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“Notes from the Castle Church Door” December 2018

PREPARATION AND REFLECTION

Isaiah 40:3-5 (ESV) ³A voice cries: “In the wilderness **prepare** the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵And the **glory of the LORD shall be revealed**, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”



Preparation – We seem to do a lot of preparation this time of the year.

Preparing our homes with Christmas lights and decorations; preparing to host gatherings or preparing to travel to family and friends; and hopefully preparing our hearts and minds to celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist quotes in the Gospels the above verses from Isaiah. JTB’s “job” or calling was to prepare the way for the arrival of Jesus. John the Baptist’s call was for repentance. Repentance (*metanoia in the Greek*) means to change our mind. The Law confronts us to “change” and the Gospel gives comfort, hope and forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Christ our Savior. This is where the “glory of the Lord shall be revealed”, that is, in the incarnation of the Son of God. As we approach the cradle of Jesus the newborn King, let us reflect on the personal comfort and hope we have in God becoming flesh in Jesus Christ.

Below are some **reflections** by me and the other Deputy Directors who served in 2018:

Bob Flohrs – Usually in the spring I spend a month in Lutherstadt Wittenberg in meetings with officials from the Castle Church and the Town Church. Also, I have the privilege of meeting with the “Lutheran Nuns” who so graciously allow us access to the chapel next to the Town Church. It is also a pleasure meeting with various people in the city offices and local organizations. For one week I normally lead worship before the first WEM pastor arrives for the year.

It was a joy to work with Rev James Fuchs and his wife Karen Van Wert the first two weeks of the 2018 worship season. James did an outstanding job of preaching the Gospel and reaching out in Wittenberg to travelers and inviting them to the worship services. Karen, a handbell professional, played at a couple of our worship services as well. She also worked with the Castle Church Handbell Choir on several occasions and played in a Sunday German worship service.



The link below is a video of Karen Van Wert playing handbells during a WEM worship service at the Castle church in May 2018. Her husband, Rev James Fuchs, was the WEM pastor for two weeks in May. David and Kris Burki were Deputy Directors in May and June.

<https://youtu.be/bgJQc9hkNDk>

Left to right: Rev James Fuchs, his wife Karen Van Wert, Rev Robert Flohrs, Kris and David Burki.

From Tim Reaman - The handbell choir from the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, played during the Sunday worship services held at St. James Lutheran Church, Redding, CA on October 7, 2018. The St James congregation was instrumental in helping the Castle Church form a handbell choir in 2011. The choir is under the direction of Sarah Herzer, Cantor at the Castle Church. The handbell choir occasionally volunteers to play during the English Ministry Saturday worship services in Wittenberg.



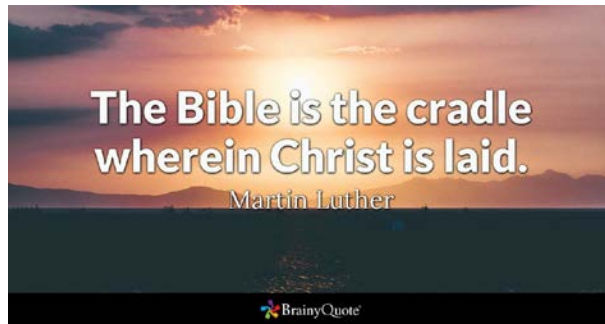
From Don and Cheryl Klein - Wittenberg English Ministry connects to people from many nations each year. For many, English is a 2nd or 3rd language. One such connection story is Vivian of Australia. We met Vivian at a Thursday 3:00 WEM service in Castle Church. She attended English Stammtisch on Thursday evening and we visited with her. Vivian is native Chinese, now living in Australia. A co-worker invited her to worship multiple times. Vivian finally attended worship and eventually became a Christian. Her Christian travels have taken her to the Holy Land and, this summer of 2018, to Luther sites. At Stammtisch a local tour guide explained the Wittenberg Luther sites to Vivian. Her parents still live in China and are now reading a Bible in Chinese. Vivian returned to join our Friday noon WEM service in the Castle Church before departing Wittenberg.

Church at Night - About a year ago, the Town Church in Wittenberg began to plan and then start a new worship service. It was an offshoot of one of the most popular exhibits of the Jubilee Celebration of 2017—an ecumenical worship service held at night, with special lighting effects, in a building called the Light Church. The new Town Church service, led by Pastor Alexander Garth, is called Church at Night and is held on Friday nights, once a month, at 10:00 pm. The service has become quite popular with over 400 in attendance—mostly local residents who are unchurched. We pray that the Spirit continues to encourage those that attend and to move others to hear the Gospel proclaimed!



From David and Kris Burki - The Church at Night service in June happened to coincide with the start of the Luther Hochzeit Fest. Red and green lights dramatically lit the interior of the Town Church. The entire service was in German; however a local teen-aged dance troupe presented a skit depicting the devil tempting Luther and his struggles to resist. The service concluded with the entire congregation forming a circle around the church interior and singing the closing hymn. Even if you don't understand German the service is beautiful and moving.

One of my most memorable experiences in Wittenberg was after a service in the Castle Church, meeting and visiting with a brother and sister that had been separated at the end of WWII. They were babies at the time and the sister wound up being adopted into an American family while the brother was adopted into a German family in the East. They had found each other through Facebook and reunited just the day before. They were sightseeing in Wittenberg and decided to attend the English language service since the sister spoke only a little German and the brother spoke fairly good English. Their joy and enthusiasm were contagious.



We want to thank ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS who make this ministry possible, including those who have designated their **THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS** to WEM. This year we have received \$5494 from 42 donations through Thrivent.

For updated information on WEM go to www.wittenbergenglishministry.com; for information on Lutherstadt Wittenberg go to www.lutherstadt-wittenberg.de

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Three ways are available to **financially support** WEM, a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization.

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- 2) **Direct your Thrivent Choice Dollars** - www.thrivent.com and log in, then in the top menu bar click on “My Thrivent”. Choose Wittenberg English Ministry from recipients list.
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For more information about Wittenberg English Ministry:

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We will also be on Instagram in 2019!