



Dear praying Friends and Family,

We hope this newsletter finds you well. We are excited to share with you how God has encouraged us and what we have experienced over the past month and a bit.

"The church, what a picture of misery!"

As strange as it may sound, this was the title of a sermon at our church that led to great encouragement for us over the past two weeks. The sermon began with outlining some of the failures of the church in general. As brothers and sisters in Christ we have all too often let each other down, hurt each other, and deeply wounded others and driven them away from the church.

These failures are not new, and we have personally struggled with some of them as well. But then came the powerful reminder: Christ Jesus loves the church, made up of wretched sinners. He loves the church so much that he was willing to die for it (Ephesians 5:25). If this doesn't blow our minds then the next point should. Not only did Christ die for the church but he also wants to reach the world, through the church! Christ wants to use the 'miserable sinners' that make up the church to tell the world about him! How humbling!

We both felt convicted for our judgements about the church. We realized that we tend to complain and focus so much on what is not going well in the church that we miss what God is doing, despite our failures! Over the next few days God gave us clear glimpses of this:

1. We were able to watch the baptism service at our home church in Canada. We heard testimonies of the power of God to transform lives. We were encouraged to see that God is using our home church, despite the shortcomings it may have.
2. I had the chance to preach at the Arabic/Aramaic speaking church in Gütersloh two weeks ago. This church is struggling with learning what it means to be a church family, as most of its members are first generation Christians and new in the faith. After the service a man approached me and asked me questions about the meaning of baptism and other topics. His parents are Muslim and Catholic and he said he is trying to find the truth. He was invited by a co-worker from the church. I was encouraged. This past Saturday we were able to celebrate the baptism of 11 people in this church! The church may be struggling, but God is using it! We were encouraged.
3. Last week Jolene met with a local friend. Many times we have wished for and prayed that God would open this woman's heart for the Gospel. Often Jolene felt disappointed when conversations didn't move in this direction. The kids are also always present when they meet and conversations tend to be interrupted a lot. This past week the kids played peacefully and God led the conversation so that Jolene was able to clearly share the Gospel message with her friend! We may think we don't know how to direct a conversation or have the proper words but God was able to use Jolene to speak truth to her friend. We are encouraged!



Practicum

The past few weeks have also been filled with learning! I (Adrian) was able to do a three week practicum at the MB Bielefeld (<https://mb-bielefeld.de>). This is the mother church of our church in Brackwede. I am grateful for the opportunity to see how a church functions in comparison to what I have experienced in my life so far. I was able to look in on membership and pastoral meetings, hear more about how the church supports missions, how their youth and young adults programs run, how they support marriages, how their care groups function and more.

I came away with many ideas that I would love to try out in Brackwede and back in Canada. I was also encouraged by two things:

1. This church has about 1000 members, and of those members around 700 are actively serving in the church! This allows a church of this size to have only three paid staff!
2. The emphasis of working and making decisions in community. This connects to the previous point. Everyone has a role to play and everyone has an equal say in the decisions that are made as a church. One interesting fact I discovered: Heinrich Klassen, their lead pastor and also chair of the executive committee at ICOMB; spent three months doing a practicum at our home church King Road MB back in 1989!



Visits

We were also blessed to receive visitors from Canada and make a fun visit last month. At the end of March Adrian's parents visited us for about a week. We are thankful for opportunity to reconnect, show them our surroundings and for Niklas and Sofia to spend time with Oma and Opa.

A few weeks later we had the opportunity to travel to Switzerland for a Bible School reunion. It's almost been 10 years since Adrian spent a year at the Bienenberg Bible School. It was neat to have dinner together as students and reconnect as a whole group for the first time in many years. Jolene was also able to meet up with a fellow Bienenberg student.

They had not seen each other since their school year ended five years ago. We are grateful that God gave us this opportunity to reconnect with people from our past as well as with family we have in the area.



Praise:

- *Thank God for the visits we received and could make*
- *The opportunity to learn through a practicum*
- *The baptism that took place in Gütersloh*
- *Jolene's conversation with her friend*

Prayer



Requests

- *Those baptized in Gütersloh and for the church*
- *For Dennis, who is searching for the truth*
- *For Jolene's friend*
- *A Brackwede church leader who is battling cancer*

Thank you for your prayers and support. We are encouraged!
It is our prayer that you may also be encouraged as you see what
God is doing across the globe and at home.

Adrian & Jolene,
Sofia and Niklas