



## Wittenberg English Ministry

2031 Cheltenham Court  
Woodbridge, VA 22192

Phone: 703 494-0602

Email: [loesch.wem@comcast.net](mailto:loesch.wem@comcast.net)  
[www.WittenbergEnglishMinistry.com](http://www.WittenbergEnglishMinistry.com)

# “Notes from the Castle Church Door”

**MINISTRY UPDATE** – August 7, 2010

Dear friend,

**Already WEM is at the midpoint of our ministry year!**

As the summer moves on, things are going well in Wittenberg. Now halfway through our 14<sup>th</sup> year, Pastors **Neldo Schmidt** (MN), **Steve Molin** (MN), **Wayne Knolhoff** (MO), **Kevin Bates** (WA), **Robert Tasler** (CO) and **Cameron MacKenzie** (IN) have rotated in like clockwork for their two-week ministry periods during the months of May, June and July. They are soon to be followed by **Bryan Chestnutt** (NC), **Keith Prekker** (CO), **Daryl Solie** (SK,CAN), **Gordon Beck** (MO), **Timothy Wright** (AZ), and **John Weier** (South Australia).

Just as significantly, the **Deputy Directors**, continue to do yeoman work in managing our ministry from our office at Wittenberg Information and enabling the pastors to be at their effective best. The pastors regularly tell me what Rev. Wayne Knolhoff said so well in his report: “I want to tell you what a blessing **Bob Lehmann** was to us as Deputy Director. He really did a wonderful job of orienting us to the ministry, answering any questions we had, being a great tour guide, and getting everything ready for the services.” Bob served during May and June; **Keith Jopp** is there for July and August; and **John Speckhard** will arrive at the end of August for the final two months. **LeRoy Wilke** is a fourth member of the team.

**People are attending from around the world**

**The attendance at our various services is quite strong!** For the first three months (May, June, July), we had a grand total of 1,332 people attend the Saturday evening services in the Castle and Town churches and the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday afternoon services in the Corpus Christi Chapel. That number is only a hundred fewer than we had during the whole of 2009! We anticipated larger attendances this year because of the Oberammergau Passion Play, and that is certainly coming to pass. In 2000, when the previous Passion Play was presented, we had a grand total of 3,044 people attending our services. We are hopeful that we can meet or exceed that total this year, despite the economic difficulties in many parts of today's world.

What is significant about the attendance figures is that those numbers represent people from across the world as well as residents from within Wittenberg and elsewhere in Germany. On July 15, people from nine nations attended our English service! On July 28, there was a group of 45 people from Hong Kong. A South Korean film crew recorded our Chapel service on June 23. People have been coming as families from US military bases in Germany. Additional groups were present from Canada and Australia, as well as Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Nebraska, Texas, California, Minnesota, Washington, Maryland, and Kansas.

The vast majority of these people come to Wittenberg as committed Lutherans or as Christians from various other church bodies. Our goal always is to proclaim Christ and provide a worship experience so that any Christian from any denominational background from anywhere in the world can worship God in Luther's church. We want to enable everyone to connect their faith in Christ with their heritage of the Reformation so

that they might return to their homes with a deeper commitment to Christ and the Church and involve themselves in the mission of the Gospel following their visit to the Cradle of the Reformation.

### **Congratulations to Our First Wedding Couple!**

**The first Wedding in our 14 years of ministry took place during our service on Saturday, June 12,** the weekend of "Luther's Wedding" Town Festival. Since the English service that day is annually presented as a Celebration of Christian Marriage (in recognition of Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora's wedding on June 13, 1525), and regularly includes a wedding vow renewal ceremony, it was very special for **Susan Leckie** and **Joel Ortman** to speak their wedding vows with their own pastor, Rev. **Steve Molin**, there to officiate. Just as the Germans make their legal vows before the magistrate at the Rathaus followed by the church service at a later date, so Joel and Sue had their official rites done back home in Minnesota and had the church wedding in Wittenberg. Afterward Sue and Joel said, "We are in awe reflecting on the fact that we were married in the same spot as Martin Luther and his beloved Katie 485 years ago....For us, it was the perfect wedding ceremony!" We offer our best wishes to the Ortman family and pray for them a long and happy life together.

### **What Happened to the Luther and Melanchthon Statues?**



**It looks like someone may have stolen the Luther and Melanchthon statues** which have been standing in the Marktplatz for decades! Actually they were removed in the Spring for refurbishing and are intended to be re-installed in time for the Reformation Festival weekend at the end of October. The hole, bottom left, will be where the Melanchthon statue will be reinstalled, and the hole in the center will be where the Luther statue will be placed. Upper left is the historic Rathaus. Upper right are some shops with St. Mary's Church (Stadtkirche) towering behind. Our Saturday evening services are held in that church, alternating weekly with the Castle Church, All Saints.

## Some Pastoral Moments as told by Wayne Knolhoff

**It is always a rich joy to hear how our pastors serve God's Church** as they meet with individuals or groups during their two-week ministry period in Wittenberg. Here are a few stories from Wayne's time that give a flavor of how our pastors connect with and serve the people. The worship services are most important, but all sorts of ministry opportunities flow directly from them.

"Three incidents reminded me how important it is to be flexible when leading the chapel services. A group from South Korea filmed the entire chapel service. After worship Bob and I had a chance to visit with them. Bob did a wonderful job of answering their questions about Luther.

A second incident involved a group from Minnesota. It was a pretty large group and they kept coming in at various times during the devotion. One group came in right after we sang "A Mighty Fortress" and asked if we could sing the first verse again, which we did. Toward the end of the chapel service more from the group arrived and asked if we could sing the first verse of "A Mighty Fortress" one more time, which we did. They all were very appreciative for our willingness to sing at least parts of "A Mighty Fortress" three times. Which, by the way, Bob Lehmann said was a record!

The third incident reminds me that while I may think a hymn is well known because I have sung it so often in the churches I have attended, it may not be so for others. A Presbyterian minister volunteered to lead the singing of "Take My Life And Let It Be" to a tune neither Bob nor I were familiar with.

In addition to the worship services the opportunity to meet and get to know others in Wittenberg as we attended the English Stammtisch and walked the streets was gratifying. We met a couple from Denver. The wife was a Christian who grew up in Germany and was 7 when she and her family rushed across the Elbe river near Torgau to escape the Russian Army. Her husband was not a Christian, but did attend one of our chapel services with his wife. Joyce had a chance to visit with them while I greeted others who attended.

We also had the opportunity to talk with two more couples who were visiting Wittenberg from the US. We met them in front of the City Church. They knew we were Americans because I was wearing my St. Louis Cardinal shirt. We struck up a conversation and talked for nearly half an hour about Luther and the Reformation."

**Every pastor who serves in Wittenberg has the joy of similar, yet different, pastoral ministry moments!** Some pastors have told me that they feel they benefited more from the ministry experience than the people did, even though they were there to serve the people. However it happens, our pastors receive incredibly much from this international cross-cultural ministry time.

## We Need Your Help

**As you and your congregation proceed in your planning for the Fall, I ask that you consider support for the Wittenberg English Ministry as one of your Mission Projects.** The Reformation season is a wonderful time to have a group or congregational Offering that will support Gospel ministry in the place where the Reformation took place. Or, how about including the WEM in the congregation's Mission or Benevolence as your budget is developed for the coming year? Or, maybe both?

Since the WEM is a 501(C)(3), independent Lutheran ministry, not "owned" by any Lutheran denominational body, we rely on the gracious support of people such as yourself who want to see the Gospel and the faith of Dr. Martin Luther proclaimed in Wittenberg. The WEM is unofficially considered the "English arm" of the German church in Wittenberg. As such, even as we conduct worship in English for the multitude of visitors, we continue to have a significant impact on both the Castle and Town Church congregations by helping to revitalize their ministry to both the local community and the world at large. As WEM ministers to tourists, so we also minister to the people and congregations in Wittenberg.

Additionally, the WEM provides Lutheran pastors with short-term multicultural ministry growth experiences that stimulate them for more effective congregational ministry when they return to their home churches. Pastors find personal revitalization, an invigorating new dimension, and an international sensitivity for mission and ministry that significantly enhances their ministry to and with their local congregation. This also is worthy of one's support.

To support WEM, **make checks payable to: Wittenberg English Ministry** and send them to the address on the masthead. It will be greatly appreciated!

### **There's Now a NEW way to Support WEM – Your THRIVENT CHOICE Dollars**

If you are a member of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, you are likely receiving information on the "Thrivent Choice" program. This summer, eligible benefit members will receive a letter from Thrivent with information on their designated Choice Dollars for 2010 and details on how they can help direct Choice Dollar funds to the Lutheran organizations of their choice.

I pray that you will consider directing some or all of your Choice Dollars to the Wittenberg English Ministry.

- 1) Log on to the Thrivent website
- 2) In the top menu bar, click on "My Thrivent" or "Thrivent Community"
- 3) Click on "Thrivent Choice" and follow the directions.
- 4) When asked "Search Organizations", indicate "Wittenberg English Ministry"  
City and State: Woodbridge, VA

OR you may Call 1-800-847-4836 and designate your Choice Dollars by phone.

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 I write this ministry update, my wife and I are preparing to host a tour to Wittenberg, Lutherland, and the Oberammergau Passion Play during the last two weeks of September. Of course, attendance at the Saturday service on September 18 is built into our itinerary! It will be very special to again walk the streets, visit the Lutherhaus, the Melanchthonhaus, the Castle and Town churches, and see some of the townspeople that I've learned to know over the years. But most of all when in Wittenberg I look forward to sitting in the pew beholding the incredible Altar paintings of Lucas Cranach as the Scriptures are being read, the Creed confessed, the Sermon preached, and the hymns of faith sung to the accompaniment of the great pipe organ! To be a child of the Reformation is truly an honor and a privilege!

God be with you always.

With joy in Christ,

Rev. Keith W. Loesch, Director