



Newsletter of the English-speaking United Methodist Congregation in Munich

New Year 2022

Dear Peace Church sisters and brothers,

A belated “happy new year” to you all!

This Peace Church News is packed with updates and photos on what happened over Advent, Christmas and New Year. The Corona restrictions meant we had to be creative in how we celebrated together, but we still had lots of fun!

Over the last two years we have had to try out different ideas for how to ‘be church together’. And we’ve discovered some new, creative, fun, safe and appropriate ways, such as Family Fun Days, Open Church events, small groups and online meetings. There’s a lot going on in the next few months. Why not try out something new this year?!

This newsletter also contains prayers and a meditation from Pastor Christine as we journey into the new year.

As we start this new year, be encouraged that God has done great things! Be alert for what God is doing today! And be expectant as you walk with God into each tomorrow.

Lots of love,
Kat Wagner (Pastoral Assistant), 4 February 2022



A Journey of our Souls

A meditation on the Three Wise Men by Pastor Christine Erb-Kanzleiter

I would like to invite us in this first newsletter of 2022 to read the wise men's journey as a journey of our souls.

We have come a long way from Christmas. Starting at the manger in a humble stable, we walked through desert and plains, pausing at the threshold between the years. We have begun the new year, and from here we come back one more time to the manger scene.

In her Christmas meditations, Hildegard of Bingen, a medieval theologian, invites us to translate the Epiphany story (when the three kings arrive at the manger, and mad King Herod fears the "new born king" might get all the attention..., Matthew 2:1-12) into the soul's journey towards new life.

The three kings, says Hildegard, symbolize the well-educated mind, filled with all sorts of worldly wisdom, power and knowledge.

But then a star in the East arises, just where the sun awakens, like a guide from beyond, from another world, pulling them on a journey towards their **"heart's knowledge."**

Following the promise of this star led the wise men away from all the cherished stars (and values) they held before, even away from their own stardom (their homes and riches, their palaces, and their power). This star which went before them led them to "God's grace" lying there as an innocent child.

They found divine gifts in this little child, gifts which frighten rulers and threaten their worldly powers. The wise men's heart's knowledge enabled them to see the divine gifts and to follow the star. When they found the "new king", surprised by the sight of a new born, they rejoiced in this new wisdom which they had found. **"Their souls tasted heavenly things,"** says Hildegard.

Overcome by that very moment, the wise men open their heart and offer their innermost riches: they see God, they see themselves, and they let God change them.



Let me try to put this in our everyday 2022 context.

I The Journey of the three kings – our inner pilgrimage

Hildegard helps us to see that in our lives we have, all along, already been travelling with the wise men on their journey. This is the journey of the heart holding fast the hope of Christmas; the journey to the place where God's wisdom dwells, away from what we considered urgent and important and towards the living light, who wants to dwell in us. It is a journey from "dead" knowledge to "living" wisdom, when God's spirit becomes alive in the human heart. In our hearts – at Christmas time and beyond.

II The little child – our birthing hope and grace

So, who is the new king? A little tender child, symbol for peaceful innocence (or as the German theologian Paul Tillich has it: "dreaming innocence") cradled by Mary, mother of all wisdom. There is no doubt in Hildegard's reading that this child is to be born in each of us, the spark of hope and peace, kindled by eternity. This inner child is not childish, but offers childlike innocence, as when Jesus calls us to become childlike. Finding your inner child, as an adult, saves and heals us. Recognizing the little child, and God in the child, and the child we are ourselves, brings grace and hope into the hearts of all who seek a new way...

III To Bethlehem – our heart's heart

The wise men's journey to Bethlehem becomes our inner pilgrimage to our heart's heart. It clears us of all excess baggage and ballast, and lets us see who we really are, or who we could be, or who God wants us to be. It is, says Hildegard, here at the manger in Bethlehem where we find our true self, not as something waiting to be picked up, to be possessed and held fast, but as something that travels with us and makes our hearts mature on the way... We see who we are, as we journey through life, through a life with God who we met in the baby in the manger, and who lets us find the divine every day as the most precious purpose of our lives.

Our journey from Christmas on does not come in pre-packed wisdom bits and pieces, but instead becomes a constant gathering up, a process, a walking, and deepening every year anew – guided by a star from beyond...

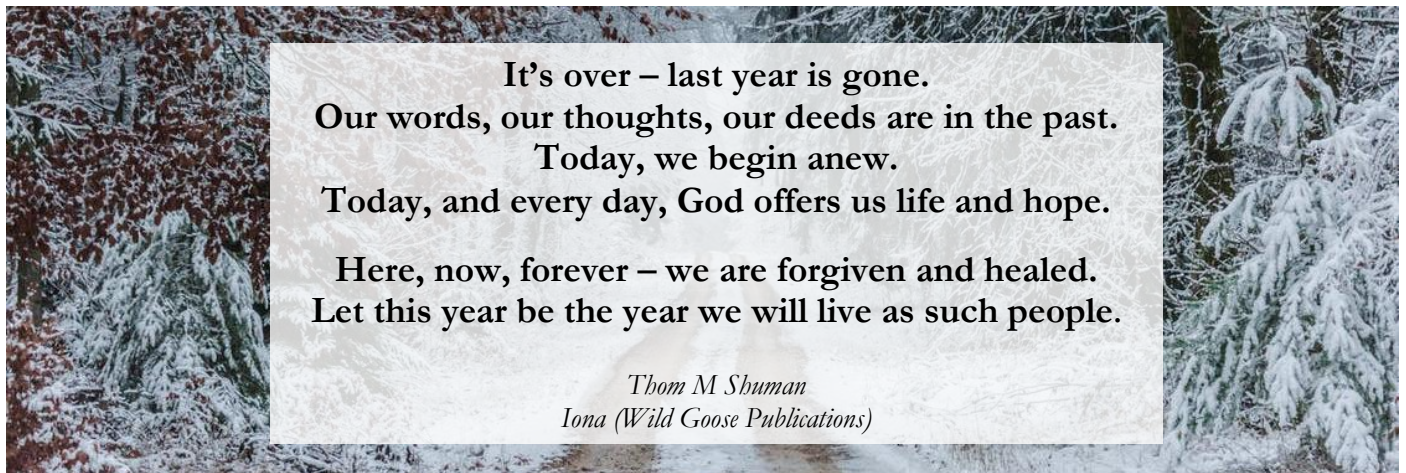
Here is Hildegard's good news:

We are all Bethlehem.
We are all vessels of the God.
We are all Mary.
We are all the womb able to deliver
the good news into our time.
We are also the wise men on the way –
led by stars, finding light,
following the voice of our hearts.

At Christmas and on every day of the year that began a few weeks ago and holds so much in store for us, may your journeys and the journeys of your souls in 2022 be blessed.

Blessing

God marvelously, miraculously cares about each and every one of us.
And so, God says to you:
"I love you.
You are precious.
Your being is a gift.
Go in peace. I am with you!"
Amen.



Report & photos: Advent Family Fun Day

The latest Family Fun Day took place on Saturday 11 December. It was a bit cold because we kept the windows open as per the Corona rules, but we had lots of fun! We made beautiful crafts, baked biscuits, played with a nativity scene, heard stories and music, and decorated the Christmas tree in the yard. "Kinderpunsch" and biscuits gave us all a foretaste of the Christmas celebrations to come.

The next Family Fun Day will be on Saturday 19 March.





Did You Know That...

...on the second Saturday in December we had a Family Fun Day again? Lots of Advent and Christmas workshops were offered to those who joined. (See report and photos on pages 4-5)



...a day later we had our annual nativity Sunday? We all joined in a spontaneous play telling the story of the nativity. (See report and photos on pages 8-9)



...a concert planned for the 4th Sunday in Advent could not take place? Corona rules did not permit it. Instead, we came up with a fairly spontaneous mix of Advent and Christmas music, poems and prayers, and enjoyed a beautiful, simple Sunday of meditation and fellowship.

...the church gave Christmas presents to families in need? Envelopes with significant financial support were given to some really poor church families and individuals. The aim was to make their Christmas a happy one – free of material needs.

...on Christmas Eve the church people gathered round a fire bowl in the church yard? We sang the lovely old Christmas hymns. Katie was playing at the piano in the chapel of the church. The windows were wide open. Katie could see the rest of the congregation gathering in a big circle in the yard, and people in the yard could see Katie at the piano. Christine preached on Mary who reads a book and Joseph who holds the child. The sermon can be found on the website.

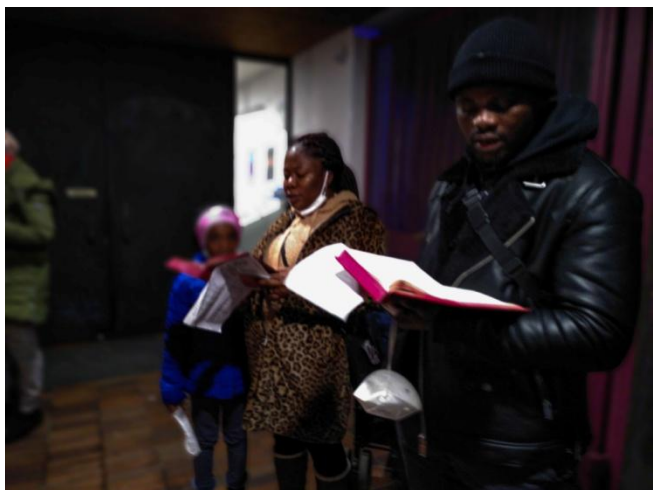


The Fire Bowl created a warm atmosphere at the Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve outdoor services

...on Sunday 26 December we had a service too? A guided meditation led us on the road to Bethlehem and let us rest in the stable where Mary had just given birth to God's son. Christine guided the church people in imagining what it was like at Bethlehem that night when Jesus was born. Was it cold or warm, comfortable or rather unpleasant? Who helped Mary? Was there the innkeeper's wife to help the young woman give birth to her first child? What did they all look like? What were they doing and saying? What impact did the birth of God in the poor manger in a little town in Palestine have on our lives, our faith, our doing? We sang as many Christmas songs as possible and added many new prayer bubbles to the prayer wall.

...the service on New Year's Eve helped us remember the past year? We had a chance to remember the good things and the bad things, the joys and the burdens. And we found ways of letting go of the hard stuff, and holding fast to the joyful and promising things. Encouraged and strengthened by God's presence, assured to us through many biblical stories of hope, we stepped

over the threshold of the New Year. We began 2022 full of hope for better things to come than we had experienced since the Corona pandemic began shaping our lives so drastically in spring 2020.



...the women's Bible study group meets now at Vanda's? In December we studied the story of Phoebe, a fairly unknown biblical woman. In January, the focus of our reading and discussions was Esther, after whom a whole biblical book is named. The next meeting will be on 23 March at 7pm. We shall learn more about Martha of Bethany.

...there is a homegroup at Kat and Christian's home? They meet every two weeks in their apartment (and an online option is offered for those unable to attend in person). The group is currently studying Parables in the Bible. Recently they have read and discussed various parables told to 'individuals who asked questions' and the 'rich and powerful'.

...the Tuesday online prayer group now meets once a month? Participants take it in turns to lead

the meeting, following a template which includes: worship songs, a Bible reading, hearing and discussing a meditation which had been recently given in a Peace Church service, praying through the Prayer Bubbles from the Prayer Wall, and praying for each other. If anyone is unable to attend church services in-person, this online meeting could be a great option for you!

...the Homework Club still meets in Nico's place in Giesing? We still support a handful of students who do really well at school. Sometimes they bring along a friend. We have finger food to eat, gummi bears, and drinks, and a fantastic team of helpers! A big thank you goes to all of them!

...we still celebrate communion with a grape and a piece of bread in a bag? Every individual is handed out a paper bag with bread and grapes. We stand in a large circle in the church, pay attention to the social distancing, lower our masks for a moment and eat and drink and remember the last supper. A communion service is held on the first Sunday of every month at 12 noon.

...Sunday School has had a break since March 2020? At the Council on Ministries meeting in November we expressed the hope to restart small groups on Sundays and teach them in the fellowship hall. The first group to begin with will be the teenagers. Nicolas will let them know when to meet.

...the next confirmation class group will begin at the beginning of February? The kids and Pastor Christine with team will meet on Saturdays from 2 to 4 pm – hopefully in the chapel of Philippuskirche. A teaching schedule has been made, and we hope to have a festive confirmation service for the kids partaking in the early summer of 2023.

...Kids' Club is still on hold? For the third time we will not go to our beloved farm in Austria in the Easter holidays. Instead we are trying to offer "open church afternoons" every day of the week after Easter. Watch out for more information.

...Open Church projects on Sundays and family fun days on Saturdays are planned for 2022, too? They are nice opportunities to meet in an informal way with sisters and brothers from church. Make sure you save the dates (see Calendar & Upcoming Events, pages 10-11).

Report & photos: Nativity service

We had a wonderful nativity service on Sunday 12 December. The church wasn't full. Corona held us in its grip. But those who could come made the very best of the occasion and utterly enjoyed the Christmas play. It was all very spontaneous: the sharing out of roles and the dressing up happened as part of the service. A minimum of props was used. And more wasn't necessary, really.





Upcoming Events



Family Fun Days
3-5pm Saturday 19 March & Saturday 28 May
Crafts, stories, games, snacks, fun!
Contact: Pastor Christine



Open Church at Easter
12-2pm Easter Sunday, 17 April
Easter-themed craft, songs, choir, texts and meditations

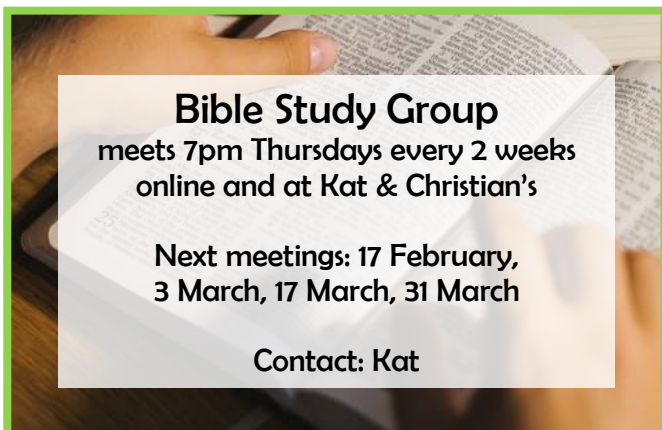
Regular Groups



Confirmation Class
Starts 2pm Saturday 12 February
Contact: Pastor Christine



Women's Bible Group
meets Wednesdays once a month
at Vanda's
Next meeting: 7pm Wednesday
23 February
Contact: Pastor Christine



Bible Study Group
meets 7pm Thursdays every 2 weeks
online and at Kat & Christian's
Next meetings: 17 February,
3 March, 17 March, 31 March
Contact: Kat

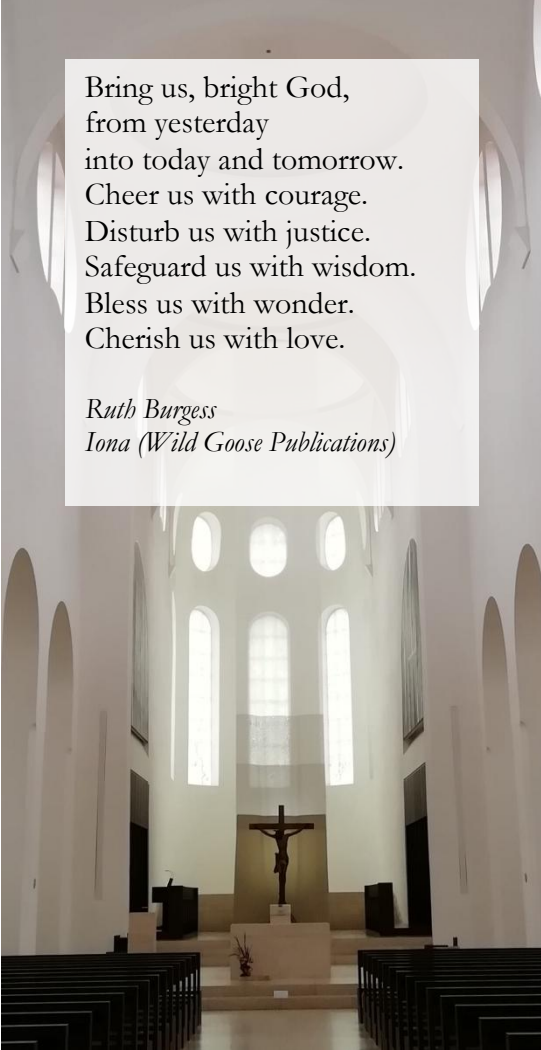


Online Prayer Meeting
meets 6pm Tuesdays once a month
Next meetings: 15 February,
15 March, 19 April
Contact: Rino

Peace Church Calendar

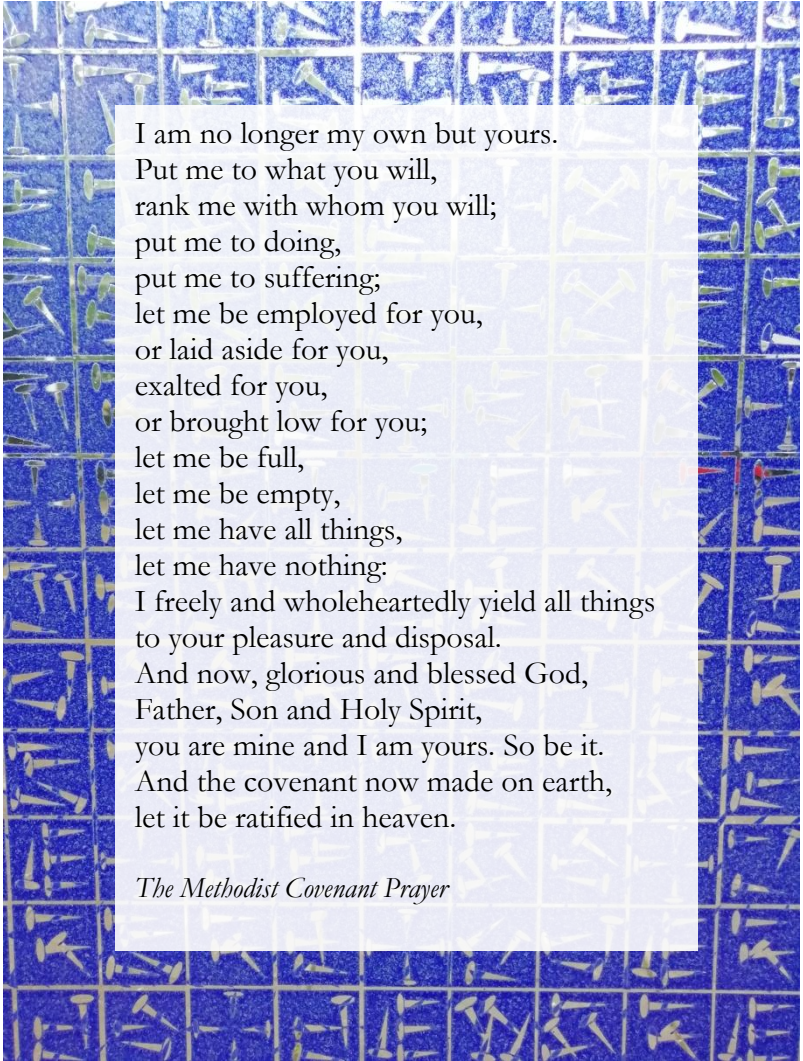
Sunday 6 February	12 noon Communion Worship with Reception of New Members followed by a potluck finger food lunch
Friday 11 February	2 pm Homework Club at Nico's
Saturday 12 February	2 pm Confirmation Class at church
Sunday 13 February	12 noon All-age Worship with Baptism followed by lunch-to-go in the church yard 6 pm Evening Prayer
Tuesday 15 February	6 pm Online Prayer Meeting
Thursday 17 February	7pm Bible Study (online & in-person at Kat & Christian's)
Friday 18 February	2 pm Homework Club
Sunday 20 February	12 noon All-age Worship 6 pm Evening Prayer
<i>21 February to 5 March</i>	<i>Holiday Pastor Christine</i>
Wednesday 23 February	7 pm Women's Bible Study at Vanda's
	<i>Homework Club takes a break (until 18 March)</i>
Sunday 27 February	12 noon All-age Worship 6 pm Evening Prayer
Thursday 3 March	7pm Bible Study (online & in-person at Kat & Christian's)
Sunday 6 March	12 noon All-age Worship with Communion
Friday 11 March	2 pm Homework Club
Saturday 12 March	2 pm Confirmation Class
Sunday 13 March	12 noon All-age Worship 6 pm Evening Prayer
Tuesday 15 March	6 pm Online Prayer Meeting
Thursday 17 March	7pm Bible Study (online & in-person, location TBC)
Friday 18 March	2 pm Homework Club
Saturday 19 March	3-5 pm Family Fun Day
Sunday 20 March	12 noon All-age Worship 6pm Evening Prayer
<i>21 to 27 March</i>	<i>Holiday Pastor Christine</i>
Friday 25 March	2 pm Homework Club
Sunday 27 March	12 noon All-age Worship 6 pm Evening Prayer
Thursday 31 March	7pm Bible Study (online & in-person at Kat & Christian's)

New Year Prayers



Bring us, bright God,
from yesterday
into today and tomorrow.
Cheer us with courage.
Disturb us with justice.
Safeguard us with wisdom.
Bless us with wonder.
Cherish us with love.

Ruth Burgess
Iona (Wild Goose Publications)



I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will,
rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing,
put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you,
or laid aside for you,
exalted for you,
or brought low for you;
let me be full,
let me be empty,
let me have all things,
let me have nothing:
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven.

The Methodist Covenant Prayer

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Impressum

Your suggestions, comments and contributions to the Newsletter are welcome. Deadline for the next issue is 31 March 2022. 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.