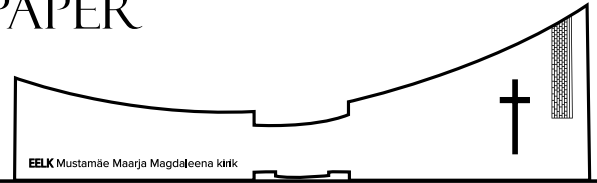


EELC MUSTAMÄE MARY MAGDALENE CHURCH NEWSPAPER



SPECIAL EDITION
DECEMBER 2023



Christ is born, glory to God!

It is the most wonderful time of the year again: Christmas lights, decorations and presents. It is a time filled with joy and hope, beauty and excitement. When we listen to the Christmas gospel or see Mary holding her baby, we feel something deep inside of us. There is something in the story that we need and long for. This is the story of love and reconciliation. God, Creator of the world loves us so much that He decided to come to our world and be with us, be one of us, among us. He was born as a baby because He loves each and every one of us. It is not a one-time event that took place 2000 years ago only once - we need the miracle of Christmas to happen again and again in our lives every year. We need it today, to feel our hearts fill with love that comes from above.

Indeed, it only happened once in Bethlehem, that God was born as a baby. Today he wants to be born in our hearts, in yours and mine. All we can do is open our hearts and pray, "Come, Lord!" and he will live in our hearts.

It is remarkable that Jesus became a helpless baby and not attracting a lot of attention. Only the shepherds, not trustworthy and despised people back in the day were called as witnesses. A 5th century bishop, Peter Chrysologus wrote that, "God came to us as a baby so that we wouldn't be scared of Him." The angel who came to announce the miracle to the shepherds, started by saying, "Do not be afraid!"

Jesus came as a helpless baby, so that we would not be afraid but receive Him openly and with love. Just like a parent carries their child in their hearts, we can carry baby-Jesus in our hearts. In Jh 14:9 Jesus says about himself, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." So, when we look at Jesus, we see God, and when we carry Jesus in our hearts, we carry God in our hearts. Jesus was born to reconcile people with God and give everyone hope. This is another message

we need to hear time and time again, as we long for inner peace and good relationships with people. Peace is something everyone strives for and yearns for.

Every first Advent, pastors are invited to announce Christmas-time peace to people. It is of course mainly symbolic, as the world will not stop and take it easy because of that. But on a spiritual level those who receive it, will experience inner peace and truly feel that God is with us.

God gives us peace and love, but not for nothing, we need to do our part. First of all we need to accept these

presents from God, but this is just the beginning. To fully experience love and peace we need to share it with others, to do acts of love unconditionally and do our best to keep good relationships in peace.

Many of us are looking for the magical Christmas feeling these days. We cannot buy this feeling from shops, unlike presents to bring joy to others, but it will never be enough. We will get this feeling when we open our hearts to Jesus like a manger. Let Mary put her

baby down to rest in your heart and mine, so that Christ himself can live in us, shape us according to His will, renew us from the inside and make us more Christ-like. This is the glory angels sang about, "Glory to God Almighty!" Because God came to us to make our hearts His home and He will come again next year. May you have Christmas peace in your hearts and may Jesus be born in your home. Most beautiful Christmas-time and most blessed New Year of 2024!

Tiina Klement



MUSTAMÄE CONGREGATION IN 2023

Ülle Reimann, Imbi Arro

For a small group of young people, the year 2023 started in Rostock, Germany at a Taize Youth Meeting. That means we sang Taize songs and prayed for peace while the new year arrived. They were happy to spend their New Years in a different and uplifting way, it was great to see old friends and encourage young people to visit Taize community in France. This year's meeting takes place in the capital city of Slovenia, Ljubljana. A group of pilgrims are travelling there with pastor Tiina Klement. Throughout the year, Taize prayers have been held on Fridays in our church.



*Taizé European Youth Meeting 2022/2023 in Rostock
Photo: private collection*

As usual, Christmas-time ended with a communal gathering on Epiphany in January. We had a delicious feast and amazing decorations, smiling people. Our pastor Tiina proposed we pray more for each other in 2023. Therefore she gave out paper slips with names of all the congregation members and people present among everyone, so we all had specific people to pray for. For entertainment we sang Christmas songs, had a few performances and in the end, a quiz based on the articles we had for the children's page in the newspaper throughout the year.



*Congregation Christmas party on Epiphany 2023.
Photo: Marilin Pärna*

In addition to regular Sunday services and Family services on the first Sunday of the month, we had regular meetings for toddlers, children, youth, elderly, newspaper group, men, Tuesday meetings with food and the Mission Choir. During 2023 we held 4 meetings in the event series "Bread of Life" and 2 Bingo nights. The latter gathered us 220 euros for use in the congregation. In September we started to offer weekly church soup to those in need, a project generously supported by our friends in Norway. Recipients have been families with children, elderly and visitors from Mustamäe Social Service Center. After a common mealtime we usually play different board games.

At Pentecost Sunday we confirmed 2 new members and baptised one of our youth group members. Another teenager was baptised on the Sunday we celebrated our 13th birthday on November 26. Enough youth grew out of the children's church and we started a confirmation group for 7 teenagers, lasting until early summer.



*Young confirmants solving a group task.
Photo: Tiina Klement*

The toddlers meet once a month and the children who attend with their parents or grandparents have become a kind of family. We meet monthly to sing, pray, hear a Bible story and eat together. The families always communicate between meetings as well, to share things worth sharing.

"BREAD OF LIFE" MEETINGS

Every meeting has its own topic and guest. These evenings are organised by our board member Marilin Pärna, who always has a snack table, set by food and decorations based on the theme. The first one of the year was on February 14, our guest Ove Sander (pastor of EELC Nõmme Rahu and rector of EELC Institute of Theology) opened the topic of "Message of Love". We read 1Cor 13 and took a journey through love. We also discussed love towards oneself, positive attitude towards life, loving thy neighbour, forgiveness and reconciliation. All the food was red that day.

Next one was in May, when we celebrate Mother's Day in Estonia and the topic was "Church as a Mother". We invited the pastor from Risti church, Annika Laats



*"Bread of Life" guest Ove Sander.
Photo: Marilin Pärna*

to speak. She shared her experiences as a spiritual counsellor at the children's hospital. In the light of the topic she also compared the church as a chicken who gathers her children under her wings (Mt 23:37).

Our cantor and leader of the Mission Choir Maarja Vardja composed a special song "Bread of Life" for this event and we can sing it every time from then on.



*Annika Laats and Tiina Klement in deep discussion.
Photo: Marilin Pärna*

The third event in the series took place during the Church Days in August and the guest, radio host and lecturer Ingmar Kurg talked about the fruits of the Spirit that God gives to a congregation through the Holy Spirit. Church Days are described in more detail in its own article.

The fourth and last of the year took place on October 31, anniversary of reformation. Of course this became the inspiration for the topic, a quote by Martin Luther: "Here I stand, I can do no other." The guest, the deacon of St Charles and a teacher Meelis Holsting. His main message was that faith is not a personal business, as we meet with God in the Holy Communion offered at services, at a church with other people.

INTERCESSORY CONGREGATIONS

Every year there is a draw between congregations who wish to have another congregation pray for them for a year. The main idea is to pray for another church, but it is also a wonderful reason to visit and cooperate. On March 2 a small group visited St Paul's church in Tartu, that was our intercessory congregation the year before. Pastor Kristjan Luhamets shared and showed

the everyday workings of their church. As a lot of what they do is also part of our future vision, this visit was very beneficial and inspirational.

On March 25, the day of Annunciation, we welcomed our this year's intercessory congregation, St Mary's from Ambla in Järva county. Their pastor Tõnu Linnasmäe brought with him a big group of their loyal Christians. People from both congregations had baked a good deal of delicious food to be enjoyed after a common prayer during getting to know each other. On one of the stormiest days of the year on October 7, our pastor Tiina filled her minivan with eager members of the congregation and headed to Ambla. It was impressive to visit a church built in the 13th century, hear the history and be welcomed so warmly by the same people we had already met in March.

ELDERLY GROUP - JOYFUL AND ACTIVE

The monthly meetings of our elderly continued in 2023. Usual participation is around 10 people, depending on their health situation. There are some people who attend every time and sometimes we have curious people stepping in to see what is going on.

The meetings always start with a song and prayer. We ask God's guidance and blessings to those who are present and those who could not come. We also pray for our country and our church. It has become a tradition to congratulate past month's birthdays with a song, flowers and good wishes. Should it happen that the birthday child is absent, someone will bring them the flowers to their home.

There is always a thematic discussion at the meetings. We often read a spiritual text to encourage us, share our thoughts and experiences connected to it to make it alive for us. It is not healthy to sit for too long, so we always take time to stretch and exercise.

The gathering continues at a coffee table, rich with the food and snacks everyone has brought along, be it sandwiches, salads or cakes. Free conversation follows, mostly about their everyday events, feelings, thoughts, but also health tips and food recipes.

The most awaited and favourite event is the December gathering with presents and a more festive table. We have a tradition to create our own Christmas poem, when one starts and next one adds their line until everyone has contributed.



*Christmas meeting of the joyful and active ladies.
Photo: Marilin Pärna*

CHURCH DAYS "BREAD OF LIFE" "ELULEIB"

Marilin Pärna

In August 2023 we had another Church Days event in Mustamäe church. This year's theme was "Bread of Life" and they took place from August 24 to August 27.

It is important in life to take good care of both your body and spirit, to give both of them only the best food. During those 4 days we gave both to our visitors. Most of the activities and events were in our church or around it, but we also included Mustamäe Christian Free Church.



"Bread of life" gathering. Photo: Marilin Pärna

The grand opening was a meeting with a guest, a series of events called "Bread of Life" that was started last year and we have continued with the same name ever since. Our guest this time was Ingmar Kurg, who opened the topic of "Fruits of the Spirit" for us. He spoke of the special fruits that a Christian congregation is given. He taught all the guests in a playful way how to share joy, love, peace and kindness to the people around us. The point of the game was to notice how giving will return the good things twofold to ourselves. The many guests at the event could eat a bountiful amount of good fruits from the snack table, listen to the talented Maarja Haamer sing and play instruments and of course sing along with Maarja Vardja at the piano.

Friday and Saturday morning we held morning prayers, led by pastors and musicians from different Mustamäe churches.

On Friday morning and afternoon, Vaike Pähn led 2 workshops, open to different age groups. She taught how to train one's brain and memory, and build bridges to improve relationships through kinetic sand therapy.



Memory training. Photo: Ülle Reimann



Café day. Photo: Jaana Maria Unga

Friday evening was open to school children to play all kinds of board games in the newly finished basement room. The daily programme ended with a Taizé prayer.

Saturday was once again a cafe day. The weather was warm and sunny, so perfect for our stand full of home baked goodies and lottery. We also welcomed Lustimaa to offer soft ice cream, ice drinks and cotton candy. Vispel foodtruck offered the best of street food. Children enjoyed jumping on the bouncy castle and could get face paintings for free, if they wished.

Throughout the day we had several performers - feisty gypsy dancers from Harkujärve church, local singing talent Ingrid Stamm and the wonderful Mission Choir led by Maarja Vardja. Eva Mitreikina led 2 workshops - beatbox and playing instruments, open to everyone to discover the varied world of rhythms.



Open-mic event. Photo: Kristel Mägedi

After the cafe day we gathered to enjoy the different ways 7 people, both amateurs and professionals have chosen to express themselves - through music, poetry, fairy tales, visual art etc.

Mustamäe Christian Free Church held an evangelical open-air service on Saturday evening in Löwenruh park. They had invited the Christian puppet theater Talleke to perform their piece "From a Shepherd to King".

The Church Days ended with a festive open air service in the inner courtyard of Mustamäe church, as it could accommodate all the guests and the Mission Choir. The choir itself celebrated their 25th birthday this year.

Jesus says: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Jh 6:35

CHILDREN AND YOUTH WORK IN 2023

Maris Kuldkepp

It is quite a challenge to write a yearly overview, as it often is in Mustamäe, it consists of two different halves. The beginning of the year does not guarantee it ends the same way. It was especially true in 2023. Therefore the overview is in 3 parts: January-June, summer and September-December. Regular events that remained the same were family services on the first Sunday of the month and toddlers' group led by our deacon Ülle. Youth work was more active than children's church this year.

JANUARY-JUNE

We had an Estonian NMS intern Renata with us and she also led the youth evening in March. In January our guest was Maarja Haamer, a musician who happens to be blind so meeting her was most inspirational. In February we had Kadre Arikainen, a young Christian woman who works at a sexual health clinic and has worked as an ambulance nurse. In April we watched a movie called "Heaven is for real".

During the spring we visited Tartu twice - St Paul's youth event at the end of April and St John's event in May. Our youth rarely go to Tartu, so we walked around, saw different churches and Tartu University main building, plus a lovely walk in the botanic garden.

The first weekend of February we participated at the annual winter youth event in Põltsamaa in mid-Estonia. The theme was "Self-defence" and there was an actual self-defence workshop for everyone.

Some of the youth participated on the Way of the Cross on Good Friday in Tallinn old town. On May 1st we invited people to help out together to make the surroundings of our church look decent, quite a few of the children and youth came to help as well.

There were 8 children's church meetings during this time. As usual, we looked at the New Testament stories. We learned more about John the Baptist, Jesus' disciples and miracles, we played a card game "Saboteur" when we talked about Jesus' temptations in the desert. 2 of the last meetings of the spring were dedicated to apostle Paul. The February gathering was a little different, as one of the children wished to prepare the Bible story about a 12-year old Jesus in the temple.



Summer camp. Photo: Marilyn Pärna

SUMMER

The annual summer camp took place before St John's day and as June 23rd is a National holiday in Estonia, the camp was a day shorter this year. Throughout the 4 days we looked at only one Bible story, as there are so many layers and meanings in "The Prodigal Son" parable. The activities included bowling, Proto science center, Arvo Pärt center and an overnight visit to Nõva, ca 1h from Tallinn.

In mid-July there was the annual Christian youth festival JäPe in Pilistvere, the theme was "I am your friend". There were both volunteer helpers, nicknamed ants, and participants among the Mustamäe youth.

In July some of our youth spent a week in the Taize community in France.

At the end of August, just before school started again, we held the Church Days again in our church. There was a special board games event for the youth, and they also participated at the cafe, making pancakes.

AUTUMN

We were joined by a lovely NMS intern Martha from Norway and as usual, we share her with Saku church. As most of the children have grown into the youth group age, then Maris will focus more on the youth work from now on. Children's church continued once a month, led by Tiina, but we are hoping someone will feel the calling to take over from her. We started a youth confirmation group for 7 teenagers and they will be confirmed in the late spring.

The youth evenings usually take place twice a month, but we also visit Christian events over the weekends. In September we started with the theme "New beginning" and at the end of the month participated in St Paul's church youth event in Tartu. In October, the youth chose to watch "The Fault in our Stars" and as the end of October is close to All Soul's Day, we talked about death and life. The November youth evening was led by Martha and her topic was both Father's Day and "Dual Citizenship".

Mid-November was a special time for many youths from Estonia, as 60+ of us participated in Europe's biggest Christian youth festival Maata Näkyvissä in Turku. It was Mustamäe congregation's first trip there and hopefully not our last, as it was an amazing experience and we got help from generous donors to go there.

December is the busiest month in churches, but we managed to fit in another youth evening and we tried to imagine what the world would look like, if Jesus was not born. Our conclusion: it is indeed very good that he was born into this world! On December 16th we had our annual Christmas party, over 30 toddlers, children and youth got a present. On the next day, December 17th we were invited to participate at a joint youth event in St Charles's church in Tallinn and we hope to host them soon in our newly finished church rooms in Mustamäe.

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COUNCIL OF THE CONGREGATION: Imbi Arro, Maris Kuldkepp, Auli Tohv, Elina Rätsep, Kaimo Klement, Aivar Suur.

EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE NEWSLETTER: Tiina Klement, Ülle Reimann, Maris Kuldkepp, Imbi Arro, Jaana Maria Unga, Auli Tohv, Marilyn Pärna, Elina Rätsep.

65 NEWSLETTERS RICH WITH CONTENT

Jaana Maria Unga

At the end of 2023 we published the 65th newsletter - 61 regular ones and 4th special edition, both in estonian and english. The newsletter was born of the wish to collect memories and a kind of a chronicle about the life and events in the congregation. So our purpose has been both to inform our readers, whoever they may be, of our past and upcoming events, but also informative articles about faith, religious holidays, culture and offer edification to our readers.

The editorial team gathers monthly in the church to pray, make an overview of the contents for the next edition and construct a basic plan for the one after that. At the end of the year we also compile a special edition to introduce our life and activities to the people outside of our own congregation and Christianity.

Sometimes the article topics come easily, as there is so much happening to reflect upon. During the more quiet season, we publish articles from other areas, such as mission letters, travel blogs, personal portraits, introducing Christian holidays and so much more. We have, through the years, published food recipes, poetry, jokes and crosswords. The latter are usually in the children's section, but these offer a small challenge to people of all ages.

The children's page is always present in every edition, usually written by Maris Kuldkepp. Other regular sections are academic religious confirmation lesson materials by Dr.theol. Jaan Lahe. Imbi Arro shares her thoughts, experiences and recommendations in the field of culture to keep the readers posted about what is happening. A very vital part is prayer, both prayers of thanks and intercessions, inspiring people to notice and put in God's hands, and of course, pray. This section is Ülle Reimann's responsibility, but it is open for

everyone to send their prayers to her to be published. The members of the editorial team often write the front page contemplation or other thematic articles. We often include others to write for us as well. For example, the previously mentioned mission letters come from our dear NMS interns who give a small update on their lives and reflect back upon their time in Mustamäe and Saku. Front page contemplations and other thematic articles have been written by both people from our own congregation, but also by different people outside of our congregation. such as friends from abroad, from bishops and deans to scientists.

Once the new edition is compiled, our own language editor Auli Tohv will make sure they are written, using correct spelling and grammar, and fit the word limit. Last step is then by the designer Jaana Maria Unga, who will add relevant photos and other elements to make it pleasing to the eye and reader friendly. The new newsletter is then introduced by Marilyn Pärna, writing a short introduction or summary about each section. Then it is ready to be read, either on paper or online.

Even though the newsletter work is done as a cell group, we are nevertheless connected to a wider audience and fellowship through our guest writers, friends from other congregations in Estonia and beyond, people who pray with us and of course our dear readers. The readers are mostly anonymous to us, besides the obvious ones, but the more pleasing it is to hear on the radio or read on social media that people we don't know have read our newsletter and enjoyed it very much. We sincerely hope that everyone - the editorial group, guest writers and all the readers are encouraged, blessed and guided thanks to the work put into the Mustamäe congregation's newsletter.

HAPPENING IN THE CONGREGATION:

SUNDAY SERVICES

on Sundays at 3pm

FAMILY SERVICES

on the first Sunday of the month at 12

WEEKLY EVENTS:

- Mealtime with Prayer and Bible
- Taizé prayer
- Soup Kitchen

TWICE A MONTH EVENTS:

- Youth evenings

MONTHLY EVENTS:

- Toddler's Church
- Children's Church
- Fellowship for men
- Positive and active group of elderly
- Newsletter cell group
- Mission choir practice

ONCE A QUARTER EVENTS:

- "Bread of Life" meetings

DONATIONS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHURCH:

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PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING

Dear God, glory and thanks for blessing and keeping our congregation safe. We are eternally grateful for all our friends, donors, prayers and everyone who attends our services and events. We appreciate everyone, close and far who carry our small congregation in their hearts.



Dear Lord, we give thanks for all the loyal children and teenagers who come to church. Bless them with your Holy Spirit so they will stay faithful to You. Help those who do not know you yet, to trust their lives in Jesus' hands.

We are especially grateful that our church building has continued a great deal by now. We thank you for a good relationship and cooperation with Tallinn city council and their financial help. Bless those who support the building of Mustamäe church.

INTERCESSIONS

Dear Father, we lift up all our congregation members and pray- unite us all as one body in Christ, where everyone can use their unique talents to build up your Kingdom on Earth.

We pray for health and strength for the sick ones, consolation to the sad ones and hope to those who are desperate.

We pray that our church will be fully ready soon and this house of God will be full of people to worship you and bring glory to your name. May this house become a place of peace and reconciliation where people can be healed and meet Jesus Christ personally.

Translation to English: Maris Kuldkepp.

Author of photographs on page 7: Tuuli Korsar

Graphics of a bell on first page: orchidart on Freepik

Street map: regio.ee



Magda Mission Shop goods are now available for purchase only through our online shop at

magdamisjonipood.ee

due to the closing of the shop in November

Profits from the sales will go to help families with children and the work in Mustamäe church.

We are grateful for every contribution to Magda Mission Shop.

