

Trinity Tribune

Trinity Lutheran Church ✠ Paola, Kansas

2015



October



This month I am sharing with you an excerpt from an article that appeared several years ago in Christianity Today, by Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto, an acclaimed international journalist who is a member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This interesting article has special relevance to current events, with news stories about the United States negotiating with Iran, and the massive Muslim migration to European countries, especially Germany.

The Other Iranian Revolution

By Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto
Excerpted from *Christianity Today*
July/August, 2012

“God must have been laughing up his sleeve,” muses Jobst Schöne. The retired bishop of the Independent Lutheran Church in Germany [an LCMS partner church body] is applying a German paraphrase of Psalm 2:4 to the baptism of seven former Muslims from Iran—who in Germany are generally referred to as Persians. Early Easter morning, the seven were baptized in the Berlin parish where Schöne serves as associate pastor. The baptisms were an emblem of something bigger—a nationwide surge of such conversions in several denominations and a spate of reports of Muslims seeing Jesus in their dreams. But Martin Luther’s Bible translation, now nearly 500 years old, also played an important role in their story.

The group baptism happened at an unsettling time for European Christians.

During Lent, radical Muslims handed out large numbers of Qurans on street corners and announced plans to distribute 25 million German-language copies of their holy book in order to win Germans to their faith. But on the night before Easter, some 150 worshipers filed silently into St. Mary’s Church in the Zehlendorf district of Berlin to witness conversions in the opposite direction.

Until midnight, the sanctuary was dark. Then Gottfried Martens, senior pastor, chanted from the altar: “Glory to God in the highest.” All at once the lights went on, the organ roared, and the faithful broke jubilantly into song: “We praise you, we bless you, we worship you.” Like Christians everywhere, they celebrated the Resurrection of their Lord.

“In this congregation, I heard for the first time that God is a loving Father who desires a personal relationship with every human being. This was news to me, because Islam had taught me the image of God as a distant, punishing deity.”

For the six young men and one woman in the front pew, the moment had additional significance: They were placing their lives in danger in exchange for salvation. Under Islamic law, apostasy is a capital crime, a fact brought home to the German public by press reports about Iranian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani, an ex-Muslim, who was sentenced to death in Tehran. Some of the converts at St. Mary’s were themselves persecuted before fleeing to Germany, now home to the largest Iranian community in Western Europe, numbering 150,000.

“These refugees are taking unimaginable risks to live their Christian faith,” says Martens, who ministers to one of Germany’s most dynamic parishes, which has grown from 200 to over 900 members in 20 years. He views the conversion of a growing number of Iranians in Germany as evidence of God’s sense of irony. “Imagine! Of all places, God chooses eastern Germany, one of the world’s most godless regions, as the stage for a spiritual awakening among Persians,” Martens exclaims. According to a recent University of Chicago study, only 13 percent of all residents of the formerly Communist part of Germany attest belief in God.

Martens’s experience with Muslim converts goes back to when he began catechism classes for Persian immigrants five years ago. The classes quickly expanded, and on Easter Sunday 2011, Martens baptized ten converts. Ten more converts are expected next Easter, and another ten the following year, plus more in between.

As news of the Easter baptisms at St. Mary’s spread, churches across Germany reported similar experiences. In a rural Lutheran church in Bavaria, for example, several dark-skinned strangers surprised the Communion assistant during Lent when they showed up at the altar. “Who were they?” he later asked his pastor. “Oh, they are just another family of Persian converts,” the minister answered.

The number of baptisms of Persians and, to a lesser degree, other Muslims in Germany outweighs the conversion of Christians to Islam. According to a report by the central archive of Germany’s Islamic organizations, approximately 500 Germans became Muslims in 2010. Yet those were either German girls marrying Muslim immigrants or nominal ex-Christians hoping for good business opportunities in other Islamic countries.

The conversion of Persians is of a totally different quality, usually following long instruction in the Christian faith.

In Martens' congregation, for instance, the catechumens from the Middle East spend four or more months studying the Bible, the church creeds, Martin Luther's Small Catechism, the significance of the liturgy, and the hymns. "They are very attracted by the liturgy, which was absent in their previous faith," Martens explains. Wilfried Kahla, a former missionary and a veteran in evangelizing Muslims says that he made his candidates study a 62-page brochure on Christian doctrine and administered a written exam to them. Then, at the baptismal font, he made them renounce Islam.

Martens follows a similar curricula, carefully explaining to converts the difference between the Allah of Islam and the God of Christianity. "Islam is like a rope ladder on which people try to reach God," Kahla likes to say. "They manage to climb a few rungs, but with each sin, fall off the ladder and must start all over again. Christians, by contrast, need no ladder because Jesus comes down to earth for them. Christians have salvation. Muslims don't."

Why is it that, of the 4 million Muslims living in Germany, Iranians are the most likely to turn to Christianity? The ministers interviewed attribute this fact in part to

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their high level of education. They say that most of the Iranian refugees are businesspeople, physicians, scientists, engineers, lawyers, economists, teachers, and other professionals or students.

"Iran is suffering from a big brain drain as a result of its fanatical religious policies," observes Thomas Schirrmacher, chair of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance. Hans-Jürgen Kutzner, who ministers to 1,000 Persians on behalf of the United Evangelical-Lutheran Churches in Germany, agrees: "As far as the university-educated elite in Iran is concerned, Islam has lost all moral integrity, especially among the young."

***"Isn't it odd that the
Ayatollah Khomeini has
turned out to be one of
modern Christianity's
greatest missionaries?"***

According to a report by the nationwide Deutschlandradio network, perhaps half of all young, educated Persian urbanites sympathize with Christianity these days. The rise of underground Christianity in Iran is due partly to the fact that every day 17 million of its 79 million people listen to programs via Christian satellite radio and television from abroad. Speaking on condition of anonymity, a U.S. Lutheran pastor involved in clandestine missionary work in the theocratic nation speaks with awe of the intensity of exchanges between the expanding Christian communities in exile and in Persia itself.

Perhaps the most convincing argument supporting Bishop Schöne's image of a laughing God at work is found in the genesis of the Persian awakening at St. Mary's. It began in Saxony, the birthplace of the Reformation, where Christians have become an endangered species. Twelve years ago, Trinity Parish in Leipzig, a tiny congregation of the Independent Lutheran Church, began teaching German as a second language to asylum seekers awaiting government approval of their refugee status.

Trinity used Luther's Bible translation as a textbook. Linguists credit that translation with having created the modern German language. Intrigued by what they read, several exiles asked to be baptized. They brought along friends who also wished to learn the basics of the Christian faith. "Today, one third of our 150 members are Persians," says Markus Fischer, Trinity's pastor.

Those members include 28-year-old "Amin" (not his real name) and his young family. Amin says he is a direct descendant of the prophet Muhammad. He was a successful corporate executive in Tehran until an Armenian friend introduced him to the Christian faith. Amin and his pregnant wife then fled to Europe. Their story is much like that of "Hamid," former owner of a Tehran shopping center. He was arrested and tortured after a raid by Iran's religious police on the house church he attended.

"In this congregation, I heard for the first time that God is a loving Father who desires a personal relationship with every human being. This was news to me, because Islam had taught me the image of God as a distant, punishing deity," says Hamid. He was one of the ex-Muslims baptized this Easter in Berlin, where he had moved after the German authorities granted him refugee status.

Other Persian converts from Leipzig also moved to Berlin. Others still moved onto Hamburg, Dresden, and Düsseldorf, where they joined the local congregations of the Independent Lutheran Church. Wherever they went, they started evangelizing fellow refugees, which helps to account for the surge in conversions.

Meanwhile, in Leipzig, Trinity's success among immigrants has caught the attention of German-born seekers. The congregation is outgrowing its minute makeshift building in a cemetery and negotiating a permanent lease of a large but little-used sanctuary of the state-related Lutheran Church, a shrinking denomination.

Schirrmacher finds stories like this engrossing. He says, "Isn't it odd that the Ayatollah Khomeini has turned out to be one of modern Christianity's greatest missionaries?"



**Missionaries
of the Month**

Each month we remember in prayer in our worship services—and you are encouraged to remember in your personal prayers—specific missionaries around the world supported by our congregation through our Synod.

October 4
Philip Joseph
Kenya

October 11
Rev. James & Peggy Krikava
Czech Republic

October 18
Julie Lutz
Papua New Guinea

October 25
Rev. James & Brittany Baumgartner
Dominican Republic



**October Birthdays
& Anniversaries**

Our records of birthdays and anniversaries may not be complete. If your information is missing or inaccurate, please accept our apologies and notify the Church Office at 849-3344 or email Church Secretary Stacey Elkinton at blocktlc@midwest-connections.com.

Fall Sermon Series



**Unlikely Heroes
of the Faith**

Maybe sometimes you don't feel or act like a "saint." It may surprise you to learn that many of the great saints of old often felt the same way! During October and November we will have a special sermon series looking at five *Unlikely Heroes of the Faith*.

October 11
Eve

October 18
Matthew

October 25—Reformation Sunday
Martin Luther

November 15
Peter

November 22
Paul

- 1 Kimala Morton
- 1 Michele Minden
- 2 Ashley Peckman
- 2 Sharon Prothe
- 4 Kyle Minden
- 5 Mark Deering
- 8 Megan Stutzman
- 8 Brian Oberheide
- 9 Kyle Garrison
- 10 LeRoy Thoden
- 11 Shelby Barrett
- 11 Kegan Warring
- 13 Vicky Boyer
- 13 Aaron Mueller
- 13 Hazel Prothe
- 15 Pam Peckman
- 15 Jay Warring
- 16 Ariel Alcorn
- 16 Erica Jones
- 17 Dylan Fanning
- 17 Tony Hubbard
- 17 Julie Kellogg
- 18 Carter Zajic
- 19 Betty Prothe
- 19 Joe Stephens
- 19 Ray England
- 20 Khrystin Davis
- 20 David Minden
- 23 Brett Golubski
- 23 Kaelah McMullin
- 23 Hannah Allcorn
- 24 Payton Bruce

- 26 Charlie Peckman
- 26 Dalton Russell
- 26 Garrett Russell
- 27 Kolby Fanning
- 27 Lloyd Peckman
- 27 Kayla Shappell
- 30 Chris Kettler
- 30 Rose Peckman
- 30 David Prothe
- 30 Jai Jenkins
- 31 Nina Gerken
- 1 Larry & Dana Simonson (10)
- 2 Randy & Kayla Rausch (5)
- 6 Stewart & Beth Marsland (14)
- 7 Scott & Nancy Golubski (26)
- 17 Joe & Anisha O'Barto (17)
- 17 Darrel & Brigitte Rodewald (34)
- 19 Kyle & Pam Minden (24)
- 25 Mark & Diana Deering (12)
- 27 Eric & Lindsey Lester (3)
- 30 Les & Beth Prothe (22)
- 31 Dale & Linda Prothe (38)

**Pastor Vogts Elected
Synod Delegate**

At the Circuit Forum on September 20—a lay and pastoral representative from each congregation in the circuit—

the Johnson–Miami County Circuit elected Pastor Vogts as the circuit's pastoral delegate to next year's national convention of our denomination, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Held every three years, next summer's convention will be July 9-14, 2016, in Milwaukee.

Each of the approximately 600 circuits nationwide sends two delegates, lay and pastoral, to the national convention. Our circuit also elected a lay delegate, from Bethany, Overland Park. Because they represent the entire circuit, the delegates' expenses are covered by the Synod's convention budget.



The quarterly Voters Assembly meeting will be Sunday, October 11 at 7:00pm. The agenda includes election of officers for 2016. To prepare for this meeting the Church Council will meet Tuesday, October 6 at 7:00pm.



Extra Communion Sundays

Beginning on Sunday, October 18, we will again have extra services of Holy Communion, on both the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month, in October, November, December, January, and February. This provides an extra opportunity to receive the Sacrament for those who may not be able to attend worship on the first Sunday of the month due to inclement weather.

Trinity's 7th Annual



Trunk or Treat

Saturday, October 24, 4:00pm-6:00pm in Church Parking Lot

Food 🍎 Games 🎲 Pumpkin Decorating 🎃 Bouncy House

Everyone Is Invited to Offer Trunk or Treat from Your Car, Truck, or Other Vehicle!
(Please Have Your Setup Completed by 3:30pm)

All Invited—Everyone Welcome!



Nursing Home Services October 25

You are invited to help Trinity provide brief worship services for nursing home residents at North Point and Medicalodge on October 25. The simple services are approximately 20 minutes in length at each home. We begin at 1:30pm at North Point and then go to Medicalodge for the second service.

The residents really enjoy these services, especially singing their favorite hymns. It's great to have church members there to greet the residents and sing along. We have a faithful few members who help but we could use your help too!



Thank You

Thank you from the Trinity Youth to all donated so generously for our dinner at Blocktoberfest and all who gave so much help preparing everything. We had net proceeds of over \$4,000 to apply toward our trip to the National Youth Gathering in New Orleans next summer!



Two Sundays in October remain open for Coffee Hour hosts—and the entire rest of the year after October!

There is a sign-up sheet on the table with the snacks. Consider signing up for special occasions such as birthdays or anniversaries. Our Generations group provides and prepares the coffee and juice each week, so those signing up are only asked to provide some treat. Thank you to all providing snacks for Coffee Hour!

October 4
Jan Minden

October 11& 18
Need Volunteers

October 25
Chicken Noodle & Chili Dinner



Portals of Prayer

The new issue of *Portals of Prayer* for October thru December is available in the small literature rack (on the end table) in back of the church.

To make reading easier, in addition to the standard “pocket” size we also have copies available in a medium “digest” size (same size as *Reader’s Digest*), and a large-print size.

You will be blessed by the brief daily devotions and short daily Bible readings prayers. There are also suggested longer readings for each day, and in the back of each issue a wonderful collection of prayers for each day of the week and special needs and occasions. A great way to keep close to the Lord!



Trinity’s Annual

Chicken Noodle & Chili Dinner and Bazaar

Sunday, October 25, 11:00am

All Invited—Everyone Welcome!

Come Enjoy the Fun, Food, and Fellowship!



Community Christmas Party & Talent Show December 6

Mark your calendars for the first activity scheduled by our new Fellowship Committee! On Sunday, December 6 at 3:00pm we will have a Community Christmas Party & Talent Show in our church basement Fellowship Hall.

Everyone—individuals, groups, families—is invited to show off your talent! All types of performances are welcome and do not have to be Christmas related, but if Christmas related do not have to be strictly religious—“Jingle Bells” and Santa are welcome! To get on the program email Pastor Vogts with the talent you will be sharing at pastorvogts@gmail.com.

The fun will also include a Christmas Carol Sing-a-Long. Following the show, everyone is asked to bring your favorite Christmas treat to share on our “eat dessert first” bar—no meal, just dessert! This is also a great opportunity to invite

guests, neighbors, family members, etc. And, yes, there is a Chiefs game that day—but set your recording and come enjoy the holiday fun and fellowship!



Mission Sunday & Thanksgiving Potluck November 8

We will observe Mission Sunday during our morning service on Sunday, November 8. Our guest preacher will be Rev. Larry W. Rockemann with the international mission society Lutheran Heritage Foundation.

Following the service we will celebrate Thanksgiving early with a “Thanksgiving Potluck.” Everyone is asked to bring your favorite Thanksgiving dishes! At the end of the dinner Rev. Rockemann will give a presentation about the mission work of LHF.



LCMS Mercy Medical Team in Kenya

By Philip Jaseph
LCMS Missionary in Kenya

Two thousand; that's quite a figure. We get into that range of numbers and it becomes difficult for us to visualize in familiar terms. We might know that 30 people can fit comfortably in one room, or perhaps five people in a four-door car, but where do you put 2,000 people? A football stadium?

The most recent LCMS Mercy Medical Team in Chesinende, Kenya saw more than 2,000 patients in five days, calculated through patient care and prescription forms that every registered patient received. I accompanied the team of 11 students, doctors, nurses and a chaplain, and assisted my colleague Shara Cunningham in helping to manage logistics, orient the team culturally and keep things running as smoothly as possible. That's no small feat when your clinic averages 400-500 people daily, as Shara can tell you!

The Kenyan branch of Lutheran Hour Ministries, Nuru, sent along an evangelist to share the Gospel and lead prayers, and a counselor who provided testing and medical advice for those suffering from HIV. We also had much needed help and manpower from Kenyan translators, doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals provided by Kericho County. These workers assisted the team in bridging language gaps and providing local information about prominent cases and treatment protocol.

Beyond all of this, though, if we did not have a relationship with our partner church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church

in Kenya, there would not have been a clinic. While the LCMS organized the American team and medical supplies, the ELCK head office selected the site, and the ELCK congregation there opened their compound and congregation for this work.

Pastors helped to keep an eye on things as well as leading evangelism and prayers, and even a baptism. Church elders directed patients and organized lines. Church youth manned the registration table, getting contact information logged and filling out patient forms. Working at peak capacity, it was a sight to behold.

While numbers and metrics are never the biggest concern of an MMT, the ability to collaborate and cooperate with a church on the ground through an established relationship enables the clinics to have a much greater impact than if one church body attempted such a project alone.



MMT's are a great example of purposeful and holistic ministry, meeting physical needs and addressing spiritual ones together. These clinics are organized to allow everyone involved to play a part, and it is especially encouraging to see spiritual matters left to local pastors. These pastors are often well known in their communities, serving as leaders, which is helpful during clinics. After the team has departed, the visibility of the church and congregation has been increased, and the pastors are able to follow up with new relationships, like the woman baptized during this clinic.

All cases presented during MMT's are not always easily treatable, though the most extreme cases are eligible for referrals to area hospitals. What is crucial, though, is that all who attend hear the Word of God and what Jesus has done for them. MMT's are a special

kind of synthesis, bringing people from the United States to another part of the world to share their time, talents and faith. This would not be possible without the knowhow and manpower of the local communities and church body. These clinics are wonderful reminders that the widespread body of Christ, separated at times by geography and language, all strives towards the same goal.



Adult Bible Class

Our current study in Adult Bible Class is *These Are a Few of Our Favorite Hymns*, looking at the background and meaning of—and singing!—beloved hymns. Join in Sundays at 9:00am in the Overflow to get a deeper appreciation for your favorite hymns!

Luther Movie in Adult Bible Class October 25

On Sunday, October 25 our Adult Bible Class will take a break for our current study to observe Reformation Sunday with *Opening the Door to Luther*, an excellent, short video featuring PBS travel show host Rick Steves. Come at 9:00am in the Overflow to journey with Luther on the Reformation trail!



All youth are invited to join in each week our Youth Bible Study, led by our Youth Director, Janette Reinke, during the Sunday School hour from 9:00am-10:00am in the Youth Room (upstairs behind the Choir Loft).



Following the dedication of our new Trinity Lutheran School Memorial Shelter House at the Blocktoberfest Outdoor Service on Sunday, September 20, those in attendance posed for a group photo in front of this beautiful new facility. Built in the exact location and the same dimensions as the former school building, this structure looks right at home and helps fill a hole left in our church campus—and our hearts!—when the historic school building was tragically destroyed in a fire.

