

CHURCH BUILDING

£4 €6

Issue 93



May/June 2005

CHURCH OF JOYFUL TIDINGS, AUSTRIA

good news evangelical church, waidhofen an der thaya



The Church of Joyful Tidings, Waidhofen in Austria welcomes guests with 'outstretched arms'

WITH just 60 seats and a diameter of just nine metres, the Good News Evangelical Church in Waidhofen an der Thaya, a small town of nearly 30,000 in Lower Austria close to the country's northern border with the Czech Republic, is anything but large, writes THOMAS SÜLZLE.

Yet that didn't stop numerous church and state dignitaries from attending the dedication on October 30, 2004, led by Bishop Herwig Sturm, the leader of Austria's Lutherans. But it wasn't the size of the church that attracted so much interest, but the form.

"The church is striking – and we Evangelicals are happy about that," says Pastor Horst Pehlke, whose parish includes the 250 or so Lutherans in Waidhofen. He

recalls that when he first saw the plans "I immediately gulped". But the local congregation has by now got used to their church's unusual architecture. From outside the broad outer wall makes the church look bigger than it is. The yellow ochre colour of the exterior paint looks friendly and in summer, seats outside the church are inviting.

As the old place of worship had to be pulled down to make way for the new church, discussions began more than five years ago between the Waidhofen congregation and the Greek-born Austrian architect, Efthymios Warlamiis, who had been approached by the congregation and agreed to take on the project. Building work finally began in July 2003 and was completed in October 2004 ahead of the dedication.

"Planning and designing a church is one of the greatest challenges of an architect," says Warlamiis. It demands other yardsticks, "a sensitive aesthetic able to please not just people – God too should be pleased by his house". This puts demands on the architect. "The design requires humility, but that did not stop me planning boldly and finding ideas which are harmonious, classical and at the same time modern."

Warlamiis has worked all along on this project without charging any fees. "It was obvious for me that I should jump in and help this small community and contribute to the realisation of this beautiful project." Throughout he had discussed and elaborated this idea together with the

EFTHYMIOS Warlamiis was born in Greece in 1942 and is an architect, painter, writer and pedagogue. He studied architecture at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. He has taught and lectured at the university's department of architecture as well as at other European universities and academies.

While teaching experimental architecture at the International Summer Academy of Fine Arts in Salzburg in 1988, Warlamiis developed his 'New Age' philosophy of architecture, art and design.



Since 1992, Warlamiis has been director of the International Centre for Art and Design (IDEA) in Austria.

Warlamiis' work has been shown all over the world. Since 1997 his most extensive exhibition, *Alexander 2000*, comprising 1,700 paintings, has travelled to museums in Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Austria, Switzerland and Belgium, and in future will tour several Near and Far East countries and the United States. His Olympia-exhibition *Mother Olympiad* will be hosted by the leading museums in China.

● Efthymios Warlamiis' book *Poetic Architecture* (ISBN 190109251-8) will be published by New Architecture Publishers Ltd (Andreas Papadakis) in May, where there will also be a London exhibition of his paintings.



The children's round chapel has a colourful hand-painted window and round carpet. The kids love it



The brick and glass frontage eases the transition from exterior to interior



The church tower is in the form of a chalice



The rear of the church has a more traditional feel with wooden arcade, thick pillars, niches and seats. Its composition encourages visitors to stop and rest awhile



A sense of security and community is created immediately by the round form of the main room. This feeling is reinforced by the extraordinarily thick walls with shaped niches and windows

• From page 09

members of the congregation, and the plans developed and took concrete form in numerous discussions. "As architect it wasn't for me to put the artistic into the foreground or to promote my artistic vision," explains Warlamis. "It was essential for me to find a way between the material and the spiritual, an expression of the Good News of Christianity, love and community."

Warlamis worked with symbols and signs, though being careful not to overdo it. The church tower is in the form of a chalice and within it is a children's chapel with a round, hand-painted window. The main room of the church is round and lit by windows in the dome above. The intention is to create a sense of security and community. This feeling is reinforced by the extraordinarily thick walls with numerous shaped niches.

"The church is exactly right for our

conditions," says Pastor Pehlke. This goes not just for the size but for the financial side of the project: the planned building cost came to just €380,000 (some £265,000). Most of this has already been raised, with nearly a quarter coming from the local authorities.

Ecumenical activity is an important part of the church's role and is symbolically rooted in the church; the foundation stone includes a piece of the Catholic St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, an original stone from Jerusalem and a gift from Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the senior cleric of the Orthodox Churches around the world. Warlamis dedicated the church to the children of Europe – and the children of God. •

■ Thomas Sülzle is an editor at the *Gustav Adolf Werk*, which supports Lutheran Church work in the diaspora and helped support the building of the Waidhofen church.



A glass cross and a hand-carved rosette with coloured glass, dominate the main entrance



Y70 ©

View from the ante-room into the main room through the cross-shaped opening



Y70 ©

LEFT:
View from
vestry into
main room

RIGHT:
The arcade
on the rear
side



Y70 ©



Y70 ©

The church cross is close to the people who utilise the handy seating provided



Y70 ©

Cover: The Church of Joyful Tidings is an eye-catching and unusual place of worship designed by Greek architect Eftymios Warlamis in a small Austrian border town – see page 12

ISSUE NUMBER 93

MAY/JUNE 2005

GABRIEL COMMUNICATIONS LTD
First Floor, St James's Buildings,
Oxford Street, Manchester M1 6FP
Tel: 0161 236 8856
Fax: 0161 236 8530

EDITOR
Norman Lawton
norman.lawton@the-universe.net
www.churchbuilding.co.uk

STEERING COMMITTEE
Richard Giles
Tim Gough
Paul Middleton
Paul Walker

EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Donald Buttress
Allan Dolg
Tom Devonshire Jones
Jonathan Goodchild
Robin Gibbons
Caroline Mackenzie
Martin Purdy
John Thomas
Austin Winkley

ADVERTISING SALES
Carol Malpass 01785 660543

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION
Grant Barlow
production@the-universe.net

EDITORIAL DESIGN & PRODUCTION
Norman Lawton
norman.lawton@the-universe.net

SUBSCRIPTIONS, DISTRIBUTION AND BACK ISSUES
Jean Unsworth: 0161 834 8918

PRINTED BY
Buxton Press Ltd, Palace Road,
Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 6AE

PUBLISHED BY
Gabriel Communications Ltd
Registered No. 2012469 England
ISSN 0268-912x

REGISTERED OFFICE
First Floor, St James's Buildings,
Oxford Street, Manchester M1 6FP
Tel: 0161 236 8856
Fax: 0161 236 8530

While every reasonable care will be taken, neither Church Building nor its agents accept liability for loss, damage or accident to colour transparencies or any other material submitted to the magazine.