

Dear Trinity Lutheran,

Greetings from Germany! I am so thankful for you and your much needed prayers and support for the mission here in Leipzig and for me! I wanted to share an update of what has been going on over the past few months!

I arrived in Leipzig on February 7, and went right to Die Brücke (our outreach center, which means "the bridge"). Many refugees had gathered there, as they do every Wednesday. Some are already baptized, and some are there to learn more about Christianity, which we pray will lead to their baptisms! There are classes for both groups every Wednesday, and in between we sing Christian songs in Persian. There is also time for visiting, helping refugees with their German, and for them to bring in documents from the government that they need help with, etc. Jumping right into this on the first day was very exciting, and I'm enjoying working with the refugees very much!

The day after my arrival, my pastor's brother died, which meant he had to leave immediately for South Africa for 10 days. Since he had to leave so suddenly, and I was brand new, most of the activities for the week were cancelled. I took this time to start getting settled and figure out all the German bureaucracy. I spent time researching all that needed to be done and setting up appointments to see apartments. I had to register with the city, get a bank account, get a phone, work on visa details, figure out the public transit, etc. After viewing and applying for a number of apartments, I finally signed a lease on March 1, and have since been working on getting it set up with basic necessities. German apartments don't even have a kitchen or light fixtures when you move in, and I am looking forward to having those things soon. It takes a lot of time and work to figure everything out and get settled, and being able to speak German well has been invaluable through all of this!

After my pastor got back, my American supervisor--our regional director for Eurasia Missions--came to visit for a day to meet with us. Then we went to Bleckmar, Germany for a few days, where the SELK Lutheran Church Mission has its headquarters. We met with the mission director there, Rev. Roger Zieger. We talked in general about the history of the mission in Leipzig, mission strategies, and plans and ideas for the future.

Since then I have been taking on more responsibility with the regular activities at Die Brücke and in the church. The Farsi worship services had not had any musical accompaniment (except for YouTube videos). I have worked on learning many of their songs, so that I can lead the music during worship. That has been fun, and it is helping me learn the Farsi language, too! Besides having worship for refugees here in Leipzig, we travel to two other cities, to have worship with refugees there. We go to Chemnitz on Sunday afternoons and to Borna on Thursday afternoons. In Borna we also visit a family from Iraq who used to be Muslim, but now would like to be baptized!

One of the unexpected aspects of the mission here is that beyond helping refugees, which is a huge part of the work, we also help Germans in the community. The neighborhood we are in is one of the roughest and poorest in the city. In fact, the main street that runs through the neighborhood has been labeled by some as the most dangerous street in Germany. I have spent plenty of time walking on that street and have not yet felt unsafe. If you're not part of the gangs and drugs, they leave you alone. Many Germans in this area who grew up with communism struggle with substance abuse, mental disorders, etc. Their children are basically left to their own devices. We offer programs for the kids, and the parents as well.

Once a month we invite adults in the community to some kind of secular activity/topic to just get them into the church and to feel comfortable with us and with coming into the church building. Once a week German adults meet for discussion and a devotion over lunch in Die Brücke. We also have a children's group, teen girls group, and youth club that meet regularly. These groups can be some of the most challenging to work with. They have had difficult lives, and most of them claim to be atheists. Sometimes they have abrasive attitudes that can be hard to take. Yet we share the Word and pray with them, and they keep coming back. I have begun leading some music with each of the groups we meet with, which is something that hadn't been done much before. It has been amazing to see how this draws them in and allows another avenue for them to hear the Word through the words of the songs.

There are so many opportunities here to share the love of Christ! Please continue to pray for me, for my pastor and the rest of our team of volunteers, as well as for the refugees and Germans in our community who so desperately need to know the love of Christ!

The Peace of Christ be with you!

Thank you so much for your partnership in the Gospel & ongoing support so refugees can hear of the refuge we have in Christ!