

SERVING THE LORD IN

K-TOWN, GERMANY

NEWS FROM THE JENSEN FAMILY



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Landstuhl, Germany
July 27, 2024

Dear friends,

In May, on the days between Rogate Sunday and Ascension Thursday, we again celebrated Rogation Days. These are special days set aside for prayer based on the Latin word *rogare*, “to ask.” Traditionally, Rogation Days include processing through fields around a town to ask God to bless the crops and the community. In keeping with that spirit, on Rogation Monday, we met at a member’s home for a Vespers service and a hike into the fields where we prayed the Litany. On Rogation Tuesday, I visited Pastor Schuschke in the hospital in Frankfurt. From there, I went to the seminary in Oberursel, where we held a Vespers service in the chapel and then climbed into the hills overlooking Frankfurt to pray the Litany. On Rogation Wednesday, folks came to our home in Landstuhl, where we had a Vespers service in our living room and then hiked into the woods for the Litany, followed by Confessions Study back at the house. What struck me this year is that from each location—from the countryside north of Kaiserslautern, from Oberursel, and from Landstuhl—we had a clear view of the Donnersberg mountain while praying the Litany. The Donnersberg is the highest elevation in the region and is topped with ruins from an old Celtic settlement. I couldn’t help but think of the power of God’s Word to convert old and new pagans to the Christian faith.

Since Pastor Gary Schuschke’s hospitalization, recovery, transfer to the United States, and call to Colorado, I have been serving as the *de facto* vacancy pastor at Trinity, Frankfurt. I’ve filled in several times in the last few months, but my primary responsibility has been overseeing the preaching schedule. The congregation is well-connected, so they now have vacancy pastors coming for about three months at a time until Easter, when they hope to have a new pastor. As part of my role as vacancy pastor, I had the honor of confirming a young man from India—my first confirmation! We met one Sunday for a confirmation examination before confirmation the following week. On June 5th, St. Boniface Day (the Apostle to the Germans), we went to Fulda to see the grave of St. Boniface. On our way home, we stopped in Frankfurt to see Pastor Schuschke one last time before his departure for the U.S. We shared one last meal of Five Guys together, just like we used to do with Pastor Asher when I was on vicarage. We’ll certainly miss Pastor Schuschke, and we keep Trinity in our prayers as they seek a new pastor.

Besides visiting Pastor Schuschke several times in the hospital, I’ve had a number of other hospital visits in the last few months. For most pastors, hospital visits are just part of their routine. In our context, they just aren’t so common. Earlier this year, however, one of our members went into the hospital with kidney stones, and a heart issue was discovered, leading to a few surgeries and rehab. Another member had surgery to remove his prostate because of cancer. The multiple hospital and home visits have been a joy! It’s a part of the ministry I just don’t get to do so much. I also received notification from a member who was at KELC when I was on vicarage: the organist at his church was on a tour of Europe and ended up in the hospital in Munich. He wanted to know if there was any way I could go visit. That Saturday, an elder and I drove to Munich to visit the couple, bring them God’s Word and the Lord’s Supper, and share the love we have in the Body of Christ. With all these hospital visits, I’m starting to look into possibilities for assisting the chaplains at the Army hospital in Landstuhl in making the rounds and visiting the sick and infirm.

Prison ministry at the local military prison continues to go strong. I went through additional training to get my green badge, meaning I can now go about the facility unescorted and even escort the prisoners from their cells to the chapel by myself. It's a weird feeling walking a line of fifteen prisoners down the hallway. People have asked if it makes me nervous to be unescorted with criminals, including murderers. I say that if anything were to happen, I know the other prisoners have my back! I also carry a walkie-talkie with a panic button if necessary.

There was one incident at the prison in the last few months. We were discussing the order of creation, and a prisoner asked about homosexuality. I explained the biblical position that homosexual behavior is inherently sinful and calls for repentance and turning to Jesus Christ for the free forgiveness found only in Him. During the same class, the idea that God disciplines us as a father disciplines his children came up. One prisoner reported me, saying that I told them all gay people go to Hell and that I condoned child abuse. I had to meet with two prison officials to clarify what I had actually taught. They assured me that prisoners often try to play games and manipulate the system to do anything to get some time shaved off their sentencing. The prisoner who reported me stopped coming to Bible Study. But then, after going through a rough time, he started coming back a few weeks ago and has become an active participant in the class. I can see so much growth in him, which I attribute to the power of prayer and the Word of God!

On the Eve of St. John the Baptist Day (June 23), we hosted a traditional bonfire and barbecue in our backyard on a lovely summer evening. The next day, St. John the Baptist Day (June 24), Rhema Cafe (the Christian cafe in Landstuhl) hosted an event with the "Machine Gun Preacher." He spoke to the clergy group in the afternoon, which we invited others to so as to not conflict with our Divine Service that evening. Sam Childers, the "Machine Gun Preacher," got into drugs at a young age. He was part of a biker gang and married to a stripper. Eventually, he came to the faith and developed a passion for helping the helpless in Africa. On a mission trip, he saw firsthand the carnage of rebel armies with child soldiers. Childers began building orphanages and places of employment in Uganda, while at the same time fighting off African warlords, including Joseph Kony, and rescuing child soldiers. In 2011, a Hollywood movie called "Machine Gun Preacher" was released with Gerard Butler playing Childers. There's a remake underway now underway starring Nicholas Cage.

After his presentation at the Cafe, Machine Gun Preacher's agent said that two speaking engagements had fallen through, so there were two openings if anyone would be interested. I approached the agent to see about having Machine Gun Preacher speak at the prison. Long story short, the following afternoon, Machine Gun Preacher came to speak to the prisoners. He had gone to prison five times, so the prisoners could really identify with him and see how the LORD turned his life around. That night, Machine Gun Preacher joined us at Men's Group. I led an opening devotion on the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession (June 25), and then Machine Gun Preacher spoke about his background. It was surreal to have such a famous yet humble man of God in our midst. Business conferences pay tens of thousands of dollars for this man to speak, yet he was willing to speak to our prisoners and our men's group.

Our monthly Ukrainian dinners at Rhema Cafe continue as usual and have been drawing not just Ukrainians, but also homeless, widows, and others in the community. Last month, I walked into the cafe for a Ukrainian dinner, and someone asked me right away if I could preach that night (they usually have a service going on downstairs later in the evening). I couldn't pass up the opportunity to preach God's Word, so I agreed and decided to go through the sermon text for the upcoming Sunday. One of our members, Lorraine Hester, also happened to have a backpack of hymnals along, so we passed around hymnals to share and led the entire group in the service of Compline!

A highlight of the last few months has been connecting with the local Wisconsin Synod civilian chaplain. Pastor Weiss and his wife, Rachel, live about 45 minutes away from us. He holds a service on Ramstein twice per month and then spends the rest of his time visiting WELS members throughout Europe. We were able to meet up just to get to know each other (as we did with the previous WELS chaplain and on vicarage with the WELS chaplain before him). I'm happy to get to know another confessional Lutheran pastor in the area and one who shares my love of birding! We enjoyed hiking to Burg Nanstein for lunch and talking birds, languages, theology, and German taxes on the way.

On July 2nd, we had a Divine Service scheduled for the Feast of the Visitation (when Mary visited Elizabeth). The German congregation was using the church for Bible Study, so we had to find another location. I called up the local Roman Catholic Church and was able to get the keys to the Marienkappelle, a tiny chapel just down the road from us and looking out over the city of Landstuhl, Ramstein, and Burg Nanstein. We've often walked by the chapel, but this was our first time inside. The chapel was dedicated to Mary after World War II in thanksgiving for sparing the city. I emphasized how we thank God alone for such defense and noted that this must be the first time the Mary Chapel was used for a Lutheran service. It was such a pleasant service in the cozy chapel with a light rain outside. Afterwards, we walked the two minutes to our house for a light reception.

A highlight of the last few months has been the installation of both a summer vicar and a new elder. The summer vicar is Tobias Röhrs, who moved to Kaiserslautern from Oberursel to train as an electrician and attend Riga Luther Academy online. Part of his program is serving as a summer vicar. He assists with the liturgy every Sunday, accompanies me on hospital visits, and was able to fill in at Bible Study when I filled in at Trinity, Frankfurt. Our new elder is Mason Westphal, a young airman who arrived one week after we did nearly three years ago. Mason has grown in his faith so much over the last few years and now plans on attending seminary after getting out of the Air Force. His role as elder will give him more experience in helping with the spiritual life of the congregation and assisting with services.

At the beginning of July, we had a member, Sally Corey, stay with us for one week. She needed a place to live between moving out of her apartment and her PCS (Permanent Change of Station) back to the United States. It was sad to say goodbye to Sally after everything she's done to help us as a family and as a congregation. She lived around the corner from us and offered her beautiful singing voice for special church services. We also had Temish Christiansen stay with us. He's the son of a former missionary in Leipzig, and I knew the family on vicarage. Temish stayed with us on his way to Dr. Montgomery's Apologetics Academy in Strasbourg. Having two different people staying with us brought out to me the beauty of God's family and the importance of Christian fellowship.

Last week, we had a visit from Dr. William Lipke and his son. We visited the Lipkes in Alamosa, Colorado, on one of our network support trips three years ago. Mrs. Lipke is a childhood friend of Emma's mom. Dr. Lipke was a music professor in Alamosa and has recently been called as professor of music and admissions counselor to Luther Classical College in Casper, Wyoming. He was in Germany for a piano program and honored us with a visit. Dr. Lipke also offered to put on a piano recital for us, so last Sunday after church, we had a farewell lunch for a family moving to New Mexico and then a recital and reception at church.

Another piece of exciting news is the arrival of the Domenichelli family at the beginning of June. Pastor and Mrs. Domenichelli, with their five children will be planting a congregation near Spangdahlem Air Base. We've been in regular contact with one family there. Another newer family, Brandon and Inga Schulz (whom I married in March), will be moving to that area in a few weeks. And recently an American contractor at Spangdahlem married to a German has been attending services with us. It seems as though God

is working out everything exactly in his time to get this new congregation up and running. How beautiful to see the Word of God at work and the Kingdom of God expanding in this region, one person and one congregation at a time. All this is part of our congregation's proposal to assist in planting five congregations in Europe over the next few years. Please pray that the Lord continues to bless this work and bring it to fruition!

Jesus be with you,

Rev. Nathaniel Jensen

The Jensen Family



Rogation Tuesday hike from Oberursel into the Taunus mountains with an American, a South African, a Korean, and a German.



Memorial Day/Trinity Sunday bar-b-que at the Ponziano home.



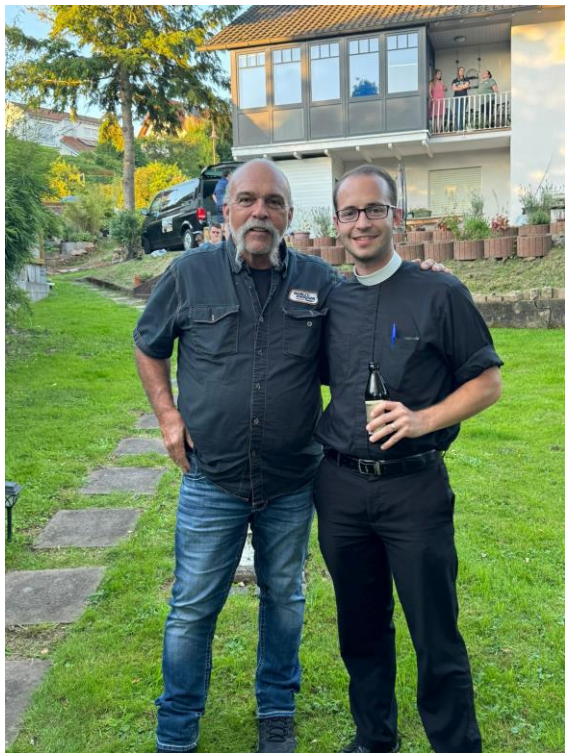
The tomb of St. Boniface in Fulda on St. Boniface Day (June 5th).



Last visit with Pastor Schuschke. Enjoying Five Guys in the hotel lobby.



Bonfire and grill out for the Eve of St. John the Baptist.



With Machine Gun Preacher at Men's Club.



Visitation of Mary day at the Marienkapelle.



With Dr. Lipke, Professor of Music and Admissions Counsellor at Luther Classical College.