Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I send you greetings from the Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN) and wish you a blessed Pentecost. (Leviticus 19:34)
The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself.

This biblical summons has preoccupied our church time and time again during the past years. It resonates – as is shown by the overwhelming amount of volunteer help and financial commitments for the refugees which our church receives. The situation for people in the Near East and in other crisis areas in Africa and Asia has worsened dramatically during the past year. Many have set out on the difficult path of escape to Europe, and over one million refugees request asylum in Germany in 2015. The last EKHN representative was Helmut Hild, who served as EKHN Church President from 1989 to 1995, and who was elected to the Council in 1973. Following his election Jung said: “I am very pleased to be able to bring the experiences of Hesse Nassau to the Council, and to be able to share responsibility for the EKDH.” In his campaign speech, the EKHN Church President pointed out the church’s role in tangling on the current social challenges. He cited the dedicated involve-ment of many congregations in providing assistance to refugees as an example. This involvement serves to help people in need – and this is in accordance with the mission of the church. Christians can also help insure that “the coexistence of denominations, religions and non-religious persons succeeds in our society.” In conclusion, Dr. Junge encouraged the synod participants: “Let us, as Protestants, speak with confidence in our hearts about our beliefs – in public debates but also, and especially, with our children.” In addition to his election to the EKHN Council, Volker Jung was also voted to be the new chairman of the board of the Joint Association of Protestant Media Communications (Gemeinschaftswerk der Evangelischen Publizistik (GEP)). In this position he is at the same time in the group of companies to which the Protestant news agency (evangelische Presseagentur epd), the monthly magazine “christmon” and also the Protestant journalism school in Berlin as well as the production company “Matthias-Film” belong.

Dr. Volker Jung Reconfi rmed as Church President. During its autumn conference in November 2015, the EKHN Synod reconfirmed Dr. Volker Jung as Church President by an overwhelming majority. Thus he will lead the 1.6 million strong EKHN for an additional eight years as of 2017. Jung first took up this position, which can be likened to that of a bishop, in 2009 as successor to Peter Steiner (1943-2015). In his campaign speech he pro-claimed his “church with wide open windows and doors.” It should see itself “as a church in this world and as a church for this world.”

New Church Councils and Deanery Synods Elected. The final results of the church council elections were available as of July 2015, and the newly elected councils took up their work in September. Of the 12,905 candidates, 47 percent were new prospects for such positions. In the end, exactly 9,838 of the candidates were elected to the church council positions, and of these 258 are youth delegates. At 58.5 percent the women’s quota remained the same as that of the last election. Following the church council elections, the deanery synods took place in November and the newly elected EKHN Synod is to hold its first meeting in June 2016.

Dr. Volker Jung was also voted to be the new chairman of the board of the Joint Association of Protestant Media Communications (Gemeinschaftswerk der Evangelischen Publizistik (GEP)). In this position he is at the same time in the group of companies to which the Protestant news agency (evangelische Presseagentur epd), the monthly magazine “christmon” and also the Protestant journalism school in Berlin as well as the production company “Matthias-Film” belong. (vk / dk)

Dr. Volker Jung Relected Provost for North Nassau. Also on the agenda of the synod meeting past November was the reelection of the Provost for North Nassau. The duration for the term of office is six years, and the synod must make its decision about a possible reelection one year prior to the end of the term. Annegret Puttkammer was reelected by a large majority, and her new term is to begin in 2017. As a Waldensian Church, which has integrated Christians throughout Africa, Latin America and Asia into its congregations via its “Esse-Chiesa Insieme” (be church together) project, Christians in our church congregations dedic-ate themselves to a welcoming and acceptance culture for refugees. You will find some ex-amples of this in our current Newsletter.

I wish you an enjoyable read. May God’s Spirit strengthen our ecclesial community. Yours in Christ.
He was quite concerned and hardly took father insisted that he participate in our actually too old for this child care project. She was very happy to see that so many children. "They have experienced very difficult situations," Fabia Krenz explains, "naturally they are skeptical and anxious when it comes to their children's welfare." But the structural aspect kept gaining," she explains. "But finally he was convinced. When she arrived in Germany shortly before Christmas in 2011, as a 15-year-old with her parents, she couldn't speak a word of German. The young Afghan girl was assigned to a special class in the Max Eyth School, a vocational school with approximately 2,100 students. "That was my very first school. In Afghanistan I was not allowed to go to school for even one day," Jimika reports. The Taliban consider education for girls as superfluous. In addition, the family belongs to the Hindu religious community, a harassed minority group in Afghanistan. Within one school year Jimika was able to complete her German basic school qualification. "All I had was the Google translator on my cell phone and children's books," she laughs. And, of course, plenty of help. The Alsfeld language learning center was involved and Ralf Müller accompanied her, helping with pronunciation of the language support program. "She is really amazing," Müller says. Jimika regularly got up at five in the morning in order to study for her school qualification. With a successful result! Afterwards she found an apprenticeship in wholesale and retail sales in Frankfurt. She also found an apartment for her parents and herself. They still hardly speak any German, and they don't feel comfortable in Germany. Their daughter must bridge the gap of caring for her parents on the one hand while on the other hand going out and learning the customs of this country. Meanwhile she has moved out, and now shares an apartment with a work colleague. She quit the apprenticeship after a few months, "too much pressure," she says. But her boss insisted on keeping her. She then worked as a temporary assistant, and acquired further qualifications in courses. Now she works in the company as a wholesale and retail sales woman – as planned – only that the path to achieving this goal turned out to be different. "I have gotten my driver’s license," she says proudly. She never would have dared dream this: the little girl from Afghanistan who was not even allowed onto the balcony in Kabul now works, drives a car, goes to the movies, and meets with friends. "My life has changed so significantly over the past four years that I can scarcely believe it." And it was Ralf Müller of the Protestant church who helped me. I will always be grateful to him," Jimika Ram promises.

"I Have Found a Home Here"

WIESBADEN. Those seeking Farhad Mostaschar's blessing for becoming Christian must successfully complete 100 units in his baptism class. "People have to really work for my class," the Iranian born Mostaschar says with a laugh. This doesn’t seem to be a deterrent as currently there are 30 Iranians and Afghans attending his class at the Congregationalist of the Resurrection in Wiesbaden. All of them want to become Christian, and they make a big effort in order to reach their goal. Throughout the year they speak Farsi, which works out very well. "Next Sunday the Pastor will baptize three members of our class," the 54-year-old joyfully notes. "Then there will be a big celebration," he adds. He is a member of the church council in his Wiesbaden congregation as well as a member of the ecumenical committee. Everyone is very kind to me," he says. "I have found a home here." Pastor Roland Falk would help him any time he should need advice and assistance. And besides, Ender, who until recently was holder of the profile post for ecumenism in the deanery of Wiesbaden and who is now retired, is always at his side. "I don’t know anyone who is quite like him," Ender says full of admiration. "Those who have gone through his baptism class usually stay the course." Ender says, with praise for Mostaschar’s member oriented work. The Iranian came to Wiesbaden 25 years ago via Bremen, Hannover and Dortmund. He was baptized while still in Iran, and following his move to Wiesbaden he founded a home church. Initially, he was alone, and even twelve people met in an apartment of only 34 square meters," Ender says. "Space wise this was simply no longer possible to handle. We looked for a larger meeting space and found the congregation of the Church of the Resurrection." Iranian church services have also been held there for nearly five years meanwhile. Recruitment problems? Not an issue!