

# ‘miteinander’

Newsletter #3  
August - November, 2001

Pastor Twila Schock  
Pastor William Swanson

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## WELCOME TO ‘miteinander’

Greetings from Wittenberg, Germany! And, welcome to our German-based newsletter - ‘miteinander.’ It means ‘together’ in German and describes how the work of the ELCA Wittenberg Center brings people from throughout the world together in preparation for mission.

“miteinander” is an occasional publication of First Lutheran Church, Freeport, Illinois, reporting on the ministry of Pastors Bill Swanson and Twila Schock, members of our congregation whom we support in their missionary work in Germany.

## GLOBAL MISSION VOLUNTEERS SERVE AS WITTENBERG CENTER PROGRAM ASSISTANTS

Pastor Jim and Gloria Thvedt (photo, right), Brookings, SD, arrived in Wittenberg in August to begin a three-month term as Wittenberg Center Program Assistants.

During their tenure, Jim assisted the Center with the preparation of study and travel resources, worship leadership, communication of the Center’s mission to guests, and introducing Center guests to the city of Wittenberg. Gloria taught English as a second language to staff and guides of the Town Church and Castle Church, to a theology student at the Predigerseminar (‘preacher’s seminary’) and to a physically disabled boy.

Pastor Thvedt, a native of Crosby, ND, is a graduate of Concordia College, Moorhead, MN and Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, MN. He has served congregations in Newcastle, WY; Sisseton, SD; Brookings, SD; Seoul, Korea; Cairo, Egypt; and Copenhagen, Denmark.

Gloria Thvedt, a native of Beltrami, MN, attended Concordia College and graduated from Spearfish University, SD. She received her MA at SDSU in Brookings, SD. Gloria has taught kindergarten and first grade in Minnesota, South

Dakota, and Korea. She has taught English to adults in Cairo and Copenhagen.

Jim and Gloria are parents of six grown children and grandparents to fourteen.

*Three month and six month volunteers continue to be sought by the ELCA Wittenberg Center. For a copy of the position description and information on application procedures, contact the Rev. Stephen Nelson, DGM Associate Director for International Personnel at (773) 380-2631.*

## GERMAN CONGREGATIONS CONFRONT TODAY’S ISSUES

In mid-September, Bill and Twila were invited to participate in one of three Gemeindegottesdiensten (‘parish town meetings’) sponsored by the Church Province of Saxony. At this gathering, laypeople and church professionals from throughout the regional church were invited to share both dreams and concerns as the German churches go into the future. Noteworthy is that many of the concerns raised are similar to those raised in church bodies in the United States. Following is a sampling of the issues discussed in this 3-day congress:

- ✓ Why have so many people left the church? Are we responsible for that?
- ✓ How can we learn to talk about our faith?

- ✓ How can I effectively witness to non-believers, including those in my family, in a way that can bring them to Christian faith?
- ✓ How can we reach out to people between the ages of 20 and 60?
- ✓ How does a church manage conflict in its congregation?
- ✓ What can be done to bring life to a dead congregation?
- ✓ What should the relationship between congregations and communities be in rural congregations. Does there need to be 'dog and cat' tension, or . . . ?
- ✓ Is it really possible to awaken new interest with new forms of worship?
- ✓ Action/Reaction: Can the church only respond to trends in society, or is it possible for the church to create impulses in society?
- ✓ One congregation/Many pieties: How can we spiritually find and talk to each other in our own congregations

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GERMAN CULTURE:  
SOME TRIVIA

Did you know that, in Germany:

- Ø one always shakes the woman's hand first when being introduced
- Ø it's more common to reach for food, than to pass it, at the table
- Ø to offer criticism is a way of complimenting another's idea or proposal
- Ø you are expected to throw your own birthday party
- Ø New Years celebrations include home fireworks
- Ø it only costs 4 cents per minute to call the United States
- Ø the German Mark will be replaced by the Euro on Jan.1

EKD STIPEND RECIPIENT  
PREPARES PILGRIMAGE RESOURCE

The EKD (Evangelical Church of Germany) recently awarded one of two annual stipends to the Rev. Robert Buckley Farlee, selected to prepare a "congregational pilgrimage planner" for the ELCA Wittenberg Center. Upon completion, this resource will provide reading suggestions, study resources, worship tools, general information, and pilgrimage suggestions for pastors, lay people and congregations hoping to make a pilgrimage or study journey to the Reformation sites of Germany.

Pastor Farlee is Senior Editor for Worship at Augsburg Fortress Publishing and serves as cantor at Christ Church Lutheran, Minneapolis, MN. In addition to editing several worship related publications, he is widely published as a composer. His works have been included in *With One Voice*; *Wonder, Love, and Praise*; *Psalter for Worship*; and *Welcome to Christ*.

Photo: Pastor Farlee discusses congregational pilgrimage possibilities with Julie Tillberg, a seminarian at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Both recently participated in "Luther Through the Ages," a Wittenberg Center study program led by Professor Kurt Hendel.

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*For more information about the "congregational pilgrimage planner," contact the ELCA Wittenberg Center at [ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de](mailto:ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de)*

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*The EKD (Evangelical Church of Germany) offers two three-month stipends annually to members of the ELCA for select study programs and projects in Germany. For more information about the EKD Stipendium Program, contact the ELCA Wittenberg Center at: [ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de](mailto:ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de)*

## WORDS OF APPRECIATION

Without your continuing support, the Wittenberg Center's work would not be possible. We say "thank you" to the following individuals, churches or organizations who have been recent supporters of the ELCA Wittenberg Center:

### WITTENBERG CENTER ENDOWMENT GIFTS (ELCA FOUNDATION)

Theodore & Leona Kleinhans .....Appleton, WI  
Eunice Roe..... Vestal, NY

### GLOBAL MISSION SUPPORT (WITTENBERG CENTER DESIGNATED GIFTS)

Tim Dodman & Lisa Petter..... Zagreb, CROATIA  
Theodore & Leona Kleinhans .....Appleton, WI  
Ron & Mavis Barth..... Eugene, OR  
Anonymous  
Eunice Roe..... Vestal, NY  
Karyn Smitz.....Green Lake, WI  
Peter & Cheryl Hellstedt.....Mt. Prospect, IL  
Mark & Wenda Fry..... Elkhorn, NE  
Dorothy Plessner ..... Washington Crossing, PA  
Anonymous  
Helen Rudie .....Moorhead, MN  
Augustana Lutheran Church Foundation..... Denver, CO  
John & Joan Henning..... Merrill, WI  
Nancy Oakford..... Rolling Meadows, IL  
Pastor Herman & Evelyn Gilbert Testamentary Trust .....St. Petersburg, FL  
David Hunsucker ..... Gastonia, NC  
Leroy & Marilyn Anderson..... Sun City West, AZ  
Barbara Harrison Condon/Larry Harrison.....Idaho Fall, ID  
Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd.....Pocatello, ID  
Bethel Lutheran Church..... Firth, ID  
\* \* \*

Gift in memory of Frederick Riedel  
Richard & Naomi Bruesehoff ..... Park Ridge, IL

### GIFTS "IN KIND"

Computer Networking  
Alex & Judy Kahler ..... Aurora, SD  
Office Furnishings/Teaching Supplies;  
James & Gloria Thvedt.....Brooking, DS  
Library gift  
Bruce Harshberger .....Willmar, MN

## HOW CAN WE HELP?

How can we help the ELCA Wittenberg Center in its mission to become a global, ecumenical center for learning?

### Ø Prayer

Pray for the churches of Germany (United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany, the Evangelical Church of the Union, the Evangelical Reformed Churches) as they continue the process of reunification begun after the decline of Communism.

Pray for the regions of former Eastern Germany where unemployment and economic difficulties continue to demoralize a significant portion of the population.

Pray for the ELCA Wittenberg Center and its staff (Bill Swanson, Twila Schock, and Renate Skirl) that they may have the wisdom to guide the Center into a strong global ministry.

### Ø Stewardship

Consider making a gift which will help provide scholarships for students, scholars and lay people from redeveloping nations. Simply use the enclosed gift card and envelope to make your tax-deductible contribution. (Gifts sent directly to the Wittenberg Center in Germany are not tax deductible.)

Consider sponsoring a member from your Companion Synod to participate in a Wittenberg Center study program.

Consider making a gift to the ELCA Wittenberg Center library. A book "wish list" is available by writing to the directors at:  
[ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de](mailto:ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de)

Consider making a gift to the ELCA Foundation which will help secure the future of the ELCA Wittenberg Center. Call 1-800-638-3522 ext. 2641.

### Ø Endowment support

*One of the strongest sources of support of the ELCA Wittenberg Center's ministry comes from congregations which have endowment funds. If your church has such resources available, notify the Wittenberg Center directors or the Rev. David Lerseth, Director for Missionary Sponsorship, at 1-800-NET-ELCA.*

## HOW GOD WAS REVEALED TO ME: A PERSONAL TESTIMONY by Kathrin Jaeger

Editor's Note: Kathrin Jaeger, a native of the former East Germany, is a product representative from Event and Touring, AG. She oversees all touring components of the study programs prepared by the ELCA Wittenberg Center.

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When thinking back to my childhood, I remember that God always played an important role in the every day life of my family. We regularly attended Sunday Worship; my brother and I went to "Confirmation Class." Although times were hard for my parents living an active Christian life in the Communist System of the GDR (German Democratic Republic), our faith was always with us and a source of strength. It didn't matter to my parents that they would be punished for their faith -- that they couldn't have a career -- because the greatest aim for them was to stand for what they believed in. There could be no better hope than in the good will of God.

Then, when The Wall came down, suddenly all the pressure was gone; it was a completely new situation of seeing yourself in this world. All of a sudden new values mattered. You had to be successful, powerful, and - in our eyes --selfish to be of value in the eyes of the others.

At that time I was a teenager, questioning the world and the way it was each single day. Somehow, I cannot even think of the reason why I lost my faith in the everlasting power of God. I guess it was because I couldn't understand why he would leave us all alone here on earth, why he would let us go through so many trials? I thought, "If he really exists, why doesn't he reveal himself to me?"

For my parents it was really hard seeing me in this situation. They tried to help me out of it but couldn't convince me. Instead of trying to find my faith again, I turned away from the Church and from God. For a few years, there was no inner voice to give me an answer to the question I still had: If God really exists, why doesn't he reveal himself to me?

In 1999, there was a first meeting with representatives of the ELCA in my hometown, Wittenberg. They planned to open a Center here to bring the exciting possibilities of following Christian routes to Luther's Homeland to as many people as possible. I felt a strong attraction to the idea right from the start and wanted to be part of this project. When I "think back," there was a light shining in the eyes of the people I met with -- the light of their faith. I was deeply impressed by such a strong conviction.

Now, more than 2 years later, the Center has become an integral part of the Wittenberg Community, and by working with Pastor Twila Schock, Pastor William Swanson and Renate Skirl, and meeting so many Christians from all over the world, I found the answer to my question.

Being with the people who come here to see the places where Luther worked and lived and who return as witnesses of God's grace and beauty, God revealed himself to me in each single person I met on the wonderful pilgrimages that would not be possible without the work of the ELCA Wittenberg Center.

These Christians are privileged to trace a certain part of their faith's origin and to see what Martin Luther achieved, inspired and strengthened by God's power, starting his work in the world of the 16<sup>th</sup> century which is of fundamental importance until today.

Now I know that there could be no clearer evidence of God's existence than the work of so many intelligent people who made the world what it is today, the inspiration and faith of so many people all around the world who are heroes in what they do in their daily work, such as the ELCA Wittenberg Center and each person coming here to be part of this project which brought back my faith.

### CONSIDER THESE LEARNING OPTIONS!

The Rev. Richard Breusehoff, ELCA Division for Ministry, will lead the German travel seminar "Where Luther Continues to Walk" April 28-May 11 at the Wittenberg Center. This program will allow participants to study Luther's key works and visit sites significant to the Reformation. It will include visits to Berlin, Torgau, Wittenberg, Leipzig, Halle, Eisleben, Erfurt, Weimar Eisenach, Mainz and Worms. Cost is approximately \$1575 plus airfare. For information, call Marlene DeWulf at 800/638-3522, ext. 6551.

"Martin Luther and the Reformation: Praying for Reform, Then and Now" is a German travel seminar led by Dr. William Russell. Held July 7-20, this program will visit Berlin, Wittenberg, Halle, Eisleben, Torgau, Leipzig, Buchenwald, Erfurt, Eisenach, Coburg, Schmalkalden and Augsburg. For details, visit [www.elca.org/ewbc](http://www.elca.org/ewbc).

