

# REPORTS FROM REGIONS

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## EVENTS – FINANCES – FUTURE PLANS

### NO. 54 ADVENT 2011

#### **Australia and New Zealand**

From 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> November the priests working and retired in Australia and New Zealand will have Synod meetings in Melbourne – we gather biannually in different congregations in the region. Anand Mandaiker is travelling from Germany to join us, and afterwards will go on to New Zealand where he will celebrate the marriage of Hartmut Borries (priest in Auckland) and Lis Alington on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November. This will be a wonderful event in the Auckland congregation and many of the rest of us who cannot make the trip to join them in the festivities, will certainly be with them in spirit. We are all wishing Hartmut and Lis a blessed onward journey.

Earlier this year, at the end of April, we held an Australian Youth Conference in Alice Springs – Star Tracks. There were 33 young people aged from 13 to 18 from Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. Lisa Devine (priest in Sydney) arranged a full cultural program which took us into the heart of country and the culture of some of the aboriginal people in the centre of Australia – and every time we walked to the shops in Alice Springs for provisions, we saw in the raw a picture of the social challenges faced by our Australian people. We were supported in such a unique gathering of young people by The Christian Community in Holland, through the Youth Fund. It is with deep gratitude that we acknowledge this gift which enabled youth in our far-flung congregations to come together and to share such life changing, cultural and spiritual experiences. We see this event as a seed for future networks of young people in our region to evolve.

In our region of Australia & New Zealand we are quietly consolidating and emerging from a recent past where relationships and finances were shaken through investment of property which was caught up in the world financial crisis of 2008, and in loss of priests working in our region. We now share a vision to find the way, over vast distances, with congregations which are of necessity, fairly independent, to become ‘one cloth’ – we’ll keep you posted on what that looks like as it happens! Star Tracks, national ‘spiritual retreats’ and consolidation by priests sharing our tasks, and by sharing of financial resources, have all been achieved in 2011 through good-will – creating greater unity and even more goodwill.

Cheryl Nekvapil

#### **Bavaria**

Nothing new to report.

Dorothea Humérez

#### **Central Germany**

no message

### **France and francophone Belgium**

In the 2011 St John's news-sheet, we informed you that the „Chapelle de la Colombe“ in Colmar had been damaged through arson that had started in a car nearby and also reached six neighbouring houses. Compared to the neighbours, the damages were limited and the insurance company has finally, half a year later, fixed the amount of the damages: around € 40,000 that will fortunately be paid by them. The repairs could begin end of November. The problem is not the postponement of the work, because immediately after the fire the rooms were cleaned and provisionally repaired. The big worry is that the local administrative officers have since April advised against being open to the public. The congregation of Colmar turned to an expert who assured that the building was quite save. But the administrative officers did not change their position, and because of this the insurance company stopped insuring the activities of the congregation. Therefore, since June all the activities of the congregation have been confined to the ground floor. We hope all will be normalized after the repairs are done. But it could be that the administrative officers come back to look at the overall security of the building! To be continued...

Christine Krüger

### **Great Britain and Ireland**

In November the Region holds its National Community Meeting. This developed over decades from what had been a kind of AGM with financial and other reports; now it is a short conference – still with reports – where members can meet and experience a deepening of their connection to the Community. The theme of this year's meeting, which took place in Stourbridge, was “Christ the Healer in the Depths of the Soul -- the Truth will make you free”. There was a strong artistic component, with Social Sculpture, Eurhythmics and singing. The first evening was a departure – there was no opening lecture, but an encounter in a so-called ‘conversation café’ – small groups seated around tables, talking on a series of questions such as what was a highpoint of your year; what are you hoping for from this meeting. This set the tone for an encounter through the whole weekend of great warmth and depth. Between 30 and 40 people attended.

Tom Ravetz

### **Italy**

On the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2011 Mrs Luisa Testa was introduced by the Lenker Walther Giezendanner and in the presence of Mrs Marie-Pierrette Robert, member of the Circle of Seven (Siebenerkreis), as the new priestess in Bologna. Approximately 100 members, friends and guests took part in this occasion. After 18 months of priestly work in St Gallen Mrs Testa celebrated for the first time in her native language in front of her congregation in Italy.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 the “**Associazione della Comunità dei Cristiani in Italia**” (Italian Association of the country with its seat in Bologna) decided on new statutes, which will authorize them to make an application for the acknowledgement as a non-profit organization. The statutes have to be approved by the Prefecture. The Prefecture demands a dedicated deposit of € 50,000 to be paid into a blocked account as security. Italy is still in the stranglehold of the Roman law. That makes us quite dizzy. In my memory the popular song resounds. “Who shall pay that, who owns so much money? Who has so many lose coins ...?” The flat on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Via Pallotti 14, the former residence of the congregation, will be relinquished, and a new hall on the ground level of the same building, now numbered 14 d, will be furnished as place of worship. This conversion requires a great deal of money which, for now, we do not know where to raise it. The year 2012 will be declared as a test run with four priests. Depending on the outcome we will then decide whether and how it shall go on.

Heinz Lüscher, Gubbio

### **Japan**

For your sympathy and help we received after the catastrophes we want to thank you whole-heartedly in this way. The most important question for us now is what we are going to make of it in future. It was strongly felt that you intensified your prayers. And the amount of your donations has been increased up to € 27,000. Beside other things we use the contribution for the removal of a family from Fukushima to Osaka, for Geiger counters and a conference in Nasu, the entrance to the region of Fukushima, which has been heavily contaminated by radiation. Unfortunately, we couldn't make use of your splendid offer that especially children should flee to you, as it is not quite so simple for their parents. We shall certainly not forget that there are these offers and we keep praying for their journeys through life.

However, financing our work has become much more difficult. Before the end of the year financial resources for our budget have become scant, and liquidity is limited, so that we have to ask again for donations. That is our situation just now, although since one year the new premises in Tokyo are filled with prayers and activities of the congregation and, at the same time, we hope for new premises in Osaka, a district not affected by the catastrophes. After the foundation in 2000 we finally have reached zero point when we are just given hopeful new tasks. The Finance committee, the Regional council and the Circle of priests together will send a letter to members and friends, who presently number 84 and 251 people.

With heart-felt greetings, Urara Koshiishi

### **Netherlands and Flanders**

The region has been shocked by the sudden death, at November 2<sup>nd</sup>, of Ellen Huidekoper at the age of 55 years. She received the priest's ordination in 1985, worked in the congregations of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, was Lenker of the region and also a member of the Circle of Seven. She retired early on health grounds in 2007.

Budgets for 2012 will be presented in these months. The main financial discussion focuses on the Allowance Fund, since there will be a similar deficit in 2012 as for this year, approx. € 65,000. Recent forecasts show that a deficit will continue for the coming years. The treasurers have decided to be included in the discussion in order to get a more complete picture on the future developments. The house of Craig Wiggins in Arnhem has finally been sold after two years. It is obvious that in the present situation it will be much easier to buy a house than to sell.

The congregations of Arnhem and Eindhoven are working hard on their building plans and on their fund raising activities. They will publish before the end of the year a joint building newsletter to raise more funds. They hope to actually start their building activities in the course of 2012.

A working group, existing of four members of the synod and two members of the regional board, have started up the planning of the international Whitsun conference in 2016.

The regional board is expecting quite a change in its composition. Almost all lay members of the board will be stepping down in the next two to three years, so finding new members has at the moment the highest priority.

Peter Rosenbrand

### **North-America**

no message

### **Northern Germany**

Nothing new to report.

Christine Berg

### **Northern Countries**

no message

### **Rumania**

no message

### **Austria and South-East Europe**

no message

### **Switzerland**

In the previous issue of the *Information* we reported that Fridolin Jenny who was the former Koordinator in Switzerland died suddenly. Unfortunately the date in the report was wrong. He passed away during the night time of 26<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

Marianne Zimmermann (Secretary for the Lenker and the union of the congregations)

### **Southern Africa**

no message

### **South-America, Spain and Portugal**

There will be three new placements at the same time in South-America, something we never before had in our region.

In *Cali* we will say good-bye to Emilia Hosmann after nine years of pioneering work on the 20<sup>th</sup> November, and on the 11<sup>th</sup> December she will be introduced in her "hometown" *Buenos Aires*. In *Sao Paulo* Consuelo Vallespir Machado took her leave on the 11<sup>th</sup> September, and after a transitional period in *Lima* she will start in *Cali* on the 20<sup>th</sup> November, initially for one year. After period of vocational adjustment in *Buenos Aires*, Fernando Chevallier Boutell, who has been ordained in June this year, will be instituted in *Sao Paulo* on the 27<sup>th</sup> November, at first for one year. Fortunately, as the contributions by our congregations to the Region are still minimal, the expenses for these removals, which are very high for our circumstances and include benefits for three children, will be covered by a bequest which we had expected for a long time and which arrived this year.

In 2012, *Neuquén*, our aspiring congregation in South-Argentina, hopes to build the annex to their small future church, to install there an improvised chapel and leave the "familiar" environment they inhabit just now.

In *Spain* preparations are made for Nicole Gilabert, who is still in Colmar, that she can start her work there as the second Spanish priest on the 18<sup>th</sup> March.

Maarten de Gans

### **South-West-Germany**

In the region the transition from the former lenker Friedrich Schmidt-Hieber to the new lenker Hellmut Voigt was done.

Friedrich Schmidt-Hieber

### **Czechia**

no message

### **West-Germany**

In June 2012 Mr Diethard Dämpfer from Bochum, who since many years is a member of the regional Finance committee and active in various panels and areas of responsibility in the West-German region, will take over as coordinator from Mr Eckardt, whose term of office has expired. Until then, Mr Dämpfer will be introduced into this task, and he already attends the sessions of the coordinators and the German Conference.

Klaus-Peter Eckardt

### **Wuerttemberg**

no message

### **Seminaries/Stuttgart**

no message

### **Seminaries/Hamburg**

We celebrated! Our little conference on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> recurrence of the foundation of the Hamburg Priests' Seminary on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011 gave a multicoloured picture of the developments through the attendance of an enjoyably great number of friends and sponsors, of students and graduates, which grew out of this initiative and, in the meantime, has become a matter of course. We want to thank again all those people who contributed to the success of this festival, as well as the many people who expressed their relationship with us in writing, although they couldn't attend at this date (as for example the Lenkers gathered in Söcking). As a Christmas-gift 2011 we are preparing the written version of the celebratory lecture by Wolfgang Held on the topic "The Countenance of Christianity Today - Das Antlitz des Christentums heute", whereby our friends and supporters may remember this special moment at the end of the year.

At this hour we are gathered with our advisory council (Alexandra Matschinsky, Kati Kolk, Inken Strauß, Elsbeth Weymann, Lars Karlsson and Dr. Ernst-Jörg von Studnitz). Beside other questions, we are dealing with the problem of the decreasing number of students. There are various reasons: on the one hand we deployed a more rigid procedure of selection during the last years; what's more, it seems to have become more difficult for our students to get out of their biographical, occupational and financial situation before or after the middle of their lives, and to start a new process lasting for years, which naturally must be open-ended. Therefore did we begin to develop a new concept of a complete training course which may be taken up while still working, and which we want to run in future parallel to the fully accredited training course. As we want to proceed painstakingly, we reckon that it takes a longer space of time for this development, before we will be able to offer a concrete scheme.

During the running fiscal year a number of legacies have been initiated or released, beside a very positive general trend in contributions which happened especially around the jubilee, and so the expected result at the end of the year will turn out more favourable than listed in our earlier budget estimate. Nevertheless, we hope for a rich flow of donations in December, so that we may reduce the still existing deficit even more.

Doris Quirling, Ulrich Meier

**Corporation Association (CA)**

As in earlier years the corporation's meeting of the Corporation Association took place in the context of the Kassel meeting. The delegates were told about the activities of the *Deutsche Konferenz* (German Conference) and the budget for 2010 of the CA was presented.

Gerda Wolter, Michael Gerasch, Klaus-Peter Eckardt

**Association of Social Issues**

no message

**Haus Freudenberg**

The married couple Mauricio Ferreira and Ana Rosa Portela from the congregation in Botocatu, who have been working with us in an honorary capacity since September for three months, have decided to work in Haus Freudenberg for one year from January 2012 on within the Federal Voluntary Service (Bundesfreiwilligendienst). We filed an application with the Federal authorities, but for the approval for a visa for one year they both must fly back to Brazil at the end of the month.

The budget for 2012 has been drafted. Also, next year we will have a balanced budget, according to the plan. The largest savings amount to the extent of € 4,000 through the consumption of gas, by changing of the gas-supplier.

Thanks to the help of all the donors and an unexpected legacy was it possible for us to exchange some windows wherever necessary, and provide all others with sealings. The paintwork for the windows is still not decided. We aim at finishing these workings before the two events of the jubilee 2012.

Jutta and Dietmar Reisch

**Haus auf dem Berge**

Nothing new to report

Tobias Knabe

**Publishers/Floris Books**

no message

**Administration of Trusts**

This time nothing new to tell.

Tim Gottschalk

*Translations by M.-E. Förster (most), K. Orłowski (some)*

*End*