

October International Cafe in Giessen, Germany

Peter Valenta
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A two-minute video from the Almenland, Styria, Austria, set the atmosphere for the audience of eighteen who attended this month's International Cafe event in Giessen.

Brigitte Makkonen now lives in Hüttenberg, but grew up in Austria. Dressed in a traditional "dirndl" she amusingly and entertainingly told us about her carefree childhood with two siblings. A well-compiled slide presentation showed highlights of her primary school years when the family lived in an official apartment belonging to the elementary school where her mother was a teacher. Children of all age groups were taught together in one classroom and Brigitte's mother taught her as well as several other children between the ages of six and fourteen from neighboring farms. Brigitte's desire was to proliferate to adulthood because, after all, one knows the right decisions to make...

Raised in the Catholic Church, as a young adult Brigitte was interested in the life of Jesus and the situation two thousand years ago. She asked herself the profound question: How would I have reacted if I had been alive at that time? Would I have followed him? How could I have been confident that this was the right thing to do?

When she was a student in Graz, she met a member of the Unification Movement. The contents of the presentations appealed to her so much that she decided, in the autumn of 1976, to become a member.

After completing her studies, she traveled to Germany to join an international team that had been established on the initiative of Father Moon to tackle in the broadest sense, access to technology for poorer countries. Her field of study and training was the basis on which she could work until her recent retirement in commercial enterprises run by members of the movement.

Brigitte also shared about her family of origin, the marriage Blessing in 1982 with a young man from Finland, and her two children and grandchildren.

She ended by remarking that she has every reason to be grateful for her life.

Original report Peter Valenta, English: Catriona Valenta