

Miteinander

“WAS BEI DEN MENSCHEN UNMÖGLICH IST, DAS IST BEI GOTT MÖGLICH.”

The EKD Bible text for 2009, Luke 18:27.

Special Edition
Oct. 2009

ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de

Rev. Steve and Dr. Jean Godsall-Myers,
ELCA Wittenberg Center Directors
www.elca.org/Wittenberg

Transition at the Center

As the last edition of Miteinander was going to press, we were not in a position to share the news that Jean and Steve Godsall-Myers would be completing their terms of service as Directors of the ELCA Wittenberg e.V. Center as of the end of November, 2009.

Here are excerpts from the letter sent by the Rev. Robert Smith, Desk Director for Europe and the Middle East, to our German partners:

Dear Companions and Partners in Germany,

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ, the One who joins us to God's mission.

I am writing today to share information regarding the ELCA Wittenberg Center and the future shape of ELCA presence in Lutherstadt Wittenberg. As you know, a convergence of financial complexities has made it necessary for the ELCA to reshape its work in many regions of the world. Harsh budget realities have been the catalyst for our most recent decision to withdraw from Steve's and Jean's service as directors of the ELCA Wittenberg Center. Even with the creative ideas for new financial partnership that have been shared in recent weeks, it is clear that the ELCA will not have the resources to place full-time staff in Wittenberg in the future. Given the budget realities that the ELCA is facing, we have needed to move far more quickly than we would have desired to restructure our engagement in Wittenberg. Thus, I want to share with you that the Godsall-Myers will conclude their service as directors of the center on 30 November 2009. We thank them for their ministry and wish them Godspeed in their unfolding future.

At this point, our church is unable to make substantial commitments to plans in the immediate future. We hope to reach some clarity regarding our budget situation by mid-November. We thank you for your understanding regarding our circumstances. Throughout our process, we have tried to work toward maintaining a presence in Wittenberg. Given our anticipated budget realities,

we are not at this point able to discern what that presence will look like, even in the near future. We remain committed to working with you. We are also committed to seeking the best possible outcome for Frau Renate Skirl, whose service to the ELCA Wittenberg Center we also recognize and appreciate.

Our Regional Representative for Europe, Rev. Dr. Arden Haug (Arden.Haug@elca.org), will be available as well for further clarification and collaboration for the future.

Prayer Request

We request your prayers for the ministry of the ELCA in Wittenberg in these times of transition. In particular, we request your prayers for Renate. She will be exploring her options in the future that are very much still emerging.

2010 Programs and Beyond

We have been in contact with our US-based program planners for the many programs we had been planning and working on for 2010. Discussions are on-going about how the ELCA and its new presence in Wittenberg might be able to support these programs. We have had some suggestions for how they might work with our German partners to support their programs. Christian Eggert, of Christian Tours Europe, who is involved in a majority of the programs, is aware of the changes at the Center and will be in discussion with Arden Haug. We are confident that all planned programs will be supported appropriately and will meet the expectations of program planners.

Jean and Steve – the Journey continues ...

We knew that one day our "Wittenberg experience" would come to an end. When we set out on this journey back in the fall of 2006 to apply to become the directors of the ELCA's

Center in Wittenberg there were many unknowns. So, today we also face many unknowns as we return to the States. We do know that Steve will be looking for a position as a parish pastor; he will likely begin in his home Synod, SE PA. We do know that we have had wonderful experiences that we would like to share in our new setting and have had wonderful relationships with folks in Germany that we hope to continue to maintain. We do know that we will be closer to family and we do know that we will miss much in Wittenberg, including the friends we have made in the past three years. We also know that God goes with us and God's Spirit will guide us as we look for opportunities to use the gifts God has given us to serve God and the Church.

We leave with incredible gratitude that we were able to have a "Wittenberg experience". We leave with the gratitude that we were not alone in Wittenberg and that there were always many 'back home' supporting us in so many ways—notes, gifts, prayers, visits. We are grateful to the many program planners who worked with us (especially in our first year) and challenged us to find just the right resources to make a spiritually and educationally rewarding experience. We are also grateful for those who went before us as Directors—Dean Bard, Dick Bruesehoff, Twila Schock and Bill Swanson, Charlie Maahs and Jessica Nipp. Jessica never wore the "Director's hat" at the Center, but did an incredible job in developing programs and interest in Center programs. She was also the one who patiently and methodically gave us our orientation to the ministry and work of the Center. We are grateful to the Rev. Said Ailabouni, who was our first 'boss' and helped us through our first challenging project, "The Walls Conference". A special thanks goes to Marlene DeWulf, who has helped in so many ways to get us information, messages (and sometimes money). We were sorry that we could not find a way to get Marlene over to Wittenberg during our tenure here. We also thank the volunteers that we had the privilege of working with during our time at the Center. A wonderful group of volunteers serving in the spring/summer of 2006 during the last

transition at the Center: Nathan Pensack-Rinehart, Nancy Peterson, Margaret Jones and Marta Magnuson. The three month volunteers who began coming in the Fall of 2006 and kept coming: John and Carol Bertrand, Paul and Ruth Bartling, Bob and Barb Grosch, Phil and Gwen Jung. John and Carol serve as "continuing volunteers" of the Center—they make sure our regular printing and mailing of Miteinander goes off without a hitch four times a year.

We write this last article for the Miteinander with some sadness, saying good bye to many stateside friends and supporters whom we never had a chance to meet in person. Who knows how our paths might cross in the future—maybe back in the States, maybe when we come to back Wittenberg and some of you are on a pilgrim journey. We keep you in our prayers to Almighty God, whose Spirit continues to accompany us on our faith journeys. So, in good German custom, we close with the greeting that leaves the future open ... Auf Wiedersehen (until we see each other again!)

Steve and Jean