

Newsletter May 2010

Dear brothers and sisters,

As we do the work in the local congregation in Thun, we become aware that there is increasingly more work to get engaged in. We could not imagine how we could take our job as missionaries seriously in this stage of church growth and our personal involvement in the work without having your financial support. There are increasingly more challenges in the church and mission opportunities that the small church in Thun face. In this newsletter we like to bring up one issue: Teenagers in the church.

How can we help teenagers grow in their faith?



Lena and I have come to realize what a challenge it is to help teenagers grow in their faith. They come to church, but they may be somewhere else with their thoughts during worship. We invited Benjamin, 15, and Rahel, 13, who are currently the only teenagers that regularly attend church on Sunday morning and that have not made a commitment to be Christians through the act of baptism. We know that they need to be challenged to think more about developing their faith. In our discussion with them, we used soccer as an example to illustrate how faith grows in people. Right now Benjamin and Rahel are

Talking with our teenagers about their faith on our balcony in this illustration in the state of watching a game of soccer when they come to worship on Sunday, but we would like for them to practice juggling the ball themselves. If they want to grow their faith, just as soccer players train on the field and get better at the ability to play with the ball, Benjamin and Rahel need to give time to be reflecting about their own faith. So they change from being watchers to being players. We offered them both to meet sometime so they can ask any questions they have. We want to talk with them and understand where they are as far as their faith is concerned. Are there critical thoughts in their minds toward God and the church? Or are they indifferent? We have had Bible studies with them from time to time, but an answer to this question was hard for us to find. We hope to find out more as we discuss with them more regularly and hope to help them get deeper involved in their faith commitment. We want to be coaching them and they can let us know how intensely they are ready to receive coaching from us.

In many congregations in Switzerland a lot of teenagers, who are children from church members, no longer attend worship on Sunday morning. The congregation in Zurich, for example, used to have a lot of teenagers in the 90's, but most of them left the church. It is sad how teenagers get attracted by many things in their lives and through their particular environment and how only few teenagers become committed Christians. Many teenagers who grew up in churches miss out on what is important in life. Once they leave the congregation, they will most of the time never return. In addition, this can lead to over-aged churches in Switzerland and a lack of leadership in twenty to thirty years. We need to make every effort to change this. We believe that it is already alarming, when teenagers do not come to the Bible study on Wednesday evening. This also is a current challenge in Thun. All young people who are 20 years old or younger only attend worship on Sunday. Lena and I want to find out what we can do so we get children used to make the Wednesday evening study a good habit early in their lives. When a church cannot manage to have its teenagers on Wednesday evening for the church Bible study, it probably will also lose them for

Sunday morning because they have not made a commitment to Christ and the church. We cannot allow the world to extend its influence deliberately to young people who grow up in church.

New Testament Survey

I currently do a survey of the New Testament on Wednesday night and Sunday morning. On Wednesday I do a systematic survey of the New Testament as I have already done it with the Old Testament. The Old Testament survey is the first study material that we put on the churches' website (www.gemeinde-christi/thun.ch). It consists of an introductory lesson and twelve lessons. I chose this same structure for the New Testament survey which is called "With big steps through the New Testament" (four lessons on the Gospels/four on Paul's letters/ and four on the remaining writings). I will later post the New Testament study as well as the study about interpreting the Bible, which I taught this spring, on the website of the church after I will have edited it.

News about People

We were glad to have Ben and Jane O' Neal on May 30. Ben preached on that morning on how to raise children. Ben and Jane are from the Pickerington Church of Christ in Ohio which has been supporting the congregation in Thun for the last two years. This year they have increased their support. Ben and Jane traveled to Italy after that to visit some of the Italian works in Northern Italy. The congregation in Thun took up the first monthly mission contribution for my brother René who works with the congregation in St. Gallen, Switzerland. Slightly over 300 Francs (almost \$350) were collected for the month of May. My brother, René, was very glad about the help he received from the congregation where he grew up and where he preached and taught until the early 90's.

Asking For Your Prayers:

- Elfriede, 81, who takes pills for her liver and suffers from a constant sound in her ears, tinnitus
- Lena's mother who finished undergoing chemotherapy to fight breast cancer
- Peter who has been unemployed since January of this year
- Regina's husband, Peter, is looking for a full-time teaching position for ethnology.
- Babies: Ilja's, Elena's and Jeanette's health and continual growth
- Angelica who is expected to give birth to a child in September
- Anna, 20, who continues to attend church on Sunday morning once or twice a month
- Teenagers of church members – Mathias, 18; Benjamin, 14; Rahel, 13;
- Our new church visitors Daniel and Tine with their three year old Ben
- Ueli, a church visitor, who went to serve in the military service for several months
- Margrit and Johanna who remain indecisive

Any Funds Can Be Sent to Our Overseeing Congregation:

Park Avenue Church of Christ
5295 Park Avenue
Memphis, TN 38119

Grace and Peace,

Ivan + Lena

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