

## Community: a moment of hope

I returned to the Basisgemeinde in northern Germany after about 12 years. I'm not sure why except to visit my friends Anthony, Tanya, Sophie and Killian. I guess I expected something but did not know what. I just meant to take a little time out.

However as I entered the community room on my first day to celebrate prayer and share lunch, faces emerged from my earlier visits with the community. They greeted me with a smile, a friendly gesture and sometimes a kindly word in English, as they recalled or intuited that I don't speak German beyond 'danke', 'hallo' and maybe 'guten Morgen'.



It was a gentle four days, relaxing, praying, sharing conversation and meals, a walk along the beach, coffee, cake and a genuine sense that I was in the presence of something sacred. I had been here before and while I knew it was a special place, these moments of spiritual awakening come upon you like thief in the night. It was a mysterious revelation reminding me again that religion that is magic or pietistic cannot sustain our hope in this complex tortured world. Somehow with this community of shared hopes and daily community life, a light shines and we can experience the trust that enables us to be eucharist for each other. It is in the daily life of people living family, working meaningfully, caring about each other and incorporating diversity and creativity that we discover the hallmark of our humanity.



This is what is sacred. Not ideology and blessed assurance but daily life immersed in its ambiguity and ordinariness. I was schooled again in the deep fundamental truth of gospel welcome and compassion. Friday eucharist and Saturday night shared prayer and meal reminded me that this community live eucharist – eating and drinking each other so to speak in the intimacy of human vulnerability.

While all is not well in the world, where a few families and others can create a space for each other and devise a way to remind us that another world is possible, then the dream lives on. The Basisgemeinde near Gettorf Germany raises my hope that through my small efforts in living community and supporting creative inclusive communities we can become a sign that the gospel still lives and we can be more than ourselves, as communities of various kinds become sites of shared brokenness, vulnerability, deep longing and loving support at the same time.

Danke dear friends of this community – your shared life reaches well beyond your community – I know I will take a little of it with me and I am confident it will be with me for many years to come. You are a blessing in so many ways for so many, some of whom may never know you exist but feel your power of love none the less through those who have been touched by your challenging commitment to love, to risk being human and to embrace ordinariness as an expression of the divine.

Peter Maher September 17