow to become good companionship. (Sailing cruise of a father-child group)



Sailing cruise of a father-child group

- * We have already mentioned that the administration work in the day nursery has risen enormously. The administration committee of our parish is also affected by it. Headed by Ulrike Mey we are unfortunately forced to struggle with the Administration of our own Regional Church, as they are, for example, in charge of employment questions, and are hardly able to administer sideline jobs. This is a very difficult development and I am asking in this respect, too: Where does that lead us to? that a congregation can grow to become good companionship.
- * In addition to this, many parish members are highly committed in the work of accompanying refugees who came to Bad Vilbel. And some of the refugees are highly committed members of the congregation, too. Ingo Schütz is the minister in charge and he is still being involved in many personal and often quite difficult legal proceedings. It is good, that we, as a Christian congregation, are working actively in this field. Religious lessons, German lessons, an intercultural Christmas celebration, cooperation with the Association for the Support of Refugees, etc. with all the personal contacts involved, belong to this area, just as the breakdance workshop headed by Hassan Nazari for some years.
- * And finally many wonderful concerts give proof of an active life in the field of music. More than 200 people are coming every week to participate in the different choirs. In addition to this, there are people who play the organ or are members of the bands, and there are also guest ensembles. They are all praising the Lord with their music, which for many of them is a very special way to their faith. Thorsten Mebus is heading the musical committee and many part-time employees and volunteers.

By this survey of the last year we wish you all the best for Christmas 2018 and the New Year 2019 and are looking forward to coming together with all of you in the new year.

On behalf of the Parish Council

Werner Kristeller, Chairman of the Parish Council