

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

November 2013: The ecclesiastical year is coming to its end and in line with our motto our parish is once more “in the centre”.

On November 3, 2013 a great charity choral concert took place in favour of victims of the flood catastrophe in spring 2013. Four choirs were performing, and among them was our “Gospeltrain”. The host introducing the choirs called Thorsten Mebus the “locomotive” of the joint charity concert under the patronage of Bad Vilbel’s mayor – and he was certainly right.

During the following weeks the Pogrom Night, that took place 75 years ago, was being commemorated. On our initiative Bad Vilbel did much to commemorate that incident more intensely and we were asking about its significance today. How can we learn from history and live a life of respect and tolerance in our time? We treated the topic at our youth service Crossroad, at our alternative service “Kirche anders”, and at the ecumenical peace service on the German National Day of Mourning. In addition a reading was given by our minister Ingo Schuetz and Fabian Vogt, and an intensive conversation circle with representatives of the Jewish and Muslim congregation, the Mayor and the (new) Headmistress of the Georg Buechner Grammar School took place. “Respect and tolerance” are also the topic of our ZACK magazine, that due to the strong assistance of our organization to support Christuskirche was distributed to all households of the city centre of Bad Vilbel. We also joined in the campaign of the Church of the Land of Hessen: “Practicing Tolerance”. There’s no doubt about it: Our parish Christuskirchengemeinde is well integrated into our church and our city. We are in the centre - and that’s a very good thing.

Let us greet you, members and friends of Christuskirchengemeinde, with these reflections in grey November. It is with thankfulness that we look back upon another intensive and plentiful year. Being Christians, we confess that we realize the blessing of our God in all of these things. We are on our way as individuals or as a group, sent, accompanied and guided by Him. This annual report is to give an impression of many individual events taken place in our parish, to help to recognize the “central threads” and to remember the year gratefully. Please feel free to pass on this report to other interested people, even outside of our parish. There are additional reports available everywhere in the parish. Of course, it is also available online, even in English.

### **Topic of the Year 2013: Jesus Christ**

What does it mean, that we are the “Congregation of the Church of Christ” or Christuskirchengemeinde? What does this so-called Jesus from Nazareth mean to us? For about 2000 years Christians have been named after him – like our church and parish. In 2012 we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our church. This year we were asking about the meaning of our church’s and parish’s name. Our ZACK magazine dealt with the topic, too. A series of summer sermons reflected “Jesus in the art”, and Beate Polderman, a glass artist, visited us with her work of art called “Gemeinsam – Together”. A group

of us went to the Icon Museum in Frankfurt. During the bible week for children in the school holidays we were getting onto Jesus' trail, and on occasion of the alternative service Kirche anders and the evening seminars of "Things that do you good" we were talking about Jesus Christ and what he means to us personally. We had most impressing and emotional discussions – and in many cases they were very personal... The theological and historical background was dealt with during "Theological evening discussions". It is great to see that so many people were attracted by all the events. Finally, after having introduced our new "Christ Cinema" at the parish centre, we were presenting three movies about Jesus at the end of the year.

## **5 Years of our Reformed Services**

Exactly 5 years ago, at the start of the advent season 2008, we changed our weekend services. Since then we have been celebrating a service with organ music, traditional liturgy and responsory, especially at the start of the service, in our old church Auferstehungskirche on Saturday nights. Although the Saturday night service used to be a secondary service only, it has since then more and more turned out to be another central service. We are glad about the acceptance of this evening service with its own clear character.

And at the same time we are happy about the great development of our "Meeting Point" Sunday service at Christuskirche. The time of 10.30 a.m. has proved to be good. The music by band and organ has literally become well tuned in to the service. The connection of adults and children with their respective services, "Kids Treff" for children and "JAC" (Jesus Alive Club) for confirmation candidates, is working smoothly. The regular focus either on organ or band music or on families has become popular. There's no doubt about it: It was really worth taking the effort of intensive work, many conversations, test services, and congregation assemblies five years ago.

Nevertheless we time and again hear during conversations, that many people in our parish have not yet realized those changes. So let us invite you sincerely by means of our new poster announcing our weekly services. Our ZACK magazine and our homepage show all the details of the weekend services. Maybe the Saturday night service at the old church Auferstehungskirche, the meeting point service at Christuskirche or the meditative, quiet prayers with Taizé songs on Tuesday at 7 p.m. (except during school holidays and the last few weeks before Christmas) open up new experiences of today's services. But let us also take the opportunity of this 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary to thank all the people who assisted at our services with a lot of commitment: organists, band members, sacristans, members of the youth team, lay preachers, and many other helpers – Thank you, it is only with your help that the services are so attractive.

## **Restoration of the Organ**

In 2013 one special event was the complete restoration and modernization of our large Walcker organ at Christuskirche. One year before we started this project by employing Simon Harden as a concert organist – let us here

express our sincerest gratefulness to the organization to support Christuskirchengemeinde and to all donators. They all made the restoration of the organ in the amount of about € 200,000 possible. It is impressing, what can be reached by such a project, in addition to all the other donations. Within one year we plan to finish the project “keen on sounds” and we will then be able to present the final financial results. But now we are glad to once again start playing the organ – on the occasion of a celebratory service with a lot of organ music and one week later with a big organ and choir concert. In 2014 real organ highlights are being planned: recitals of organ and other instruments, e.g. organ and oboe or organ and percussion (yes, it’s true, such recitals are worth listening), an organ request programme with your own selection, an organ CD recording with a public recital – and, of course, quite normal recitals with Simon Harden. We will be able to hear the new sound possibilities due to the additional stops everywhere and see the new mobile organ keyboard.

The parish choir has also been developing positively. In October 2013 it has officially become the “Evangelische Kantorei Bad Vilbel” by order of the Wetterau Deanery. We are glad about this new connection with the official church music of our church. In this context great events cast their shadows before: The Creation by Joseph Haydn and the Requiem by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Further choir members are always very welcome, especially when they have choir experience.

### **Christuskirche on its Way**

“You are nearly a travel agency”, some people say when looking at our numerous trips and camps. And indeed, “Christuskirche on its way” is a trademark of our parish. About 500 participants of family ski camps and father-and-child weekends, confirmation candidates at seminars of up to nine days, children and young people at three summer camps and, for the first time this year in autumn, at a horse-riding camp, a CK cultural trip to Krakow and Auschwitz, a weekend in the Rhoen mountains having the motto “Things that do you good”, a heavens camp, scout camps for a growing number of our Heliand scouts, etc... Yes, it’s true, many people of our parish are on their way with us – and we are very grateful for the enormous commitment of our employees and voluntary assistants.

Why does our congregation travel so much? There are two main reasons: When travelling, we are together all day long and have time to build our community far away from our everyday worries. We as a congregation want to experience community with each other and with God. Trips and camps make this possible for all generations in a very special way. A lot of parish members, for example, have become familiar with our parish and its members by our father-and-child weekends or ski camps. The persons undersigning this annual report could also tell many stories in this respect... But the distance from the day-to-day routine does not only help us to build relations among us, it opens up many opportunities to build relations to God. For some people such trips offer the opportunity to deal with such topic during prayers for the first time. For other people prayers during trips mean a very special

time of strengthening and deepening faith. In this respect, too, its very impressive to hear what people tell about their manifold and personal experiences of faith. God is active among us – during trips and camps we feel it much more clearly than during our routine at home.

In addition to the trips and camps open for all parish members, many teams, choirs and other circles of our parish are on their way. In total more than 1,000 people participate in about 25 to 30 trips and camps per year. And to all of them applies that nobody should stay at home for financial reasons. In case of need contributions for the trips are being paid confidentially and unbureaucratically out of our collections. A large part of the collections during services are used for this purpose. We are very glad about this possibility and are encouraging parish members to confidentially contact the persons in charge of the trips and camps.

### **Parish Work by our Employees**

The team of our employees has not changed in 2013. So there was continuity in the area of full-time employees (Reverend Ulrike Mey, Reverend Dr. Klaus Neumeier, Martina Radgen, the parish's pedagogue, and Thorsten Mebus, the parish expert worker). Since the end of 2012 Ingo Schuetz has been working as a half-time minister in our parish. Many people have also met Patrick Smith, who finished his practical training as a curate in our Parish at the end of November 2013.

The team of employees working in the background is not so often in the focus. There is Sabine Herth doing all the administration work in the parish centre during five mornings and on Thursdays in the afternoon, thus being the contact person for parish members and in charge of all kinds of certificates. Since January 2013 Alex Linke has been working as the caretaker of the parish, the kindergarten, and the church's cemetery at the old church Auferstehungskirche, succeeding Willi Steinleitner, who retired at the end of 2012. We retired him with all due ceremony at the meeting of all employees and teams during last year's advent season. For many of us he has always been a friendly and open person to talk to – and we are glad that he will continue to assist us at events of our parish, particularly as a hobby cook. It is not easy to follow in his footsteps, and we congratulate Alex Linke, that he has managed to do this so well in 2013. Some other people are working in our caretaker team with him, having different working hours, Adi Sahin, Robin Krauss, and Oliver Schwarz – and, of course, Gusti Ickler, the cleaning lady and soul of the parish center. Our large areas outdoors, the maintenance of our buses and the essential tours with people and material, repairs and tidiness in our rooms, many preparations and clearing works of our smaller and larger events – there is a lot of work to be done every week. And as this work is practically not seen by the visitors of services, choirs or events, let us express our special thanks to all – and particularly to Willi Steinleitner for 33 years of caretaker work at our parish.

### **Further Brief Reports**

And then there were many other things to report ... In 2013, too, we are looking back on a very active year, even though there were not that many spectacular highlights as in our anniversary year 2012. But the following things are worth mentioning:

- For the third time there were six intensive evenings with the motto “things that do you good” during Lent with a lot of people participating. Several house circles prepared the evening discussions, starting the conversations in small groups in an entertaining or reflecting way.
- In April the members of parish councils of all Bad Vilbel parishes met for the first time to interchange ideas about their work. While the professional members have been meeting regularly for a long time, this turned out to be a good extension – another meeting is being planned in 2014.
- Baptism in the river Nidda had its tenth anniversary. For the tenth time young people were baptized in our river. We are very grateful that we may offer this type of baptism to teenagers and adults – back to the roots in a very spiritual way.
- A good tradition are the other services “in the centre” of our town: During the Bad Vilbel Fair at the bumper cars, on Thanksgiving in the fields, and, in the meantime, “Advent season” in the castle, and in 2014 our parish party will take place again in front of the Bad Vilbel Kurhaus (Assembly Hall) on May 25.
- A premiere, on the other hand, was the service on Reformation day: On October 31 suddenly the song “Oh happy day” could be heard in the city centre – and within a short period of time more than 100 people from the surrounding shops were standing in the middle of the market place singing and playing instruments. A church flashmob in the centre of Bad Vilbel. And during the subsequent reformation service we had very good conversations at the tables and a communion supper that was really filling.
- The house circles of young people, families, and adults, 12 by now, have turned out to be another constituent part of our parish life – and this applies also to their house circle weekend. A breakfast with conversations on several tables on Saturday and a Sunday service prepared by one of the house circles – in 2013 this took place on the first November weekend, and the house circle of Julia Lemmer and Thorsten Mebus celebrated a very impressive communion service.
- In the largest institution of our parish, the day nursery “Arche Noah” (Noah’s Ark) and its beautiful playground outdoors, nearly all children feel at home every day until afternoon by now – changes in society, that we also experience in our area. We are very grateful for the committed work by the large team and the close cooperation between the day nursery and the congregation.

- Let us also take the opportunity to explicitly mention the good relation to the local newspapers. This is very important to us and our intention to be “in the centre”. So we express our thanks to the editorial staff of Frankfurter Neue Presse and Wetterauer Zeitung for their regular announcements and reports and to Frankfurter Rundschau and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung for several longer reports in the course of the year.

## **Outlook**

Now we are looking forward to a new ecclesiastical year that will start on the first advent Sunday – for over 100 people with a weekend of “things that do you good” in the Rhoen mountains. Some events in 2014 have already been mentioned: the concerts with our renovated organ or the parish party on May 25. For many trips and holiday camps the registration period has already begun. The ski camps in January will start with a new record of participants, the CK cultural trip in October will go to Israel. Our topic of the year will be the “Bible” – You’re going to experience it in many services and events and read about it in our ZACK magazine. – At first sight you may think that that’s not very innovative, but wait and see. There are also some anniversaries to be celebrated: At first there is the 50th partnership party (formerly mission party) on January 26, and a bit later, on March 1, we will look back upon 10 years of “Aktion Baum / Tree Project”: In January 2003 we started looking for regular donators of our organization to support Christuskirche in order to be able to pay for the new post of a parish expert worker and to employ Thorsten Mebus. You will find more details about this project in our ZACK magazine, on our homepage and in the local newspapers. We would be glad to be “in the center” of our city again together with you in 2014.

On behalf of the Parish Council at the start of the advent season 2013

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

TEXT OF THE YEAR 2014

But as for me, it is good to be near God

Psalm 73:28

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 parish. 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

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- 03 “Practising tolerance”
- 04 Beate Polderman “Gemeinsam – Together”
- 05 Poster announcing the different weekend services
- 07 Simon Harden at the new organ keyboard
- 08 Teenager camp in Spain
- 09a Heavens Camp in a Bad Vilbel Park 2013
- 09b Camp of Bad Vilbel Scouts
- 11a Willi Steinleitner
- 11b Our caretaker team: Alex Linke (caretaker), Gusti “Puthu” Ickler (cleaning and kitchen), Robin Krauss (trainee of the year and member of the youth team), Adi Sahin (civil work) – Oliver Schwarz is not shown by the photo
- 12 For the 10<sup>th</sup> time baptism in the River Nidda in 2013
- 13 Flashmob on Reformation Day in the city centre