

# History of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in East and West-Germany

## History of CCR in East-Germany

### First beginnings of CCR / first groups:

There was Peter Fischer and his wife Traudl Fischer, who got to know about a personal relationship with the Lord in 1969. In the beginning this was not linked to the CCR spirituality. They met "good Christians" who taught them how to live a life according to the bible. Fischers are an interconfessional couple, the ministry in both churches (catholic and protestant) always was important for them.

Peter and Traudl Fischer became members of a prayergroup in Freiberg (Saxony), that belonged to the charismatic renewal in the protestant church, that was founded already 1958. There they got in touch with the charismatic spirituality and founded several other catholic charismatic prayergroups: 1976 in Heiligenstadt (together with Uli Hendus) and 1979 in Freiberg.

At this time also Fr. Michael Kleiner became part of the "CCR-group" in East-Germany.

In 1976 leaders (amongst them: Fr. Norbert Baumert) came from western Germany to East-Berlin to run an interconfessional conference. The Fischers became members of the leadership of this conference, that took place 26times till 2001. From all over eastern Europe people came to attend these conferences (up to 1000 participants!).

In the end of the 70<sup>ies</sup> Fischers organized seminars for priests and pastors of the CSSR (now: Czech Republik).

At the same time they got to know a businessman from Hungary, who regularly visited them and told them about the activities in the CCR in Hungary.

In 1980/81 an other prayergroup in Dresden was founded as well others in several smaller villages.

Several weekends took place: Seminars and retreats for adults and young people. Most of the times theses seminars have had about 30 – 35 participants. A regional meeting in Dresden in 1986 was run with about 100 participants.

A national leadership (coordination-group) existed with 7-10 members.

In Guthmannshausen (close to Erfurt) Peter Fischer started 1987 the Philippusseminar, a kind of a retreat-house of the CCR. There they run several Discipleship-Training-Courses from 1988 on (first DTS: 35 participants).

After 1989 the eastern and western German bishops-conferences became one, the church became united again. Also the CCR became united. The eastern regions accepted the structures of the western CCR, their leaders became full members in the German CCR-Council.

Christof Hemberger  
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# History of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in West-Germany

## First beginnings of CCR / first groups who called themselves CCR:

There were two major ways how people got in touch with the charismatic experience:

- a) a few people got to know about this “new experience” abroad:  
USA (Fr. Lothar Janek SUD, Fr. Benedikt Hilgefort OP), Australia (Fr. Gustav Krämer), France (Fr. Hubertus Tommek SJ), some even through the testimony of US-soldiers based in Germany (i.g. Würzburg)
- b) There were several individuals in Germany who have experienced a strong encounter with the Holy Spirit / personal charismatic experience (Fr. Norbert Baumert SJ\*, Fr. August Sparrer, Dr. Hansmartin Lochner).
- c)

During the following years this people got to know each other and shared their experiences.

First groups started 1970 till 1973.

Since 1971 a prayergroup was known in Ludwigshafen, run at the Franciscan Convent and an other one in St. Augustin (Bonn) by Fr. Lothar Janek SUD. A third one was lead by Prof. Heribert Mühlen in Paderborn.

Four Jesuits became forrunners for the CCR in Germany:

Fr. Rainer Koltermann SJ (Frankfurt), Fr. Christof Wrembek SJ (Berlin), Fr. Norbert Baumert SJ (Berlin) and Fr. Hubertus Tommek SJ (Berlin). They worked on spreading the charismatic spirituality while inviting for retreats, giving theological advice and networking amongst the people who got involved in the CCR. Fr. Rainer Koltermann SJ became the chairperson of the first NSC.

Besides Berlin (Jesuits and Mrs. Ursula Kurth) Würzburg was one of the first cities with a larger group run by Fr. Barnabas (forgot the surname) and Fr. John Wenning, both members of the “Missionaries of Marianhill”. They were accompanied by Luitgard Hubert and Elisabeth Weippert and started a prayergroup in the crypt of Marianhill-church in Würzburg.

Some other important figures in the early CCR in Germany have been:

- Prof. Heribert Mühlen, professor at the university of Paderborn, who got in touch with the CCR through contact to an Australian
- Renate Wellen, Karlsruhe, who got influenced by Fr. Hubertus Thommek
- Fr. Gustav Krämer
- Fr. August Sparrer, who established a prayergroup in Weiden (Oberpfalz) in the early years
- Fr. Benedikt Hilgefort OP, who worked at the AFJ (Arbeitsstelle für Jugendseelsorge), the official youth-department of the German Bishops Conference, based in Düsseldorf.
- Dr. Hansmartin Lochner, who did a major job in bringing together all the people who have got in touch with the charismatic experience

- Fr. Eugen Mederlet OFM, one of the founders of the community at the Craheim-castle
- Fr. Fred Ritzhaupt, who started a youth-ministry in Ravensburg (1979) that became the Immanuel-community later on.

### **First public meetings / conferences of CCR / developments since then:**

1972 & 1973: ecumenical leaders-meeting in Germany, Schloss Craheim (european level)

1974: first national meeting in Wuerzburg: 80 persons attended

at this meeting a first team of leaders was elected and a name was decided:  
"Charismatische Gemeindeerneuerung" (CGE)

1976: National conference in Koenigstein, Germany: 800 participants

1977: National conference in Koenigstein, Germany: 1000 participants

1978: first statutes where given

1981: first official (theological) paper about the CGE:

"Erneuerung der Kirche aus dem Geist Gottes"

1983: National conference in Wuerzburg, Germany: 3500 participants

1987: National conference in Friedrichshafen, Germany: 4000 participants

1987: theological reflection about the CGE updated: "Der Geist macht lebendig"

1990: Fusion with the CCR in Eastern Germany

1991: National conference in Augsburg: 4500 participants

1993: National conference in Augsburg: 4000 participants

1993: "Charismatische Erneuerung" is used as name in stead of  
"Charismatische Gemeindeerneuerung"

1995: statutes where updated

1995: National Youth-conference: 900 participants

1997: International Youth-conference: 1700 participants

1999: National meeting with Charismatic Renewal in all denominations in  
Nuernberg: 3000 participants

2000: National Youth-Conference: 700 participants

2001: National Conference in Fulda

2002: National Youth-Conference

2003: National Conference & National Youth Conference

2004: National Youth-Conference (500 participants)

2005: National Conference

2006: National Youth Conference (500 participants)

2007: National Youth Conference (600 participants) & National Conference  
(1200 participants)

2008: National Youth Conference (500 participants) & National Staff Conference  
(400 participants)

2009: National Conference in Fulda: 1300 participants

### **Literature on the history of CCR in Germany:**

Baumert, Norbert: Jesus ist Herr

Mohr, Johannes: Erneuerung im Heiligen Geist

Beckmann-Zöller: Pfingsten ist nicht vorbei

CCR Germany: Der Geist macht lebendig

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