



Rev. Joseph and Deac. Dr. Jennie Asher

DID YOU KNOW?

- German is spoken by more than 100 million people worldwide.
- The longest word currently in use in the German language is “Rechtsschutzversicherungsgesellschaften” which means “insurance companies providing legal protection.”
- When JFK visited Berlin, he infamously said, “Ich bin ein Berliner,” which also translates to “I am a jelly donut.”
- Johannes Gutenberg printed the world’s first Bible in Mainz, Germany in 1456. The printing press allowed ordinary people to possess a copy of the Bible, previously only owned by the clergy and nobility.



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Die Schreckliche Deutsche Sprache

That is the title of a book by Mark Twain that Jennie just finished reading. Our readers who speak German know that it translates, “The awful German language.” As Mark Twain traveled to Southern Germany to overcome severe writer’s block he found great inspiration here, but he also found exasperation with learning the language. The articles that often don’t make sense (Did you know that in Germany a young woman is neither masculine nor feminine while a turnip is feminine?), the cases, the word endings – all present their challenges.

Jennie has had her share of struggles with that “awful German language” but already sees it as an essential tool for a missionary. It opens doors. As she studies her vocabulary, she reminds herself that one day all of these words will come together in the ability to share *the Word* with people she meets. It will also allow her to talk to the pastors of our German partner church to plan for ministry to refugees.

However, the rewards of the mind-numbing classes are not just in the future. Since most



Jennie’s language class. Most of the members are refugees from Syria, Iran, and Iraq.

of the members of her class are refugees, she is learning a great deal about their needs. She’s heard the frustration with government bureaucracy, the challenge of getting a job, and the pain of loneliness. She’s seen the grief and loss faced by refugees. One day, a woman came to class visibly upset. With her beginner German skills, Jennie learned that the woman’s husband had been sent back to Iraq. Unable yet to provide the words of comfort she needed, Jennie simply held her as she cried. Another young man told of how his girlfriend and daughter had been killed since he left Syria. And the stories go on.

How desperately the message of Christ is needed among the refugees! In this bleak world without hope, the hope of Christ is urgently needed.

If only we could get past that awful German language....

I was in prison, and you came to visit me...

Many of you know that Joe's call to serve as Pastor to Kaiserslautern Evangelical Lutheran Church also involves a half-time commitment to serve the huge US military community in this area. Part of this work is reaching out in normal pastoral ministry to the hundreds of US Air Force and US Army families in the region who need a church home and spiritual care. But also Joe's former work as a state professional correctional chaplain at Westville Prison (Indiana Department of Corrections) has been an invaluable advantage in helping at the US Army prison here.

Most reading this know that prisoners are in high need of spiritual care... whether they know it or not. After conviction, most detainees are at the lowest point of their lives. At the very least, their future military career and all retirement benefits are usually destroyed, while their future earning potential is crushed. Further, all military privileges for the inmate and his dependents are suspended. Not only have prisoners lost their freedom, they will also lose health and housing benefits (this is really significant, because eventually their children won't be able to go to the dentist, etc.). All post privileges (like even shopping

at the commissary store) will also end. Added to this is the devastating stigma that "your loved one is a prisoner."

The above reality is particularly hard for some soldiers who have been in the service of their country for ten or twenty years, or who have acquired some significant rank, or who have counted on military service benefits to sustain them and their families in their retirement "golden years."

Joe is now on the volunteer staff of the US Army military prison. He is a new volunteer, and he has begun teaching a "Spiritual Development" class on the Bible, with a focus on Philippians. Joe entitles this class "Christianity 101," and the prisoners have started coming to talk about how God can help them and their families at the lowest point in their lives.

Can Jesus really be "the answer" when a convicted soldier is facing the realities listed above?

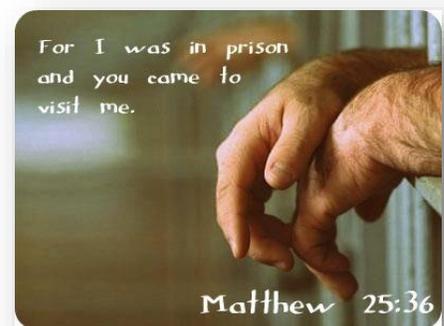
Christ is always the Answer! He is the One who sustains us in every situation. He is in the business of making all things new (Revelation 21:5). Christ is "the Almighty," the "Alpha and Omega," the One "who is, and who was, and who is to come" (Revelation 1:8). Jesus can handle all

devastation and loss, no matter how bleak a prisoner's prospects look, for our Lord said in John 6:35ff - "I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty."

And Jesus told us not to worry about our lives (Matthew 6:25ff), for the Father will take care of us as we-- in the Holy Spirit's power-- "seek first His kingdom."

In just the first month of Christianity 101, the inmates have vigorously debated the things Joe has taught from God's Word. And one prisoner from Michigan has requested Luther's Small Catechism with further private discussion on issues related to his life.

The good news is that the Gospel is bearing fruit in a lot of ways here in Kaiserslautern. And all praise and glory goes to God for His great mercy and grace.



Baptized Into Christ!

New life. We've all seen a parent holding his tiny newborn infant in his arms. His eyes are filled with joy, with hopes and dreams for the future. He can't help but marvel at this wonderful gift from God. But imagine receiving that gift in a foreign land – far away from your family, friends and support system. And you're also far away from your church. How will you give your child the most important gift you can give – bringing him to Holy Baptism?

Such was the dilemma for a U.S. soldier in Germany. His wife was about to give birth to his son, and there was no Lutheran church in which the boy could be baptized. Sure, they could go to the army chaplain, but they wanted a Lutheran church and service. They could go to the local German church, but they wouldn't understand a word that was said. As the due date drew nearer, the soldier continued his search.

Finally, a pastor in the U.S. told him about an LCMS pastor (Joe) in Kaiserslautern, and the process of bringing his baby to baptism began.

The couple and the sponsors drove four hours to Kaiserslautern for the instruction and baptism. "We would have driven to Italy if we had to..." the father explained. "We wanted our baby to be baptized in the Lutheran church."

In June and July, Kaiserslautern Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC) had three infant baptisms. All were military families far away from home. All wanted to worship in English where they would understand what's being said. All had at least one parent with a Lutheran background. All wanted their children to be raised Lutheran.

Thanks be to God for providing a place for them to be brought to and nurtured in the faith.



Joe baptizes the newborn baby of a U.S. military family.

Do you know

a U.S. serviceman or woman stationed in Germany? Let them know about us and about Kaiserslautern Evangelical Lutheran Church. Joe's local number is:

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HERE WE COME!



That's right – we're coming home again for a visit. In January and February we will be returning to the U.S. to visit congregations and supporters. Those in the Midwest can mark your calendars for our visit to Mission Central in Mapleton, IA on February 17. While the exact dates and locations of our other

visits are unknown at this time, we will be traveling to New England, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. If you'd like us to visit your congregation or group, please let Jennie know at jennie.asher@lcmsintl.org.

We look forward to seeing many of you this winter!

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- The children and families of KELC as we begin a new year of Sunday School, and for Jennie as she provides leadership and direction.
- Joe to gain access to the Air Force bases.
- A suitable location for our youth confirmation instruction which begins in September.

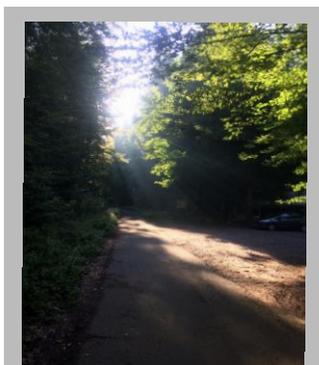
GIVE THANKS FOR:

- Three infant baptisms in June and July.
- Our friends at Mission Central who work so tirelessly to raise support for missionaries.
- Record summer attendance at KELC.
- Three short-term missionaries (GEO's) and one career missionary who have accepted assignments to serve with refugees in Germany.

PRAISE GOD FOR:

- The many congregations and individuals who pray for us, encourage and support us

Oh, What a Beautiful Morning!



The view on a morning walk.

Since our last newsletter, we have begun a morning routine of walking for exercise. About 32% of Germany remains forest land, and we are blessed to live right next to a large forested area. So this summer we have begun a regimen of walking everyday in “our” forest.

We begin at a picnic area and walk up a very steep hill. Since we can't talk as we climb this monster, Joe listens to a book on digital MP3. This gives him the opportunity, he says, to “think theological thoughts.” Jennie

practices German flashcards or listens to and practices the Sunday School music she's teaching. We finish the walk together, headed back down the hill (yeah!) talking about theology, our friends and family in the U.S., ministry needs, or just what we're going to do when our day off arrives.

Sometimes we take the “long route” and start at another spot in the forest. Here we can walk up an even steeper hill and a longer route to “our” castle. At the top we're rewarded with a look at the local mountain goats and a picnic table where we can have a long conversation.

As we try to stay in this routine for our health, please pray that God would give us continued motivation with the strength needed for improved health.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 3:17

God's richest blessings to each of you as you serve Him.

Joe and Jennie Asher



There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at lcms.org/service. Click on “Service Opportunities.”

To support the LCMS through the work of Joe and Jennie Asher, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861

Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Mark checks “Support of - Asher.” Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on our online giving page at lcms.org/asher.

You may also send your gift to our friends at:
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