

# ***miteinander***

Newsletter #5  
May-August, 2002

Pastor Twila Schock  
Pastor William Swanson

---

---

## **WELCOME TO *miteinander***

Greetings from Wittenberg, Germany! And, welcome to our German-based newsletter – *miteinander*. It means “together” in German and describes how the work of the ELCA Wittenberg Center brings people from throughout the world together in preparation for mission.

## **FLOOD WATERS DELUGE WITTENBERG COUNTY**

Wittenberg: the name means “White Mountain.” Although, it’s never looked like much of a mountain to us. “White Mound” perhaps; but not “White Mountain”.

Yet, in the midst of rising waters, we were willing to concede that, be it a mountain or a mere bulge, the gentle incline leading up to the “old city” provided an almost miraculous deliverance to much of the city in the midst of the 100 Years Flood.

After a week of anxiety, the waters -- which topped 7 meters -- finally began to recede. This does not mean that Wittenberg was spared; it merely means that damage on the north side of the River Elbe was minimized. In the days of the flood, tension mounted as helicopters carried huge loads of suspended sand bags overhead, sirens wailed, street sewers became bubbling fountains, hotel pillow cases and duvet covers became makeshift sandbags, and the waters of the Elbe came closer and closer.

Pratau, a tiny ‘suburb’ of Wittenberg across the Elbe, was evacuated on Saturday, and on Saturday night, when the dike broke, Pratau flooded. In fact, in the Wittenberg Landkreis (“county”) alone, 50 villages were flooded. And, in the same area, 500 square kilometers were covered with water. Nearby Bitterfeld suffered one setback after another. After days of sandbagging, the entire city was emptied of everything except muddy water.

It has been said that volunteerism has not been a strong phenomenon in the former Eastern Germany; but, in this crisis, this statement has been proven wrong as 10’s of thousands of citizens banded together to sandbag, assist with the evacuation of

offices and homes, and to provide meals and relief to the 100’s of thousands of evacuees.



Flood waters deluge the Wittenberg suburb of Pratau.

Many supporters called and wrote to inquire about both our well-being and the well-being of the historic treasures of the city. We were profoundly grateful for all expressions of support.

Regarding the city treasures, we spoke to the director of the Lutherhalle who, early on, informed us that the computers had already been taken off line. Those of you who know Wittenberg well, know that the Lutherhalle was more vulnerable than other historic treasures. Fortunately, the permanent exhibit had already been removed due to the reconstruction of the building. The Town Church and the Castle Church were, aside from some ground water in the basements, untouched.

We were safe throughout, albeit nervous. As many of you know, the Evangelical Academy, where the Wittenberg Center is located, is in a particularly precarious position. On Thursday, we worked in a team of about 20 people to move the basement archives and the ground floor library and furniture to the second floor; doors were removed; drapes were tied several meters off the ground; carpet was taken up. The ground floors became hollow shells.

On Friday, when the reports from Dresden worsened, we evacuated the second floor Wittenberg Center office equipment and important files to our second-story home, where office activities resumed. Later that day, the architect who oversaw the building’s renovation, called to notify the staff that the building was potentially unsound and, even in less than worst case circumstances, was in danger of collapse due to

the heavy pressure of ground water, which had begun to fill the basement already on Thursday. Wall Strasse and Elb Strasse, immediately adjacent to the Academy were, at several points under water. On Sunday, when the Elbe rapidly rose in Wittenberg, dikes were set up at the base of the old town. We were disheartened, when the dike line was set up, to see that, if flooding was to be severe, the Academy would have been in the River Elbe!

Fortunately for some, and more unfortunately for others, on Sunday night the Elbe overflowed the south bank. Thus, the Academy was spared, as the waters pressing up against the south wall began to recede. However, lives south of the bank were devastated.

Please pray for the people of Central Europe. Particularly vulnerable are the 20+% of the people in Saxon-Anhalt who were unemployed prior to the flood. As the 'hausmeister' in our office building said, "These people already lost their sense of human worth; now they've lost whatever material worth they once had."

### IN THE NEWS: CLERGY STILLETOS ARE OUT

High heels, cowboy boots, trainers, slippers, and sandals should not be worn with pastors' robes during worship, according to a new book of Protestant liturgy for German clergy. This fashion proscription is among the strongly worded advice found in the recently published 590-page Supplement to the Book of Protestant Liturgy meant to complement an earlier liturgy book published in 1999.

A lively debate has broken out in Germany over an advertisement for an energy company in which a pastor poses in full clerical garb performing the baptism of a nine-month-old baby. The advertisement carried on billboards and in newspapers included the slogan: "The future of our children begins by assuming responsibility. Including for our environment.."

By the time the coin was tossed to determine side of play in the first match of the 2002 World Cup, a profound football-inspired question was bearing down on fans throughout Germany. From highway billboards around the country, and from the pages of Germany's major newspaper, came the query: "Are soccer players our real Gods?" The question is at the heart of the June advertising campaign launched by the EKD (Evangelical Church of Germany), the country's main Protestant body, to encourage people to think more seriously about what's important in their lives.

Source: Ecumenical News Network; PO Box 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland.

## THANKS TO YOU

Without your on-going support, the Wittenberg Center's work would not be possible. We say "thank you" to the following individuals, churches or organizations who have been recent supporters of the ELCA Wittenberg Center:

### GLOBAL MISSION SUPPORT (WITTENBERG CENTER DESIGNATED GIFTS)

David L. Hunsucker ..... Gastonia, NC  
Robert Holland ..... Bethesda, MD  
Bernhard & Dorothy Plesser ..... Washington Crossing, PA

In memory of Renate Skirl's mother  
In honor of Naomi Bruesehoff's birthday

Kay Erickson ..... Amery, WI

Helge Malmede' ..... Wittenberg, GERMANY  
Luther Memorial Church ..... Madison, WI  
Anonymous

Julie Tillberg ..... Chicago, IL  
Paul & Mardeth Dovre ..... Moorhead, MN

In honor of Dick and Naomi Bruesehoff's birthdays  
Phillip and Patti Paul-Snyder ..... Appleton, WI

Bruce Harshberger ..... Willmar, MN  
John Busse ..... Sandwich, IL  
Saron Lutheran Church ..... Ashland, WI

In honor of Ken and Marion Swanson's 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
Robert & Jacqueline Matthew ..... River Forest, IL

Janelle & Marvin Hupp ..... Sandwich, IL  
Grace Lutheran Church ..... Loves Park, IL  
Marilyn & LeRoy Anderson ..... Sun City West, AZ

In celebration of the first anniversary of Yvonne's ordination  
Yvonne & Steve Marshall ..... Argyle, WI

Scott Weidler ..... Chicago, IL  
Propst Siegfried Kasparick ..... Wittenberg, GERMANY  
United Lutheran Church ..... Oak Park, IL  
David & Mary Marquardt ..... Frankfurt, GERMANY  
Charles & Luella Hilston ..... Madison, WI

### GIFTS "IN KIND"

Library books:  
Carter Lindberg ..... Boston, MA  
George & Sally Williams ..... Berkeley, CA  
Art & Audrey Stees ..... Freeport, IL  
Immanuel Lutheran Church ..... Kansas City, MO  
Richard & Anne Elizabeth Elbrecht ..... Davis, CA

Volunteer supplies:  
Keith Kramer ..... Forest City, IA

Worship resources:  
Robert Buckley Farlee ..... Minneapolis, MN

## RETIRED? NOT QUITE

In May, 2002, Bob and Mary Ann Pfennig came to Wittenberg, where they served as ELCA Global Mission Volunteers for three months.

While at the Wittenberg Center, Mary Ann taught English as a Second Language to four classes. Students were staff members at the Castle and City Churches and employees of the Evangelische Akademie. She also assisted in the proof reading of translations and provided clerical assistance.

Bob assisted the Center by translating several German area church resources into English, editing English resources, researching educational materials for the Center, and editing the Center's new website sabbatical planner.



Robert and Mary Ann Pfennig served three months as ELCA Wittenberg Center global mission volunteers.

Bob is a graduate of Texas Lutheran College and the Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary, Columbus, Ohio. He has served St. Paul Lutheran Church of Hondo, Texas, where he was a mission developer in Brenham (Christ Lutheran Church), and St. Mark Lutheran Church near San Antonio. He retired in 1997 from Christ Lutheran Church, El Campo, Texas.

Mary Ann, a native of Austin, Texas, is also a graduate of Texas Lutheran College. She has taught school in Columbus, Ohio, Port Angeles, Washington, and Brenham, Texas. She has done substitute teaching in the East Central Independent School District, near San Antonio. She was a private English tutor in El Campo, Texas for 8 years and a hospice volunteer for 13 years.

They are the parents of three children and six grandchildren. Retired in New Braunfels, Texas, their hobbies include gardening and researching primarily family history; Mary Ann continues as a hospice volunteer and Bob volunteers at the Sophienburg Archives.

## YOU CAN HELP

How can you help the ELCA Wittenberg Center become a global learning center?

- ü Simply use the enclosed gift card and envelope to make a tax-deductible contribution. (Gifts sent directly to the Wittenberg Center in Germany are not tax-deductible.)
- ü Invite your synod to sponsor a member of your companion synod to participate in a Wittenberg Center Study program.
- ü Establish a scholarship fund in honor of or in memory of someone close to you.
- ü Make a gift 'in kind' to the Wittenberg Center. A wish list of needed items follows:
  - An ESL (English as a Second Language) Curriculum
  - A Minister's Desk Edition to the Lutheran Book of Worship
  - An altar edition of the Lutheran Book of Worship
  - A full-size metal chalice and paten (suitable for travel)
  - A metal flagon
  - Words for Worship (Augsburg Fortress)
  - Martin Luther: The Classic Louis deRochemont Production (VHS Video)
  - Microsoft Excel
  - Adobe Acrobat (full version)
  - Library resource books:
    - Justification, Carl Braaten
    - Martin Luther –3 Volumes, Martin Brecht
    - Luther's Theology –Bernhard Lohse
    - Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation – Hans Hillerbrand
    - Trent and All That –John O'Malley
    - The Book of Concord (new translation) Robert Kolb & Timothy Wengert, Ed.
    - Luther's Works on CD-Rom

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR BILL AND TWILA

E-mail (personal): [SchockSwanson@cs.com](mailto:SchockSwanson@cs.com)  
E-mail(business):[ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de](mailto:ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de)

Telephone:49-3491-412-531

FAX: 49-3491-412-532

Home: 49-3491-411-665

Website: [www.elca.org/ewbc](http://www.elca.org/ewbc)

Mail: Schock/Swanson  
ELCA Wittenberg Center  
Schlossplatz 1d  
06886 Lutherstadt Wittenberg  
GERMANY

## GERMAN STIPEND BENEFITS ELCA STUDENT

Howell Williams graduated May, 2002, from Western Kentucky University (Bowling Green, Kentucky) with a Religious Studies degree, and she promptly packed her bags for travel to Wittenberg Germany. Her summer studies at the Leucorea Institute of the University of Halle-Wittenberg were made possible by an Evangelical Church of Germany Stipend and support from the ELCA Wittenberg Center. While in Germany, Howell furthered her research interests in European and American religious history and the current assessments of the church in contemporary society. She took a church and culture class as well as language classes at the Leucorea.

Between classes, Howell volunteered at the ELCA Wittenberg Center, doing graphic design work on the Center's website sabbatical planner.



Howell Williams (center) consults with Frau Gaides (right), her German language and culture instructor.

When asked where she calls home, she hesitantly answered, "Well, I'm in transition this summer." Howell grew up on the northern Kentucky side of the greater Cincinnati area with her parents, Alan and Melanie, and younger sister. She attended college in the western part of the state. There, she was an active member in the planning, beginnings and growth of Spirit of Hope (ELCA). She devoted time to church, friends, and her little sister Shawna of the Big Brothers and Big Sisters Program, as well as academics. While in her final year of college, Howell's parents relocated from Cincinnati to Beaufort, SC. However, Howell commented that Beaufort is a wonderful place to visit, but not exactly home.

After returning to the States at the close of the summer, Howell moved her bags to Tallahassee, Florida, to begin the masters/Ph.D program in American and European religious history at Florida State University. During this time of transition, study, and adventure, Howell was happy to call Lutherstadt-Wittenberg home for the summer.

## YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE WITTENBERG CENTER

"Are the Wittenberg Center programs open to me? Do I need to be a part of a college, seminary or formal ELCA project in order to participate?" we are often asked.

It is true that many of the Wittenberg Center's programs are designed by special arrangement with an college, seminar or church organization. But, the Wittenberg Center also designs learning opportunities which are opened up to the general public.

Following are some opportunities in the days ahead in which you are invited to participate:

From June 1-14, 2003, Dr. Mary Jane Haemig, Luther Seminary, will lead a travel seminar which will include visits to Berlin, Wittenberg, Eisleben, Halle, Torgau, Leipzig, Buchenwald, Erfurt, Weimar, Eisenach, Marburg, Mainz and Worms. Participants may wish to combine this program with attendance at the Ecumenical Kirchentag in Berlin, held from May 28 to June 6.

From October 24 – November 6, 2003, Dr. Rick Rouse, Pacific Lutheran University, will lead a seminar titled "Luther and Bach: Celebrating Reformation Heritage." This program will include visits to Munich, Augsburg, Rothenburg, Nuremberg, Leipzig, Torgau, Wittenberg, Eisleben, Erfurt, Eisenach and Worms, and will include guest lecturers as well as attendance at concerts.

The Wittenberg Center is also providing resource support to a travel seminar sponsored by Event & Touring AG. This seminar, from December 5 – 17, 2002, is titled "Faith Traditions: Advent & Christmas in Germany." It will include visits to Munich, Nuremberg, Dresden, Wittenberg and Berlin.

Information for all of these programs is available by contacting the Wittenberg Center directors at [ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de](mailto:ELCAWittenbergCenter@t-online.de) or by checking the website at [www.elca.org/ewbc](http://www.elca.org/ewbc)

*miteinander* is an occasional publication of First Lutheran Church, Freeport, Illinois, reporting on the ministry of Pastors Bill Swanson and Twila Schock, members of our congregation whom we support in their missionary work in Germany.

