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“Notes from the Castle Church Door”

MINISTRY UPDATE – May 16, 2011

Dear friend,

Our 15th Year of Ministry is Underway!

We are excited that this ministry has now reached the midpoint of its second decade of service in Lutherstadt Wittenberg! As April turned to May, our first Deputy Director, Robert Lehmann, arrived in Wittenberg to re-open our office at the Wittenberg Information Center, now recently re-named “Tourist Information Lutherstadt Wittenberg.” New management and staff was put in place earlier this year, and we are developing new working relationships with the office manager and her associates so that WEM can continue to operate from that prime location to provide a Worship Ministry for the English-speaking visitors who come from all over the world to visit the sites where Dr. Martin Luther was used by God to reform the Church. We are greatly pleased that the new personnel there are happy about our partnership and are as supportive of our ministry as were the previous people.



All of this is taking place at the same time that Lutherstadt Wittenberg, all of Lutherland, and all of Germany are in the middle of “**The Luther Dekad**,” the 10 years from 2007 – 2017. There is a great deal of excitement in Germany in preparation for the Great Celebration that is already underway and will be going on during the years to come, culminating with the 500th Reformation Festival weekend on October 31, 2017. For Germany this is as big, if not bigger, than the Millennial Year.

WEM is greatly involved in all of this, certainly through our English worship schedule, but also through our brotherly supportive of the Castle and Town Church congregations and the Tourist Information Center. There are also early stage plans in Wittenberg to develop the WEM into an international English congregation to be headquartered in the Castle Church by 2017.

Elementary School Choir from Berlin Sings on first Saturday in May

It was a pleasant surprise to be contacted back in February by the Music Director of the **John F. Kennedy German-American School in Berlin**, a combination High School, Middle School, and Elementary School for the American business and government people there. The music director asked that the school’s Elementary School Choir might sing at our opening service this past Saturday evening. I wish I could have been there to see it happen! We are delighted that the JFK School has become aware of our existence in Wittenberg and hope that perhaps other musical groups from the JFK school will ask to sing at our services in the future.

Florida couple coming to Wittenberg to celebrate 60th Anniversary

We are greatly pleased to welcome Luther and Agnes Stemple, their daughter and grand-daughter who are coming from Florida to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary at our service in the Castle Church on Saturday,

May 21. Agnes traces her ancestry back to a friend of Luther's who was in Wittenberg in 1517. They also intend to visit their family roots in the Alsace region of Germany and France, from which they became part of the Huguenot emigration to America in the 1700's. We are happy to help make this a major moment of praise and thanksgiving to God that the Stemples and all present will long remember.

This is a good example of how our ministry enables people to connect their faith in Christ with their heritage of the Reformation. The Holy Spirit touches each person in their own way through the worship services and pastoral ministry WEM offers. However, in special times of celebration like this, the worship service in Luther's church becomes the time and place when the roots of one's faith are vitally connected to that person's life-journey as a baptized and believing child of God. It's truly an awesome moment!

WEM has a new logo

You are seeing WEM's new logo at the top of this ministry update for the first time. It is the work of Ms. Kristin Neuharth, daughter of a Lutheran pastor in Wisconsin, and member of a Lutheran congregation in Aurora, Colorado. Here is what she has to say about it:

"The dominant feature is the wooden cross which points to the central reality of our faith in the crucified and risen Christ and is the main reason for this ministry. At the same time it is a reminder of the door where Dr. Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses and began the Reformation.

The cross is of a rough texture to indicate that our life as Christians involves a commitment to Christ that calls us to suffer with and for Christ, all the while trusting completely in the grace, mercy and power of God. The red heart in the center of the cross is a tie-in to the Luther Rose to emphasize the passionate love and forgiveness of God.

The cross and heart are embedded in WEM's name to clearly lay out the focus of the Wittenberg English Ministry, with a font style that reflects a forward dynamic movement of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to all within earshot.

We will be using this logo regularly on our letterhead, website, and other information pieces.

New "Hand-out Card" in use

Our pastors serving in Wittenberg now have a new tool to hand out to English speaking people whom they meet on the streets or at the hotels. Thanks to the idea and the funds to implement it, Rev. Kevin Bates, one of our pastors who served in 2010, has made it possible for us to produce an attractive 6" by 3½" multi-colored card that contains our worship schedule and contact information. It is larger than a business card but smaller than a brochure and fits easily into a man's shirt pocket or a lady's purse. We pray that it will be an effective tool for our ministry as it is distributed to the people along with an invitation to our services.

The Predigerseminar is moving

Many changes continue to happen in Wittenberg. A most famous landmark in Wittenberg is the "Lutherhalle," also known as the Lutherhaus, the old Augustinian monastery in which Martin Luther and his family lived, and which was given to the Luthers as a wedding gift by Elector Frederick the Wise following their marriage in 1525. The whole building is now the world's largest museum of Luther documents and memorabilia.

Across the courtyard and facing the street is the Augustineum, built as part of the Wittenberg University and completed soon after Luther died. For a good number of years now, the Augustineum has housed the Predigerseminar, an institution for training pastors in "Practical Theology" following graduation from the university, ordination and call to a local parish. In order for the Lutherhaus museum to be expanded, the Predigerseminar is being relocated to temporary quarters.

Meanwhile, the castle portion of the Castle Church complex which is also being emptied will then be renovated and made into the new home of the Predigerseminar in the coming year or two. When that happens, we are told that space is also being dedicated there as a future office for WEM.

Construction by the Castle Church

The Theses Door at the Castle Church is temporarily closed to public view, with only the mosaic and artwork above the door still visible. This has resulted from a project begun earlier this Spring of rebuilding the cobblestoned area between the Castle Church and the sidewalk. Workmen and archeologists have been digging as far as 6 feet below the surface to the support columns that extend out about 12 feet from the church and have been finding numerous artifacts. What began as a small short-term project now has become a task that will be long and tedious, with no one knowing how long it will take the historians to complete their job so the workers can then replace the cobblestone and the Theses Door be once again readied for public viewing. Because Wittenberg is so historic, this slow process happens regularly at construction sites throughout the old downtown area so that the townspeople are accustomed to it and life goes on as normal.

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!

This ministry continues to be blessed by the invaluable generosity of a growing body of people who partner with WEM by supplementing the offerings at our services in Wittenberg with their prayers and gifts. This is so vital to the Gospel outreach and church nurture that WEM is undertaking. **We say a most humble and hearty thanks** to everyone listed below for their gifts since last November through April:

Rev. & Mrs. Roy Maack, Oviedo, FL	Rev. & Mrs. Wayne Lehrer, Falls Church, VA
Rev. & Mrs. Hubert Temme, New Port Richey, FL	Mrs. Arlisa Ferrara, Vienna, VA
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Mrs. Bonnadell Koch, Wayne, NE	Mr. Rodney Koch, Omaha, NE

St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church, Salisbury, NC
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Callao, VA
Bull Run Chapter (VA), Thrivent Financial for Lutherans

In addition, we thank the following members of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans for their most helpful contributions through the Thrivent Choice Dollars program:

Elizabeth Schnabel	Jonathan Loesch	Larry Leiby	Willie Woods
Ted Ensminger	Louise Ensminger	William Hughes	Keith Loesch
Roland Langford	Arnold Abel	John Brogaard	Victoria Sutton

If you are a member of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and have Choice Dollars in your Thrivent Account for you to designate to a Lutheran ministry, please consider designating them to the Wittenberg English Ministry. You can direct your Choice Dollars online at www.thrivent.com or by phone at 1-800-847-4836. In these challenging economic times, all charitable gift dollars are critically important in helping WEM to go forward with its mission and ministry of proclaiming Christ in the Cradle of the Reformation. Thank you for your prayers and support.

A Closing Word

As in past years, our ministry in Wittenberg happens through the daily caring churchmanship of our Deputy Directors. This year Robert Lehmann, LeRoy Wilke, and John Speckhard will serve two months each, in turn, to manage and facilitate our ministry. I say a proud word of "Good job!" to these men for the great work we have come to know and expect.

It is truly an honor and a privilege to be a child of the Reformation and be connected with Wittenberg as a pastor, worker, or worship attendee! God bless you for your care, love and support of this ministry. You are helping it to be a means by which the Holy Spirit can deepen the connections to Christ and Luther for pastors and people alike from all parts of the world.

May God be praised!

Rev. Keith W. Loesch