

## **Reflections on Luther Study Tour 2019 (by Jean Wong)**

The trip made a long lasting impression on me. Those who hosted us were people of deep faith and unwavering commitment to the work of the Lord. Several of them lamented on the diminishing youth in their midst, a situation which we should lift in prayer for them and also for the church in Singapore.

It was clear that the Reformation took place as it did because God orchestrated certain events: the invention of the printing press, the protection of Luther by Frederick the Wise, the kinship between a thinking theologian Philip Melanchthon and Martin Luther, to name a few. Unlike Jan Hus, martyred in 1415 for similar ideas, the speed of the movement spread by the social media of the day (the printing press) prevented the same fate for Luther. This portion of history encouraged me about God's timing and the conscience of the believer: the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.

Another highlight for me was the **Luther Garden**. In 2017, 500 trees were planted by different congregations from different parts of the world, to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> year of the Reformation. We visited the Living Monument in Wittenberg. Corresponding to these trees planted in the shape of the Luther Rose, a tree was planted in each of the churches in their home country to represent the connection between the birth place of the Reformation and where churches now grow. There is a similar tree planted in Jurong Christian Church. As soon as we stepped into the Garden, Mandy spotted the Hawthorn tree planted by Bishop Terry Kee! The root area was overgrown with creeping weeds. Many of the Singapore group followed Rev Thomas Paulsteiner in aggressively pulling up the web of weeds, shaped the mound of soil and poured precious water from their water bottles onto a thankful tree relieved of its captivity. It spoke to me of the community of believers helping a church not just survive, but for it to thrive.

Praise God for the leadership of Rev Fredric Lee, the ukulele ministry of Weng Kong, the Hokkien songs led by Peter Cheong, and the sweetness of sharing life amongst the group.

## **Reflections on Luther Study Tour 2019 (by Wong Leong Jean)**

I almost didn't make it. A minor stroke interrupted the plans. I am so glad I could walk through history with the camaraderie of a fantastic group of brothers and sisters.

The highlight was the visit to Rev Christian Schmidt's church in **Eltersdorf**. Besides the never ending servings of home baked cakes and homemade salads, his church leaders' welcome was a class of its own.

Rev Schmidt led us in a tour of the church he pastored, and a sing-a-long followed inside the church. One of the modern songs was "No Longer Slaves". Then a sumptuous barbeque followed and another boisterous time of singing country folk songs with Weng Kong and his signature ukulele. Breaking up was hard to do. The hospitality was out of this world. Eventually we piled into the coach to return to Neundettelsau. I took 600 photos, which was more clicks than any other day. Because of that happy day on 25 June, it made me feel this is the best tour I have ever been part of.

Another mental note was the four cooks and other staff of Missions One World: they were consistently sweet and smiling, a testimony to the joy of the Lord.

Precious private time was spent with Rev Strauss. How Lisa and Rev Strauss need our on-going fellowship. Don't forget the old soldiers who spent the prime of their lives in Singapore.

The walking seemed to go on forever, especially to dinner at the Rhine. I am convinced I have done enough exercise for one year, thanks to Rev Thomas. Since a picture is worth a thousand words, I have spoken volumes through the photos taken on the trip. With that, I rest my case.

### **Reflections on Luther Study Tour 2019 (by Joanne Wong)**

The Diakoneo, a Christian institute founded by Wilhem Lohe for social welfare work. They provide for the needs of the poor, elderly and the special needs people.

I am very impressed when we visited the workshop where the special needs people work daily to produce wood crafts meant for sale in the market. The products are well made and of good quality. Housing is also provided for them.

The workers take pride in their job and give their best, They enjoyed the sense of belonging, usefulness and social life.

I pray that Singapore would be able to do the same for our special needs people.

Nuremburg is an important industrial centre with a strong standing in the markets of Central and Eastern Europe. It reminds me of Singapore who also does not have its natural resources but also plays an important role in South East Asia.

Nuremberg is well known for its delicious traditional gingerbread.

God is at work through all these. I thank & praise God for His faithfulness, providence, love, mercy as His work is being carried out on this earth.

## **Reflection on Luther Trip 2019 (by Mrs Dorothy Lee-Teh)**

There are many insights throughout the Luther History Study Tour, I will highlight 3 aspects that leave an impression on me.

1. **In the chapel of Mission One World**, the query among group members over a sculpture from Thailand, of a lady in a prayer posture, with the caption "Kwan Yin" and a German translation which says, "hear the sound of the world". "Kwan Yin" in Chinese also means "Observe the Sound". In order to hear the sound of this world, I need to quieten my heart and put aside my prejudices and preconceived ideas or judgement. And pray the Lord to enlighten my heart and mind about my response to the needs of this world. For then I will hear the call of God to do His bidding.
2. **At Neundettlesau Diakonia factory and Augsburg Diako**, health centre, hospital and home for the sick and elderly. We have much to learn from their unconditional love, care and respect for people as their witness of God's Love. Their ministries are primarily catered to help, improve and bring hope to the suffering and disadvantaged people without any hidden agenda for christian conversion. While at the Diako garden, the church bell rang at 12noon and the Director led us in a prayer for peace in the world. They do this everyday at 12noon without fail.
3. **The magnificent handbuilt churches/cathedrals, monuments**, excellent craftsmanship and work of art that are preserved at high costs leave behind trails for our knowledge and study of past history- good and bad- what are we to make of it? What platform are our churches giving to the arts? Do we let history repeat itself or learn from it to bring about a better community of people in our own societies and to the world?

## **Reflections on Luther Study Tour 2019 (by David and Ros Phua)**

The tour was an enriching and memorable one, with great fellowship among participants, warm hospitality from our hosts Pastor Thomas and his wife, Renata, and meeting up with old friends Pastor Werner and Lisa Strauss, and Pastor Christian Schmidt and his church members.

A high point of the tour was the visit to Wittenberg, the town where Martin Luther stayed, preached, and lived with his wife and children for many years. With his posting of the 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church, it was regarded as where the Reformation started.

As we entered Wittenberg, the Castle Church and its tower was the first building we see. Our host Pastor Thomas alerted us to the words "A Mighty Fortress is our God" in German, in a mosaic frieze, around the church tower. (See attached photo). This opening line of Luther's well-known hymn resonated with us. Having visited Wartburg Castle a few days earlier, we could see Luther identifying with King David's experience of God as his refuge, "a very present help in trouble. It was at Wartburg Castle that Luther was hidden in disguise for 10 months to escape the death sentence pronounced on him. Luther's faith in God's sovereignty and almighty power was such that even in his enforced stay in the Castle, he was able to translate the Greek New Testament into German in 10 weeks!

Another thing that impacted us was the history of Neuendettelsau as a Center of Mission and Diakonia. Its founder Pastor William Loehe saw the church's mission as spreading the Gospel and ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of people, especially the neglected in society. He founded a mission society that trained and sent men to work among German migrants in the US and also to Native Americans. Seeing the poverty in his own village, he started a Deaconess Institute to train and send women to work in schools, hospitals, homes for the mentally and physically handicapped, aged etc.

We visited some of these Diakonic Institutes and were especially heartened to see the intellectually disabled treated with dignity and given jobs commensurate with their gifts and potential. We saw them doing woodwork, assembling and painting wooden toys, assembling electrical sockets. Their focus in their work and confident interactions with their supervisors were evidence of their abilities and satisfaction. It helped us see what they can do instead of what they can't, and that they too have a calling to be a blessing where God has put them.

May God continue to richly bless Mission Eine Welt as she and her partner churches seek to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

### **Reflections on Luther Study Tour 2019 (by Eric Hong & Family)**

Eric-

I had been blessed and greatly enriched from this Luther Study trips. I gained a lot and had a better understanding of the Protestant history and appreciated how our forefathers fight to keep their faith.

Daphne -

Firstly I would like to thank God for this great opportunity. I felt very blessed and honoured to be chosen for the Luther Tour and especially so when our whole family was able to travel together.

I learn why some Protestant churches has simpler architecture whereas the older Protestant churches are more Gothic Cathedrals and some have extremely elaborate baroque style interiors.

During the tour, we visited the All Saints Church in Wittenberg where Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses, opposing against the Roman Catholic Church for the sale of indulgences. When he was kidnapped into Wartburg Castle, Martin Luther didn't waste time and translated the New Testament Bible from Greek to German in 11 weeks, and profoundly influenced the form and standardization of the German language.

At the Diaconic Institutions for the disabled - I saw how the disabled people were given opportunities to be train, learn and work in small teams, giving them hope and feel useful. The work they created was beautiful and amazing. This touches my heart deeply and inspires me a lot.

Lastly, prior to the Luther Tour, I have during one of my daily conversations with God mentioned that I have not seen a rainbow for many years and I hope God is able to show me a beautiful rainbow one day (but I'm forgetful and had totally forgotten about this request made in 2018). God not only surprised me with a rainbow, He blesses me and my whole family saw the double rainbow in Erfurt after we came out from the medieval restaurant. It was the most beautiful rainbow I've ever seen. I'm truly bless and I couldn't thank Him enough. Glory to God alone, Amen!

Zekiel-

The Luther study tour enlightened me about the history and development of the Protestant movement. Through, I was able to see the locations of the Reformation and gain deeper insights into the lives of Martin Luther and his contemporaries. I am also grateful to see the continuation of the work today through Mission Einewald and the Diaconic Institutions. I thank the Lord and everyone who helped us in making this trip possible.

Adielle-

The Luther study tour was truly a wonderful and eye opening experience. It was a well rounded trip following Luther's life journey and the works of Mission Eine Welt as they touched the hearts of people all around the world.

It was a blessing to be able see the places that Martin Luther has been and it has made me stronger in my faith as I put myself in his shoes. The danger he put himself in by going against the Catholics for what he believed in pathed a way for us. "Here I stand I can do no other, God help me"

I was also enlightened by the community work in Neuendettelsau when we went to visit the Diaconic institutions for the disabled. It was nice to see the community embracing disabled people and giving them an opportunity to feel useful rather than shunning them away from society. The works that they created were remarkable and motivated me to constantly improve myself and have no excuse otherwise.

### **Reflections on Luther Study Tour (by Mandy Lee)**

#### 16 June Sunday - Families

Our sons sent us off and there were other families seeing their loved ones off as well. Although I'll miss my family members back home, I'm looking to an exciting trip with my extended brothers and sisters in Christ for the next 2 weeks. We are but one big family in Christ!

#### 17 June Monday - Neuendettelsau

Greeted by Reverend and Mrs Straub at the airport. It was good to see familiar faces in a foreign land. Neuendettelsau is a small quiet town with about 7000 population. We were amazed that this small town is very much self-contained with all the amenities. We are blessed to have Doc Vorlander to conduct the history lesson about Neuendettelsau. We learned about the rich history and great impact and influence of its mission works both local and overseas, especially the work of diaconal originated from.

#### 18 June Tuesday - John 16: 12-15 Trinity

Pastor Fredric Lee elaborated the understanding of Trinity. God works in us so we could glorify Christ.

The Spirit will guide us and tell us the truth so that we might be transformed.

Visited diaconate workshop. Was impressed by how the workshops run by 100 over employees who are mentally challenging people, are now able to work and self support through simple and routine jobs. The employees take pride in their jobs and deem their roles are important. They stressed the importance of producing quality products. The staff treats them with respect and dignity.

### 19 June Wednesday - Genesis 15

"Fear not" when God greets us. God reminds us that he is always by our sides. We can trust Him.

Bernard related his challenges on a mission trip to Mongolia. The objective was to provide dental care as an outreach to the Mongolians. They were threatened by the customs authority. However, Bernard was reminded to praise God in all situations and times, as a weapon to conquer the obstacles. His personal faith increased when he witnessed how faithful God is when we focus on the cross rather than the obstacles.

### 20 June Thursday - Acts 17: 17 to 24 The sound of the world

In his devotion, Peter Cheong related that he was disturbed when he saw a statue of a wooden lady with a praying posture in the MEW chapel. It has a card written with the Chinese word 观音 which we identified as the god of Mercy and some German words which means sound of the world. Peter shared that when he thought further, he agreed that people have the tendency to be captured by the "sound of the world " and that we become so distracted with all the things (sounds) happening around us and in our lives. Peter encourages all Christians to stay close with the Lord with prayers, singing, meditating His word in order to stay on the track.

Rev Thomas added the importance of continuing our Christian values impact to the society, failing which, Christians are like beautiful flowers (roses) beautifully displaying in the living room which brighten up the place but only for a short while, as the roots of the flowers were already cut off.

## 21 June (Friday) - A psychological game; Humiliation and Fear

Visited Buchenwald Nazi Concentration camp. We witnessed the dark side of the history of the Nazi. Humiliation is the way that the SS (special service) used to tear the victims both physically and psychologically apart. One would totally lost his identity and self worth in the Concentration Camp. Most perpetrators, I believed carried out their duties out of fear and loyalty to the authority. They have put their country first before their conscience.

In Gabriel's devotion, Psalm 113, he reminded us that we are baptized into the name of the Lord and we should use our capacity to work for His glory. Doing good work for His kingdom such as the mission works carried out by MEW.

In the afternoon, we visited a couple of chapels and cathedrals but the most impressive one was the Augustinian Monastery as it was related to Martin Luther. As much as I admired the awesome and majestic architecture of the churches, I wondered does God really pleased with such grandeur places of worship. Were the churches/cathedrals built to glory man or God... point to ponder...

## 22 June (Saturday) - Psalm 8

Rosalind shared this morning devotion that we want to be in control and even controlling God, expect things from Him in our own time instead of God. We are not mindful of God while He is mindful of us. We can seek God's help to change our mindset towards Him and prioritize Him in our lives.

Mandy shared her thoughts about is God being honoured through such majestic cathedrals. Rev Thomas responded that in the past, people contributed money to build beautiful cathedrals did it out of fear; to be out of purgatory. But with the teaching of "faith alone" by Martin Luther, it threatened the strong financial foundation of the Catholic empire. Rev Thomas mentioned that churches built after the reformation were simpler. However, people also stopped contributing much to the church as they realized that they are saved by grace and not through good works which includes donations.

Visited Katharine Luther's memorial stone in St. Anne church. Understand she was a capable lady that God gave to Martin Luther. She ran the household well so Martin could focus on his mission.

The most impressive place the Castle Church Torgau in Hartenfels Castle. The castle church is built according to Martin Luther's suggestion of



simple and practical design. The other side of the castle stands another amazing architecture of a beautiful spiral staircase that has no central column support.

### 23 June (Sunday) - God's revival

Went to Castle church (All Saints Church) in Wittenberg for service. This is the church where Martin Luther pinned his 95 theses. It's another majestic church, rich with its past glory. However, this famous church is quite empty if not for our group. What happened? Where's the fire of the Lord? I sat there and prayed that God will send another revival. After 500 years, who is next to be used by God to revive His church? Martin Luther is a faithful servant, the world need another one to move the mountains.

Visited Martin Luther's house in the afternoon. God has been so gracious to him that his living condition was considerably good for that era.

Martin's wife Katharina von Bora, was well-known for her capabilities to run the household and taking care of their children. This reminds me of proverb 31: 10-31, God's description of a wife with a noble character. Praise God for He knows Martin needed a good assistant.

### 24 June (Monday) - Eph 3: 14-21

Peter Seow shared his testimony about how gracious and merciful God is towards him that he had 2 kidneys transplant. Indeed and perhaps one among thousands of kidney patients could have but only one chance of one kidney transplant. Yet Peter had twice the opportunities.

Visited birth and death places of Martin Luther in Eisleben. He was from a middle class family. Born Nov 10 1483, died Feb 18 1546 at age 63.

Survived by his wife and 4 children (2 daughters passed on at age 1 and 14 respectively). In the tour, we learned that the

legends about Luther: the thunder storm "Help me St. Anne and I will become a monk." was a bluff, an excuse to escape a pre-arranged marriage by his father.

### 25 June (Tuesday) Hebrew 10: God's calling

Desmond shared that he was given the chairman position in LCCS which he did not asked for. He said that he chose to be obedient to God's calling even though he felt he wasn't ready. Pastor Frederick reminded us that besides obedience, we have to do things out of love for God as the main reason for accepting His calling. Mandy shared that she dreamt about

having 50% pay cut 3 years ago prior to her joining LCCS came true. It was a preempt from God to prepare her mentally for the pay cut and confirmation of His calling to her to work as a counsellor in LCCS. Pastor Schroff gave his testimony that God will equip those He called. Need not to worry about whether you are fit for the job as you will learn along the way.

Visited Nuremberg - a rich historical place particularly when Nazism took place. Another eye opening is the interesting walk in the cellars. The most impressive tour was the visit to Eltersdorf Church and its congregation. It has 1000 years of history and there lies some treasures that were passed down from generations. A great experience to four of us who climbed the narrow and steep staircase to the church's bell tower to see the old bells. They are now operate via electricity instead of manually pulling the lever to strike the bells.

26 June (Wednesday) - strengthening ourselves in the Lord

Jean Chew shared 1 Samuel 23, 30 and 1 Chronicles 11 in this morning devotion. She reminds us that our destiny is not an end point but a process. The outcome of our decision or choices, make us who we are. Along the way, we need good friends who are able to strengthen us, encourage one another as well as to support as a community. Iron shaper iron, we need to courage one another's faith. How to strengthen; giving Him praise, thanks Him everytime and worship Him. Lastly, listen to God with a discerning heart. Filling ourselves with His word and remembering the goodness of God. Do not forget God's faithfulness and love.

Visited Diako Lutheran hospital in Augsburg this morning. Greeted by Rev Viktor Gotz who is the director in-charge and Rev Thomas' aunt Rose who is a diaconal worker for the past 50 years. Very impressive place. Rev Gotz displayed great love and care for his staff and the place. The hospital is also a home for 38 retired diaconal workers. Aunt Rose looks demure and awesome for her age 84. She has that calm and peaceful countenance, always ready with a wide smile. Indeed a well respected lady.

The Augsburg confession took place in Augsburg palace where Martin Luther presented his stand. The apology of the Augsburg confession is still relevant today.

The temperature soared up to 39 degree Celsius just when I thought I could escape the heat from Singapore. But thankfully is not as humid so it's still bearable.

#### 27 June (Thursday) - to leave our comfort zones

Rev Strass shared about listening to God and prepare to leave our comfort zone such as leaving our friends and work behind for mission fields.

#### 28 June (Friday) - John 15: 9 - 13

Pastor Fredric shared that we serve one another out of God's love, although there's a need to segregate between church ministry and family. To continue to pray for MEW, the diaconal works, LCCS, LSM, and the pastors especially retired pastors like Pastor Strauss and Pastor Nelson. Pray for mission works such as the one in Cambodia.

HOME SWEET HOME. As we depart from Neuendettelsau to Munich airport, I know I'm going to miss this place and the pastors as well as many who were so kind to host us during our stay. I'm thankful for this trip.