

Peace Church News



Newsletter of the English Speaking United Methodist Congregation in Munich: February/March 2012



The Road to Emmaus

There is a new piece of art hanging on the wall in the entrance hall of the church building. Steffen Schuster, a painter and sculptor, and a member of Friedenskirche created it for exactly this purpose: to greet the people who walk into the church, to attract their attention, and to offer them a first moment of meditation. The painting of the Road to Emmaus with its brightness, its rich colouring, and the story that lies behind it is both an invitation to come in, and a foretaste of what you may experience when you get involved on this road, in this church.

The two wanderers on our picture are heading towards a small and peaceful village. They have with them the light luggage for a day trip or so. Near an enormous old tree they meet a man... - and much later in the story the three share one of the most significant meals recorded in the Bible.

So the invitation in this picture in the entrance hall is to come in and meet others who may be with you on the journey... and: to sit with others, be nourished and fed while meeting Christ at the table and in each other...

But let us start where the biblical story (Luke 24:13-35) begins:

“Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.”

The two were leaving the place of their greatest defeat. Everything they were living for had dissolved into nothing overnight. The great hope for the Messiah, for freedom, for self-determination of their people, for peace and justice — all their hopes were dashed to pieces.

And then came the report from the women that they hadn't been able to find the body — and they were talking about angels! So much confusion! They all needed to have some distance, to get away from the scene of horror, to escape the confusion, the danger and the ridicule. The road to Emmaus was, first of all, a way to flee. On the way to Emmaus the two talk, consider, argue, cry... The only thing they still see is that terrible end. They are pitying themselves, they are desperate and devastated...

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?”

Someone joins them on the way as they walk in their utter discouragement, some stranger, someone who apparently didn't know anything about it all. He asks them the most natural and appropriate human question. What are you doing on the road today?

At last, someone they can share with! The stranger listens. But instead of responding with understanding he calls out something like “O you fools. How slow your hearts are to grasp it.” They couldn't have found a worse therapist! Instead of showing caring sympathy, he calls them fools! “Open your eyes! Open your hearts! Don't hang on your pain. Suffering is not just suffering. Death is not just death. You're grasping at the obvious only. Try to look at it all from a different point of view.” He calls on them to be strong. But they need his company and his help.

And so he explains to them the whole history of God's relationship to his people which they have misunderstood so fundamentally and which we often don't understand either.

“Wasn’t it necessary for Christ to suffer this?” the unknown fellow traveler had asked, and quietly they began to understand what he meant. It was as if they heard him say: Did you think there could be change and healing without pain and without suffering? The road to Emmaus is time for a new look at things.

The disciples are only beginning to understand, but they start to sense it: The dream they thought was destroyed, their hope for a successful life opens ahead of them along this new path.

What they had once begun with Jesus can now continue. The way becomes clear to them as they walk it. The whole thing has been given a deeper meaning, - one they had certainly already once known, one which had been hidden from them by the burden of their sadness.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; ...

It is not in deep teaching and thorough studying that the disciples recognize Jesus, but in his presence at the table, in his breaking and sharing of the bread. It is in the community, in the simple action of sharing, of eating together... It is in the action of sitting around a table, of being together as equals... of fulfilling each other’s most basic needs – it is in this small act of living community, that they realize who he is.

He was not dead. And hope rose again within them, hope that everything was not over, but was only just beginning. They sensed that the kingdom of God would continue now, and that they dare not allow their dreams and visions to be taken away from them... They held fast again to the vision that there could be a world without hunger and need... that everything could continue: love, justice, commitment, the way. And they understood: they themselves are a part of the message, they are to be hope for the world. And everything this man has lived and died for is true!

This is a part of the story that we must consider when we stand in front of Steffen Schuster’s painting. The fact that the two disciples invite the stranger into their sad and desperate lives, that they share their sorrow with him, eventually leads to this life-changing fellowship at the table in Emmaus. The beautiful little village with some golden roofs and a small forest nearby... - but here the story does not end...

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying,

“The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

In the middle of the night they get up and leave for Jerusalem, back to the place of crisis and danger. The place where their hopes were dashed becomes the place of promise.

It is, I think, and will always remain significant that the understanding of what has happened and the small birth of new hope come after a long journey and a shared meal, after the realisation that this man they’d been travelling with, is Jesus, the risen Christ.

The disciples can look beyond pain and despair and rediscover the presence of God.

The meal which they share points beyond itself; it forever has a meaning which is far beyond the simple act of breaking bread! From now on they can look at the world in a different way. The meal has become a sacrament: a simple gift of food and drink, and the world is more deeply textured and more richly coloured...

May every visit to this church, every glance at Steffen’s painting, every piece of bread shared in this community make your life richer and bring you closer to the hope that lies in the risen Christ and his presence in our lives.

Yours, Pastor Christine.

News from Peace Church Life

Peace Church in December

by Christine Erb-Kanzleiter

Advent came along, and with it all the different themes for sermons, services and celebrations. The preachers made sure that they somehow covered all the topics necessary: the prophets, John the Baptist, Mary, and of course all the beautiful well-known songs filled our services with stuff to remember and to meditate.

A Christmas Crafts Day on the first Saturday in December gave the Kids’ Club children an opportunity to produce very special Christmas crafts that could be later used as presents for moms and dads and friends. One of the projects was a beautiful angel made of a piece of firewood.

Others were cards and jewellery, stars and Christmas trees made of felt, beautifully decorated little boxes, handmade wrapping paper, wind lights, candles and of course bakes: all sorts of the most delicious German Christmas cookies! The church children love this day because it gives them a chance to make things on their own without the rest of the family knowing what presents there will be at Christmas.

Christmas Eve had its own dynamics with only about a third of the people present being familiar. The congregation was smaller than on Sundays and consisted mainly of visitors and guests from near and far: tourists who spent Christmas in Munich, local people who had visitors from abroad, and the few church families who made sure all was in place on that day. The biggest surprise came from Hermann Harrassowitz, the grandfather of a church family, who'd come with his wife from Nürnberg to spend Christmas with his daughter's family. Hermann Harrassowitz is a retired church musician, a professional organist; and he played a postlude for us that made us hold our breath! It was just so powerful... Other musical highlights came from Paul Milburn, Hermann's grandson, from Paul's mother Christiane and from Katie Gill: the two women accompanied the Christmas hymns with oboe and piano, a fascinating match which we don't often hear. Emily Eiben preached a brilliant sermon full of humour and poetry. Her words shed a new light on the old story and made young and old aware of its old and new significance to our lives as Christians and our image of God.



The all-age service for Christmas Day had been planned and prepared by Pastor Christine and David Onka, our young Nigerian pianist. The congregation sang lots of well known Christmas songs. In between were solos by David. The framework of it all was a child-friendly reading of the different stations of the Christmas story. At the end of the story and song time everybody was invited to join an activity called "a cloth for the cradle". People were invited to turn their minds away from preparing for Christmas to preparing for the baby Jesus, the baby God who came into the world with nothing in his hands but with love and peace to fill our hearts... Each person walked a long way through the church to get a strip of cloth of all different colours from a basket at the back, hold it silently in their hands for some time, think of what they could do to prepare a place for God in this world, in this city, at this very moment...and then walked to a fruit box that served as a cradle and put their strip of cloth in it. Out came an

amazing patch work blanket that showed everyone's intention to make a place and keep a welcome for Jesus on this Christmas Day.



The service ended with the following blessing: When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among the people to make music in the heart. May you be blessed so that you can be a blessing.



New Year's Eve saw the traditional mix of the German and the English-speaking congregation worshipping together. Sermon, prayers, the communion liturgy were in two languages. The songs sung on the evening could be either sung in German or in English, depending which hymn book people chose to use. Prayer requests were shared, the peace exchanged, and at the end of the service we all stood in a big circle around the church holding hands and singing the, now well known, Shalom song. Locals and strangers, young and old, all colours and backgrounds one can imagine held together by our common faith – a most touching moment of solidarity and openness that always has a healing impact on those present.

The next day was New Year's Day and a Sunday. We were a huge congregation, reflecting on "there is a time for everything..." and celebrating communion together. We sang "This is a Day of New Beginnings" and enjoyed being together as a church family on this first day of the New Year. Thanks to the African Choir, following the service, we had a delicious lunch and shared and celebrated way into the afternoon. The New Year began joyfully, and so it may continue!

"Whoops-a-Daisy Angel"

by Emily Eiben

On Sunday, December 11, the children of Peace Church performed the nativity play "Whoops-a-Daisy Angel", completely charming their audience of proud parents and earning tremendous applause from the congregation. This nativity play was about as far from boring as you can imagine! Sabrina Gill, who read the story aloud clearly and beautifully, served as narrator. The play starred a lovable, clumsy angel played by to perfection by the talented Lily.



Despite her good heart and best efforts, this clumsy angel couldn't seem to get anything right – she didn't quite seem to fit in with the other holy angels, and she even had a hard time counting the snowflakes. Everything changed for her one cold clear night when she ended up leading the way to Bethlehem where she and the other angels find Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. Joined by three wise men, a host of shepherds and even some barnyard animals, the clumsy angel found her place at last: worshipping the baby Jesus.

The Peace Church children sang beautifully and proudly – most of all, I loved to see the big smiles on their faces! Incredible thanks and admiration go to Jenny McPherson for turning the Peace Church children into angels – a true Christmas miracle! Liz Smith made the angels and snowflakes absolutely glow in their handmade costumes. Katie Gill played the piano as beautifully as ever and Cathy, Phil, Becky, Dagmar, Tobias, Lizzy and Sue offered enthusiastic support and time, energy, and love. Thanks to everyone involved for such a beautiful nativity Sunday!

Bible Drama Day

by Christine Erb-Kanzleiter

Bible Drama has always been part of the Confirmation Class teaching schedule. Christine considers it an important part of getting to know the Bible and its stories. Not only reading texts and listening to stories, but also experiencing them physically allows a different and very interesting approach to the "Book of the Books".

In December Pastor Christine managed to invite a professional Bible Drama leader to work with her and the Confirmation Class kids one Saturday morning.

Brigitte came on Saturday 10 December and started the morning off by explaining to the group what Bible Drama is: that it is not only about slipping in roles of biblical characters but also about getting to know each other differently by experiencing how these roles make us act and give us a new and unexpected place in the flow of the story or the set-up of the group who is doing the Bible Drama together. After the introduction all were excited: some hesitant, others curious and keen to start at once...

The story was presented: Brigitte read the Bible passage once, gave some background information, helped the group put it into place in the context of the Gospel. The story of Jesus walking on the water comes immediately after the story of the feeding of the Five thousand. What influence this piece of information would have on all the participants they would learn later.

In a next step Brigitte invited the group to identify with possible roles to play. Obviously there was Jesus, his disciples, lots of people; but the group was also shown less obvious roles like the boat, the wind, the water, the storm etc. After some giggling and shying away all had found their roles. Many volunteered to be the crowd, and their number had to be limited to three: Saby, Irene and Foriwaa. Three boys wanted to be disciples, and when interviewed later and invited to imagine details of their roles, they all claimed to be Peter. This made all of the kids laugh out loud. But Brigitte clearly stated that this was certainly possible and encouraged the boys to give it a go. Charlotte wanted to be the boat, Heike the wind, and Mira the waves and the water. Only Anna-Maria was left who then surprisingly offered to be Jesus: Anna-Maria who did not know any of the other kids when Confirmation Class started in September, who hardly ever goes to church and is most unfamiliar with the Bible, the congregation and all issues of faith...

Brigitte had laid out blankets and scarves, and had explained that everything, literally everything in the room could be used if it helped to act out the story.

The kids dressed up in Scarves. Anna-Maria wrapped herself in a big blanket and tied a headband round her head. The wind and the waves got a blue cloth each. The three-in-one disciple Peter looked like Arab nomads, head scarves covering their faces, only allowing the eyes to be seen. Caspar, Paul and Tim felt really strong there together in their role and willingly shared their jobs, how they'd got to know Jesus, why they'd followed him, and what they'd experienced with him.

The three girls who'd decided to be the people were all teenagers who had come out to the lake of Galilee to meet the famous teacher and healer. One of them was very sick and hoped for healing. And Jesus, Jesus was the one who Brigitte invited to start off the whole play. They clarified where the land and where the water would...

Jesus walked along the seashore when suddenly the wind blew so hard that the water turned into enormous waves. The boat with the disciples was tossed about, and through the noise of the wind Jesus could hear his friends cry out for him to rescue them. He walked towards them on the water, and calmed the waves. Only seconds later he could hear the crowd on the other side of the lake shout loud that they were hungry. Jesus, torn between the two places where his help was needed, told his disciples to row the boat to the other side of the lake. Since they did not row fast enough he climbed out of the boat and hurried to walk the last few miles on the water.

He reached the shore and turned his attention towards the crowd. They still begged for food, but Jesus also saw how sick one girl was and healed her instantly. Then he gave them all some bread, invited them onto the boat that by now had arrived. At that moment the boat shouted out that "she" was not meant to transport so many people, which caused the disciples to suggest that they could extend the boat. While the building work was going on the crowd continued shouting for bread.

As soon as they were out on the lake again the disciples decided to catch some fish which they could all eat. Two of the crowd turned into fish, swam in the lake and were pulled out in a very heavy net. As soon as the fish was ready to eat, the group decided to row back to the shore. And in their way they expressed their great joy to be all together in one boat!

Jesus especially gave a sigh of relief because "she" was no longer torn between the different needs of two competing groups, but all was peaceful around "her", each and every one getting exactly what they most needed.

This was the point at which Brigitte decided to stop the play. All were invited to give back shawls and blankets and become their real selves again. After a few moments all entered in a lively discussion on how they

had felt in their roles, what challenges they'd faced, what they'd found hard, and what had been easy to do, what they'd liked and disliked, how they then liked their own mix of the story, and what they would do differently next time. Individual statements were most touching and remarkable but surely not meant for the public or outsiders...

Time sped by quickly that day. And all were fascinated and inspired by this special experience and said how much they'd really liked it!

A big Thank You to Brigitte who made this all possible!

Interested in Bible Drama? Contact Pastor Christine. Maybe there is another chance of doing it?

"Let Justice Prevail" – Women's World Day of Prayer 2012

by Christine Erb-Kanzleiter

Every year the first Friday in March is the Women's World day of Prayer. Services are held in Christian churches around the globe on that day.

This year we are invited by the Christian women of Malaysia to join them in prayer and worship. They prepared the liturgy for the "rest of the world".

Together with them we form part of the wave of prayer that will be sweeping across the globe. It begins when we are still asleep and it ends when we will once more be in bed. What a wonderful witness to the world of our Christian faith, the connectedness that comes through it, and the power of voices united in prayer!

On Friday 2 March 2012 we can all meet at Peace Church and learn a little about Malaysia – its variety, its beauty, its hospitality, its multiculturalism.

We will also learn that Malaysia is not without its problems. There is corruption and inequality and there are conflicts between the religious and civil law. Some people in Malaysia suffer injustice. Our theme – Let Justice Prevail – challenges us to work for tolerance, harmony and justice for all.

The meditation picture offered to us by the women of Malaysia is more than beautiful. It emphasizes the theme of the day.



If you like, look at the meditation picture. Who are the figures in red? One of them is standing tall. Has she won her fight for justice? One is helping a

crouching figure to stand. She is not doing it alone. The women of Malaysia ask us ‘Do we engage or stay neutral?’ They go on to state ‘We **do** have a role to play by speaking out against all forms of injustice. Are we to watch in silence?’ They believe that it is our vital Christian duty to raise our voices. This is our moral responsibility as Christians. Will justice ever prevail if we stand back and do nothing?

In the service we will come across the parable of the widow and the unjust judge (Luke 18). As a widow, this woman was in a vulnerable position. Jesus doesn’t tell us what injustice she was suffering. All we are told is that she didn’t give up but kept on going back to the judge until eventually he grew tired of her and granted her request. Maybe she too had thought ‘How long?’ She could have surrendered in despair but she didn’t. She put pressure on the man in authority and she won her case.

Sometimes we may feel overwhelmed by the injustice and suffering that exists in the world. We may even feel frustrated that God does not seem to be listening. But look once more at the meditation picture. Light is pouring from above, flowing around the figures, including the one who is crouching. Light brings hope in dark situations. There is greenery, symbolising new life. There is a figure in yellow strengthening the red figures with arms around them. Who is this? Who brings light, hope, courage and new life? It is God. God is there, with us, around us, in us, and through us.

We will never be alone in the struggle for justice in this world. God will be there beside us, strengthening and empowering us to work and to pray without giving up until justice prevails.

Baby Welcoming

by Jenny McPherson

At Peace Church we welcome all our new babies into the church with a little baby welcoming celebration. We help many of our new mums with support by giving the babies presents of essential clothes, nappies, creams, shampoos etc. We usually rely on donations for these things and are currently quite low on stocks of the following items;

- hats, socks and bibs – babies age 0-12 months
- long and short-sleeved vests for baby boys aged 0-12 months
- Sleep suits and clothes for boys and girls aged 0-12 months
- bottles and teats age 0-12 months
- baby soaps, shampoo, creams etc.

If you feel that you could buy a few things to support our babies and mums please call the office and arrange to bring them along, or bring them to church on a Sunday morning and give them to Jenny.

Did You Know That

The Peace Church Homework Club is growing in numbers? We now have 11 children who come regularly and could do with more teachers. If you can teach Maths, English, or German and would be willing to help, would you please contact Pastor Christine?

Some of the church members went to a Christmas Market together on 4th Sunday of Advent? This was an offer the church had made to anybody who wanted to come. A group of almost twenty went and had some Gluehwein and sausages and chips, and enjoyed the snow and the sun – a perfect combination just for us on that day.

Place Church always needs people to help with coffee hour on Sundays? Please, consider whether you can prepare coffee and refreshments for the church family once or twice every 6 months. If everybody did that, we would easily find enough people to contribute. We also need helpers with tidying up. Maybe you can help and wash dishes in the kitchen every now and again: it is a great opportunity to chat to people and get to know them better.

If you are a newcomer and don’t know what to do but would like to help, get together with some of the people who have been around a long time and ask them to show you what to do. Jenny and Christine are always willing and happy to point out these people to you.

You can donate food supplies to the church? Biscuits, crisps and juices, coffee, tea and sugar are always needed and welcome. Please Speak to Jenny or Christine if you are planning to bring things. Thank you!

There was a baptism in December and one in January? We baptised Antonia Omotoni Vincent on 4 December 2011, and Prince Edward Akinbayode on 22 January 2012. A warm welcome to the two children and their families.

More baptisms are planned? On 12 February we are going to baptise Fleur Patricia Bouchaud and Esohe Miracle Agbonavbare, and on 26 February Favour Isibor and Maita Staudt. We are pleased about the growth of the church family and pray for the new members.

More prison services are planned for 2012? Peace Church is in charge of organising the service on 11 March in the largest Bavarian prison of Munich-Stadelheim. Also on 1 July and 16 December in the prison of Landsberg. If you can help and would like to come along, contact Pastor Christine. We especially need volunteers for 11 March soon!

Asylum seekers from outside Munich still need a permission to travel by their "Landratsamt" to come to Peace church on Sundays? Every week Pastor Christine sends out several invitation letters for these people. Every church visit has to be confirmed afterwards. The asylum seekers have to hand in a paper of confirmation signed and stamped by Pastor Christine after they have visited the church and returned to their "homes".

Peace Church received a donation from a church in Maryland? Charles Babb who'd come and joined us for worship several times last year, had told his home church about us, and they must have found it worth to support the work of Peace church. How wonderful! Our big thank you goes to our brothers and sisters of the Hughes United Methodist Church in Wheaton!

There is a Home Group at Peace Church? 5 or more people meet on a regular basis to study the Bible. With a very simple method, a Bible text is shared and explored. The group usually meets on the first Thursday of every month at various people's houses. If you are interested in joining, contact the pastor. Meeting are on 2 February, 8 March, 3 May, 7 June, 5 July, 4 October, 8 November and 6 December. All welcome.

The Women's Bible Study has been changed? The group does not meet on Tuesday morning anymore, but on Tuesday afternoons at 4:30 pm. It will now be called "**Mums' and Babies' Prayer Group**" and meets in the crèche. It is especially for mothers with small children. If you are interested in coming along, please speak to Christine or Jenny for the details.

Kids' Club plans for 2012 are made? Programmes are already printed. Make sure you get one.

Peace Church sermons can be read online? Sunday sermons and announcements are published on the Peace Church website: www.peacechurch.de.

The Peace Church Sunday School is looking for more and new teachers and helpers? If you feel called to help with this ministry contact Jenny or Pastor Christine.

A long list with Peace Church plans for the year of 2012 is available on the Peace Church website? Should you not have access to the internet, you can take a paper copy from the shelf at the back of the church.

We want no more donations of clothes and household goods? The Council on Ministries has decided to stop the 'Give and Take' days for a period of time to give them the opportunity to rethink how we can best serve our congregation in this useful way. For the time being, **please do not** bring clothes and household goods to the church as there is no place to store them.

We would like to introduce...



Name
Nicolas Kanzleiter

Where do you come from/where do you live here?
I was born in Munich and have lived here since then.

How long have you been in Germany?
All my life.

Are you here for ever or temporarily?
I'll be here forever.

What is your profession/job?
Still at school. In the middle of the Abitur exams.

Hobbies?
Wheelchair rugby/Murderball, drawing.

Which are your favourite meals?
Indian curry.

How did you find Peace Church?
I changed from Friedenskirche to Peace Church when I was a child.

What do you like best at Peace Church?
Peace Church has a place for everyone.

What are you responsible for at Peace Church?
I'm working at Kids' Club and in the Homework Club.

What does the Christian faith mean to you?
Help others (doesn't matter whether friend or stranger).

Favourite stories of the Bible?
The Good Samaritan.

We would like to introduce...



Name:
Jonathan Michalski

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

I am half Bolivian and half German. I live in Neubiberg.

How long have you been in Germany?

7 years.

Which are your favourite meals?
Bolivian Empanadas.

How did you find Peace Church?
I came with my parents.

What do you like best at Peace Church?
The cultural mix.

What are you responsible for at Peace Church?
I am a member of the Kids' Club team.

What does the Christian faith mean to you?
Caring for and helping others, believing in God.

Favourite stories of the Bible?
Joseph and the coat of many colours.

Why did you come to Germany?

We lived in the USA, when my father decided to move to Germany where he had found a new job.

Are you here for ever or temporarily?

Maybe forever, maybe not...

What is your profession/job?

I just finished school, and will start studying in autumn.

Hobbies?

Playing the trumpet, and playing basket ball.

Impressum

Your suggestions, comments and contributions are welcome. Deadline for April/May issue is Sun 18 March. 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.

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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.