

The Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC)¹

*living Christ-centered lives –
developing inspired ideas through dialog –
impacting society*

Our Mission:

We are an interdenominational community seeking to live Christ-centered lives as we work together to develop creative ideas to impact today's society. We are committed to playing an active role in social and church renewal. In an age of growing disorientation, our calling is to offer young people *friendship, a place of belonging, and a sense of direction* in Jesus Christ. We believe that our strength as a fellowship lies in the dynamic combination of community living, intellectual and spiritual reflection, and social action.

Our Goals and Convictions:

In many respects, Western society today finds itself at a crossroads. We are being challenged to develop new perspectives in response to a culture which is increasingly characterized by broken relationships, an underlying sense of detachment, and a growing crisis in the search for meaning. Over and over, we have seen that when individuals experience an encounter with Jesus Christ, they also discover *friendship, a place of belonging, and a sense of direction for their lives*. It is our desire to share this source of hope with others.

Finding a home in Christ – learning to draw from the Source of Life

Being a follower of Christ means being drawn into relationship with the living God, allowing our story to become integrated into His Story. We at the Reichenberg Fellowship invite people to discover this new horizon with us as they find their place within the family of our Father-God. The adventure begins as we turn towards God, listening to His voice and allowing Him to surprise and transform us. God's Spirit is the strongest creative power at work in the human heart and the true source of meaning and purpose for our lives.

Finding friendships in Christ – Impulses for community life

When we reflect upon the Trinity, we see that God in His very nature is community. Created by God to reflect His image, we are called to live and grow in relationships – both on the local level and in the context of a global world. This kind of community is possible when women and men, families and singles, young and old, take the risk of trusting one another, seeking to live in reconciled, Christ-centered relationships,

¹ OJC stands for "Offensive Junger Christen", the German name of our organization and community.

regardless of their different denominational or cultural backgrounds. It is vitally important that church and society today are able to draw from the example and experience of committed communities of faith. With this in mind, we invite and encourage others to learn with us in their search for community.

Finding direction in Christ – Fighting for a culture which embraces life

The biblical message offers us hope for the future while at the same time giving us a deeper understanding of human history and the world we live in. The Judeo-Christian inheritance is our foundation, providing us with the orientation capable of and necessary for withstanding the challenges which lie ahead. For the sake of generations to come, we seek to watchfully discern intellectual and social developments and their underlying issues, working diligently to formulate our position in order to take a clear public stand. Our aim is to challenge young people in particular to think laterally and independently. Together, we seek to develop and live out constructive alternatives to the cultural mainstream wherever possible.

Translating Our Mission into Action

The following areas of work and ministry provide the context in which we translate our goals and convictions into concrete action:

1. The community of the Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC)

The Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC) is a committed association of families and singles who have chosen to live and serve together in a community of faith. This community serves as the supporting foundation for all fields of work and ministry

2. Short-term community living

We invite young people to live with us in community – often as part of an officially recognized year of voluntary social service. Within the framework of our daily life together, we encourage one another to nurture and practice a responsible and dynamic Christian faith. Guests are welcome to come and share in community life, regardless of their age and background.

3. Regional and international youth work

The Reichelsheim European Youth Center is involved in a variety of youth activities, including public youth work, opportunities for youth groups, and international youth camps. Our aim is to strengthen and to facilitate the positive development of children, teenagers and young adults. One of our main emphases here includes international, cross-cultural and interdenominational gatherings to promote mutual understanding and the peace-making process.

The willingness to act: Healthy community flourishes as a result of the motivated service of every individual for the whole. We encourage individuals to act responsibly and independently.

A culture of celebration: Simply put, we are a community that loves to celebrate, whether it be in the context of the traditions of the Church Calendar or in the feasts of our everyday lives. We are convinced that celebration, beauty and joy go hand-in-hand. Community life within the Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC) involves plenty of hard work...and a generous portion of celebration!

Recognition and Awards

- 1989 Irmela Hofmann, co-founder of the Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC), is awarded the “Traugott-Bender-Preis” by Lothar Späth, the governor of Baden-Württemberg, for her “...exemplary service, rooted in Christian freedom and responsibility, in the spheres of society and politics”.
- 1990 Horst-Klaus Hofmann, co-founder of the Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC) and long-term chairman, is awarded the Federal Cross of Merit.
- 1999 Hermann Klenk, long-term community member and vice-chairman, is awarded the Federal Cross of Merit.
- 2000 Dr. Christl R. Vonholdt (German Institute for Youth and Society) serves as a consultant of the American Anglican Council (AAC) on the issues of sexual ethics, marriage and the family.
- 2002 Dr. Dominik Klenk, leader of the Reichenberg Fellowship, is awarded the University Award of the Catholic University of Eichstätt for his doctoral dissertation.
- 2002 The Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC) is officially recognized as a non-governmental organization (NGO) by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation.
- 2004 Dr. Christl R. Vonholdt (German Institute for Youth and Society) addresses the legislative committee of the German Bundestag (Lower House of Parliament) on the topic of “Adoption Rights for Homosexual Couples”.
- 2005 The Reichenberg Fellowship is honored with the BMW Award for Intercultural Learning in Munich for its international construction camps for youth from all over the world.

Reichelsheim, 5th October 2006

Approved by the members of the Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC)

Our Spiritual Culture

We are a community of Christians who have voluntarily chosen to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. Our life and work together is shaped by a spiritual culture characterized by the following components:

Prayer and contemplation: Each one of us has been created to live in an attitude of listening and response. God Himself is the Source of speech, the One who initiates communication. When we enter into dialog with Him and His Word, we experience reawakening and renewal. Therefore, we practice regular times of contemplation and prayer and allow our lives to be shaped by a corporate spiritual rhythm.

Thankfulness: We desire to live our lives as grateful recipients. “Thankfulness is the doorkeeper of the soul against the powers of destruction.” (Gabriel Marcel)

Freedom: As followers of Christ and children of God, our lives are rooted in freedom. It is out of this freedom that we consciously choose to live committed, concentrated lives of faith.

Living within the family of faith: We want to learn to interact with one another as brothers and sisters, to respect the unique “otherness” of our neighbor and to live out of a generous transparency which resists the temptation to withhold our true selves from one another.

The willingness to face conflict: We seek to constructively embrace and creatively respond to the inherent tension which exists between commitment and self-determination, equality and diversity. We believe that conflicts provide us with the opportunity to grow towards deeper reconciliation in our life together.

Sharing: Our life together is based upon the willingness to share. This calls for the conscious affirmation of a lifestyle which brings with it personal limitations. For us, sharing means letting others share in our lives, our time, our money, our experience and our faith, not only in the context of our immediate relationships, but also within the global family of faith.

Hospitality: By extending hospitality to others, we offer them a sense of home. These encounters are mutually enriching and they deserve the felt investment of our time and love. This includes the importance of creating and arranging living spaces in such a way that they radiate an environment of warmth and beauty.

Transparency: It is our desire to interact honestly with one another and live in accountability to one another. Our understanding of transparency also implies giving public account of our work, our organizational structures and our finances.

Maturity and responsibility: God views each of us in the unique light of who He created us to be. To us maturation is the growth process we all go through in being transformed into this unique image. Experience shows that the road to maturity involves crises and painful processes of change. Maturity prevents us from becoming entangled in unhealthy dependencies. We cannot delegate our own individual responsibility to others. Every authentic voice helps true community to grow.

4. Experiential educational discovery center

At the Reichenberg Fortress², a unique, “hands-on” center of faith is being developed – the “Pathways to Life” Discovery Center. Here, visitors have the opportunity to encounter stories, symbols and people that bear witness to our culture, Christian life and its Judaic roots. The purpose of this “modern place of pilgrimage” is to offer impulses of hope to individuals who, in turn, may serve as multipliers throughout our country.

5. Pastoral care and guidance

Since 1979 the OJC has been running basic and advanced training courses on pastoral care for church workers. Our focus is to accompany individuals spiritually on their way to maturity and wholeness. We seek to help others experience healing in those areas where inner wounds have hindered their personal growth.

6. German Institute for Youth and Society

Our team studies trends in society, scientifically examining such topics as identity development, gender, sexual ethics, marriage and family, as well as the challenges of community-building in a world of different cultures and religions. This think tank seeks to provide intellectual and spiritual orientation in an increasingly disoriented society. In addition, in 2004, the Institute helped to establish the German network-initiative “Bündnis Ehe und Familie” (Alliance for Marriage and Family).

7. Conferences and lectures

We also offer conferences and lectures on topics relevant to our various fields of work and ministry. We place particular emphasis on issues which have been “tried and tested” in the “laboratory” of our daily community life and which have challenged us toward deeper intellectual and spiritual reflection.

8. Guest houses

In order to facilitate our ministry, we run several guest houses and a public café.

9. Publication of books and periodicals

We communicate about our work through the publication of books and a number of periodicals - (Salzkorn (Grain of Salt), Brennpunkt Seelsorge (Focus Pastoral Care) and the Bulletin of the German Institute for Youth and Society. At the same time, we provide differentiated information on selected current issues, particularly on those

² A medieval 13th century edifice purchased by the OJC in 1979 which has been gradually renovated over the years and is used as a conference center, staff housing facility and public café.

topics which are often ignored or presented in a biased way in the public arena. In doing so, we desire to equip those in positions of responsibility for their tasks in church and society, making the insights we have gained through community living and corporate biblical reflection accessible to the public.

10. Worldwide partnerships

Within the framework of long-term co-operations, we work with individuals and groups who are taking a stand with us for a culture of life. When seen from a global perspective, this means actively working toward reconciliation, justice and hope. Since 1970 we have been supporting projects with partners in developing countries, providing assistance for long-term sustainable development. In doing so, we place great importance on nurturing personal relationships and ongoing exchange with our partners in order to facilitate mutual learning.

Our Roots

In 1968, at the height of the student unrest in Germany, a small group of socially active Christians started running a series of conferences for high-school and university students, together with the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary in Darmstadt. Coming together in dialog, they searched the Gospel for viable answers to the students' personal and political questions. In the aftermath of these conferences, the married couple Horst-Klaus and Irmela Hofmann launched an "experiment" of community life which developed into today's Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC), an interdenominational community currently made up of approximately 100 members who live and work together. The Fellowship's spiritual roots can be traced back to the YMCA, the Oxford Group Movement and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's vision of life together.

Our Place in Church and Society

As an interdenominational community firmly rooted in the tradition of the Reformation, we have deliberately chosen to remain under the umbrella of the Protestant Church of Germany. At the same time, we also co-operate with many partners within the framework of the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen"³ and the world-wide ecumenical movement. The diversity of our community is also reflected in the various denominations represented by our members.

We have taken on responsibility within the Protestant Church of Germany in a number of areas. These include the "Jugendkammer"⁴, the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft

³ ACK, an association of various Christian denominations in Germany

⁴ presiding body within the Protestant Church of Germany regarding youth issues

Evangelischer Jugend"⁵, the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Evangelische Einkehrtage"⁶, as well as the "Arbeitsgruppe Evangelischer Kommunitäten"⁷, which we helped to initiate. The Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC) is a professional association within the "Diakonisches Werk", the social services arm of the Protestant Church of Germany. In addition, we are a member of the "Ring Missionarischer Jugendbewegungen"⁸ and a recognized provider for those carrying out a voluntary year of social service or their required community service (an alternative to Germany's mandatory military service). The Reichelsheim European Youth Center is a member of the CVJM-Westbund (Western Chapter of the German YMCA).

The Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC) is a non-profit association located in Reichelsheim/Odenwald in Germany. As a recognized non-governmental organization (NGO), we work together with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation in the area of foreign aid and development.

Our Financial Resources

From the very beginning, the Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC) has been funded primarily by donations. In addition, we have received social recognition for various areas of our work and receive public, third-party funding for specific projects. The Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC) is examined annually by the German Evangelical Alliance and has been awarded the Donation Seal of Approval. Since our founding, we have been officially recognized by the German financial authorities as a non-profit, charitable organization. In addition, in 1981, we received official recognition as an institute for scientific research.

The ojcos Foundation

In 2004, the Reichenberg Fellowship (OJC) established the ojcos-stiftung⁹, a foundation recognized by German civil law and created for the exclusive purpose of directly supporting tax-privileged non-profit, charitable and religious activities. The goals of the ojcos Foundation include the promotion of humanitarian, missionary and social work. Examples of the work being supported include projects among street children in Manila and Saint Petersburg, intercultural youth camps in Germany and the Balkans, as well as measures for AIDS prevention in the Congo.

⁵ aej, an association of Protestant youth

⁶ an association of Protestant retreat centers

⁷ an association of Protestant communities

⁸ RMJ, a co-operation of Protestant and free-evangelical organizations primarily involved in missionary youth work

⁹ ojcos Foundation