

## Meetings of the Austrian Committee for Transition

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*Austrian members come together to foster generational change in leadership in the Austrian movement*

On March 18–20, the Austrian Committee for Transition (ACT) held its first Working Weekend in Gafrenz, which was a successful step in working together more concretely.

Peter Zoehrer initiated the ACT in September 2015, as a group of fourteen young Unificationists (primarily second-generation couples), with the purpose of assisting a transition process in Austria to younger leadership over the next few years. Since its inauguration, the committee has met twice, at the Austrian Leaders Meetings in September and November 2015, where we took time for the committee to find clarification and direction in its mission. This weekend workshop in March was the first initiated meeting of the ACT, to start a working process together in separate focus groups.

The idea for the weekend was to allow time for the three ACT working groups (Inreach, Outreach, Structure and Organization) to meet and make a start on mapping out the areas that need addressing and to set up a working process, in which others outside of the ACT could also be involved.

As an initial step toward working with others beyond the ACT, the working groups invited two second-generation members and two first-generation members to participate in the meeting. As it turned out, they provided valuable contributions. This being the first time that we met in earnest, having smaller groups proved valuable. The smaller sizes made it easier to identify and discuss the main topics. The working groups intend to gradually involve others and work more with others, over time.

Over the weekend, in addition to having three constructive working group sessions, we had the opportunity to take part in some programs as a whole group. These included hoondokhae, discussions, fellowship, games, just taking in the fresh country air and some presentations. Among the latter, we had an opportunity to learn what inspired Top Gun workshop participants in their workshop and received information about various communication and self-help training programs available and heard an overview of the Gafrenz center, currently Austria's sole church property.

The main outcomes and actions steps from each working group were announced at the end with the whole of the ACT, to identify crossover points, and to connect everyone to the bigger picture with a shared direction.

### **Inreach Meeting, Vienna**

As a follow-up to the ACT Working Weekend, on Saturday May 7, the ACT Inreach working group, led by Anna Janssen, organized a one-day meeting in Vienna with relevant members from the areas of Inreach in the Austrian movement — namely, in the areas of Youth and Education (Small children, HARP, CARP), Blessed Family Department, and Pastors. This was the next step, as it included more people in the ACT working process. In total twenty-four people took part.

At the meeting, we spoke of supporting the Blessed Family Department and regional pastors in their roles, for example, by providing a greater network of mentors and counselors, and by delegating some of their more menial tasks. We see it as useful to bridge the gap between the international and local level activities. This could be done by creating more national level retreats and activities, as well as a national newsletter.

### **Outreach and public relations**

We discussed the possibility of developing a German version of America's "dp life," which acts as an outreach web site and witnessing tool for the movement in the United States. We see as useful the idea of revitalizing our witnessing efforts through a national "AUTreach" witnessing campaign and a "DP Refresh" workshop. We also anticipate that working in concert with Germany and Switzerland to strengthen our public relations work would be effective and would produce synergy.



*Seated (from left): Peter and Gabriele Zoehrer and Heinrich Krcek, an ex-Benedictine monk blessed among our 6,000-couple group*

### **Structure and organization**

We intend to evaluate our church finances, legal status, and organizational structure with the idea of researching systems used by other faith groups to find most effective solutions. We also delved into the potential to develop national projects such as Gafrenz and an annual Austrian Gathering (Österreich Treffen).

This Working Weekend helped the group to feel a greater sense of unity, teamwork and family spirit, and created some momentum for the working groups to do the groundwork. We decided amongst us that the next time that ACT meets as a whole would be in the autumn and that until then the working groups would make up their own plans as far as when, how often and in which form to meet.

### **ACT Inreach Meeting**

The well-coordinated schedule allowed working sessions to take place within these respective areas, as well as cross-over sessions, for example, Youth and Blessed Family Department (discussing matching and blessing curriculums), Youth and Pastors (improvement of our youth involvement and increased engagement), the Blessed Family Department and Pastors (pastoral care and counseling).

This created a dynamic and highly interactive spirit, which allowed fruitful sharing to take place throughout the whole day — including over lunchtime, where the whole group went together to a local Asian restaurant for a buffet lunch. For the final session of the day, everyone met together again and each working group shared a summary of its action points.

It was inspiring to be able to involve and work with more members in the ACT activities, and we hope to continue this process by including the abilities and passions of even more people in the community.