

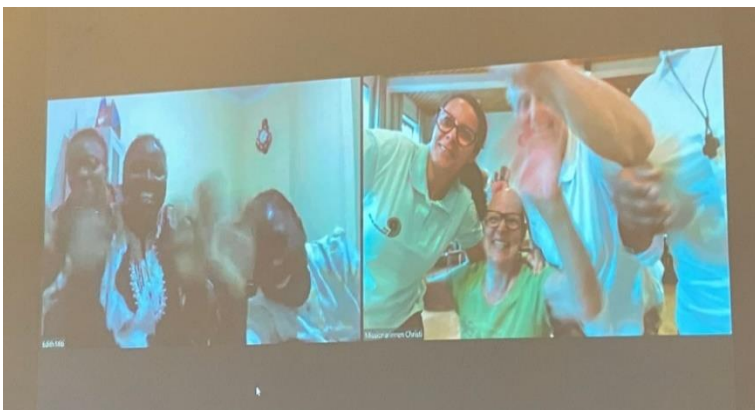
## Report from the 10<sup>th</sup> General Assembly from 31.07. – 19.08.2022

*Christ set us free, so that we should remain free – different lifeworlds, one community*



***Dear Sisters, Dear Members of the Weggemeinschaft,***

Many of you will have seen photos and the short film from the General Assembly. With this letter we would like to tell you in more detail about what moved us during these three weeks.



As you know, it was unclear for some sisters in the Democratic Republic of Congo as to who would actually receive a visa right up to the assembly. In the end, the two Sisters Zita Ngolomingi Elum-Nkos and Philomène Tshilomba Kangudi came to Munich on 12.08.2022. Sr. Edith Miti Manika



unfortunately did not receive a visa. However, she was present online the whole time via Zoom. That was the first time for us that the General Assembly was not just held face-to-face.

The location for the assembly was also new: we were able to use the St. Hedwig parish hall and all of the rooms in the parish centre. We ate in a tent in the inner courtyard, especially erected for us. The food was delivered by two different catering companies. The sisters in the Generalate also provided us with coffee, cakes and the not unimportant break time snacks, such as jelly bears.



Sr. Karolina Schwehofer gave each delegate a bag full of corona tests and a power bar. Thus equipped, every sister was able to take a corona test everyday – and right until the end we were all always negative!

We began the assembly in the chapel of the Generalate with a Mass, which was celebrated in two languages by P. Michael Huber, the new Provincial Superior of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

The days of the assembly were structured using elements which remained the same:

At the beginning of every day, each sister took her turn to present us with a personal impulse which she had taken from the “Text for our Orientation to our Mission” from the GA 2016. Before lunch there was always a communal time of silence. In the evening, before the liturgy, we met in small, constant groups, to discuss what had particularly moved us. After this exchange, we celebrated a service, either in the form of a Mass or a Liturgy of the Word. This end to the day was particularly valuable to everyone and strengthened us. In the liturgies, we experienced great richness, also because of the different languages which were used (English, French, German, Portuguese, Korean, Russian, Lingala).



In the first days, in good tradition, the reports from the regions were on the agenda.



**The sisters from Brazil** invited us to travel with them to and through Brazil. To begin they showed us a video of the threatened world of the Amazon and the life of the indigenous peoples. Sr. Katia Andrade dos Santos reported on the political and economic situation of the country. Sr. Barbara Kiener and Sr. Gertrud Fokter described the journey of the community over the last six years, talked about the mission of the region and reported on the Brazilian Weggemeinschaft “Group with MC Spirituality”. For the sisters in Brazil, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God is central to what they do. They live with the people and create a net of justice and care. Every sister lives her mission and

supports many people and groups. They are a community in constant outreach to the people on the edges of society and the church; to the needy and the excluded. The seven sisters are prophets of comfort and hope among the people. In the feedback on the report by the Region Brazil, the General Assembly was touched and impressed by the presence of the sisters and their great clarity about their mission. We are very grateful for these strong women who make Jesus Christ present in Brazil.

Next, the **sisters from Germany/Austria** presented their region. Sr. Anita Leipold began with the quote from P. Moser, “There is no point in becoming a slat like every other slat in a fence” (Conference P. Moser Nr. 26). With twelve decorated fence slats, the sisters presented twelve topics which are of significance to the region: war in Ukraine; pandemic; climate change; vulnerability in crises; gender justice; abuse in the Church; loss of meaning of the Church and Search Movements; the situation of the elderly sisters; financial position; commitment to faith and human dignity; Spurgruppe and Vision 2035; formation time and ideas for opportunities for new forms of membership as Missionaries of Christ. Sr. Anita Leipold and Sr. Mareile Hartl built a bridge out of the fence slats to show that the Missionaries of Christ in Germany/Austria are bridge builders in diverse fields of work and assignments. They stand up for people in all their diversity and unity, with all their creativity, their love and their lived faith. Then a boat was created from the bridge – a boat in the storm. Thus the difficulties were expressed, with which the region is currently confronted, eg. the decreasing financial means. At the end there was a sign of hope: the slats were laid around a centre, around the centre Jesus Christ. The sisters way of life and ways of expression are as colourful as the slats. They are asked to try new assignments; to give a space to people who are searching; to change the Church from within; to show freedom and courage; to live diversity and breadth; to keep the question of God alive.



Every sister bears witness to Jesus Christ with her own life. The look ahead, the long breath, the faithfulness and above all the great trust in God moved the assembly.

Sr. Edith Miti Manika opened the report for the **Region Africa** with the tasks since the last Regional Assembly in 2019. Seven nationalities are represented in the region. Lived interculturalism – with all its challenges! Sr. Angèle Maliba Endana reported on the political, economic and social situation in the three countries. In a role-play, the sisters showed how digital communication is mastered in the form of a Zoom conference with a lot of improvisational skill, even when technical difficulties occur. Sr. Zita Ngolomingi Elum-Nkos described life in the novitiate and the many women in formation. Love and patience are important elements which are helpful in her work. Sr. Brigitta Raith reported on the 16 junior sisters and their wishes, such as more exchange within the whole community and for international, reciprocal assignments. Sr. Philomene Tshilomba Kangudi and Sr. Michaela Prachtl gave an insight into the financial situation in their region, which is producing more and more initiatives towards financial self-sufficiency. Examples are the agricultural projects in Kinshasa and Arusha, the aquaponics (fish farming and simultaneous cultivation of vegetables) in Bronkhorstspuit as well as the sheep farming there. Sr. Catherine Mkaleso Shirima, a qualified psychologist, used a powerpoint presentation to discuss causes of interpersonal conflicts, solutions and help to transform painful relationships.

The sisters are living in challenging situations both within and outside the community. The region expressed their courage not to give up, but to continue on the path into the future. Compared to the other regions, Region Africa, is a very young community with respect to average age, with a lot of life and development. Future-oriented formation is valued highly. The sisters have great creativity in taking on initiatives for self-financing. They live a great commitment for and with the people. Their perseverance and courage to start again and again as well as the diversity within the region are impressive.





After the reports from the regions, **Sr. Hildegard Schreier** presented her report. Sr. Hildegard experienced her six years in office in two major sections. One section coincided with the Regional Assembly in the Region Africa in 2019, combined with the dismissal of Sr. Pascaline Bakaa Nsal’Olumba from the General Leadership. Her commitment to the group “Religious Women for Human Dignity” also had a strong influence on her last years in office. Central to this was the question of women's roles; the credibility of the Church; the view of people and religious life. Sr. Hildegard emphasized that the topic “Unity in Diversity” has increased in importance in the community in the last six years. Sr. Hildegard thanked her councillors for their loyal and creative support. The General Assembly thanked Sr. Hildegard for all of her work during her twelve years as General Leader with a long and warm applause after her report. The delegates emphasized that Sr. Hildegard always had an open ear, and her great charism of the Word in writing and preaching were highlighted.

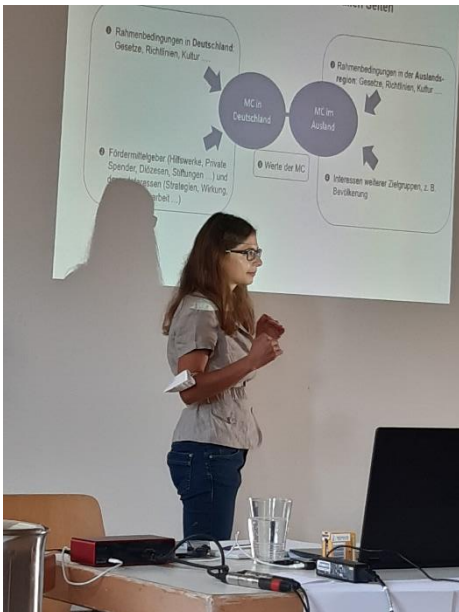


At this point the Regional Leaders thanked Sr. Hildegard and the councillors with bouquets of flowers for their commitment, their dedication, their love and service to our community.



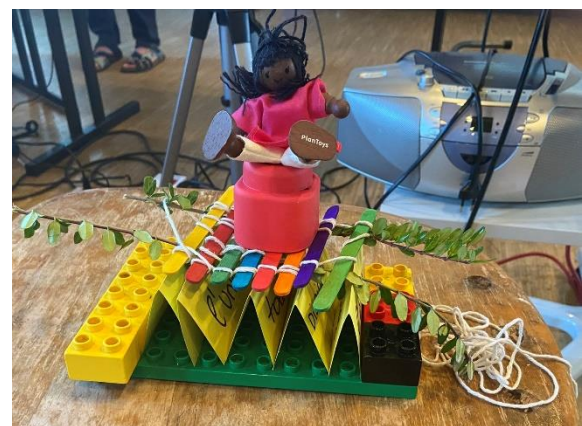
After this moving part of our General Assembly we began to deal with the first proposal: **“Motion to increase the size of the General Council”** It was sent out before the GA as Working Paper Nr. 2. After two long working sessions, the motion was finally carried with 23 votes for, two votes against and two abstentions. Sr. Hildegard Schreier had already obtained the provisional approval in advance from the Diocese of Munich Freising, for the required change to the Rule of Consecrated Life.

What of course, must be included and is also part of the report by the General Leader, is the **financial report**, which the administration manager Ms. Steber and Sr. Ulli Richter presented to us. In comparison to 2016, the financial situation is considerably tighter. The causes are to be found both within and outside the community. Within the community we have decreasing income and at the same time increasing expenses eg. due to additional employee and care costs. Due to the low interest rate policy of recent years, we are lacking income from interest which was always a good source of income. The current financial situation and the unfavourable forecasts for the future present one of the challenges for us as a community in the coming years.



At this General Assembly there were **three theme days**, in which we learned together. The first was presented by Dr. Haslbeck (Researcher on the research project “Violence against Women in the Catholic Church” at the Chair of Pastoral Theology and Homiletics at the University of Regensburg) on **“Abuse and Prevention”**. A depressing and serious topic which we had begun to tackle in advance with the help of Working Paper 1. During the General Assembly it was expressed that we in the whole community wish to and must continue to deal with this topic. In the same way, we see it as our duty to produce our own protection and prevention concepts in all regions, as well as common guidelines for the entire community.

The next theme day concerned the topic **“Intercultural Learning”**. This theme took two days and was full of practical exercises. The theme was presented by Ms. Mumbure and Ms. Schuchmann, consultants from Missio Munich. We attempted to build bridges, both internally and externally. By doing this, the bridges you can see here were created:







We know that we are only at the beginning of “intercultural learning”, even though some of us have many years of experience but we can all see ourselves as learners and take steps together to learn more from each other, towards an intercultural community. We experienced this in a fragmented way in a big role play. Beforehand, the delegates wrote two roles for a “typical” Missionary of Christ and for people with whom they are in contact. These roles were then shared out in the plenary session. This created interesting configurations: an African sister was, for example, a regional councillor in Brazil etc. Now a decision

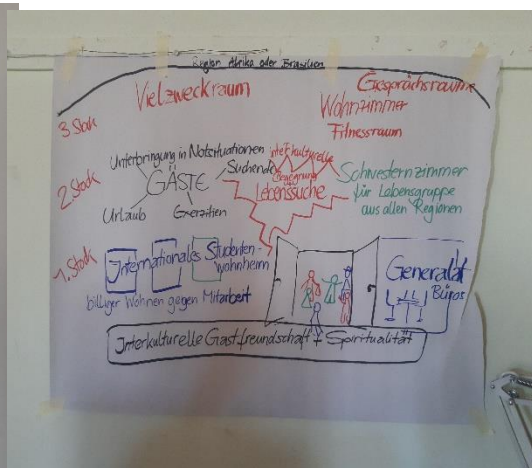
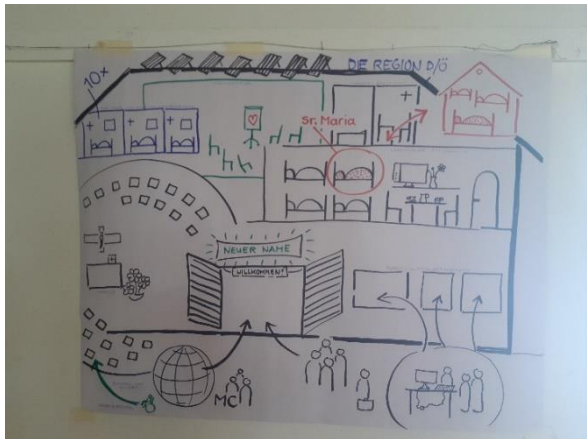
was to be made in different groups about a project to be supported. For this, there was a list with several proposals. Afterwards, a solution was sought in the plenum. This was an exciting exercise which was fun and gave us hope for further steps towards an intercultural community. We also noticed how we all have to struggle with the (partly hidden) racism within ourselves. “It is not enough to be against racism – you also have to actively fight it.” - this sentence quoted by Ms. Mumbure gave us all pause for thought. Here, too, we wish to continue to be learners with one another as a whole community. In the future, we would like to have more international exchange. Communication with each other is essential and should be promoted and strengthened.



The third theme day was entitled “**Media Ethics**”. There was also a Working Paper – Nr 4. for this before the General Assembly. The consultant Prof. Dr. Paganini, Professor for Media Ethics at the University for Philosophy, Munich, drew our attention to the dangers and also the opportunities of social networks.

In addition to the theme days, another point was the continued work on the “**Orientation to Our Mission**” which the General Assembly 2016 adopted. In Working Paper Nr. 5, we have already dealt with this. What is particularly important to us in the text, which points should be added, what can be changed? In the discussion about these questions, a text was created which Sisters Christine Rod, Barbara Kiener and Bärbel Thomä as the editorial team prepared. You will find the result attached. We were very pleased with this text and will be well on the way with it in the coming years. It is attached for you so that you can begin to get to know it.

One theme which emerged during the General Assembly was **“The Generalate House”**. In group work we were creative and designed our future dreams for the Linderhofstraße. One proposal was made by four of the five groups and that was to open our house in the future under the umbrella of the G/A Region for guests, those who live with us, sisters from all regions and courses.



The General Leadership and their administration should continue to occupy a part of the house. One group had the idea to place the house under the umbrella of the Region Africa or Region Brazil.

With this collection of ideas, a lot of joy, hope and optimism could be felt. The General Leadership and the Regional Leadership Germany/Austria have now already undertaken the first steps to make this a reality.

Some things were different in this General Assembly – not just the location, but also that no new directives were given to the General Leadership. What we formulated were **recommendations**.

One of these was presented in advance in Working Paper Nr. 6 as a proposal: **“Change of Canonical Status”**. This was the question of whether it would not be better, more consistent and more advantageous, for us Missionaries of Christ as a whole to strive for the status of **“Pontifical Right”** instead of the current **“Diocesan Right”**. There are points for and against this. The recommendation states:

*“The General Leadership 2022 recommends that, before the General Assembly 2028, the General Leadership should consider whether a change of canonical status from diocesan right to pontifical right would be appropriate. Should this review tend toward a change, all sisters must be involved in forming an opinion.”*

Then there was another recommendation, which arose from a topic introduced at the General Assembly. Repeatedly women are contacting us who would like to live in **an extended form of connection** to or with us, which lies between membership and the opportunities of the Weggemeinschaft. We discussed this and decided on the following recommendations for the Regional Leaders:



Recommendation: “Forms of Connection”

The General Assembly 2022 discussed different opportunities for a closer connection to our community.

It recommends that the Regional Leaders, before the next General Assembly in 2028, – depending on the possibilities of the regions:

- seek information from other communities,
- experiment and gain experience,
- work out a framework

and to reflect on this in the region, between the regions and with the General Leadership.

A special type of “membership” also developed during the General Assembly with our translators. For Portuguese it was Sr. Cecilia Becker for a few days and especially Ms. Monika Ottermann who translated for the whole three weeks. Ms. Martina Kersting translated French at first, then Sr. Marie-Josée Hoffmann and also for the whole three weeks, Ms. Nicole Graf. They translated simultaneously, which was a great challenge due to the enthusiasm and speed at which the delegates spoke. We always tried to consider the translators – but there is still a lot of room for improvement and we still have a lot to learn! Alongside the simultaneous translation, they also had to translate the minutes and all the texts which were produced. This was work which did not end with the liturgy in the evenings, but sometimes only really began afterwards. Through this intensive work and support of the sisters, the relationship between translator and sisters became ever closer and more trusting.



As with all the other General Assemblies previously, there were some motions and the corresponding changes which will be included in the Rule of Consecrated Life or in the Directives for Application. These can be found in Appendix 1.

Our **minute takers** were also part of the General Assembly. Ms. Elvira Fromme, Ms. Maria Alferding, Sr. Barbara Wölfle and Sr. Christine Romanow took the minutes. Sr. Ulli Richter was responsible for the smooth running and overall coordination. This work also did not finish when everyone left the St. Hedwig parish hall but continued into the night.

And while we are talking about services which were essential for the General Assembly, we must, of course, mention our **sisters in the Generalate** and also the **employees**, who provided for us – and not just with coffee and cake. Sisters Rita Storf and Eva Froschauer came daily and ensured everything was clean and brought fruit, chocolate and other essentials for survival. The sisters from the Generalate were energetically supported by Sisters Annelies Brunnlechner, Arlette Reichel and Annette Funke.

Everyone, the translators, the minute takers, helpers and last but not least our chairwoman, Dr. Gosebrink were thanked by Sr. Hildegard Schreier and Sr. Karolina Schweihofer at the end of the General Assembly with a beautiful bowl.



However, the entire General Assembly would not have come about and could not have taken place without **Sr. Karolina Schweihofer**. Of course, the entire General Leadership, above all Sr. Hildegard Schreier, was guarantor for the assembly, but Sr. Karolina had the entire organizational responsibility and leadership before, during and afterwards. So Sr. Karolina, representing everyone, deserves a very big thank you here. Thank you!!!





For us in the General Assembly, the support and solidarity with all the sisters could be felt strongly. Your **prayers** carried and strengthened us. Without this support and accompaniment, it is not possible to imagine how we could have dealt with the difficult issues.

The General Assembly was marked by the allegations of abuse made within the community. Hurt and tendencies towards division became clear to us in the same way and were a topic for discussions.

Again and again, shock, deep dismay and sadness were palpable, like a shadow settling over everything.

Nevertheless – in this crisis we have grown closer together. Existential and fundamental things were noticeable. Sentences such as “Now everything is at stake”, “We will come out of the crisis different than before”, “We will go through it”... showed the first attempts to get a grip of it. What was said and disclosed at this General Assembly will concern us as a community for a very long time. It is good that the problems have been revealed. Now we can tackle them.

As Sr. Hildegard Schreier has already shared in her brief to all sisters, these allegations of abuse also had an effect on the **election of the new General Leadership**. Sr. Hildegard Schreier introduced the election process and Sr. Christine Zeis assisted us with intensive and very valuable impulses, to trust the work of the Holy Spirit and to maintain our inner freedom. We took a lot of time for this common spiritual journey. Probably new in the history of the General Assemblies was the fact that we achieved an absolute majority in the first vote for the election of the General Leader as well as the General Councillors and the Substitute Councillors. Sr. Maria Wolfsberger was the leader of the election committee and gave us the election results after the count.

The **election results** were as follows:

Election of the General Leader:

Sr. Maria Stadler

Election of the General Councillors:

Sr. Catherine Shirima Mkaleso

Sr. Barbara Kiener

Sr. Ulli Richter



Sr. Maria Stadler appointed Sr. Mareile Hartl

as her deputy and after this appointment the election of the Substitute Councillors took place:

Election of Substitute Councillors:

Sr. Căcila Njau Amina

Sr. Karolina Schweihofer

With gratitude and joyful hearts we celebrated the election and toasted together in thankfulness for the past and in hope for the future!



We wish us and everyone....  
**Faith**, that Jesus Christ will carry each and every sister  
**Hope** to continue in diversity and community  
**Love** in attentive togetherness  
and in service for the people.  
God help us! Amen

Sr. Maria and Sr. Mareile

