

Newsletter

September - October 2026

United Methodist Church
Flensburg Congregation
Local Pastor: Gillian Horton-Krüger
Telephone: 0178 8216 853
flensburg@emk.de
www.emk.de/flensburg

10.09.2026

Dear friends!

When was the last time you used a proverb in conversation or in writing? I have the impression that proverbs are rather falling out of fashion, both in German and in English. I recall enjoying collecting them and writing them down in a notebook when I was at school. These days, I do sometimes fail to see the wood for the trees, and when I dawdle after waking up, my conscience tells me, "Gillian, remember the early bird catches the worm". But, sadly, I rarely embellish my everyday speech with such vivid imagery.

The Biblical verse or watchword for September in the churches in Germany sounds very much like an old proverb I could well have jotted down in my notebook during my school and student years. It's a verse from the Old Testament book Ecclesiastes:

Better is a hand full with quiet
than two fists full with toil,
and a chasing after wind

Ecclesiastes 4,6



I like the poetic quality of this verse. Some Bible translations choose to leave it as a heavily metaphorical statement; others attempt to explain it. My understanding goes in this direction: *Better to possess less in life and be able to breathe freely and deeply. This is better than abundant wealth, if it means you are constantly and straining and striving for more.* When I think of "hand", I picture an open palm, steady and receptive. An open hand can also let go, as well as give or pass on. "Fists" are clenched, tense, perhaps even aggressive.

We recently discussed the context of this statement from Ecclesiastes during our online Bible study group for the Methodist congregations in Schleswig-Holstein*. The thoughts following on from verse 6 emphasise how good it is when not only possessions, but life in general, can be shared. Looking out only for yourself, with tunnel vision and no consideration for anyone left or right, is not a healthy state to be in. Mutual help and mutual warmth, on the other hand - very much so.

The need to work is not ignored here; sitting back and doing nothing is not the answer either. This is made clear in verse 5. Calm is not some kind of *replacement* for the tasks that life sets us, no matter what stage – or age – we find ourselves at. But it's good when peace, given by God's Spirit, can *accompany* those tasks. It doesn't relieve me of the tasks. But it can, using a metaphor North Germans can identify with, take the storm out of them.

I wish us all blessed autumn days, filled with a paler, more reviving sunshine than in high summer, and with plenty of the sort of encounters which do us and our souls a power of good. And where storms rage outside, may there be calm within us!

* The Bible study group meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 7 pm, led by Reverend Christine Guse, UMC Ellerbek by Hamburg. What do I need? A Bible and internet access on a computer or smartphone. (These are meetings held via 'Zoom'.) Need more information? Please feel free to ask me.

Sharing joy and sorrow and other news ...

On 11 August we paid our respects in memory of Ingrid Stark, née Richter, with her family and friends. Ingrid would have turned 80 on that day. The funeral service took place at St. Johannis Church and at the cemetery in Adelby, where Ingrid's late husband Gerhard is also buried. We wish Ingrid's son Markus, daughter-in-law Sandra and Ingrid's five grandchildren God's blessing, comfort and strength.

In the church calendar, early autumn has recently come to be known as "Creation Time". We give thanks for the earth's bountiful gifts. At the same time, we remember: "Creation is groaning". Forest fires raged in many places this summer. I hope you only had to see them on the news. Rev. Damian Carruthers, who visited us in Flensburg and shared a sermon with us last Christmas, has unfortunately had more of a first-hand experience. The fact that forest fires had begun to encroach on the city of Spokane even made the German news in August. Following an evacuation order, Damian had to move to a safe distance and stay with friends for a few days. Fortunately for Damian and his neighbours, the fire was brought under control before it reached their street. An experience like this tends to galvanise to action, and can also feed reflection. As well as taking part in ecumenical relief efforts, Damian shared his thoughts in his church newsletter. I have added this here as an appendix, see p. 3 below.

Last year, our Methodist sister congregation in Kiel suffered water damage to their building in Gneisenaustr.. As is so often the case, the repair work dragged on for a long time and all activities had to take place in the sanctuary, where the floor was damaged but usable. The floor in the adjoining room has now been refurbished; the sanctuary is next in line. During this (we hope short) time, the congregation will meet for worship in the parish hall of nearby St. Paul's in Kiel. So now the Methodists in Kiel are sharing our own experience of the hospitality of local Lutherans. As a German hymn says: "It's good that we have one another. It's good that we see one another". Anyone who fancies a Sunday outing any time can find the dates and times of the services at www.emk.de/kiel. Please note however: services for the German congregation are no longer held every Sunday, but on the 1st and 3rd Sundays at 11.00 am.

We hope you can join us at our next Sunday services

We meet at 11 a.m. in St. Jürgen parish hall, Jürgensgaarder Str. 1 in Flensburg
- with coffee fellowship after the service -

Datum	Predigt und Liturgie
13 September	"Let all that I am praise the Lord!" Gillian Horton-Krüger & Edgar Nordmann Sermon on: Luke's Gospel 19, 1-10 – Quite an encounter!
27 September	Reverend May-Britt Johannsen (ev. Nordkirche, Engelsby) & Uwe Lembcke For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery! Galatians 5,1 – Verse of the Month for October 2026
11 October	Gillian Horton-Krüger & Peter Nordmann Harvest Thanksgiving, with Holy Communion
25 October	Gillian Horton-Krüger & Karl-Heinz Tuttlies
8 November	William Barnard-Jones ("BJ", Local pastor, retired, Hamburg) & Edgar Nordmann
22 November Eternity Sunday	Gillian Horton-Krüger & Dörte Lorenzen In the service we will remember those who have passed away during the year
	December service dates: 6th, 13th and 27th

Looking forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely, *Gillian Horton-Krüger*

United Methodist Church – EmK Flensburg, Postal address: Gneisenaustraße 2, 24105 Kiel
Bank details for donations: Nord-Ostsee Sparkasse IBAN: DE44 2175 0000 0000 2504 65 BIC: NOLADE21NOS
Translation from German – DeepL, supported by Gillian

From "The Spirit" - Newsletter of Cheney UMC in North-West USA

Dear friends,

I am writing this just a few days after the fires in Spokane began. Hundreds of people have lost their homes. Families are displaced. Many are scared, traumatized, and uncertain about what the coming weeks and months will bring.

The other day, I paused and found myself wondering what it really means to pray in a situation like this. What do we pray when friends are evacuated and don't know whether their house will still be standing when they return? What does it mean when I pray for a family I know, and their home survives while the neighbor's house—for whom others were surely praying as well—burns to the ground?

That is hard to reconcile. I don't have a neat or satisfying answer to what the "right" prayer is or exactly how prayer works in moments like these. But perhaps the deeper question is not whether prayer changes every outcome. Perhaps the deeper question is how prayer changes us in the midst of suffering.

A while ago, I stumbled across an interview with Stephen Colbert, the former late-night host, devoted Catholic, and enormous Lord of the Rings fan. In it, he says, "It is a gift to exist. And with existence comes suffering. There is no escaping that." He continues, "When you are grateful for this life, then you have to be grateful for all of it. You don't get to pick and choose what you are grateful for, even the pain you wish never happened."

At first, those words almost sound impossible. Maybe even offensive. How could anyone be grateful for pain? For losing a home? For grief? For illness? For trauma? And Colbert makes clear that suffering itself is not good, and he wishes not to experience it. Nor do I believe we should pretend it is. Rather, I think he is pointing toward a profound truth that Christians have wrestled with for centuries:

Wherever there is life, there is also suffering.

Christianity does not promise a life without pain. We do not believe in a God who keeps us from suffering. We believe in a God who entered into suffering. Jesus carried a cross. He wept. He knew betrayal, loss, fear, and death. And because of the resurrection, we believe that suffering never has the final word. That hope does not erase our pain. But it changes how we live through it.

As someone who lost his father far too early and who experienced abuse in daycare as a child, I would never say I am grateful those things happened. I wish they hadn't. But I can be grateful for what those experiences have made possible. They have taught me how to sit with someone whose heart is breaking. They have helped me recognize grief in another person's eyes. They have allowed me to say, "I understand," not because I have all the answers, but because I know something about that road myself.

If it is true that every human being will know suffering in one form or another, then suffering is one of the most universal parts of being human. Strange as it sounds, it is also one of the deepest places where we can truly meet one another. The Apostle Paul writes, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

Perhaps that is what prayer is meant to do. It shapes us into people who can truly weep with those who weep. So, what do I pray for today? I pray for rain. I pray for the firefighters risking their lives. I pray for every family waiting to hear whether their home still stands. I pray for comfort, protection, and miracles. But I also pray for something I know God longs to answer: I pray that no one walks through this alone. I pray that, whatever happens to my friends' homes, they know they are surrounded by love. I pray that I have the strength, the understanding, and the compassion to support them—to listen, to hug, to show up, and simply to sit with them in the uncertainty, the grief, and whatever comes next.

Because perhaps one of the unexpected gifts that can emerge from suffering is not the suffering itself, but the love it teaches us to give. May our prayers make us people who love more deeply, who see one another more clearly, and who become living reminders that, even in the darkest moments, God has not abandoned us.

Grace and peace, Pastor Damian (August 2026)