

## **Sermon on 1 Peter 2:2 – 5**

### **Pastor Karl-Edzard Buse-Weber**

Dear brothers and sisters in the church district of Kusini B, a house is a place full of life. You will know it from your homes. The parents live with the children, the grandparents tell stories and help with the housework, the parents provide for the family through their work in the fields, in the shamba. The children play in front of the house when they come home from school. In the evening the family comes together, the mother has cooked and everyone is happy to be together and share the food. The house is full of life and gives security and makes people feel safe. The house is full of life. This is how a house can look, of which the Bible says: God's spirit is present in it!

### **Pastor Melanie Freye**

A house full of life. A house where God's spirit blows. I remember a family service outside in the garden on benches and picnic blankets with cake and lemonade afterwards. So many families were in that service. We sang together, prayed, remembered our baptism and lit baptismal candles. The sun was shining, the wind was rustling through the trees and the atmosphere was great. God's spirit was blowing.

I also remember something else fondly: a Christmas Eve service in the open air. It was raining heavily. And yet there were well over 100 people there. We all got completely wet. It was cold and uncomfortable. But we all went home strengthened and happy. Despite the rain, the Christmas Eve service was wonderful. A community was formed. People shared an umbrella, pulled together and braved the weather with good humor. People still talk about it - with smiles on their faces.

A house full of life, with God's spirit blowing. That is what we wish for in our church community. Perhaps we have to understand the community of people who believe in God as a "house". Where these people come together, spirit blows. It doesn't matter whether they meet in a house of stone or in the open air. The important thing is that people come together in the name of God. They form a house. The house is full of life. This is how a house can look, of which the Bible says: God's spirit is present in it!

### **Pastor Karl-Edzard Buse-Weber**

A house near us in Paderborn was full of life, but now that is over. The house is a church with a community center. The church is named after our great church teacher: Martin Luther. The Martin Luther Center is to be closed; the building is to be sold. For many years the church has been home for the people in the district of Paderborn. People have celebrated services here in the Martin Luther Church, couples have been married here and many children have been baptized here. It was a house full of life. But the congregation in Paderborn can no longer sustain the Martin Luther Church. There is not enough money to pay for repairs. Fewer and fewer people belong to the congregation. More old people die than children are newly baptized. Some adult people leave the church, resign from the church.

The Martin Luther Center is to be sold. This is not easy. Many people in the community are sad about it. They are searching and asking how to go on now. How can we continue to be and build a Christian community? How can we keep our faith in God alive and make it effective in the world? A house loses its life. And yet it is to go on and we are looking for God's spirit to remain alive in us. For that we hear thoughts about this as they are written in the 1st Letter of Peter:

## Reading 1 Peter 2:2 - 5

"As newborn children cry for milk, you should long for the true word. In this way you will grow in faith so that you will be saved.

For you have already tasted how good the Lord is. Come to him! He is the living stone rejected by men. But with God he is chosen and precious.

Let yourselves also be built up as living stones to the church. It is the house where God's spirit is present. Thus, you become a holy priesthood and offer sacrifices in which His Spirit works. These are sacrifices that please God, because they are mediated through Jesus Christ."

Dear sisters and brothers in Kusini B, those who cry out and pray, ask and seek, are in the right place with God and Jesus Christ. God is dependable and gives security in troubled times. Christ is the solid ground in our lives and in the life of the church. Christ is the rock on which the house of our faith and our community stands. This rock remains even if we have to give up and sell a church building. Our rock Christ carries us, through him we are built up to a congregation that is creative and new. In the church district of Paderborn, we continue to share and live the good word of Jesus Christ.

### **Youth Officer Oliver Schwarz**

I want to share with you my image of a spiritual house like it should be. Full of life, at the same time a shelter to feel safe and sound. The spiritual house should be placed among all other houses, in the middle of our street. But how we can move our houses to the middle of the street? We have built all those churches and parish houses and we cannot move them anymore. But fortunately, one idea came to our minds. What if we have an opportunity to offer our services at many places. At Schools, on public places? We found an option, a tent filled with air, grounded by a belt filled with water, looking like a half ball, coloured in purple. 50 people or more have space in the tent and it is seen from far, because of a height of 6 metres. We started our first projects at several places. In parcs, at school grounds, at the grand meeting of our church dem Kirchentag. These projects were planned and performed by young co-workers and volunteers. They created programs with music, art and prayers. For the visitors the participation in the program is free and easy to access. After the first months we can say that we are very proud of our new house (which is a tent) because it is filled with activity and gives our youth the feeling that they are alive stones in the spiritual house of God.

### **District Pastor Volker Neuhoff**

Wapendwa dada na kaka! I have been district pastor in the Paderborn church district for over seven years. When I came to Paderborn, there was this special verse from the 1st letter of Peter: "As living stones, be built up into a spiritual house." That is the biblical motto for our church district. I like that verse.

Christ is building his church. If we want to be church, the only way is to let Jesus Christ build us up. He shows us how to live before God. He shows us how to live from person to person. He lets us see that people, as different they are, are respected and loved by God. And we like to help each other because of that. Jesus lived this. He healed, satisfied hunger, gave joy, gave meaning to life. He comforted the sad and opposed death with life. Jesus also makes us feel that he sees more in us than our faults. He forgives. He makes us start anew. This is how Christ builds us up.

With all this, Christ builds up his church. With people like us – with their small und growing faith, with their happiness and their worries, with their strengths und weakness, with their enthusiasm, sometimes tiredness, with their love for their neighbors and their commitment to the community.

Christ builds up his community. And then we ourselves can be building up. “alive – building – spiritual”. For me, these are three beautiful and important words for how community and church can be. That is why I say them so often in the church district of Paderborn. When we are a lively, constructive and spiritual congregation, the people around us feel it. Because they see: These Christian people are there for each other, they engage in diaconal or political work for others, they are committed to the integrity of creation, they pray and act for justice and pace for this world. Above all, the people around us should see that what we say und do has a reason – our faith in God. How we sung here: “Ye ye ni Bwana, mwana na roho.”

In the church district of Paderborn there are many places where this can be felt: Diaconia is there for refugees from Ukraine who have fled the war. People who need someone to talk to can call our telephone counselling service. We have many kindergartens. Young people meet at the “Dome”. There are choirs. Yesterday a baptism festival was celebrated at the place where the little river Pader is born – in Paderborn. Church services are celebrated in many forms, including some with other religions.

But: We are experiencing a great crisis. We have just heart about that. The Corona pandemic has distanced some from the church. People are staying away, leaving the church, no longer close to its message. Congregations are getting smaller, money is getting less, a smaller number of people are training to be pastors. – All this is painful.

Ndugu zangu! I like the biblical motto of our church district and these three words from it: alive – building – spiritual. I would like to hold on to this even in the crisis. I am convinced that Christ Is building up his church and is doing so with us. This is happening here in Kusini B. This will happen in the church district of Paderborn. The people around us will feel it.

Thank you to those who do this here and give us impulses.

Mungu akubariki! Ameni.