



Newsletter of the English-speaking United Methodist Congregation in Munich

Advent & Christmas 2021



Dear Peace Church sisters and brothers,

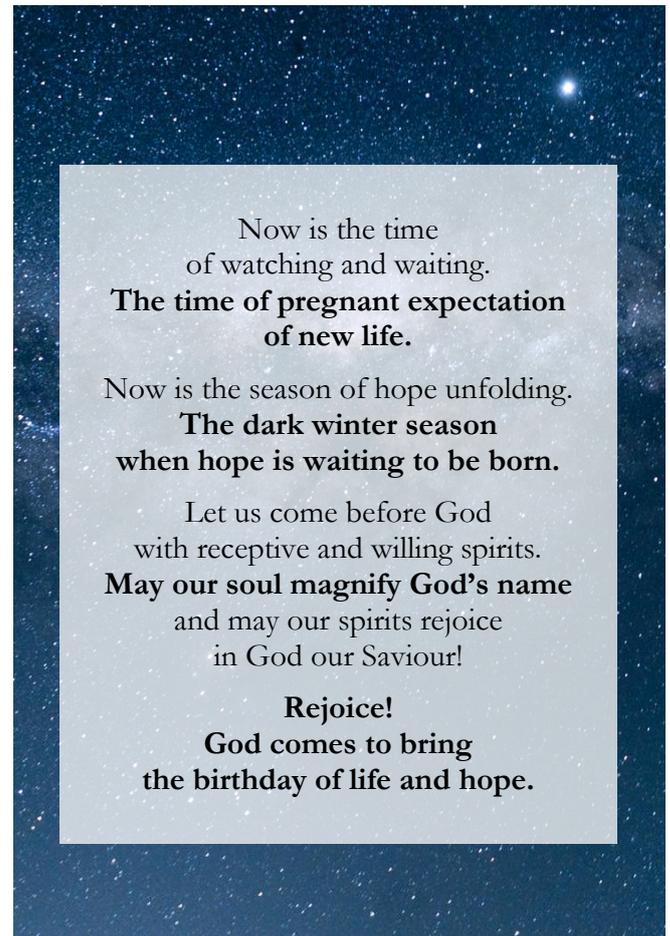
Christmas is such a special time of year because it reminds us of who God is. Light shining in the darkness. New life in harsh surroundings. Unexpected hope. Love in human form. Peace proclaimed to all people. You'll pick up these themes in the meditations, prayers and reports in this newsletter.

There's lots going on in Peace Church throughout the Advent and Christmas period, so do make a note of all the special services and events:

- 11th Dec 3-5pm Advent Fun Day for Families
- 12th Dec 12 noon Nativity service
- 19th Dec 12 noon Musical Advent worship
- 24th Dec 8pm Christmas Eve worship
- 26th Dec 12 noon All-age Christmas worship
- 31st Dec 7pm New Year's Eve Communion worship

Wherever and however you will be spending this Christmas, may you know the love of Emmanuel: God with us.

Lots of love,
Kat Wagner (Pastoral Assistant), 1 December 2021



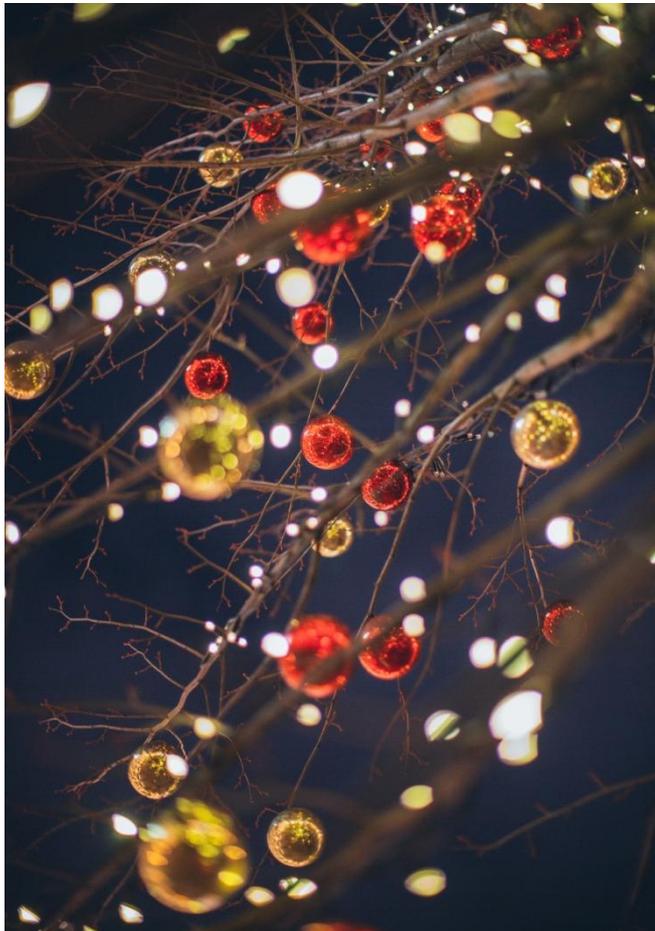
Like a candle flame in the darkness

A meditation on John 1: 9-13, by Cathy Williams

⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

(John 1: 9-13)

When I think about the time of Advent I think of light, strange, as winter is the darkest time of the year. But lights twinkle all over. As I write this children are walking around the streets with beautifully made St Martin's lanterns. The Christmas tree in Marienplatz is standing but as yet without its lights and looks rather dull. Soon it's lights will twinkle above the bustling Christmas market which itself displays lights of so many different kinds.



Thinking of light made me think about the Graham Kendrick song, Like a Candle Flame. It's a song that the children sang as we lit the advent candles at my old school in Britain. The children's voices were wonderful and the tune and harmonies quietened my mind. The words are so special. They tell the story of advent in little over 50 words.

Like a candle flame
Flickering small in our darkness
Uncreated light
Shines through infant eyes

God is with us, alleluia (Men)
God is with us, alleluia (Women)
Come to save us, alleluia (Men)
Come to save us (Women)
Alleluia! (All)

Stars and angels sing
Yet the earth sleeps in shadows
Can this tiny spark
Set a world on fire?

Yet his light shall shine
From our lives, Spirit blazing
As we touch the flame
Of his holy fire

The four Sundays of advent all have a special theme. As I think of these, I'll refer back to the song.

Hope.

How important at the current time. We read or hear a lot of bad news at the moment. Most people are agreed that we are living in a difficult period. But during Advent we think of Jesus coming and bringing "uncreated light" into the world. What wonderful and hopeful words. As we look into all babies' eyes they shine with hope for the future – lives to be lived, dreams to be dreamed and futures to be sculpted. If we look a little further into the news, we find some of the countless good news stories – stories of hope for the future. The Syrian girl who, after spending her childhood in many refugee camps, is now at a German university studying to become a doctor. The new vaccine that

has been developed and is now being used against the killer disease malaria. There are many more. Baby Jesus coming into our world did indeed come as a small speck of light, a candle flame flickering and creating a little light in the darkness. When we pick up this flame and spread it around what hope we have for the future.

Peace

Peace be with you. We always used to shake hands or give each other a quick hug as we shared the peace before communion. Now we look each other in the eyes, give a big smile behind our masks and the twinkle in our eyes conveys that peace. “*God is with us, Alleluia*” goes the chorus of Graham Kendrick’s song. God is with us at all times and gives us inner peace. Sometimes we can find this peace through meditation. It is a privilege to sit with God in quietness and feel his peace descend, numbing stresses and allowing time for contemplation, thought and prayer. Some people like to light a candle before prayer or meditation – the candle flame in the song? Through Jesus we can find inner peace.

Love

“*Stars and angels sing.*” Are they singing of the love that the birth of Jesus brings into the world? God’s love is something very special. It is love that every one of us can depend on forever. He will always be with us. God shared his love of us all by sending us his son. Many early Christians spread the love of

God to others. St Martin was a Roman soldier and an early Christian. He is said to have cut his tunic in half and given half to a freezing beggar. Afterwards as he tried to keep warm in his half of the cloak his comrades laughed at and ridiculed him. However later that night Martin dreamt that God spoke to him and told him his actions were good. Later he became the first bishop of Tours in France. Our lives and actions will probably not be remembered for hundreds of years but in their everyday lives I know of many at Peace Church who spread the love of God around.

Joy

“*Yet his light shall shine, From our lives, Spirit blazing, As we touch the flame, Of his holy fire*” – what wonderful optimistic words! This last verse of the song really reminds me of the joy of Christ’s coming and the happiness of Christmas. I love all the traditions and festivities during Advent and Christmas and participate in them wholeheartedly. It’s been a pleasure for many years to be in schools and see the joyful anticipation of Christmas in the faces of children. I also love to visit the small Christmas markets in Bavaria which are often surrounded by lights twinkling in the trees.

In these and the many other lights we see at this special time of the year we remember John 1: 9.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.



Report & photos: Open Church on the 1st Sunday of Advent

On Sunday 28th November, the church was open for two hours for people to come and go and enjoy the various Advent worship workshops on offer.

There were Advent texts to read, candles to light, the Prayer Wall, Advent prayers and blessings to take home, music to listen to and join in with, candles to decorate, children's Advent books to read, a play corner and, of course, delicious food and drinks served in the yard.

Here are some pictures from the day:



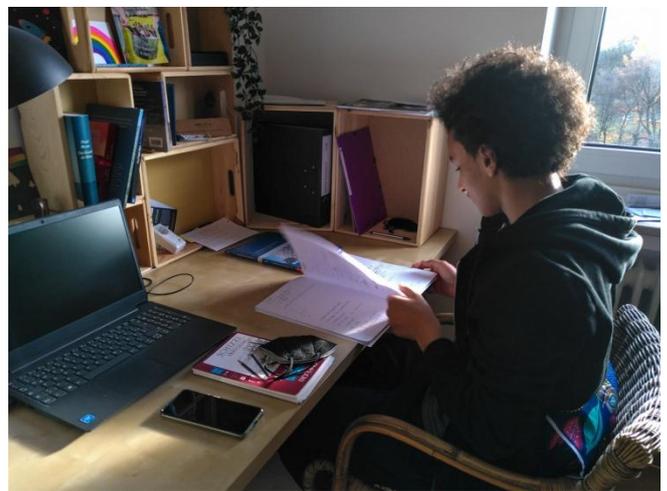


Did You Know That...

...we have a new teacher in the Homework Club? Rachel Farnsworth, a young American teacher, is spending a school year in Germany and teaching at a school in Ebersberg. She offered to join the Homework Club team consisting of Nico, Konrad, Sabrina, and Christine. With Rachel's help, and with the support of Sabrina Gill, we can now offer individual support for school kids on other weekdays than Fridays.

...Nicolas Kanzleiter now has an apartment in Giesing? He lives partly with his parents in Hafelsberg and partly in Giesing – just a few streets away from church. In Giesing he is always able to be supported by a family member or a friend. His friend John Lamaster is moving in with him this winter.

...the Homework Club takes place in Nico's new place? It has become a cosy home for the small Homework Club family. (See photos)



...some of our young people are moving forward on their life journeys? Two moved away from Munich: Ioris Grüter is doing an internship in the South of France. And Eve Gill is studying in Münster in the North of Germany. Nana, Franci, Sabrina and Irene are studying at universities in Munich. David, Ronny, and Harold are doing apprenticeships. Many others are successfully studying at various schools and working hard towards their exams.

...Jonathan Hutter is an actor? The young man who regularly worships at Peace Church comes from Switzerland. He now has a main role in the crime series "Die Chefin" which is on television on Friday evenings.

...there is a Christmas tree in the church yard?

Pastors Klaus and Christine came up with the idea to put up a Christmas tree in the church yard. Little stars are provided in church on which you can write a prayer and hang it on the tree. Any star made at home or in school can be brought along to church and put on the Christmas tree. We hope that by Christmas the tree will be fully decorated with the most beautiful stars and lights.

...Kat and Christine have been collecting peoples' address details for a new Peace Church directory?

In January all that has been collected will be laid out and printed, so that we begin the new year with a brand-new Peace Church address book.

...Bible study groups are going really well? The group which meets at the home of Kat and Christian will review their situation before Christmas and decide how they want to continue in the new year. The women's Bible study group now meets at Vanda's home in Ramersdorf once a month.

...Fun Days for families are a beautiful way of "replacing" Kids' Club at the moment? With Corona, it is difficult to run our old pattern of Kids' Club. We decided to open the church on a Saturday afternoon once every two months and offer activities and games and food for all those who come.

...Kids' Bags are sent out to young church kids once a month? Christine is happy to continue this nice tradition because she hears from kids and parents that most kids are thrilled to receive little "somethings" in the post.



...small groups are what help us at the moment?

Since Corona made it impossible to meet in large crowds, and many people must or do avoid masses of people, our community faces the challenge of connecting with each other in small groups. Many creative ways are possible: a dinner in your home with someone else from church, a walk in a park, a phone call, a parcel sent in the post, a book shared after reading because you loved it so much and want others to "partake", a card, a letter, a prayer candle lit in your home and you let the other person know it's there... There are many awesome ways of staying in touch and still feel the spirit of community.

...services are held at 12 noon on Sundays? The evening service will take a break till the beginning of January. And the online prayer meeting will go back to its monthly format which it had before Corona.

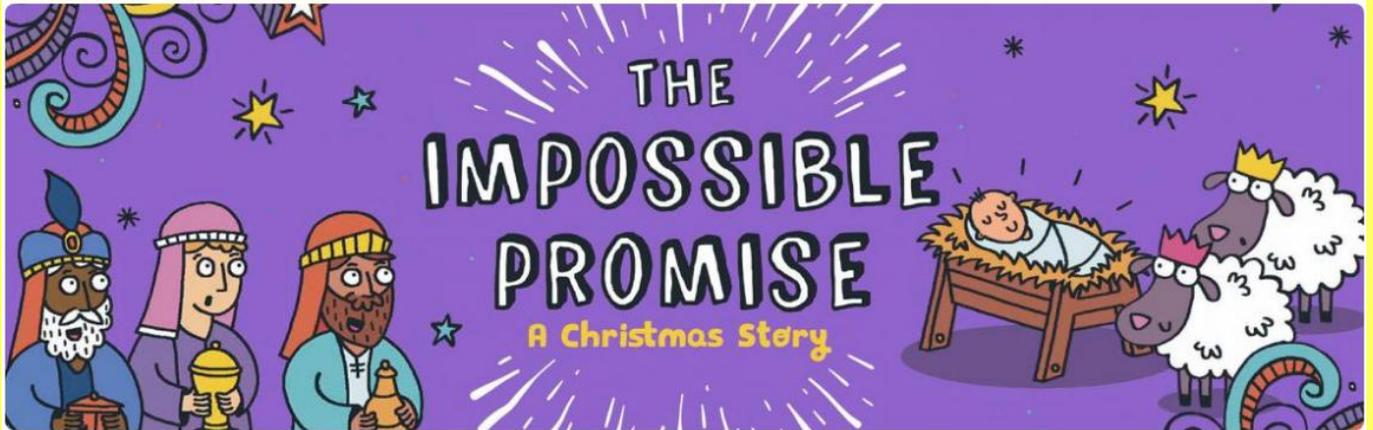
...there has been no Sunday School since March 2020? We will try to open small group opportunities for children and teenagers on Sundays soon. Nico will begin contacting the teenagers in January 2022.

...Peace Church has a great team of musicians, worship leaders and preachers? Musicians are Katie Gill, Phil Gill, Konrad Heidler, Graham Williams, Reiner Kanzleiter, Kat Wagner, Martin Bernhard and of course the African Choir. Worship leaders are Kat Wagner, Kate Stoiber, Rebecca Yebuah, Phil Gill, Katie Gill, Moses Adofu, Jonas Bedford-Strohm, Megan Bedford-Strohm and Rino Handra. Preachers are besides Pastors Christine and Reiner, Jonas Bedford-Strohm, Megan Bedford-Strohm, John Lamaster, Nicolas Kanzleiter, Rebecca Yebuah, Kat Wagner, Christian Schreiber, and Israel Pereira. Cathy Williams offered to support with meditations in the evening service now and again. We are looking forward to her doing so in the new year. A big thank you goes to all who help holding the church family together!

...Pastor Christine is happy to visit you in your home? She can come and drop something at your door, speak with you through a window, enter the house with a mask, or without. If you need her, make an appointment. She will come. Other ways of communication are shared walks in the park, telephone calls, e-mails and texts. It is so important that we stay connected!

Upcoming Services & Events

You are invited to an 'instant' nativity service on Sunday 12th December at 12 noon



Please come dressed as Angels or Shepherds! Everyone welcome!



Fun Day for Families
3-5pm Saturday 11th December



Christmas Eve Worship
8pm Friday 24th December
in the yard
followed by Glühwein & Stollen
Wrap up warmly!



All-Age Christmas Worship
12 noon Sunday 26th December



New Year's Eve Worship
7pm Friday 31st December
in the church
followed by Glühwein and finger food
in the yard



All-Age Communion Service
12 noon Sunday 2nd January

Prayers

This Christmas, Lord
take a corner of my life and steal in...

Invade the busyness of my doing
with the smallness of your coming.

Illuminate the darkness of my thinking
with the brightness of your seeing.

Infuse the coldness of my loving
with the warmth of your being.

Take the unprepared places of my life
and make them fit for your dwelling.

Amen



Jesus, born in a stable
because there was no room in the inn;
we pray for the homeless.

Jesus, born away from your hometown;
we pray for those away from their families
this Christmas.

Jesus, hunted by Herod;
we pray for those in danger,
for those who live in war zones
and for those who are treated unjustly.

Jesus, living as a refugee in Egypt;
we pray for all refugees in the world
and for the situations they flee from.

Jesus, visited by shepherds and wise men;
we pray that this Christmas everyone may be
visited by someone bringing comfort.

Amen

A Christmas Affirmation of Faith

I believe that Christmas is more than a time for parties and ornaments; it is a time for remembering Christ and the incarnation of God's love as human flesh.

I believe there are gifts more important than the ones under the Christmas tree, such as the things we teach our children, the way we share ourselves with friends, and the industry with which we set about reshaping the world in our time.

I believe that the finest carols are often sung by the poorest voices, from hearts made warm by the wonder of the season.

I believe in the angels' message that we should not be afraid, that the child of Bethlehem is able to overcome all anxieties and insecurities.

I believe in prayer and quietness as a way of appropriating Christmas that if I wait in silence, I will experience the presence of the One born in the stable, for he lives today as surely as he lived then.

I believe in going away from Christmas as the wise men went 'another way'.

I want to be different when these days are past.
And I believe God will help me.

Peace Church in the second Corona winter

by Pastor Christine

What is our mission as church this winter? With rising Corona incidence numbers?

A second Corona Advent? Who would have believed that? A second Corona Christmas? Who are we in all that? As Peace Church?

What can the Christian faith and the messages of Advent and Christmas contribute in times of crisis and pandemic? What does God want us to do?

Whatever situations we are living in, our primary call is to proclaim the Good News which, according to the Methodist leader John Wesley, means to encourage people to believe and trust in God, to care for each other, and to live God's love.

So, how can we help people discover God's tremendous love, and follow Jesus as the most loving and caring role model? How can we invite each other and others to see that with God there is always a possibility for new beginnings in our lives? How can we share the value the Bible is for us? The hope it gives us? How can we explain and emphasize God's unconditional love to all creation? To you, to me, to just everyone? How can we be witnesses of God's unfathomable love and grace? How?

Despite the restrictions, social distancing, fear and tiredness – how can we care for each other and help each other see the joyous sides of this season and our lives?

“Joy to the world, the Lord has come...” Isn't that the main message in Advent and Christmas? How can we live it out? How can we find joy in the dark days? How can we keep and preserve it so that we can pass it on to others?

Could I aim to make at least one person happy every day throughout this season? Could I pass on God's love in such a way that others experience it through me, and meet God in me? What a wonderful world we could have if it was profoundly shaped by love, God's love? What are the big and small things I can do? We can do? How can our relationships with God and one another grow?

Corona does not make it easy to answer these questions. But let us not be ruled by fear and

distancing. Let us be ruled by courage and visions. This season, let us remember the people who lived in darkness and saw a great light. Let us see the light. Let us be the light.

Corona does not make church life easy. But we can meet in church if we stick to the following regulations which make church life possible – even in this time of a pandemic.

Our current hygiene and protection standard at Peace Church is:

- We take a record of church visitors, collecting their names and address details.
- Hand disinfection at the church entrance.
- Free FFP2 masks are given out at the entrance if someone doesn't have one.
- The entrance and exit in the church hall are separate and very far away from each other. Doors are kept open at all times – no matter what weather.
- Everybody wears a mask throughout the whole service.
- Singing is only allowed when people wear a mask.
- Seats in the church are marked at a distance so that people are at least 1.5 meters away from each other. Only families/households sit together.
- The Lord's Supper is served using gloves. Everybody receives a small paper bag with a piece of bread and grapes. People eat when everyone is standing in a large circle throughout the church.
- Church coffee only takes place outdoors. No church coffee in bad weather.
- All worship rules regarding distance, masks, singing, and coffee outdoors are announced at the beginning of every worship service and if necessary repeated during the course of worship.
- For safety reasons, Sunday school is currently not taking place.

Peace Church Calendar

Sunday 5 th December	All-age Communion Worship at 12 noon
Friday 10 th December	Homework Club
Saturday 11 th December	Advent Fun Day for Families from 3 to 5pm
Sunday 12 th December	Nativity Service at 12 noon
Wednesday 15 th December	Women's Bible Study at Vanda's at 7pm
Thursday 16 th December	Bible Study Group at Kat & Christian's at 7pm
	<i>Homework Club takes a break till after the school holidays</i>
Sunday 19 th December	Musical Advent Worship at 12 noon
Friday 24 th December	Christmas Eve Worship in the church yard at 8pm followed by Glühwein and Stollen in the yard
Sunday 26 th December	All-age Christmas Worship at 12 noon
Friday 31 st December	New Year's Eve Communion Worship in the church at 7pm followed by Glühwein and finger food in the yard
Sunday 2 nd January	All-age Communion Service at 12 noon
Sunday 9 th January	All-age Worship at 12 noon & Evening Prayer at 6pm
	<i>Tuesday online prayer meeting restarts on a monthly basis (date to be confirmed)</i>
Friday 14 th January	Homework Club
Sunday 16 th January	All-age Worship at 12 noon & Evening Prayer at 6pm
Friday 21 st January	Homework Club
Sunday 23 rd January	All-age Worship at 12 noon & Evening Prayer at 6pm
Friday 28 th January	Homework Club
Sunday 30 th January	All-age Worship at 12 noon & Evening Prayer at 6pm

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Impressum

Your suggestions, comments and contributions to the Newsletter are welcome. Deadline for the next issue is 17 January 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.