



Newsletter of the English-Speaking United Methodist Congregation in Munich: March 2021

## ...life is simple

A Meditation on Mark 1: 14-20  
Jesus Calling the First Disciples  
by Sabrina Gill

Life is simple. Your heart beats, your lungs fill with air all by themselves, without any effort, without a conscious thought being sent to the organs. The blood flows through one's body, just as rivers flow and can't be stopped. Life is a perfect construction whereby everything falls into place the way it needs to.

Of course, this claim of mine only works when one views it on the basis of the absolute simplest aspects. Breath and the workings of the body is one example. A lot of people would disagree with my statement of life being simple. Sickness, bills, work and raising children can make this claim of simplicity unstable. I'm quite sure that many people amongst us would in fact say that life is very complicated. Full of twists and turns, full of mysteries and frustrations. Full of time feeling lost or stuck or both at the same time.

Jesus and his disciples show us how simple life can become, when you follow God. Jesus sees Simon and his brother Andrew whilst they're fishing. Jesus only had to say one sentence to them and immediately they followed him. James and John even leave in the presence of their father. In the middle of

their task of fishing for food they get up and follow Jesus.

There probably were farewells. Maybe they had time to quickly fetch their favorite blanket before leaving their home, but they probably didn't do much more. The bible wouldn't have documented it so short and simple hadn't it occurred in this way. At least that's how I choose to see it, because in this story the simplicity of choosing God, choosing to follow something deeper and more meaningful than even food or family is beautifully demonstrated.

Before the action of following comes the action of choosing. This is also theoretically simple but not easy. It means saying "yes" every day in as many moments of one's life as possible. This can seem impossible when dealing with strong emotions inside oneself. Anger, disappointment, resentment and many other strongly negatively charged feelings can lead to doubt in our power of choice. We can get so worked up, our minds can be so loud that we don't hear the voice of reason and wisdom anymore because our inner child is screaming for attention and making our inner life extremely chaotic and messy like a kid throwing a tantrum banging, shouting, scraping, knocking and kicking. No, it is definitely not easy but always simple.

Jesus is saying "follow me" to all of us and the disciples of Jesus show how this is done. Through simplicity. Simply by realizing the choice we always have at our disposal and then saying yes. That's all it is. That's all one has to do. To live a life with God you just

follow him. The rest will sort itself out. Just like the breath flowing in and out, life will flow and be ok.

A lot of people probably don't want to believe this. They think about all the work they have put in to have things or to keep up this mask of a persona that they have worked so hard at obtaining. They don't want to admit or realize that it was all in vain, because there is no secret to a perfect life. The perfect life is to follow. Call it what makes sense to you. You can say that you follow your heart, your intuition, that true voice inside you. It all means the same. It all means following God.



## ...we are the church

News from Peace Church Life  
by Pastor Christine



### How Can We Stay in Touch

It is February 2021. I have not seen some of you for almost a year. Many of our church friends are in church occasionally so I feel I know how they are doing. Email, telephone,

skype and other options help us to stay in touch. The old snail mail is used more than ever before in the life of Peace Church. Christmas Cards were sent out and Christmas presents for the church children. Most families reacted to this and send little messages letting us know that they are doing fine.

### Sunday Worship

A fairly consistent group of 35 to 45 people come together for the family services at 12 noon on Sundays. For the Sunday Evening Prayer we have a regular group of 10 to 20 people. Both services are shorter than our services were before Corona. I am thankful that Philippuskirche is such a huge space that we can meet without fear or risk. We strictly observe the Corona rules and regulations given to the churches by the government. We are glad that church can still be open for worship, and we know what responsibility we have keeping our church comers safe.

A big 'Thank You' goes, of course, to all who help put the services together and deliver them. Young people are helping with stories and readings in many creative ways. We have plenty of old and new(!) worship leaders, preachers and musicians. Especially the evening service on Sundays has become a place where people can try out their talents. Other than in the "big" services, the meditative evening prayer encourages (young) people to try out their ability to preach, read, and play music in public worship. We feel very blessed with all this, although Corona, and the limitations which come with it, makes us sometimes feel strange and certainly outside our comfort zone.

### In the Pulpit

Last year in March Becky had written a beautiful sermon for a Sunday in Lent. There was no chance to preach it because on 15 March 2020 the first serious lockdown came. She kept it of course and is preaching it now – almost a year later. Konrad wrote his first sermon for an evening prayer. Rahel and Izzy, Megan and Jonas, Pastors Reiner and Christine led worship and preached. Lily

and Irene began leading worship. So did Katie Gill. Saby preached twice in the past months and, by the way, began studying theology. John Lamaster promised a sermon for March. After a funny and fantastic Peacecast he made for us, Christine asked Christian if he wanted to try out preaching. And he does! Kat is a great asset. She preaches, leads worship and plays the piano. I think, we are a great team supporting and encouraging each other tremendously in these strange times of the pandemic. We feel, we belong together and have work to do: The work of God in a time when people need courage, comfort, dreams and visions even more than at other times.

### Music

In spite of people we have not seen since the first shutdown, we still have musicians who can fill the services with music. Music in the air is so important – especially since we are not allowed to sing anymore. Katie, Konrad, and Kat are doing a great job at the piano. Phil and his guitar help a lot. Martin Bernhard from Philippuskirche enriches us with admirable flexibility and great skills. Reiner and his various recorders have filled our services with new tunes. Bright and Svenja with their singing (when it was allowed) and playing are a blessing. So many relationships grow despite the “distancing” – this must surely be God at work.

### Kids and Youth

No physical meetings with kids and young people are allowed. We even had to give up the Homework Club. Individual teachers are in touch with individual students. They work on projects on the phone and via WhatsApp. I admire their imagination and patience. Sunday School, Teens and Kids' Club are completely on hold. When last year we had to cancel our beloved Easter retreat for Kids in Kundl, Austria, we all hoped it would take place this year, but there is no way that we could organise it. Should openings for kids and youth come, I am sure, our first gatherings will be open air events such as picnics and meetings at playgrounds, in parks and by the river. Let us hope that the

warmer weather will allow some small get-togethers.

I am still sending fun packs out to many families to keep the children entertained. It is at least a little something which I can do. Today I packed story bags with items for storytelling. I am sure the kids and their parents will like them, but I would so much more prefer to do the storytelling with the young people myself.

### Women's World Day of Prayer

Last year the WWDP took place just a week before the first lockdown. Ecumenical women from the English-speaking churches in Munich met in the chapel of the Catholic community in Kaulbachstrasse. This year we will not have a service on an ecumenical basis at all. This is a shame, but it can't be helped. At Peace Church Katie and I decided to use the liturgy designed for the first Friday in March and worship with it on the first Sunday in March. So, on 7 March, we will sing and pray with the words that women on the tiny islands of Vanuatu have prepared.

The scattered islands of Vanuata are just over 1,100 miles to the east of Australia in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. This cluster of islands, stretching about 400 miles, form a Y shape on the maps. Europeans began living there in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. There was a sharing of administration between France and the UK. Vanuatu became independent in 1980.

The writing committee for the WWDP 2021 liturgy was formed from all the different denominations and islands of Vanuatu. They met together to prepare the service about building on a strong foundation. They all understand about the need for safe buildings as the islands are in the South Pacific tropical cyclone zone. Cyclone Pam caused great devastation in 2015 and the islands were just beginning to recover when, in 2020, cyclone Harold destroyed everything in its path. Life on these tiny islands is unsafe, broken and battered, and yet there is hope as we shall see in the service on 7 March. The confident and faithful women of Vanuatu ask us to help them pray for their threatened lives and help them change them.

A group of Peace Church women around Christine and Katie will organize this service.

### **Pastoral Support and Counseling**

Pastor Christine is happy to meet people for “walks and talks”. With all the rules for social distancing we cannot meet in groups inside of buildings. But we can meet in parks and on walks. We can arrange times and places where we can see each other in the open air, wearing our Corona masks and sharing our stories, worries, hopes and plans. Feel free to book an appointment with Christine. She also does home visits if you cannot leave your house. Never hesitate to ask her to come when you need it. She will.

### **Council on Ministries**

We haven't met as a council in person for a while. The last meeting was in December just before the second strict lockdown. What was clear in December is that all council members are concerned about and committed to staying in touch with people. I think somehow everyone in church is connected with someone. When I ask in a small group how people are doing, there is always someone who knows. This is a comfort and a blessing. I hope and pray that the ties which bind us together will continue to work among us, that we will hold each other up in prayer, and look forward to the day when we all – young and old, sick and healthy, weak and strong - shall meet again in church.

### **Bible Study**

Kat and Christian had offered to initiate a new home group at their place. Before they could start with it, Corona appeared and prevented people from meeting. We still plan to start this new and lovely meeting when Corona regulations allow it.

The women's group who reads Catherine Keller's book “On the Mystery” is now meeting online too. We all miss the physical meetings and long for the spring when we can maybe meet and read in the park near the church or in someone's garden.

### **Confirmation**

I am teaching confirmation class as a book course and the kids send me their homework in the post. I correct it and send it back. Some of us see each other occasionally in the worship services. We hope to be able to celebrate a confirmation service in early summer.

Also, in the summer we would love to meet for a big African-style feast. We want to make up for the simple and careful African Harvest of 2020 and be able to sing and dance and rejoice without limitations. We must make plans otherwise we become depressed and paralysed. So let us hope for a joyful, colourful and lively summer!

### **Easter**

With no services at Easter last year, there is a serious longing for worship opportunities at Easter this year. The plan is to have a family worship on Palm Sunday at noon, and an evening prayer at 6pm. On Good Friday one service with Stations of the Cross could take place. On Easter Sunday we could have an All-age Easter service with the careful sharing of bread and grapes, and a quiet and meditative prayer time in the evening. All provided that infections numbers will go down and allow us to meet with each other.



### **Pastor Christine and Family Are Moving House**

On 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2021 Christine, Reiner and Nico will move out of their home in Putzbrunn. They found a wheelchair-friendly and big enough ground floor apartment in an old farmhouse outside Glonn, called Hafelsberg. The little hamlet is in the middle of beautiful countryside but 30 kilometres away from Philippuskirche. All

three of them will continue working in Munich: Reiner as a hospital chaplain in Martha-Maria in Solln, Christine at Peace Church, and Nico at the Heckscher Klinik in Giesing. Christine will try work in Philipuskirche on Wednesdays. She can use the church secretary's office.

**Pastor Christine will be on leave from 2 to 22 March 2021 to prepare and organize the move.**

### **Pastoral Assistant**

With our (Christine and family) moving further out of the city, and the promising new arrival of Kat Wagner at Peace Church, I am thankful that the Council on Ministries decided to employ Kat on a "minijob" basis as a Pastoral Assistant. The Bishop's office and the Superintendent gave their approval! I am very much looking forward to the cooperation with Kat beginning in March this year. (So far we have worked together really well and Kat has been of great help). Kat will preach and lead worship, lead a future Bible study and/or home group and help with all sorts of publicity jobs. New beginnings are so important to us. Let's enjoy them and make the most of them.

## **...about Kat**

Hi everyone. I am Kat Wagner. Here's a little bit of background about me: My hometown is Reading in the UK, but my parents and siblings are now dispersed across four countries: England, Wales, USA and Germany!

I grew up attending a large, multicultural Baptist Church, and it was at age 16 on the church summer camp when the gospel message 'clicked' for me in a personal way. After university (where I studied biology and geography), I took part in YWAM's Discipleship Training School, and then worked for 11 years for BMS World Mission (the Baptist Missionary Society) in grant management and partnership support for development projects around the world. This included some amazing visits to Chad and Afghanistan, among other places.

I learned a lot from colleagues and friends about faith and mission, but it was through some really tough times in my mid-20s that I started a journey of really exploring questions of faith and spirituality. Richard Rohr's teachings and books continue to influence and inspire me. Sensing that I needed to explore something new, in 2018 I took the plunge and sold my flat, left my job, (unexpectedly met a handsome German man at a friend's wedding) and joined the Scargill Movement to live for one year as part of an international ecumenical Christian Community where we followed a rhythm of prayer and welcomed guests for retreats.



It has been my pleasure to be a part of Peace Church since I arrived in Munich, just over one year ago. I am now married to Christian (we had a lovely 'lockdown wedding' in September last year). I am slowly improving my German language, and enjoy weekend walks in the mountains and playing Catan!

I am really excited to be working alongside Pastor Christine and to be getting more engaged in the life of Peace Church.

Yours, Kat Wagner.

## Prayer

**Into the Hands of God – a prayer which we pray at Peace Church in the noon time family service every Sunday**

In our prayers today,  
we put all thoughts and worries and hopes  
into the hands of God.

You may like to hold your own hands  
in front of you as you pray.

Let us pray:

**We place into the hands of God  
the life of this church,  
the people around us,  
and those who are not here today.**

We place into the hands of God  
our difficulties and frustrations,  
and our hopes and our worries  
about the future.

**We place into the hands of God  
the life of the church in all the world,  
all people in the world who bring God's  
love to others.**

Loving God, as you have blessed us,  
make us a blessing to your world.

**We place into the hands of God  
a world that needs peace,  
a world that needs wisdom,  
a world that needs healing.**

We place into the hands of God  
the leaders of every nation,  
the poor of our own and every land,  
those who live in fear,  
and all who hold the lives of others in their  
hands.

**Loving God, you have poured such love  
into your world.**

**Show us how to help make it  
a more loving place. Amen.**

## Sermons & Meditations

A booklet with sermons and meditations preached at Peace Church since May 2020 is coming out this month. It will be sent out to the church members and friends in the Munich area in the mail. It can be found on the Website as a PDF document. And you can order it from Pastor Christine. Kat Wagner and Pastor Christine hope that you will like the collection and make good use of it.



### The Lockdown Collection of Sermons & Meditations



*Sermons, meditations and reflections  
shared at Peace Church during the Corona-virus pandemic*

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### Impressum

Your suggestions, comments and contributions are welcome. Deadline for the next issue is 20 March. If you would like to receive future issues by e-mail, please send a message to [christine@peacechurch.de](mailto:christine@peacechurch.de), simply type "PCN by mail" and we will add your address to the list.

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