



Intercultural Impulses that enrich.

36 Impulses for your local encounter journey.



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Imprint



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Foreword

The Global Local Devotional Booklet is a gift to you and to those around you. A gift to inspire and enrich you with intercultural impulses. A gift to pass on the inspiration you have received.

There are 36 impulses waiting for you, written for you by different people! There are six impulses on each topic. These are presented in the following six steps.

- “Gifted“ - A blessing to each other
- “In The Flesh“ - The Gospel unites
- “Open“ - God Challenges
- “Together“ - Table Fellowship For All
- “Active“ - Unfolding Vocations
- “Alive“ - Heavenly Perspectives

There is a daily challenge for each devotion. Be curious!

How can you use the devotional booklet?

1. For you personally, for quiet reflection. How, when and where you like.
2. You can read and discuss the reflections with a group.
3. If you are running Global Local with your church, club or organisation (see www.globallocal.de for more information), it is a good idea for everyone involved to read the impulse from the devotional every day. There is an impulse for this journey every day except Sundays. On Sundays you will meet for worship!
4. If you have other ideas about how the devotional booklet can serve you in your daily life, put them into practice.

Be enriched and inspired, and share it with others!

Enjoy the devotional booklet!

Day 1 Love That Crosses Borders



"Gifted" - A Blessing For Each Other



Ruth 1:16

Hours of tying thin fine threads. Knot, tighten, take a new thread. Sometimes I knotted a friendship bracelet for a friend for days. Every now and then I would get annoyed while knotting, unknot the bracelet again and move on. Knotting these ribbons represents a friendship. Going through ups and downs together. When you knot a friendship bracelet, you end up with a bracelet that symbolises: I am here. You are my friend, you are my friend. I trust you.

The Bible is full of stories of people who also lived friendships like you and me. One of the most famous friendships is that between Naomi and Ruth. They went through thick and thin, experienced ups and downs together.

Ruth would probably have knotted a bracelet for Naomi in this day and age, symbolising that she would go along no matter what. A token of love. At that time she said, "Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Where you go, I will go, and where you live, I will live. Your people are my people and your God is my God." Words that speak to the heart. Words that have great value. This is love that crosses boundaries. Ruth does not let Naomi go, no matter what Naomi says. Ruth knows that they have more in common than words can express, so she goes with her to Naomi's home.

I myself love to see the rainbow in the sky. For me it is a promise from God who says to me: "Where you go, I go. And where you stay, I stay." The rainbow with all its bright colours, reminding me how diverse all my friendships are and how individual each person has been made by God. A reminder in the sky that we are all part of the family, that we are allowed to come as we are with our quirks and edges, our history, our fears and our joy. A promise in the sky that shows me again and again: Diversity is the order of the day at God's table. I am right. I am important. I belong. We belong together in our diversity as God's family.

Daily Challenge:

Write a card or make a friendship bracelet and pray consciously for your friend.

Justin Sathiskumar

Ev. Lydiagemeinde Dortmund, on Instagram as just.incredible24. It's important to me that the church is courageous and meets people at eye level, wherever they are.

Day 2 A future for Ruth, a stranger in a foreign land



"Gifted" - A Blessing For Each Other



Ruth 2:10

When we left the Sunday service in the summer of 2015, a surprise was waiting for us outside. Five letters written on large cardboard boxes. Carried by five different people from different cultures and nations. These five letters were arranged to form the word THANK YOU. With this, dozens of refugees thanked the Reconciliation Church in Iserlohn. The Bible tells of Ruth expressing her gratitude and amazement to Boaz. She asked him: "How have I found grace in your sight, that you are kind to me who am a stranger?"

Time change! Ruth is a foreigner in Judah, a Moabite who has deliberately chosen to follow her mother-in-law Naomi. She is a migrant who has lost everything and is trying to build a new life. Her mother-in-law helps her. Ruth believes in the future, even abroad. She takes the courageous initiative to work in the field of Boaz, a man she does not know. There she is welcomed, treated with respect and guaranteed the right to work.

Boaz's hospitality to a stranger culminates in an invitation to the table. Ruth moves from the field to the house, from the periphery to the centre, from the place of shadow to the place of sun. She is invited to eat at Boaz's table. A community emerges in which everyone belongs together. The future of the world lies in the ability of all to welcome each other and give each other the chance to live and thrive in community. A community where the rights of every human being are guaranteed. Where differences are factors of mutual enrichment and blessing. A society like the table of the Lord Jesus Christ, where we are all invited from East and West and North and South and gathered as one family in Christ.

Daily Challenge:

Think about what you are grateful for that strangers have done for you!

Dr Jean-Gottfried Mutombo

Regional pastor of the Office for Mission, Ecumenism and Church World Responsibility in Westphalia, originally from Congo.

Day 3 God provides in a foreign land



"Gifted" - A Blessing For Each Other



Ruth 2:1-9

When I moved with my family to the greater Hamburg area in 2015, six of us came from France. The new everyday life looked familiar, we immediately enjoyed the recognition of the church community I was now privileged to serve, and we lived in a beautiful semi-detached house. What love, what luxury, thank you Germany!

After a few weeks, my wife and I just fell into bed exhausted in the evening and went straight to sleep! Why? Because despite all the obvious familiarity, everything was different. It was mostly just details, but all details at once!

I don't think Ruth once had it as easy as I did. Yet, little by little, she successfully became part of her new living environment! Today's Bible passage lets me see some steps: Ruth first seeks advice (1) from the bitterly discouraged Naomi, who can only tell her to "Go, my daughter". Thereupon Ruth moves into action (2), unaware (3) of the field she is in. Later in the text, the foreman praises the woman's diligence (4) and from the words of Boaz we see how he inquires about Ruth (5), then describes work procedures to her (6) and explains to her how to behave towards local women and men (7).

Of course, some strangers or strangers who have become strangers are as broken as Naomi, others are ambitious like Ruth, Sadeq, Fatma or Mahdi. And still others there are. But could it be that one or one of them is destined to meet you soon, to satisfy their specific hunger?

To give Ruth a way in a foreign land, Boaz had to temporarily leave his Bethlehem. This was perhaps his villa? His office? His routine? From this I think I discover: The greater journey that immigrants, returnees or refugees make geographically, emotionally and culturally should be followed from time to time by the shorter journey of the indigenous. What do you mean?

Daily Challenge:

Pray that today you will perceive a person who is not part of your everyday life as a fellow human being. In the evening, check whether you have succeeded.

Michel Ertz

Pastor at Anskar Church Hamburg-West, highly delighted with challenges.

Day 4 Blessing each other - not a given



"Gifted" - A Blessing For Each Other



Ruth 2:11-12

We sit together in an intercultural circle and read the story of Ruth together. We are fascinated. Some of us recognise our own ancestors in her. They created new realities with their courageous departure into a new world. Some of us recognise ourselves. Not so long ago, they immigrated to Germany and started a new life here.

Two moments in the story particularly stick with us. Boaz says to Ruth: "You left your father and your mother and your homeland and went to live with a people you did not know. (2:11) For some in our circle, this sounds not only courageous. What right do you have to leave your own family and your own culture? Leaving father and mother does not only sound like "finally leaving home", but also like "abandoning father and mother". If I live somewhere else, I can no longer be there for my own. That is also a difficult experience for many of us.

What is so significant that it justifies this step? It is this new communion that God gives. In that one moment when Ruth desperately wants to be more faithful to her lonely and abandoned mother-in-law than to anyone else in her life. We remember decisions in our lives that were bigger and more important than our background, our tradition and our culture. What does it mean to embark on such a venture? Many of these decisions seemed crazy at first. We didn't know beforehand whether they made sense and couldn't explain them one hundred percent. But we felt: our life is striving for more. We experienced: God opens something completely new. And he allows new connections to develop. Moabite and Israelite, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law become sisters and friends. We have experienced something similar with each other.

Boaz says to Ruth, "May your reward be complete with the LORD God of Israel, to whom you have come to take refuge under his wings." (2:12) We make the big decisions of our lives in small moments. We make them out of faithfulness to others whom God places in our lives. We make them out of a desire that our lives hold more than what we already know. In the end, we not only find ourselves in new places and new situations. We also find a new home under the blessing wings of a God who calls the whole world his own. We also wish this greater home for those we have had to leave behind along the way.

Daily Challenge:

What decisions in your life have demanded everything of you? Where have they taken you?

Himmels Fels Community

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Day 5 Blessing each other - Part 2



"Gifted" - A Blessing For Each Other



Ruth 2

Under no circumstances be dependent on help! That is so humiliating! To be dependent on the goodwill of others who may even act as saviours - I would never want to be in such a situation!

Ruth and Naomi are in need of help. They arrive in Bethlehem just as the harvest has begun. They have not sown anything, so they cannot harvest. That means hunger, they have no income.

But God gave Israel a law: What falls down when tying the ears of corn must remain lying! Those who have nothing else to eat are allowed to pick it up.

Ruth uses this law. In Boaz's fields, she walks behind the harvesters and picks up what has been left behind. Boaz sees her working and speaks to her: She should stay in his fields; he has forbidden the workers to disturb her. And what is more, he instructs his workers to leave extra for Ruth.

Boaz does not act like a saviour. He doesn't bring a sack of grain to Ruth and Naomi and take a selfie of it. Instead, he quietly makes sure that Ruth's work yields enough for her to live on. Ruth is young, a foreigner, a widow - she could not defend herself against assault. But Boaz helps her without humiliating her. He preserves her dignity.

There is a gap between those who help and those who are helped. Those who really want to help do not take advantage. Blessing means recognising the dignity of those in need. Not to belittle them. Then the blessing can flow back.

Just like Ruth and Boaz: the two become a couple.

Daily Challenge:

Help someone today in a way that he or she won't notice.

Dr Claudia Währisch-Oblau

Evangelical pastor and head of the Evangelism Department of the United Evangelical Mission. After 12 years in China, there is always an 18kg bag of rice in her pantry.

Day 6 God's Story



"Gifted" - A Blessing For Each Other



Ruth 4:13-22

The birth of Obed is the beginning of the family tree of Jesse, from which the Messiah Jesus also came. Today I am looking at the meaning of the names in this story. We give our children names and ask ourselves - does the name suit this child? What motives and what values determine our decision?

Ruth is Moabite and means "the plain servant of God". Naomi means "the pleasant one". Orpa "the one you see from behind" - that means she will go other ways. And the "redeemer" is the Goel, which also stands for Jesus the Redeemer.

What does your name mean? What has developed for you with your name? How is it connected to your very personal character? "Nomen est omen" means "the name is a sign". The story of Ruth shows this. It is a story in which God is almost not mentioned, and yet it tells of the interplay between God's salvation story and human history. Tragedy and loyalty are the threads that are woven here by God into a wonderful fabric. Your God is my God. That is enough as a credo, as a confession, in this story for God's presence. God remains the faithful God, especially in our everyday life. Yahweh means "I am who I am" - the creator of your life and who has called you by your name.

Daily Challenge:

What does your name mean? Today, ask another person what their name means and get talking about it.

Markus Rapsch

58 years old, married, three adult children, lives in Wuppertal. Since 2000, he has been employed as YMCA secretary at the YMCA Regional Association Westbund with a focus on association support, education and international projects.

Day 7 United in Christ



"In The Flesh" - The Gospel Unites



Ephesians 2:14

"[Christ] himself is our peace, who made both far and near one, and by his bodily death broke down the wall of enmity." (NeÜ)

Faith in Jesus Christ unites people. The early Christian movement was diverse. The churches consisted of Jews, Greeks, Romans and people from many different backgrounds, cultures and languages. Although the early Christian church was very diverse, they had one thing in common: faith in Jesus Christ.

The death of Jesus Christ on the cross not only healed the relationship between God and human beings. We can love each other as human beings because Jesus Christ first loved us. He revealed his love to us on the cross. Thus, the separation between people is also overcome in Jesus Christ.

Here we must pay close attention to the wording in our Bible text: Jesus Christ himself is our peace. This means that reconciliation between people is not possible without the love and peace of Jesus Christ. Only through his love is unity between people possible at all. Faith in Jesus Christ unites. Through our common faith in Jesus Christ, strangers become friends.

Diversity has shaped the church from the beginning. Our different gifts, talents and backgrounds enable us to serve unity in Christ. As Christ gave us his body for us, so we all become members of one body.

This colourful mosaic must be embraced by us again and again. I believe this is what Jesus Christ wants from his Church. If we profess unity, we must also live it. We must continue to look for ways to promote unity and cooperation. Believers need to join hands across cultural and linguistic boundaries to actively alleviate the need in the world. We cannot do this alone, but through the grace of Jesus Christ and in union with one another.

Daily Challenge:

Think of an action where you can reach out to someone today across cultural or linguistic boundaries.

Dr Elritia Le Roux

Intern in pastoral ministry at FeG Wuppertal-Vohwinkel. Previously a pastor in the NHKA, South Africa with a doctorate from the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz.

Day 8 Living Peace - when something bothers me



"In The Flesh" - The Gospel Unites



Ephesians 2:15

"By his death he put an end to the law with its commandments and ordinances and thereby made peace, creating both in himself one new man." (NLB)

There are so many conflicts in the world for which there seems to be no solution. That Jewish and non-Jewish people could have any kind of community at all was simply unimaginable. After Jesus' ascension, the good news of his resurrection was told throughout the world. The Jewish people who believed in Jesus had heard that one had to keep the rules from the law in order to be at peace with God. Jesus had freed them from this constraint. He fulfilled the law for all of us. He has made us right with God, and so we can enjoy peace with God.

This should also bring us into harmony with our fellow human beings. The Jewish people who believed in Jesus had to get over themselves to have fellowship with other people. Fellowship also means eating together. This was very difficult because their cultic rules for eating were very strict. In the New Testament it is very clear that the food commandments should not disturb the fellowship of the Christians among themselves.

Many years ago in China, I experienced for the first time a form of prayer community that was new to me. All of a sudden, everyone started praying out loud at the same time. "Pure chaos!" I thought. I felt uncomfortable. The next few times I accepted it as a different form, but it was still not for me. I couldn't think straight, let alone pray along. At some point I plucked up the courage to pray aloud myself. I realised that I could concentrate on my own voice and thus also on my own prayer.

It has not become my favourite form of corporate prayer, but I have learned to deal with it and go along with it.

Daily Challenge:

Think about what practice of other Christians can enrich you.

Fred Eick

Is part of the Global Local Team. He has lived in China for many years, loves different languages and cultures and wants to pass on this love.

Day 9 Access Forbidden



"In The Flesh" - The Gospel Unites



Mark 15:37-38

"No trespassing!" - Our two properties are separated by a fence. We talk across the wire mesh. We greet each other. Dog treats are slipped to our Labradormix through the cracks in the fence. Then - it was last summer - a piece of wire mesh is missing right by the seating area. Only a potted plant is pushed into the gap so that our dog doesn't run away. It is easy to move. Now we sit together every now and then. Sometimes only very briefly. But then also longer for a cold beer.

"No entry!" - The Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem was hidden behind the heavy curtain. There was no place more sacred for believers. No ordinary person was allowed there. Behind the curtain was the place of God's presence. Only the high priest was allowed to meet God personally, and only once a year. A place - not for you.

"Out of bounds!" - When Jesus died, everything changed. Mark writes in his Gospel: "Jesus cried out loudly and died. Then the curtain in front of the Holy of Holies in the temple was torn from top to bottom." (Mark 15:37-38)

Jesus' death cry becomes a cry of victory. Jesus' death on the cross has overcome the barrier between holy and unholy. God himself hangs in Jesus on the cross of Golgotha and puts an end to the loveless separation. Reconciliation happens there. God says: "I am with you! Nothing separates us any more, you man and me God. Take this as a model: open your life in love without reservations for your neighbour. He is HUMAN - like YOU and I."

Daily Challenge:

Look for "fence gaps" to other people. What kind of encounter is possible here? Notice the differences between people and pray for them.

Matthias Schmid

Pastor in the Rhenish Service for International Ecumenism of the EKIR; enjoys intercultural encounters and is convinced: local faith needs the global perspective.

Day 10 Peace for All



"In The Flesh" - The Gospel Unites



Ephesians 2:17 and
John 14:27

"He came into this world proclaiming peace - peace for you who were far from God, and peace for those who had the privilege of being near him." (NGÜ)

I firmly believe that peace is the most important thing of all that we need. We often ask God first for his divine provision, protection, strength and prosperity. Yet we can have all this and remain restless inside. Peace is not the same as happiness. Happiness is influenced by things on the outside, but peace comes from our heart. Jesus is the "Prince of Peace". When we entrust ourselves to him, we receive his divine peace. No fancy car, good-looking spouse or lucrative position can replace this.

Jesus says: "As a parting gift, I give you peace, my peace, not the peace that the world gives. Do not be frightened, do not be afraid! (John 14:27)

There are well-meaning people, politicians and big organisations like the UN who try hard to bring peace to the world. But what they can achieve is limited. Why is that?

- You cannot give what you do not have. We humans are selfish and therefore all our efforts are also characterised by a certain selfishness. Only Jesus can make a difference here. Jesus shows us by his own example that it is necessary to give our absolute best if we want to see good results.

- Peace does not come overnight. When I started my church in Berlin as an immigrant pastor, I felt that the people in the neighbourhood had little in common. I prayed for them and realised God's will that I should reach out to them like Jesus. So I talked to the politicians in the district, other leaders and the leaders of the neighbouring churches. I invited everyone to an annual neighbourhood party with barbecue and international buffet. Everyone was happy about the good fellowship that was created and I was able to invite people to our church to tell them about Jesus.

Daily Challenge:

Do your part today to create peace around you. End an argument, give someone a hug or a compliment.

Bismarck Mperi

from Nigeria, pastor of Miracle Harvest Church e.V. in Berlin/ Soldiner Kiez

Day 11 #connected



"In The Flesh" - The Gospel Unites



Ephesians 2:18

$1+1+1=1$. A friend of mine wrote her master's thesis under this title. Mathematically, it's nonsense. But maybe it's not so wrong. Let's not think in numbers, but more abstractly. The equation speaks to us of something that is connected, with each other, in all directions.

"Through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father." (Ephesians 2:18, LÜ)

This verse creates a triad, a trinity. What is this actually about, this one God who is somehow also three at the same time. $1+1+1=1$, mathematically wrong, but vividly right. And actually it goes even further. If we read carefully, there are also "we", "all", "both". $\infty \times 1+1$ Infinity times one plus one. Confusing, these mathematical equations.

Let's look at it differently. I'm on the road a lot, meeting people from everywhere who go everywhere. You might think it's the many new impressions, the acquaintances, the countries, cities and languages that excite me. But what touches me even more are the moments when I feel connected. A new city, voices and sounds that are unknown to me. I look up. A simple sign hangs between the trees. It says: There is more. My heart warms and I feel how connected I am. Connected to all the people everywhere, connected to the world and beyond. There is more. More than plus calculation, but at the same time only one thing counts. Something that cannot be explained mathematically, something that connects, with God, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit, with the world and beyond. Something that transcends all the logic of mathematics, that is simpler than any calculation. Because you don't need to calculate to feel. When we stop calculating, when we stop seeing people as numbers and instead focus our gaze on what comes out in the end: One. Everything in everything and everyone in everyone, connected by what cannot be divided in natural arithmetic. Connected by God who is three in one.

Daily Challenge:

Take a moment. Focus on God. He gives us unity. Listen carefully! Look carefully! Live carefully!

Ina Lurweg

Spirituality, Taizé, Ecumenism

Day 12 House mates of God and man



"In The Flesh" - The Gospel Unites



Ephesians 2:19

Do you know the Huguenots? Protestant Christians who lived in France in the 16th century. Their name is derived from the Dutch word "Huisgenooten" (German for "housemates"). They had to meet secretly in houses where they were not observed because the Catholic government persecuted them. However, Protestant groups were just as violent against Catholics in the "Huguenot Wars".

In Ephesians we also read the word "members of the household". But in a broader meaning. "So then you are no longer guests and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household". (Ephesians 2:19) Because God comes to people in Jesus, we are all members of God's household, we can live in his house. With and with God. And with and with our fellow human beings. No matter where and how they live, where and how they are, what age, sex, appearance they have. God wants us to be together and not against each other. In the great house of the saints. Saints, according to biblical understanding, are the people loved by God. All of them! All are sanctified by his love. God wants us all to be members of the same house. That differences do not divide us. That we do not look at what is different and perhaps seems strange to us at first. But that we recognise in the other the one and the one in whom God wants to meet us and enrich us.

Let us therefore build the house in which we can all live with God. Let us learn from each other and support each other where people need it - locally and globally.

Daily Challenge:

Imagine each person you meet today as if you were living with them in a house where God is the householder, giving you all space but also calling you to live and act together.

Michael Voss

Wuppertal, President of the Evangelical Alliance of the Lower Rhine-Ruhr-Southern Germany and member of the executive working group of "Micha Germany".

Day 13 I've never done that before...!



"Open" - God Challenges



Acts 10:14

"But Peter replied, "By no means, Lord! I have never eaten anything forbidden or unclean." (GNB)

Peter is surprised, even overwhelmed, by the vision. "I've never eaten this unclean stuff before," he exclaims in disgust. What he really means is: "I've never done that before. Just going into the house of a non-Jewish person, sitting at the table with them. You don't do that with us Jews". There is an inner barrier. But that's exactly what God wants to break.

The story goes that an American journalist accompanied Mother Teresa on the streets of Calcutta. There she took pity on an old man on the street. She treats his stinking wound. For the journalist, this is too much. "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars!" he exclaims spontaneously. Mother Theresa looks him in the eye. And then she says, "Neither would I." And after a pause: "I do it for God".

As platitudinous as it sounds, real love overcomes inner barriers. It overcomes the discomfort, the emotional repulsion of the stranger and also the damned comfort. To love simply means to be completely with the other. Selflessly, that is, to be rid of oneself, to take the other person to one's heart. Love makes barriers free.

No, there is no better example than Jesus. What barrier of decency did he not break? At the Samaritan woman. The hated tax collectors. The prostitutes. The lepers.

Real love is not only loving. It takes risks. It does not see only wretchedness in the other like the journalist. It is gripped by compassion for others.

"I have never done that before. But today I just do it."

Daily Challenge:

Be kind to 2-3 people today. Greet them or do something good for them. Especially people who spontaneously seem strange to you or who may at first seem scary.

Reinhold Krebs

Herrenberg, Regional Officer in the Protestant Youth Work, married.

He has four grown-up children who have more intercultural experience than he does. In the meantime, Iranian and Afghan friends have also joined the family.

Day 14 Do not avoid people



"Open" - God Challenges



Acts 10:28

At dawn, I am on the road in a small Indian town. Many people are already walking to their rice fields. Street sweepers are picking up rubbish in the market square. I notice brown shards of clay in the gutter, pull out my camera and capture the scene. Soon I am surrounded by passers-by who want to know what I am doing here. I ask about the shards and get a vague answer. Dalits bought tea here. They were given a disposable cup, which was then smashed. According to tradition, the lips of an "untouchable" contaminate the vessel to such an extent that nothing can clean it.

Peter had the same problem 2000 years ago. As a Jew, he would never enter the house of a Gentile. Especially not the house of a Roman officer. He is the representative of the brutal occupying power. Through a vision, God's Spirit calls him to do just that. He has to overcome his deep disgust and sets out. Then he confesses before Cornelius and his assembled household: "God has shown me not to regard any man as unclean or untouchable." (Acts 10:28) And no cultural distance is greater than that between the Jewish people of God and the non-Jewish peoples.

Not far from the market place in India is a small Christian hospital where people from all social classes receive medical and pastoral care. A beacon of God's love. Through his ministry, 200 small house churches have sprung up in this region in recent years.

The "untouchable" lives not only in India, but also very close to me. Who do I avoid in everyday life? And why? Because someone reacts so differently, communicates so differently, has such different habits? Because I once had a very bad experience with a similar person?

Daily Challenge:

Today, consciously approach a person, call them or write them a text message!

Detlef Blöcher

married, 3 adult children, 4 grandchildren. Physicist, taught and researched at universities in Germany, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. He has a passion for Jesus and a big heart for people from all nations.

Day 15 God is a Dancer



"Open" - God Challenges



Acts 10:34-35

Then Peter replied: "Now I know that it is true: God makes no distinctions between people. In every nation he accepts those who respect him and do what is just." (New Life)

"Would you like to visit our service?" No question, I have practice in that, I am routine and know all the variations. The church festivals, like Christmas or Easter, baptism services and youth services. And yet I was completely surprised.

The service of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in the middle of Stuttgart in Swabia literally pulled me out of my chair. It wasn't just the rousing praise. Suddenly the whole congregation was standing and dancing. A polonaise was quickly formed and I was right in the middle of the human chain. I suddenly felt strange in the familiar. I wondered if this kind of dancing would work similarly well in my Vietnamese home community. Who would we offend with it? In the middle of the polonaise, however, I was quite sure that God was dancing with us through the worship hall at that moment.

Dancing for and with God. In the Bible we read of people dancing. They danced with joy to the praise of God, out of devotion for God and his works. I was outwardly and inwardly moved by how alive these stories still are in the Ghanaian community today. I was amazed at how different it still felt for me to suddenly break with a habitual expectation of worship. We celebrate the same God together. But it felt like I was rediscovering this side of God. And I came to realise that he celebrates differently with other people elsewhere on Sundays than he does with me.

In other countries and cultures, other churches and services, I discover new sides of God. God is always climbing out of the drawer I would like to put him in. He always wants to be sought, found and recognised anew by me. Seeing God through the eyes of others makes this process much easier and helps me to keep moving with my faith.

Daily Challenge:

Write down two things you have learned from Christians from other cultures. (And, if you want, listen to the song "I could sing of your love forever". Do what the song says in the bridge: "Oh I feel like dancing - It's foolishness I know - But when the world has seen the light - They will dance with joy like we're dancing now, yeah...").

Thai An Vu

Committed to the Evangelical Vietnamese Tin Lanh congregations in Germany, big heart for evangelical youth work, citizen of the world

Day 16 Welcome to the House at the "More"!



"Open" - God Challenges



Acts 10:6

From the poet Christian Morgenstern comes the phrase: "Tell me how you live and I'll tell you who you are". Even as a child, I loved being welcomed into other families' homes. Seeing where they lived, what they ate, how they lived. Each family had its own unique smell. The Schmidts smelled of fresh laundry, the Karahamza family of delicious food, the Seifert family of cigarette smoke.

The personal home is always a kind of self-revelation. In the photos on your wall, I see a piece of your personal history. The furnishing of the house tells something about your taste and reveals what is important to you. An invitation to your home includes an invitation to get to know MORE of you. What an honour to be welcomed into your home!

Peter "stays as a guest with Simon the tanner, who has a house by the sea." (Acts 10:6) What is interesting and worth mentioning about Simon's house is the place where it stands. It cannot be seen separately from its surroundings.

A house by the sea. Every person is surrounded by a personal sea of imprints, obligations and desires. A sea of influences, experiences, interests, fears and views. Some things are visible on the surface. Others are hidden in the depths. There are magnificent coral reefs, but also one or two broken wrecks.

Perhaps this image helps me in everyday life when meeting others: To see in my counterpart "a house by the sea". This attitude makes me curious about the "more" in and behind the house. What is hidden beneath the surface, beyond my prejudices and previous experiences?

We can find this out by welcoming people or being welcomed by others ourselves, in other words by inviting each other in. Welcome to my home at MORE!

Daily Challenge:

Invite someone or make a visit in the coming days! This is a sign of honour and appreciation.

Tabea Wichern

Consultant for Spiritual Life and Student Accompaniment at the YMCA University in Kassel, lives in a house by the golden wheat field sea.

Day 17 Be part of God's Mission



"Open" - God Challenges



Acts 10:45

"The Jewish believers who had come with Peter were amazed that God also gave the Holy Spirit to non-Jews." (New Life)

I first came to Germany in 2005 as part of a youth project. We wanted to reach German youth through music. At that time, I didn't perceive it as missionary work. I wanted to sing, make music and share my talent with others. We visited many churches on our tour. We worked with our German colleagues, ate together, made music, prayed, sang worship music and were on stage together.

While visiting different places in Brandenburg, we spread joy in the communities. We sang and told personal faith stories. One of the stories was about the first missionary who came to Kenya. We told the listeners that we felt obliged to come to Germany and say thank you. That we wanted to witness through our enthusiasm and through worship that the Germans had an impact on Christianity in Kenya. By coming to Germany we wanted to give something back. We wanted to bring back the Gospel that was brought to us.

Two things are true about mission. The first is that the Church does not have its own mission, but is part of God's mission. We as the body of Christ serve God's mission.

The second is that mission is not a job for a special category of people. but a lifelong calling. Because there are still people who have not come into contact with the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can take the good news of the gospel to the people who need to hear it.

Mission is a part of our identity. It is not a project or a programme.

We don't have to wait until a call comes from the pulpit. We should ask ourselves, "What do I have in my hands that can help others experience God? How can my life be an example of what the grace of God means?"

Daily Challenge:

Today, ask God to enable you to share His love through you! And that he shows you how.

Frank Koine

Singer/songwriter from Nairobi, Kenya, youth pastor at the Stadtkirche Wittenberg and part of the EKM trial space "Musikgemeinde Wittenberg" He is married and father of two girls.

Day 18 Telling what God has done



"Open" - God Challenges



Acts 11:4

Peter has to justify himself. He has transgressed the - God-given! - He crossed the boundaries of the "believers" and sat down at the table with Gentiles. But how do you teach the brothers and sisters what God has shown you? With razor-sharp argumentation, with a lot of theology?

Peter is a fisherman. A practical, hands-on person. While you catch fish with the reality of nets, you convince people with the reality of what God is doing. And so Peter tells. Not about how great he is, he, the rock! But how great Jesus is. How Jesus led him, the inveterate sceptic, to Cornelius and beyond his own limitations.

Mustafa comes to mind. His enthusiasm is infectious when he talks: Born in Turkey into a well-off family. His life was a wild ride: sympathiser of revolutionary ideas, dropped out of university, cook in Saudi Arabia.

And then he had a dream during his military service: "I saw an angel who said to me: Don't be afraid, just come with me! He lifted me up. We went up to heaven, to indescribable beauty and peace. He who sat on the throne sent me down to earth - right into the chaos of a torture and crucifixion."

Mustafa saw and experienced Jesus' crucifixion and death. His account reads like the script of a Jesus film, right down to the smallest details. He was so confused by this dream that he went to the military doctor.

A few years later, after shattered dreams, disoriented in a German asylum shelter, he has to sort through books. A Turkish Bible is among them. Mustafa opens it to John 19 and reads exactly what he had seen in the vision. Then a German takes him to an international church service and he meets an Iraqi Christian. Mustafa is baptised.

And now he is bubbling over with enthusiasm for "Immanuel, God with us, all with us". He takes me with him into this closeness of Jesus. So much life becomes palpable. Yes, when God manages to "penetrate" a Turkish army barracks - there is no stopping him.

¹ Mustafa's story can be found in: Heidi Josua: My New Life. Christ meets Muslims. Leipzig 2019, pp. 84-97.

Daily Challenge:

Think about where you have experienced God in particular. Can you tell outsiders about it in a stirring and understandable way?

Heidi Josua

Weissach im Tal, Interculturally married, 5 children. Lives and works in and with the Arab Evangelical congregation and runs the Evangelical Salam Centre.

Day 19 The Christian Extra Effort



"Together" - Table Fellowship For All



Galatians 2:11-14

We often ask ourselves: How far should I go when I strive to do good? Do the well-being and happiness of my fellow human beings always come before my own? Something like this might also have been on Peter's mind. In Galatians 2 we read that Paul and Peter spread the gospel. Peter preached primarily to the Jewish people. At meals together, he increasingly distanced himself from non-Jewish people because he feared reproaches from Jewish Christians. Others also separated themselves. When Paul heard this, he publicly rebuked Peter. He reminded him that Jesus has set us free from the bondage of the law. It is true: God's love should be extended to all people. But that is sometimes easier said than done! Peter is to give up his tradition, his venerable position. Although he wants to follow Jesus, it unsettles him to give up his identity as a Jew.

God requires of us a "Christian extra effort". We are allowed to put on the new, pure robe of glory (Rev. 19:8), but we are also to get rid of the old, stained robe of sin. This involves a bit of self-sacrifice. In Christ there is no "Jew or Greek" - we have a new identity (cf. Gal. 3:28). Our cultural differences may remain, because they are a testimony of God's diversity, but at the same time we are on an equal footing in God's eyes. We are to live what we believe and take steps towards each other. Even if this is sometimes difficult. God promises us that he will never give us up more than we can carry (Rom. 8:18).

I myself have a boss who is very impatient and can get angry quickly. Like several colleagues, I considered quitting. But then God spoke to me and I realised that my boss has no family and hardly any private life. I prayed for him and felt a surge of divine love. I accepted the extra work, stayed and now strive to make his work life as pleasant as possible. In doing so, God has opened a door that can lead to my boss's soul and its salvation.

Daily Challenge:

I would like to encourage you today to take on an extra effort for another person.

Tracy Peukert

Law student at the University of Potsdam; Ghanaian, born in Hamburg; youth leader and translator in GBIM (Gospel Believers International Ministries e.V.) in Berlin.

Day 20 The Best Meal Ever



"Together" - Table Fellowship For All



Exodus 24:9-11

When do you always have a big feast? What occasions can you think of? No matter whether it's a wedding, Christmas, a birthday, the delicious food must not be missing. Even in poor countries, people save for a celebration and spend generously. Even if it seems impossible to get something, we humans still try to find something small to make the celebration special.

Do you know the situation when we expect important visitors? We want the invited person to be comfortable and we also want to offer them good food and drink. We want the invited person to feel comfortable and we want to be hospitable. In the same way, God wants us to be comfortable. We feel honoured when we are invited to someone important's home and are allowed to dine there at the same table. How nice would it be if your favourite actor invited you to his home and offered you food? Surely a happy feeling. But how unimaginable is the feeling when God personally invites you to a feast?

In the second book of Moses we read: "Afterwards Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and 70 of the leading men of Israel went up the mountain. There they saw the God of Israel. The ground beneath his feet shone like sapphire, clear as the sky. And though the leading men of Israel saw God, he did not kill them. Yes, they even ate and drank in his presence!" (New Life Bible)

This story is not just about a celebration or invitation, but about an alliance. An alliance is a contract, an agreement an association between two parties. In this case, an alliance between God and human beings. What better way to celebrate a covenant than with a feast? A meal together is about sharing with each other. We humans need food to live. So in a celebration or a covenant, we share something vital with each other. God wants to provide us with something that keeps us alive.

Daily Challenge:

Do this experiment with your family or friends: eat together. No one is allowed to help themselves. Try to communicate without words. How did you experience this?

Fabian Nam Nguyen

User Experience Designer from Hesse. Board member of the Youth Association of the Evangelical Vietnamese Tin Lanh Congregations in Germany e.V., Youth leader of the Vietnamese Methodist congregation in Frankfurt am Main, Staff member of the children's recreation team of the Protestant youth of Pforzheim.

Day 21 The Table of Peace



"Together" - Table Fellowship For All



Galatians 2:12

"At first Peter had taken part in the communal meals together with the non-Jewish brothers and sisters. But when some people from the circle around James came [...] he separated himself from the gentiles." (NGÜ)

It stands in the middle of the Swabian Forest, the large "Table of Peace". It is part of the "Weiterweg", a path of reflection near Gschwend. This peace table is the central point of the circuit. Where picnic areas usually have three or more tables spread out over the terrain, the large "Table of Peace" is different. The 16-metre-long table consists of a single Douglas fir trunk. With two long benches on the left and right, it offers 55 seats and six more for wheelchair users.

The artist, observes the same thing over and over again. Families or groups sit down somewhere at the long table. But then they find it strange to sit so far apart. "We sit at the same table anyway, so we can move closer together." Fascinating how a long table literally brings people closer together, even people who were strangers before. How they feel that this table connects us.

Many Jesus stories take place at the table. Jesus brings the tax collectors and the sinners back into the community of God's people, simply by eating together at the same table. And he passed this on to his followers. With bread and wine, at the table of the Lord, they should realise. Nothing separates us from each other, nothing separates us from God.

Among the first Christians, Jewish and non-Jewish people were together at one table. Such a practice was revolutionary in the Roman Empire. The story of Peter and Cornelius shows us the huge barriers that had to be crossed.

Paul then reports in Galatians 2 about a heated argument he had with Peter. Peter had fallen off the wagon. He had "set himself apart" again, abandoned table fellowship with the non-Jewish people, out of fear. For Paul, this was betrayal, a denial of the Gospel.

What Jesus has established, the fellowship at the table of peace, we cannot simply dispose of when it is difficult. Humanly, many things divide us, but in Christ we are united, we move together, we sit at the table of peace.

Daily Challenge:

"May I join you...?" Why not practise table fellowship today with someone I haven't had much to do with?

Reinhold Krebs

Herrenberg, regional advisor in the Protestant Youth Work, married, four grown-up children who have more intercultural experience than he does. In the meantime, Iranian and Afghan friends have also joined the family.

Day 22 For My Visualisation



"Together" - Table Fellowship For All



1 Corinthians
11:23-24

"I myself have received a tradition from the Lord. And I have passed it on to you: On the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread. He thanked God, broke the bread into pieces and said, "This is my body for you. Do this in remembrance of me!" (Basic Bible)

I only really got to know two of my sisters when I was already 16 years old. I lived my life in Germany, they lived in Croatia. When I finally visited them, they had djuvec for lunch, a popular southern European rice and vegetable dish. I mentioned, "Djuvec is also what my father used to cook at my house in his second homeland when he was alive." Now our father was not present when we siblings met. Nevertheless, it was now nevertheless as if our father was sitting at the table with us. We shared the same memory and were connected on an intimate level.

Jesus also celebrated a memorial meal with his disciples on the day before his crucifixion with the Passover meal. At the annual Passover on the first full moon after the beginning of spring, Jewish people remember the exodus of their ancestors from Egypt. On their way out of slavery to the Promised Land, they took unleavened bread with them, which kept well on the long journey. Every year since then, bread has been shared as a reminder of the journey to freedom.

Jesus links this special feast to his life and thus establishes a culture of remembrance. In the future, he will be in the midst of the partakers while sharing bread and drinking wine. There has been much discussion about what exactly happens at the Lord's Supper. One thing is certain: the Lord's Supper connects people of all generations and cultures with each other and with Jesus himself.

Daily Challenge:

Take a piece of bread in your hand. Think of Jesus sitting with his disciples at the Last Supper. Immerse yourself in the global community of all those who follow Jesus. Realise: He is here now!

Branko-Christian Uhlstein

Regional Youth Pastor of the Protestant Church of Westphalia, lives with his wife in Hohenlimburg, has two daughters and four sisters.

Day 23 The way to a man's heart is through his stomach



"Together" - Table Fellowship For All



1 Corinthians 11:26

"The way to a man's heart is through his stomach". The origin of this saying is not known, but it contains a lot of truth.

An example: When I met Sarah in 2017, a mutual friend of ours organised a weekend for four people in the Cederberg Mountains in South Africa. On that trip, Sarah made a chocolate mousse. Not only did it taste good, but I was deeply impressed that she could conjure up such deliciousness in the mountains. Four years and five months have passed since that magical moment and I still enjoy her brilliant cooking as her husband.

When Sarah asks me from time to time why I love her, I often joke with her and say it's because of her cooking. But falling in love and staying in love is much more complex than cooking well.

What exactly makes people connect with each other on such deep levels when they eat together? Food is about more than survival. It is how we make friends, court lovers and express our appreciation. Eating together has always been a part of human history. From the ashes of Vesuvius in Pompei, a round loaf of bread was recovered with scratch marks: "Baked to be shared". Breaking bread together, a phrase as old as the Bible. It expresses the power of a meal, the power to forge relationships, to bury anger, to provoke laughter. Children bake sand cakes, have tea parties and exchange sweets to make friends. In this way, they imitate the rituals of adults. The association of food with love will run throughout their lives. I am sure you can identify with at least one of the above experiences.

1 Cor 11:26 says that we should proclaim the Lord's death at communion until he comes. The death of Jesus is one of the things that unites us as Christians. When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we proclaim that we want to be and are part of the body of Christ, the Church. This unity can be extended into our everyday lives. By simply making it a habit to share a meal, a snack or even just a drink with my sisters and brothers in Christ from around the world.

Daily Challenge:

Share your favourite food or drink with someone, e.g. at work or with neighbours.

Denzel Thys

South African, lives in Entringen, Global Local project team, married to a German-Indian. They have two small children who are growing up Swabian. Loves good food in good company.

Day 24 Neither Jew nor Greek



"Together" - Table Fellowship For All



Galatians 3:28

Before my marriage, many people had told me that according to the Bible we would become "one body" after marriage. So there would be no more differences between me and my partner. But that was not the case! Our individual differences were merged and our peculiarities remained. Nevertheless, we were united at the same time.

"Now there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all equal - you are one in Jesus Christ." (Gal 3:28, New Life)

From the core idea of the text, it seems that we are to give up our own individual differences or our "labels" so that we may find unity with one another. Despite this impression, Paul presents something different, namely he means that we are already one in Christ in advance.

The text calls for unity. Paul reminds us to perceive others as they are already united with Christ. This unity becomes visible when we live together in community.

Paul proclaims the liberating grace found through faith. The same promise given to Abraham was given to Jesus and fulfilled by him. Nothing remains for us to do in return.

We have been brought together despite our different cultures. Our own cultures are important in making us who we are. However, these cultural differences are brought into a unifying whole because we are all children of God.

Daily Challenge:

Take a walk in your place. When you see someone, try to consciously see them as a child of God, as Paul tells us. Pray for yourself and the other person.

Brandon Watson

USA, is doing his doctorate at the University of Heidelberg. Assistant for Systematic Theology and Philosophy at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal. It is important for me to live in another culture and find out how the liberating and loving grace of Jesus is proclaimed there.

Day 25 Growth Brings Challenges



"Active" - Unfolding Vocations



Acts 6:1-7

Many communities dream of growth. And then sometimes people come to them who were not expected. Maybe from other generations or social classes. Maybe they find other things beautiful than we do, have other expectations, other values. And suddenly growth is not only inspiring, but also hard work.

I myself want to stand for intercultural openness and for people being welcome in their diversity, just as they are. And then the volunteer from Indonesia explodes at the service interview and says he finally wants more responsibility after six months. After all, he had studied and was no longer 18. The colleague and I sit there shocked. I thought we were getting along well. We hadn't noticed what was going on inside him at all. Did I behave in a racist way towards him? Or was I simply "insensitive"? In any case, I feel ashamed.

The apostles must have felt the same way. They themselves did not notice that the Greek speakers felt neglected, especially at this sensitive point where it is a matter of providing for the most needy, i.e. sheer need. Only when the grumbling increased did they react (v. 2). Even then, reluctantly and with a bit of resistance. But at least they reacted.

The number of Christians from other cultures is growing in Germany. Do we talk to each other? Do we understand the challenges some of them face in their everyday lives? For example, our sisters and brothers who live here as tolerated persons?

Daily Challenge:

Who can you meet or call in your area or place today and get to know better?

Matthias Stempfle

Deacon in the Evangelic Parish of Wuppertal-Vohwinkel... dreams of a church where people from east and west, north and south come together at one table at eye level.

Day 26 Ethnic Conflicts in a Growing Community



"Active" - Unfolding Vocations



Acts 6:1-7

When something is going well, we usually have the feeling that we have no problems. But successes often present us with new challenges! Just like in the growing community of Jerusalem. They initially experienced great unity and shared everything they had, but then their harmony was threatened. On the surface, it was about providing for the widows, but on the deeper level we see tensions between the Hebrew and Greek Jews.

In the church, values are repeatedly adopted from society that are morally or spiritually dubious. Also, the fact that a person finds faith in Jesus does not mean that their attitudes automatically change. Very often we live and act in the church in the way we have learned in the culture around us. The tensions mentioned above already existed in the Jewish community. They also threatened the Christian community. It could have ended in the community splitting into two ethnic groups.

In our communities, too, it happens that one ethnic group dominates other ethnic groups or that the needs of minorities in our midst are overlooked. What values of our cultures do we uncritically adopt? What divisions in our society are reflected in our church? Do we allow Jesus to challenge our attitudes? What changes are we willing to make?

The apostles solved their problem like this: They met with the Greek-speaking minority and listened to their complaints. Together they drafted guidelines for godly leadership and chose seven co-workers. These were blessed and empowered for their ministry by the laying on of hands by the apostles. All committed themselves to productive cooperation, which enabled the gospel to be proclaimed throughout Jerusalem and the church to continue to grow.

I myself, Peter, was encouraged many years ago by a German pastor and the congregation to preach in German. At first I felt overwhelmed by it. But when I tried it, it gave me a boost and opened new doors for me. I am grateful for that. Maybe there are undiscovered potentials of members in your church, with which they can be a blessing and advance the development of your community?

Daily Challenge:

Pray today for minorities in your church and for potential to be released!

Peter and Steffi Arthur

Ghanaian-German marriage, director of Akebulan e.V. in Berlin; bridge-builder.

Day 27 Trust others to do something!



"Active" - Unfolding Vocations



Acts 6:1-7
+ Romans 2:11

People of different cultures, languages, skin colours, religions, histories as well as with different levels of education and diverse views come closer together. Based on this diversity, we often develop ideas, prejudices and certain expectations towards others; be it positive or negative. These make it difficult to live together openly. Disputes often determine our everyday life. Or are they already the headline in our lives? In the end, a lot of suffering arises in the form of anger, sadness or stress.

Have you ever had the experience in life of having categorised someone negatively based on their mere appearance and being positively surprised after a conversation? Or maybe the other way around?

In the Bible we read: "God does not favour or disfavour anyone." (Romans 2:11 HfA) If our Creator can see us all as "equal", that is, give us equal love, forgiveness and care, shouldn't we try to do the same? Every human being, with all strengths, weaknesses and even faults is "equal" before God.

If we would all at least try to minimise our prejudices and expectations and meet our counterparts with openness, appreciation and kindness, we would all be spared a great deal of suffering. We could use this time of life so much more sensibly! We can discover what potential our "new neighbours" have brought with them and experience that they become a great enrichment for us.

Daily Challenge:

Today, try to believe something good in someone who has a different background than you do. Don't expect anything, but learn from it! You will be positively surprised.

Aneta Oladeji

German-Polish roots, German-African marriage, mother of three children: volunteer teacher of the children's and youth department of Trust in Faith Gospel Mission Berlin e.V. since 1999.

Day 28 We Need Harvest Workers!



"Active" - Unfolding Vocations



Matthew 9:35-37

Scripture tells us that Jesus travelled through ancient Palestine, telling the people the good news of God's Kingdom and healing their diseases. He revealed himself as the heavenly King of Israel and offered that they should turn to him. One day Jesus looked at the crowd of his listeners. He saw that many were ready to be saved, but there were not enough workers to go with them. The people were helpless and restless. Jesus had great compassion for them.

It would be desirable that we receive in our hearts today this deep longing for the spiritual welfare of the lost! It is sad to see important work in God's kingdom fall by the wayside or struggle to progress because there are not enough helpers. We definitely need more people who love God and are committed to His cause! Our hearts should be concerned daily for the spiritual welfare of our neighbours, just as Jesus cares for His sheep as a good shepherd.

Earlier we read that an evil spirit had made a man dumb (verse 32). Someone was concerned about him and brought him to Jesus. Perhaps we often do not realise what spiritual struggles our neighbour:ing or brothers and sisters in the church are going through. Especially people who have immigrated to this country often have to deal with great opposition. Jesus challenges us to show compassion. His call for co-workers is also true today. He told his disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest for helpers (verse 38). That is not yet a calling. We should first wait to be sent. In chapter 10:5 Jesus sent out his disciples. That is why we should pray to him when it comes to evangelism. In Isaiah 6:8 we read, "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?' But I said, 'Here I am, send me!'" Dear brother and sister, you may be determined to work in the Lord's harvest. But you should first ask God to send you. If he commissions you, your work will be blessed. Before you step into the harvest field, let God's apostolic servants lay their hands on you to empower you (cf. Acts 13:1-4).

Daily Challenge:

Pray today that God will send workers into the harvest who can handle interculturalism well.

Pastors Dr. Jere & Leticia Aidoo

from Ghana, Gospel Believers International Ministries e.V. in Berlin and Co-founder of the Association of African Pentecostal Pastors in Berlin e.V.

Day 29 How Immigrants Drive Community Growth



"Active" - Unfolding Vocations



Acts 6:1-7

My family is always in the minority. In Indonesia, we belong to the Christian minority in a majority Muslim environment. In Germany, we are the non-white immigrant family with patchy knowledge of German. We are often seen as second-class people.

In the congregation in Jerusalem at the time of the Acts of the Apostles there were two groups at that time: the Hebrew, i.e. the Jewish members who came from Jerusalem, and the Jews of Greek origin who had immigrated to Jerusalem. The Greek-born group was smaller and financially worse off. At the time there were complaints in the congregation because the widows of this group were being shortchanged in the provision they received from the congregation. This concern was taken up by the apostles. People were chosen to be commissioned to "serve at table". Later the term deacon was coined. From the names of those chosen (verse 5) we can see that they were Jews of Greek origin. The problems of the immigrants were not only taken seriously, they were included in the attempts to solve them and they became part of the leadership level of the congregation through the appointment.

This approach is often missing in German churches. People of colour, young people and people with disabilities are rarely seen, not only in the church leadership, but even among the worshippers. In Jerusalem, the decision was made to include Greek Jews more. This even became a decisive factor for the growth of the church.

If the churches and society in Germany are to become stronger, listen to the voice of the immigrants, open the doors to the refugees and entrust people of different origins and backgrounds with leadership positions in an equitable way.

Daily Challenge:

What is your contribution today to make the church more diverse?

Andar Parlindungan

from Indonesia, Wuppertal, Member of the VEM Board, married, three children.

Day 30 New Opportunities? Diversity is Attractive!



"Active" - Unfolding Vocations



Acts 6:1-7

Diversity or uniformity. What would we say? What are we for, who wins? What would we opt for? Well, of course, diversity. And that's a good thing too! A good goal, because through diversity in a group we can learn more about other people and ourselves. Learning to appreciate other cultures. Be inspired. Challenge our own viewpoints and practice tolerance. What a beautiful idea to share our cultural richness like this and learn from each other! Yes, true diversity is attractive. A good word, easily said, but the deed is more difficult. After all, diversity is hard work.

The very first Christian congregation had to realise this. The early church of the apostles was quite multicultural from the very beginning. Early on, there were both Greek and Hebrew-speaking new Christians. So it was so intercultural! And that brings with it very practical problems, as the Bible passage shows us. The Greeks among them feel neglected, very practically. They need more care! It becomes clear that diversity needs a watchful eye of all for the neighbour(s), for the respective needs, spiritually and practically.

Still barriers in your head? Fear of the foreign? Isn't uniformity easier, better for me? One's own circle, one's own culture. One's own comfort zone. It's normal. I know it from myself. Jumping over the shadow. Hard work. Shadows need to be taken seriously and then overcome with God's help. Only with this overcoming does true diversity emerge, which attracts. With consideration for others. Through little things this already happens. By including others in our speech and actions. With an alert eye, where we can support someone with a deed or a word. With sensitivity. And trusting that we are already a unity in diversity, a body of Christ with many different members that nevertheless fit together. This is how I have often experienced it in my personal faith. Let us be a unity in exciting diversity and genuinely overcome ourselves for this!

Daily Challenge:

Today, with God's help, try to overcome your own barrier and practise something new that you have copied from another person.

Florian Rentzsch

Theology student at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal, in an intercultural relationship, active passionate type, musician, trusts in a unity in diversity.

Day 31 A Heavenly Togetherness



"Alive" - Heavenly Perspectives



Revelation 7:9-10

"The world as a guest of friends. Perhaps you still remember this motto? It was the motto of the 2006 World Cup in Germany, which became known as the "summer fairy tale". To the great surprise of most football fans, Germany proved to be a good host. German fans celebrated in the streets together with guests of different origin, language and skin colour. A lively atmosphere that no one had expected, not even the Germans.

John was surprised, certainly even overwhelmed, by the atmosphere when he saw and heard in a vision of the future the praise of the innumerable crowd before the throne of God. The crowd consists of those who remained faithful to Jesus until the end and finally, as the resurrected, worship God and live together with him.

While many people from Western countries usually imagine the resurrection as a personal, ultimate salvation, according to biblical findings, the life of the resurrected is first and foremost a life in community. Together with all the redeemed from all cultures, we will experience God's full presence and give him the glory.

Fellowship and praise are typical characteristics of those who are made alive. For we are already made alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:5)!

Daily Challenge:

Invite someone from a different culture than yours to your home and celebrate together: Barbecue together! Watch football! Play together! Or make music.

Elisabet Castro & Steffen De Coninck

belong to the mission movement Kontaktmission and support missionaries from Latin America to live out their calling in Germany. As a Peruvian-Swabian couple, they love high-quality, substantial food, although there is disagreement about which is ultimately tastier - potatoes or spaetzle.

Day 32 God's Love Unites



"Alive" - Heavenly Perspectives



Revelation 7:9-14

Revelation 7 gives us a vision of people standing before the throne worshipping Jesus as the sacrificial lamb. In verse 9 John speaks of a great multitude from all nations and tongues. This reminds us that God's love unites all people who submit to his will. They are described as loyal and active. It is said that they washed their clothes. This means they did not wait for God to serve them, but consciously and wholeheartedly gave themselves to him throughout their lives.

A particularly important aspect here is holiness. It encompasses everything. I believe that this should be a heartfelt concern for all Christians. The Catholic Catechism teaches that the purpose of life is to know, love and serve God. This is how we can inherit the Kingdom of God. We see confirmed that God planned from the beginning to save all people. This is beautiful, and even the ancient prophets spoke of it: "From the rising of the sun to its going down, my name is glorious among the nations, and in every place an offering of incense and a pure sacrifice is offered to my name; for my name is glorious among the nations, says the LORD of hosts." (Malachi 1:11)

In verse 14 we read that the garments of the crowd had become clean because they were washed in the blood of the Lamb. This sounds a bit strange, but it has a direct reference to the Old Testament, where animal sacrifices were brought to receive spiritual cleansing. In the New Testament, this system was replaced by the one-time sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. His blood washes us clean from all guilt. The washing of clothes was an active activity. This shows us that we should consciously accept salvation through Jesus and live according to his word: "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have access unto the tree of life, and may enter in at the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I firmly believe that it is time for Christians from all denominations to put aside their cultural, religious, political and national differences. Let us seek together the One who has called us to become His children!

Daily Challenge:

Let us pray with Francis of Assisi: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, that I may love where people hate; that I may forgive where people offend; that I may bring faith where doubt threatens; that I may awaken hope where despair torments; that I may kindle light where darkness reigns; that I may bring joy where sorrow dwells."

Parish Priest Fr Stephen Duodu

Parish Priest in the Ghanaian Catholic Community and assistant pastor in the German parish, Berlin.

Day 33 God Will Wipe Away All Tears



"Alive" - Heavenly Perspectives



Revelation 7:17

"The Lamb in the midst of the throne will feed them and guide them to the springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (LÜ)

This Bible verse reminds me of the many miracles the Lord has done in my family. I have a wonderful family whom I love very much. But when I was barely born, my father became addicted to alcohol and smoked a lot. He would come home drunk every night and argue with my mother. Then she started crying and could hardly sleep. This went on for 21 years! When I was at school, only my mother came to visit me on visiting days, but not my father, as was the case with my friends. That took a lot out of me, and I also cried a lot. My brother and I always wanted to play with our father, but it was not possible. In the evenings, my mother was often afraid. On holidays, we were never together as a whole family because my father preferred to meet his friends to drink with them. We really went through a valley of tears. Often my mother did not even want to eat. Her heart was full of sorrow and she prayed desperately to God day and night. One day she poured out her whole heart to him.

In Psalm 6:8 we read that the Lord will hear our prayers and wipe away our tears. That is what we experienced. God is so good! My father has not drunk or smoked for four years now. He has been freed from his addiction. Today he can show us his love and he takes wonderful care of my brother and me. We are all happy and praise God together. We will never forget how wonderfully he has helped us!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, perhaps you too are sad today, perhaps you have worries, problems and needs. Perhaps your heart has been broken, perhaps you are very alone. Maybe it is your friend, someone in your neighbourhood or your family who is going through hard times. I want to encourage you: You are not alone! Jesus is there to help you, the people you love and everyone around you. He was broken and crucified for us. He loves us and he understands us. The Word of God tells us: The Lord will wipe away your tears, and he will remove your shame. (Isaiah 25:8). Jesus is there to save us, to comfort us and to give us new strength. God bless you!

Pray: Jesus, thank you for hearing my cry. You are merciful. You dry my tears. You turn my lamentations into songs of joy. Thank you for your love and care. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

Today, think about who around you could use comfort. Is there a person you can help, especially someone from a different background than you?

Esther Srinivasan

from India; teacher and professional dancer.

Day 34 Practising for Heaven



"Alive" - Heavenly Perspectives



Revelation 7:9-10

"After this I saw a huge crowd from all tribes and peoples, people of all languages and cultures; there were so many that no one could count them. Clothed in white robes, they stood before the throne and before the Lamb, holding palm branches in their hands and shouting with a loud voice: "Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb!" (NGÜ)

Practising for heaven can mean discovering, valuing and celebrating the diversity of languages and cultures in our globalised world. The Bible reveals to us in this text God's love for diversity and that he encourages us to accept the people we meet on our journey through life. I also see Jesus' Great Commission fulfilled here (cf. Matthew 24:14). Since it speaks of the crowd being made up of people of all peoples, nations, ethnicities and languages, we may assume that our diversity will be preserved in heaven. All unite in worship before the throne of God and the Lamb. So God certainly expects us Christians to reflect that on earth.

My personal faith experience that I would like to share with you today goes back to the early 1980s when I came to Germany. I completed a Master's degree in business administration in Hamburg and joined a Christian community where I found faith in Jesus. Eight years later, it became a church and I was ordained as its pastor. I had no idea that God had deliberately brought me to Germany to preach the Gospel to Africans in the Diaspora, their children yet to be born, and native Germans! I was and am happy and blessed to do it. However, when my studies were over, I was to be deported with my wife and our children. The matter dragged on in court for eight years and finally ended up before the parliamentary body of the Hardship Commission. Thank God I had found very dear German pastor friends in the meantime who stood by me in this situation. Together with the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church, they successfully intervened and negotiated that in the meantime 6 of us should go to Ghana for one year and then be allowed to come back. It was one of the most challenging times of my life, but God helped us through. We are all very grateful for that! I see the cross-cultural aspect in my story in the German church's realisation that God has brought people from other countries so that they can carry out the Lord's Great Commission together with them. No matter what background you and I have, we are called by God. We are to win souls for him and invite people from all cultures by sharing the good news with them here on earth.

Daily Challenge:

Pray today for a person with an intercultural background from your environment.

Pastor Kingsley Nimo

from Ghana, International Christian Church Berlin e.V., 1st Chairman of the Association African. Pentecostal Pastors in Berlin e.V., Fishers of Men for Christ.

Day 35 United before God's Throne



"Alive" - Heavenly Perspectives



Revelation 7:10

"And they cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation is with our God who sits on the throne, and with the Lamb!" (LÜ)

I am always fascinated when Christians from different cultures come together to praise God with united hearts. I have the privilege of having lived on different continents: Asia, Africa, North and Central America and Europe. I find that the biggest hurdle to friendship and integration into society is the cultural and language barrier. Locals generally see you as a foreigner if you are different. But when I am among Christians, I experience that this barrier is overcome. Even if the external conditions remain the same, the feeling of "foreignness" often turns into a feeling of "togetherness". But what brings us together? Without salvation through the blood of Jesus, we would still be strangers to each other. Belonging to the Church of Christ is different from belonging to a club with similar interests. We cannot join the family of God by our own strength. Salvation is with our God who saves us and cleanses us through the blood of Jesus. It is only because of his grace. No matter what colour of skin we have, what language we speak or what level of society we belong to, we can be saved and belong to His family. How wonderful that Jesus has united his children from all nations through his blood! Despite cultural and linguistic differences, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. This is a foretaste of heaven!

While we may separate ourselves from each other because of our differences, God likes the diversity of our differences. He is the creator of diversity and yet he unites us as one in his family. Imagine that one day, after we have fought the good fight and completed our walk on earth, all brothers and sisters of different cultural backgrounds will gather around his throne in heaven. We will be one, praising God with one voice and thanking Him with united hearts for His salvation! What a joyful day it will be!

Daily Challenge:

Make a date with a person from a different background to praise God together!

Y.C. Tang

comes from Hong Kong and lives in Germany with her German husband. Together they are in service for Christ.

Day 36 God's Voice in Worship



"Alive" - Heavenly Perspectives



Revelation 7:15
and 1 Samuel 3:1-10

"Therefore, they stand before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple. And he who sits on the throne will give them his presence." (NGÜ, verse 15)

We go to church on Sundays. We enjoy the fellowship of our brothers and sisters and like to sing our favourite praise songs. We sing and tell God how much we love him. We pray and praise God and tell him what worries us, what concerns we have. But we often forget that God also likes to talk to us.

The Bible says: God dwells in our praise. (Psalm 22:4). He is so close to us, and he speaks to us. This does not mean the 30 minutes of praise on Sunday. All of life is praise, whether we are at work, in the supermarket or on the train.

In the Old Testament, Samuel served in the temple and lived there. Today, the Holy Spirit dwells in us everywhere we are. But our everyday life is often so loud that we no longer hear God's voice or often mistake it. I grew up in the big city of Aleppo in Syria, where it is really loud. But when you grow up there, you get used to the noise and it doesn't bother you anymore. I sometimes wonder how many times God spoke clearly to me, but I couldn't hear him.

The good news is that when we long to hear God's voice, he is patient. He speaks to us so many times until we recognise and understand his voice. Hearing God's voice requires spiritual maturity and attention. The Bible says, "My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them." (John 10:27) God speaks to each of us in a different way. God knows my culture, my background and my character, and he speaks my language.

Daily Challenge:

Practice listening attentively and sensitively to God's voice. You will be surprised how much God wants to tell you.

Subhy Samra

Mannheim, grew up in Aleppo, Syria. Worshipping with David and Mark Samra Worship seminars, songwriting and music production.

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