

Peace Church News

The Newsletter of the English-speaking United Methodist congregation in Munich



ISSUE Advent & Christmas

December 2023-February 2024

In this issue of Peace Church News:



'Advent—Same Procedure as Every Year...?'
Thoughts from Pastor Alex and prayers for the season



Did You Know That...?
News and happenings in the life of our church



Report from the South Bavaria Regional Meeting about the SJK 'change process'



Updates from the Charge Conference and CoM Retreat



Greetings from Friends of Peace Church
Messages from the Bedford-Strohms, Ann & Michael Hewson and Robin Hutt



Peace Church Calendar
All the important dates for your diaries



Peace Church United Methodist
Munich, Germany

“Same Procedure as Every Year...?”

Thoughts by Pastor Alex von Wascinski



Advent is finally here. Not really surprising. But every year I am indeed surprised anew at how busy this supposedly ‘quiet’ time of year is - and how many articles in Christian magazines complain about this fact in particular. So, I will

not... I am going to complain about something different. After a couple of years’ experience with the season of Advent I have realised that it is not exactly my personal highlight season of the year. And I was really relieved as another member of Peace Church expressed the same feeling. I obviously am not the only one with this kind of social problem. Very often I think that this season of the year lays a nice white blanket over the terrible things that happen in this world, covering everything up—just as the snow did in Munich the other day, which brought everything to a halt. But I don’t want to be on standstill or standby during the Advent and Christmas season. What I want is that during this season where we seem to be more open to matters of love, peace and solidarity (as many organisations understand as well and raise most of their donations during exactly this season) we can achieve major steps forward on matters in which love, peace and solidarity lack. So too often I think that we’re just going through the ‘same procedure as every year’. And once Christmas season is over the blanket is taken away and we (have to) return back to our agendas.

For whatever reason, this year the story of Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem seems to be my personal Advent theme. Maybe one of the reasons is the ongoing war in Israel and Palestine—or more precisely between the state of Israel and Hamas. Honestly, the biblical story especially in the Gospel of Matthew is dripping with absurdity. The ‘king’ enters Jerusalem without any royal insignia, on a donkey, or more precisely, two donkeys to match the prophet Zechariah’s literal construction (parallelism membrorum). And the crowd cheers “Hosanna” while their cheer sometime later is “Crucify!”. Is it the same thing happening here?

The real problems are covered up, this time with palm leaves for a “Hosanna”. And then return to the violent agenda of “Crucify!”? And ironically a possible translation of Jerusalem is “God gives Peace”. Doesn’t this look like a pure absurdity of world history? So, when we will have survived the season of Advent and Christmas will it have been the “same procedure as every year”. And will we then sit down on our sofas on New Year’s Eve to watch ‘Miss Sofie’s 90th Birthday’, as every year which has made the phrase the “same procedure as every year” so iconic—what an absurd German New Year’s Eve tradition...

But I don’t want it to be like that. And I don’t want to diminish the Advent and Christmas season. I actually want exactly the opposite. I want to see this message of God coming so vulnerably into this world, of God bringing peace to this violent world, of God who is in complete solidarity with the poor, needy and abandoned becoming reality. I want this “same procedure as every” to be stopped. “Your kin(g)-dom come!” we pray. And yes, this is my deepest wish for Christmas. This world so much needs our Christian message of the loving God coming into this world, bringing peace and love.

This morning I remembered having some Christmas cards in a drawer, which I always kept—and never sent to anyone. I guess because I think they seem so weird. And you immediately spot where I originally bought them. They do not match my idea of Advent beauty—but



that may be disputable. However, to me they are like a stop-sign. Things seem to come together that don't match—might even seem absurd. But then: Why should Advent and Christmas not be different? Why shouldn't I expect the unexpected? Why shouldn't I go for a different procedure this year? Why should I not break up the cosiness and invite an unexpected person over for Christmas dinner? Why should I not hang my peace-flag out the window instead or together with my fairy lights? Why should I not embrace the absurdity of a world blanketed in Christmas glitter—and pray and pray and pray constantly for peace? I don't want to give in to a kind of thinking that doesn't really expect things to change. I want to get together with others and pray and pray and pray for peace over all the Christmas holidays. If this time of the year will become (again) a season where we unite in praying for peace, a season where we all consciously train ourselves to be peacemakers in our families, our neighbourhoods, our wider communities, a season where we encourage others not to step in to the vicious thought that violence solves conflicts and wars can bring peace, then, yes, this season can really make sense to me.

And then I might even enjoy the “same procedure as every year” sitting on our family sofa, watching Miss Sophie turning 90 years old for the 100.000th time, advancing into a new year 2024...

I wish you all a 'peacemaking' Christmas and a peace-bringing new year!



This Advent, Lord,
invade the busyness of my doing
with the smallness of your coming.

This Advent, Lord,
illuminate the darkness of my thinking
with the brightness of your seeing.

The Advent, Lord,
infuse the coldness of my loving
with the warmth of your being.

This Advent, Lord,
take the unprepared places of my life
and make them fit for your dwelling.

Amen

Did You Know That...

...we will restart Coffee&more on 8 January 2024?

Coffee&more will take place from 8 January 2024 on Monday afternoons at Philippus. We have a team but would still love to have more people to commit to being there: setting up, making coffee, cooking pizza, chatting with adults, playing with kids...



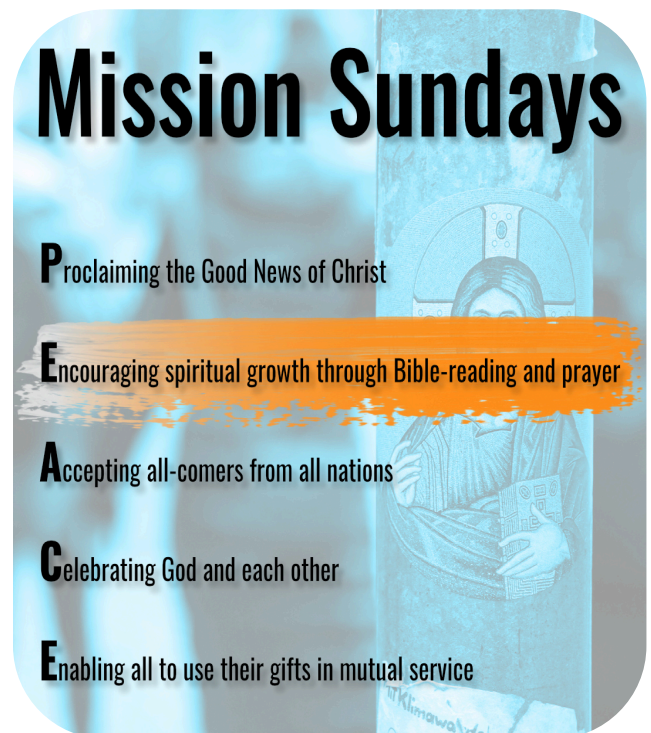
...ordained and lay representatives from the United Methodist churches in South Bavaria met on 3 October? You can read a report about the change process in the South Germany Annual Conference on page 6.

...there was a joint Regional Worship Service on 22 October? We were hosted by EMK-Erlöserkirche in Moosach and joined with congregations from EMK-Friedenskirche and EMK-Christuskirche (Augsburg). The service was led by people from all four congregations and included singing from the Peace Church African Choir.



...there have been important meetings of the Council on Ministries and the Charge Conference? See the reports on page 7 for more details...

...we have been following a 'Mission Sundays' worship series? Each week we looked at a line of our Peace Church mission statement. We culminated the series with a 'Find your place at Peace Church' ministry fair.



...there will be Volunteer Thank You Service & Feast on Saturday 10 February? Everyone who serves on a ministry team, volunteers or generally helps out at Peace Church is welcome to come!

...we entered 'winter church' season? Since 19 November we meet for worship services in the Fellowship Hall. We'll be back in the Sanctuary on Palm Sunday (24 March).

...the Sarpey family moved away from Munich? Theo, Vivian, Kyler and Theo junior have moved to Darmstadt at the end of November for Theo to start a new role doing post-doctoral research at the university. We will miss you and pray for God's abundant blessings on your family!

Did You Know That...

...we've introduced a slot in our worship services for testimonies? It has been such an encouragement to hear peoples stories of God working in their lives. If you would like to share something of your story, let us know!



...there will be a Saturday Drop-In-and-Play starting in January? This will run every two weeks. Come along with your kids and let's play together! Speak to Rebecca Nguyen for more info.

...there was a bring-and-share Thanksgiving Special on Saturday 25 November?

...we raised €3.078,10 at the African-Style Harvest Festival on 15 October? Thank you for your generous offerings and auction bids!



'Change Process': report from Regional meeting



What's it all about?

On 3rd October, 20 participants (ordained and lay) from the churches in South Bavaria met to discuss how we can work together in effective ways. We are entering this new way of working as part of the wider 'change process' taking place in the South Germany Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (see more here: <https://www.emk-sjk-change.de/>).

What was discussed?

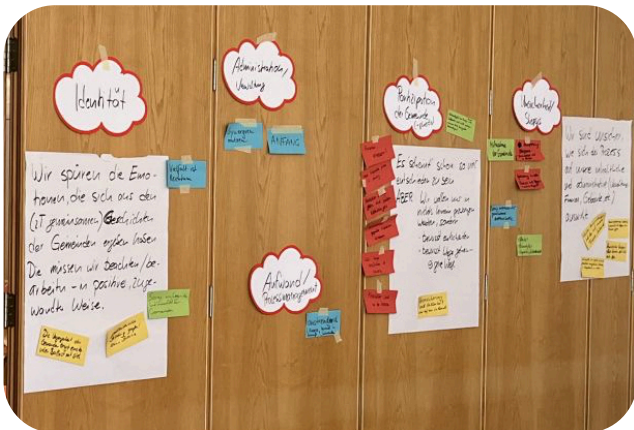
Information was shared about the current situations in our various Charges. Then the participants ranked topics related to the change process in order of importance. The three 'top' topics were:

- **Communication** - there should be clear communication both within individual congregations and between the churches.
- **Identity** - each Charge should retain their individual identities.
- **Spiritual process** - we want this process to be guided by the Spirit.

(Other topics with lower rankings included: encountering and getting to know one another; participation of the congregations; demands and process management; administration; finances; uncertainties and skepticism.)

Next steps

The team will continue to meet and work as a Steering Group until the next full meeting of a 'Regionalrat' on 13 April 2024.



Churches of South Bavaria:

EMK-Christuskirche-Augsburg
EMK-Erlöserkirche-München
EMK-Friendskirche-München
Peace Church UM-Munich
EMK-Rosenheim (from January 2024)

Peace Church participants at the 3.10. meeting:

Nico Kanzleiter
Andy Lawson
Alex von Wascinski
Becky Yebuah



Charge Conference

The Charge Conference of Peace Church took place on 4 October 2023. It was chaired by the pastor of Erlöserkirche, Jörg Finkbeiner.

After various papers and reports were presented, the following decisions were taken:

- Becky Yebuah was elected Lay Delegate to the UMC South Germany Annual Conference.
- Theo Sarpey was formally accepted as a Lay Preacher in the United Methodist Church.
- Alex von Wascinski was formally approved as Treasurer.
- Andy Lawson was approved as Chair of the Finance Group.
- Michael Binder (Treasurer of Friedenskirche) will audit our accounts together with Andy.
- The Council on Ministries would normally be approved by the Charge Conference. However, as there is such an overlap between the members of the two groups, it was suggested that on the first Sunday of the New Year the members of the CoM would be introduced to the congregation — and thereby be approved.

Council on Ministries 'Retreat'

The Council on Ministries met on 4 November for an all-day meeting. The 'Retreat' was facilitated by Pastor Alex, and we focussed on Children & Youth ministry and the role of the Council itself. We came up with lots of ideas for supporting Sunday School, reworking our 'all together' parts of worship services, improving points of contact for the 12+ age group, and plans to re-start day trips for families and teenagers.



Greetings from Friends of Peace Church

Friends of Peace Church is a scheme for people who used to be church members and attenders, and have an ongoing connection with Peace Church. We treasure their ongoing prayer and financial support of Peace Church, and pray for them in their new situations.

Dear Peace Church,

It has now been a little over a year since we left Munich and moved to Megan's home-town, Kansas City. We live in a blue house with some big old trees, a trampoline, and nice neighbors. Though it is sadly a couple of flights away, you are welcome anytime.

We are grateful that the kids can see their cousins, second cousins, aunts, uncles, (American) grandparents, and even great-grandparents, regularly. Amos turned 4 in March and is in preschool. He loves art, helping Jonas with projects and lots of imaginary play. Chiara turned 1 in July and is walking, climbing, saying more words all the time. Both keep us laughing a lot (and running around)!

We have been attending an American Baptist Church, First Baptist Church of Kansas City, which is just a few minutes from our house. It is one of the oldest churches in Kansas City, brings various types of people together like Peace Church, and has blessed us with some good friends and sense of community. It is also where Chiara attends daycare 2 days a week.

Megan is still completing her PhD, spending lots of time with the kids, and worked on a mural project in a hospital in the spring. Jonas is working for a company called Restoration Apparel, along with some work for ARD in Germany, and some house-renovation projects. Yes, he has learned some new carpentry skills since moving! He also organized a little Oktoberfest in our neighborhood a few weeks ago, which brought a touch of Munich to Kansas City for us.

We truly miss you all and think of Peace Church so often. You are in our prayers and we look forward with joyful hope to our next visit.

Sending love,
Megan, Jonas, Amos and Chiara
31 October 2023



Every now and then one of us is heard to say: "This time last year in Munich we were..."

But here we are so quickly slotting back into work and play in Queensland, Australia and involved with the South Rockhampton Uniting Church. Michael's work changed when very unexpectedly he lost his work colleague. This has meant a few extra duties and helping to move Celeste's work forward, as well as his own. His parents are not well so there have been a number of trips to Melbourne, nearly 2,000 km away. Michael is especially glad to be back sailing his Impulse dingy on Keppel Bay.

Ann has been told that her position (Public Hospital Chaplaincy of UCA) will not be funded after June next year. This means working out a strategy to hand on or cover some of the important tasks that will not be covered due to this change. As she planned to retire at the end of April it is less stressful but still means finding ways to support pastoral care in the hospital after a bit of progress over the last few years. The birds and garden take up her spare time and help her relax too.

In Australia, one state has already had flooding and then fires, all in less than three weeks. Already everything is tinder dry and fires rage just 200 km to the south.

We enjoy keeping in touch with you and the church's activities. We continue to pray for Peace Church as we know of some of your challenges. Greetings to everyone,

Michael and Ann Hewson
P.S. visitors always welcome:)
20 October 2023



Warmest greetings to you lovely people at Peace Church.

Ethel and I think of you very often and sing your praises. Like all of you it is hard to think of Peace Church without Christine, but it is good to know that you are continuing your excellent life of worship and service with Alex and Kat.

We live in Pawlett in Somerset, a small village with a tiny Methodist chapel with 15 members. We have a close relationship with our Anglican church and do all we can together. Our minister, Annie, comes from Kenya and is full of life and laughter. She would fit in wonderfully at Peace Church!

On a personal level Ethel and I keep reasonably well, with the usual aches and pains of getting older. We enjoy walking, and play indoor bowls every week. Early next year we celebrate our 20th wedding anniversary and are richly blessed in our combined large and widespread family. I preach about once a month, and try to keep up with my reading. One of my interests is the interplay between science and faith. It is a kind of rolling conversation as new things are discovered and theories change. In all that the person of Jesus is a constant.



We would value your prayers for our two churches here, that we may be sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in the development of our life together that we may be an attractive witnesses to the way of Jesus and so draw others to his side.

Robin Hutt
23 October 2023

Peace Church Calendar

Sunday 3 December (First Advent)	12pm Communion Service with Sunday School 2pm Philippus Christmas Craft Market
Thursday 7 December	7pm Bible Study Group 'Christmas Social'
Friday 8 December	2pm Homework Club
Sunday 10 December (Second Advent)	12pm Sunday Worship Service with Sunday School
Sunday 17 December (Third Advent)	12pm Nativity Service
Tuesday 19 December	6pm Online Prayer
Sunday 24 December (Fourth Advent)	4pm Christmas Eve Candle Light Service
Sunday 31 December (New Year's Eve)	5pm Joint New Year's Eve Service with Philippus
Sunday 7 January	12pm Communion Service with Sunday School
Monday 8 January	**RESTART** 2pm-5pm Coffee & More
Friday 12 January	2pm Homework Club
Saturday 13 January	**NEW** 2pm Drop-In-And-Play @ Philippus
Sunday 14 January	12pm Sunday Worship Service with Sunday School 2pm Musicians Workshop
Monday 15 January	2pm-5pm Coffee & More
Friday 19 January	2pm Homework Club
Sunday 21 January	12pm Sunday Worship Service with Sunday School
Monday 22 January	2pm-5pm Coffee & More
Friday 26 January	2pm Homework Club
Saturday 27 January	2pm Drop-In-And-Play
Sunday 28 January	12pm Sunday Worship Service with Sunday School
Monday 29 January	2pm-5pm Coffee & More
Friday 2 February	2pm Homework Club 7.30pm Sing & Connect worship night
Sunday 4 February	12pm Communion Service with Sunday School
Monday 5 February	2pm-5pm Coffee & More
Friday 9 February	2pm Homework Club

Advent & Christmas Services at Peace Church

3.12.



12pm Communion Service (1st Advent)

10.12.



12pm Worship Service (2nd Advent)

17.12.



12pm Nativity Service (3rd Advent)

24.12.



4pm Christmas Eve candle light service

31.12.



5pm Joint New Year's Eve Service

Support Peace Church Collect stamps



You may put stamps that you cut out of your personal correspondence or your employer's business mail—or which you might find somewhere at the very back of the shelf or in the attic—in this stamp collection box. There are only a few things to be aware of:

- Please cut the stamps with min. ½ cm margin (do not damage the prongs!).
- If the stamp is on a historical postcard (older than 30 years), please hand in the whole card.
- Whole collections can also be "monetised" - you can also give them to Pastor Alex directly.

Thank you for your support!!!



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

Our Mission

Proclaiming the Good News of Christ
Encouraging spiritual growth through Bible-reading and prayer
Accepting all-comers from all nations
Celebrating God and each other
Enabling all to use their gifts in mutual service

Giving

Peace Church is financed through the tithes and offerings of its members and attenders. You can give money in the offering during Sunday services or by bank transfer: KSK München Starnberg, IBAN: DE47 7025 0150 0009 0883 94 | BIC: BYLADEM1KMS

Contact (contact@peacechurch.de)

Pastor Alexander von Wascinski, pastor@peacechurch.de, +49 151 22354125

Pastoral Assistant Kat Wagner, kat@peacechurch.de, +49 176 56801258

Church Address: Chiemgaustraße 7 | 81549 München

Office Address: Frauenlob Str. 5 | 80337 München

<http://peacechurch.de>

Impressum

This issue of PCN was edited by Kat Wagner. The deadline for this issue was 12 November 2023. Your suggestions, comments and contributions to the Newsletter are welcome. The deadline for the next issue is 25 February 2024. If you would like to receive future issues by email, please contact Pastor Alex.