

REPORTS FROM THE REGIONS

EVENTS – FINANCES – FUTURE PLANS

NO. 90 ADVENT 2020

no message from

Australia and New Zealand

Central Europe

Central Germany

Japan

Bavaria

As announced in the last edition, herewith a short report from our meeting in Haus Freudenberg at the beginning of October:

“Truly heals” was the topic of our meeting in preparation for “100 Years Christian Community”. The result was initially quite incomplete because due to lack of time we had to stop before having “finished”. However, the process as such was a very lively and exciting one. The following topics were discussed: What can we as Christian community learn through the Corona crisis? How much of everything we are currently experiencing in this crisis can be associated with the appearance of the Antichrist. We will continue to work on both topics in the year to follow and wish to obtain a certain level of clarity by doing so.

Dorothea Humérez

Great Britain-Ireland

Since my last report, we have gone through a further month-long lockdown in England. The other areas of the UK were not affected. This time, the leaders of all the major faith groups made strong representations to the Government pointing out that the ban on worship was unconstitutional and unwarranted. The Christian Community was not invited to that committee meeting, but I sent a letter from our synod as well. We have now emerged into a system of tiers with local variations; in each one, public worship is allowed. Priests are working with their congregations to establish what they can responsibly do.

We were able to hold a synod in Stourbridge just before the latest lockdown was imposed. It was moving to experience our common substance, with all the divergence in opinion that we have encountered in the last months.

The outer challenges that we are facing call upon us to develop our capacities inwardly to meet world events out of our deepest values. One of the greatest challenges has been the times when we have not been able to attend Church services. A friendly outsider asked me whether we were live-streaming our services, like many other places of worship. Without any reflection, I heard myself replying that we were. When he asked what technology we were using, I explained that it was one that needed no Wi-Fi, which everybody could join and which suffered no awkward gaps in transmission. He told me that this would be very useful for his university department! I’m not sure whether his interest was feigned when I told him that I was speaking about the living stream of connection which is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Cultivating this sense for the living word which unites us wherever we may be, is a key task in our Christian Community. Understanding this mission to uphold the living word grows harder in a world that – understandably – sees in information technol-

ogy a kind of salvation in the current situation. Standing up for the living stream of the word can be a challenge, particularly if people have grown accustomed to the idea of a funeral or other service being transmitted over the internet. We need to validate the experiences that many members have described, when they made space in their soul inwardly to participate in the Act of Consecration of Man at home, perhaps seeing them as a part of our achievement in this challenging time.

Selina Horn took up a new placement in the Forest Row congregation at the beginning of September. Luke Barr left Forest Row to take up a placement in central Hamburg at the beginning of December.

As announced already two years ago, some of the priests have been working on new translations of all the places in the ritual text where Thee and Thou are used. We have made a lot of progress with this work, which we had intended to introduce in stages, starting this Advent. In view of the difficulties which we are all facing, which make it particularly difficult to communicate and even meet at this time, we have decided to delay introducing any changes in this regard at the moment. We hope that it will be possible to do this in the course of next year.

Tom Ravetz

Netherlands and Flanders

The wind blows where it wants...

Ventilation has become an important focus in our meetings today, both in our outdoor and indoor spaces. The constant corona pressure can be felt everywhere and has radically changed our awareness of proximity and distance. Sometimes it seems as if every compass points in a different direction. In recent years the living space of our priests has given us some headaches. We intend to strengthen our internal knowledge of financial planning and asset management and are considering an interdisciplinary housing mandate group. The Regional Council was able to meet in October and November, and the joy of being together has helped us to overcome the financial tensions over the housing fund and has shown us the way to a new focus on the problem by listening to each other better. We are taking hopeful steps to recover from the injuries we have suffered and the Regional Council is pleased with the new space being created to focus on new plans for the future.

The Dutch-Flemish region is preparing for the 100th anniversary in Dortmund in 2022, and we are very much looking forward to the 100th anniversary of our own region in 2026. The parish of Zeeland-Middelburg hopes to be able to light the altar candles in its new church building at Christmas. The Alkmaar parish is currently suffering from the lack of an election result for a new executive committee. The congregation in Antwerp is deeply unhappy about the current ban in Belgium on holding church services. We live with the question: Can we manage to not only keep our heads above water but also keep an eye on each other in this crisis?

The wind is blowing us towards the new year. The Regional Council has prepared new plans for the work and has good intentions. But let us string together the weeks leading up to Christmas and let our hearts be ignited ... and you may hear his whistling; but you do not know where he comes from or where he is going ...

Laurien van der Laan de Vries

North America

Nothing new to report.

Craig Wiggins

Northwest Germany

Generational change in the region of Northwest Germany:

Just over two years ago, there were all kinds of experienced priests in the parishes of north-western Germany. But they were all moving towards retirement. The generational change began in Bremen.

Mrs. Mazur, the youngest of the 2019 ordination group, was sent to Bremen, at present she is still the youngest in the priestly circle. This year the youngest of the Stuttgart consecration group, Gregor Steinle, followed to Osnabrück, and also this year the youngest of the Hamburg consecration group, Felicia Holland, followed to the congregation in Hannover. A generational change can be achieved when those entering the priestly vocation have the opportunity to develop their skills and at the same time receive support from an experienced colleague in the very diverse fields of work of a parish priest. It succeeds when young and old work together and stimulate and complement each other in their work. It succeeds when the experienced people hand over responsibility bit by bit, without overburdening the young colleagues. It succeeds when the congregations open themselves up to the new priests and are happy about development. When I write this, the readers may have experiences in front of them, such as new things being slowed down, development being hindered and responsibility not being passed on.

Well, I am very grateful to report that in the three communities mentioned above, the generational change is succeeding in a very pleasing way for all concerned, for the communities and for the colleagues alike.

Next year Bielefeld wants to join, in three years Ottersberg and in four years Oldenburg. One thing is clear: the north-west German region is undergoing a major transformation in these years. And so far, the transformation is succeeding

Joachim Paulus

Nordic Countries

The Christian Community in Sweden – now a registered denomination

A brief description of the development in Sweden becoming a registered denomination. The congregations of the Christian Community in Sweden – two main congregations and seven subsidiary congregations – have all been individual, independent associations up to now connected only through the work of the priests. The branch communities provided financial support to the main communities in a loose manner. About ten years ago an initiative came to life aiming at creating a unified organization registered as recognized denomination. However, this process was not completed at the time and the status quo maintained.

About five years ago, a growing dissatisfaction with the financial situation was felt since the finances were more or less managed without a proper concept over the years. The desire for more transparency and cooperation between the communities in financial and organizational matters slowly arose. The first meeting of representatives from all communities on these issues was held four years ago, and has since led to an informal platform for administrative and financial cooperation between all communities, with two to four meetings per year. About a year ago we realized that the collaboration which had been fruitfully established in this informal way was not very far off from the formal collaboration as a registered religious community that had been considered once.

Thanks to a lawyer who is part of this work and who is very experienced in this field, it was possible to draw up statutes in a very short time, to pass resolutions and to submit an application as registered religious community to the authorities. The other day we received the positive answer: After more than 80 years of activity, the Christian community in Sweden is now a registered denomination with the same status as all other churches in Sweden, including the large Swedish Church which used to be a state church.

The task of this new organization will be to continue and develop the already existing financial and administrative cooperation between the communities further; to manage our so called “future funds“, which we set up a few years ago among all communities in order to support new priests the Christian community in Sweden so urgently needs. The intention is for individual communities in Sweden to join the new organization as independent legal entities. This form of organization offers various other possibilities, such as participation in ecumenical work, which we can gradually make use of as required. Thus the communities in Sweden have taken a very big step towards stronger community within the last five years. Interestingly, this development in Sweden took place along-

side the same development in the entire Nordic region, where we have managed to establish a Nordic regional council in the last few years working for the financial and organizational cooperation of the communities throughout the north. A wonderful step towards more community.

Per Andersen, Stockholm

Russia

Like in previous years a leaflet will be distributed in all communities with pictures and small articles about the work of the Christian community in Russia. Including Sochi seven small and large communities are scattered around Moscow.

It is not so much the lack of community building with regard to our sacraments in Russia but a lack of resident priests to support Anna Geyer's work. Between 400 and 1,600 kilometers have to be overcome in order to reach the other communities from Moscow. Mostly by plane, of course. Hardly imaginable by German standards. Bearing in mind that Dieter Hornemann in particular, but also Sophia Gerhold and Annette Semrau from Germany are continuously helping out, but the latter also have to meet their obligations in the communities of Flensburg and Kiel. Corona has left its mark in Russia as well, but in most places the Act of Consecration of Man could be celebrated continuously with the communities being present.

Gerhard Ertlmaier

Southern Africa

Brief report on the Cape Town Community December 2020:

During the period of the covid lockdown the participation of the congregation in the Act of Consecration of Man has deepened considerably. Also the Sunday services are well attended and very focused. There are a number of people who actively participate in the daily early morning service from their homes. The children's service is well supported and the confirmation class this past year was small but very engaged and strong.

There is a strong awareness and joyful support for the fact that Andreas van Breda is in the process of training towards a possible ordination. He is very earnestly engaging in this journey which is both practical in the life of the community as well as theoretical through study and conversations with priests and also participation in the Africa Seminary.

The community of elderly people living in the cottages behind the church is thriving with a great deal of mutual support for each other and also activities such as eurythmy and study/reading groups on offer.

Many people in the congregation are having to deal with a considerably reduced monthly income and some have lost their income altogether and are having to find new ways of generating an income so as to keep their children at school. This is also reflected in our church's monthly income which is further compounded by the inability of the community to rent out its spaces or property. So far we manage to keep going with a minimum outlay of expenses and a great deal of trust in the future. Despite all the difficulties of the times the community is in high spirits.

Richard Goodall

This report reflects very well the situation in our Region. We are approaching the Christmas festival period with clear intent of actively continuing the setting of impulses which awaken and strengthen our purpose and mission as a Movement for Religious Renewal, with the sense that '2022 has already begun'.

Reingard Knausenberger

no message from:

North Germany

South America

West Germany

Southwest Germany

As everywhere else in the world, the communities in our region have tried to live as normal as possible given the imposed restrictions. Often this could not be done without controversial debates. Particularly in the larger communities, the whole range of possible points of view is present – and thus a constant challenge to find a practicable “middle way” in each case so that people are not excluded from the hoped-for participation in the strength-inducing cult. At least it was possible to celebrate all the “important moments” in the lives of the youth until October – with the exception of one congregation, where confirmation was postponed until the following year.

Fortunately, most of the events have a clearly religious, worshipful character and could thus take place adhering to the rules of keeping the safety distance etc. Our regional synod in October was also held with very good participation. On the other hand, the regional assembly once again fell victim to the increasing insecurity of travelling. Social processes in some communities deserve special attention. Not only actual viruses afflict people, but soul and psyche are severely tested in this crisis. Since long-term planning is hardly possible, people try to find inner strength in habits they have cultivated for decades – alternatively they seek comfort in complete withdrawal. That easily dampens the spirit of people who, despite the situation, try to spontaneously make the most of the present moment. Turns out the only tool to deal with these discrepancies is calm communication and mediation. Insisting on one’s own point of view only makes matters worse.

It should also be reported that, despite the adverse circumstances, two changes took place within the region: In October, Ursula Hausen moved from Unterlengenhardt to Karlsruhe. She joins the existing colleagues and looks after the branch community in Neustadt an der Weinstrasse from there. Since she is freed from daily church work for about half the time, she will continue to deepen the work started on the spiritual topics connected with the establishment of the Christian community and make her work accessible to the internal and external public in as far as possible. The second change concerned Daniel Schietzel, who discontinued his work in the communities of our westernmost part of the region (“Saar-Palatinate-Mosel”) and takes on the responsibility for the community in Unterlengenhardt.

This allows us to draw a first conclusion of the past months: We will emerge strengthened from this crisis if we succeed in recognising the inner task in addition to the external challenges: to seek and find the security of existence where the (death) fear has been overcome – in the spirit that our soul calls our home (from the funeral ritual)!

Hellmut Voigt

Switzerland, Southwest Europe

Nothing new to report.

Christine Jost

Wuerttemberg

In this region Bettina Glas was sent to the community in Mittleres Remstal in September. There she will be working with Ingo Möller and continue to work in the community in Murrhardt as well.

Anne Fechter

Körperschaftsverband (KV)

The team preparing for the Kassel meeting had again prepared everything for the annual meeting at the end of November this year. However, even before the invitation flyers were to be commissioned, it was clear that the meeting would probably not be able to take place as usual. Consideration was given to how the Corona rules could be adhered to, and other – larger – premises were considered. But there was no way to get 130 people under one roof for this meeting. With a heavy heart, the preparatory team and the board decided to cancel the Kassel meeting in 2020.

But at least the corporate meeting, which always took place within the framework of the Kassel meeting, should take place with extended contents! For this the delegates were invited and with almost 40 people a very nice event took place on 31 October 2020: It began with the Act of consecration of Man, followed by keynote speeches, reports and discussions, a cultic conclusion and in the evening everyone went home again. All participants were very happy about the encounters and the exchange – because even whilst maintained hygienic distances the personal encounter is very valuable. We all hope (and it is planned accordingly) that the Kassel meeting can take place again in 2021.

Thomas Nayda

Seminaries/Hamburg

In March of the year 2020, now drawing to a close, we had to learn to adapt to the difficult conditions for everyone in dealing with the pandemic: Only a week after the festive ordination of priests, the large group of currently 18 students enrolled in the “Study for Professional” had to be dismissed on their actual arrival day due to the beginning of the lockdown in March.

However, due to the location of the semester break, the loss of study weeks in the various training groups was kept within limits. Thanks to the comparatively generous Hamburg regulations, we were also able to work with the ten students (four of whom were “part-time in full-time”) in full-time studies and the five candidates in the preparatory course largely without any particular restrictions. To this day, the main difficulties have been the cross-border trips made by foreign students. We are extremely grateful for the lively flow of donations and some endowments helping us to bear the financial shortfall caused by the lack of study guests and helping us to cover any extra expenses incurred.

The intense and rich life at the seminar is sometimes experienced as an oasis by students, lecturers and staff – an oasis on the way through a year otherwise characterised by a severe lack of cultural life and social peace. Just yesterday, instead of the usual Advent Café, we experienced a magical hour with artistic presentations and inspirational thoughts, which we will live on for a while. At the end of the year we will say goodbye to Klaus Gläsker, who has been working as a caretaker in housekeeping since 2018 and now wishes to retire. From January Michaela Cramer, who already works for the Johannes-Kirche congregation and the region, will take over his area of work. We look forward to a deepened cooperation!

This year we have again created a “Christmas gift” for the friends and sponsors of the Hamburg Seminary. Our lecturer Ilse Wellershoff-Schuur has written an essay with the title “... and with it all the tribes of the earth will bless themselves ...”. Written on the history of God and his people, which we recommend with the following preface: At the beginning of the year, some seminarians in the “Study for Professionals” asked why in the course “Human Evolution” with Ilse Wellershoff-Schuur the history of God with his people, as it can be read and found in the Hebrew Bible, is looked at in connection with the module “Confirmation”. It is part of the fate of this group that we had to cancel the course on Confirmation in March due to the restrictions which had just begun in connection with the Corona pandemic, and that further answers to the question will have to wait until the agreed catch-up of this course.

We are extremely grateful to Ilse Wellershoff-Schuur for providing us with a wonderful manuscript for the Christmas gift, in which she has written down the main lines of development of the work she has done and the course she has completed. She has consistently pursued the central question of the development of the individual on her way through the three layers of the Hebrew Bible: in the cosmic-prehistoric, the mythical and the historical narratives, which are summarised in this unique and diverse collection of sacred books.

What awaits you – like the students – when reading this essay is not only the long breath and the wide view that can be found in the experience of the portrayed as a soothing and healing deepening and “materialisation” in the soul, but also a concrete preparation for Christmas. Our author writes at the end of her text: At Christmas we celebrate the feast of the incarnation of the I, just as

the path of the chosen people has marked it out. We do so in memory of the redemption of man, who is in constant danger of straying and losing himself on the path to himself.

This booklet can be reordered at a price of € 5 (plus shipping costs): Hamburg Seminary of the Christian Community | Johnsallee 17 | 20148 Hamburg | Telephone 040. 33 45 55-80 | Email: info@priesterseminar-hamburg.de

Ulrich Meier

Haus Freudenberg

Warning: Incident in Haus Freudenberg calls for vigilance and caution

“In hindsight one is always smarter!” We know this saying all too well and often hear it after events we would have rather seen avoided. An incident just like this happened in Haus Freudenberg recently. We are reporting about this event in order to make as many people as possible aware. It is one of those incidents reported in the media causing utter disbelief how something like this could have possibly happened. To experience something like this is painful because after all trust is being abused. A person who introduced himself as Charles de Serres was subsequently making himself known to many a person as a friendly helper in house and garden. However, as it turned out his actual name is Karl Zeretzke. And this wasn't his first attempt to gain trust. A report in the Wirtschaftswoche testifies: <https://www.wiwo.de/unternehmen/industrie/karl-zeretzke-der-gescheiterte-griff-nach-den-leifheit-millionen/12589140-all.html>

Luckily his plans failed in Haus Freudenberg as well. Due to the vigilance of some and quick action in the community, immediate consequences were put in place. He was banned from entering the premises. With this information we want to ensure that as many doors as possible remain closed to him in order to prevent his fraudulent activities. Thomas Meinhardt in Haus Freudenberg is available to answer any questions you may have about this case.

Thomas Meinhardt

Haus auf dem Berge

As accommodation facility for tourists including leisure activities in Thuringia, we had to suspend guest operations for the second time this year at the beginning of November. A large part of our costs are fixed costs meaning they have to be paid regardless of occupancy. The efforts needed in order to make sure the company is in line with the legal requirements, to maintain the site and to keep the complex technology running are also largely independent of the number of guests present. Due to an extraordinary number of exceptionally generous donations and in view of the funds promised by the government we applied and hope for, we will survive this year economically. It's Advent.

Tobias Knabe

no message from:

Seminaries/Stuttgart

Verband der Sozialwerke

Publishers

Treuhandverwaltung zur Förderung der Christengemeinschaft e.V.

The Sozialwerk in Berlin

Ruhrstr. 11, 10709 Berlin offers a very special place of recuperation: There is a small holiday house in **31195 Lamspringe, Hellegrund 11.**



Years ago a little holiday house was bequeathed to our Sozialwerk for “members and priests of the congregation in need of recuperation” in the hamlet Lamspringe, in a very charming relaxing countryside of the Vorharz. Lamspringe is situated in the county Hildesheim in the southern Lower Saxony, it is an officially approved place of recuperation near the Heber, and it is member of the region Leinebergland. In the neighbourhood are Goslar, the old diocesan town Hildesheim, the saline steam and mud baths Bad Salzdetfurth, Bad Gandersheim the town of St Roswitha, and

Alfels/Leine, all of them with rich cultural offers. An excursion into the Harz nearby is worthwhile in every season of the year.

Lamspringe is not far from the motorway A7 (exit at Bockenem or Rhüden/Harz), the major roads B 3, B 64 and B 243. The nearest stations are Bodenburg, Freden/Leine, Bad Gandersheim and Hildesheim, where you’ll have Intercity connections. The holiday house is a little distance outside of the village. You do your shopping in the little town; walking there takes approximately half an hour, going by car only few minutes.



Directly around the holiday house there is a superb wood of beeches, which invites you with its tidy paths to go for a walk. The garden, 600 m² big, can be used as playground, grill place or to bask in the sun, but as a working place for amateur gardeners as well. The little house with a living area of about 60 m² has a fully equipped kitchen, bathroom, a large living room with a balcony and a panoramic view

into an enchanting countryside, a children’s room with a step-ladder bed and a bedroom for the parents. A heating system for off-peak electricity and a burner for all kinds of combustibles provides warmth.

The entire house is comfortably furnished. For your own requirements you may bring with you bedclothes, terry towelling, and tea towels. To cover the running costs we ask for € 50 per day; at your departure we would like you to do a final cleaning, which can be dropped by paying € 30. If we succeeded in arousing your interest and you want to spend your holidays there, you may contact Mrs. Petra Wilms by phone 030/213 24 08 or e-mail petra-wilms@t-online.de.

Translated by Michaela Cramer – many thanks to her!

*****END*****