



Newsletter of the English-speaking United Methodist Congregation in Munich

Pentecost 2021

A note from Kat...

Dear Peace Church sisters and brothers,

While it is still difficult for us all to meet together, you are invited to use the resources in this newsletter to guide your own Pentecost devotions at home.

At Pentecost we remember the Holy Spirit dancing like tongues of fire on the heads of Jesus' disciples, who, full of new courage, burst out of their locked room into the streets to share the good news.

In her meditation, Pastor Christine invites us to ask: *What does it mean in these times of Corona to be free and courageous? How can rushing winds break into our lives with a freshness that we haven't felt for months?*

Let the prayers, poems and songs in these pages (many inspired by the Iona Community in Scotland) accompany you as you reflect on these questions with God.

In this newsletter you can also read updates of what's been happening in the life of Peace Church since Easter, as well as some lovely reports on the in-person and online services.

Lots of love
Kat Wagner

Opening Prayers and Responses for Pentecost

Spirit of God,
flickering over our heads,
illuminating our faces,
inspiring our thoughts,
give us now, we pray,
WORDS OF JOY AND PRAISE

Spirit of God,
filling our hearts with hope,
steadying our nerves with peace,
comforting our lives with love,
give us now, we pray,
WORDS OF JOY AND PRAISE

Spirit of God,
come to us now –
surging through the darkness of our lives,
sweeping over our weariness –
so that, in this time of Pentecost,
the sparkling light of faith,
the rushing wind of hope
and the joyful sound of praise
may echo round the world,
and find their response in us.
Spirit of God, give us now, we pray,
WORDS OF JOY AND PRAISE: AMEN

Pentecost Thoughts on Life in Times of the Pandemic

by *Pastor Christine Erb-Kanzleiter*

It was on Pentecost Sunday a year ago, when we reopened Peace Church after the first serious lockdown we had in Germany from March through to May 2020. I remember when COVID-19 started, just as the word “pandemic” was starting to be whispered, before life as we knew it changed so radically. That first week, it seemed harder to get through the days and nights – there were so many questions and so few answers. We were shocked. None of us had ever before experienced anything like that: a lockdown.



Meeting again in-person, Pentecost 2020

The days passed. Many of us felt like we were living in slow motion. Why couldn't we concentrate? Even basic tasks seemed beyond us. We felt empty and didn't know how we'd get through the next phase, or even the rest of the day. Yet somehow, we did – even if we had lost track of what day it actually was. We thought, we'd get through this quickly and then resume our old lives – only to look back now on over a year of limited life and lost freedom.

At first it seemed inappropriate to feel disappointed that we couldn't get a haircut, visit friends or go shopping. Then it got more serious. When people in our communities started showing symptoms, we realized that the virus was truly here among us. When loved ones were ill or frail, we hated that we couldn't visit them at their home or in the hospital. When people we knew died, we wished we could celebrate the usual funeral rituals. So many families did not have the comfort of people gathering to say goodbye.

When the loneliness made us sick – emotionally and physically, we hoped the nightmare would be over soon, and began doing our very best every single day. When holidays were not possible anymore, when inviting friends became difficult, we were exposed to an isolation that became more painful the longer the restrictions lasted.

What all these things – sleeplessness, trouble concentrating, emptiness, sadness, isolation – have in common is this: they are all part of grief. Somewhere along the line, people started talking about the overwhelming grief that we were experiencing in the whole world. Not only the loss of people we love through death, though that is truly hard to bear. But the loss of independence, income, work, financial security, freedom of movement, time with family and friends, and gathering as a faith community. You could say we are grieving our normal lives.

For Christians, living this time of grief during the Lenten and Easter seasons is especially touching. Think of what the disciples went through after the 'high' of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and then the 'low' of his arrest the next day, followed by his trial, crucifixion and death. Their lives were turned upside down overnight. They were stunned. They didn't know what to do or how to be in the world. They hid, isolated and full of despair. They thought hope was gone.

But we are Easter people, and we know that the story doesn't end there. Before long, hope was reborn. Jesus rose from the dead and was with them. Then came Pentecost! Filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples left that upper room and took up the story – then shared the good news with everyone they met. Fear had been turned into hope. They understood that grief was there because they loved so much. And they discovered that a shared faith would always carry them through.

Grief is part of life. Once we name it, we can accept it, find meaning in it and start to live our way through it. And one day, we will laugh and dance again. Even if we cannot celebrate Pentecost in the usual way with a church full to overflowing, even if we are very careful in our worship and miss many

of those who were with us here before the pandemic, we know that the Spirit is at work in us, in the church, even when our in-person-services are so different now.

What gives me comfort and helps me make plans even though we never know what will come the next day or week is the following verse from Paul's letter to the Corinthians:

"And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians 13: 13.

Pentecost is the time in which we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. The spirit which came as it is described in Acts, like a rushing wind, a flickering tongue of fire, which sent those gathered together out into the streets to the crowd, to tell them what was happening.

This is the Spirit which calls us to move as well: to act, to take courage, to live the heights and depths of the life God gives us, to pray, to weep, to sing, to grieve, to be angry, to laugh, to confess, to challenge, to change – ourselves and the world we live in.

The story of Pentecost begins with the disciples on their own in a room, shut up alone, in their tight-knit group. The Spirit comes, and suddenly they are on the street amongst the people gathered from throughout the world, shouting about what God had done. The Spirit turned them, opened them,

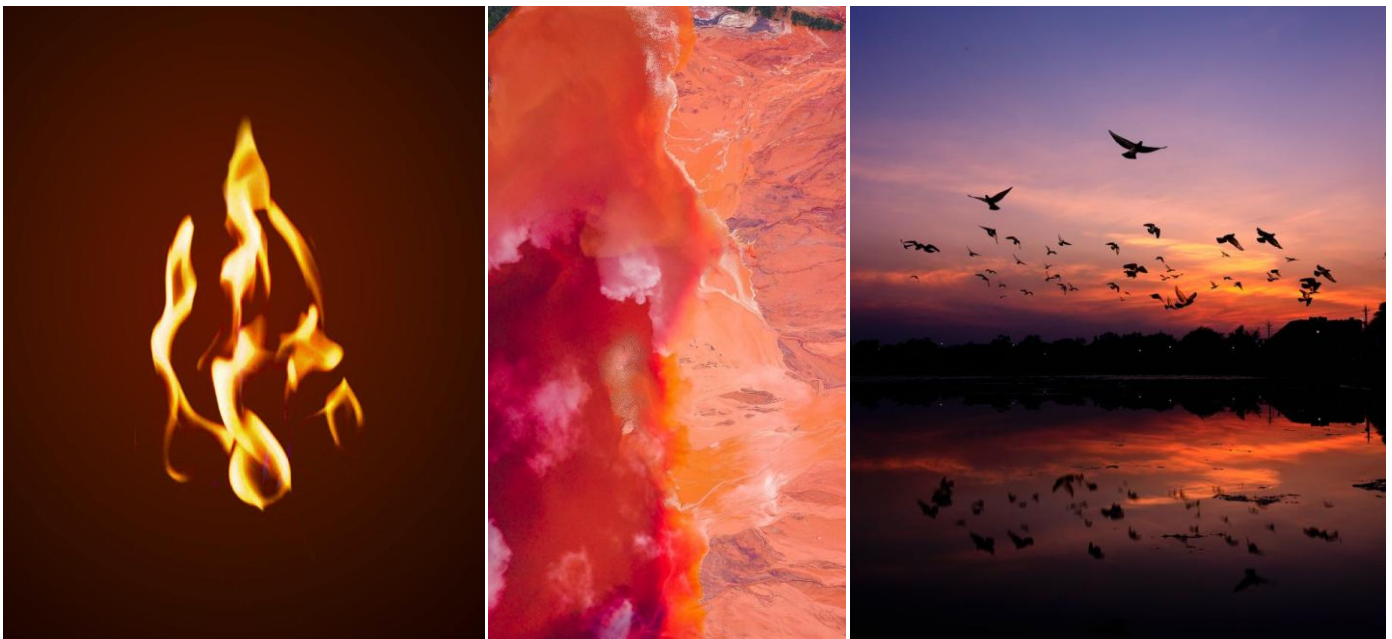
shifted their focus: they were now free from fear. The events of Pentecost had called the Jesus followers into the freedom of God! God's grace sets people free and gives them courage.

But how do we deal with these God-given values of freedom and courage? What does it mean in these times of Corona to be free and courageous? What does it mean to be called out to move beyond the narrowness of our lives into the wideness of God's love? In what ways can God's spirit of freedom inspire our limited lives? How can rushing winds break into our lives with a freshness that we haven't felt for months? I have no answers to that.

I only have the knowledge and the deep genuine experience that sometimes, when our lives seem to have reached the lowest point, dreams can carry us through: visions of a new heaven and a new earth that will come true.

when our lives seem to have reached the lowest point, dreams can carry us through

Let us stick to the faith that God is in there with us, to the hope that one day things will be different, and to a love that blossoms surprisingly and unexpectedly between people, because it is God who is giving it.



Pentecost Prayers, Poems & Songs

When the day of Pentecost came

A reflection on the Pentecost story by David Lemmon

When the day of Pentecost came there was a noise ... like a strong wind blowing.

Wind to blow away the cobwebs of our tradition.
Wind to freshen our faces
and awaken us to the challenge of today.
Wind to fill our sails
and send us on a voyage of spiritual discovery.

Wind of the Spirit,
blow strongly through the Church
and enliven us with the breath of God.

They saw ... tongues of fire...

Fire to burn away the rubbish in our lives.
Fire for spiritual heat to 'strangely warm' our hearts.
Fire to light a beacon of hope
for the people in our communities.

Fire of the Spirit,
blaze away in the Church
and set us on fire for the Gospel.

They heard the believers speaking in their own languages.

Speaking in a new way that people can understand.
Speaking to real needs,
having something to say on real issues.
Speaking so that our neighbours want to listen.

Words of the Spirit,
speak to us and through us,
that we may preach the living Word.

But others said: "These people are drunk!"

Perhaps they were:
Drunk on the new wine of the Kingdom of God.
High on the power of the Holy Spirit –
celebrating the birth of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Holy Spirit of God,
inspire and excite us as we celebrate in worship,
and empower the work and witness
of the Church today. Amen

Breathe on me, Breath of God

A hymn by Edwin Hatch, 1878

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
fill me with life anew,
that I may love the way you love,
and do what you would do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
until my heart is pure,
until my will is one with yours,
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
so shall I never die,
but live with you the perfect life
for all eternity.



Pentecost Responses

God of fire and beauty
WARM US

God of peace and justice
DISTURB US

God of wind and wonder
AMAZE US

God of Pentecost
KINDLE YOUR LOVE IN OUR LIVES

Litany of the Holy Spirit

From Fr. Richard Rohr

Indwelling presence
Descending dove
Flowing water
Wind of change
Fire of life and love
Warmer of hearts
Softener of our spirit
Generosity of God
Inherent victory
The welcoming within
The great connector
Overcomer of the gap
Great bridge builder
The space of love between everything
Reminder of the mystery
Cloud of unknowing
The deepest level of our longing
Seething desire
Eternal praise
Inner Defence Attorney
Truth speaker
Homing device
God compass
Divine DNA
Inner breath
Implanted hope
Pure gift of God

On this Pentecost Sunday...

A prayer by Robin Hutt

We give thanks
that you transformed frightened disciples
into courageous witnesses for Christ,
testifying to his resurrection
and drawing others into faith.

We rejoice
that the Word has come to us in our time and place,
that we too may know
that we are loved and cherished and understood,
and challenged to deeper ways of living and loving.

So we pray: come Holy Spirit
to renew and cleanse and deepen our lives,
that we too may be witnesses for Christ
in all we say and do.
Amen



Enemy of Apathy

A song by John L. Bell, Iona Community

She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters,
hovering on the chaos of the world's first day;
she sighs and she sings, mothering creation,
waiting to give birth to all the Word will say.

She wings over earth, resting where she wishes,
lighting close at hand or soaring through the skies;
she nests in the womb, welcoming each wonder,
nourishing potential hidden to our eyes.

She dances in fire, startling her spectators,
waking tongues of ecstasy where dumbness reigned;
she weans and inspires all whose hearts are open,
nor can she be captured, silenced or restrained.

For she is the Spirit, one with God in essence,
gifted by the Saviour in eternal love;
she is the key opening the scriptures,
enemy of apathy and heavenly dove.

A Song of Blessing

The song of creation restore you,
the song of justice infuse you,
the song of heaven enlighten you,
and the blessing of the living God,
be with us now and always.
Amen.

Spirit of the Living God

A song by Daniel Iverson, 1926

Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mold me,
Fill me, use me.

Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.



Pentecost Prayers of Intercession

Holy Spirit,
we circle the world
with the flame of your love,
and pray for peace and justice
where there is inequality and war;
for dancing and joy
in place of oppression
and the daily grind of poverty.
May all enjoy the feast of life.

Holy Spirit,
we circle this place
with the flame of your love –
and thank you for friends and fun,
for gifts and talents.
We pray for peace in our hearts
as we journey along together,
and for a knowledge of your gifts within us.

Holy Spirit,
we circle with your blessing
all those who will be born today.
Protect and cherish them.
We circle with your healing love
all those who are enduring illness or disease,
and we especially pray
for all those sick with the Covid-19 virus.
Be with them in their suffering.

Hear our prayers,
and bless us, God.
Hold the secret longings of our hearts
in the mystery of your love,
that the light of your kingdom
will continue to shine on earth.
Amen.

Come to us, O Christ

A prayer by Richard Rolle (c.1290-1345)

Come to us, O Christ,
as wind that blows the autumn leaves,
as the song that soothes the troubled child,
as the melody that lifts the anxious spirit;
and fill us with affection for you that is unbounded,
desire for you that is unrestrained,
and yearning for you
that throws caution to the winds,
and this for your love's sake.
Amen.

Blessing

May the flame of the Spirit
touch our souls,
the light of Christ's truth
fill our minds,
and the love of the Maker
fill our hearts.
Amen



Creative ways of meeting together

Katie Gill reflects on how we have adapted our services and ways of meeting because of the pandemic.

Katie writes: We have had to be creative this year – even more so than usual!

Finding a way to meet the needs of Peace Church community during the pandemic in terms of fellowship and communal prayer has been a challenge. It has required flexibility, cooperation and a willingness to contribute.

As churches began to open up during the summer of 2020, Peace Church initially offered a range of services: a Tuesday ‘Zoom’ meeting with an emphasis on prayer; a Thursday meeting for those who preferred a smaller number of participants, a Saturday Family service and a 6pm Sunday evening

worship, offering periods of contemplation, music and prayer.

Some of these have stayed – some have been revised better to respond to the preferences of those attending.

There are now two Sunday in-person services: a family service taking place at 12 midday, and the 6pm meeting.

Compromises have had to be made as with many things during the pandemic. It’s interesting to ponder over what will remain and continue to be a blessing even when we return to more recognisable pre-pandemic forms of service.

Read the three reports below to find out more.

Sunday 12 midday Family Service

Report by Katie Gill

Each week around 30 people come to the Family service.

The focus is on the children present, with stories and activities planned specifically for them to enjoy. It can be challenging to create an activity where the children can take part without coming too close to each other!

However, these services are intimate and meaningful. We have there an opportunity to worship with a smaller number, representative of the greater community to which we all belong – absent yet present.

There is also an opportunity to write prayer requests, share them and place them on the prayer wall. These prayers are taken and offered during the Tuesday meeting.

Hymns are included but, although we are not yet permitted to sing, it is wonderful to hear the humming coming from behind the masks.

There is a shorter meditation or poem given as a spiritual impulse for the adults present.



A lovely and fun activity in a recent service

Thoughts on the Sunday Evening Worship

By Dan Kinney

John Wesley, founder of Methodism, would rise every morning at 4:00 am and pray for 4 hours. I cannot imagine that discipline (“methodism”), or what I would pray about after 5 minutes. I get up much later, down my coffee, and sit down at my computer to do something “constructive”.

Prayer. Meditation. Left in stillness with just our thoughts is uncomfortable. We put it off. We turn on the radio or TV. We find things we need to do.

Since ancient times (as noted in the Psalms), Jews and Christians would “pray the hours”. This was the practice in the monasteries during the Middle Ages. The monks would gather several times a day, from early morning to evening, to pray. I visited one such monastery in Germany. The monk’s rooms and the church were not heated. During the winter, the morning and evening services would be dark and cold. How could they concentrate on prayer when they were shivering?

Even today, when attendance in Christian churches is down, “Evensong” services are popular.

So, in this tradition, I attend the Peace Church Sunday evening prayer and meditation service. We wear masks and sit far apart. During winter it was dark and cold. But attending forces me to leave my busy world outside.

We listen to music. I try to still myself.
We light candles. I hold the candle and allow myself to remember and feel.
We hear scripture. I hear of God’s engagement with our world.
We hear someone’s reflection on the scripture, usually by one of our young talented people.
We write prayers. I let my heart express my pain, and the pain of others.



What do we pray to a God who is all-knowing and all-loving? What can I add or ask that God already knows and is working? For me, prayer is about listening, feeling, having sympathy (as an action) with one another.

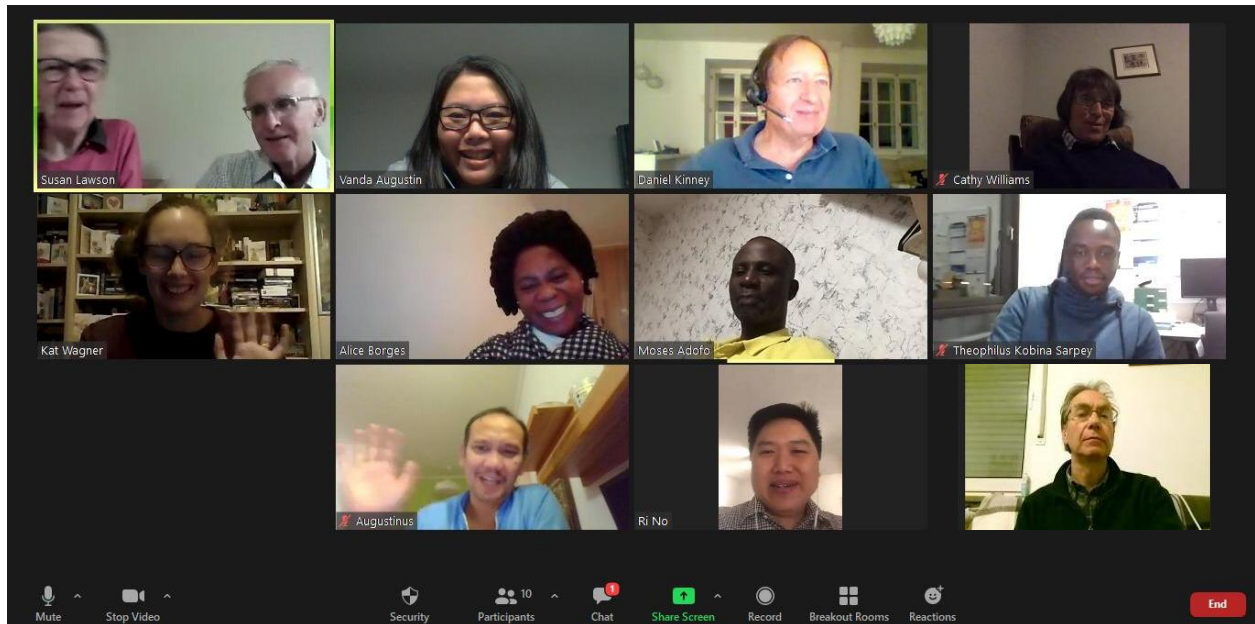
Attending is about connecting with me, and each other. Come join me. Now it is not so cold.

To read more about ‘praying the hours’, Dan recommends: <https://www.asacredjourney.net/praying-the-hours/>



Tuesday Online Prayer Meeting

Report by *Graham Williams*



The enforced periods of solitude and isolation of the last 12 months will have had different effects on different people.

Although in the spiritual sense we never walk 'alone,' the absence of the physical presence of others in social contact situations has significantly impacted our lives. Certainly the Peace Church has not escaped these interruptions to everyday life.

However, thanks to modern technology, those unable to attend Sunday services and other regular church meetings have found a place to meet, online, on Tuesday evenings.

The 'virtual' Peace Church Prayer meeting, via 'Zoom' has provided a suitable and comforting substitute to help guide us through these difficult times.

The meetings, coordinated by Rino, are led each week in rotation by the other regular online worshippers.

We start at 6:00pm with a welcome and an opening prayer. This is followed by a piece of music and then a reading. Someone next reads a meditation - usually taken from the previous Sunday's service - followed by a chance to reflect on and discuss its content and message.

Then to the real purpose of the meeting. We take the list of prayers from the prayer wall at Peace Church and divide them up amongst ourselves. We each then, in turn, take time to offer these prayers to God. This section is concluded with the sharing of joys and prayer requests from those present.

This mutual support through prayer has provided important and invaluable reassurance to those who attend these meetings.

We then finish with The Lord's Prayer, some more music and finally the Blessing.

The Tuesday night on-line prayer meetings are currently scheduled to continue until at least the end of July and all of you reading this, are of course, very welcome to join us.

If you'd like to join the Tuesday online prayer meeting, contact Vanda, Rino or Kat for the details to join the meeting on Zoom.

Did You Know That...?



... on Palm Sunday the noon time congregation reflected on Jesus, the king of the poor?

He is totally woven into the fabric of human history, forever present in the world. Simply. Gently. Kingly. He calls us to follow his way

and remember the cloaks on the ground and the palm branches waved with joy and hope for a new kingdom to come. Young and old were asked to cut out palm branches and lay them down on the floor – together with a few pieces of clothing. It showed us what the streets of Jerusalem could have looked like when Jesus long ago entered the city.

... in the week before Easter a newsletter was sent out that contained beautiful Easter texts and thoughts? We hope this enabled people to worship in their homes.

... on Good Friday a very small congregation gathered in the church yard of Philippuskirche? We stood around a cross. Some beautiful graphics were laid out in the yard and people were invited to remember Jesus' way to the cross.



Good Friday service in the courtyard

... on the Saturday before Easter Sunday Pastor Christine met with a handful of people to prepare an Easter Garden? The Easter Garden stations were laid out inside the church and outside in the yard. The stations lead people through the Easter Story: from Jesus' birth in the stable through his life of love leading to the cross, his entry into Jerusalem, his crucifixion, the empty tomb in the garden, and the supper table at Emmaus.



Stations of the Easter Garden

Did You Know That...? (continued)

... Christine and Kat had created special liturgies for the Easter 12pm and 6pm services?

For the Sundays from Easter leading to Pentecost we are using slightly altered liturgies to reflect the themes of resurrection and the Holy Spirit.

... on Easter Sunday the noontime church-goers celebrated Easter by following the Easter Garden stations and sharing communion?

The communion took the form of a piece of cracker bread and a grape, individually packed in beautiful Easter bags.



Easter Sunday midday service

... the Homework Club restarted on Friday 16 April?

We will do our best to accompany the school kids through the rest of this school year – in whatever form is needed and appropriate. Especially those teenagers who are facing exams can rely on our support!

... we hope to be able to have a confirmation service in early summer? It will be the confirmation of Esther, Akua and Priscilla. They were taught by Pastor Christine with a book study called *Manna & Mery*, and did a really good job.

... for Pentecost we will come together for a different style of meeting and worshipping? On Sunday 23rd May, we will have an 'open church' between 12noon and 2pm. (There will be no evening service.) See details overleaf.

... Jan and Emily Eiben are moving away from Munich? Together with their little daughters Lily and Filippa they have found a house in a small town near Wiesbaden. Jan and Emily served the church community for many years in various jobs and positions. Emily mostly as a preacher and worship leader, but also with office tasks, Jan as a member and later the chair of the Council on Ministries and as part of the finance group. We shall miss them dearly and wish them showers of blessings for their new life. We wish them the experience that strangers become friends, and that old friendships can last. May we meet again when they visit Munich where they leave lots of friends.



The Eiben Family

... a second volume of Peace Church meditations will arrive in your homes soon? We hope you enjoy reading these Bible reflections that have been shared on Sundays in recent months.

... groups like Bible study or prayer meetings, Kids' Club and Sunday School still cannot take place in-person? The fun stuff is still forbidden: no joined cooking and eating, no parties. The Tuesday Prayer Meeting and the Women's Bible group meet online.

... Peace Church has a Corona Unemployment Fund? Should you be in need of financial support, speak confidently to Pastor Christine. She can help.

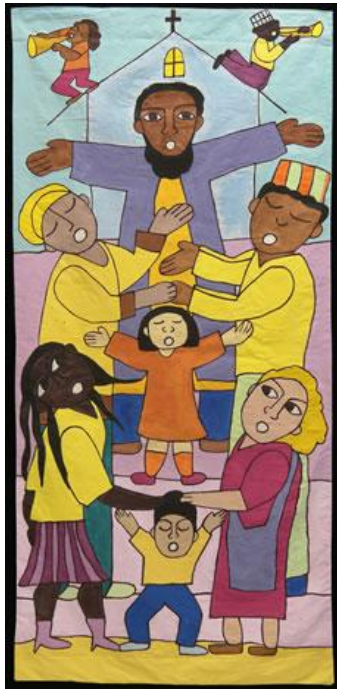
Pentecost Sunday

On 23 May the church will be open between 12 noon and 2pm. You can come and go as you like.

We offer worship activities as prayers, stories, games, art & more until 13:30. You can partake in any of these for as long & as often as you like.

The last 30 minutes will be a celebration of Peace Church's 37th Birthday with coffee & cake-to-go...

A warm welcome to all!



Invitation to worship services

You are warmly invited to our weekly services:

Sundays 12pm at Philipuskirche

Sundays 6pm at Philipuskirche

Tuesdays 6pm online

(Contact Vanda or Kat for the Zoom meeting code)



Holidays and pastoral support

Pastor Christine will be taking leave 24 May to 6 June. You can still reach her on her mobile phone.

Kat Wagner (Pastoral Assistant) will be on leave 22-30 May.

Impressum

Your suggestions, comments and contributions to the Newsletter are welcome. Deadline for the next issue is 21 June. If you would like to receive future issues by e-mail, please send a message to christine@peacechurch.de, simply type "PCN by mail" and we will add your address to the list.

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