

Mission at Nuremberg: An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis

with a number of Gerecke relatives. Like so much of the Missouri Synod before the First World War, the language of these immigrants at home and at church remained German. As we will see, God worked through Henry Gerecke's early familiarity with the German language in a marvelous way.

A Review Essay by Pastor Jensen

Mission at Nuremberg: An American Army Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis. By Tim Townsend. New York: William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. 2014. 388 pages.

Introduction

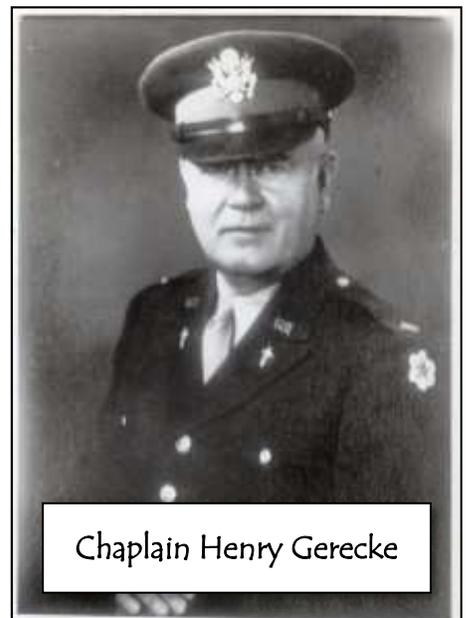
In the July, 2022 issue of *The Kaiserslautern Lutheran*, Chaplain Ayers referenced LCMS Chaplain Henry Gerecke, who ministered to the Nazi war criminals at the Nuremberg Trials. Chaplain Ayers also mentioned the book documenting Gerecke's work, *Mission at Nuremberg*, under review here. Every month, the local English-speaking clergy in the Kaiserslautern Military Community meet at Rhema Cafe to discuss our work. In the United States we would call this a "ministerial alliance." At our August meeting, I presented there on Chaplain Gerecke's ministry among some of the most hated men in the world, men whose deeds many consider unforgivable. The lesson we learn is that Jesus Christ died to forgive the sins of all people, no matter how big those sins appear to us. This

glimpse into the last days of the Nazis on trial shows how diverse their approaches to the Christian faith actually were. As Christians, we know that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." But we also know that all "are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23-24). *Mission at Nuremberg* gives us an example of what that looks like in more recent history. It also serves as a warning that hatred can very quickly turn into crimes against humanity. Yet the blood of Christ cleanses us from *all* sin (1 John 1:7).

Henry Gerecke

Henry Frederick Gerecke was born on August 4, 1893 near Cape Girardeau, Missouri. His grandfather, Wilhelm Gerecke, immigrated from Germany to Missouri in 1855 and in 1863 enlisted in the Union Army. Three months after the war ended, Wilhelm Gerecke and other German men, exhausted by war and in competition with the Methodists, founded Zion Lutheran Church in Gordonville, Missouri. One of our supporters, Rev. David Dissen (see review of his *Letters from Havana* in the June newsletter), is a member of Zion, along

Already in 1908, at the age of fourteen, Henry wanted to be a pastor. Like many American youth, he was influenced by popular preachers, such as Billy Sunday (p. 24). In 1912, Gerecke enrolled at St. John's College in Winfield, Kansas, a school of the Missouri Synod dedicated to training especially pastors and teachers for the church in the English language. On a visit home in 1917, Henry's dad found him lined up outside of an Army recruiting station to enlist for the war in



Europe, but Mr. Gerecke would have none of that (p. 31)! Many German immigrants, naturally, were opposed to American involvement in a war against Germany.

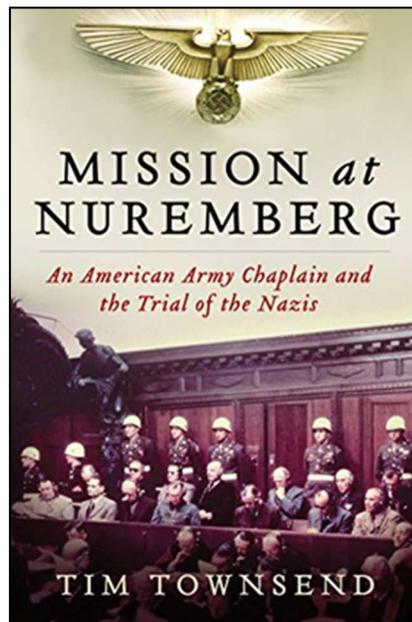
In 1918, Henry Gerecke graduated from St. John's, Winfield and enrolled at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Soon he met his future wife, Alma Bender, daughter of a St. Louis brewer. The two married the following year, while Henry was still a student at the seminary. At that time, students were not permitted to be engaged or married, so Henry was expelled. With the help of his mentor, Rev. Richard Kretzschmar (1868–1940), Gerecke found work as a teacher and continued studying on his own for seminary examinations. He passed his exams and was ordained in 1926, accepting a call to Christ Lutheran Church in St. Louis.

In 1935, Gerecke became executive of the St. Louis Lutheran City Mission, established by Rev. F. W. Herzberger in 1899 to bring the Word of God to inmates in "hospitals, prisons, poor-houses, and asylums." The fallout from the Great Depression led to much suffering, but also much Gospel proclamation among the urban poor. Gerecke described the work of City Mission in a newsletter: "we are after souls, lost strayed souls. Some will miss Hell because you have sent us with the Gospel" (p. 40). This work, too, prepared Gerecke for his later role as a chaplain. Former members of the Lutheran Church were directed to local Lutheran pastors and "every effort is made to encourage the individual to renew his confirmation vow." To those who have never given a thought to God, Gerecke would try to "bring them the meaning of the cross." Members of other confessions were urged to contact their own clergy (pp. 40–41). Part of Gerecke's work as a city missionary included his radio program, "Moments of Comfort," on the LCMS's radio station, KFVO (founded by Gerecke's mentor, Richard Kretzschmar). The program included Scripture verses,

devotions, and music. Each program ended with a "mission prayer": "Lord, lay some soul upon my heart and love that soul through me. And may I nobly do my part to win that soul for thee" (p. 42).

Chaplaincy

In 1943, Gerecke volunteered for the Chaplain Corps through the LCMS. The letters of recommendation written on his behalf emphasized how Gerecke's work at the City Mission prepared him well for the chaplaincy (pp. 45–46). That summer, Gerecke was sent to Chaplain School at Harvard University. He was then assigned to the 98th General Hospital, which set up a massive temporary hospital in Hermitage,



England, to handle all the wounded coming off the continent. As chaplain, Gerecke made sure to visit every patient. At one point, the doctors asked Gerecke to pray for an unconscious man. Gerecke stood in the room for three hours praying as the soldier underwent surgery. In another case, a dying man asked in front of the medical staff: "Chaplain, am I going to die?" Gerecke paused, and then responded: "God's children never die. Heaven's gate is opened by trusting Jesus, who died for you" (p. 79).

In October, 1944, Gerecke wrote to Paul Kretzmann, librarian of Concordia Seminary St. Louis, asking for German devotional literature. One thousand German POWs were being used for building projects in the area. Because of Gerecke's knowledge of German, he was asked to help supervise the German prisoners (p. 81). As the war began winding down, American soldiers liberated from German POW camps began showing up at the hospital until it was once again at capacity. As of May 1, all patients who would require more than sixty days of treatment were to be sent back to the US, a sure sign that the war would soon be over. Within a week, Karl Doenitz (Hitler's successor) had General Alfred Jodl surrender to General Eisenhower. The war in Europe was over (p. 85), but the spiritual battle Gerecke would wage over the souls of those responsible was just beginning.

The 98th packed up and headed to France, then to Munich, Germany, where they occupied a German hospital in near complete disrepair. Gerecke continued his hospital chaplaincy and like all military personnel at that time began taking courses in "Aims of the Nazi Party Before 1933," "The Nazi Party in Power, 1933–39," "The Guilt of the German People," "The Nazi Strike," and "Nazi Atrocities." In the meantime, there were numerous visits to Dachau concentration camp (p. 94).

In November, 1945, Gerecke was asked to transfer to Nuremberg to serve as chaplain for the major Nazi war criminals awaiting trial. Many of those to be tried considered themselves Lutheran, so a Lutheran chaplain was requested. In addition, Gerecke spoke German and was intimately familiar with the U.S. prison system from his work at the St. Louis Lutheran City Mission (p. 97). His age was also a factor. Though old by military standards (52 years), the defendants needed someone more in their age range. They refused counsel from the twenty-eight year old Lutheran chaplain, Carl Eggers (p. 103). Gerecke was the right man at

the right time. After prayer and reflection, Gerecke chose to stay on at Nuremberg rather than go home.

Religion in Nazi Germany

In order to understand the religious beliefs of the Nazis on trial at Nuremberg, we first have to know a bit about religion in Nazi Germany. When Hitler came to power in 1933, the population of Germany was about 60 million. Of that number, c. 40 million Germans considered themselves to be Protestant and c. 20 million Roman Catholic. In 1939, something like 3.5% of the population was "gottgläubig," ["believing in God"] that is, they believed in a higher power but rejected fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. About 1.5% of the population was atheist.

The official Nazi policy towards religion is summed up in the 1920 party platform, point 24 of 25, which reads: "We demand freedom of religion for all religious denominations within the state so long as they do not endanger its existence or oppose the moral senses of the Germanic race. The Party as such advocates the standpoint of a positive Christianity without binding itself confessionally to any one denomination. It combats the Jewish-materialistic spirit within and around us and is convinced that a lasting recovery of our nation can only succeed from within on the principle THE COMMON INTEREST OVER INDIVIDUAL INTEREST [GEMEINNUTZ GEHT VOR EIGENNUTZ]."

The origins of "Positive Christianity" can be traced back to the Historical Critical method of biblical interpretation, in vogue in the 19th century. Higher criticism distinguished between the historical Jesus and the divine Jesus of theology. Basically, the historical veracity of Scripture was denied while some semblance of religion was hoped to be maintained. In

the end, theologians working in this way could create God in their own image. And so in the case of Nazi Germany, Jesus became a warrior of the master Aryan race, fighting against Judaism at every turn. Those who adhered to "positive Christianity" thought traditional Christianity overemphasized the passive aspects of Christ's life and work, such as his suffering and death.

Some high-ranking officials in the Nazi party, such as Himmler, Rosenberg, Bormann, and Goebbels planned an eventual de-Christianization of Germany. In the meantime, "positive Christianity" could be used within any Christian denomination. In the end, the Nazis mostly just wanted control of the churches. Their goal was to unite the 28 separate state churches and give control to the "German Christians," who were favorable towards positive Christianity and Nazi ideology. In the end, though, only about 3,000 of the 17,000 Protestant pastors were considered "German Christians." About the same number were equally opposed to the German Christian Movement, but most clergy remained relatively neutral. When the theologically conservative Pastor Bodelschwingh was elected Bishop in 1933, Hitler appointed the German Christian Ludwig Müller instead. This political influence in the church led Pastor Martin Niemöller to create the "Pastors' Emergency League," which turned into what is known as the "Confessing Church," made up of Christians desiring to retain traditional Christian orthodoxy. The *Kirchenkampf* [church struggle] continued throughout the Nazi period. Already in 1935, around 700 pastors of the Confessing Church were imprisoned. Their traditional views of Christianity were deemed a threat to the Nazi political machine.

Only a small percentage of Christians took part in the *Kirchenkampf*, favoring the pro-Nazi or the anti-Nazi wings of the church,

respectively. But most Christians in Germany remained indifferent, or were able to hold onto (or not) their childhood faith and remain in their churches without disturbance. Even among the high-ranking Nazis there was a diversity of religious views and church background. Some were Protestants, Lutherans even, some were Roman Catholic, some supported the German Christians, some were "gottgläubig," some neo-Pagan, and some Atheist. Religious sentiment in Nazi Germany was as diverse as anywhere.

The Defendants and Their Spiritual Care

When Gerecke arrived in Nuremberg, two defendants had already committed suicide in their cells. Leonardo Conti, to be tried at the Doctor's Trial, was the Reich Health Leader involved in "Aktion T4," the Nazi program to euthanize the mentally and physically handicapped. Robert Ley, the leader of the German Labor Front, wrote in one of his suicide notes: "We have forsaken God and therefore we were forsaken by God" (p. 121). Many of the major Nazi war criminals held similar sentiments, which they expressed in the trial or to the chaplains.

In a letter to his wife, Alma, Gerecke described the results of the first devotional service, where he preached his first German sermon in 15 years: "They said they were truly moved from the way I presented the Gospel to them." Albert Kesselring, who had directed bombings of England and later oversaw German forces in Italy, was moved to tears (p. 153). Many of the 22 defendants began warming up to Gerecke. By the end of the trial, the former SS Lieutenant who served as Gerecke's organist had come back to the faith and was given Holy Communion. Gerecke wrote: "The simple Gospel of the Cross had changed his heart" (p. 158). Thirteen defendants

attended Gerecke's Lutheran service. Each one remembered his confirmation verse (p. 159). Four attended Mass with Chaplain Sixtus O'Connor and five refused spiritual counsel. Chaplain O'Connor would joke: "At least we Catholics are responsible for only six of these criminals. You Lutherans have 15 chalked up against you."

Rudolf Hess

The first prisoner Gerecke was introduced to was Rudolf Hess (1894–1987), who was an early Nazi and even helped Hitler write *Mein Kampf*. In 1941, Hess secretly flew to Scotland to try to negotiate with the British. He was imprisoned there for the rest of the war. Gerecke shook hands with Hess, for which he received criticism. Gerecke later wrote he acted "in order that the Gospel be not hindered by any wrong approach I may make . . . I knew I could never win any of them to my way of thinking unless they liked me first. Furthermore, I was there as the representative of an all-loving Father. I recalled too, that God loves sinners like me. These men must be told about the Saviour bleeding, suffering and dying on the Cross for them" (p. 140–141). Hess refused a copy of St. John's Gospel and other Christian literature, thinking it would make him appear weak (p. 143).

Hermann Goering

The next prisoner Gerecke was introduced to was Hermann Goering, the most high-profile Nazi on trial. Goering's business contacts helped Hitler come to power, and in return, Goering received political power. In 1932 he became President of the Reichstag. He was given control over the party's security apparatus, and in that role established the first concentration camps. Goering later took over the Luftwaffe and Germany's economic vision, the Four Year Plan (p. 145). He was also Hitler's designated successor until the end of the war. On July 31, 1941, he

wrote to Reinhard Heydrich: "I hereby charge you with making all necessary preparations with regard to organizational and financial matters for bringing about a complete solution of the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence in Europe" (p. 147). Six months later, the Wannsee conference began working out the details.

Of all the defendants, Goering knew most about the Bible. The Roman Catholic chaplain, Sixtus O'Connor, said that "with his brain he could've accomplished a lot" (259). Gerecke had become close to Goering and his family. They were both the same age and had a common interest in baseball, of all things. Gerecke came to Goering's cell the night of his execution in one final attempt to get him to accept Christ. Goering said he was a member of the Christian Church but could not accept all the teachings, such as creation, inspiration, or the atonement. He said Jesus was "just another smart Jew." Goering believed God watches over the large affairs of man, but wouldn't care much for a little man like Hermann Goering (261). He asked about receiving the Lord's Supper but Gerecke refused. "I have never been refused the Lord's Supper by a Lutheran pastor," Goering said, a sure sign he was not prepared to receive the Lord's Supper. That night, Goering committed suicide "after heartfelt prayer" (268). Chaplain Gerecke regularly visited Goering's wife and daughter and continued sending them care packages after the war.

Alfred Rosenberg and Julius Streicher

Of course, some of the Nazi criminals remained unbelievers and went to their deaths completely unrepentant. Alfred Rosenberg, for example, the Nazis' chief philosopher, told Gerecke he had no use for his childhood faith (166). He was "gottgläubig." Rosenberg had no final words and refused a final prayer. Julius Streicher, editor of the virulent antisemitic periodical, *Der Stürmer*, was twitching and anxious on the way to his

execution. He was able to free his right arm and raise it in one last Hitler Gruss, shouting "Heil Hitler!" Streicher spat at Master Sergeant John Woods and told him the Bolsheviks would hang him one day. "I am now by God, my Father. Adele, my dear wife, I die innocently." (275)

Hans Frank

From the Roman Catholic group there was Hans Frank, who had said during the trial that "A thousand years will pass and this guilt of Germany will not have been erased." He later retracted this statement after learning about crimes against Germans. Nevertheless, he said: "We did not suspect that our turning away from God could have such disastrous deadly consequences and that we would necessarily become more and more deeply involved in guilt . . . Hitler's road was the way without God, the way of turning from Christ, and, in the last analysis, the way of political foolishness, the way of disaster, and the way of death" (229–230). Frank was smiling as he was escorted to his death by O'Connor, who began to crack. Frank prayed to St. Joseph for a good death and also prayed: "My Jesus, have mercy on me." (278)

Erich Raeder

Members of Gerecke's little Lutheran congregation included Erich Raeder, who was Grand Admiral of the German Navy until he retired in 1943. At first Raeder seemed skeptical, but he was more skeptical of the U.S. Army than of Christianity. In fact, Raeder had been a regular church attender well into the Nazi period. He was a fierce critic of "Bolshevism and international Jewry," but he also supported Rev. Martin Niemöller, a former submarine officer, and defended the Lutheran and Catholic churches (p. 167). In prison, Raeder regularly read his Bible and one day joined Baldur von Schirach on his way to chapel. He began reading the upcoming

Sunday Scripture reading ahead of time and always had questions prepared for Gerecke's visits. He would ask Schirach for help with English phrases in the religious tracts Gerecke gave him. Soon, Gerecke allowed him to commune (p. 168).

Joachim von Ribbentrop

Joachim von Ribbentrop was ambassador to the United Kingdom, then foreign minister. At first, Ribbentrop would question Gerecke about apparent contradictions in Scripture. He was curious if a person could be Christian and patriotic at the same time (169). Gerecke responded with balancing between Romans 13 and Acts 5:29. At first, Ribbentrop was unrepentant, but he regularly read his Bible and Catechism and eventually communed from Chaplain Gerecke (168). Ribbentrop had grown up in the Church, but his wife had led him away. Mrs. Ribbentrop wrote several letters to Gerecke saying she would offset his influence on her husband in any way possible. Before the executions, when families were allowed to visit their husbands and fathers for the last time, Gerecke overheard Ribbentrop pleading with his wife to have the children baptized and bring them up in the church (235). Ribbentrop read his Bible most of the day. According to Gerecke, he "Put all his trust in the blood of the lamb that taketh away the sin of the world and asked that God have mercy on his soul" (271). Ribbentrop's final wish at the gallows was for peace in the world. He then looked at Gerecke and said: "I'll see you again."

Fritz Sauckel

Fritz Sauckel, the Nazi Labor Minister, was in charge of acquiring slave labor from occupied territories to make up for the lack in Germany. By the end of 1942, Germany was using more than 4.5 million slaves, mostly living in horrible conditions (p. 172). By 1944 there were 8 million and in 1945, 25% of Germany's workforce was foreign (p.

173). Sauckel told Gerecke that he had done his duty without "any idea of committing wrong against God or man." He was only working towards an ideal social community (p. 171) and had come to believe that Hitler was "the man chosen by fate to unite Germany" (p. 171).

Sauckel was the first defendant interested in receiving instruction from Gerecke so that he could partake of the Lord's Supper. He would bring his Catechism to court and read it in the docket (174). After each devotional session, Sauckel would say "Gott sei mir gnädig, ein Sünder" [God be gracious to me, a sinner]. He and Gerecke would kneel on the stone floor together in prayer. The example of Sauckel inspired other defendants to seek out spiritual care from Chaplain Gerecke, including Albert Speer, Hans Fritzsche, and Baldur von Schirach.

Hans Fritzsche was Propaganda Minister after Goebbels's death. He told Gerecke he was "deeply ashamed of having turned against the church" and that he "hoped to come all the way back to Christ" (p. 176). Fritzsche was enthusiastic about discussing the Scriptures, but hesitant to accept everything: "Don't expect me to drink it all down. I'm not going to accept it as I find it. But I want to talk to you about it" (p. 179). Fritzsche kept drawing closer. He wrote about his experience of Christmas as a prisoner: "Here more clearly than in the most richly decorated church He [Christ] stood out as the focal point of all action, all thought . . . Did not the light that flowed from Him penetrate the darkness that encompassed the immeasurable human suffering of my country and of the whole world?" (188).

In June, 1946, a rumor was going around that senior U.S. officials would be permitted to return home. The defendants were nervous about losing



Albert Speer, Hans Fritzsche, and Baldur von Schirach

Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and later Minister for Armaments and War Production, admitted his guilt, saying of the Nazi government "that the neglect of genuine Christianity caused its downfall" (p. 175).

Chaplain Gerecke before sentencing, so during the hearings, Fritzsche wrote a letter to Chaplain Gerecke's wife, Alma. Schirach translated the letter, which was then signed by all 21 defendants, even those not under Gerecke's spiritual care (p. 223-225).

Baldur von Schirach's grandfather, like Gerecke's grandfather, was a German

-American who fought in the American Civil War. Schirach was leader of the Hitler youth and said the energy he spent on the German youth "should have been used to develop loyalty to really Christian principles" (p. 179). Schirach was made governor of Vienna and removed all the Jews. He had become an antisemite reading English author Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Henry Ford (p. 181). Speer, Fritzsche, and Schirach all received communion at the same time.

Wilhelm Keitel

Wilhelm Keitel, the chief of the German Armed Forces, was interested in readings and hymns about God's love and the redeeming blood of Christ. He recited Bible verses on the way to the gallows and hummed "Härre, meine Seele" His final words were a prayer his mother taught him as a boy, which Gerecke also knew from childhood: "Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit, das ist mein Schmuck und Ehrenkleid; darin will ich vor Gott bestehen, wenn ich zum Himmel werd eingehen. Amen." Then said to Gerecke: "I thank you and those who sent you with all my heart" (pp. 272-273). Keitel wanted Gerecke to have him buried near Braunschweig, which was impossible after the military cremated the bodies and dumped the remains in the river.

After the Executions

The ten weeks between the end of the trial and the executions had been the most intense, but Gerecke said that "It was gratifying to see the working of the Holy Spirit on some of these men" (p. 233). The defendants were visited 4-5 times per day (p. 258). They continued turning inwards toward self and towards God (p. 253). Gerecke said "They unburdened their hearts because they soon felt they were going to eternity." (p. 258) When it was all over, people often asked Gerecke if the Nazis

only seemed to convert because they were scared of death. Gerecke said: "My only answer is that I have been a preacher for a long time and have decided that [finding God] is the only way a good many folks find themselves" (p. 182). In addition, many of the Nazis who were later imprisoned at Spandau continued attending chapel services regularly.



After the executions, the chaplains had committal prayers (275-276). That night, Gerecke reflected on "the gross hates and cruelties which climaxed in the careers of the Nazi leaders" that had begun with "petty hates and prejudices and compromises." He knew they were intelligent men who, in other circumstances, could have been "a blessing to the world instead of a curse." That night Gerecke also thought of all the good Lutherans do in the world (277). He had to keep in mind that despite all the evil he had seen, God also worked good things.

Back in the U.S.

Chaplain Gerecke returned to the U.S. and continued working for the Army in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He had regular speaking engagements about his time in Nuremberg. His story appeared in the "Saturday Evening Post," which led to hate mail, calling him a "Nazi lover"

and "antisemite" (298). But Gerecke always knew the truth and the complexity of what really occurred. He saw these prominent war criminals have a change of heart and repent of the evil committed by them or in their name. Gerecke always ended his talks with the same line from "Moments of Comfort," the radio program he had in St. Louis before the war: "Lord, lay some soul upon my heart and love that soul through me. And may I nobly do my part, to win that soul for thee." (223). Gerecke also added a line attributed to Corrie Ten Boom: "And when I come to the beautiful city, and the saved all around me appear, I want to hear somebody tell me: it was you who invited me here." Gerecke was certainly surrounded when he entered eternal rest!

After leaving the Army, Gerecke became assistant pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Chester, Illinois, where he also worked at Menard prison among some of the most hardened criminals in the United States. His message was always the message of forgiveness in the cross of Jesus Christ. In his sermon notes for his last Holy Week (referencing O.P. Kretzmann's notes for Good Friday on Luke 23:34), Gerecke wrote: "This was not the first mistake Roman justice had made. Other innocent men had been crucified . . . but here was something new on a Roman cross. . . The sum of man's years and man's shame and the greater sum of God's forgiveness and God's love. . . This is our faith. A religion without forgiveness is only the ghost of a religion which haunts the grave of dead faith and lost hope." Could better words be found to conclude an overview of Gerecke's life and work? His life and ministry were all about preaching the forgiveness we have in Christ Jesus to the worst of the worst. Chaplain Henry Gerecke died on October 11, 1961 after having a heart attack in the parking lot at Menard prison. His last words: "How quickly God can change your plans."



LCMS MINISTRY TO THE ARMED FORCES

A Ministry of Presence



It has been said, "the only thing constant is change." Which can be hard, especially for Lutherans! But people connected with the military, change is a way of life. There are so many cycles of changes that we live in: PCS season, the fiscal year, the calendar year, our rated time, etc. Even our church has its own cycle of the church year from Advent to the Christ the King Sunday. And individually, each one of us has a life cycle within the church—from baptism to confirmation, perhaps marriage, and eventually a funeral.

Yet all of these things are a part of a world that is waiting for the final end and the return of our Lord. This final end will usher in the end of time as we know it, end of all cycles, and the righting of all the wrongs and corruption that our sin has brought to everything we have known.

Rev. Bo Giertz (a favorite theologian of mine) wrote a short devotional for the last Friday of the church year from Revelation 22:7. Here is a part of it,

Those words are in the Bible's last chapter. That's probably not a coincidence. Although from the beginning they obviously refer to Revelation, they can be said about the entire book, for the entire Scriptures contains the prophetic Word, the message from God. And blessed is he who keeps the word. It's Jesus who says this. The Resurrected One said the same thing to John that He said to His disciples in Galilee. Blessed are those who hear God's Word and keep it.

These words are wise and true. They are a greeting from God, from the Father who longs after His children. They are the invitation to His house, where the great feast of joy has been prepared. They're the call to the delightful world where there shall no more be anything accursed. Everywhere on earth we meet judgment that must pervade over all evil, everything that breaks down stains God's wonderful creation. Since we ourselves are a part of that which is broken down and stained, that judgment pervades over us also. But now it can be revoked. Now the gates have been opened to a world where everything is whole and pure again and will remain that way forever. Now, as the saying goes: Come for now everything is ready.

As we wait for the end of all cycles let us enjoy what is before us here and now. We, as a Lutheran community, are blessed to have an Army chaplain, Air Force chaplain, and Pastor to minister in this area to assist with our spiritual needs. While this will certainly change at some point, let us embrace what is before us now as we keep the words of our Lord and wait for the next chapter in each one of our lives. Each of us has a calling where we are at now to live for our Lord while waiting for His return.

—Ch Sol Grosskopf



Photo courtesy of Viktor Bender

There is an invisible undercurrent to living in Germany in late summer 2022. It is still sunny and warm. People are relaxing in outdoor cafés and bars; dog walkers are out in droves; the kids are back in school. But at the same time, only some 1,200 miles southeast of us, the “biggest war between European countries since World War II” (WSJ, Aug. 23, 2022) is being waged. And because Germany’s energy supplies have been completely upended by this war, the German government is preparing for potential energy rationing in the months ahead. No wonder

consumers all across the country are snatching up space heaters to be able to keep their apartments and homes warm this coming winter. In addition, the many refugees from Ukraine have depleted available living space, and apartments are hard to find—all around Germany. And yet, there is a bright side to all of this: Thanks to the many generous people in the U.S. who have been moved to alleviate the plight of Ukrainian refugees, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has been able

to call a Ukrainian Lutheran pastor and his family (who are themselves refugees!) to serve their fellow Ukrainian refugees now living in the region around Wittenberg. This meaningful work is being coordinated by Rev. [James Krikava](#) (Director of OIM Eurasia of the LCMS), Rev. [Roger Zieger](#) (director of the SELK’s Office of Mission), and Mr. Viktor Bender, a brilliant project leader based in Hamburg who is managing the disbursement of LCMS funds to the SELK (see my FB post from June 21). The result: last Sunday the regular Divine Service held in the Old Latin School—the LCMS’ headquarters in Wittenberg—was packed, with almost 50 people worshipping. The words of Scripture best explain the “bright side” of the historic upheaval we are experiencing: “For those who love God ALL things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28)!

A Letter from the Mission Field Pastor Christian Tiews

1 Peter 1:1 speaks of the “dispersion” of Jewish and Gentile Christians scattered around “Asia”—east of the Aegean Sea. We LCMS missionaries serving here in Eurasia recently met for several days west of the Aegean Sea. And Lula and I got to meet real-life Lutherans in today’s “dispersion.” One afternoon over lunch I got to sit next to [Iro Damianaki-Tsakmalis](#) (see picture). She told me how happy she was to participate in our retreat, to hear proper Law and Gospel preaching, and to receive the Lord’s true body and blood with a large group of fellow Lutherans. “How did you hear about Lutheran Christianity?” I asked. “Mainly from the wonderful teaching of Reverend Rev. Bryan Wolfmüller on the Internet.” I replied, “But you are the only Lutherans in Greece. Do you ever receive Holy Communion?” “Yes, she replied: “About once a month, either Rev. Sorin Trifa or Rev. Andrew Fedder drive down from Romania and we have a church service in our home—with my

husband [Jordan Tsakmalis](#) and our two children.” I told her I was so happy that, even though her family is, in fact, in the dispersion, they can remain connected to the larger Lutheran family. “What attracted you to Lutheran Christianity in the first place?” I wondered. Iro leaned back and thought a moment. “I think it was the clear proclamation Lutheran Christianity has regarding Law and Gospel. Although this teaching is prevalent throughout Scripture, we seem to be uniquely focused on using it as the correct lens to read Scripture. The Law shows our sin, but the Gospel shows our Savior. Even though I was a Christian before, I always felt

condemned because I thought I had to be a perfect Christian to be saved. Lutheran Christianity has taught me that my salvation does not depend on how well I lead my Christian life—even though I try hard—but that it is solely dependent on Jesus Christ who took all my sins upon Himself.” And so, the Lord comes to us with Word and Sacrament—even in the dispersion.





Elder's Corner

Insights, thoughts, and inspirational messages

Fellowship

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:9

As we excitedly approach our retreat in Wittenberg, I am prompted to write about the importance of Christian fellowship in our lives. This weekend will be an opportunity to praise and worship our Lord together, in a place rich in history of our shared Lutheran faith. An opportunity for us to learn more about the early history of the reformation. An occasion for us to break bread together and strengthen the relational bond we share as brothers and sisters in Christ.

In each of our lives, we hopefully are blessed with family, friends, and coworkers. We do things with them, share special moments and occasions. How is fellowship different? Specifically, Christian fellowship? From the Lutheran Study Bible;

"Fellowship. More than friendship; a common share in something (or in this case, someone.) Christians have a common share in God the Father

through the human nature of Jesus. Since we are all members of one Body of Christ, we share in fellowship with all other Christians through Jesus."

Note on 1 John 1:3

What does this mean for us? Being a part of a Christian community is a safe haven for us from the primarily secular world we live and operate in. A place where we feel warmly received, our faith understood, and shared. Where we gather to support and strengthen each other.

Overarching all of this, Christ is with us. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." Matthew 18:20

From our gracious Lord, through Jesus Christ, we receive the strength we need to face the trials and tribulations of this earthly life. However, we are not meant to live this life alone. This strength we are blessed with, is what we share when we join in fellowship together. We lean on and learn from one another. With our eyes communally focused on Christ and his work on the cross, we encourage each other on the right path as we make our way through each day.

—Stephen Guzik

God's richest blessings to
Marianna & Jeremiah Tiews
and their new life together in Christ.



Sundays at KELC

Divine Service

Sunday Mornings
8:30-9:30 AM

Fellowship Time

Sunday Mornings
9:30-10:15 AM

Sunday School & Bible Study

at Kirche Mittendrין
10:15-11:15 AM

Catechesis

St. Michael's Basement
11:30 AM-12:30 PM

Safe Travel for everyone
headed to
Wittenberg, Germany



Labor Day Weekend
Sept 2nd-5th

There will be NO divine service in
Kaiserslautern on Sunday, September 4th

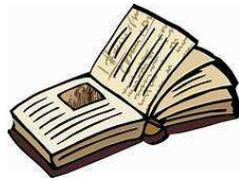
**LOOK FOR US ON
FACEBOOK &
MESSENGER**

Kaiserslautern
Evangelical Lutheran
Church (KELC)

For news, worship sign-ups
and fellowship events.



CONFESSIONS STUDY

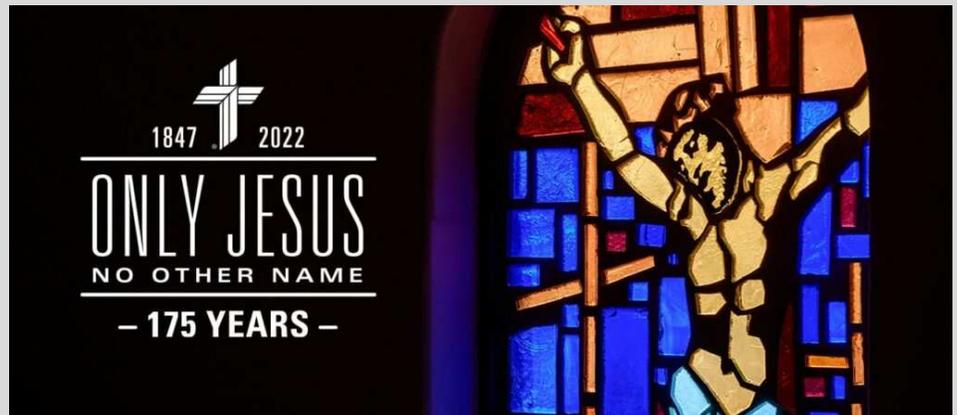


Wednesday Nights
at 7:00 PM
Location TBD

Fellowship
Lunch

**SAVE THE
DATE**

Sunday, Sept. 25th



*Wedding
Anniversaries*



Happy 7th Anniversary to
Sebastian & Kristen Blank
On September 5th

Happy 12th Anniversary to
Sven & Mindy Malenius
On September 17th

Happy 3rd Anniversary to
Sol & Tierney Grosskopf
On September 21st

Please join us in
praying for the
important work of
the Kaiserslautern
Military Resiliency
Center in Landstuhl,
Germany.



*September
Birthdays*



2 Johannes Schnachenberg
10 Mason Westphal
18 Dylan Worley
26 John Tittel
30 Sebastian Blank