

Dear Members and Friends of our Parish Christuskirchengemeinde,

the first decade of the 21st century is coming to its end. But in spite of all the progress made, this world has neither become fairer nor more peaceful. Some people are worrying about the future – for their own and our society's sake. Does the way to a united Europe rather mean a blessing or a curse? On the other hand we are living in peace and freedom and are enjoying wealth, that our ancestors wouldn't have dreamed of. We are experiencing rapid developments in many areas of life. Many things make life easier and richer, but at the same time they are a challenge and even a threat to some people. How should we organize our own lives? What gives us guidance? Who are the people and which are the conceptions we can trust?

All this represents the background for the life in a local parish like Christuskirchengemeinde in Bad Vilbel. We see that people are grateful for a reliable community, for Christian proposals and guidance in a complex world. And where trust in people and conceptions, in politics and the economy has been called into question, many persons discover their trust in God and his greater truth again. "You have set my feet in a spacious place", the psalm 31 says and it is true: their trust in God gives Christians new perspectives when looking at the world, they are experiencing relief and calmness, and at the same time feel released to take action. Persons knowing about God's greater truth are able to turn their attention to other people and their worries.

100 Times Kirche anders, the Alternative Service

In our parish it means a lot to us to open up different ways and possibilities for finding the meaning of life. In this context, Kirche anders has been our advertisement for 15 years. In December 2010 we were able to celebrate the 100th Kirche anders in the crowded Christuskirche church (just this once in the church). Of course our band "Die anders Band", the Gospeltrain and our theatre team took part in the celebration, but also our Hesse Church Leader Volker Jung and the Chairman of Willow Creek Germany, Karl Heinz Zimmer came to celebrate. Together with Ulrike Mey and Tobias Utter they told very personal stories about their experience with God in their lives. The children were at the same time celebrating their KICK (**K**ids in **C**hristus**k**irche) service in the parish centre and afterwards all came together in the Church for a drink.

We are particularly grateful that Kirche anders attracted many new people to our parish. The Bistro atmosphere, the narrative sermon, the chance of a dialogue at the part of "question and answer" – all this has proved successful for 15 years and we give special thanks to our wonderful, committed and creative team. In the meantime a new Kirche anders winter season has already begun...

Continuity and Change in the Parish's Social and Welfare Work

During the last few years it was also in the field of nursing care that we felt the changes of the general social set-up. For our Bad Vilbel Community Care

Centre it has not always been easy to find the right answers to the problems faced. Early this year there was an important change of place: after 20 years near our church on Gruener Weg, the Community Care Centre moved to the area of the nursing home at Bad Vilbel Heilsberg, which is also part of the Protestant Social and Welfare Work. At the same time Juergen Kraemer became responsible for managing the nursing services. The responsible association of all Protestant parishes of our town hopes to have opened the way for the future of social and welfare work in Bad Vilbel with these two changes – and many facts have already proved that this decision was right.

In autumn another change took place: After ten years Ernst Kreiling resigned as the Chairman of the Society for the Support of the Community Care Centre and Uwe Zeiher took over. In this time of a difficult economic situation for nursing care we are nevertheless able to maintain the high level of Christian social and welfare work by means of membership subscriptions and donations. Therefore we wish to thank the old and the new chairman, the whole management and, of course, all the members and donators. Although the rooms of the new Community Care Centre are no longer in the center of our parish, this does not affect the real nursing work at the people's places in Bad Vilbel, and we are very grateful to all employees of the Community Care Centre for their important Christian work.

When the community Care Centre moved, its former building became vacant and had to be renovated completely. Fortunately, this could be done in the first half of 2011, so that the Mebus family moved in in Summer. After having worked for our parish for six and a half years, Thorsten Mebus and his family have now become real Bad Vilbel citizens. – Of course, the Building Committee had lots of work by maintaining our buildings and areas, even without further major projects, and we are glad for this reliable work in the background. Our churchyard wall is also worth mentioning, it had to be restored to a large extent this year.

Children in our Town

In 2011 another major building project was given up in an early stage. There existed plans to extend the day nursery "Arche Noah" ("Noah's Ark") in cooperation with the City of Bad Vilbel. It was planned to expand the building for 20 more children under the age of 3, 14 primary school children and some more kindergarten children. The reason for our offer was the request by many parents of children between 1 and 10 years of age. There are particularly many requests for primary school children, who by now have no legal right to day care. Especially in the city area of Bad Vilbel the need of day care for children seems to be strong. According to the plans made, the extension would, however, be much more expensive than other alternatives. So the City of Bad Vilbel decided not to develop the project any further.

Another step forward was made as regards the network of different institutions for children and families around our Christuskirche church. The cooperation between our parish, the day nursery "Arche Noah", the Protestant Family Education Institution, the day nursery for children under the age of three,

“Kleine Strolche” and the day care institution for primary school children “FIBS” has by now become quite natural. Under the direction of the Parish the official recognition as a Family Centre was applied for at the Land of Hesse.

In 2011 the Parish’s projects for children and families have also been expanded: the father- and child-weekends showed a new record of participants by reaching 300 persons, and in autumn a bible week for children with 80 participants took place. In addition to this, there are lots of other projects, regular groups and holiday camps.

Anniversaries and Honours

In 2011 we have had several reasons for celebrations: Early this year Klaus Neumeier has been a minister in Bad Vilbel for 20 years, in autumn Ruth Homann has been the director of the day nursery “Arche Noah” for ten years, and Beate Sobiegraj her vice director also for ten years. The same applies to Sabine Herth, who has been working in the Parish Office since 2001. – It is a blessing for a parish, when, in addition to many volunteers, very committed and creative employees push the development of the parish as a whole. All four anniversaries were properly celebrated with services.

For the third time our Parish Magazine ZACK won the competition of the best parish magazine in the Land of Hesse. After the award of Oberhessen and another special award it was honoured to be the “best parish magazine of the Protestant Church of Hesse Nassau”. Werner Kristeller, Sabine Herth of the ZACK editorial team, and Astrid Kuess of the Parish Council received the document from Provost Sigurd Rink.

As regards public relations, let us also mention the excellent work for our homepage by Andreas Giese, Edgar Dobrow and others, as well as the outstanding cooperation with our local newspapers. This cooperation beyond church boundaries cannot be taken for granted – and that’s why it is worth mentioning in this report.

In addition to this, two members of the youth team received awards: Sinja Bauer and Hannah Neumeier participated in the German competition of “Sermons by young people” and were invited, together with 8 other young people from all over Germany, to an exclusive sermon workshop at Wittenberg. Our parish was the only one with two participants.

Motto of the Year: “Celebration of Services”

Above all we have regularly celebrated our services. Without doubt it is the main purpose of each Christian parish to celebrate and praise God in many ways. “What do services mean to us and our faith?” That’s what we asked ourselves in many home circles and teams in the course of 2011, talking about the meaning, types and contents of our services.

Many things have grown into a good habit since we changed our Sunday service into a real “meeting point”: the organ and a band, the integration of

the services for children ("Kid's Treff") and confirmation candidates (JAC), the focus on families and on organ music.

And additionally we had something new last year: On the Saturday before the fourth advent Sunday we had a calm, musical celebration at our castle. Given the wonderful weather and beautiful snow, the first celebration of the advent season in the castle was a real success. Several hundred people participated and afterwards they were standing together talking and drinking glühwein and children's punch for quite some time.

One of our youth teams has also tried a new track by organizing the new youth service called "Crossroad". The team members come from our common youth team of Christuskirche and Dortelweil. The service addresses young people from all Bad Vilbel parishes and takes place at different locations. We hope that it will attract many young people who have already celebrated their confirmation.

New Tracks for Classical Church Music

Some decades ago, Christuskirchengemeinde was famous for its classical church music: a church choir, a trombone band and an employed choirmaster and organist belonged to the parish life as a matter of course. At the end of the nineties this employed post was cancelled by the regional church of the Land. We intend to change this with the assistance of the organization to support Christuskirchengemeinde. In autumn we concluded a contract with the concert organist Simon Harden from Dublin on a fee-paying basis. Beginning in 2012 he will add to the team of volunteer organists, playing the organ once a month at services, building up a parish choir, playing concerts, supervising the renovation and starting the development of the large Walcker organ at Christuskirche.

This will be made possible by our organization to support Christuskirchengemeinde, who, on request of the Parish Council, has started the "Organ Tones Project", and is looking for donators in order to support and strengthen the classical church music, in addition to modern church music, on the long run. Many donators will be required, but it will help the parish as a whole to grow and get stronger.

This is to explicitly thank all new donators of the "Organ Tones Project" and also all faithful donators of the last few years, who made so many special projects possible in Bad Vilbel. But let us also thank all tax payers, who form the foundation of everything by their regular contributions.

2012: 50 Years Christuskirche in the Centre

To be "in the centre", that's the aim of our parish work. This applies to the "Christians in the shop window" in premises at Bad Vilbel's main street, the Parish Party in front of Bad Vilbel's Kurhaus (assembly hall), network projects like "Notinsel" ("emergency islands" for children), the cooperation with the

trade association, cultural affairs department, music school or primary schools – “to be in the centre” has really become characteristic of our parish.

Since 1962 this has also been the case locally: Christuskirche, with all its buildings and areas, is situated in the centre of Bad Vilbel. The 50th anniversary in 2012 will be a good reason for many celebrations next year. In January the ZACK magazine will present the programme. It will have a great variety of events and so will be suited for our parish. “In the centre” will also be the motto of a new parish book. (Do you still remember the book “It’s us” from 2000? There are still some of them in the Parish Office).

“To be in the centre” is also our aim for many events together with associations and institutions in our town, when we celebrate services, parties, concerts, and musical shows in the year to come. And we hope that you will also be in the centre with us, when we have our party around Christuskirche on June 17 or at the first Bad Vilbel night of churches on October 6. Many things are being planned intensively, and we are very curious about the events to come.

“To be in the centre” is also the motto of our new emblem, that is opening this annual report. Together with the guiding principle “Many gifts – one spirit” it expresses a good deal of our parish’s identity. Hopefully you will see a large or small one on many occasions.

All activities, however, are worthless without God’s spirit “in the centre” and His blessings. And that’s what we are praying for, so that our parish may be a blessing for many people, as this has been our purpose – in the last and the new ecclesiastical year.

On behalf of the Parish Council at the start of the advent season 2011
Werner Kristeller, Chairman of the Parish Council
Dr. Klaus Neumeier, Minister and Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council