

Newsletter of the English Speaking United Methodist Congregation in Munich: Pentecost 2019

Nicodemus Meets Jesus in the Night

The evangelist John's gospel often is a mystery to me. If we read the story of Nicodemus and Jesus, we enter a totally different world: Many well known words, familiar phrases about heaven & earth, about spirit & flesh, about light & darkness - far away & mysterious. I can only approach the story of Nicodemus & Jesus when I learn to accept the mystery of the text, understand it as a journey, a wonder in process, as Catherine Keller, the American theology professor says in her book "On the Mystery".

The mystery in the gospel of John wanders with us & ahead of us & has no straight forward path. The mystery draws us onward. We are always trying to figure it out; to discern our way; to gather clues, hints & signs. And when we've finally got it, we may already have lost it again. Is the mystery "God"? And I guess the answer is yes. Divinity is surely a mystery.

So when I study the gospel of John, I can probably only do it in the spirit of mystery, and with a theology which is constantly in process, which Catherine Keller calls a "way of open-ended interactivity". Faith is not settled belief but a living process. We step with trust into the next moment, into the unpredictable, allowing the mystery to remain what it is.

So let us explore a bit of the mystery of God's Spirit while we reflect on Nicodemus meeting Jesus in the night.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus in the night. A Pharisee. A counsellor. A leader of the Jews.

A person who usually lives & acts in the light of the day. Who leads and copes & organizes, who knows & is expected to know where things come from & where they go. But this night is special. Mysterious. A representative of the "grey gentlemen" who normally "administers" daytime and logic & even business is looking for something that he cannot possibly find in the light of the day, within the framework of what can be, what is normal and can be measured.

And I suspect he chooses the night in the first place - not because he does not want people to recognise him, not because he wants to stay anonymous. Not because he wants to keep it a secret that he, an established theologian and an official of religion tries to get into contact with this unestablished, mysterious stranger whose life and teaching are somewhere beyond law and order.

I think Nicodemus chooses the night, because night is the only appropriate atmosphere to get close to what he is looking for. There are gifts present in the darkness and Nicodemus seems to sense that.

Darkness can be a place of birth and growth: the seed in the ground; the seed in the womb; the seed in our soul. In the dark lie possibilities for intimacy, for rest, for healing and revealing. The dark teaches us to rely on senses rather than sight.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus in the night. He longs to get to know something from the other side, from the hidden parts, from the wonders of the world, from the surprises of human life, and from the mysteries of God.

Only the night gives him the chance to leave the world of facts and enter the mystery, the unknown & dark, the unconscious & emotional & changeable side of human life. Nicodemus the scholar and

teacher wants to discover what's beyond. He might have always had a feeling for the mystery and the wonder of the night, a perception for its depth and different nature. He is captured by its magic.

Out of the logic of daylight Nicodemus asks: How can anyone be born again? After having grown old? Can one enter a second time the mother's womb and be born again? How on earth can everything just start from the beginning again? He doesn't believe being born again is at all possible. He thinks it would be a step back in time – and rationally of course impossible.

Nicodemus does not understand that he is asked to go back in terms of go beyond: to enter somewhere he has never before been. That he is not expected to step back into his physical past but enter new spaces which he'd never before thought of.

Nicodemus finds this hard to understand.

Jesus clarifies as far as possible: Being born again, being born from above does not mean that one is born again of the flesh. The initial, natural birth of course is and stays natural; and it is the essential condition for all being born again and anew!

To be born means: to come to the world. And to be born again, means: to enter the world again, differently, see it with new eyes, receive it with a new spirit, and be an altogether different person, a renewed human being in God's creation. Being on the mystery, as Catherine Keller calls it.

Nicodemus insists on asking how that can all happen, and Jesus continues giving Nicodemus answers: The wind as an image if God's Spirit blows wherever it chooses. You can feel it. But you'll never manage to get hold of it. And you never know where it comes from and where it goes. There is a big mystery surrounding God and God's spirit... the human knowledge of God's unfathomable being and acting. Nobody would ever really get hold of God's spirit. Knowing that is part of our Christian faith, and of course, it is a challenge for theology.

Calling God a mystery does not at all mean that God can't be experienced. But it takes more than the logic of the daylight to realise and notice it. Beyond the clarity of daylight a mystery is waiting for Nicodemus and for us. It can enrich our life & widen our horizon, if only we dare to ask our questions in the night.

Living on the mystery and enjoying it, is my wish for us all in this Pentecost season.

Yours, Pastor Christine.

Prayer

Holy God,
You challenge ordinary people
to live in your truth and love.
Touch our hearts with your awesome mystery.

News from Peace Church Life

Following Jesus

Confirmation Service 14 April 2019

by Graham Williams



(more photos: www.peacechurch.de "Latest News")

You could be forgiven for forgetting that Palm Sunday was on the 14th of April, because the service was devoted to the confirmation of four young men who have grown up in the Peace Church community and congregation.

Following Pastor Christine's introduction - "*What role does Jesus play in our lives? How do we get guidelines for our life as Christians in this world? Would what was essential in Jesus' time still be of significance today?*" - Fred, Ronny, Solomon and Steven, all smartly dressed in suits and ties, proudly took centre stage for their special occasion. Each took their own turn in the service to present self-produced art work and statements to support Biblical stories they had chosen for the theme "Following Jesus", which formed a framework for the service as a whole. Solomon began by reading his favourite Bible story of The Good Samaritan supported by an excellent two-tone image depicting the stories events. If we can help each other, we should, was Solomon's message; without expecting something in return. Steven went next with his colourful collage to represent "The Last Supper" - the hands of Jesus breaking bread in the centre led to many images and words representing the event. Steven's story shows the important role food plays in sharing and celebrating.

Through the story of Jesus walking on water Fred explained how, through being confident and believing in ourselves, we can do more than we think we can. In the story Peter proved a role model to Fred, to step out boldly and follow Jesus. Continuing the 'aquatic' theme Ronny shared his favourite Bible story about Jesus calming the storm. He pointed out that life's journey is not always smooth and predictable. However the story has encouraged Ronny to stand firm and have faith in God when difficulties arise.



Many people helped Fred, Ronny, Solomon and Stephen over the weeks of the confirmation classes. During the service itself, they were ably supported by Nico, Becky, Harold, Merle and Erica. Pastor Christine's sermon carefully drew together the elements from all four Bible stories: "*The Bible offers us so many exciting stories of people coping with life in various and unusual ways. What connects them all is their will to follow Jesus, and their strong relationship to a loving and caring God who wants his human beings to be equally loving and caring*".



Just before the Blessing of the Confirmands, we were treated to a rousing performance from the African Choir to add to the celebrations. Andy Lawson then presented the 'four' with presents and expressed his joy in seeing them grow

up from infants to adulthood under the roof of Peace Church. He wished them well for the future. Finally, through a combination of luck and divine intervention, I had already lined up my song 'Following In The Footsteps' to sing at the end, which in the circumstances seemed an apt way to finish this special service.

Following In the Footsteps (©2018 Graham Williams)

**Following in the footsteps, that Jesus left behind,
You know they're still out there, so He's not that hard to find,
He taught us to share, He taught us to care,
He showed us that God's love is everywhere
Following in the footsteps, that Jesus left behind,
You know they're still out there, so He's not that hard to find,
He showed us that problems can be over-come,
He showed us that God's love is for everyone
Following in the footsteps, that Jesus left behind,
You know they're still out there, so He's not that hard to find,
He led by example and showed us the way,
He showed us that God's love is still here today
Following in the footsteps, that Jesus left behind,
You know they're still out there, so He's not that hard to find,
Following in the footsteps, Following in the footsteps
Following in the footsteps, that Jesus left behind**

Kids' Time-Away on a Farm

by Nicolas Kanzleiter

As every year so far, Kids Club went on its annual Easter Holiday Retreat in Kundl, Austria. From the 23rd to the 27th of April, 21 Kids and teenagers alongside 8 (young) adults and two toddlers spent a week away on a farm in the Austrian countryside. Every day was planned differently and the kids had a variety of choices through the week to join activities, games and workshops, or to have their own little adventures or just hang around for some time. Also every day started with a Good Morning meeting, with a story, a little meditation or activity and an introduction for what was to come, each morning prepared by a different member of the team.

Tuesday was the day of journey, arrival and exploration. After a joined bus ride for the whole group, starting at the church, the group arrived at the farm in the early afternoon. Now the kids would have enough time to find their rooms and roommates, explore the area, get to know everything and have a little snack. The first dinner at the new place was followed by an opening evening, during which all the necessary rules were explained, the program for the week was announced and games were played to get to know everyone a little better. A rather long evening ended with excited and tired kids and adults, as did the first day. Everyone went to bed to sleep through their first night, prepared for the first full day, which of course was...



...*Wednesday*, which would be a day full of sports and competition. Between breakfast and lunch there was free time for the kids to do whatever they might come up with, partly to give the team time to prepare what was planned for the afternoon. On that afternoon, the whole group was gathered, teams were built and the “Kundl Olympics” were announced. 5 teams competed against each other in a number of games requiring creativity, fitness and teamwork. Which team jumped the farthest? Which team collected the most creative collection of flowers? Who scored the most goals or ran the fastest without spilling a bucket of water? And most importantly: Which team had the funniest name? After a whole afternoon of running, thinking, playing and a huge match of Brennball, a game similar to Baseball, everyone sat around a campfire with a barbecue for dinner.

Thursday was the day away. The whole day was planned for a hike to either a lake in the mountains or, for the brave ones, the summit. The whole group went, so nobody would stay at the farm and get bored and even the toddlers made it. As the majority of the group went to the lake to enjoy nature and have a picnic, a small group of the oldest boys and two tough younger kids made their way to

the top of the mountain “Vollhöpperspitze”. Each kid would bring its own lunch which they had packed during and right after breakfast. Coming home late in the afternoon, dinner was served after a break and some time to rest, followed by an evening of games, with a round of Musical Chairs as the grand finale. Exhausted, the kids went to bed, to be well rested and prepared for...



(more photos: www.peacechurch.de “Latest News”)

...*Friday*. To keep the kids busy, the last full day started with a huge game of Dodgeball, in which everyone took part. After lots of playing and running around, lunch and a break afterwards, the afternoon was full of creative workshops. The kids could choose whether they wanted to design cards, create art from natural materials, prepare a song or bake waffles for the group. Of course, they only had to choose where to start, everyone could take part in every workshop throughout the afternoon. Once every workshop was finished the kids got some spare time to play before dinner was about to be served. After that, they got to see the movie “Jim Knopf und Lukas der Lokomotivführer” on big screen.

Saturday is always the last day at Kundl, and pretty much always the same. After breakfast the kids are asked to pack their luggage clean their rooms and make sure they don't forget anything. After that, the last activity is the Ich-mag-dich Runde (I-Like-You Round). Every kid is given a Ich-mag-dich Buch (I-Like-You Book) with lots of empty pages and their name on it. Round by round the books are passed on in a circle and everyone is asked to write something nice in each book. In the end everyone has a book full of nice statements, wishes and greetings. The week ends with a group photo, a last lunch and the bus ride home, on which usually everyone falls asleep.

Clearly, a trip with 21 kids doesn't go without some discussing, fighting and problem solving, but also with a lot of great and funny moments! We're excited for next year and hope to have a big group of kids with us again, since they all seemed to enjoy it quite a lot!

Sunday School at Peace Church

by Sue Lawson

Cathy Williams and Pastor Christine have produced a new set of Sunday school lessons specially designed to meet the needs of Peace Church children aged 4-11.

Each lesson is based on a plan consisting of an ice-breaking session, a song, a Bible story, a craft and/or colouring activity and a prayer. Lessons are taught by two teachers.

The Bible stories are taken from Desmond Tutu's children's Bible. Craft materials are kept in a cupboard in the Sunday school area. The lessons are very easy to follow and require little preparation. If you would like to find out more and/or might be interested in teaching – on a regular basis or from time to time – you're welcome to join us one Sunday.

When **Adam and Eve** were the theme of a session a signal for quiet – a gong sounded through the room. The children were asked to sit in a circle and each one takes a turn saying, "Hello! My name is (name.)" When they say their name, they also make a movement (arm shake, head roll, knee bend, etc.) The group responds by saying, "Hello, (name!)" and echoing the movement.

Then we often speak a **Prayer**: "God, you are above (reach toward the sky), below (touch your toes), inside (hands to heart) and all around (big arm

circles). I worship you (reach toward the sky). And I love you (hands to heart) with all that I am (big arm circles). Amen." If the teachers like to all sing one of the songs from the Kids' Club songbook.

Story Time means the story is read in both languages English and German.

It is followed by an **Activity**.

For Adam and Eve the kids created a big garden. They collected together green paper of all different types and colours, took a big piece of paper and cut out some hills from the different coloured greens (see picture in Children of God). Together they created a big picture of the garden of Eden with lots of different trees and flowers, at the end adding different coloured birds and animals and flowers. Each session ends with a prayer – often spoken by all kids standing in a circle and holding hands.

Women's Bible Group

by Rahel Pereira



Do you know Hagar? The slave Hagar, who is often forgotten, when the story of Abraham and his well-known wife Sarah is

told? Have you ever heard about the relationship between these two unequal women, who do not manage to support each other in a very complex family situation (Genesis 16: 1–16)? Two women in a patriarchal world using their different ranges of power to make each other's life difficult?

Then Hagar runs away from this desperate situation but returns to her mistress who keeps treating her badly. Why?? Hagar still does not seem to feel free enough to make her own journey... She is still caught in her role as being a property of someone. Is there only hopelessness in this scene? No, there's more to discover! The careful listener discovers that Hagar is the first person in the Bible to give God a name. Try to imagine in that moment the worth, which is given to Hagar. God honors her, while allowing her to name Him. Astonishing!

Let us move to another biblical scene. This time, a more uplifting one in the book of Ruth. Have you ever experienced a friendship like that between Naomi and Ruth, two women from different cultures, where – again in a very difficult situation –

one says to the other: "I'll stay with you whatever come, your God will be my God (!)"? What a promise in a moment, when the other woman, full of grief, cannot do anything else other than accept this wonderful gift of care and friendship. What is your way of living friendships?

Or take the story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10: 38–42), you're probably familiar with that one. Maybe you've already heard it several times. Remember the situation? Mary listens to Jesus while Martha works in the kitchen all the time. Later on, Martha complains to Jesus about the laziness of her sister. How would you evaluate this relationship between those two? Was Mary more at fault than Martha? And what does your opinion say about the role you play in your family? Don't we embody sometimes both figures? At least I could tell that – depending on the constellation of persons – I am sometimes more the Mary type and at other times I feel like a Martha.

Let's move a little deeper into the story. What does Jesus respond to Martha? He does not say: "Martha, it is bad that you cook and clean all the time!" But with his words, he makes it clear: "Martha, you are a strong woman! Don't complain behind Maria's back! Communicate with your sister and tell Mary if she's not attentive enough to see that you need help!"

And now imagine a new end to the story. When Jesus comes to visit, Martha kindly asks her sister for a little help. Jesus stands up, offers Martha his place, and walks into the kitchen...

Since January, a group of Peace Church women meet once a month at Rahel's house to listen and talk about these biblical women's lives. Each time we start our sessions with some music, a prayer and then we read together a chapter of the book "Just a Sister Away", written by the Afro-American Old Testament professor Renita Weems.

In the Bible, we find many stories of people with God in all its diversity: ups and downs in life, fortunate encounters, radical crashes and unexpected turnarounds. God is everywhere – also there, where He is misunderstood because He carries the lives of all people, then and today.

So what makes it worth to think especially about the relationships of women in the Bible? First, looking at women in the Bible means to make unknown stories known. It means not to forget about the victims. For example, the daughter of Jephthah

(Judges 11: 1–40), who is killed because her father made a foolish vow after winning a battle ("Whoever comes out of the door of my house when I return I will offer as a burnt offering"). It also means to take a closer look at the ones, who seem to play a minor role in the big stories. A familiar context in which the women and their lives were commonly disregarded, however much more frequently and worse than that of the 21st century.

Second, I think that is what our Christian community is for. We can't live our faith alone. We need others to get aware of God and the hidden things we would not discover on our own. We can grow and change our lives together, but also train to tolerate different perspectives.

What can we, women *and* man, read and learn from these stories today? Again, some questions we reflected in our group:

1. Are there situations in our life, where we abuse our position that may be more powerful than the one of someone else?
2. How did we grow up and experience(d) life in all its beauty, but also cruelty?
3. Are we trapped at certain points in our lives and God is calling us out?
4. What does God want for us, where do we need healing?
5. And finally a challenging question for women: How can we learn to grow in our sisterhood instead of underlining our difficulties and differences?

Curious now? All women are warmly invited to join our next meeting on Thursday the 13th of June at Hohenschwangauplatz 6 from 7pm to 9 pm.

Confirmation Class Weekend Away

by John LaMaster

Friday morning I told a friend at work that I was going on a trip with the confirmands that weekend and that I would be responsible for preparing the meals. As most people would, she asked me where we were going on this trip. I rechecked the emails and document Pastor Christine sent me and promptly replied, "Keine Ahnung!" I knew when to show up and where. Other than that, I was just along for the ride.

The drive through the countryside to the Chiemsee was beautiful. Once we arrived and got settled, everyone headed to the kitchen to make pizzas.

One of my favorite aspects of this weekend was the fellowship while cooking together and eating together. I had the opportunity to spend time with each of the confirmands preparing the food and straightening up after the meals. On Saturday, we prepared a Biblisches Mahl using only foods that were available in biblical times. We split off into groups, each group preparing part of the meal such as the bowl of dried fruits and nuts, the lentil soup, the vegetables, and the bread.

Saturday evening was especially funny. While preparing the food for lunch on Sunday, Steven accepted a “challenge” while cutting all the onions. His face was so close to the onions, he looked like an old man trying to read a menu, but he forgot his glasses at home. Steven was crying because of the onions, everyone else was crying from laughing so hard! In between taking pictures, Solomon and I got to talk about our favorite parts of the Avengers movies.

We spent Friday and Saturday evening playing Dixit together. It was my first time playing, so I watched for a while before I jumped in. At times it got a little competitive, but whether you were watching or playing it was a lot of fun. Plus it gave me the chance to get to know everyone a little better. We wrapped up the trip with a very nice communion service devised and acted out by the confirmands and then concluded with a nice lunch and some freshly baked peach crumble with vanilla ice cream. This was a very nice weekend together and I hope everyone else enjoyed our time together as much as I did.

We would like to introduce...

Name/family: **Hutapea, Augustinus & Mediana with teenage kids: Jonathan & Josephine**

Where do you come from/where do you live here? **We are native Indonesians. Now our “Zuhause” is Germany. We live in Unterhaching, just a mile from work and neighbourhood high school.**

How long have you been in Germany? **Since 1st July 2018. Wife and twins came a week before the school year started.**

Why did you come to Germany? **Passion to continue working & contribute before retirement age. Indonesian retirement age is 56 years, but in Germany it's 67 yrs.**

Are you here forever or temporarily? **Long-term. I was in Berlin from 1972-79 when my father brought along family to educate himself. I would like to follow my father's footsteps, & have brought my family for that same experience.**

What is your profession/job? **Employee at Infineon Technologies AG, as Quality Manager.**

Hobbies? **Everything that is greater joy to be enjoyed together ... family cycling, hiking, Zumba, get connected in social media...**

Which are your favourite meals? **Bavarian Weißwurst, Schnitzel, Schweinshaxe**

How did you find Peace Church? **During one of our quest journey to explore Munich (by bus towards Giesing).**

What do you like best at Peace Church? **The fellowship and diversity of multinationals.**

What are you responsible for at Peace Church? **Giving ourselves & our talents from God...**

What does the Christian faith mean to you? **Faith is believing that God sent His Son as our saviour here on earth. He is present, when all I hear is silence. Faith means obeying God even when questions remain answered.**

Favourite stories of the Bible? **Most of the Bible stories that I can recite to our kids as desired.**

Wishes or dreams for the mission of Peace Church? **Solid in diversity as one strong community in building relationship and peace.**



Peace Church Calendar

Weekly events:

Coffee&more on Mondays 13-16.30h
Homework Club on Fridays 14-17h

Monthly events:

Prayer supper on Tuesday 17.30-19h
Women's Bible Study on Thursday 19-21h
Kids' Club on the first Sat of the month 10.30-14.30h

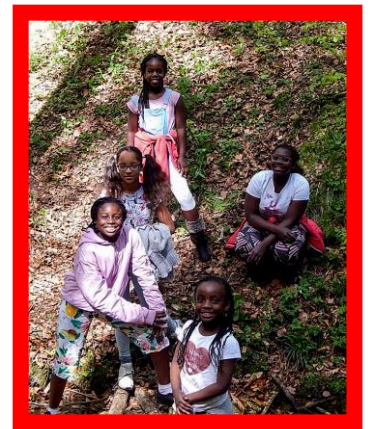
Seasonal Bible studies on Sunday mornings with Jeff Buck according to announcements

June

Sunday 2 June	Communion Worship, Sunday School & Church Coffee
Sunday 9 June	Pentecost all-age Worship & Church Coffee
Sunday 16 June	Sunday Worship, Sunday School & Church Coffee
Thursday 20 June	Midsummer Potluck Dinner & Concert in the Church Yard
Sunday 23 June	Sunday Worship, Sunday School & Church Coffee
Sunday 30 June	Sunday Worship, Sunday School & Church Coffee

July

Sunday 7 July	Communion Worship: Kids Help Kids
Sunday 14 July	Sunday Worship, Sunday School & Church Coffee
Sunday 21 July	Sunday Worship, Sunday School & Church Coffee
Sunday 28 July	Sunday Worship, Sunday School & Church Coffee



Impressum

Your suggestions, comments and contributions are welcome. Deadline for the next issue is 8 July. Please include a photo if possible. (Reports may be edited.) 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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