



Newsletter of the English Speaking United Methodist Congregation in Munich: Pentecost 2020

It's Our Birthday – the Church Begins...

by Pastor Christine

It is our birthday in so many ways this year. After a long break due to the Corona crisis we open our church again. The last service was tiny – just a handful of people on 15 March. Ever since churches were shut. We missed each other tremendously & found the most adventurous ways of remaining in touch with each other & staying connected.

This Pentecost Peace Church is turning 36 years old. It's our birthday! The birthday of all those who have been, who are & who will be members, visitors & friends of the United Methodist English-speaking congregation in Munich.

It all began in 1984. Pastor Cheryl Rhodes had come to the Augsburg area with her husband who was in the US army. She assumed that there would be many English speakers in the Augsburg-Munich area who would like to worship in English. Since she was a pastor without assignment, she got in touch with the Methodists in Munich revealing her plan to start a small English-speaking Methodist congregation.

She remembers how in the first weeks they were passing out invitation flyers in Marienplatz to invite

people to the new church. In those early months the first refugees showed up. Expats & emigrants found their way to the church, & tourists found help when stranded in the foreign land. So, it's had the challenges we have now, right from the beginning. The only difference is that the church kept growing in numbers, tasks and missions. A reason for great gratitude! Cheryl Rhodes remembers how they celebrated their first anniversary with readings of the Pentecost story from the Book of Acts in many different languages...

Jim Dwyer who came as a pastor in 1992 remembers how he began with a handful of people, & how difficult it was to establish a church structure. As the congregation grew many children were baptized whose parents had come as refugees & would probably remain in the country, therefore establishing a second generation. The congregation grew steadily & became more and more colourful. People from all over the world, & people of all colours of skin & many different ethnic backgrounds did not only start worshipping at Peace Church, but also began taking on responsibility & reaching out to new and more folk. Today we are often filling Philippuskirche on Sundays with 80 adults and 50 children.

But it is not only the birthday of Peace Church on Pentecost, it is the birthday of the Christian church all together. Pentecost is the day on which we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit which came as it is described in Acts, like a rushing wind, a flickering tongue of fire, which sent those gathered out into the streets to the crowd, to tell them what was happening. This is the Spirit which made them so excited that people thought that they must have had too much to drink – at nine o'clock in the morning. This is the Spirit which calls us to move as well – especially in this time of Pentecost: to act, to take courage, to live the heights and depths of the life God gives us, to pray, to weep, to sing, to grieve, to be angry, to laugh, to confess, to challenge, to change – ourselves & the world we live in.

The story of Pentecost begins with the disciples on their own in a room, shut up alone, in their tight-knit group. **The Spirit comes, & suddenly they are on the street amongst the people gathered from throughout the world, shouting about what God had done. Now, this is not exactly what we are asked to do in those Corona times with social distancing and shut-down.**

But one thing that was true then is true today too: God's spirit turns people, opens them, shifts their focus – all things we need desperately at the moment. The first Pentecost people in Acts 2 were then free from fear. The events of Pentecost had called the Jesus followers into the freedom of God! That is my wish for us too: fearlessness because we are loved & led by God. God's grace sets people free and gives them courage.

God's Spirit brings us the gift of God's freedom and opens us to the eternity of God's truth. The Spirit challenges us to see where the rushing winds break through the gates of our existence & move us through & out & on. It challenges us to open the closed doors of the rooms in which we find ourselves, move on even though we don't feel safe and secure, move out into the world of all those who suffer from illness, oppression, discrimination, persecution.

With our eyes opened to God's freedom and truth, with our memories of the times before Corona, we can follow God's call to dream God's dream, see the vision of the "new heaven and the new earth" and believe in and work for something better – with the means we have now and with the wonderful talents and ideas we will be given for an uncertain future.

Let our prayer be:

"O Holy Spirit, whose presence is liberty, grant us that freedom of the Spirit which will not fear to tread in unknown ways, nor be held back by misgivings of ourselves and fear of others. Ever beckon us forward to the place of your will, which is also the place of your power, oh ever-leading, ever-loving God. Amen."



Opening the Church Again Time for Experiments

It's time for experiments! Yes! Trying out new things... No risk, no fun!

We have to reshape our church life and invent worship services new. We have to learn to live with ideas & plans which may only last a week or two, & then we may have to change things again. We must be open to trying out, we must be willing to make mistakes & let others make mistakes. And in all this we are invited to see how manifold our ideas & talents are, how flexible we are, how imaginative, rich, maybe sometimes crazy we can be.



So, when we re-open the church we must be prepared for many things that have changed and will surprise us.

With the Covid-19 regulations...

- We are allowed 50 places in the Philippuskirche building. They are signed with a cross. Where there is no cross one must not sit! Families must sit together, couples, households too.
- We are only allowed services; no Bible studies, no Sunday School, no church coffee, no meetings, no choirs, no music group, no hanging around and chatting with each other after the service – neither in the church nor on the sidewalks in front of the church. (If you want to meet us with someone – only persons from one other household – you must organize that beforehand and privately).
- There are strict regulations for the use of bathrooms. Signs and markings will guide people.
- The fellowship hall must not be used.
- Before entering the church everybody must pass by a table with disinfectant spray (for the hands), masks (can be given to people if they don't have their own), a sheet with regulations how to stick to the social distancing and the protection of each other, a service sheet, and a list with the participants names and telephone numbers.
- At such a table we need 5 stewards who inform people, help with disinfection, hand out papers and lead the people to their seats. They must sit where seated and nowhere else.
- No walking around the church unless you are asked to. Parents must make sure their children stay with them!!!
- Singing is allowed but we must wear our masks.
- Everybody has to keep a distance of 2 metres around themselves. No touching, no hugging, no kissing... No physical contact!
- No sharing of any food, toys, presents or other things. (this sounds not very Christian, but here we go...).
- We have to use one door (our current main entrance) for entering the church, and the door at the front right-hand side to exit the church. Arrows on the floor will show people the way where they can walk.
- We are not allowed to use hymnals or instruments. No other materials or visuals.
- If you are invited to an activity, stick strictly to the rules the worship leaders tell you. (There will be a prayer wall in the church. Please note that you will have to bring along and use your own pen!)
- A worship service must not be longer than 40 minutes.
- After the blessing and while the postlude is played people must begin leaving the church, one after the other, with 2 metres distance in between each person – exceptions are families. Families are asked to leave together!
- The pastor will be standing at the exit to bless you with a bow. Someone else will be holding an offering plate to give you the opportunity to donate to the church who desperately needs your money. (With every service which did not take place we are missing around 200€), so please consider giving generously.

On Pentecost Sunday, 31 May 2020, we offer a “worship service to go”. The church is open from 12 noon to 3pm, with short services starting at 12noon, 1pm and 2 pm. They last for 30 to 40 minutes, then music is played until the next worship part begins. Each little worship will be exactly the same, so, you won't miss out on anything.

Please do not all come at 12 noon, plan on coming at 1pm or 2pm too.

We can only let about 50 people in, then people have to wait. We will let new people in after the first ones have left. Please plan in that you may have to wait and don't be frustrated, if waiting is the case. Thank you!

Most important is that we are allowed to meet again and that we rejoice in what we have now and dream big of a better future. Let us all look forward to meeting again!

But: no pressure at all. If anyone feels better to stay home a little longer, this is perfectly fine. We all need to be responsible for ourselves, make sure we feel comfortable and safe with what we do, and we need to take care of ourselves.

We love each other and respect each other's decisions.

Lots of love and many blessings, Pastor Christine

Keeping the Church Kids Happy



Impressum

Your suggestions, comments and contributions are welcome. Deadline for the next issue is 20 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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