

# REPORTS FROM THE REGIONS

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## EVENTS – FINANCES – FUTURE PLANS

### NO. 96 ST. JOHN 2022

#### **Bavaria**

The Bavarian Region wishes everyone a beautiful, revitalizing and inspiring St. John's tide.

Dorothea Humérez

#### **Central-Germany**

Farewell party *Haus auf dem Berge*

Dear friends,

It was with consternation and sadness that you received the news that the Haus auf dem Berge will be closed and sold by us. Your sympathy for the fate of Tobias Knabe is great, and he probably appreciates it very much that we let him walk his healing path in peace and quiet, and that we think of him in silence. In the meantime, the considerations and preparations for a sale, examined and prepared by Armin Knabe, continue.

For our part, we are now planning a farewell party for the Haus auf dem Berge on Saturday 27 August. It will begin at 9:30 a.m. with the Act of Consecration of Man, followed by reminiscences and reports, as well as singing, artistic activities and a tour of the grounds, and of course a meal together and finally a close of day service at 5:30 p.m. Whoever would like to support this day and its preparations and whoever would like to register already, please contact

Gottfried Weidauer: [gottfried.weidauer@gmx.de](mailto:gottfried.weidauer@gmx.de) | Tel. 0351-8509 86 27 or

Kirsten Rennert: [kirsten.rennert@klangplastik.de](mailto:kirsten.rennert@klangplastik.de) | Tel. 0179-429 76 31.

If you would like to stay overnight before or after, please contact the St Mark's Community in the village: [Mrs Monique Stark vertrieb@gutshof-hauteroda.de](mailto:Mrs Monique Stark vertrieb@gutshof-hauteroda.de) | Tel. 034673-7369-0.

#### **New Congregation in Havelhöhe**

How does a church found itself that has actually existed for years? Because for 27 years now there has been a cultic life of the Christian Community on the other side of the Havel. Here, on the campus of the Havelhöhe Community Hospital, there are various opportunities to work in the spirit of the Christian Community. With Uwe Sondermann, Richard Dzidzaria and most recently Susanne Gödecke, Havelhöhe has been continuously served by the Wilmersdorf mother church since 2002; since 2015 as a branch with a monthly service on Sundays. Due to constant growth, the desire for more services and a congregational life arose.

Since autumn 2021, the congregation has had a local priest in the person of Mr Renato Gomes. This opens up the possibility for the next step – the foundation as an independent congregation. The concrete planning for this has been intensely carried out since last year by the initiative group, a group of people who strongly support the Christian Community in Havelhöhe. In the process, it became clear how much more an independent congregation means in relation to a branch.

Now the time has come: On Tuesday, 17 May 2022, the Havelhöhe congregation was founded the fourth congregation in the Berlin area. On St. John's Day, Sunday, 26 June 2022 at 12:00 noon,

we will celebrate the laying of the foundation after the Act of Consecration of Man and a wedding. We cordially invite you to this event.

Andreas von Wehren, Martin Layer

### **Great Britain-Ireland**

For the last two years, we have been unable to come together for our annual regional meeting. It was wonderful that we could do this again, in Forest Row from 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> June with the theme ‘Creating Sacred Spaces – where present and future meet’. Over fifty people attended, with more joining from the congregation for parts of the weekend. Vicke von Behr gave the keynote address on the Founding of The Christian Community in the Spiritual World, encouraging us to recover our sense of newness about the church that rests on the spiritual freedom and responsibility of its members. The weekend was blessed with sunny weather and the able hosting of a dedicated group of volunteers from Forest Row. We are now planning an event together with Rev Jonah Evans on ‘Living Life as Priestly Service’ (see [tiny.one/PriestSvc](https://tiny.one/PriestSvc) for more details).

On Palm Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> April, Liza Lillicrap was introduced to the congregation in Stroud. Liza is British, but has been living for the last years in Australia. She was ordained in 2021, and has been working in Bremen, Germany.

Nigel Lumsden was ordained in Toronto this year. He will start his work in London on 19<sup>th</sup> June.

Tom Ravetz

### **Middle Europe and Switzerland, Southwest Europe Central Europe Region**

In the second week of June, after the pandemic, a synod could finally take place again in Vienna South, in which priests from all the countries of the region could participate. Over Whitsun, the East-West Congress took place in Vienna with about 300 participants, which was co-organised by the Christian Community. This was on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the great congress with Rudolf Steiner in 1922.

Work is progressing well in the individual countries; the financing of the same is still a big question, especially in Romania. What effects the present generally uncertain situation will have remains to be seen.

In Graz, the congregation has been for some time living with the question of building its own church. A plot of land is available and there is now also a concrete design; the financial feasibility still has to be clarified next.

Christine Jost

### **Switzerland/Southwest Europe**

Two special events have taken place in our region in recent weeks: Over Ascension Day, 22 staff members from the whole region met for a few days in our welcoming house in Walkringen and reported on their work. It was a real “party” – with an already Pentecostal character. Because of the six predominant languages in our region, we always needed at least three of them so that everyone could communicate with everyone else. So, there was a lot of back and forth translating between French, Spanish and German. What was particularly heartening was the fact that language was not a barrier – getting to know each other, being allowed to report on the work, sharing the joys and hardships in each country and community created a warm and welcoming atmosphere, which was further enhanced by the beautiful surroundings and benevolent weather. Participants travelled back to their communities with a request to continue nurturing this seed.

Apart from that, the coordinators were able to meet in the Colmar congregation for several days for some out-of-town work. For the first time, other full-time staff members were present too – a suggestion by Thomas Nayda that proved very successful. Our church building in Colmar, which

was convincing in every aspect, and the warm hospitality of the congregation provided a joyful setting for our work, in which our leader M. Bruhn was present throughout. The congregation in Colmar had received various loans from other regions for the church building; the prosperity of the congregation – it is the largest in France and has a rich congregational life – impressed us deeply.

Only three full-time priests are at present available for this big country – supported by retired priests and priests from other countries. In order to be able to change this in the future, a proseminary has now begun in Strasbourg. Such proseminaries will probably also be necessary in other countries in the region to encourage people to take up a priestly vocation.

Apart from that, we can report that in Spain both the congregation in Madrid and the one in Alicante are facing building issues. More details can only be revealed later. In Switzerland, there will be a number of new appointments in the course of the summer.

Christine Jost

### **Netherlands and Flanders**

On Saturday 14 May the Christian Community and the Anthroposophical Society jointly organised a conference to mark the centenary of the Movement for Religious Renewal. Peter Selg, who has been researching the impulses of the Christian Community for years, was asked to give two lectures. The day was a festive reunion of people who have known each other for 100 years and of people who want to shape the next 100 years together. Peter Selg's message was very clear: Both movements belong together and have a common task for the future. In his first lecture, Peter Selg spoke about the return of Christ in the etheric as the most important event of our time. In the second lecture he spoke about the past of the Christian Community: The spiritual world had wanted the renewal of religious life. How can we, without overestimating our strength, generously go out and let the inner core of light of the Christian Community work for the needs of the world? Characteristic of the beginnings of our movement was the spirit of openness to achieve much with little. We need this spirit again!

In 2020 and 2021, it was not possible for the Helios Camp organisation to prepare the summer camps together with all helpers on Ascension Day due to corona. How grateful we are that this is possible again! And so, this year there was a real "HV", a camp on the Berka site in Drenthe with only helpers and priests among themselves: full of training, workshops, learning new songs, trying out recipes from the kitchen staff, and camp fire until the early hours of the morning. And while the birds chirped around the big tent, more than 120 young voices sang in harmony during the Act of Consecration of Man. Special guest was Ulrich Goebel (priest in Dortmund), who spoke with much humour about the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christian Community and about the World Conference in Dortmund. He spoke about the past and the future: "The conference is not about looking back at the past and celebrating how unbelievably wonderful we are; we should not want to fix and plan the future so that the next three generations know what to do. The question is: how can we learn to listen to the language that the future speaks to us? If people start to understand this language in the meetings and personal encounters in Dortmund, then the conference will be a success."

On 24 June, the first chapel of the Zeeland congregation (in Middelburg) will be consecrated and its name announced. This small congregation has been in existence for 54 years and is looking forward to this auspicious occasion! From now on, everyone visiting Zeeland during the year is welcome, whether on holiday or not. If you would like to join us for the Act of Consecration of Man in the new chapel, please check our website: <https://middelburg.christencommunity.nl/> beforehand. If you are intending to visit on weekdays, please let us know in advance that you are coming so that someone can welcome you.

Ernst Terpstra

### **North America**

The highlight of the past period was undoubtedly the ordination of four candidates in Toronto on 14 and 15 May. With energetic help from all the region, the congregation and candidates planned and organised the festive days. Three senior leaders (Oberlenkers) delighted us with their presence; Oliver Steinrueck celebrated the sacrament of ordination. The warm afterglow of the consecration days still lives on in the region. Meanwhile, the newly ordained have arrived at their places of sending.

Damien Gilroy will stay in Toronto for a short while before moving to Adelaide/Australia via Melbourne. Nigel Lumsden will be working in Temple Lodge/London. Erica MacLennan will take up work in Vancouver/Canada, while Robert Bower (USA), after a short stay in Chicago, will divide his time and energy between Boston and Taconic-Berkshire.

It is gratifying to see groups of people longing for the sacraments in such far-flung places as Austin/Texas, Gainesville/Florida, Calgary/Alberta in Canada and Tucson/Arizona. Members and priests go to great lengths to make the seemingly impossible possible. In northwest Washington State, the priests Ann Burfeind and Julia Polter, along with local members, are stepping up their efforts to make something new happen where there is almost nothing of a congregational life. Ann will also be exploring through her network of camp leaders and helpers how a congregation could come about in ways yet unimagined.

Craig Wiggins

### **North- and Northwest Germany**

After years of preparation, the Sozialwerk der Christengemeinschaft in Norddeutschland e.V. (Social Work of the Christian Community in Northern Germany) separated from the Frankenberg Monastery in Goslar, Altenstift der Christengemeinschaft gGmbH on 8 October 2021 and transferred the property and the neighbouring residential building at Nonnenweg 18 to the ownership of this gGmbH, which is backed by the *Antonie von Siemens Foundation and the Elly von Siemens Foundation* as shareholders. This was a forward-looking step for the Frankenberg monastery, enabling urgently needed fire protection measures and further major renovations to the property. Part of the proceeds from the sale was granted to Frankenberg Monastery immediately after the sale as a loan to help finance the necessary measures. The entire monastery complex is located in the inner city area of the city of Goslar and is therefore a listed building. As a result, all construction work is only possible under difficult conditions.

After the sale of the *Methorst* in 2013 and the sale of the Frankenberg convent and the residential building Nonnenweg 18, the Sozialwerk in Norddeutschland still has land that is operated by the *Heilpädagogisches Förderzentrum Friedrichshulde gGmbH* and by the town of Schenefeld with the *Biene Sonnenstrahl* day-care centre by way of a heritable building right. The ground rent income from these two facilities is now the not very high remaining regular source of income that helps to secure the existence of the Sozialwerk in the North German and North West German region. The Sozialwerk is also a co-partner in the *Tobias-Haus Alten- und Pflegeheim gGmbH* in Ahrensburg near Hamburg.

Jörgen Day

### **The St Leonhard Chapel in Braunschweig**

Originally, St. Leonhard's Chapel in Braunschweig was located outside the gates of the city. It was built under Henry the Lion around 1190 and belonged to a hospital for lepers. Beguines cared for the outcasts here, while priests from the city's Benedictine monastery read mass and buried the dead.

Thousands have been buried around the chapel since then: the sick, the homeless, orphans – in short, the weary and the burdened. While the cemetery has long since become a garden, the Romanesque chapel between the large old trees still radiates a great spiritual power today. After it had been desecrated, almost demolished and used for farming and storage purposes, the Christian

Community took it over immediately after the Second World War. Dilapidated but undestroyed, it was cleaned and repaired and consecrated anew by Emil Bock in 1947.

In the course of time, the congregation was able to acquire the chapel park, the neighbouring four-storey house (built in 1924) as a residential building and the Old Smithy (built around 1750) as a community centre. We have just completed the most recent renovations (since 2019) and would like to report on it here.

Over newly set stone steps, the altar was moved from the apse a little closer towards the congregation. The middle of the three colourfully glazed apse windows had been covered with plaster-board and was now reopened. New discreet and efficient radiators and an automatically controlled ventilation system were installed, and front windows were made and fitted in the deep reveals. After the space had been restored in this way, the mouldy organ, which had been removed and repaired in the meantime, could be put back on the gallery. The vault was painted white, the walls in light and the apse in dark violet. Last but not least, we ordered 90 chairs of beech wood with seat and back cushions, colour-coordinated with the interior and safe and comfortable.

The organ renovation and the seating were largely paid for by a Brunswick trust. The renovation of the chapel itself was competently and very cheaply planned – for around €130,000 – by our architect Rudolph Koehler and was paid for half by foundations, and half by the congregation. The active members of our building group accompanied the planning process, organised the financing, liaised with the heritage department and, wherever possible, actively lent a hand themselves.

In the run-up to the project, we redesigned the chapel park with our own hands and made it accessible to the general public. The chapel itself is open daily for viewing and contemplation. Many people from Braunschweig gratefully take advantage of this. – We are also happy to welcome visitors from out of town and are happy to provide simple accommodation! The railway station is only a ten-minute walk away.

Marc Jungermann

no message from:

**Australia and New Zealand**

**South America**

**Southern Africa**

**Japan**

**Southwest Germany**

**Nordic Countries**

**Russia**

### **West Germany**

Events and activities in the congregations are visibly reviving. Things that had been dormant or could only take place on a reduced scale are being taken up again. But new initiatives and forms are also emerging.

When the kindergarten on the ground floor of the Bendorf community closed down and terminated its rental agreement with the congregation, the first impulse was to quickly look for a new tenant so that the rental income could be secured as soon as possible. But then it was decided to try something new and the vacated rooms are now used for various initiatives by the community, the surrounding area but also from the local neighbourhood. Courses, workshops, concerts and much more are now taking place. It is also hoped that a revival of community life and contact with the surrounding area will spring from it.

The preparation for the conference is also gradually gaining momentum in the congregations that have taken on individual tasks. There are congregations who want to run cafés and a juice bar, who are taking care of the welcoming of people at the beginning of the conference and much more. We expect and hope that after the summer break, this will gain significant momentum in the two months that remain.

In consultation with the Steering Committee, the Area Group responsible for this, has appointed Mr Tim Gottschalk as Coordinator at its meeting on 21 March 2022.

Tim Gottschalk

**Wuerttemberg**

Report on the departure from Murrhardt and the dissolution of the congregation

After the old people's and nursing home Haus Hohenstein went bankrupt eight years ago and was taken over by a new sponsor, the church with the community house stood on a "trapped property". One of the consequences of this was that the church and the house were to be cut off from the previous supply of electricity and water on 30 June 2022. Also, the number of supportive people in the congregation outside the nursing home had not grown to such an extent that there was any prospect of future development for the congregation. Many community members are so busy with their jobs that there are hardly any resources left for community work. In addition, apart from the legal requirements, the supply of electricity and water would have required considerable investments for new supply lines to the public grid system. All this had been seriously discussed both in the congregation with the responsible members and in the regional synod. It had finally led to the decision of the congregational assembly on 8 January to leave the church as a place of worship and to dissolve the congregation.

Thus, on Saturday 21 May 2022, a final Act of Consecration of Man was celebrated in this church by the current local priest Bettina Glas. The church hall was filled with a large congregation from near and far, plus 15 priests from the region as co-celebrants. The atmosphere was solemn and serious. After the last Act of Consecration of Man, the taking-back of the consecrated space took place as a civil procedure.

A look back: On 1 Advent 1967, the foundation stone of the church was laid. On 29 September 1968, the consecration of the space and the first Act of Consecration of Man were celebrated in this church.

The music for the Act of Consecration of Man and the taking back of the consecrated status of the church was a special event and was played by Rabia Kübler: Improvised music was played on two tams, made of iron and bronze respectively, and a copper tube chime; this contributed greatly to the solemn and serious mood. A tam looks like a large gong hanging freely from a rod. The beginning of the Act of Consecration of Man and the end of the de-consecration ritual were accompanied by the iron tam, the closing music for the Act of Consecration of Man was played on the copper pipes, and the individual acts of the de-consecration were accompanied by playing on the copper pipes, the bronze tam and the iron tam. The music in the middle part of the Act of Consecration of Man act was contributed by Roland Greiner on the organ.

The leader of the region, Martin Merckens, gave the sermon: This began with the uprightness of the human being, which enables him, unlike the animal, to look into the distance and raise his eyes upwards towards heaven. This was in reference to the consecration of the space with the subsequent initial Act of Consecration of Man. Through the consecration, the place of worship is taken out of its profane status. Elemental forces are addressed in the consecration of the space, with the direction to the north the solid earth forces, to the west the forming forces of water, to the east the soul forces of air, to the south spiritual forces of fire, and thus the beings connected with the elements are included; they co-celebrate in the service. By celebrating the last Act of Consecration of Man, the religious space is returned to a secular use. What as spiritual substance has been formed in the place over the decades may be seen as imperishable part of the earth in the sense of the transformation of the sacrifice into eternal medicine. The fact that in this place (the church) services of the Christian community are no longer celebrated fills us with pain. From the pain, however, we can rise with Christ's power and gradually transform it in union with Michael, after whom this church was named.

The withdrawal of the consecration of the room: Following the Act of Consecration of Man, members met outside in glorious sunshine in thoroughly lively conversations, to gather again in the church after some time. Martin Merckens explained the process of the de-consecration of the church hall. Each individual act was accompanied by improvised music, first with the copper tam, then with the bronze tam, and at the end again on the iron tam. First the candles and candlesticks were cleared from the altar, then the altar cloths and finally the red antependium. Music continued to resound for a while. From the silence, the next act was performed: The altarpiece was covered with a

cloth; it was once painted for this church by Peter Andreas Mothes. As a third act, the small table on the right side, on which the tray with wine and water was provided and the little bell and the beret were put down, was dismantled. Finally, the wall around the altar was worked on with wire brushes up to the height of the altar plate, and in some places the paint and plaster was scraped off: pars pro toto...

When the music had ended, those present quietly went outside. Afterwards, they were able to fill up on the delicacies they had brought with them, both savoury and sweet dishes, and to have many more conversations. The people sat together talking for a long time.

The priests who were present also let their eyes wander as to what they could use from the treasures of this congregation for their own use. Curtains, jugs and the figures of the Christmas cot found their way to new congregations. A large part of the vestments will go to Korea for ongoing work. The remains of an inherited mineral collection were available for the taking: The proceeds of the donations will go to the conference in Dortmund. The library books will be taken over by the antiquarian bookshop Engel. Finally, a flea market is planned for 18 June.

After a week's break, Bettina Glas was in Murrhardt again to clear out some things and was very surprised at how empty (in a positive sense) the church space felt now: "It feels good and round and this very special architecture now comes very much to the fore. There were three members from the Winterbach congregation with us who had the same impression. It's not gloomy or dark at all, it's all very coherent, good and peaceful. The surrounding place also looks very peaceful. I have the impression that what we tried to do on 21 May succeeded and was well supported and accepted by the spiritual world."

The altarpiece will initially be taken over by the congregation in Stuttgart-Möhringen, where it will be incorporated into their altarpiece process. The lamps, a special design, will also be used in Möhringen. The sculpture by Astrid Oelssner, which stood outside opposite the back wall of the altar, will in future stand in the park of the Havelhöhe Clinic in Berlin. Here, last year, the congregation of Berlin-Havelhöhe moved from branch status to become an independent congregation.

The prospect that a buyer will be found for the land and building is encouraging, as the civic community has already bought up surrounding land from the bankruptcy estate of Haus Hohenstein. So, there is hope that the buildings will be put to a sensible use.

Bettina Glas, Peter Joachim Knörrich, Martin Merckens

no message from:

**Körperschaftsverband (KV)**      **Haus Freudenberg**      **Verband der Sozialwerke**  
**Treuhandverwaltung zur Förderung der Christengemeinschaft e.V.**    **Priest's Seminaries**

*Translated by Gabriele Kuhn – many thanks to her!*

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