

Peace Church News



Newsletter of the English Speaking United Methodist Congregation in Munich: December/January 2009/10

"What do you want for Christmas?"



Red mittens, a kitten, a coloring book: when I was six, there was an easy answer to the question, "what do you want for Christmas?" My mom actually asked me this question the other day, as if I (26, quasi-adult, living alone in a foreign country) might be eagerly expecting a Christmas package full of shiny presents shipped from the US. But none of the things I want now fit in cardboard boxes. I no longer have a simple answer to that question. What *do* I want?

It is a part of the human condition to want things. When we are lonely, we want company; when we are hungry we want a warm gingerbread cookie; when we are cold we want to come into a well-lit room and be cheered by a warm fire. In the season of Advent (the four weeks before Christmas), we are encouraged to give voice to our desires - specifically, to our desire for God to come and dwell among us. Advent is a word that means "coming" or "arrival", and the Church's attitude in these dark weeks of waiting is one of hope. Our hearts are oriented towards the coming arrival of Jesus on Christmas day. We want salvation; we want to see our Redeemer come into the world and "make all things new."

But as I enter this Advent season, I am also aware of the many other things I want. In hard economic times, we might want better jobs; maybe we want good health for ourselves or for an ailing family member, or the visa, work permit, or permission to stay in Germany that we've been waiting for. Maybe we long for reconciliation in a broken relationship, or for relief from depression. We have superficial desires, as well: adver-

tising is terribly good at convincing us that we want or need certain material goods (the latest fashions, a new car, a bigger house), and culture tells us to want a certain lifestyle, a certain kind of partner or family, or a certain kind of career.

Not all of these desires are bad, of course. But during Advent (and throughout the year), it is worth asking ourselves *why* we want the things we do. Some of these things are the good and natural result of our love for God and for others. But other desires might simply be the false hope of finding happiness in superficial things. The things we want show us where our heart is oriented, what we value, and what we love.

The season of Advent is traditionally a penitential one in the Church (although the message of repentance and spiritual preparation is often lost amid the flurry of good cheer and cookie baking). We are called to examine our hearts and to ask whether we are really ready for God's imminent coming. Far from the madding crowds on Marienplatz, we carve out a quiet space to be still and take inventory of our hearts. What we find there might not be pretty; we may discover that what we want and what God wants are two different things.

My prayer this Advent is to have right desires: to long for the presence of God before all else. I want to *want* to see God. It might be a long wait, but we train our souls to lean forward in hopeful expectation, anticipating the Light that we cannot yet see.

During Advent, we lean our ears into the silence and wait to hear, strain our eyes into the darkness and long to see, and orient our hearts towards God and wait for his presence. Let us turn ourselves towards God and express, together, our longing for salvation. Let it be our prayer this Advent to want, above all, to be present to the coming of God into our midst.

With my very best wishes for the season of Advent



Emily Neeson

News from Peace Church Life

A girl in a bee-costume, a boy who is actually a girl, and a true nature-boy

by Sofia Heinsen & Edith Borges

We met all these characters at the Reading Night on 9th October. After all the 29 children arrived at 6pm they could choose between 3 books: The Quigleys, Alabama Moon and Donata – Tochter Venedigs. Each book had its own room where the children could set up their beds. While everybody enjoyed reading Becky and Basti were busy preparing our meal. Because there was no space left for any tables the kids had to eat on their sleeping bags. Thank God, the spaghetti went into their tummies and not on the sleeping bags. Then we continued reading, and reading, and reading, and reading...until everybody was asleep.

For breakfast Katie brought about 90 rolls and 45 Brezn. The group reading "The Quigleys" read so quickly that they had to start a new book in the morning: Paul Vier und die Schröders. And surprisingly we went on reading, and reading, and reading until lunch was ready. Sitting on the floor again we ate mashed potatoes and hamburgers. At 2pm the children were fetched by their parents and the team of 11 people could tidy up ;)

In spite of the modification work and its noise everything went fine and we all had a lot of fun. And we were very excited about Nico's visit Friday evening and Saturday morning.



We are really looking forward to next year's Reading Night!

African-style Harvest Festival

by Emily Zumpe

Once again the African Harvest Festival celebrated at Peace Church on Sunday, October the 18th was a beautiful success. The festivities began months in advance, when members and friends of the congregation began preparing works of art, clothing and other gifts to present at the annual auction, and the African Choir began practicing for this important event. Invitations were extended, flyers were distributed, songs and sermons were planned and practiced. On the Sunday before the

Harvest Festival, the Sunday School children baked bread in flower pots to sell during church coffee in order to be able to make a contribution to the Festival's collection. And on that Sunday, the church filled early with people dressed in vibrant clothing. Everyone was a buzz, since the leaves had begun falling and the first hints of snow had already been seen around Munich.



As the service began, we watched the graceful choir enter the sanctuary, prepared our hearts for a special worship service, and stood to declare together that "We are members of one worldwide family" and that "we are people of pain and fear... anger and joy... compassion and grace." The Harvest Festival showcases our native African church members and their gifts and talents, but it also reminds us that we still live in a world filled with abundance and want - a world in which many still suffer from hunger, displacement, fear and loss. As we listened to the all-Age Story about one boy's picnic making a BIG difference for Christ, and as we recited Psalm 104 together, I began to consider what my "picnic" could be for the Lord. When the Gospel was read from Luke 12, The Parable of the Rich Fool, I wondered if I was rich or poor in Christ - where had I been storing up my "ample goods" in order to save for the coming years, so that I could relax, eat, drink and be merry. And when and where might Christ be expecting - even demanding - my life, all that I had stowed away and my sacrifice.

During Caroline's sermon and the songs and prayers that followed, I considered what harvesting meant to me. How many seeds has God planted in my own life, which I have failed to sow or reap? How many of God's intentions have fallen on hardened ground, not producing the vibrant plants and fruit He intended? As we prayed aloud together, "Creator God, we thank you for your many gifts to us... Help us to truly enjoy your gifts: Help us to share them with others" I began to think of all the unrecognized blessings in my life - good health, a family (though far away) who loves me, friends and loved ones in Germany, a job which sustains a lovely life. And I felt ashamed that I sometimes

get bogged down in my daily life, feeling restless about the future or complaining about current problems. I thought of all the gifts of righteousness, including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. What an array of gifts! What amazing blessings!

As we brought our gifts of fruit, money, homemade and purchased goods forward for the auction and laid them on the altar, the dancing was more restrained than in years past, but the joy on the faces of Ben Yebuah and the members of the African choir, and the members and friends of Peace Church who were present was certainly beaming and evident. We met God in that house, and as we joined our voices together to sing "How Great Thou Art" at the close of the service, the presence of the Lord was palpable. Despite laughter and tears, misjudged musical notes and elegant musical interpretations, God met us at the foot of the cross to celebrate his Harvest in our lives - and a sense of calmness and peace was present throughout the auction and following lunch which I have never experienced.

There were the usual bidding wars during the auction - for pineapples, bottles of wine, massage certificates and clothing and art. Much money was donated to help Peace Church and its missions - in total 1597.69 EUROS - and the amazing worship service and auction were followed by a mouth-watering African meal in the fellowship hall. Even the chaotic condition of the building during its renovation and construction could not dampen the spirit as people from Asia, Africa, America and Europe joined together to celebrate God's presence in our lives and the sowing of his seeds in our hearts during the season of stewardship. As we left that day, my contribution of time and talents to God's church was at the forefront of my mind. And the joy of song, dance and a filled stomach were with me throughout the day. May we all - those who were present and those who missed the African Harvest festival - continue to consider our commitment to the Lord and the church in the coming year.

And may we all show thanks, love and gratitude to the planning committees, cooks, cleaners, auctioneers, worship leaders, choir members, pastoral staff and others who were and are present each year to ensure the joy and success of our special and beautiful Harvest Festival. If you missed it in 2009, then please mark your calendars for the next annual Harvest Festival - coming to you in October 2010. It is truly a spectacular and God-filled day that you don't want to miss!

Clementina, Galma & Eunice

"It is Tuesday morning. The Women's Bible study has not yet started. Pastor Christine is doing three things at a time. Peter comes late for the photocopying. In an awful hurry she has to explain to him what to do. The door bell rings, the first Bible study attendees arrive, Christine rolls her eyes and sighs. Peter smiles at her and says: Pastor, we are driving you crazy... Yes, she says and presses the button to open the main door. Downstairs stands a woman, beautiful, tall and black - with a baby in a pram. Christine switches on the light to recognize Eunice, a church regular whose baby was baptised only a short while ago. The baby's name is Hope, Christine remembers..."

Eunice is a Nigerian asylum seeker. And she came to church that morning because she hadn't got any more diapers for little Hope. She lifted the blanket covering the baby and showed Christine that she had wrapped the little girl in tissues and a plastic bag that had two small holes for Hope's little legs... Thanks to the International Women's Club of Munich Christine had some spare packets of Pampers stored in her office and could hand them out in no time. The Bible study that morning started only a few minutes late.

"The Peace Church office phone rings on Thursday morning. Galma has been given her letter of transfer. From Baierbrunnerstrasse she is sent to an asylum seekers' home near Straubing in the north of Bavaria. Galma needs advice. How can she get there with all her things and little baby George Michael? The social workers have no one available.

Can Peace Church help?

And Peace Church can! Emily is off work that week and is happy to take Galma and the baby boy to Plattling. It is a trip that fills at least half of her day. The two women make the most of their journey together. They talk and share, and become friends. When they arrive in Plattling, Galma almost kisses the floor of the new place, because it is so different from the noise and dirt in Baierbrunnerstrasse. It is clean. She has some private space and no one to share even the bathroom with. The custodian is a nice man who hands over keys and lots of valuable pieces of information. Galma expresses her desire to travel back to Munich on Sunday to attend the African-style Harvest Festival at Peace Church, and the guy hands Emily a number of the foreign office in Deggendorf. The office is already closed, but Emily promises to take the number back to Munich and ask Pastor Christine to ring the man in Deggendorf first thing the next morning."

Galma had not even registered at the new place, when thanks to Christine's diplomacy she was already given one of those - for asylum seekers - very rare permissions to travel. On Sunday 18 October she walked

through the door of the church – with George Michael in his baby carrier.

“One Sunday Clementina sits in church. It is a surprise to everybody because she and her 5 year-old daughter Precious had been sent to a tiny village in the middle of nowhere the week before. Clementina is in tears telling us her sad story of losing half of her possessions on the journey because the young men who had been asked to help and accompany her had abandoned her and her stuff half way because they were fed up. Since Clementina’s ticket was bound to a specific train, she and Precious had to continue their journey with the few bags they could carry themselves... And back in church she weeps bitterly over the loss of clothes and food and household items, and over all the baby’s things that she had already collected for the new baby due to be born soon.”

Clementina was not as fortunate as Galma to find somebody from church to take her to a new asylum seekers’ home in the Ostallgäu. But what the church people then could do for her, was to list the things she had lost and try to substitute them. Within a week Clementina had all the things again that she needed for her daily life. Christine had collected everything at church, and Liz and Nathalie had offered their time to drive out to Clementina and hand over what church people had given to her.

War, Violence, and Cooked Vegetables...

...were among the things confirmation class children disliked most. On Saturday 24 October the “old” and new group met for the first time since Pastor Reinhard Wick from Friedenskirche had left and Pastor Christine had taken over to teach the youth of both congregations. There are 3 boys from Peace Church and 11 kids from Friedenskirche. 6 of them have already had a year of confirmation class. 8 are starting anew.

So when they met for the first time a few weeks ago they spent about an hour to introduce themselves and get to know each other. Names were told, hobbies shared; the teenagers talked about their families, about their summer holidays, and last but not least they were asked what they disliked most. The three things that make the headline of this passage were mentioned with passionate disgust, added were noise, homework, Latin tests, injustice, friends who let you down, people who don’t keep their promises and eggs, broccoli, spinach and nutmeg. Each kid and Christine and Caro Voss who helped teach the first session, painted a picture of themselves. These are now hanging in the Sunday School room in the first floor where the 7 and older group usually meets on Sundays.

The second part of their first meeting was a religious theme. God, who are you? ...was the question we started with. We tried to explore God by expressing what he or she can be like, and what he or she is doing, and how God can be experienced in our everyday lives. Sentences such as “God is to love and to be loved” or “God is in the bright sunshine of a beautiful spring morning” or “God is a child that laughs and laughs and laughs” were read out loud. Then we studied old and new hymns – to find out how people now and then express the experience of God being a creator, a lover, a comforter, a source of wisdom and peace, a reason for praise, a help in need and many more. We discovered God in Biblical stories and worked out how people in the Bible meet God: they meet him in creation, they meet him when he calls and leads them into promised land, they meet her when she is different from all our expectations. God is there when people are encouraged, surprised, called out to do the unexpected; God warns and suggests, God appears in people’s dreams, God talks through angels, God can be seen in Jesus. We were all impressed how many sides and faces God has, and we realized that meeting with God is not something that you can do and finish today or tomorrow, but that meeting with God is a lifelong process, a never-ending story of God with his people.

Postcards and photos helped us to collect manifold images of God, and at the end a beautiful story encouraged us to see God in the people we live with, in the people we come across, in the people we meet:

“I had lunch with God...”

A little African boy wanted to meet God. He knew it was a long trip to where God lived, so packing his suitcase with small cakes and a six-pack of soda, he started his journey. When he’d gone about three blocks, he met an old woman.

She was sitting in the park just staring at some birds.

The boy sat down next to her and opened his suitcase. About to take a drink from his can of soda, he noticed that the old lady looked hungry, so he offered her a small cake. She gratefully accepted it and smiled at him.

Her smile was so pretty the boy wanted to see it again, so he offered her a soda. Again, she smiled at him. The boy was delighted!

The African boy and the old woman sat there all afternoon eating and drinking and smiling but they never said a word. As it grew dark, the boy realised how tired he was and got up to leave. Before he had gone more than a few steps he turned around, ran back to the old woman and gave her a big hug.

She gave him her biggest smile ever.

A short time later, when the boy opened the door to his house, his mother was surprised by the look of

joy on his face. She asked him, "What did you today that made you so happy?"

He replied, "I had lunch with God."

Before his mother could respond he added, "You know what? She's got the most beautiful smile I've ever seen!"

Meanwhile, the old woman, also radiant with joy, returned to her home. Her son was stunned by the look of peace on her face and asked, "Mother, what did you do today that's made you so happy?"

She replied, "I ate small cakes and drank soda in the park with God."

Before her son could respond, however, "You know, he's much younger than I expected!"

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

The Stewardship Season blessed us with two new Sunday School teachers? Cathy William from Britain and Franziska Kuhn-Haederli from Switzerland are having a go at teaching the Peace Church children. May they love it. May the children like them. And may they find it a satisfactory support they can give to our church.

On 4 October we had an installation of certified lay preachers? Caroline Voss and Emily Zumpe received their certificate from the South Germany Annual Conference and are now officially lay preachers with a full training in the United Methodist Church. Peace Church Charge Conference will renew their recommendation to preach at Peace Church as well as in other Methodist congregations every year.

When Pastor Christine taught Sunday School on 11 October, the children baked bread? 12 children were in a group baking tasty bread in flower pots and selling them to the congregation at church coffee. The kids raised 56.-€ for the work of their church.

Three Peace Church boys have started confirmation class? Benjamin Michalski, Alvin Mbuvi and Julian Borges are joining a class with 11 Friedenskirche kids. Their teachers are pastors Christine and Reiner, Caroline Voss, Kirsten Schaetz, and Klaus Gruendler. A teaching schedule can be seen on the Peace Church website.

The African-style Harvest Festival 2009 attracted 188 people to come and worship with us? At the auction following the service we raised 1597.69 € for the work and ministries of Peace Church.

We have new faces leading worship at Peace Church? Phil Gill and Andy and Sue Lawson led worship for the first time in October and in November. They all did ever so well and enjoyed it. So did the congregation. We thank them for their willingness to try out new things and embrace new challenge!

On Monday 19 October the 10.000th visitor checked the Peace Church website? A big thank you to Pastor Reiner who is responsible for our website!

The Munich International Women's Club decided to help Peace Church and Pastor Christine during the long rehabilitation of Nicolas by doing some of the jobs she would usually do? The women have taken on the providing of the welcome packets for mothers of new born babies which we hand out at Baby Welcomings or take to hospital after somebody's given birth. Roberta Zoellner and Liz Smith are coordinating the project. The biggest thank you ever for this substantial support!

The Give & Take Day on 14 November was really good again? It was not only a welcome event to exchange things but also a community-building experience for all who were part of it.

The General Board of Global Ministries of the German Central Conference of the Methodist Church helped us financially again? The board transferred 200.-€ to us after they had had the news of little Desmond Dabiri's funeral and that the church had paid for it.

The Methodist congregation in Neuenhain near Frankfurt organised a jumble sale for us? The proceeds of their big annual flea market were transferred to Peace Church to support our work with the asylum seekers in the city. The amount: 1.300.-€. Thank you to the sisters and brothers in Neuenhain!

Pastor Christine was deeply touched when she read her e-mail one Sunday morning? Peace Church was offered financial assistance by the Catholic community in Kaulbachstrasse. Cherry Harris-Bayer, a member of the Kaulbach community and the international Women's Club, had taken Peace Church concerns and needs into a church community meeting there and the committee members decided to donate 100.- € per month to support the work Peace Church does among the asylum seekers. What happens here is an ecumenical miracle: a Catholic community assisting a Methodist congregation to support the poorest of the poor in the town in which they all live. With this donation for the first time an ecumenical "sister" church is helping us to meet the needs of the strangers who come to us and ask for help. We want to assure our sisters and brothers at the Kaulbach community that their 1.200.-€ will go straight into the Peace Church Refugee Account, and will only be used for this. We are utterly grateful for their generosity and wish them the experience of God's abundant blessings in their own church work.

We welcomed 3 new babies into the church family? On Sunday 15 November, just after the Give & Take Day Samuel Osadebe, Richard Sunday and Victoria Obedbeb with their mothers were blessed at

has also been involved in church administration and music. We are keen to become involved where we can best support the work of Peace Church.

What does the Christian faith mean to you?

Being a Christian has been our lives since we were children. Following Christ and being attentive to the calling of the Holy Spirit has always been a great and worthwhile road for us both. We try and make the Christian Faith our life within the world.

Favourite stories of the Bible?

This is a very difficult question. For Alistair, Jesus sending the disciples out on their own for the first time is always challenging. Jenny gets a great deal from Jesus' parables in that Jesus used relevant stories and situations that met the understanding of the people of the time. A good teaching principles.

Wishes for the common mission of Peace Church and Friedenskirche?

That the Peace Church will be attentive to the Word of God and act on the calling of his Holy Spirit as we all journey together in this place.



Name/family

Titilayo Adedokun-Helm, married to Rüdiger Helm, mom to Sahara Jordan and stepmom to Valentin and Elias.

Where do you come from/where do you live here?

New York City although born in Nashville (to Nigerian parents). If you ask my husband though, he'll tell you simply that I'm from the Glockenbachviertel in Munich ☺

How long have you been in Germany? 6 years

Why did you come to Germany?

I sang with a Music Festival in Bavaria in the summers of 2002 & 2003 and returned in the fall of 2003 to do agent auditions in Europe. I had lived in Milan for 5 years so I wasn't planning on moving to Germany – of all places! I only came for 3 months but fortunately, as it turns out, I landed a contract after 2 months. And before that contract was up, I got another... and then another. Two years later, I finally realized that I would be here for a while and moved my things over from New York. Then I met my husband and the rest, as they say, is history.

Are you here for ever or temporarily?

With family here and in the States, Rüdiger and I will always have a foot here and a foot there. But it is not inconceivable that the "rest" of us may move to an entirely different country or continent in the future.....

What is your profession/job?

I'm a true Jack-of-all-trades: I studied Music (opera) and English with a minor in Journalism, and I sing mainly opera and Musicals but with jazz and crossover on the side. I also develop my own projects and I released my first self-produced jazz/crossover CD this year.

Hobbies?

Reading, writing, travelling, listening to music, cooking, eating good food and quality time with my family and friends.

Which are your favourite meals?

Pasta, rice, couscous, my husband's roast duck and my mother's liver dish. I also like a Nigerian dish called Iyan (pounded yam) with okra or spinach-tomato soup.

How did you find Peace Church?

I was feeling homesick when I finally settled in Munich and I wanted something familiar. So I visited all the English-speaking churches in Munich, which led me to Peace Church.

What do you like best at Peace Church?

I stayed on at Peace Church because I feel comfortable and I have a feeling of being warmly embraced every Sunday. People greet you warmly, genuinely and truly care about your needs and concerns. My husband was raised Catholic but was never interested in church. That changed after he came to Peace Church with me. Now he never wants to miss a service so it's also time spent together with my family.

What are you responsible for at Peace Church?

I basically fill in whenever I'm needed. Since I'm a freelancer and work at home, I tend to do behind-the-scene things that I can plan and work on at home or as time permits.

What does the Christian faith mean to you?

It means being people of action, not only of words, and doing good things together. It means letting the outside reflect what's on the inside, living every day for a good purpose, treating every human being with respect and kindness and never turning your back on anyone who needs help which is in your power to provide. It is our greatest hope for a bright future (Jeremiah. 29:11).

Favourite stories of the Bible?

I have many childhood favourites like Noah and The Ark and Jesus walking on water. But my favourite as an adult is the story in the Gospel of John about a woman accused of adultery and brought to Jesus by the Pharisees. They wanted to trick Jesus into either disobeying

the Mosaic Law which mandates stoning for adultery or discrediting his own teachings. But Jesus thought for a moment and then replied, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her." The crowd was so dumbfounded by this response and troubled by their own consciences that they laid their stones down and left one by one. When Jesus was alone with the woman, he asked her who accuses her now. She replied, "No man, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you: go and sin no more."

Wishes for the common mission of Peace Church and Friedenskirche?

People come to Peace Church for the first time for very different reasons. Some, like me several years ago, are

homesick and are looking for a home away from home. Some are simply curious about the service and some come because they need hope and help from the church community. It is my hope and wish that everyone who comes to Peace Church finds what he/she is looking for and that we, as a church, continue to work together as one towards our many goals. I strongly believe that there is nothing we cannot accomplish if we pull together. In addition, if everyone who is able makes a monthly contribution to the church each month, no matter how small, it can go a long way in helping to meet the various needs of our congregation.

Peace Church Calendar

November

Sunday 29 November 1st Sunday in Advent, Pastor Christine preaching

December

Thursday 3 December Home Group & Bible Sharing
Saturday 5 December Kids' Club
Sunday 6 December 2nd Sunday in Advent, Communion, Pastor Reiner preaching
Friday 11 December Teens International
Sunday 13 December 3rd Sunday in Advent, Nativity Sunday
Sunday 20 December 4th Sunday in Advent, Kirsten Schaetz preaching
Thursday 24 December Christmas Eve Worship, Pastor Christine preaching
Sunday 27 December All-age Worship, Pastor Christine leading
Thursday 31 December New Year's Eve: joint communion worship with Friedenskirche, Pastors Christine & Reiner preaching

January

Sunday 3 January 2010 Communion Worship, Pastor Christine preaching
Sunday 10 January Sunday Worship, Caro Voss preaching
Friday 15 January Teens International
Saturday 16 January Confirmation Class
Sunday 17 January Sunday Worship,
Sunday 24 January Sunday Worship,
Friday 29 January Teens International
Sunday 31 January Sunday Worship

more dates to follow...

Impressum

Your suggestions, comments and contributions are welcome. Deadline for February/March issue is Sun 17 January. Please include a photo if possible. (Reports may be edited.)

If you would like to receive future issues by e-mail, please send a message to christine@peacechurch.de, simply typing "PCN by mail" and we will add your address to the list.

Contact Details

Christine Erb-Kanzleiter

e-mail: Christine@peacechurch.de

Office: 089-26023677 Mobile: 0179-6726794

Homepage:

www.peacechurch.de

Peace Church United Methodist, Frauenlobstraße 5, 80337 München.

Germany: Account 90 88 394 at Kreissparkasse München Starnberg (BLZ 70250150)

For US readers

You can support the work of Peace Church through a mission "Advance Special" account. 3020450 designated for Peace Church, Munich, Germany, to support the congregation's local program.