

REPORTS FROM THE REGIONS

EVENTS – FINANCES – FUTURE PLANS

NO. 94 ADVENT 2021

Bavaria

In October, about forty people from the Bavarian congregations met again for three days in Haus Freudenberg to prepare for the conference in Dortmund 2022.

This time the theme was “Speak just one word...”. We tried to create an “open space” in which we could find the themes we wanted to engage with. In listening and sharing, we tried in three steps to *condense* the contents together, to make them a *reality*, to bring them to *life*. This work was enlivened and complemented by joint artistic activity in eurythmy. From this condensation, a wide variety of themes emerged, which were then exchanged in individual discussion groups. For example, one group dealt with the topic: I do have human dignity, but in the Act of Consecration I am spoken of as an unworthy creature and at the same time at the beginning of the Act of Consecration the motif of the worthy, common accomplishment is heard, I still have great difficulty in understanding this in the right way.

Further thoughts on this and the other topics, such as the “Four Stages of Listening”, will not be elaborated here, but will contribute to the enlivening of the conference in Dortmund.

Dorothea Humérez

Central-Germany

“Can you imagine becoming a coordinator in our region and working with me?” I was asked this question by the lenker of our region, Mr von Wehren, last autumn. During a stay of several days in our Wiesbaden congregation, this question came up. However, as long as my company, a commercial agency for tools and machines, still existed, I could not imagine to commit myself. I did not want to close my business until spring, after 23 years of self-employment.

The Regional Council’s search committee for the new coordinator contacted me again in the spring, and since my company had been wound up in the meantime, I accepted. The handover took place in the summer and since 11 September 2021 I have been the coordinator of the Region Central-Germany. At the same time, I was given the management of the East Germany Corporation. Mr Knabe, my predecessor in office, is thankfully supporting me in what is still unfamiliar territory for me, and I have weekly communication with Mr von Wehren.

The working atmosphere is very pleasant and the tasks are varied and exciting. Besides the daily routine work, I try to get to know the communities little by little. I try to attend the respective annual meetings as well as conferences, to get into conversation with the people and to help them deal with their problems. Topics that concern me are, for example, the pros and cons of income pooling, transparency and consolidation of municipal budgets as well as the regional budget for better planning. I am happy to be a part of the movement for religious renewal and want to make my contribution.

Martin Layer

Farewell to Plauen in the Saxony Vogtland, new beginning in Hirschberg!

Last year we met with 12 priest colleagues in Plauen and then in Hirschberg, including the leaders for Bavaria and Central Germany, Harry Lohse and Andreas von Wehren. The town of Hirschberg is situated on the Upper Saale in the triangle Thuringia/Saxony/Bavaria and thus on the border between Bavaria/Thuringia, our regions Bavaria/Germany Central and former GDR/BRD. It was a mutual impulse of the meeting to look at the large “border region”, which includes the municipalities of Nuremberg and Würzburg in the south and, Gera, Jena and Chemnitz in the north. In the summer of 2021, there was a big joint summer festival of the surrounding congregations and people from the wider rural region to develop a common awareness, also across the triple border.

About three years ago we started from Plauen to celebrate the Act of Consecration of Man in longer intervals in the Kultur-Villa-Novalis in Hirschberg. Because of the Corona situation we were grateful for the beautiful large rooms and could now visit regularly. The decision was subsequently taken to give up the rented rooms in Plauen and to continue the Christian Community in Hirschberg with renewed and growing forces. Active contacts and mutual visits have already developed with the friends in Hof, Bayreuth and Wernstein.

In the next few weeks we will say goodbye to the rooms, the place and the spiritual companions in Plauen in a small ceremony in order to pitch the “church tent” anew in Hirschberg. This step was not easy for all of us, after almost 90 years of Christian Community in Plauen, many caring priests from the surrounding area and a supportive small community. The joy of coming together “across the border” in the future and work to unfold new potentials along the old border strip, makes us happy and gives us courage for the future!

Markus Harm, Dresden

Founding of the congregation in Berlin-Kladow: In 1995, the Havelhöhe Hospital in Berlin-Kladow, located in the very south-west of Berlin west of the Havel on the Wannsee, passed from public purse to the non-profit Association for the Promotion and Development of Anthroposophically Expanded Healing Art e.V. Berlin.

Soon pastoral care for the sick began by priests from the two Berlin congregations. In 2001 religious lessons were offered in the Waldorf School, founded the previous year on the same site. In September 2002, the first Act of the Consecration of Man service was celebrated in the ecumenical prayer room of the clinic, and two years later the Sunday service for children was celebrated for the first time. People gathered one Saturday a month. Little by little, vestments, antependia, and later even cloaks and casulas were sewn. Gradually, the community grew and an initiative group was formed. During Easter tide of 2015, the service could finally be celebrated for the first time, so that we became an affiliated congregation of Berlin-Wilmersdorf. Since autumn of the same year, we have been able to gather for worship, weddings and baptisms in the multi-purpose hall of the hospital. The congregation grew, with 20 to 30 people attending one Sunday a month, and up to 50 at Christmas. In 2017, the Gold Fund, founded and run by Johannes Lenz, gave us our own chalice. Devotions in the hospice and in the neighbouring nursing home were established. Various small working groups emerged.

Two years ago, the initiative for an independent church saw the day of light. With the strong, energetic and encouraging guidance by the priest Susanne Gödecke, we made the necessary preparations. Renato Gomes from Brazil was sent to our congregation, on the 2nd Sunday of Advent he was introduced by the leader Andreas von Wehren and welcomed by the congregation.

We still have to work out a final constitution and financial independence. At the same time, plans to demolish and rebuild the hall we have been using so far have forced us to look into the question of finding our own premises. So, we are entering the new year in a spirit of optimism. (See also: <https://christengemeinschaft.de/gemeinden/berlin-havelhoehe>)

Gerhard Saltzwedel

Great Britain-Ireland

On the first Sunday in Advent, 28th November, 2021, we made a major change to the translation of the ritual texts that we use in the region. After many years of discussion, we have decided to change all instances of Thee, Thou, Thy and Thine to You and Your. We also changed 'yea' to 'yes'.

We were aware as we discussed making these changes that for some members they will come as something long overdue, whilst others would rather that we had not made them. In two rounds of consultation, one in 2018 to 2019 and one this year, we have sounded out the congregations on questions relating to this change. It was useful to hear what had been discussed in the congregations when we worked on the translations at the synod.

The international leadership has given it over to each of the English-speaking regions to work on the translations as they see right for their local area, recognising that there are differences in the way words are used and understood within the English-speaking world. However, the lenkers are agreed that it would be desirable to have a unified version for the whole English-speaking world. Although this was not a motivation for making the changes that we are undertaking, we are glad that regarding this very major difference, the British English version is now in harmony with the other three English-speaking regions (North America, South Africa and Australia-New Zealand).

Tom Ravetz

Middle Europe

Austria: The congregation in Linz has a new chalice. The old one was stolen during a burglary at Christmas 2019. Goldsmith Horneber in Hamburg made the new chalice and paten, according to the Linz chalice design group. They were consecrated on 3 October at Michaelmas and used for the first time at the subsequent service. The costs of the break-in were covered by the insurance.

Ulrike Cibulka, Priest in Linz

The Salzburg congregation has now found a way for barrier-free access to the church and this will be purchased and installed over the winter months. Unfortunately, this issue was not taken into consideration when the church, which was consecrated in 1994, was built. After completion, wheelchair users will be able to use the ramp at the side entrance.

Herbert Bitzner, Treasurer of the Salzburg Congregation

Netherlands and Flanders

We wish light and peace to all congregations around the world.

Laurien van der Laan de Vries

North America

The Joy that emanated from the ordinations celebrated during Ascension weekend of 2021 spreads and grows throughout our region. And even reaches as far as New Zealand, thanks to Rev. Lesley Waite's presence in the North American ordination group. Lesley is back in her home town Wellington, working together with the priests in Auckland to care for their beautiful and challenging country. The congregations in Denver, Chicago, Devon, Spring Valley, Taconic-Berkshire Region and Toronto along with the many affiliates have received their newly ordained priests with warm hearts and active hands. Members, friends and priests will continue to develop and strengthen our work and reach out to new and uncharted territory.

From November 11-13 we gathered in the Taconic-Berkshire congregation for our annual Delegates' Meeting, this time live and in person. The days were enlivened by singing, enriched by talks given by Regional Board members. On Friday afternoon the Annual General Meeting gathered for a 'State of the Region' by the Lenker and a financial summary by our treasurer Allen Logue. The members approved the financial statement for 2020. The next AGM will be in March 2022 on

Zoom, the next in person Delegates' Meeting with AGM will take place in the Fall of 2023, location to be announced.

On the first Sunday in Advent Rev. Nora Minassian was introduced in her new congregation in Sacramento/Fair Oaks, California. With musical contributions as well as humorous and serious addresses the congregation welcomed their new priest with elan. We wish priests and congregation lots of good and creative energy for the new constellation.

We are very happy that our North American Seminary will take up its in person work in January, beginning with the Ordination Preparation Group and continuing with first- and second-year students later in the month. If all goes well, we will celebrate the Sacrament of Ordination in Toronto during the weekend of 13-15 May, 2022. Consider yourself invited!

Craig Wiggins

North- and Northwest Germany

Questions are more beautiful than answers

From 8 to 10 October, people from different congregations met in Hanover on the theme of *Economy and Christianity*, interwoven with the youth conference *Money or Life*. Both events served as preparation for the big jubilee meeting *Consecrating Humanity* during Michaelmas in Dortmund in 2022.

A small group of volunteers found the participants mainly by word of mouth. The number of posters and flyers was kept small, as it was not certain how many people the Community hall would be able to accommodate because of physical distancing restrictions. Due to a shortage in the host community of Hanover, a group of helpers joined from Bremen and tirelessly provided food, drink and merriment.

The contributors were all very good and well-known professionals, legitimised by their strong practical backgrounds, which was clearly noticeable. Nevertheless, there was already a surprise on the opening session when the speakers candidly explained: What Christianity really had to look for in the economy or to seize as opportunities in it, not even they did know. So, they took a different approach: They asked the participants questions and they were able to discuss the issues amongst themselves. This continued over the next few days: group discussions again and again, even in the midst of the lectures, along with Vital-Eurythmy, singing and conversations in pairs. The artistic exercises were not 'decoration' or a 'loosening up', but they prepared the way for listening skills and mindful speaking.

The motto *working for each other – learning from each other – living together* did come true. All speaking was loosely joined, there were no results to settle any issues. But people went home curious and with many addresses exchanged.

It seems to me that thoughts nevertheless emerged that could become wilful ideals. One of them is that economic activity based only on profit and efficiency is running itself to death. A more Christian approach would be to ask what our fellow human beings need. This does not mean that we have to consume ourselves in selflessness, but our own work becomes more meaningful and refreshing when the question of the other lives in us. This also included the fact that something trinitarian appeared in all conversations: At the conference, a trinity was experienced everywhere – not only in the sense of the threefoldness of the social organism: in the human being in body, soul and spirit, in the divine world as Father, Son and Spirit, in the conversation: *You – I – a truth alive between us*. Common dualities suddenly became suspect, such as the opposites of good and evil, rich and poor, etc., which tend to lead to moralising and strong judgements.

Even the participants with well-known names did not appear as the 'great speakers', but also received gratefully. So, the path was once again taken a step further: The Christian community increasingly sees its task in the communion between congregants and priesthood and a wider public to offer a space for conversation.

Frank Hörtreiter, Priest in Hanover

no message from:

Australia and New Zealand
America Southern Africa

Japan Nordic Countries
Switzerland, Southwest Europe

Russia South
West Germany

Southwest Germany

Half a year has passed since our last report and we were faced with the task of closing a painful gap: For many years, Mr Thomas Gerber worked for the interests of the Christian Community and was the coordinator of our Southwest Germany Region for more than 20 years. His illness and death in May of this year has left a painful gap.

We are therefore very happy that in this situation Mrs. Jutta Rother was willing to immediately sift through the existing documents and take care of the tasks at hand. She has familiarised herself with the matter with great commitment. Since she is also prepared to continue to take care of the upcoming responsibilities, she was elected as the new coordinator on 30 October 2021 at the regional meeting in Constance. The main focus of her work will be the regulation of finances and economic matters of the region. In other areas, the Regional Council wants to be more involved in future and share the responsibilities.

We have also entered a process of some reorganising: In the coming spring, Hellmut Voigt will hand over his responsibility to his successor Irma Beridze-Gössler, currently priest in the Karlsruhe Congregation, after more than ten years as the region's leader.

We have also started to invite guests from the responsible bodies of the congregations in Southwest Germany, in order to make the work of the Regional Council transparent and also to enable further strengthening of the body. In spite of this significant change, 'impulse' days were taking place as planned in the autumn (31.10. to 1.11.): "Christianity – an existential challenge" – One's own connection with the Risen One – What is strong? What is weak?

About 50 participants, among them several priests, found dedicated hosts in the members of the affiliated congregation in Wahlwies with the support of the local Waldorf School. This allowed for an open atmosphere of exchange, characterised by many conversations. Some enthusiastic singing brought momentum into the community. Both the seriousness of the present situation and impulses for the future found their expression. It became clear that the next 100 years of the Christian Community are about to begin and that it is up to each individual to contribute to this.

The Offenburg congregation has now moved within the Waldorf School and now meets in a well-proportioned room that is also accessible by lift. The long-term goal, however, remains to have its own rooms.

Hellmut Voigt

Wuerttemberg

The Michaelmas conference was (despite imposed restrictions) a wonderful event. There was a new format in which art and conversation could be brought together more intensively. Many pictures were created representing individual sentences from the Creed which then could be viewed together in a plenary session. Marion Ehram helped to shape the conference through her artistry, an exhibition and guidance in our own artistic work.

In Tübingen, we welcomed Heike Strobl as our new priest on 21 November. She was ordained in Berlin in October 2021.

For the first time we experienced real restrictions on a Sunday in two congregations. Due to quarantine requirements the priests were unable to hold the service and a replacement could not be found. Hopefully it will not happen again.

Martin Merckens

Foundation

Retrospective – Farewell – New Beginning

On 30 April 2003, more than 18 years ago, I applied for a job as “Assistant for the Leadership of the Priesthood” at the “The Christian Community (Foundation)” in Stuttgart. I was invited for an interview on 15 May with Taco Bay, Christoph Heyde and Andreas Weymann at Ameisenbergstr. 16. On 1 July 2003 I started work as a secretary at the “Stiftung Die Christengemeinschaft”. A little later my colleague Katja Orlowski became assistant to the leadership of the priesthood.



Our house in Gubener Straße was a huge building site at that time. As a local Berlin employee, I had to observe the progress of the building work, report to Stuttgart and actively prepare the move. I did my secretarial work in my home office. On 1 September 2004 we moved into the beautiful new rooms of the Christian Community's “Management and Administration” at Comeniusplatz in Berlin-Friedrichshain.

Isolde Rebmann, later Sabine Burmeister and managing director Dagmar Brockstedt came with us from Stuttgart, as did Volker Elfert for setting up the archive. They all introduced me to the diverse tasks. In 2005, Armin Knabe was appointed managing director and Janine Jenitschonok soon joined us as archivist. We found ourselves working together respectfully as a good, hard-working team through all the ups and downs of everyday professional life.

In 2005, Vicke von Behr succeeded Taco Bay as Erz-Oberlenker. Every year at least one ordination was prepared here. Many candidates for ordination came to Gubener Straße for talks and (preparation) courses. Countless meetings and conferences with people active in the Christian Community took place. And yes, some “kitchen fairies” also lovingly looked after us and fed our guests during these long years.

On 1 September 2020, Thomas Nayda succeeded Armin Knabe in the management. And for the Synod 2021, João Torunsky was inducted into his Erz-Oberlenker role. After all these many changes and transitions, the time has now come for me to say goodbye to my tasks at Gubener Straße. The many years of service for the Christian Community were a great gift to me, an extremely rich time of human encounters, a school of life. Lasting friendships developed that will carry me forward. I look back with deep gratitude on this period of my life, which I could never have imagined and yet this time was probably destined for me.

Something new is now beginning for me, which is called “retirement”. This is also at the moment beyond my current imagination, but I am approaching it confidently and with good cheer. I sincerely thank you all for the faithful cooperation over the past 18 years and say goodbye from the secretariat of the leadership and administration of the Christian Community. Greetings to you all!

Yours, Petra Wilms

Seminary/Hamburg

Life at the seminary in 2021 was particularly marked by, among other things, the fact that we held three preparatory courses. Ten new priests have been working in their congregations since their ordinations in February in Berlin, and in October in Berlin and Warsaw. With a current group of five candidates, we are moving towards the ordinations in March 2022 in Berlin. In December, the 2nd course “Study for Professionals” is rounding off and we look ahead with the students to the internship phase, which for the first four students will be followed from May 2022 by the preparatory course for the ordination during the big conference in October in Dortmund.

This year, for workload reasons, it has become necessary for us to suspend the full-time training for quite some time. Moreover, due to the Corona restrictions, it was not possible to open the seminary for guests and visiting students, which was probably a reason for a low demand for full-time

studies. We used the free time for concentrated concept work in the leadership team. After a learning process in spring 2022, we will summarise the formulated ideas into a presentation for differentiated considerations, with accents on basic study, the methodology of joint study and a possible cooperation initiative with regional partner organisations. The new start for full-time training is planned for the winter semester 2022/2023.

In April 2022, the 3rd course in “Studies for Professionals” will begin. At the beginning of October, we presented our new guidelines at an orientation day, and since then there has been the opportunity to obtain more detailed information in person and telephone conversations. We are looking forward with anticipation, after our initial discussions and some firm registrations, to the introductory module (22.4. to 8.7.2022), and the emerging group of part-time students. On our website, the aforementioned guidelines can be viewed or downloaded as a PDF for printing:
<https://www.priesterseminar-hamburg.de/studium-fuer-berufstaetige/3-kurs.html>

In these days we are expecting from the printers the “Christmas Gift 2021”, which this year contains an essay by Jörgen Day with the following title: *Accompanying the dying on their way into another life*. The author, a priest emeritus of the Christian Community in Hamburg, has gained a wide range of experience in the field of end-of-life care: He was involved in the founding of a care service and an outpatient hospice facility and has led a training course for end-of-life and dementia care. In the preface, the following thoughts refer to the great connection between dying and the incarnation of Christ:

The apostle Paul writes that with the burial of the body we sow a mysterious and seminal seed: “An earthly body is sown, a supernatural body is raised” (1 Cor 15:44). In this way he takes up the parable of Christ, who symbolises the completion of his journey into the Incarnation in the image of the seed: “Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:24).

The Christian year begins with such a seed: The child, who finds no more suitable place than the stable in Bethlehem for his birth, becomes the seed of a new beginning for the perishing world. The path of the child born in poverty leads to the painful death on the cross, but when his body is laid in the tomb on Golgotha, the image of the grain of wheat begins to be fulfilled. This booklet can be ordered for € 5 (plus postage): Priesterseminar der Christengemeinschaft Hamburg, Johnsal-lee 17, 20148 Hamburg, Phone 040-3345 55-80, Email: info@priesterseminar-hamburg.de

Ulrich Meier

Verband der Sozialwerke

This summer, long ago, we were able to run all the planned holiday camps. It was not easy and again required ingenuity and a portion of courage from all involved to make this possible under the currently prevailing conditions. The holiday camps were a real blessing for the children and young people after the Corona-related restrictions. For next year we have again planned a youth leader course and a camp for children in the week following Easter, and also the children and youth camps during summer. We also want to try something new: a canoe trip in Sweden for young adults. Then there will be study trips and/or courses. We will see what can be realised. Information on all events can be found on our website: www.cg-sozialwerke.de.

Dietmar Schwarz

Worldwide Encounter

Encounter – a sentiment that concerns people more and more. But since we have all been living with the Corona pandemic, on the one hand the desire for encounter is more noticeable and on the other hand the thought of encounter can also be frightening.

The experience of encounter played an important role on my trip to get to know the Argentinian congregations in autumn 2018. During my three weeks there, I was always put up privately. The encounters on this trip were very warm and moved me deeply. Back in Germany, an idea slowly

developed: In the way I experienced the people of the congregations in Argentina, the Christian community could – in our globalised world – grow closer together in encounters that create more awareness through the unfamiliar, unexpected and heartfelt experience in the You. As Steiner describes it in GA 175: “With every human encounter there is linked a true spiritual process.”

How is that supposed to work, “worldwide encounter”?

The decentralised form is important: There is a proposal for an organisation, whereby each congregation has its representative who acts freely within his congregation, so there is no global centre, only a list of representatives of all congregations worldwide. Only this list of representatives is to be kept up to date. Each congregation that wishes to participate is actively involved through its representative. In this way, a system of promoting encounters within the Christian community – worldwide and reliably available worldwide – is built up (more details: please request the flyer by email).

Perhaps one will only meet once, or perhaps return visits will follow, in any case a network of profound human experiences will be created, which will give the Christian community of the future a new kind of foundation and renewed strength. Already 17 congregations worldwide are successfully carrying this project forward into the future. Flyers are available in German and seven other languages. Are you interested in being the representative of your congregation or do you have any questions? If so, then please send your mail to: weltweitebegegnung@christengemeinschaft.org or dial this phone number: +49-221-6430 6208 Let's start so that every congregation has its representative and we can offer our members and friends a new support for meetings at the 2022 festivities.

Herbert Warmbrunn, Cologne

no message from:

Körperschaftsverband (KV) **Haus auf dem Berge** **Haus Freudenberg**
Treuhandverwaltung zur Förderung der Christengemeinschaft e.V.

Translated by Gabriele Kuhn – many thanks to her!

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