



Landstuhl, Germany

July 11, 2025

Dear friends,

I apologize for the length of time it has taken to get another newsletter to you. Thank you for your patience and for your continued support!

Back at the end of January, as our last newsletter was in preparation, we went to a birthday party for a dear friend, Pastor Max Schüller, in the Saarland. There we discussed a possibility we had been batting around for a while about an “international Winkel” (a coming together of pastors for mutual study). We decided to stop thinking about it and just get it organized, knowing there’s so much we could learn from each other. And so we made plans for our first “international Winkel” to be held on March 1st in Saarbrücken. Two pastors from our German partner church, the SELK, were in attendance: Pastor Johannes Achenbach and Pastor Max Schüller; two pastors from the Synod of France: Pastor Garry Heinz and Pastor Frederic Stilmant; two pastors from the LCMS: Pastor Domenichelli and myself, as well as Vicar Tobias Röhrs, who is studying at Riga Luther Academy. I presented on a similar “international Winkel” from the 19th century (the inspiration for this meeting) and we discussed how we plan to operate going forward. It was decided to hold three meetings per year for mutual study and conversation. Our second “international Winkel” was held in Kaiserslautern last week [June 14] with a special visitor: the WELS civilian chaplain for Europe. Our third and final meeting of the year will be in France in September. We determined that three meetings per year is enough to keep us in contact without taking too much time out of our busy schedules. We pray this tight-knit circle will bear much fruit for the preaching of the Gospel in our churches!

On Ash Wednesday (March 5th), I went down to Rhema Cafe early in the morning to distribute ashes to folks on their way to work. Not too many came, but it was a great opportunity to visit with Pastor Carentz and remind people of the importance of repentance and faith. When I came home from men’s group the night before, there was a bottle of oil on the counter. I assumed Emma had left it out for me to mix with the burned palm fronds from last Palm Sunday to make ashes for Ash Wednesday. The next day, I found out it was a bottle of rancid sunflower oil I was supposed to discard!

At men’s group we switched from studying Luther’s Large Catechism to studying the Brief Statement (a 1932 document summarizing the LCMS position on disputed doctrines). The main reason for this was to get some better familiarity with the document since I was asked to present on it at a conference in Rome at the end of May. I’ve always appreciated the Brief Statement, but now I do even more after studying it, researching it, and presenting on it. It’s a glorious treasure I recommend to all. Our men’s group continues meeting twice per month, alternating between church and the Ramstein Air Base food court. It’s been a great opportunity to introduce new folks to the congregation, including a veteran living near Coburg, Germany who is interested in Lutheranism as well as a gentleman from Croatia who lives near church.

For the past year we've included Vicar Tobias Röhrs's mother in our prayers as she was battling cancer. Susanna died at the beginning of March. We traveled to the far southeastern corner of Saxony (where Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic come together) for the funeral. It was heartbreaking to see all the ten children, especially the younger ones, who had just lost their mother, but also inspiring to see how their Christian faith and hope in the resurrection is keeping them strong.

During Lenten midweek services, I shared the pulpit with our two German theology students (Tobias and Markus) and with one of our young elders (Mason), who will leave the Air Force in September and attend the Fort Wayne seminary the following year to train to become a pastor. I had all the guys over one night to go over the basics of sermon writing. Then we had a "homiletics workshop" to go over each of our sermons and critique them. In April it was officially announced that KELC will be receiving a vicar from Fort Wayne. Peter Willimas will arrive in January 2026, so I'm working with our current vicars and elders to discuss ways we can all work together on learning how to be (or how to be better) pastors.

Holy Week and the time leading up to it were quite eventful, as usual. We invited the congregation over on the Sunday before Palm Sunday to listen to and discuss Bach's St. Matthew Passion (the last few years we've listened to the St. John Passion). On Palm Sunday we had our regular Palm/Passion Sunday with the procession of palms and the reading of the Passion account according to St. Matthew. Palm Sunday was also the last Sunday for our dear friends, the Swensons, who then moved to North Carolina. It helped that they moved during Holy Week, so we were so busy we didn't have much time to dwell on the loss! On Holy Monday we had a regular vespers service with the Passion according to St. Mark. On Holy Tuesday, we revived an old KELC tradition by having a "stations of the cross" service. We went to St. Martin's church in Martinshöhe to use their stations. On Holy Wednesday we had another vespers service with the Passion according to St. Luke. Then Divine Service on Maundy Thursday, our three-hour "Tre Ore" service on Good Friday, and Tenebrae service that evening. This was the first year Chaplain Ayers was not able to assist since he and his wife, Camille, moved back to the U.S. last summer. By Good Friday, I was losing my voice and on Holy Saturday, I could no longer chant or sing for our Easter Vigil service, which began at sundown. The hardest was not being able to chant or sing on Easter Sunday! Next year I'll be more careful about not overusing my voice. Our usual Easter brunch was held at the Hester home. We also held Divine Services on Easter Monday and Easter Tuesday, which is an old German tradition. One of our joys of Holy Week was having so many visitors in town who are connected with the congregation, including Germans, a South African, and a Spaniard.

After the busyness of Easter settled down, we got going on intensive, last-minute preparations for KELC's 40th anniversary. Since January I've spent quite a bit of time researching the history of our congregation and contacting former members. The week before our May 11th celebration, we resurrected another old KELC tradition, the Men's Prayer Breakfast. A group of us came together for a devotion, prayer, and last minute anniversary preparation. The anniversary celebration was a huge success! After an opening service of matins with Chaplain Craig Muehler, the "chief of chaplains" for the LCMS, preaching, I gave a presentation on the congregation's history. Our lunch was my favorite American barbecue catered by "D.P. Smokes," a Christian friend in town who runs a food truck. Then we heard presentations from Chaplain Muehler, Chaplain Michael Frese (who now works with LCMS church relations), and our Regional Director, the Rev. Dr. David Preus. We were also excited to have Deaconess Carolyn Brinkley with her husband Rich in town, Deaconess Melissa Pflug (the missionary care coordinator for Eurasia), and most exciting of all, two of KELC's founding members: Chaplain Mark Gruebemeyer and Jane Vander Brook, who flew all the way to Germany for this special occasion. It truly was an honor that they took the time to come celebrate with us!

The KELC anniversary was great, but personally another anniversary overshadowed this. On May 1st Emma and I celebrated our fourth wedding anniversary! The Petersons babysat and we went to Cafe 21, a restaurant at the top of the Kaiserslautern City Hall we've wanted to try for a few years now. The views of the city and

surrounding countryside were amazing, but the best part was being with Emma and reflecting on our four years of marriage. Just a few days ago, my Grandma and Grandpa Jensen celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary! What a great example for the rest of us. [Just under a week later, my Grandpa Jensen entered eternal glory on June 19, 2025. The Gospel text the following Sunday, Trinity I, about the rich man and Lazarus, brought us great comfort knowing that Grandpa was carried by the angels to Abraham's side to await the resurrection of all flesh].

At the end of May, my duties as Area Facilitator for Western Europe took me to Lisbon, Portugal for the European Lutheran Conference. We decided to make a vacation road trip out of it and saw Chartres cathedral, Bordeaux, France, and Salamanca, Spain on the way. This was a great opportunity to meet or catch up with church leaders from the LCMS's partner churches in western Europe. My mom's cousin has lived in Lisbon for over 15 years now, so we really enjoyed catching up with him, his wife, Maria, and Maria's father, Sr. Castelo. When I was a student in Oberursel and then vicar in Kaiserslautern I made several trips to visit these relatives. It was a joy to spend time with them in Lisbon again! From Lisbon we went to Madrid to attend the congregation of our sister church there, and then kept going to the microstate of Andorra. Other microstates we visited on our trip were: Monaco, Vatican City, and San Marino. We made our way to Rome for the second symposium of the Confessional Lutheran Church in Italy under the leadership of LCMS Missionary Rev. Tyler McMiller. I presented a paper on the history of the *Brief Statement*, which is an official doctrinal position of the LCMS. From Rome we traveled up through Bologna, across the Alps, and then visited Neuschwanstein castle back in Germany. The trip went well, but we were excited to be home.

For the last few years we've been trying to emphasize Pentecost to a greater extent since it's a major festival right alongside Christmas and Easter. We had a Pentecost Vigil service the night before Pentecost, which included Old Testament prophecies of the Holy Spirit's descent similar to how the Easter Vigil service has Old Testament prophecies concerning our Lord's resurrection from the dead. On Pentecost Sunday we had special music (choir and brass). That afternoon we had a Pentecost hymn sing at our home to make sure we were able to sing the German and TLH Pentecost hymns not in LSB. We also held Divine Services on Pentecost Monday and Tuesday, both followed by a light reception of champagne and dessert. The following week was an ember week, so we held vespers on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.

On Friday, June 13th I was honored to speak an invocation and opening prayer at the retirement of one of our members from the Air Force. Jim took his last official flight and then stepped off the airplane, making a grand entrance into the hangar for his retirement ceremony. At the end of June I was also honored to speak an invocation and opening prayer at the promotion of another member, Daniel, to the rank of Colonel in the Air Force. This event was held in the NATO headquarters on Ramstein Air Base, behind an extra layer of security. It was exciting to brush shoulders with people deeply involved in current events.

During the month of June, we attended two back to back weddings, both of which were in Braunschweig and both of which were Krügers. I baptized Tanyen a couple of years ago. He married Sara Krüger, whose brother is a dear friend and currently studying at the Fort Wayne seminary. The next weekend was the wedding of Sara's cousin, Max Krüger, who attended KELC for several years when he was a student at Oberursel. I had long wanted to visit Braunschweig and see the Lutheran sites in that area. Braunschweig is where Martin Chemnitz was pastor; the famous Lutheran musician Michael Praetorius was from Wolfenbüttel; and Johann Gerhard was born in Quedlinburg. Two weekends in the region allowed us to see quite a bit and enjoy the company of some dear friends in honor of our Lord's bringing together man and wife in holy matrimony.

A highlight of our summer, as it was last year as well, was our Eve of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist bonfire. We celebrate the birth of our LORD on December 24, and John the Baptist is 6 months older than

Jesus, so June 24th is celebrated as the birthday of John the Baptist. In Europe, it's common to have bonfires the night before. We invited the congregation over for a cookout in our backyard. We also sang English and German hymns specific to the Nativity of St. John the Baptist and played Foursquare, which none of us had played since middle school.

In Adult Bible Study we have been studying typology: how Old Testament accounts point to the life of Jesus and the New Testament. We have been using a book of 18th century paintings from the Lutheran Church in Speyer and will make a field trip at some point this summer to visit the actual church. This study of typology is crucial for our goal of teaching our members how to read the Bible in the way it's intended, namely, with Christ at the center.

My weekly Bible Study at Sembach prison keeps going strong. The constant turnover of prisoners teaches me how to deal with the turnover in the congregation, which teaches me how to take the turnover of life. I'm thankful for the people God brings to us, though for such a short time, whether at the prison, in the congregation, or in life. I learn so much from them in our mutual study of God's Word, and my prayer is that we can be a blessing to all of them as well!

On the last Sunday in June, Sts. Peter and Paul Day, I had the honor of baptizing a new member into our congregation, a baby girl born to one of our military families. That afternoon I went to Velden for the last house service of Pastor Domenichelli at the Spangdahlem church plant (Spangdahlem Evangelical Lutheran Church). The Domenichelli family will be returning to the US in August. Since July 1st I have been the vacancy pastor. More on that in my next newsletter!

Until then, thank you, as always, for your strong support of our work here. Without you and the LORD working through you, none of this would be possible! The LORD is using you in a powerful way to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this place.

Jesus be with you,

Rev. Nathaniel Jensen

The Jensen Family



Our first “International Winkel” in Saarbrücken.



Ash Wednesday at Rhema Cafe in Landstuhl.



Preaching workshop with our theology students.



Easter 2025 with Easter Breakfast at the Hester home.



Resurrecting the Men's Prayer Breakfast at KELC



With two founding members of KELC who came out for the 40th Anniversary: Chaplain Mark Gruebmeier and Jane Vander Brook





Sr. Castelo with CC.

OIM missionaries after Divine Service in Madrid, Spain.



I got some strange looks at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. One person did ask me how it works out that a priest has a family.



In Segno, Italy, we visited the birthplace of Fr. Kino, the missionary who first came to what is now Tucson, AZ. On both support raising trips to AZ, we've visited missions started by Fr. Kino. Now the mission has come full circle!



My presentation and the panel discussion at the conference in Rome.





Eve of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist bonfire.





The Jensen girls.



Celebrating our 4th wedding anniversary on May 1st.



To support the LCMS through the work of Pastor Jensen, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

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P.O. Box 66861
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Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Mark checks "Jensen-Germany Support." Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on my online giving page at lcms.org/jensen.

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