Yours in Christ,

May God’s Spirit strengthen our focus of our newsletter this year.

How we do this and why this ministry among young people.

Now many pastors in our Church the ministry declined.

The religious and theological qualification of pastors was of great concern to him. He sought direct conversation with Islamic associations in Hesse, and he built up reliable relationships with them.

Prof. Dr. Steinacker is mourned by Church boards and by persons in EKHN’s Partner Churches because of his friendship, representatives from ecumenical partner organizations and partners in inter-religious dialogue, as well as by the staff members of the Center for Ecumenical Work. His commitment to ecumenical affairs will be held in grateful memory. A detailed tribute to the life of Prof. Dr. Peter Steinacker is available on the EKHN website www.ekhn.de.

The challenge

As for other western countries, the years with the highest birthrates in Germany were in the 1950s. The development and distribution of birth control and a change in lifestyle led to a vast decline in births during the following decades. Now, 60 years later, EKHN must adapt itself to the situation that there are more pastors who retire every year than young pastors who become Church ministers. A survey among students at German universities, has labelled the current number of pastors as insufﬁcient. The religious and theological qualiﬁcation of pastors must be improved 

The Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN), as a Church of the Reformation, is committed to the Lutheran principle of the Augsburg Confession which states: “Every baptized Christian shall go forth and share his or her creed and support the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all peoples.” For this EKHN, like most of its partner churches around the world, has created and maintains a “special ministry.” This special ministry for proclaiming the Gospel is practiced through the congregations by pastors and educators. Today EKHN engages 1,700 pastors, of whom 1,250 work in single congregations. According to the Augsburg Confession, they ensure that regular public services are offered at which the sacraments are administered. For EKHN these sacraments are Baptism and Holy Communion.

The Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN)addresses. (dk)

Questions regarding climate change and its changes. During this campaign projects it represents taking steps towards possible answers to global challenges with regard to 

EKHN has set up an ofﬁce to handle the prepara-
tions for the anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. Several projects are being planned. These include, among others, a “Luther path” through Hesse, an exhibit of “Luther’s Masterpieces” at the Bible Museum in Frankfurt and a central celebration for the state of Hesse in Marburg in 2017. (dk)

Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace. EKHN is reinforcing its engagement against injustice and war. Towards this end the Synod has resolved to participate in the international “Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace” campaign sponsored by the World Council of Churches. Within the next seven years this initiative seeks to help search for responses to global challenges with regard to the economy, the environment and politics, as well as with regard to faith. Here the term “Pilgrimage” is used as a transferred image, it represents taking steps towards possible changes. During this campaign projects geared towards the battle against poverty or refugee issues, for example, are being supported and networked internationally.

Questions regarding climate change and its worldwide consequences are also to be addressed. (dk)

New and Reelected Provosts.
The Church Synod elected Rev. Oliver Albrecht as Regional Bishop for the District of North Nassau. In other elections the Synod re-elected Rev. Matthias Schmidt as Regional Bishop for the District of Upper Hesse and Rev. Karl Held as Regional Bishop for the District of Starkenburg. They will serve for a term of six years and have the title “Provost.”

Oliver Albrecht succeeded Provost Dr. Sigurd Rink, who serves as Protestant Bishop for the German Armed Forces since 2015 following a long illness. During his tenure as EKHN Church President between 1993 and 2008 he made great contributions towards promoting ecumenical issues, and he decisively furthered the content profile of the Center for Ecumenical Work. Regular visits with EKHN’s African, Asian and European Partner Churches expanded his awareness for the concerns of the people in the partner regions and for the cultural wealth of the Christian faith. He was a most welcome visitor in the Partner Churches, and in his sermons and lectures he managed to find expression for the modern theological questions from a Central European perspective within a foreign cultural context.

He was a member in the German-Polish Contact Committee for many years, and he maintained close relationships with the Polish Ecumenical Council as well as with the faculty of the Waldensian Evangelical Church in Rome, Italy. It was early on that Dr. Steinacker advocated a dialogue with Islam and initiated various programs to further this understanding.

Theological and ecumenical relationships with them.

Prof. Dr. Steinacker is available on the EKHN website www.ekhn.de. (dk)

In order to make best use of this potential – and in view of the current low number of Protestant theology students – and to attract more young people to the ministry – EKHN has appointed Pastor Anja Schwerin-Weinrich to serve as its special envoy. Since 2012 she visits prospective students in high school classes, presents EKHN during job fairs and at Church Youth Con-

gresses, and supports active recruitment via new media. “There are two tracks towards our recruit-

ment for the parish ministry. The first of these is by publicity and advertisement, in both digital and print media, and by our presence at job information fairs. The second track – and the one I find to be more effective – is to cooperate with active pastors, teachers, and other educators. They best know who is qualiﬁed and interested, and they can serve as role models, inspiring young people to seek their future in the ministry.”

The web portal

In November 2014, EKHN launched a web portal www.machdochwasdagebenaber.de (“do what you believe your ministry demands” — information about the ministry and the path one must take to get there. A student, a vicar and a pastor talk about what it is about the ministry which excites and motivates them. Those interested can take a “job test” and, as of autumn 2015, the simulation game Gemeindealltag (“everyday life in the congregation”) will be available on the website. Then young people will be able to participate in video competitions, and be able to show what enthu-

ses them and what they can do well. That this EKHN campaign is important is shown by a look at the statistics. These illustrate that the number of Protestant theology students has increased slight-

ly, but the current number is not yet enough to cover requirements over the next years. Currently there are 269 prospective pastors on EKHN’s list. Yet the Church sees great potential in making itself even more attractive. Motivating and instructing young genera-

tions to take on the mantle of the Church remains a challenge. (j)
"It was a very good decision"

Are you still studying towards the right degree? His fellow students asked Thomas Lotz, a mechanical engineering student born in 1979. At this he had to laugh. They asked him this because he had so many theology books on his shelves and had already completed training as a curate. The pastor of his congregation, where he had initially become involved in ministry projects, had helped point him in that direction. Then Lotz began working as a mechanical engineer. "I enjoyed that, but I was also looking for a subject I could teach," he says. And he was definitely also considering religion.

This led to an appointment with an ecclesiastical human resources consultant. Why not study theology straight away in an extra occupational program, the counselor asked him. Such a degree program was newly offered in Marburg. "At that moment a huge door was opened for me," Thomas Lotz confessed. Usually theology studies in Germany are begun directly after graduation, upon getting one's qualification for university admission. But now a study program is also offered for people who have already completed a different university degree, as well as those who have already worked in the field they studied. During a preliminary interview in Marburg the responsible parties asked him, how he envisioned being able to manage the financial aspects as he also had a family. The three-year study program would cost EUR 10,000 in any case, as only a first study program can be had for little money. Thomas had savings, and he could offer mechanical engineering instruction on the side. His wife supported his plans which was, he said, absolutely essential for him. The entrance examination followed in which his knowledge of the Bible was tested, along with the writing of essays, argumentations, analyses – it was a really difficult test. "A total of 27 people began the study course, and 24 made it through to the end," Thomas reports. "Those who begin this program must really want it in order to make it through," he adds. He had read the Bible from cover to cover before taking the entrance exam. Essentially the program is similar to a distance learning course. During four weeks and on four weekends a year attendance is mandatory, and all program participants meet at one location. Otherwise perseverance applies, in small groups and alone: with reading, reading, and more reading as well as godly. Theology student Lisa Gapp and beams. The young theology student will be taking her exams soon. And then? "I would like to become a parish pastor, preferably out in the countryside." She is completely certain about this move, too. (as)

"It is the best field of study there is," says Lisa Gapp and beams. The young theology student will be taking her exams this year, she has already written her research paper on the topic of instruction for confirmation candidates. "Well true," she admits, "I didn’t really like everything. I don’t care too much for church history. But practical theology on the other hand, I really enjoyed that." As she comes from the countryside, she would prefer to serve her parish internship in the city. The this as she is curious to see what life there is like.

She did not only study theology, but also checked out the fields of biology and political sciences. Lisa treasures the freedom she has to do so. She has many varied interests, and is also politically involved at college. She was not predestined to become a pastor from birth. "I had a very, very good class in religion," she says. And it was her religion teacher’s recommendation that she study theology. "Then I signed up for a six-week work experience program with a church congregation during summer vacation, and after that my decision was clear.” Immediately following graduation she took an eight-week study program in Greek.

Now she will be finished with her studies soon. And then? "I would like to become a parish pastor, preferably out in the countryside." She is completely certain about this move, too. (as)