

Peace Church News



Newsletter of the English Speaking United Methodist Congregation in Munich: June/July 2010

Sacred Journeys, Sacred Spaces...



...was the theme of our Weekend Away in Austria. The theme had emerged some weeks ago from my strong desire to deepen my

everyday faith life and spirituality. I'd always taken much from travelling, walking, running. All of a sudden, with a disabled family member to look after, so much in my life had changed. I discovered that the word journey has not only to do with actual travelling but also with a movement that happens within a person, with matters of the heart and the mind. "Journey" is a word to describe the real mobility of people as it occurs so often in Biblical stories. "Journey" is an image with which we often describe our whole life story – whether it is full of physical moves or not. Reflecting on "journeys", especially the sacred ones that have a lot to do with our faith and our relationship with a God who is calling and leading his people, Abraham came to my mind: a classic figure who in the name of God is constantly on the move.

In Genesis 12 we are told a simple but nevertheless powerful story: God speaks – Abraham listens – and sets off. As if this was the easiest thing on earth: to understand a divine call and then on the spot leave everything that once was meaningful and important and expose yourself to the unfamiliar and unknown. Abraham, Sara and Lot set off with all they have and with all those who are related to them. Every now and again Abraham builds an altar. I don't believe for a moment that Abraham builds his altars in order to mark a property and try to own the land; no. He simply builds his altars as an expression of his relationship to the God who is with him on this journey. He establishes places to thank God for being with him and blessing him. There he reassures himself and those who are travelling with him of God's never ending care.

Abraham's and Sara's story reflects the lives and journeys of so many people then and now: leaving behind the familiar and walking into the unknown. God's mission for his people is to live here and there, settle in and move on – locally, spiritually and emotionally. In order to be a blessing to the world, it seems that God's people have to be on the move.

Reflecting so much about uncertainty, moving and changing it becomes clear when we are on the move, we also need places – or spaces – to feel safe, become still and have a break.

Abraham's sacred places made me think of my sacred spaces: It is so true – there are places in this world, journeys to travel, paths to walk, that are sacred. They are sacred because they bring us closer to God. They help us meet the divine outside us and within us. Such places are magic. They enchant us. They fill us with energy. Some do really exist; some of them I carry as an image within me, a memory of their charm and their atmosphere. It is the pictures of sacred spaces, the memories of sacred journeys that help me and enable me to walk on and survive on even painful roads. I personally need both: I need the actual sacred place or space somewhere in this world, as a point in history, as a part of and an experience in my life story and I need the memory of them which change and shape my life forever.



Last summer, in the most difficult hours after Nicolas' accident in this huge hospital of Murnau, I sometimes only survived and remained mentally sane because I was bearing images of happiness and peace within me that prevented me from losing my mind and being swallowed up by the pain and despair of the situation there. Places like the North Yorkshire

Moors, and my memories of walking across them, the memory of the cool air within the cloisters of Iona Abbey in Scotland, the magic power of that centre point in the labyrinth of the Schlehdorf monastery, the gushing waters of the water fall near my favourite

hamlet in the South of France, the sound of the church family's singing before my mind's eye and in my mind's ear - these were all things that kept me going. None of the places I could go to at that time, but the memory of my most beloved places, the fact that I could vividly picture them, helped me often to raise my heart and soul above the awful situation of the intensive care unit with its machines and sounds and beeps. My memories, the images of beauty and abundance in my heart, and my ability to share them with Nicolas, helped us both go on "spiritual journeys", visit sacred spaces, and be nourished and sustained through this experience. We made imaginative walks through Cornwall, heard the storks chatter in Poland, felt the coolness of the old brick walls of San Galgano in Tuscany and tasted the sweetness of the ice cream on the Plaza in Arezzo. With all those memories we dreamed small dreams of happiness against the cruel and threatening reality of the cold and grey hospital ward and Nicolas' uncertain future. Sacred places in nature had become sacred spaces within our hearts.



It has become so important to me to reflect on how I can focus on what nourishes me and lifts me up while fear and pain and darkness are all around. I have

become grateful for every happy and peaceful image within me. I am glad about the opportunities to travel, to listen to music, to read prayers, poems, books, to talk to people, and enjoy the silence, to create something beautiful, touch flowers, smell the grass, feel the wind in my face because all those experiences have put me in touch with the holy and are helping me to survive on the harsh and dark side of life.

Motivated through Abraham and his altars I wanted to find out and explore how I could find a way that helps me practically in making the ordinary and the everyday paths and tasks a way to and with God. And while searching I discovered the writings of a 6th century monk.

St Benedict wrote a faith guide for his household and all its demands: preparing food, looking after the guests, earning a living, caring for property and land, educating the young ones, tending the sick etc. His suggestion is to make prayer the central focus of everything else. Prayer as part of every moment of my life so that it all becomes one big sacred journey with little altars all around: one big conversation with an ever-present God for whom nothing is too small, to

unimportant, to secular, to worldly to be loved with divine love.

The question St Benedict encourages us to ask ourselves at the beginning and the end of every single day is: Am I daily becoming a more loving person? ...walking God's way overflowing with love in all I do? Are we living our lives to the fullest, making them as a whole "the work of God"?

These questions are not meant to be answered immediately. And they are not to be answered with words. They can only be answered by our very lives, from dawn till dusk every single day of our life journey and like Abraham we are given the assurance that however hard or long the journey may be, we are not out there alone, but that God is with us always and wherever we go.

May God be with you on your journey through the next few weeks and fill your life with beauty and wrap it in love.

Yours, **Pastor Christine.**

(all photos taken on Iona Island/Scotland)

News from Peace Church Life

Collecting Stones:

A passionate Good Friday experience

by Emily Flemming

During the Holy Week, Christine asked me to gather a few stones for the Good Friday service on April 2nd. I was grateful to be involved, since I had been unable to fast during Lent for health reasons. As I walked along the Isar river collecting large and small stones, it began to drizzle and I noticed many makeshift beds and homes under the bridges. My head was filled with the beautiful artwork of Tony Nwachukwu, a Nigerian artist whose paintings we had considered in the nightly meditations. His depiction of the passion story was just that - bright, colourful, passionate. The pain and suffering of Jesus was clear, but the paintings on wood still managed to be uplifting and inspiring - a drastic contrast to the heavy stones in my hands and the dirty homes under the bridge in the gray weather. As I later wrote words like denial, failure and loss on the stones which would form the way to the cross on Friday, I thought about the contrasts in my own life - the passionate moments of vivid colour, and the heavy, gray moments. Which ones would dominate the Good Friday experience for me?

During the service, we wrote our own burdens on small stones and brought them forward to place among the larger stones. We prayed aloud together: "God in Christ, you travel with us in faith towards the hard places in our souls. You know the agony of pain, guilt

and hurt. You know our frightened faces, the frustration and the anger, the sadness and the grief deep within us. They are stumbling blocks within ourselves in our travelling, O God. We take these stones and lay them at the foot of the cross which is able to bear the weight and the wounding for us. Amen."

And I thought about many church services, many Good Fridays past, many prayers and times when I had laid my life and my burdens at Christ's feet, at the foot of the cross.... only to turn around the next minute, hour or day and pick them back up, carry them back out into the world. It is not God's will for us to pick up our burdens again, to bear the weight of the world on our shoulders. He sent Jesus Christ to carry all of our burdens on the cross.

As Christine preached, tears rolled down my face. She spoke not only of the pain of Good Friday and the death of Jesus, but also of the opportunity offered to us in his sacrifice, the freedom and purpose that his love give to our lives. She discussed our response to suffering - we are not promised a happy-go-lucky life with no problems, but we are invited to lay down our burdens every day, every moment, at the foot of the cross. Jesus said, "it is finished" and with that statement, confirmed that he had fulfilled his purpose in life."He had discovered his heart's desire, something big enough to live for, and big enough to die for... his own deepest desiring, the passion for God that made him willing to do anything, even to die, in order to express the longing of his heart." And this too, is our purpose. Why are we here? How are we spending the resources of our lives with which God blessed us? Where do we place our time, our talents, our focus and commitment?

The service, the lovely Communion, prayers, music and sermon stayed with me long after we left the church that Friday. And they challenged me - they continue to challenge me - to discover my own passion, my own purpose for living, my heart's desire, something worth dying for. The service was about the passion story in the context of Lent and Easter, but as we often sing: we as Easter people should celebrate the resurrection of Christ every day, the triumph of good over evil, life over death, love over fear. The lessons of the pain of Good Friday and the joy of Easter Sunday go with us in every moment of our lives. And so, as we enter into this summer, let us remember Christine's challenge and Jesus' challenge from the cross: "Let Good Friday be a chance for us to breathe in, relax, let go and love...and most of all: to reflect on what we were sent in this world to do. What were we sent to give? What were we sent to receive? What were we sent to learn? What needs to happen so that, with Jesus, we too could say "It is finished"?"

May the discovery of your passionate heart's desire and the clarity of our purpose begin to dawn in our lives as it has begun to dawn in mine, and may we all discover the joy in giving and receiving in the family of God here at Peace Church.

Sacred Journeys, Sacred Spaces Weekend Away in Kundl 2010

by Jenny McPherson

Twenty intrepid travellers set off for the farm at Kundl for the Peace Church Away Weekend on Friday 7 May. The weather forecast was not promising but we all arrived with anticipation, and for some slight trepidation, of the weekend ahead. What a beautiful, restful place! The Friday evening saw us all getting to know each other better, playing silly games and singing songs. Everyone joined in and there was lots of merriment and laughter. Evening prayers were a fitting way to calm down before heading off to bed.

On the Saturday morning we woke to a beautiful sunny morning and after morning prayers and breakfast many of the ladies joined Hillary in some 'Movement to Music' out in the sunshine, which was invigorating, peaceful and prayerful all at the same time. This was followed by all-age worship before the children went off to their activities and the adults settled down to a programme which explored their "Sacred Journeys and Sacred Spaces."

For the children it was wonderful to be out in the sunshine, running around and exploring God's wonderful world with all their senses. The baby rabbits were well loved throughout the day! (We did notice a few of the adults quietly sitting with the rabbits too!) The children completed a collage which they shared with the adults later in the day. They had been on their own sacred journey in a sacred place.

After lunch there was some free time to explore the farm and the surrounding area and Hillary again offered some 'Movement to Music. Three intrepid hikers set off for the lake and returned a few hours later looking happy but like drowned rats as the weather took a turn for the worse.

Due to the weather it was not possible to have a barbecue or a campfire which disappointed the children but instead we had a fun time again playing games, singing songs and laughing together before evening prayers to calm and focus us at the end of a busy day.

Sunday again dawned sunny and warm and Christine led very moving morning prayers before returning to Peace Church to take the service. The rest of the group

was split into four smaller groups each focusing on one aspect of organising a communion service so that everyone would be involved in the planning. We laid out the seats and communion table outside in the sun looking up to the mountains still topped with snow, and worshipped God in this amazing setting with all ages taking a meaningful part in the service. It was very moving and a fitting way to draw us all together at the end of a very special weekend.

For those of you who were unsure as to whether or not the Church Weekend Away is for you, I urge you to reconsider and come along next year. It was a very fulfilling, relaxing and enjoyable weekend, where the children have the freedom to safely run around and be children and the adults can relax and focus on themselves for a while. Next year the Peace Church Away Weekend will be 27-29 May so get it in your diary now!

Cooking for Christ

by Emily Flemming

Munich hosted a huge ecumenical event in mid-May called the Kirchentag, or Day of the Church, and Peace Church was not left out of the action. On the night of the opening service, which took place on the Theresienwiese on Wednesday, May 12th, 300,000 hungry people stormed the pedestrian zone in downtown Munich - and the men of Friedenskirche and the ladies of Peace Church were ready to satisfy both hunger and thirst. A large team of women, headed by Alice Borges, had cooked for 2 days in advance to be able to offer around 400 plates of Ghanaian rice with vegetables and a spicy meat sauce. Special thanks also to the unexpected kitchen help offered by the International Women's Club! With a large stand, a few beer garden tables and benches, and lots of smiling faces, we were soon faced with a long line of appreciative customers who told us we were not only the best but one of the only stands offering a warm hearty meal. The weather has been unseasonably cool and rainy this May, so we really hit the spot. It was much hard work - the planning, purchasing, preparing and serving - but there were many laughs, and as the last portions were called out and rationed off, we only nearly avoided a riot as everyone wanted more; next time we will be ready for them! A huge thanks to all of the men, women, and teens from at least 5 countries who made this event possible. All proceeds go directly to our work with asylum seekers in Munich.

News from the Council of Ministries

The Council on Ministries meets about six times a year and on the council are members of the congregation

who look at the life and work of Peace Church, making decisions, alongside Pastor Christine, about the direction that the church is taking. Recently they have looked at the evaluation forms which the congregation filled in earlier in the year and from the feedback are beginning to look at ways of implementing some of the suggestions made.

The Council of Ministries has disbanded the Admin and Finance Committee and that work will now be reviewed within the Council of Ministries on a regular basis.

To learn more about the work of this committee, please feel free to speak to one of the current members who are, Caro Voss (chair), Pastor Christine, Katie Gill, Rebecca Yebuah, Chris & Joe Czyszczewski, Hillary Schubert, Johnbull Ehiorobo, Alistair McPherson, Emily Flemming, Natalie Pfisterer, Andy Lawson, Kate Stoiber and Jenny McPherson (secretary).

Did You Know That...

The Holy Week Meditations this year were written by Pastor Ulrich Jahreiss? Pastor Ulrich is a retired colleague of Reiner and Christine's who helps them with the work at Friedenskirche and Peace Church one week every month. Ulrich Jahreiss wrote the texts to interpret beautiful pictures of the Stations of the Cross painted by the Nigerian artist Tony Nwachukwu. 5 of the paintings are still hanging on the wall in the sanctuary. Our thanks go to Ulrich for his texts, and to Marie Voss who had translated the German meditations into English, so they could be read to about 20 people of both congregations on the evenings of Holy Week.

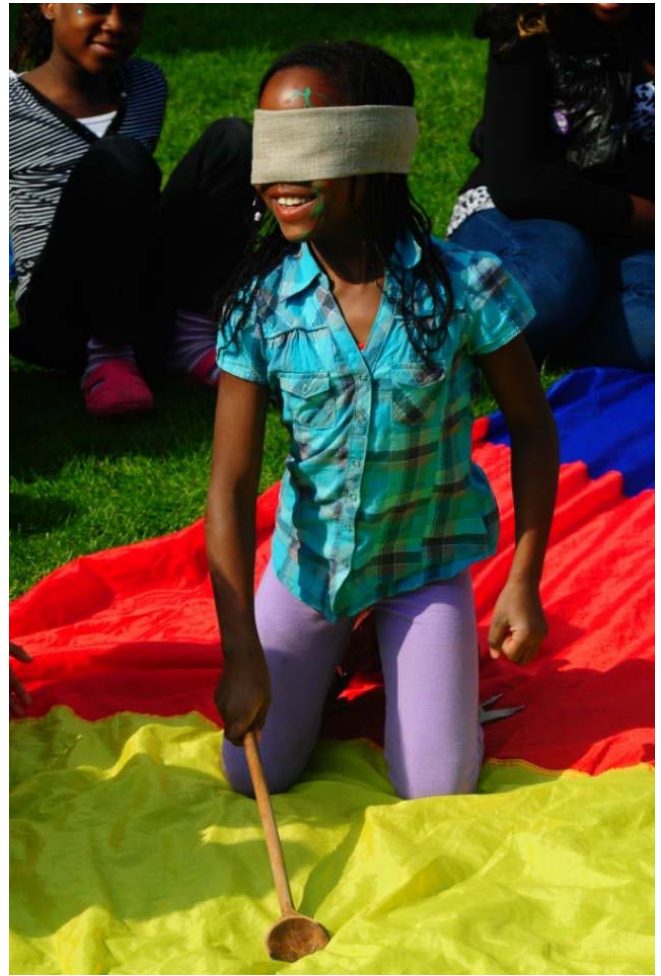
For the Easter weekend Peace Church had offered accommodation to a family of asylum seekers? Sonia, Dizzy and Anthony who had just before Easter been transferred to an asylum seekers' home in Deggendorf, so longed to come back to Munich for Easter and meet up with the church family and celebrate Easter with us. We simply arranged a room for them to stay, wrote a letter to the foreign office in Deggendorf and asked for a permission for them to travel and enjoyed having them over Easter.

On Easter Sunday Caroline Voss preached a beautiful Easter sermon about the women at Jesus' grave as they appear in the Gospel of Luke? In the same service Kiara Osahon was baptised. The church was full to overflowing with over 200 people, and most of them stayed on for lunch and the baptism party. A thank you to the Osahon family, and to all who helped them and a thank you to all who made the Easter worship such a special event.

Kids' Club – as every year – spent the week after Easter on a farm in Kundl, Austria? This year we were 38 children and 12 adult helpers. We had a great time on the farm, enjoyed beautiful weather, and most of all were very happy that we managed to take Nicolas along in the team of helpers. Nicolas couldn't play football anymore, but he was a great asset when it came to the homework support offered to the children every day at lunch break. Thanks a million to the gorgeous Kids' Club team which is making this valuable project possible!



More photos:
www.peacechurch.de



We have a new worship leader? Jenny Mc Pherson lead worship on Sunday 16 May. Thank you to her for doing a great job!

For the first time in many years an all-age worship service will not be lead by Pastor Christine? Instead Phil Gill and Alistair McPherson prepared the service for Pentecost Sunday.

Confirmation Class had one of its highlights recently? The teenagers met up with members from both congregations to get to know each other better. Thank you to Klaus Gründler, Steffi Cramer-Gschwend, Kirsten Schätz (all Friedenskirche) and Alice Borges and Rebecca Yebuah (Peace Church) who shared their life and faith stories with the youngsters and helped them get to know some of the history of the Methodist Church.

Since January we baptised 7 children and 1 adult? Our best wishes and our blessings go to Mojisola Dabiri, Prince Towor Osawe, Great Ekdiza, Sidney Anthony Sidiakay, Jessica Tollalupe, Kiara Osahon, Destiny Enunekwu and Success Oko and their families.

It does help asylum seekers to be a part of the church? It not only helps them feel better because there is a

caring community, many lawyers started asking the pastor to write out official certificates of membership for their clients. This may support the asylum seekers' appeal to eventually get a permission to stay in this country. Many asylum seekers from outside the Munich area can only come to church, because Pastor Christine is writing letters and faxes to the foreign office all over the place to ask the officials there to please let our people travel to church on Sundays? Most of the time our efforts are worth it. Only sometimes the permission is denied. May the new regulation soon be that nobody needs this permission anymore but that all can travel freely wherever they want to go.

The children's choir is doing fine? By the time this newsletter is out, the choir will have sung in church twice already. The kids have great fun working together with Titilayo and Katie, to whom we give a big thank you!

There is an adult singing group, too? They meet every other Sunday at 10:30 am with Katie and Jenny. If you are interested but have not yet been, contact those two, and try it out.

Pastor Ulrich Jahreiss is going to preach at Peace Church soon? On Sunday 20 June 2010 he will preach about "Naboth and his vineyard", a story from 1 Kings 21.

Katy Wheat is coming for an internship? She is a full-time student at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC. Katy will be in Europe from 10 June to 25 August. She will work at Peace Church as well as with churches in Milan, Berlin, Hamburg and Alresford in England. While she is in Munich she will live with Jenny and Alistair McPherson. We are all looking forward to an interesting three months.

The home group is still meeting? We are working with a very simply method of "Sharing the Bible", and will meet two more times before the summer break: on Thursday 3 June at the McPherson's home, and on 1 July at Pastor Christine's place. Everybody interested is welcome!

Kids' Club is offering a movie night? Watch out for extra invitations for the children to come and sleep over at church and watch films from Friday 11 to Saturday 12 June.

The storage for the next Give & Take Day is full to overflowing? The opportunity to still bring things will be on the Friday evening of the next Give & Take weekend. The date is: 25 to 27 June. Mark it in your diaries and if you would like to do so, come along on one of those days.

The German Class is still taking place? It has, however, been moved from Tuesday afternoons to Saturday afternoons. If you are interested in getting to know more about it, contact Nathalie Pfisterer.

We would like to introduce...



Name: Dorothea Kudla

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

I was born in Munich and I lived in Regensburg and Dresden before coming back to Munich, Solln, in 2007.

How long have you been in Germany?

My whole life apart from one year that I spent in West Bengal in India.

Why did you come to Germany?

Because my parents decided to start their family here.

Are you here for ever or temporarily?

I will be here for at least four years until the end of my studies.

What is your profession/job?

I am studying medicine.

Hobbies?

Rock climbing, skiing, mountains, jogging, singing, playing the organ and the piano, children, other cultures.

Which are your favourite meals?

Indian meals and cake.

How did you find Peace Church?

My grandma's family went to Friedenskirche, and my own family, too. As I love to meet with people from other countries and cultures I decided to go to Peace Church as well as to Friedenskirche.

What do you like best at Peace Church?

That people of all cultures, colours and ages from so many different parts of the world and with so many different backgrounds come together for Sunday worship and that they sing with their full heart and so loud that I can pull out all the stops of the organ.

What are you responsible for at Peace Church?

Sometimes I play the organ.

What does the Christian faith mean to you?

My faith and my relationship to God as my loving father give a purpose to my life. Sharing my faith, praying and singing together with others in Peace Church and Friedenskirche strengthen me for my every day life.

Favourite stories of the Bible?

Ruth, Noah, the parable of the lost son, Lazarus.

We would like to introduce...



Name: Katy Wheat

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

I'm from Washington, DC, United States of America, and I'll be staying with Alastair and Michelle while I'm in Munich.

How long have you been in Germany?

I'm not yet in Germany, but will arrive on June 10th.

Why did you come to Germany?

I'm here to work with Peace Church!

Are you here forever or temporarily?

I'll be staying for three months.

What is your profession/job?

I'm a full-time student at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC.

Hobbies?

I love photography, reading, travelling, knitting and crocheting, taking walks, listening to music and singing, camping, and visiting art museums.

Which are your favourite meals?

I especially enjoy soup of all kinds, but also anything Thai!

How did you find Peace Church?

Through a friend, Tabea Münz, who was an exchange student at Wesley Seminary in the fall of 2009.

What do you like best at Peace Church?

I have not visited Peace Church, but I'm excited to meet everyone and learn about the ministry and mission of the congregation.

What are you responsible for at Peace Church?

I'm sure I'll do all kinds of things.*

What does the Christian faith mean to you?

My faith is an extremely important part of my daily life – I love to read the Bible, pray, and worship. I believe that all people are precious children of God, and that affects daily how I treat and interact with others .

Favourite stories of the Bible?

I enjoy reading the Old Testament stories of strong women – Esther, Sarah and Hagar, and Rebekah. They empower me to be a strong Christian woman!

*Katy will preach at Peace Church on 27 June (the editor©)

Story for the Children

Rosalie Nikiema - I have a dream...

My name is Rosalie Nikiema. My home country is Burkina Faso. I am a poor girl from a poor family, But I have a dream: One day I will be an expert for economic affairs. I will work in a big bank, and I will make sure that half of the rich people's will be given to the poor. I would allow millionaires to have accounts at my bank, only if they transfer part of what they have to the accounts of very poor people. One day I will be the president of my country Burkina Faso. I will make sure that every person owns only one house. If people own more than one house they will be asked to give them to those people who have nowhere to live. I will build children's homes for all the orphans in the country. And I will set up a law that forbids child labour, but offers every child a free place at a school. Medication and hospital treatment will be free, and everybody will have a job. One day I will start a world wide peace movement. And I will make sure that there are no more wars in the world. Then the earth would be paradise!

Peace Church Calendar

June

Thursday 3 June	Home Group & Bible Sharing at the McPherson's
Sunday 6 June	Communion Worship, Pastor Christine preaching
10 June to 20 August	Internship Katy Wheat
11 – 12 June	Kids' Club Movie Night
9 -13 June	South Germany Annual Conference
Sunday 13 June	Sunday Worship, Caro Voss preaching
Saturday 19 June	Confirmation Class
Sunday 20 June	Sunday Worship, Pastor Ulrich Jahreiss preaching
26 & 27 June	Give & Take Weekend
Sunday 27 June	Sunday Worship, Kathy Wheat preaching
Sunday 27 June	Prison Service in Landsberg (CoA in charge)

July

Thursday 1 July	Home Group & Bible Sharing at Christine's
Saturday 3 July	Kids' Club
Sunday 4 July	Communion Worship, Pastor Christine preaching
Wednesday 14 July	Asylum Seekers' summer fair
Saturday 10 July	Confirmation Class
Sunday 11 July	Sunday Worship (Christine preaching) & Watching the Final of the World Cup together
Sunday 18 July	All-age Worship & PC Picnic
Sunday 25 July	Sunday Worship, Emily Flemming preaching
28 July to 26 August	Pulpit Cover Sam Greening

August

Sunday 1 August	All-age Communion with Friedenskirche
7 to 28 August	Holiday Erb-Kanzleiter family
Sunday 8 August	Sunday Worship, Pastor Sam Greening preaching
Sunday 15 August	Sunday Worship, Pastor Sam Greening preaching
Sunday 22 August	Sunday Worship, Pastor Sam Greening preaching
Sunday 29 August	Joint Worship with Friedenskirche

Impressum

Your suggestions, comments and contributions are welcome. Deadline for August/September issue is Sun 18 July. 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.