

# REPORTS FROM THE REGIONS

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## EVENTS – FINANCES – FUTURE PLANS

### NO. 88 ST. JOHN'S TIDE 2020

no message from

**Australia and New Zealand**

**Central Germany**

**Japan**

#### **Bavaria**

At the regional synod in autumn 2018, the priests in Bavaria decided to pay more attention to Haus Freudenberg in future. A constructive cooperation between the board of the Bavarian association for non-religious tasks of The Christian Community, the sponsors of Haus Freudenberg, and the priests of the region was the result. Another positive development is the Freudenberg chapel now being more frequently used for celebrating the Act of consecration of Man. Please refer to Thomas Meinhardt's report "Haus Freudenberg" to get more in depth information.

Dorothea Humérez, Harry Lohse

#### **Central Europe**

A change of lenker is imminent in the region. Supporting the founding of the region since June 2017, Walther Giezendanner was able to hand over office to Stephan Meyer at the regional synod in Budapest mid-November. He left the Stuttgart seminary in March.

The consequences of the Corona crisis were also evident in this region. Closures, exit restrictions as well as the return to more freedom have been different from country to country. However, as in many places, the restrictions were put in place in March already. You can find more detailed information on this in the "Mitteilungen" Johanni 2020. We are very grateful confirmation could take place again in Hungary and the Czech Republic – in Hungary even as originally planned on White Sunday! The financial impact of this situation on the communities will only really become apparent in the course of the year. As the region includes Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania, three former socialist countries struggling from the start to finance our work, households are likely to be very affected.

Christine Jost

#### **Central Europe/Austria**

From March 16 to May 14, celebrations could only be held in silence, i.e. without the presence of community, because the Corona regulations prohibited assembly and religious gatherings. Schools, universities and many shops were closed too. The situation, which could be interpreted as an attack on religious freedom, encouraged priests to celebrate with even greater intensity. Starting in the Holy Week, members of communities were increasingly involved again; either on invitation or by a registration process depending on the parish. In order to support people continuing their religious lives, the homepage was increasingly used as a means of communication.

At the moment we are required to keep a one meter distance in closed rooms, which means only half of the seats in the altar rooms can be occupied. Communities deal with these restrictions differently depending on the circumstances: In some cases conditions are almost back to pre-Corona times, in other cases celebrations are carried out three times in a row in order to divide the congregation in smaller groups. The way of dealing with the communion is also very different: In some cases it was never discontinued, and in some cases it has not yet been distributed. For many people the corona break seems to have led to a conscious grasp of religious life at home, so we hope to emerge from this crisis strengthened internally.

During the Christmas season, a break-in took place in the community of Linz and both chalices were stolen. Until new goblets can be purchased, Linz celebrates with the goblet of the Moosburg community and in Moosburg the Act of consecration of Man is being celebrated using the travel goblet of the Salzburg community or, more recently, the goblet of the community in Vienna South. The residents of Linz are very grateful for the temporary replacements. The loss of the chalices is largely covered by insurance.

During the course of this year our lenker, Walther Giezendanner, will be replaced by Stephan Meyer, member of the circle of seven and former leader of the seminar in Stuttgart. We would like to extend our gratitude to Mr. Giezendanner for the loving and understanding guidance of our region during this transition phase! At the same time we are looking forward to our new lenker and welcome him to the region "Central Europe"!

Herbert Bitzner

A change is pending in Carinthia (Moosburg): Siegfried Ostheim, priest of the community since September 2014, hands over responsibilities to Ms. Veronica Zamalloa (Graz) Almost 72 years old he has reached retirement age. The handover will take place in the chapel of the Christian community in Moosburg, Am Sonnengrund 2, on Sunday, 20. September 2020. Mr. Stephan Meyer, new lenker of the region, will come to Austria from Stuttgart for the occasion. The Moosburg community invites everyone who feels connected to the Christian community in Carinthia to this festive day. It will begin at 10:00 a.m. with the Act of consecration of Man continues with conversations and exchanges with Stephan Meyer and ends at 5:00 p.m. The handover, farewell and welcome will take place in the early afternoon. A more detailed program will be sent out. The evening before, on Saturday, 19. September at 7:00 p.m., Mr. Stephan Meyer will give a public lecture at the Europahaus Klagenfurt on the subject: "Why do we need a spiritual religion again? What strengthens us in times of crisis?"

Siegfried Ostheim

Vienna is growing: A lot has changed and developed in the Viennese community in recent months. In Vienna-South, a sister community to the loyal, stable regular community in Vienna-Mitte has formed, which has proven to be quite independent and lively. The new church, the close proximity to the Waldorf school, the beautiful location – a large house with a wonderful garden – are increasingly attracting young families with their children. At the first Sunday service for school beginners in autumn 2019, 38 children came and the church was bursting at its seams. Even on normal Sundays there is no shortage of children; therefore the children's Sunday service and the Act of consecration of Man has been celebrated every Sunday since December in the Johanneskirche instead of previously twice a month. The annual festivals and youth meetings for both communities take place in Vienna South.

The community in Vienna-Mitte seems to mainly appeal to people from student age. The frequency of Sunday services has been reduced here. The Act of consecration of Man on Sundays is always very well attended and an active community life blooms with a lot of music, lectures, conferences, art exhibitions and workshops. The large workshop on the culture of dying "Actions in the presence of death" lead by priestess Jeserschek-Bubik deserves a special mentioning and does not only appeal to older people.

Again and again we feel very blessed to be able to host blessings for the dead: in Vienna-Mitte in the altar room due to space reasons, in Vienna-South in the community hall. Looking into the future we hope to one day have a special room to pay last respects to the dead.

Angelika Teichmann, Jakob Butschle

### **Great Britain-Ireland**

Since the country went into lockdown in March, we have been able to celebrate the Act of Consecration of Man at the very least among priests and more recently with lay servers. Our regular communications with the congregations have allowed members to feel part of the services without attending them physically. With all that, we are keenly aware of how much we are losing by not opening the churches. Since June 15<sup>th</sup>, we can open the churches for private prayer. We are hoping that the government will fulfil its intention of allowing places of worship to reopen from 4<sup>th</sup> July, although we do not yet know under what conditions this will be possible.

Tom Ravetz

### **Netherlands and Flanders**

Since the measures related to the Corona virus have recently been relaxed, members are again able to participate in the services in our churches. A maximum number of participants is fixed to ensure sufficient distance. In some communities, people do sing during service, in others people don't sing because of the assumption singing poses a higher risk of infection. The children's service was resumed as well. The confirmations, which could not happen in spring, were postponed to Michaelmas.

Every summer, around 600 children and young people partake in the Helios camps of the Christian community. The camp organizers have done a lot of work to adapt the running of the camps to the current situation and to keep everyone updated. The latest update is that camps in Belgium can and will be taking place in adapted form. A limited number of participants, 50 in total including employees, will form a "bubble" and as such do not have to adhere to the usual Corona social distance rule.

Unfortunately, the guidelines in the Netherlands leave no room for a solution like the one in Belgium. Participants, aged 13 years and older as well as employees have to keep a distance of one and a half meters to each other. This condition would adversely affect the atmosphere of the camps, which is why it was with much sadness decided to cancel the camps this summer.

Ellis Booi

### **North-America**

It's been a while since we reported on the North American Region. The Corona Crisis made everything so uncertain that I didn't dare send any news, thinking it would be outdated before it reached you. Although this note includes many cancellations, we are slowly picking up the loose threads again. Across this huge continent, the tempo of reopening is very different from place to place, the prospects unclear.

It was encouraging to see how congregations and priests took up the most various means to keep up a stream of teaching and preaching, even though liturgical celebrations were brought back to a minimum or took place behind locked doors. YouTube, Zoom, podcasts, Facebook all contributed to the availability of The Word to even the most remote areas, as well as to other parts of the world. Many people noticed that their inner experience deepened because they were not able to take part in the physically present service.

All confirmations were postponed, but the first ones are already scheduled for June through August.

One children's camp was canceled, but a canoe trip will take place on a smaller scale. Another struggled mightily with the local authorities, but to no avail. A third one is still going ahead but is

meeting up with a lot of hindrance. We all know how important these camps and trips are for our young folks!

The conference *ASK2020* in Atlanta will take place as a one-time Zoom Evening on St. John's Day. We are looking forward to a variety of contributions from all around the continent. We are very grateful to the Toronto Seminary for taking the initiative. The proceeds will go to support the development of our work in the Southeastern US.

After his ordination in Stuttgart on February 14, Rev. Michael Latham took up his post in San Francisco with the doors locked and the congregation sheltering at home: a real challenge at the very beginning of one's priestly work!

Several priests will be moving between St. John's and Advent. To begin with, Revs. Emma Heirman and Matthias Giles will move to Washington DC/Baltimore at the beginning of July. Rev. James Hindes will keep the fires burning in Denver until the next ordinations. At the beginning of September Rev. Carol Kelly will take up the work in the Taconic-Berkshire congregation in upstate New York. Rev. Liza Marcato will then, after a sabbatical, move to New York City where Rev. Gisela Wielki will be retiring after fifty years of service to the Christian Community.

The situation in Denver gave us good reason to consider the priest housing situation. After extensive research and many conversations with the Board and the lenker, the decision was made to build an appropriate dwelling on the church property. This is a bold step for a congregation that is far away from its nearest Christian Community neighbors. The plan promises a good portion of stability for the future.

And then looking further ahead: In August a preparation group will be coming together at the Toronto Seminary. We will all be looking forward to their ordinations on the weekend of December 12 & 13. Mark your calendars!

Craig Wiggins

### **North and Northwest Germany**

Only a short message from the region of Northern Germany as a whole this time: In addition to everything having been reported by all other regions alike about the Corona-madness, we unfortunately had to cancel our annual Ascension Day conference at lake Mözen. The conference center usually hosting us had to cancel our stay due to hygiene requirements which could not be met.

Also – as previously announced – Wolfgang Wohlfarth has taken up his position as Coordinator of the region Northwest Germany on June 1. He will relieve me of part of the workload for the entire region since I will be dedicating myself to management of the Foundation.

Thomas Nayda

no message from:

**Nordic Countries**

**Russia**

**South America**

**Southern Africa**

### **Southwest Germany**

It has been three quarters of a year since the last information from southwestern Germany. Back then, no one could have predicted the situation as it is today: the suspected invisible threat to our health and the associated measures had a huge impact on our society.

However, in retrospect, astonishing things were set in motion through this crisis. In many communities the continuing efforts to trace the "hidden treasures", dormant in the impulses of the founding personalities since almost 100 years! A range of vastly different individualities indeed – becoming so clear in their biographies! In essence the unconditional will to really transfer the impulses from the spiritual world into humanity today through the events of change at the altar. In several communities, this became the guiding principle for the design of the program for 2022.

There was the unforeseen interruption in mid-March when suddenly no public events were allowed to take place anymore. Meanwhile, community life has started to normalize again although it is beginning to dawn on most people that the “old” normal is probably a thing of the past. However, the inner strength of the congregation was evident: first only in the priesthood, then with altar servers from the congregations and finally with the congregations – restricted by maintaining distance and, in some federal states, the “chalice ban”. This resulted in an increased inner connection to the Act of consecration of Man, often celebrated daily. Accompanied by weekly electronic news in the communities with information, strengthening thoughts and suggestions for the children, those who were most affected by the situation. In many places, people agreed to come together in activities connecting in spirit at certain times without physically being together. In some communities, the time of „standstill“ was used to finally tackle renovations which had been pending for a long time: Rooms were painted, spiders and dust in the height of altar rooms were tackled with the appropriate means.

Of course, this time of drastic restrictions did not leave people untouched. The polarization of society affected the communities. The main challenge seems to be to remind oneself of the fact that there will always be opposing views in society. The archetype is the group of twelve of the disciples at Pentecost, representing the future of humanity – always two in the circle directly opposite each other...

The restrictions resulted in several necessary meetings, such as the regional synod, regional assembly among others being cancelled. Even the confirmations planned for Easter could not take place. Instead, there were even more intensive workshops in a small group. The external restrictions ultimately led to intensified work! Only one final step towards the complete practice of the sacraments is still missing: the execution of the public communion. But perhaps an even more conscious approach is needed here before we can return to a “new” normality here...

In Freiburg the joint impulse for a new building for “assisted living” and other community rooms on the land next to the church together with the cooperative “Leben Ü50” – (life over 50, formerly “ILiA”) is going into the next phase. The preliminary building request and the finances are on the agenda.

In our region, the young Japanese Hiroyuki Yoshino, one of the newly ordained priests came to Pforzheim in order to gain first experiences with community work. Unfortunately this process was off to a rather slow, unsatisfying start due to the Corona restrictions. The official introduction is therefore still pending.

It has become apparent that our usual way of sending a priest to a group of communities – as in the area Saar-Pfalz-Mosel with altars in Neustadt/Weinstraße, Kaiserslautern, Saarbrücken and Trier – has proven rather unrealistic. After all, one has to grow some roots in a place in order to be able to work as a priest. Unfortunately this attempt must therefore be regarded a failure leading to personnel changes in this area. But since failure is always a possibility when attempting something the result is inevitable knowing better afterwards.

Hellmut Voigt

### **Switzerland, Southwest Europe**

In the Corona crisis, the entire spectrum was represented in our region, from the severely affected regions (Milan, Ticino, Alsace, Madrid) to the hardly affected regions (Portugal, Central France, parts of Switzerland), countries with curfews and countries with moderate contact restrictions, countries with a ban on worship and a country like Spain, where worship was not prohibited, but leaving one’s own home, even with children was not allowed.

We also experienced the full range of responses to the Corona restrictions, from those who fully agree with the measures taken to very rebellious responses; those who accept the scientific explanations to the most varied forms of mistrust and wanting to get to the bottom of the „true reasons “.

In all communities an inner accompaniment for the continuing celebrations of the Act of consecration of Man held by most priests was felt. At the same time the priests stayed in contact with the

communities in writing or other forms of communication which was met with great gratitude by all members of the communities. This way of communicating also reached many people who had previously been on the margins of community life or had withdrawn. They were now able to experience a new connection.

In **Italy**, which endured a strict curfew, only one of the two priests working there had the opportunity to celebrate at an improvised house altar every day. This was due to the fact that we had to give up our permanent altar in Bologna for financial reasons. Such fixed reference point has been sorely missed lately. On the other hand, flexible work with many interested groups and communities in different parts of the country evolved through this crisis and seems to be the appropriate form for Italy in the near future. In **France**, priests holding appropriate papers as proof, were able to work in our chapels and churches and celebrated there without the presence of the communities of course. In some regions they were even allowed to do home visits. In **Spain**, some altar servers were able to regularly support the community in Madrid as volunteers, so that the Act of consecration of Man could be celebrated there including altar servers. In **Portugal**, only one of the planned weekend visits by a priestess had to be canceled. There was also a ban on assembly and worship in **Switzerland**, but up to five people were allowed to gather in public spaces and churches were allowed to remain open for silent prayer. The interpretation of these regulations was quite different: In some congregations the celebrations were strictly without altar servers and without the community, elsewhere the number of five people was used to admit three members of the respective community in addition to priests and altar servers. On Palm Sunday the police visited a community after a “tip-off from the neighbourhood”, and those present were sent home.

Paradoxically, our holiday home in Bühl in Walkringen did not have to close, but all events, school trips, holiday camps etc. planned there had to be cancelled. Only a scaled-down Swiss Synod could take place there since it was legally defined as internal work meeting.

Estimation suggests a drop in revenue by approximately fifty percent for the year 2020. A big concern felt everywhere is how the economic consequences for individuals, the communities and the region will develop. On the other hand the newly experienced inner connection is likely to bear positive fruit in future.

The ordination of priests held just before the crisis beginning of March, led to three new assignments to our region: David Schiffer and Eva Oswald, respectively, already started their work in Zürich and Bern. For Madrid and the other Spanish communities we look forward to the arrival of Manuel Toro in September.

Michael Bruhn

### **West Germany**

The construction project in Cologne – basic renovation of House Iona: Despite various difficulties, work is progressing well, however, celebrating Christmas in the new rooms will have to remain wishful thinking. Realistically construction work should be completed by Easter 2021. Despite some unexpected challenges, the costs will not exceed initial estimations. In the Herdecke community the concrete facade is currently being repaired and should be completed by end of July 2020.

Ms. Kaori Mogi was sent to Bochum after two years in Dortmund. The community of Dortmund bid her farewell on Pentecost Sunday; Ms. Miriam Röger is still waiting for a visa for her planned sending to the USA.

Klaus-Peter Hunold

### **Wuerttemberg**

The eased Corona regulations are slowly working their way into daily life and the Act of Consecration of Man is being celebrated again. The confirmation is in preparation and we are hoping for further developments for a carefree community life yet again. At the moment we still have to contend with no communion.

The renovations in Reutlingen are nearing completion. The first apartment has already been occupied by a tenant. Due to financial reasons the plan of a separate staircase to the parish room was put on hold. In the community of Stuttgart-Mitte, the community worker, employed there since 2012, has given notice leading to a phase of reorientation as to how the regular and ever present tasks can be accomplished.

Since 1. June we have a new coordinator for the region. We are very grateful the regional administrative tasks as well as the joint work in the supraregional bodies can be more efficiently bundled again.

Martin Merckens

### **Seminaries/Stuttgart**

With the Starting of our Easter holidays, the borders of Germany closed resulting in many of our students unable to go home. We decided to make the rooms available to those students free of charge so they could have a home. Since we are a facility similar to a convent, we have been able to celebrate continuously since end of March. Well aware that in many places people were celebrating without a congregation we were fortunate to continue celebrating with the seminar community being present.

In the meantime, the government has taken measures to enable us to resume teaching adhering to special conditions of course. Seminar rooms are fortunately large enough and staff have put in more efforts in order for the students to continue studying.

During this time, students and seminar leaders had to remain flexible. Some lecturers were refused entry. We are very grateful to the new lecturers who could spontaneously „jump in“. Some planned courses did not take place, some new ones were „born“.

During the holidays at Pentecost, students worked on Goethe's fairy tale "The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily". After the vacation the students, Moni Boerman and Dagmar von Radecki artistically edited the fairy tale. Last Friday an internal workshop performance was the very moving result. Social interaction and internal work made up the most part of this period.

Xenia Medvedeva and Mariano Kasanetz

### **Haus Freudenberg**

How close beautiful moments and oppressive experiences can lie together was also felt in Haus Freudenberg. After closing the year 2019 with a balance in financial terms, our Freudenberg House is aching under the huge pressure dealt to us by state regulations and requirements in connection with the Covid19 pandemic. Over 14 events had to be cancelled since mid-March resulting in no revenue during this time. And the worst is not over yet. We will undoubtedly feel the effects until end of the year, maybe even beyond. Luckily a heritage has saved us from having to close for good and continue to pay the salaries. We also owe this to the many people actively and financially committed to the house. This humbles us and encourages us to walk tall despite this enormous challenge. We have decided to ask for further support in a letter asking for donations.

In close cooperation with the board and a project group headed by Armin Fröde and Harry Lohse, the lenker of the region Bavaria, we will continue to discuss matters important for running Haus Freudenberg in future. This special invigorating place is important for so many people and the community alike.

And of course we didn't just waste time during the weeks Haus Freudenberg had to remain closed. A wonderful group of volunteers, board members and employees got involved in house and garden. We renovated the workshop, completely renewed the benches in the garden and much, much more. The kitchen project which we had started before the pandemic has been completed.

The house is shining in a new light ready to host guests again. Seems like the star of change continues to shine brightly over Freudenberg because we are happy to introduce Anna von Druska, priestess of the community Munich-Mitte as our very own In-house priestess. Johannes Fellner,

priest of the Prien community, deserves our sincere gratitude at this point. He previously supported Haus Freudenberg lovingly. We are pleased to announce the doors of Haus Freudenberg being open again with the first events already taken place. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions or ideas. We look forward to welcoming you here soon.

Thomas Meinhardt

**Treuhandverwaltung zur Förderung der Christengemeinschaft e.V. (Trust Administration for the Promotion of the Christian Community)**

Apart from a warm greeting, there is currently nothing to report from the trust administration. Stay healthy and positive!

Tim Gottschalk

no message from:

**Körperschaftsverband (KV)**

**Haus auf dem Berge**

**Publishers**

**Seminaries/Hamburg**

**Verband der Sozialwerke**

*Translated by Michaela Cramer – many thanks to her!*

