

*The secret to moving forward is to  
to take the first step.*

*The secret to the first step is to  
your complex, overwhelming tasks  
to be divided into many small, manageable  
and then start with the first step.*

**Dear Readers,**

In this newsletter, individual sisters report on the changes in their lives.

**Sister MARGRIT begins:**

The above text spoke to me during my training in meditative dance, which I started in January. Often tasks seem too difficult, too big to me, and every change, every new beginning is a risk. Without the first step, nothing happens, but many small steps make the task manageable, and it can be implemented as a result. Sometimes there are also steps backwards, and the above text made me think of the danced "pilgrim's step", which consists of forward and backward steps. As a result, progress is slow, but it is moving forward, it has something meditative and beneficial.

Since October, I have been offering the opportunity to dance once a month in the "Tent of Encounter". I am looking forward to fellow dancers, even those who would like to get to know meditative dancing.



**Sister TRAUTE writes:**

My journey into the community began over 20 years ago. Living in Schleswig-Holstein, I discovered pilgrimage. Here I got to know the rhythm of the daily prayers. This rhythm of morning, noon and evening prayer structures the day and interrupts me again and again in my actions and aligns me with God. I always found it very beneficial. This was the beginning of my search for a place where I could live it. First of all, I became a pilgrim guide, helped organize and guide many paths in the north of Germany. And then came the call to move to Belau. I really enjoyed the first time with the care of the animals, but soon had to realize that I couldn't physically keep it up for very long. Then it became clear that the administration of the community needed care. This position fell to me, after all, I was a tax clerk and have a long professional experience. I didn't really want to have anything to do with the bureaucracy anymore, but God wanted it differently. So now I take care of our accounting and administration, which is also getting bigger and bigger.

As a result, I gave up pilgrimage for a few years and was happy when I was able to offer our "pilgrimage on the doorstep" here. It is very important to me to convey to people the rhythm of the daily prayers and God's Word, and to get to know our beautiful surroundings. Our days begin and end with a devotional, it is interspersed with impulses with silent stretches and a midday devotion.

Pilgrimage is praying with your feet! It also brings me a lot of joy to explore our surroundings and see how beautiful God has created nature.

Living and encountering God in everyday life, that's what I found here!



**We are in the process of fundamentally redesigning the "Tent of Encounter".**

We were able to take an important step with friends, namely to renovate the kitchen!

We have installed the well-preserved kitchen from the house "Zion" there. The sale of "Zion" is progressing, negotiations are ongoing. There are no more sisters living

there, the house is being cleared out, and we are concentrating on the "Genezareth" area, which is quite sufficient for us.

The wooden windows in the "tent" could be renovated this year. Next year, it will be the turn of the windows of another house on the site. We want the tent to be used in as many ways as possible and to benefit many people. Also this year, friends celebrated birthdays and marriage anniversaries there.

At the moment we are looking for new seating for the "tent", on the one hand for church services and similar events, on the other hand for meals. New tables are also needed for this. We would be happy to receive donations in this area.

**We would like to thank all those who helped with work on and in the houses, and who also helped to clear out "Zion"!**

**We are on the way to developing new forms for our worship services.** We are very happy that Heidrun and Thomas Weiß support us musically!

**One of the changes in Belau is** that in June of this year we were able to have the first retreat week with guidance from outside. We stayed in the "House of Silence" in Weitenhagen, which did us a lot of good.

We continue to use supervision. Looking back, we are very grateful that we have already been able to develop so much.

Sisters also continue to participate in training and further education. We have already been able to implement a lot of this for our work.

#### **Renovations - Sister SABINE writes:**

After 20 years, I decided to paint my room. Before that, I had already renovated another room with Beate, and realized that I really enjoyed it! It showed me again my joy in manual activities, which was awakened during my life in the community. With the great support of Beate, it turned out beautifully, very bright, especially because we also painted the wooden ceiling. We decided that the other living spaces also needed to be renovated – after 20 years!



#### **Sister MARTINA writes:**

This is my home, with the women I have come to appreciate with their very different abilities, strengths and weaknesses, and whom I probably would not have chosen as friends in a "normal professional and everyday life". It's like a family you can't choose. But I am free to leave or stay.

What unites us is more than just a decades-long working and service community. But these connections are delicate and fragile and at the same time precious and need to be nurtured. What unites us is more than just "together you are less alone", although this is also a quality that should not be underestimated. What unites us is also the freedom in the interpretation of the Word of God, the appreciation for the richness of biblical interpretation anchored in the Jewish tradition, and the openness to the feminine side of God.

We have the opportunity to open up spaces in which people can meet spiritually. In conversations, we often sense a great desire for an encounter that goes into depth.

I experience that we are valued by many people as a whole community, but also as individual personalities. That feels good.



**Sister GABRIELE writes:**

Triggered by my professional activity in Uelzen, I have been looking for practical and prayerful ways to relieve my life situation. In particular, the long car journeys to work since March required an improvement. Now I have found an apartment in Uelzen. I would like to write about my situation here again for everyone:

I go to work now because I have realized that I am not existentially provided for by the community. My retirement provision has not been provided for since I have been living in the community (for 24 years). This, by the way, applies to all the sisters who have entered the community. The day-to-day personal care in the community has not been clarified for the future.

All the sisters have always worked for free.

My current situation does not change the fact that I am and want to continue to be part of the community. We meet

regularly once a week. In addition, it is still my task to support the gGmbH. Together with Sr. Martina, I am still an honorary partner and managing director of the gGmbH. Through the new challenges of my everyday life, the meaning of living community opens up to me anew, especially in today's world. This is because many people are alone and/or lonely. In my encounters with God, I have been particularly moved by two contents that I would like to share with you:

In a sermon I heard that God made not just one creation, but several. Many scholars are convinced of this. Our creator is very creative, and there are many ways to think and act. God created human beings in His image, so we have many options as well. I would like to claim this fact anew for life in community and draw hope for change or renewal from it.

These changes, which we encounter in many different ways in life, I have found in wonderful words in the poem "Steps" by Hermann Hesse. It encourages me that life is also about letting go and starting something new.

**Sister KATHARINA writes:**

It has become important to me to be called by my baptismal name. That's why I gave up my religious name Hannah.

At the beginning of my time in Belau, I, like most people, had to work with the animals and in agriculture. These were valuable experiences. Coming from a rural area, I was able to experience what it is like to live with respect and love with farm animals. The daily challenges were carried by trusting prayer. That and the working group in agriculture was important to me.

Since we no longer have agriculture, it is possible for me to get involved in the church community. When the church choir of Schnega was looking for a new director, I felt addressed, as I have a basic training in choral conducting. Since 2019, this has been a new, suitable challenge that makes me feel more at home in Schnega/Bergen and that makes me grow. I am very grateful for the trust that the Schnega singers have placed in me.

I am also grateful for the opportunity to do a part-time training in dance therapy. Through the training, I get more to the bottom of my specific gifts, and I hope to be able to open up a fulfilling activity for my future.

It is not so easy to take yourself out of the community dynamics that have become habitual over many years and the work that is always present in order to gain space for learning and internalizing the lesson content.

In order to be able to continue to finance the education and to contribute to our budget and social security, I would like to take up work outside the community.



It is certainly understandable that these and similar movements in the community are greatly changing our local lives and the structure of the community. I am happy to experience more flexibility here and we sisters support each other! I am also grateful that we receive support from our circle of friends.

**Sister KATRIN writes:**

I am 64 years old, have lived in the community for more than 30 years. In the beginning, I worked in our farm: driving tractors, taking care of sheep.

Immediately after I joined, our joint work also consisted of taking in and caring for the Ukrainian guests who had been damaged by the Chernobyl disaster.

From 2001, after the death of Sr Jutta, I grew into working in the kitchen in Belau. We were always a big round at the table, with many guests and roommates, so every day was completely filled.

Now I feel our life in "Genezareth" like the encore after a concert: when the performances are over, you can play something particularly beautiful. For me, the most beautiful thing is to have time for people, in conversation and prayer, in making music, in worship: being able to turn to others without asking for anything in return. And, of course, that we continue to make our community suitable for old age. For me, some of this now takes place through office work, such as the maintenance of the website, the address list, the income and expense tables. Other things in personal contact – this summer I joined the visiting service group of the church community, and visit people who are not mobile.

**The care of the Ukrainians** is completed for me after Katya, Dima and Mija have also returned to Ukraine. We remain united in prayer with all those who were here, and pray that they will be spared from the hostilities! And that peace will return to the whole of Ukraine.

***Do not allow yourself to be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.***  
(Romans 12:21)

In the face of wars that come so close to us, the will to defend oneself and the will to kill, the boundaries between good and evil are blurred. But it is precisely here that God speaks and expects us to look at a new path like a vision. Nechama Leibowitz, a Jewish biblical interpreter, speaks of the "horror of Abraham before war itself, even if it is a purely defensive war." (Genesis 13:8-9). Because it always affects the righteous. And bloodshed always has consequences.

For the global political situation, we see our task in prayer, which prepares the way for God's action. But this biblical text is also important and challenging for the environment for which we are responsible. It is not always easy to renounce escalation and revenge, or exclusion. Often there is no easy way. But it is precisely on this arduous path that pushes us to our limits that God is at our side and strengthens us.

Greetings from your sisters of the Ev.Lukas community

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