



Newsletter of the English-speaking United Methodist Congregation in Munich

Harvest 2021

Dear Peace Church sisters and brothers,

Our latest newsletter is packed with colourful and warming stories and pictures from recent events at Peace Church: the African-style Harvest Festival, the Confirmation Class weekend away, the Women's Bible Group, the new Bible Study Group, and the Family Fun Day.

We also have an invitation for you and your friends to an Advent Open Church event on the 28th November. Please join us as we turn our thoughts towards Advent and Christmas!

Our Bible reflection for this newsletter comes from Katie. It's a thought-provoking reflection on the way we view our lives.

Enjoy the newsletter and this beautiful autumn season!

Lots of love,
Kat Wagner (Pastoral Assistant), 27 October 2021



Seeing a new perspective in our personal stories

A meditation on Isaiah 30 v15-18, by Katie Gill

This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. You said, "No, we will flee on horses." Therefore, you will flee! You said, "We will ride off on swift horses." Therefore, your pursuers will be swift! A thousand will flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you will all flee away, till you are left like a flagstone on a mountain top, like a banner on a hill.' Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore, he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

(Isaiah 30 v15-18)

The days are shortening, the nights becoming longer – in the Northern hemisphere at least. The air temperature cools. We hunker down; layer on the 'woolies'. We light the candles in our homes, enjoying the warmth of their glow; keeping the wintery chills at bay, outside our doors.

There is a lovely hymn that begins with the words 'Longing for light, we wait in darkness. Longing for

truth, we turn to you. Make us your own, your holy people, light for the world to see. Christ, be our light.' This hymn seems appropriate for the dark days of Winter when we are especially conscious of a yearning for the warmth and light to return. What of 'light'? We use the word in so many different contexts: light to see by; daylight; a light colour; facts brought to light; or the light that enlightens or informs, that enables us to see from a different perspective the stories we tell ourselves.

We are all storytellers by nature. It is part of the human condition in order to self-protect. In the absence of a thorough grasp of the facts, we will make up a story to fill in the gaps, particularly when we are hurt. We need to make some meaning out of what has happened and often choose something that fits with what we think we already know. I have been reading from Brené Brown. I came across her work when she gave a fascinating interview for Phil's training day on 'Empathy in the Workplace.' In her book 'Rising Strong' Brené Brown refers to the way we examine the stories we tell ourselves with these words:-

"The rumble - getting honest about our stories, thinking about topics such as boundaries, blame, resentment, heartbreak, generosity and forgiveness –(italics - inserted portion) begins with turning up our curiosity level and becoming aware of the story we are telling ourselves about our hurt, anger, frustration or pain. The minute we find ourselves face down on the arena floor, our minds go to work trying to make sense of what is happening. This story is driven by emotion and the immediate need to self-protect, which means it is most likely not accurate, well thought out, or even civil."

In my attempt to find an example to better illustrate this point, my mind drifted back to a short event a couple of weeks ago. I was walking along a street near our home. Coming to a crossroads and hearing no traffic, I stepped off the curb into the road. I looked and suddenly saw a cyclist coming along fairly fast. He made a very large swerve to avoid me and hurled a string of abuse in my direction. I didn't understand it – perhaps it was better so. He continued on his way. You can maybe imagine my initial reaction. 'He was travelling much too fast. What if a car had been approaching the junction? I stopped, didn't I? WHAT is his problem?' I was irritated, embarrassed, blaming, and for a while the event spoiled my day. Going back and 'rumbling' as

Brené Brown suggests, what could my reaction have been? The cyclist was travelling very fast – but maybe with good reason. I looked to check for any hazard *only after* I had stepped into the road. In future I need to learn to be more aware when crossing a road. I did a 'stupid' thing. (You will note how I evaluate my behaviour!) Therefore, I also need to find a bit of forgiveness – not just for the cyclist and his rude words (I presume they were!) but also for myself.

This example was maybe trivial but it demonstrates the process of turning from our initial hasty reactions to being more honest with our stories. We have the opportunity to learn and experience the kind of growth that can be transformative.

Our stories can be unkind, both towards ourselves and others. Most of us do it. I would guess it is fairly common to humanity. Brené Brown goes on to say, "The most dangerous stories we make up are the narratives that diminish our inherent worthiness. We must reclaim the truth about our lovability, divinity and creativity."

Indeed. How much we need the light and presence of Christ as we look at our struggles and pain. "Longing for light we wait in darkness. Longing for truth, we turn to you. Christ be our light, Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness. Christ be our light."

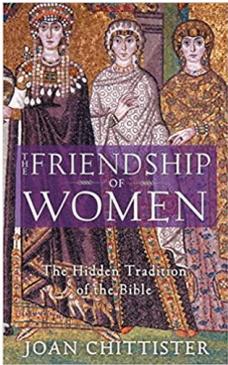
The verses quoted at the beginning have been particularly meaningful to me over the last two or three years. They demonstrate so clearly and yet so mercifully the process I have been describing. So often in our struggles we try to find our own solutions, rushing headlong into inappropriate conclusions. Difficulties become exaggerated. We may be telling ourselves a story that is only partially true. We can end up exposed, isolated and alone – 'like a flagstaff on a mountaintop'.

God offers us a space – a place where, if we are honest and repent; if we are willing to wait, to face our situations, bringing them to God and seeing them from a different perspective – we can find rest. In the stillness of God's presence, trusting in God's mercy, we might discover truth, peace and forgiveness.

'For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!'

The Friendship of Women

by Pastor Christine Erb-Kanzleiter



In the Women's Bible Study Group which meets once a month we are currently reading a book called "The Friendship of Women". It contains short chapters on biblical women and their impact on friendship. So far, we have looked at Lydia, Prisca and Deborah. Some of these women's stories are often hidden and rarely known.

When it comes to Prisca, I had to do some real research and came up with a write-up of Prisca's life story. I used it in as an all-age story in church and shared some thoughts about this amazing woman with the congregation. Here is Prisca's story for you:

I am Prisca. I wrote the letter to the Hebrews. In there you find my theology. I come from the city of Pontus on the Black Sea. (This is where Turkey is today). I am a tentmaker. I am married to Aquila who is a tentmaker too.

Soon after our wedding, we left our hometown on the Black Sea and moved to Rome. In Rome we started a tentmaker's workshop. We made tents and we repaired tents. We had a good life. The Roman military with their army tents were our best clients.

In Rome we met a small community of Christians. We loved the city and the little congregation. We could have stayed forever. But then, all of a sudden, Claudius, the emperor, demanded for all Jews to leave the country. We had to flee, because from our upbringing we were Jews.

We found asylum and a new home in Corinth. There was a Christian community, too. We joined them. We opened a tent workshop. One night, a stranger arrived. His name was Paul. He'd come from Athens where he'd just given a famous speech. Paul believed in Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth. And he talked about him everywhere. He just couldn't stop. He invited people into a life with Jesus and encouraged them to believe in the living God. We welcomed Paul into our modest home and let him live and work with us, because his profession too, was tentmaking. Paul was with us way over a year.

Unfortunately, he got in trouble with the Jews in Corinth who could not stand his talking about Jesus. They wanted to

get rid of him. The young Christian community loved Paul, but they could not protect him from the attacks of the Jews. Paul decided to leave. And we went with him.

We entered a ship to Ephesus. There we bought a house, set up a workshop, joined the Christian community, and lived and worked together. Paul and us – we'd become family for each other. We made tents and preached the good news of Jesus. We became real experts in theology. I had students to teach, because my knowledge of Jesus and his way of loving and living had grown immensely over the years.

Ephesus was a beautiful city. We liked our life there. But again, Paul got in trouble. The majority of the people in Ephesus worshipped the Goddess Artemis. They deeply disliked Paul's sermons on the one and only invisible God. Eventually they hated him so much that they threw him into prison. Aquila and I bought him out of prison and hid him. But we were not safe anymore. We had to be quick. By night and fog, we had to flee. We risked our lives for Paul who somehow always got in trouble. Deep trouble.

Paul went to Macedonia, whereas Aquila and I went back to Rome. We had heard that the situation in Rome for Jews and Christians was safe again. We'd loved living there before, so we had a strong desire to return. We found a house and a church. We started a business again.

Here we live. I still teach and make tents. Aquila too. We are in contact with Paul who travels the world. We receive letters from him. He never forgets to greet all his friends. In those letters we share our beliefs, strengthen each other in faith and, most of all, hold each other in constant prayer. We are living in a wonderful circle of Christian friends and hope from the bottom of our hearts that Rome will now remain the place where we belong.

Oh, just one little last thing: when I was little my parents called me Priscilla, - little Prisca. Some of my friends and my husband sometimes still do. But Paul, my good friend Paul, always calls me Prisca.

It is fascinating to meet women and study the stories of women in the Bible. Without the Bible group I would probably never have reflected on Prisca, nor written her story. But with this group I am constantly challenged to search and explore and read my Bible with a "different view".

Girls, girls, girls...

*Reflections on the Confirmation Class Weekend in Hafelsberg
by Pastor Christine Erb-Kanzleiter*



From Friday 10th to Sunday 12th September, Becky Yebuah and I took the confirmation class girls out to the countryside to spend a weekend in my family's new home in Hafelsberg. The girls had been offered to bring along a friend. So, we were a group of four teenagers and two adults. All women.

A significant part of the weekend was getting to know each other and opening up to each other. Through so many months of the Corona lockdowns our group had only met in person twice, and for the actual confirmation service in July. It was a real desire of the girls to experience something like a weekend away – they knew that this was the case before Corona. Becky and I decided to take the girls out to Hafelsberg. We went out for meals together, played and cooked, and had a lot of fun.

“Who do you trust most? What was your best moment this summer? When did you feel really free? Who are your favourite people? What would you ask God for? What is it that you absolutely dislike? What makes you laugh from the bottom of your heart? What miracle are you carrying inside of you?” These were questions written on big sheets of cardboard and laid out in our garden on Saturday morning. Each of us got a pen, we played soothing

music and began to write our answers on the sheets. After 40 minutes or so, each of us took one or two posters. We read them out to each other aloud, discussed a bit and marvelled at the fact that many of our answers were similar, despite the various backgrounds we have, and the different age groups.

The creative part of exploring “who we are” and what role we have in the group, was painting ourselves in life-size. We put packing paper on the garden table, each of us had a go lying on the table and the others sketched the shape around us. We all found a place in the garden to paint and fill our images with reflections and meditations on ourselves and our place in this world. We enjoyed painting and talking and learned a lot about each other.

In the afternoon, we hiked to a neighbouring village and had a late lunch in the garden of a restaurant. Back home we began cooking and baking for a festive dinner at which we would read great speeches of great women to each other. We slipped in the roles of Hillary Clinton, Malala Yousafzai, Ida Wells, Shirley Chisholm, Manal al-Sharif and others and presented to the group the themes these women were working for: in all cases equal rights

for women and men in different countries and at different times in human history.

We watched Morgan Freeman’s fascinating film “The Story of God” late in the evening. And the next morning we developed our own worship service on the theme of friendship. The story of the lame man who was carried to Jesus by his wonderful friends was acted out in my garden. We prayed and danced and produced small friendship bracelets. We are now friends! Women friends who know how costly it is to live in God’s amazing creation and play our part in it.



Bible Study group report

by Kat Wagner



Bathsheba's husband to be killed in battle so that David could marry her. At this point, the prophet Nathan tells David a story. The parable is about a poor man's beloved lamb being taken and killed to feed a rich man's guest. David had a strong emotional reaction because of the injustice in the story. But he was shaken to the core when Nathan told him that David himself was the unjust man. David immediately confessed his sin. Had he done so if Nathan had confronted him directly? Possibly not. That's the power of a parable.

After many months of social restrictions being the norm, it felt very special to welcome seven people into our apartment on 7th October and share food together! The dining table just stretched for us all to get around it and we enjoyed delicious food, good conversation and a great start to our new group.

We look forward to delving in to more parables... Why did Jesus often teach using parables, instead of saying something directly? What is the meaning of his parables? What pictures and stories could we use to communicate the gospel today?

Our theme for the coming months of Bible study is Parables.

The Bible Study Group will be meeting every other week on Thursday evenings.

In our latest meeting we saw the amazing power that a parable had on King David. David had recently committed adultery and then arranged for

Kat & Christian were joined by Sue, Andy, Matt, Dan, Vanda, Rino and Ian. If you are interested in joining the group, please speak to Kat or Christian.

Family Fun Day

On Saturday 2nd October, families were invited to come to church for a Fun Day. Here are some photos...





African-style Harvest Festival



“Colourful, fun, beautiful, warm, welcoming, awesome” – just some of the words used to describe this year’s African-style Harvest service on Sunday 17th October.

Vivian Sarpey, Rachel Farnsworth, Megan Bedford-Strohm, Moses Adofo, Esther Owusu, Lily Owusu and Irene Bonsu were interviewed by Kat Wagner and Nico Kanzleiter.

What was your favourite part of the Harvest service today?

Esther: My favourite part of the service was when the African Choir was singing and people were dancing, because it lifted up the mood and it seemed like the typical Harvest we used to have.

Lily: I enjoyed the table decorating – when we all put the fruits or vegetables on the table – because I got to see everybody and it filled me with joy.

Megan: Mine was dancing and bringing our offerings forward. Just finally seeing everyone together.



Vivian: The dancing part! At home, if I were to enjoy something like this I’d have to play some videos or audios from YouTube. But this was a live experience and I enjoyed it.

Moses: When the people bring their offering: the dancing, seeing how they are moving their body. It was great!

Irene: My favourite part was singing and dancing together in that big circle. We could simply enjoy the moment, enjoy ourselves and enjoy each other’s company. In that moment, I felt like we are a big, strong community, because we’ve been through hard times the last few months. Seeing all the happy faces doing the same thing made me really happy.

What does the word 'harvest' mean to you? What are we celebrating?

Vivian: Abundance! Everything in abundance: peace, joy, food. Abundance in every aspect of our lives. That's how I understand 'harvest'.



Rachel: I think we're celebrating reaping all the fruits of our labors, all the work that we've done through the year. And remembering that we're here with each other, before the winter starts and settling down into the end of the year.

Megan: Some of the liturgy reminded us to think about where our food comes from, and so many of the things that are necessary for our life. We don't often think about who is putting in a lot of that labor. So it was good just taking time to be grateful for having what we need.

Moses: You have to show the appreciation to God, that we really enjoy what he always gives to us.

Esther: I think it's very important to celebrate Harvest every single year because it feels like we are growing together and getting close. It's like a big get-together, it feels like we are all close, like a family. When we were dancing together, I was very happy. It was a very beautiful Harvest Fest.

Lily: I love celebrating and I like the consolation of so many people coming together to celebrate one thing. What harvest means to me is basically a coming together of people from far and near, those that we've seen before and even new people that we've never had the opportunity to talk to.

Irene: Seeing the community being one and celebrating all the different cultures is why it's important to celebrate harvest.

What are you taking away with you from today's service? Something physical? Something spiritual?

Irene: I will not forget the fun we all had today! It's also nice to see that things are getting better, that we could eat after the service and talk to each other.



Lily: Something physical that I'm taking away is the food. The food that my mum prepared was delicious and I loved it. Serving up food gave us a feeling of normality and reality. Because of this Coronavirus we haven't had a lot of church coffees or food to share. This little activity of feeding people brought back good memories and I loved it. I think spiritually, it's the connection that I've made with people. I've seen friends that I haven't seen in a long while, or even family members, and it was lovely to see these people again.

Rachel: I am taking some delicious food from the outside lunch here. It's very good! And I'm also taking away a sense of community. I'm new here, so it's just been nice to be involved and to see everyone all at once, it's very exciting.



Megan: Even though of course it's not a full-on Harvest Festival yet, it really feels like there's so much life that's returned. It makes me feel very grateful and like we're not alone in this time.

Vivian: Should I say psychological?! I've had the opportunity to meet a lot of people, people I last met so many months ago. It's very fulfilling for my mind psychologically.



Moses: For me it's a spiritual encouragement. If you see the whole year, because of Corona, everybody's down. And now you see how the people are moving, it encourages us to do more.

Esther: What I definitely remember about the service today is the uplifting mood, the positive vibes and the great service. Today was very awesome.

How would you describe the Peace Church Harvest Festival to a friend?

Megan: Colourful. A lot of African clothing, but also a meeting of many different cultures. Being joyful and celebratory together through the liturgy, good food, movement and song.

Rachel: It's a fun, communal experience where we're all worshipping together and enjoying each other's company.

Moses: There's the singing of the African Choir, the auction in normal time, and how we dance and bring our offerings. And the preaching of our dear pastor is always awesome.

Lily: Harvest is a big, colourful, active, beautiful, loud place where a lot of people come together to become one and to celebrate one thing. It's not 'loud' as in noisy, but 'loud' as in active, with a lot of beautiful voices coming together. It's embracing and warm, everybody's welcoming.

Irene: It's an African Harvest Festival where we all come together as one church community to thank God and to enjoy ourselves and each other's company. Everyone has the chance to get to know the African culture better by eating African food, listening to the African Choir and seeing or wearing all the nice African dresses.

Esther: The service felt like no one was left behind, that you're not alone, that you felt connected and together with people. It was very heartwarming. The vibes were very great, you just feel positive and I think you cannot stop smiling.

The Harvest Offering raised €1.814
Thank you for your generous gifts!



Peace Church **Confirmation Class**

**Are you a teenager?
13 years old? Or older?**

**Would you like to learn about God and the world?
Would you like to get to know the Christian faith and life?**

**Then maybe you'd want to partake in the
Peace Church Confirmation Class which will begin this
autumn...**

**If you are interested, speak to
Pastor Christine (0179-6726 794)
before the end of November 2021.**

The classes may take place on Friday afternoons.



Invitation to an Open Church at Peace Church on 1st Advent 28 November 2021

The church will be open from 12 noon to 2pm.
You can come and go as you like

We offer Advent worship activities as prayers, stories,
games, crafts, art projects, music and more...

You can partake in any of these for as long and as often
as you like.

We will have coffee & "Stollen"-to-go...

A warm welcome to all!



Peace Church Calendar: November

Thursday 4 November	7pm Bible Study group (at Dan's place)
Sunday 7 November	12 noon All-age Communion Service (No Evening Prayer)
Tuesday 9 November	6pm Online Prayer Meeting
Thursday 11 November	7pm Council on Ministries
Friday 12 November	2pm Homework Club
Sunday 14 November	12 noon All-age Worship 6pm Evening Prayer
Tuesday 16 November	6pm Online Prayer Meeting
Wednesday 17 November	7pm Women's Bible Study Group (at Vanda's place)
Thursday 18 November	7pm Bible Study group (at Kat & Christian's place)
Friday 19 November	2pm Homework Club
Sunday 21 November	12 noon All-age Worship 6pm Evening Prayer
Tuesday 23 November	6pm Online Prayer Meeting
Friday 26 November	2pm Homework Club
Sunday 28 November	12 noon – 2pm Open Church with Advent Activities
Tuesday 30 November	6pm Online Prayer Meeting



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Impressum

Your suggestions, comments and contributions to the Newsletter are welcome. Deadline for the next issue is 30 November. 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.