

Annual Report 2005

The old ecclesiastical year ends with commemorating the dead, the new one starts with the preparations for Christmas. Each turn of the year is a good opportunity to pause and reflect: What did the past twelve months bring about, what appears to be really important when looking back? As was already the custom in the last few years, this annual report is to give an impression of the important events of our parish, Evangelische Christuskirchengemeinde at Bad Vilbel, thus making clear the “central threads” of the past year.

A new Chairman of the Parish Council

After the end of the summer holidays the Parish Council's intensive but calm work in a good atmosphere came into focus when there was a change in its chairmanship. According to ecclesiastical law an election of the chairman/chairwoman had to take place after two years. Several months in advance Ingrid Faludi had already said that she would no longer be available for this office. She had been the Parish Council's chairwoman for eight years, and vice-chairwoman of the two preceding years. With great prudence and an incredible commitment she, being the first chair-woman and the first lay-woman, set the course over and above the limits of our parish. By bringing people together instead of supporting polarization, always making her mark as a chairwoman, but without pushing herself forward, Ingrid Faludi was the first servant of our parish in the true sense of the word. The Parish Council discharged her from her office giving her great recognition for her services and expressing that she has deserved a new emphasis in her life. In the face of the other numerous honorary posts in our parish, parish life will continue to play an important part for her anyhow.

Early in September Frank Sarkar was elected the new chairman. He is 41 years old and is living with his wife and two daughters on Bad Vilbel's Niederberg. During his two years as a member of the Parish Council Frank Sarkar has familiarized intensively with financial and staff matters and has also cooperated with other teams of our parish (services for children, Kirche anders, an alternative type of service, father-child weekends). We are very grateful to him and his family, that he has taken over this additional

task as a chairman. He will be supported by Dr. Klaus Neumeier, who continues to serve as vice-chairman.

In summer another change took place among the ministers of our parish: After the end of her year of maternity leave Ulrike Mey took over her post as the minister of the southern part of Bad Vilbel again. We thanked Claudia Winkler for her work in our parish. She had covered for Ulrike Mey as a minister during that year and then left for Bad Homburg. She met many parish members during her work when visiting elderly people on their birthday, celebrating services, and educating confirmation candidates or pupils at school. The churchyard was also one of her tasks during her year in our parish.

Concerns about the Parish's Funding and Employees

The financial and staff situation of our parish gives rise to concern. Due to the church tax being related to the income tax, the church income declines sharply in economically difficult times. In addition, the decline in income tax cannot be offset by other kinds of taxation by the church. The cuts required are noticeable in the parishes – in large parishes like Bad Vilbel with many employees even more than in smaller ones. We are very concerned about the administration and caretaker jobs, especially so, as they are fulfilled by long-term and deserving employees. The financial committee is intensively looking for stable solutions for all the parties involved.

As to the parish work, our parish applied for one out of five project jobs of the Church of the Land of Hessen concerning parish development in 2005. Although we had presented a convincing conception together with the neighbouring parish of Dortelweil, and although the church direction had clearly favoured the project at Bad Vilbel before, we were not taken into consideration. We regret very much that the promise has not been kept.

Thorsten Mebus Sets New Trends

At the same time the Organization for the Support of Christus-kirchengemeinde was, by their own effort, able to employ Thorsten Mebus who is to support the other employees in their different areas of parish work. In the annual report 2004 his name was

mentioned for the first time. He has been working for us for three quarters of a year now and we are very grateful to him for the new trends he was already able to set. In the first place this applies to his musical work: He set up the "Gospeltrain" choir and the youth choir and supported the work of the band and other musical activities intensively. Additionally he is in charge of the large honorary youth team for the youth services "chill church" (a new quarterly service for our confirmation candidates) and "Phoenix" (for young people who have already been confirmed), of confirmation lessons, home conversation circles, several committees and work groups. And in January he will participate in the ski holidays for families at Saas Grund, Switzerland.

In spite of the high inflow of donations the Organization for the Support of Christuskirchengemeinde is still looking for regular monthly donors, in order to secure the jobs of Thorsten Mebus and Martina Radgen, our parish pedagogue, permanently. Unlike in the past we have to pay 20 per cent of her salary on our own account. Due to the difficult financial situation, it is impossible to pay 100 per cent by funds of the budget.

A Large Variety of Services

During their closed meeting on a weekend in spring, the Parish Council gratefully reflected the large variety of services in our parish. We could again celebrate many small and some large services. Let's begin with the five services on Christmas Eve, which are all quite crowded, the services for families with the musical show "Happy Birthday Jesus". The open-air services took place in the usual and successful way at the bumper cars on the Bad Vilbel Fair and, in spite of heavy rain the day before, in the orchards for Thanksgiving Day. In the last case the sermon was held by Bishop Samantaroy from Amritsar in the North of India, the partner diocese of Upper Hessen. For the second time four confirmation candidates were christened in the river Nidda. This turned out to be a touching spiritual experience for the persons to be baptized as well as for the younger and older participants of the service. The alternative type of service named "Kirche anders" started its anniversary season in autumn: In spring, on March 5, 2006, the 10th anniversary of this highlight of our parish will be celebrated.

But the services area, too, gives rise to concern: The number of participants in the Sunday services, that had been rising steadily in the preceding years, started to decline a bit. And due to the lack of interest the team of “service with all senses” decided to stop offering this type of service for the time being. As much as we appreciate the Protestant freedom as regards the participation in services on the one hand, we would nevertheless ask our parish members to reflect on their own practise of participating in services. As this is what Protestant service is about: The joint celebration to praise God and to align and strengthen our lives.

Construction Work at the Old Church “Auferstehungskirche” not yet Finished

The Auferstehungskirche has practically been closed the whole year. After the services around Easter the interior reconstruction started. In summer uncovered wall areas were presented to the public. A detail from a medieval picture is to be preserved permanently as a “window to the past”. But in principle, the baroque interior from the end of the 17th century is to be renovated. For this purpose a wall section behind the pulpit in the shades of gray and black customary for those times is uncovered and renovated. The other wall and wood areas, too, as well as the columns of the gallery are to be adapted to the baroque period. – The construction committee regrets very much that the old church could not be reopened in December 2005, as had originally been planned: Several covered, load-bearing roof beams turned out to be so damaged that they had to be replaced in a long-lasting and expensive way. The reopening was postponed until Easter 2006.

In the course of the year many activities of the “Initiative to Rescue the Old Church Auferstehungskirche” took place. The series of the effective charity concerts was continued (band concert by “Die anders Band”, cello concerto by Stefan Faludi, brass ensemble with Thorsten Mebus, women’s chamber choir Cantilena and the Purcell Brass Ensemble). In the hall of a Bad Vilbel bank there was an exhibition of photographs and pictures painted by the Bad Vilbel painter Willy Menner showing the Auferstehungskirche. The art printings made in this connection are available at the parish office. A charity picnic with music in the empty Auferstehungskirche was a very special experience. Several other stalls and smaller activities completed the year 2005 increasing the amount of

donations to about 190,000 €. We hereby express our thanks to all donors.

10 Years Day Nursery "Arche Noah" (Noah's Ark)

Even if day nursery work in Bad Vilbel has 150 years of tradition, the new day nursery has had its 10th anniversary by now. A small brochure does not only show all the children of these years but also reflects the educational and structural changes. As a matter of fact the day nursery work has developed in many ways from the care for children to real educational work. The project "Education from the beginning" in the framework of the "Educational plan for children from 0 to 10 years of age in Hessen" takes this up consistently. We are glad that, together with the Bad Vilbel primary school, we have been accepted to the inner circle of institutions for this project in Hessen. The pioneering educational work from the last ten years can thus be continued in a qualified way in times after the worldwide PISA study. We lay particular stress on religious education and the close cooperation with our parish. So the tenth anniversary was celebrated with a great party early in summer. To account for the day nursery's name a musical on the story of Noah's Ark was performed by the children's choir, supported by the choir of small children and the musical band, - another highlight of the children's choir. In summer, after 10 years only, the day nursery's kitchen had to be replaced completely in order to account for more than twice the demand for meals since the beginning. As it is getting more and more usual for both parents to work in a job, it is also getting more and more normal for the children to stay in the day nursery all day long, not only in our day nursery.

Quality Award for the Community Care Center and the Care Project

The work of the community care center, too, was particularly honoured and awarded. This center offers and realizes the family and home care on behalf of all Protestant parishes in Bad Vilbel. In the course of a ceremony the Dean Jörg Michael Schlösser awarded the "seal for high quality care" to the community care center. This center is one of the first institutions that have realized general care and organization standards with a lot of personal commitment. In the course of an extensive control the care in particular was assessed excellent. In the face of the many

bureaucratic concerns as regards the nursing care insurance this award means a lot to the centre's nursing staff in their not too easy everyday work.

Together with other social institutions at Bad Vilbel the Community care center participated essentially in the creation of a care project called "Café Kleeblatt" (Café Cloverleaf), which started this year causing great interest among Bad Vilbels inhabitants. The care for the usually elderly mentally sick people as well as the support and education of their relatives are important tasks of our time. In addition to the employees many volunteers give a lot of their time, strength and competence.

Anniversary of the Father-Child-Weekends

Another highlight of the past year was the happy family party on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the father-child-weekends. What started once with a small group of committed fathers of the day nursery, turned out to be a complex programme of several weekends with more than 150 participants. As a matter of fact those weekends offered the fathers a very special time with their children and helped to develop many new contacts and friendship among each other. The happy meeting at the anniversary celebration showed this as much as many other activities within the parish as a whole, which would not be possible without the background of this special type of men's work. We are glad that a church foundation is of the same opinion and supports those weekends financially, acknowledging it as modern type of church work. On the day of the celebration, however, the focus was not on addresses but on deeds: The children won the tug-of-war due to their quantitative superiority against their fathers... Those who participated most frequently were awarded with certificates and huge ice creams. – The plans for the next year were made immediately afterwards: In 2006 there will even be 4 weekends with different age groups! More details are mentioned in the 10-year chronicle, which, like the commemorative brochure of the day nursery is available in the offices of the parish and the day nursery "Arche Noah".

Further Developments of the Parish Work Concepts

In various other fields new fundamental ways were opened and conceptions were developed in 2005. They were initiated by the

Parish Council during a workshop weekend in spring – committees and working groups took up their work subsequently:

- In the field of partnerships and ecumenical contacts Eva Raboldt is the new chairwoman of the committee. Discussions on inter-religious dialogues and on the topics of debts / fairness and AIDS attracted as much attention as the sermon held at the Thanksgiving service by Bishop Samantaroy from India. In the months to come the committee is going to work on how partnerships can be better established in our parish. As early as in 2006 the partnership party is to be celebrated in a new form on the last Sunday in January.
- The committee of adults has started to restructure the concept of qualified activities for people in the second half of life. The work in home and conversation groups for all ages is to be intensified.
- Our choirs have already been set up completely: Thanks to our district's choirmistress Nilani Achtruth we have a choir for children between 5 and 7 years of age since the beginning of 2005. Klaus Neumeier continues to direct the children's choir for school children in the forms 2 to 6. The youth choir for confirmation candidates and young people as well as the "Gospel Train" choir for adults is directed by Thorsten Mebus. In this field the committee is very much interested in extending the cooperation in all kinds of services.

The three working areas present their activities in information sheets. Just like our other infos (our services, activities for children and young people, activities for families, work with confirmation candidates in our parish, welfare and social work, information on christening, marriage, death and on joining the church) they are available at our parish office.

Everyday Work with a Lot of Love and Great Reliability

With all the highlights and the conceptual work, however, it must not be disregarded, that the everyday work in our parish is done with a lot of love and reliability. The four examples listed below represent many other ones:

- Contrary to former times there are no more organists employed, so that amateurs, i.e. music lovers in the true sense of the word, play the organ during our traditional services. In countless and invaluable overtime they prepare themselves for the services practicing to play an instrument that represents the whole orchestra and must be operated with hands and feet at the same time. Those who have learnt to play the piano and have sat at an organ know how complex this instrument is. So we are particularly glad that we were able to offer organ recitals for the first time during the past advent season...
- While many others of our helpers are working in their jobs or are at school, the ladies of our clothing store team are sorting second-hand clothes and giving them out to the poor week after week. Sometimes this task is not easy at all, when the people would prefer to rummage through the garment bags themselves...
- Some areas do not attract attention unless they stop functioning. This applies to the churchyard, which is at best discreetly but well kept. Just like in other areas there are sometimes different expectations and conflicts in this field, too. We are very grateful that due to prudent decisions we have not been involved in the Bad Vilbel "tombstone conflict" and that our churchyard is in a really good state thanks to the reliable tending by our young people doing community service instead of military service.
- The members of our visiting service team work quietly. When mainly old or sick people can no longer go outside and feel isolated, the members of our team visit them, giving them their time – for reading to them, for conversations or just listening. And the things they have listened to must sometimes be digested. In such cases it is good to have a team that supports the members and gives them advice. For many years Elfriede Kühn directed the visiting service. Now she has handed over the chairmanship to Uschi Szczes and with many thanks was appointed honorary chairwoman.

There are many more things worth mentioning: The second Heaven's Camp on the meadows near the river Nidda with nearly 200 young campers, the ski holidays for families and the summer

camps for children and young people, the camp for confirmation candidates with a slightly further developed conception, the regular meetings of senior citizens in the retirement home and in the parish center, the development of a large youth team Bad Vilbel – Karben and their joint trip to Scotland, etc. All these activities show that the time spent together with other members of the parish bears fruit – for our parish and for each individual. We express our thanks to all of those people who worked with commitment for an active and open parish Christuskirchengemeinde at Bad Vilbel! Asking God for his guidance and support for the ecclesiastical year 2005/2006 we extend our best wishes to all the teams and members of our parish –

In December 2005

In the name of the Parish
Council

Ingrid Faludi, Chairwoman of the Parish Council until September
Frank Sarkar, Chairman of the Parish Council since September
Dr. Klaus Neumeier, Minister and Vice-Chairman