

Robert & Regina's Trans'atlantic Newsletter

Sept. - October 2015

Oct. 3rd. - Today is a rather historical day for Germany, as it marks the 25th. anniversary of the re-unification of the former East and West countries. I remember the day too. I was stateside at the time. I know a couple of Germans who were visiting the US. They said that they stopped on the road while underway and thanked the Father for the occurrence of this very significant event.

A social work project started here in Chemnitz just around the unification time. It is entitled VIP. Two men talented with vision, passion and social understanding begun this work. Neither of these men are involved now, but the work still exists, and celebrated its 25th. anniversary recently. Additional projects were added early on under the VIP umbrella. One of these was called MSHD, a mobile help service, dealing mostly with people with alcohol problems, and their families. This begun in the middle 90's. Regina joined it 6 months after its formation, and she is now head of this small group. VIP's 25th. celebration was held at MSHD's building, and Regina was among the speakers for the day. Although she plans to retire from full-time work at the end of this year, she will continue there 2 days a week to accomplish the financial planning and reporting.

Something really fascinating has been happening in October; that is the Morning Star show that Venus has put on for us. It occurs before sunrise in the eastern sky. If you haven't seen it yet, you are in for a treat. I have never, ever seen Venus so bright as it has been. Its so bright that I imagine this is one of those times that you can see it in the daytime hours if you just knew exactly where to look.

For the summer, the town of Oelsnitz has been hosting the annual Garden show for the state of Saxony. It is the second time they have done this. Regina and I visited the show recently, our first time. The town had a large train station. It basically fell into being a ruin after the wall fell in 1989, as many other stations did in smaller towns as train services were cut *drastically*. But the area is large, and has been quite nicely converted over into the Garden show. Compliments on Oelsnitz!

For a few interesting facts of the once thriving coal mining industry in that town from 1844 until 1971 check this link out. For instance, at the end, they were mining coal at a depth of almost 4,000 ft!: <http://www.showcaves.com/english/de/mines/Oelsnitz.html>

From 1990 until 1999, I lived in Oelsnitz, and was a part of that congregation while there. It is located 12 miles southwest of Chemnitz. Oelsnitz had the earliest Gemeinde Christi here in East Germany that we know of. The name means Community of Christ, and is the most commonly used German name to describe the groups we know as churches of Christ. It began around 1986, 3 years before the wall fell, with the immersion of, I believe, 17 people who had begun meeting together. Hans Schaeller led this group, as he still does. Visiting speakers often came from West Germany and from the US to preach and teach. Of course they had to go through all the bureaucracy needed to get in this fairly closed country. There are some interesting stories around their visits in the DDR!

That congregation thrived for a while after the wall fell, but like many congregations in Germany and Europe, it has shrunk much in size. People have died, or moved away, or become just disinterested in religion, including our methods. It doesn't mean that they no longer had an interest in the Creator!

It is the same story most everywhere, certainly here in western Europe too. Years ago, while living in Oelsnitz, I showed someone a list of known German Gemeinde Christi congregations that I had found and printed out. He looked at it a minute, and with a pen, struck through at least half of them, commenting that they don't meet anymore. I wonder if anybody EVER asks why??

In the middle 90's a congregation was started in Ronneburg, about 40 miles west of here. That congregation doesn't meet anymore; having closed around tragic circumstances. But a young man (now 40), who was a part of that, still lives there. He is alone, with no living family or relatives anywhere close by (A sister lives in Norway). He suffers from the ongoing effects of a bug bite years ago, and cannot work. 3 of us; Wolfhard and Enrico from the Oelsnitz congregation and myself, visited him; sadly, first time in a few years. Enrico had received a birthday card from the man, and decided that it was truly time to act, as we had often spoken of making a visit, but nothing done. He called me, since I drive, and we made a firm date for this visit. Ronneburg is very small and lonely, with few younger people there now (Regina grew up there). We have tried to talk him into moving to either Oelsnitz or Chemnitz. But, for now, he has no desire for that. We all enjoyed dinner out together. It was truly a great time and great conversation and fellowship. I believe that the Father enjoyed the fellowship too.

Oct. 14th. - Was funny to wake up to a little snow, but it wasn't funny to those caught on the Autobahns. On the A72 this AM, nearby us, was a 20 mile long traffic jam. It was just one of many in the Chemnitz area here along the mountains. The 4 lane A72 is my least favorite Autobahn. A new section has opened connecting Chemnitz to Leipzig. That is welcomed, believe me. But the older part, the 60 miles from Chemnitz southwest to Hof, is the worst section, due to being fully in the Erzgebirge foothills. The mix of curves, hills, trucks, aggressive, stressed car drivers and occasional unlimited speedlimit sections is a deadly cocktail; especially in snow and rain.

I made a recent trip to Prague, but, believe it or not, not to see the city. My Filipino friend, now living in Helsinki, was taking a course there once a month. He had two days extra before leaving for Finland, so we got together for the first time in eons. He is involved in DVD documentation of several aspects of dance history ; a talent and skill given to him that he is maturing in at an astonishing pace. We had a blast together; talking, discussing religious stuff, and relaxing and walking around the airport area where we stayed for a couple of days. As a US couple visiting the Chemnitz area had my car for a couple of weeks, I took the bus there. Cost only 11 \$\$ each way for the 2hr. 40 minute trip! Was glad to let someone else do the driving.

Regina's mom just turned 85. She lives here in Chemnitz, alone in her own apartment. She had 3 brothers. Her only surviving brother came up from Zwickau for the event. He brought with him the surviving wife of one of the other brothers who had died earlier this year. Regina's mom was best friends with this lady in high school. She soon introduced her friend to that brother whom she was certain would find her friend interesting. She was right. That is all it took! The rest is history.

Everyone brought birthday-style goodies to her mom's place. It was a nice, memory-filled afternoon celebration for all 5 of us.

We do have a couple of house studies going on here again, and Regina and I attend one of them. We are going through a book chapter by chapter, and entitled „Lord, Change My Attitude“, and written by James MacDonald. It is regularly scheduled for the last Thursday of each month, but it doesn't meet each time, due to schedule conflicts of all types. But that is OK. My observation is that the death of a study is generally due to the insistent, almost sacred, nature of it having to meet regularly, and a leader having to prepare a lesson. Thankfully, we are a group that can see that differently. If only a few show up, we have no trouble just to be together, snack together, and converse some, getting to know each other in a more real way, and save the chapter for when more people are there. Just getting together with no fixed agenda is a real blessing.

Speaking of house studies: the one that we both attended for years up in the mountains has folded for now. That had existed since the early 90's! There is sure nothing wrong with taking a break.

The Sept. moon eclipse was awesome. However, I admit that I didn't see it at its peak. I got up a little too late for that. Clouds were predicted, but it was unusually clear as a bell here. What a neat participation in incredible ways that the Father provides so lavishly for us! Life is full of this when you start

looking. It was there for all to see, allowing everyone to enjoy and applaud in their hearts for the incredible show of their creativity and love.

Towards the end of Sept., a small group of students (3 girls and 1 guy) came to Chemnitz. They are part of the Vienna studies program sponsored by Oklahoma Christian University. The Chemnitz cong. has collected and stored clothes donated for Bulgaria for a couple of decades. The Vienna students have helped in past years sort, pack and label all the clothes here in Chemnitz in a flurry of Saturday morning activity, and the rest of the weekend getting to know the congregation, and allowing us to get to know them.

The program has sent students here for many years now. 19 year-old Cody overnighted with Regina and I. We had a great time together. I think that each of them realize that such trips help them grow in their own maturity and understand others better in other cultures. We appreciate their efforts, and the efforts of those here who arrange all of this.

Larry Sullivan then uses his VW van and a trailer to haul the clothes, usually along with a few members from here, to Sofia, the Bulgarian capital. Larry is a veteran at this trip. Nevertheless, there are always new surprises along the way. This year, it is anticipated that border crossings will consume more time, due to control, because of the rivers of refugees moving through the areas. The trip involves several border crossings. It could be a very different kind of trip this time.

The members from here go along to help with the distribution, and to use their talents to help make repairs to members houses there. Tom and Sherrill Black have been involved with that congregation for many years, but I think that they are stateside some of the year now, due to health issues.

Reiner and Rosel Kallus live in Munich and have worked with their son in a congregation there. Both are nearing the middle 80's in years, with probably 60+ years and 23 or so house moves behind them in full time ministry. Reiner is retiring from some of that load. There will be a get-together in October to remember their life and work in various parts of Germany and the US. Some of us who have worked with Reiner in the past are asked to share some thoughts appropriate to this event. Regina and I really look forward to the weekend with the congregation there. Update: Unfortunately, both R and I are down with colds and really cruddy coughs on this weekend, and unable to go.

Hopefully, I will be getting to see many of you in my November weeks stateside!

Much love, Robert and Regina

A quote below from: *The Perfection Obsession and Meddling With Our Union With Christ*

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'Dr Thomas Goodwin on his deathbed turned to his friend and said, "I am going to the three Persons with whom I have had communion; They have taken me – I did not take Them. I shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye; all my lusts and corruptions I shall be rid of, which I could not do here on earth. I am found in Him, not in my own righteousness, but in the righteousness, which is of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Christ cannot love me better than He does; and I think I cannot love Christ better than I do. I am swallowed up in God "'

Our true selves are hidden in Jesus Christ and made perfect.'

Need a one verse summery of the Good News? Here is a very good candidate: "In that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you:" Jn. 14:20 ASV John was teaching the early church the *essential* concept of the Trinitarian relationship, and our involvement. John saw it! (Jn.1:1ff) He knew! Paul knew (1Tim.1:9)! Do we?

