

Nachrichten aus Wittenberg

A NEWSLETTER FOR SUPPORTERS OF ELCA MISSIONARY REV. BRIDGET GAUTIERI



Photo Credit: Cedric Gegel

Even though tourist season winds down in the winter months in Wittenberg, there is still a lot going on. In this newsletter, you will read about this year's Reformation Service, the 25th Anniversary of the ELCA Wittenberg Center, the stumbling stones in Wittenberg, and the many ELCA visitors who have come to Wittenberg. Thank you for your continued support, prayers, and partnership!

REFORMATION DAY IN WITTENBERG

October 31st is internationally known as Reformation Day, and is a holiday in most German states. Tens of thousands of people flock to Wittenberg for Reformation celebrations. The ELCA Wittenberg Center and LWF Center Wittenberg (Lutheran World Federation) organize a Reformation worship service in English each year, held on October 30th at 5pm in the Castle Church. This service caters to the international visitors who come to Wittenberg, as the three Reformation worship services held on October 31st are all in German. This year, we invited Bishop Paulina Hlawiczka-Trotman of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain to preach. She preached on the topic of hope. We also welcomed Dr. Anna Krauß, who is the new director of the LWF Center Wittenberg since September 1st, 2024. The service brought together about 80 people from all over the world. Cantor Sarah Herzer was the musician.

Pictured from left to right: Rev. Dr. Sámuel Nánási, Rev. Arlington Trotman, Rev. Bridget Gautieri, Bishop Paulina Hlawiczka-Trotman, Rev. Andrew Krauß, and Dr. Anna Krauß.

October 2024



ELCA WITTENBERG CENTER CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF MINISTRY

November 2024

During my first week in the office in Wittenberg in September 2023, I came across an exciting fact: the ELCA Wittenberg Center was founded in 1999, meaning 2024 would be our 25th anniversary! Over the next year, my ELCA colleagues and I put together a program to celebrate this anniversary and to think about our next 25 years. Since the ELCA Wittenberg Center is a learning center of the ELCA, we decided on holding a 5-day long seminar celebration. This would consequently be my first time organizing a seminar in Wittenberg!

From November 17-22, 2024, 40 participants came to Wittenberg, Germany to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ELCA Wittenberg Center. Participants included ELCA Service & Justice staff, including YAGMs (Young Adults in Global Mission) serving in Central Europe and the UK, Wittenberg locals, former ELCA Wittenberg Center staff, ELCA seminarians and professors, and ELCA-Germany companion synod representatives.

The celebration seminar was both a time of celebrating 25 years of ministry in Wittenberg and a time of learning. Throughout the week, participants learned about the Center's foundation and complex history, heard about the ministry of the Center today, and imagined many possibilities for the Center's future. The seminar also focused on experiencing Wittenberg, with its many museums and historical landmarks, and learning about our German partners. We learned about the structure of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), the role of the German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation (GNC/LWF), the current status and struggles of the protestant church in the Wittenberg region, and what life was like growing up in Wittenberg during the communist GDR time.

ELCA Global Mission Personnel in the Europe region with ELCA Service & Justice Director Rev. Khader El-Yateem and Global Mission Director Paulina Dasse



Photo Credit: Cedric Gegel

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A photograph of three students in a library or study area. On the left, a student in a white sweater is looking at a book. In the center, a student with a blue and purple scarf is also looking at a book. On the right, a student in a purple sweater and glasses is looking at a book. In the foreground, there is a black laptop with a white keyboard. The background shows bookshelves and a window.

Photo Credit: Cedric Gegel



January 2025

WITTENBERG'S STUMBLING STONES

January 27th, 2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the largest of the German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps. Over 1 million people died at Auschwitz. To commemorate the liberation's anniversary, the town of Wittenberg held a ceremony at the Jewish memorial in town. As you can see in the picture on the right, the Lord mayor and many political organizations left bouquets of flowers at the memorial. The community was then invited to leave white stones on top of the memorial.



One way to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust and keep their memories alive is the laying of "Stolpersteine," which translates to stumbling stones. These stones are concrete cubes topped with a brass plate, which is inscribed with the victim's name, birth and death dates, and, if known, where they were sent for persecution. The stones are placed in front of the buildings where Holocaust victims used to live. The laying of these stones began in 1992, and over 100,000 stumbling stones have been laid. The Stolpersteine project is the largest decentralized memorial in the world.

There are 30 stumbling stones laid in Wittenberg, 3 of which are laid very close to the ELCA Wittenberg Center (Jüdenstr. 9). There are two laid at Jüdenstr. 7 and one at Jüdenstr. 29. There is a book by Richard Pester called "(Un)Forgotten Neighbors" (pictured below), which outlines what is known about the 30 Jewish victims of the Holocaust who lived in Wittenberg. There are also trained locals in Wittenberg who can lead tours for those want a guide while visiting the 30 stone memorials. The ELCA Wittenberg Center has purchased dozens of these books in English for those wanting to buy a copy of their own.



The stumbling stone pictured on the left is located at Jüdenstraße 29. The text translates to: "Here lived Martin Kolf. Born in 1889. Arrested and jailed at the police prison in Wittenberg in 1939. Sent to Sachsenhausen in 1940, then sent to Dachau in 1940. Murdered on 1/28/1941." According to "(Un)Forgotten Neighbors," Kolf was born in Poland and came to Wittenberg as a Russian POW in 1915. After WWI, he stayed in Wittenberg and married a German woman. Kolf was baptized Protestant in 1920 and he and his wife gave birth to a son, Wolfgang. Kolf and his family moved into an apartment at Jüdenstr. 29,

where he also opened his own tailoring business. Wolfgang was bullied in school for being a "half Jew"; he fled to Sweden in 1939, where he lived until his death in 1991. Martin Kolf was "deprived of his German citizenship in 1934 due to his Jewish heritage" (p. 47). He was arrested in 1939, sent to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp in 1940, and died at Dachau Concentration Camp in 1941. Kolf's wife stayed in their Wittenberg apartment until her death in 1969. She had to share her apartment with another single woman as ordered by the GDR government (Soviet controlled Eastern-Germany).

ELCA VISITORS!

I was able to welcome several ELCA visitors to Wittenberg. 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!



ELCA members Susan and Harold Boxberger (Kansas) and Rev. Brett Wilson (Washington, D.C.)



Bishop Michael Lozano (Northwest Pennsylvania Synod), Bishop Craig Miller (Upper Susquehanna Synod), and Rev. Eric Luedtke (Minnesota)



Rev. Megan Hoewisch (Montana), Rev. Soliette Lopez (Nicaragua), and Rev. Ollie Bergh (Alaska)



Bishop Phyllis Milton (Virginia Synod) and Rev. Dr. Cheryl Peterson (Wartburg Theological Seminary, Iowa)

And lastly, I had the pleasure of meeting with a group of students from Luther College in Minnesota in January! Luther College is one of 26 ELCA-affiliated colleges and universities. The group was here for a J-term course titled "Reformations in Germany and Spain" and were led by the Rev. Dr. Anthony Bateza and Dr. Noam Sienna.

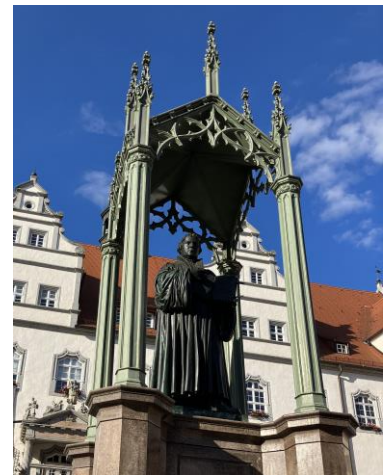


All photos that are not credited were taken courtesy of Bridget Gautieri.

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
- Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church, Omaha, NE
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Robeson, PA
- Wannetta Phillips
- Kimberly & Daniel Gautieri
- Alyssa & Quan Dan
- Rev. Pastor Carol Lindsay & Jeanne Elmuccio

You can 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.