

Nachrichten aus Wittenberg

A NEWSLETTER FOR SUPPORTERS OF ELCA MISSIONARY REV. BRIDGET GAUTIERI



A lot has happened in Wittenberg and for the ELCA Wittenberg Center so far this winter! In this newsletter, you will read about the Wittenberg Weihnachtsmarkt (Christmas Market), Advent in Wittenberg, my January installation, and hear about the many ELCA visitors who have come to Wittenberg. Thank you for your continued support, prayers, and partnership!

WINTER IN WITTENBERG: THE WEIHNACHTSMARKT

The Weihnachtsmarkt is a beloved German tradition during the Advent and Christmas season. With mulled wine, candied apples, gingerbread cookie hearts, roasted nuts, Christmas ornaments, artisan craftmakers, carousels and a ferris wheel, there's much to love about the Weihnachtsmarkt. The Weihnachtsmarkt in Wittenberg celebrated its 555th year in 2023! Which makes me think that Martin Luther and Katarina von Bora must have enjoyed a few of these during their time in Wittenberg. The market's kick-off event was led by Rev. Mattias Keilholz, pastor of the Stadtkirche (Town Church), and Bürgermeister Torsten Zugehör, mayor of Wittenberg. It is very powerful to witness how involved the Wittenberg churches are in public life and with the state/town. Another example of this is the weekly Stadtgebet (town-wide worship) which is held in the town square in the summertime, and is promoted and supported by the town of Wittenberg. It demonstrates to locals and visitors that the church has a prevalent role in the life of the town and its identity, even though church membership in the area is only about 12%, one of the lowest rates in all of Germany. The ecumenical relationships in Wittenberg are very strong and fruitful, seeking to do more things together for the benefit of not just church members but all of the town's residents. If you're interested in attending the 2024 Wittenberg Weihnachtsmarkt, save the dates!: Nov. 25-Dec. 29, 2024 (closed Dec. 24 & 25).



Photo credit: Bridget Gautieri

ADVENT TRADITIONS

The picture on the right is of the Advent wreath in the Stadtkirche (Town Church). Unlike most ELCA congregations which use blue candles, the Advent wreath candles in Germany are almost always red. The Stadt-kirche wreath has a special feature: small candles represent each day of the week, while the large, red candles represent each Sunday in Advent. Each day during midday prayer, one candle is lit. The picture on the right was therefore taken on the 5th day of Advent (Dec. 7th, 2023), when it was my turn to lead midday prayer.



SERVICE OF INSTALLATION



My service of installation was held on Friday, January 12th, 2024 at the Fronleichnamkapelle (Chapel of Corpus Christi), the small chapel next to the Town Church. About 35 people gathered for this service, coming mainly from the local Wittenberg community and some of my dear friends from Leipzig. Rev. Rachel Eskesen, ELCA Europe Desk Director, led the installation and Rev. Dr. Meghan Aelabouni, ELCA theologian and pastor at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Jerusalem, preached about how love makes a sacred place holy. The picture on the left shows (from left to right) Rev. Dr. Meghan Aelabouni, Rev. Rachel Eskesen, Rev. Bridget Gautieri, and Rev Dr. Gabriele Metzner, the superintendent of Protestant churches in the Greater Wittenberg Region. The bottom picture shows some of my friends who participated in the service as readers and prayer leaders.



ELCA VISITORS!

Recognize any of these people?! I was able to welcome several ELCA guests to the ELCA Wittenberg Center for coffee/tea and conversation. The ELCA Wittenberg Center seeks to be historically rooted and radically relevant while being centered on intersectional justice. It is always great to talk about the ministry and work of the ELCA Wittenberg Center with colleagues and friends, both old and new, while hearing about the ministries visitors are involved with back at home. Make sure to email me if you plan to visit Wittenberg; I would love to welcome you!



Rev. Blake Scalet from St. John's Lutheran Church in Summit, NJ

Rev. Dr. Cheryl Peterson from Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, IA



Vicar Jason Reed from Temple Lutheran Church in Pennsauken, NJ

Rev. Caleb Crainer (left) from St. Andrew's Lutheran Church in Los Angeles, CA



WARTBURG SEMINARY VISIT

Rev. Dr. Jan Schnell, Assistant Professor of Liturgics at Wartburg Theological Seminary (pictured bottom left), led a J-term group of Wartburg Seminary students and alumni to Germany. Rev. Rachel Eskesen, Rev. Dr. Meghan Aelabouni, and I met with their group for coffee, cake, and conversation while they stayed in Wittenberg. I talked to them about the work of the ELCA Wittenberg Center and ELCA Global Mission. We met for nearly 2 hours because the group was so engaged and asked lots of great questions. We shared call stories, ministry ideas, and lots of laughs!



THANK YOU

Thank you again for your prayers and financial support. You are always welcome to visit Wittenberg and experience the spirit of the Reformation for yourselves. Keep an eye out for the next newsletter, follow us on Facebook and Instagram @ELCAWittenbergCenter, and look out for our upcoming seminars and webinars.

Do you know a church or an individual who would like to support my ministry? Please have them contact me at bridget.gautieri@elca.org.



Thank you especially to the following congregations and individuals who are sponsoring my ministry:

- Calvary Lutheran Church, Cranford, NJ
- St. John's Lutheran Church, Parkville, MD
- St. John's Lutheran Church, Evansville, WI
- St. John Lutheran Church, Ocean City, NJ
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Robesonia, PA
- New Jersey Synod of the ELCA
- Kimberley & Daniel Gautieri
- Alyssa Gautieri
- Rev. Pastor Carol Lindsay

You can now give online! The link is in the email I sent with this newsletter. Alternatively, you can go to www.ELCA.org → Our Work → Global Mission → Global Service → Support Missionaries → Missionaries "Give now" → Select "Bridget Gautieri" from the drop down.